

# **Reclaiming Voices: Nigeria's EndSARS Movement in Online and Offline Spheres through the Lens of Memory Studies**

Silas Udenze  
Doctoral Thesis



**Reclaiming Voices: Nigeria's EndSARS Movement in Online and Offline  
Spheres through the Lens of Memory Studies**

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## **Dedication**

*To the memory of my parents: Silas N. Udenze and Cecilia C. Udenze  
Daddy! Mummy!, by God's GRACE I conquered the barriers!*

## Acknowledgements

Why Barcelona?

This is the question I often encounter when people learn that I am pursuing my doctoral studies in Barcelona, Spain. My response is always the same: Barcelona chose me (laughs). The landmark moment in my journey was when I stumbled upon the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) during a Google search. This discovery, a stroke of divine providence, resulted in my being awarded a fully funded grant to pursue a PhD in Humanities and Communication at this esteemed university, and great city, a turning point for which I am deeply grateful.

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## **Publications**

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## **Abstract**

This multidisciplinary research examines Nigeria's EndSARS movement through the theoretical lens of memory studies. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit within the Nigerian police force, has become infamous for its pervasive human rights abuses. This study employs a qualitative research design, precisely a digital ethnographic approach, conducted over three years. It incorporates in-depth interviews with eleven purposively selected participants to understand how they construct diverse memory practices and utilize Instagram and WhatsApp Stories (24-hour ephemeral media) within the context of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. Furthermore, the research explores the movement's commemoration through its 2021, 2022, and 2023 anniversaries. Specifically, the research addresses these questions: "How did the research participants utilise Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media (Stories) during the EndSARS protests?" "What memory practices did the participants construct on Instagram and WhatsApp in the context of the EndSARS movement?" "How did the research participants create collective memory through the movement?" and "What are the distinctive features of the first, second, and third anniversaries of the EndSARS movement?" The findings of this study as highlighted by the research participants reveal that the EndSARS movement serves as a broader umbrella of the various socio-economic challenges plaguing Nigeria, such as youth unemployment, poverty, endemic public sector corruption, and police brutality. These issues, which I term implicit collective memory, are posited as the underlying catalysts of the EndSARS protests. The analysis of Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media demonstrates their appropriation for what I describe as not-entirely performative activism. These platforms functioned as dynamic newsreels and facilitated proximate activist engagement, mainly through WhatsApp. Moreover, Instagram and WhatsApp Stories engendered diverse memory practices, including digital memory, mourning, and digital archiving. The examination of the EndSARS anniversaries reveals distinct characteristics for each year, yet I argue that the movement is inherently episodic. It tends to focus on attention-grabbing activities, such as demonstrations and public spectacles, which in turn fuel the 24-hour news cycle. This episodic nature underscores the movement's reliance on high-visibility events to maintain momentum and public interest. Overall, I conclude that the EndSARS movement embodies a dual nature of collective memory: both retrospective and prospective. It reflects the historical trajectory of Nigeria's numerous socio-economic and political challenges while simultaneously highlighting the unresolved issues that must be addressed for future progress. This duality signifies where Nigeria has been and illuminates the path forward, emphasising the necessity of tackling these enduring challenges to achieve lasting change. In sum, this research analyses the EndSARS movement, illustrating how digital media practices and collective memory construction intersect to shape social and political activism in Nigeria. It provides valuable insights into the role of ephemeral media in contemporary protest movements and the complex interplay of memory, media, and socio-political dynamics in the Nigerian context.

## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	1
Dedication.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Publications.....	5
Abstract.....	6
<b>List of Tables and Figures .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1. Introductory Thought.....	13
1.2. Research Background.....	15
1.3. Rationale for the Research .....	19
1.5. Structure of the Dissertation .....	23
<b>Chapter Two: The Literature Review .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	25
2.2. Contextualising Nigeria Socio-Economically .....	26
2.3. Knowing Nigeria and its Complexities: A Brief Overview .....	30
2.4. Nigeria and its Colonial Legacy Experience of Police Brutality .....	34
2.5. Police Brutality: What is it? How does it Occur? .....	38
2.6. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and the Decentralised EndSARS Protest on the Streets of Nigeria .....	43
2.7. Historicising Social Protest in Nigeria: From Times without Social Media to the Era of Social Media Movements .....	47
2.8. Social Movement-Memory Studies Nexus .....	52
2.9. Mediatizing Memory: Digital Memory Practices within Social Movements .....	54
2.10. Social Media Ephemeral Story and Personal Narratives .....	60
2.11. Social Media Activism: A Look at WhatsApp and Instagram .....	61
2.12. Nigeria's EndSARS Movement: The EndSARS Literature- Identifying the Research Gaps .....	65
2.13. Chapter Summary .....	75
<b>Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>77</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	77
3.2. Memory: Looking at its Complexities and Affiliation to Social Movements Studies .....	78



3.3. The Construction of Conflict through Symbolic Means and the Influence of Mediated Public Memory.....	81
3.4. Foregrounding Implicit Memory in the Context of the EndSARS Movement .....	86
3.5. Protest Anniversaries as Memorialisation and Protest.....	87
3.6. Anniversaries as Performative: A Form of Action .....	91
3.7. The Concept of “Place” in Digital Activism .....	93
3.8. Understanding Ephemeral Story: A Conceptual Background .....	96
3.9. Visual Culture, Digital Activism and the EndSARS Movement.....	97
3.10. Chapter Summary .....	100
<b>Chapter Four: Philosophical Orientation.....</b>	<b>103</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	103
4.2. Epistemology and Ontology .....	106
4.3. Research and the Dominant Theoretical Perspectives.....	107
4.3.1. The Position of Positivism/Neopositivism .....	108
4.3.2. Interpretivism and its Standpoint.....	109
4.4. Choosing a Philosophical Paradigm: Interpretivism .....	113
4.5. The Use of Qualitative Methods for the Current Research .....	114
4.5.1 The Concept of Qualitative Sensibility .....	115
4.5.2. Qualitative Research and Generalizability: Explaining the Positionality of this Study .	117
4.6. Chapter Summary .....	120
<b>Chapter Five: Methodological Considerations and Research Design.....</b>	<b>122</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	122
5.2. The Foundation: Ethnography .....	124
5.3. Internet Ethnography, Virtual Ethnography, Netnography or Digital Ethnography? .....	125
5.4. Rationale for Using Pink et al.'s Digital Ethnography in this Research.....	127
5.4.1. Multiplicity .....	127
5.4.2. Non-Digital-Centric-Ness .....	128
5.4.3. Openness.....	129
5.4.4. Reflexivity .....	130
5.4.5. Unorthodoxly.....	131
5.5. Researching Humans: Understanding the Material World and the Internet .....	132
5.6. Fieldwork: Where is the "Field"? .....	133
5.7. My Experience as an Insider and Engaged Researcher .....	136

5.8. Qualitative Sampling .....	139
5.9. Collecting Primary Data: My Online and Digital Experience .....	142
5.9.1. The Journey to Nigeria for Fieldwork: The Face-to-Face Qualitative Interviews .....	144
5.10. The Dataset as Repertoire of Memory.....	149
5.11. Driven by the Concept of Information Power .....	152
5.12. Transcribing the Interviews- Buzz did the Work .....	155
5.13. Braun and Clark’s (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis .....	160
5.13.1. Making Meaning of My Transcript: Developing Themes from Narratives.....	160
5.13.2. Phase One- Familiarisation Myself with the Dataset .....	161
5.13.3. Phase Two- Coding: Exploring the Entire Dataset .....	162
5.13.4. Phase Three- Generating the Initial Theme .....	165
5.13.5. Phase Four- Developing and Reviewing the Themes.....	166
5.13.6. Phase Five- Refining, Defining and Naming the Themes .....	167
5.13.7. Phase Six- Writing-up the Research Report.....	168
5.14. Ethics-Related Matters .....	169
5.14.1. My Experience with the UOC Internal Ethics Committee.....	169
5.14.2. What Counts as Private/Public Space? .....	169
5.14.3. Consent in Digital Ethnography Research .....	171
5.14.4. Anonymization .....	173
5.14.5. Legal Considerations.....	175
5.15. Chapter Summary .....	176
<b>Chapter Six: “Woke” Self-Representation, and Not-Entirely Performative Activist Practice: Social Media Story as a Distinct Medium for Activism ....</b>	<b>179</b>
6.1. Introduction .....	179
6.2. Woke Self-Representation and the EndSARS Protest .....	180
6.3. Not-Entirely Performative Activism .....	181
6.4. Engaging with a Proximate Audience on WhatsApp.....	185
6.5. WhatsApp and Instagram Story as a Newsreel .....	188
6.6. Chapter Summary .....	189
<b>Chapter Seven: Memorialising the Endsars Movement on WhatsApp and Instagram: Strands of Memory Construction and Practices .....</b>	<b>191</b>
7.1. Introduction .....	191
7.2. Digital Memory in the EndSARS Protest.....	192

7.3. Memefying Collective Memory on Instagram and WhatsApp .....	194
7.4. Digital Archiving and Curating .....	197
7.5. The Memory of Mourning and Commemoration .....	200
7.6. Chapter Summary .....	206
<b>Chapter Eight: “The EndSARS Movement is an Umbrella for Other Challenges”: Implicit Collective Memory and Other Complex Memory Engagements .....</b>	
<b>208</b>	<b>208</b>
8.1. Introduction .....	208
8.2. Implicit Collective Memory: Shared Socio-Economic Trauma .....	209
8.3. “The EndSARS Movement is an Umbrella for Other Challenges” .....	212
8.3.1. Growing Youth Unemployment.....	214
8.3.2. Endemic Public Sector Corruption and Poor Police Welfare .....	215
8.3.3. Poverty: "Not Everybody in the Country can Boast of Having Three Square Meals a Day" .....	218
8.3.4. Police Brutality- Perennial Human Rights Abuse .....	219
8.4. Forging Connections between Collective Memory and Topical Societal Agenda .....	221
8.5. “We know how to Unveil and Defend the Truth”: Countering Fake and Fabricated State Memories .....	223
8.6. Dual Retrospective-Prospective Memory Narratives .....	227
8.6.1. Inherent Suffering .....	227
8.6.2. Resilience: Overcoming the Adversities .....	230
8.6.3. We Will Never Forget .....	234
8.7. Chapter Summary .....	240
<b>Chapter Nine: Commemorating the Life of a Movement: The Episodic EndSARS Movement through the Lens of its First, Second, and Third Anniversaries .....</b>	
<b>242</b>	<b>242</b>
9.1. Introduction .....	242
9.2. EndSARS first anniversary in 2021: “We will never forget”- collective mourning, the call for police reform.....	243
9.3. Sociopolitical Challenges, Nigeria`s 2023 General Elections- The Birth of the Obidient Movement in the Second EndSARS Commemoration .....	247
9.4. The Protest Anniversary Waned- The Third Commemoration .....	251
9.5. The Episodic EndSARS Anniversaries.....	253
9.6. Chapter Summary .....	255

<b>Chapter Ten: Conclusion, Implication for Literature and Future Research Directions .....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>10.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>10.2.1. Research Question 1 .....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>10.2.2. Research Question 2 .....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>10.2.3. Research Question 3 .....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>10.2.4. Research Question 4 .....</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>10.3. Theoretical Contributions and Implication for Literature .....</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>10.4. Limitations of the Research .....</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>10.5. Future Research Directions .....</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Appendix I: Ethics Committee Approval.....</b>	<b>330</b>
<b>Appendix II: Interview Guide.....</b>	<b>331</b>

### **List of Tables and Figures**

#### **Tables**

Table 4.1. Basic disparities between positivism and interpretivism.....	112
Table 5.1. A descriptive table of the research participants.....	148

#### **Figures**

Figure 4.1. A shrinking schema of research design.....	105
Figure 5.1. Shrinking schema: Distinct techniques adopted for this research.....	123
Figure 5.2. A screenshot of the Buzz application.....	157
Figure 5.3. The Buzz Software during transcribing interviews from audio to text.....	158
Figure 5.4. The extracted txt file from the Buzz software to Microsoft notepad.....	159
Figure 5.5. A word cloud from the analysis on Nvivo 12.....	162
Figure 5.6. A screenshot of the space in Nvivo 12.....	164
Figure 6.1. Images of the stained Nigerian flag and clenched-fist.....	184
Figure 7.1. Meme images from Instagram and WhatsApp of Participants 2, 7 and 10.....	195

Figure 7.2. A screenshot from a Participant 11’s Instagram page.....	201
Figure 7.3. An Image from the WhatsApp Story of research participant 8 who was at the Lekki Tollgate.....	204
Figure 8.1. A meme of President Muhammadu Buhari.....	228
Figure 8.2. An Image from WhatsApp depicting resilience.....	231
Figure 8.3. Prospective images of “We Will Never Forget”.....	235
Figure 9.1. WhatsApp Story: An image from the 2021 EndSARS commemoration.....	245
Figure 9.2. Image from the Instagram page of Participant 5- Yusuf Alami in front of Mr Peter Obi presidential campaign convoy.....	249

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1. Introductory Thought

As stated by different sources such as the Amnesty International 2024 Report, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a law enforcement unit of the Nigerian Police created in 1992, has long been implicated in a pattern human rights abuse, utilising tactics such as torture and other forms of maltreatment to coerce, punish, and extract information from suspects (Uwalaka, 2023). Instances of victimisation associated with SARS have garnered heightened attention within the media landscape, sparking widespread public outcry, particularly on social media platforms (Dambo et al., 2022). Despite pledges from Nigerian authorities in recent years to address these systemic issues and disband SARS, the unit has persistently perpetuated egregious activities, including but not limited to extortion, sexual assault, torture, and lethal (Agbo, 2021). A pivotal moment in this saga occurred on October 3, 2020, when a video capturing SARS officers allegedly shooting a young man, Joshua Ambrose, in Delta State, Nigeria, surfaced and rapidly circulated online (Amnesty International, 2021). This widely social media-circulated video catalysed into public outrage, leading to spontaneous protests across Nigeria, with throngs of young people converging on major streets and highways throughout the country. The audio in the video in the Nigeria Pidgin English says: *Na follow we dey follow dem oo; dem dey run. De don kill the boy oo! Who get that Lexus wey dey front don die oo for front of Wetland Hotel Ughelli* (Agbo, 2021). In the standard English Language, the audio states that the Police just shot and killed the owner of the Lexus SUV and zoomed off with the victim's car.

On the evening of October 20, 2022, amidst a gathering of demonstrators convening peacefully at the Lekki Tollgate in Lagos, Nigeria, ostensibly to voice their dissent, reports (The New York Time, 2021; Vanguard, 2021) suggest that the federal government deployed military

forces to disperse them. This intervention purportedly involved the utilisation of live munitions, precipitating a lamentable outcome marked by the tragic loss of life among the assembled protesters. In the annals of contemporary Nigerian socio-political discourse, this fateful occurrence has since assumed a commemorative significance, notably recognised as the EndSARS anniversary, emblematic of a broader societal reckoning with issues of governance, civil liberties, and human rights within the Nigerian polity.

Participating in the EndSARS protest in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2020 was a profound and transformative experience that not only profoundly impacted me personally but also served as a pivotal catalyst for my subsequent doctoral research on the topic. As an individual committed to social justice and human rights advocacy, I became interested in the EndSARS movement in 2017 when it gained popularity on Nigeria's Twittersphere, and since then, it resonated deeply with me and beliefs, compelling me to actively engage in the protests to advocate for meaningful change within my community and country. My involvement in the EndSARS protest was characterised by a profound sense of solidarity with fellow protestors and a shared determination to address the systemic issues plaguing Nigeria's law enforcement agencies, particularly the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). I vividly recall the palpable energy and passion that permeated the protest gatherings as thousands of people from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds came together to demand an end to police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and systemic corruption within the Nigerian Police and government entities.

During my participation in the protest march and demonstrations in Abuja, I witnessed first hand the Nigerian people's resilience, courage, and collective spirit as we peacefully voiced our demands for accountability and justice. The sense of unity and empowerment that emerged from

these experiences left an indelible impression on me, fueling my determination to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse surrounding the EndSARS movement.

After the peak of the protests, I found myself increasingly drawn to exploring the underlying socio-economic and political dynamics and implications of the EndSARS movement through an academic lens. My experiences during the protest spurred my decision to pursue doctoral research on the topic, as I recognised the need to delve deeper into the nuances of the movement. As I embarked on my doctoral research journey, I drew upon my firsthand experiences and observations from the EndSARS protest to inform and contextualise my scholarly inquiries. The experience instilled in me during my participation in the protest served as a guiding force, driving me to conduct research that seeks to amplify the voices of marginalised communities, advocate for systemic change, and contribute meaningfully to the ongoing struggle for justice and accountability in Nigeria. The protest's impassioned energy and collective determination inspired me to channel my activism into scholarly inquiry, ultimately motivating me to undertake doctoral research on the EndSARS movement through the theoretical lens of memory. Consequently, the aim of this research is to understand how research participants construct diverse memories and how they use Instagram and WhatsApp, and their ephemeral media (Stories) during the protest to construct memory practices of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. Besides, the research also attempts to understand the protest through its anniversaries in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

## **1.2. Research Background**

The interdisciplinary nature of social movement studies reflects rich and interlaced scholarly inquiries that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Rooted in the recognition that social movements are complex phenomena shaped by multifaceted factors (Pavan & della



Porta, 2020), scholars across diverse academic disciplines have converged to explore and analyse these dynamics from various vantage points. At its core, the interdisciplinary approach to studying social movements acknowledges that no single discipline can fully capture the intricate dynamics and multifaceted nature of collective action (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019). Instead, scholars draw upon insights and methodologies from fields such as sociology, political science, anthropology, history, communication studies, and cultural studies, among others, to construct an understanding of social movements.

Media and communication, and cultural studies contribute to the scholarly synergy in social movements scholarship. Cultural studies highlight the cultural meanings and representations embedded within social movements, exploring how cultural narratives, symbols, and practices shape movement identities and strategies (Bosch, 2016). This interdisciplinary approach to social movement studies through cultural studies enriches our understanding of these complex phenomena by integrating diverse perspectives, methodologies, and analytical tools, ultimately yielding nuanced and multidimensional insights.

The constant production and mediation of culture and individual memory are inexorably intertwined with the technologies of memory (Sturken, 2008). This centrality of mediation underscores the conceptualisation of memory within visual culture, cultural studies, and media studies (Bosch, 2016). The role of media in shaping collective memory is paramount, with the politics of remembering intricately intertwined with power dynamics, determining who has the authority to select topics and forms of remembrance within public discourse (Erll & Nünning, 2008). Garde-Hansen (2011, p.3) characterises media as "the first draft of history," serving as a conduit for recording contemporary events, while also engaging in the negotiation of history and memory. Notably, several theoretical inquiries into memory have emanated from media theorists.

For instance, Landsberg's (2004) examination of cinema and memory elucidates how film engenders emotional connections between audiences and past events, functioning as a form of prosthetic memory. Similarly, Hoskins (2004) introduced the concept of 'new memory' in his analysis of 24-hour television news, exploring how the media mediates narratives of war and terror. Additionally, van Dijck (2007) contributed a mediated memory paradigm, delineating how memory is shaped and disseminated through mediated channels. At this juncture, let us look at scholarship in social media activism before discussing its connection with collective memory.

Several scholarly inquiries (Fenton & Barassi, 2011; Gladwell, 2011; Morozov, 2014) have delineated a dichotomy regarding the efficacy of social media in catalysing socio-political change. These studies adopt a critical stance, contending that the utilisation of digital platforms for activism tends to yield lacklustre and inefficient outcomes. Within this perspective, the dearth of a coherent ideological underpinning within digitally mobilised activism is posited as a fundamental impediment, thereby constraining the potency of such movements in effectuating substantive change. Conversely, an emergent body of scholarship (Obia, 2023; Ferrari, 2022; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015; Davis et al., 2020) espouses a more sanguine outlook on the role of social media in contemporary socio-political activism. This optimistic perspective regards digital platforms as indispensable tools that have become intertwined with the fabric of modern socio-political movements. This sentiment is corroborated by the synchronous emergence of social media and global protest phenomena, exemplified by seminal events such as Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, the 15-M movement, Black Lives Matter (BLM), and the EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

Recent scholarly endeavours (Zamponi, 2020; Obia, 2023; Dambo et al., 2022; Rahbari, 2022) converge with the prevailing discourse, substantiating the contention that leveraging social media for socio-political objectives positively correlates with heightened engagement in protest

activities. This body of literature underscores the transformative potential of digital activism and highlights the evolving landscape of political engagement in the digital age. Remarkably, within the realm of scholarly discourse, a nuanced interplay has been made clear, elucidating a reciprocal symbiosis between participation in protests and the subsequent amplification of citizens' engagement with social media platforms for socio-political ends (Haq et al., 2022; Chang & Park, 2021). This symbiotic relationship implies that heightened participation in protest activities is causally linked to an augmented utilisation of social media channels for socio-political objectives, a phenomenon which attained heightened prominence amidst the tumultuous context of the EndSARS protests in Nigeria.

As seen in the preceding paragraphs, the expanding body of scholarship concerning the influence of digital media on social movements has grown significantly in recent years. However, investigations into the intricate relationship between digital media and the preservation of collective memory within movements remain relatively scarce, especially in ephemeral social media such as Instagram Story and WhatsApp status. Nonetheless, a recent surge of scholarly attention has emerged, with a cadre of researchers delving into the intersections of memory and digital media within contemporary social movements (Karatat & Bek, 2023; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). Among these inquiries, numerous studies (Beshero-Bondar & Raisanen, 2020; Tywman et al., 2017; De Kosnik, 2021) have delved into the role of digital archiving in facilitating the preservation of collective memory within social movements. Notably, Katriel and Shavit (2011) scrutinise the internet archiving practices of the "breaking the silence" movement, categorising it as an exemplar of memory-based moral activism. However, contemporary scholarship underscores that digital and social media possess mnemonic capacities that extend beyond mere archival functions (Smit, 2020; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). These platforms

serve as repositories for memories and function as conduits for disseminating them to broader audiences (Zamponi, 2020; Pavan & della Porta, 2020). Furthermore, digital media profoundly influence how memories shape the identity, objectives, and movements' strategies (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022; Karatas & Bek, 2023; Chidgey, 2018; Smit, 2020).

Nevertheless, there remains a critical lacuna in understanding the specific role of digital media in the interconnections between movement and memory. Scholars of social movements and memory are grappling with the question of whether collective memory remains attainable in the digital sphere (Hoskins, 2017). The emergence of platforms and social media has fundamentally altered the power dynamics within the mediatised public sphere, consequently reshaping the role of movements within this context. Scholars analysing activists' digital storytelling practices on social media platforms have highlighted the heavily personalised nature of these platforms (Barassi, 2018; Vivienne, 2016), catalysing a shift from identity politics to visibility politics (Velkova & Kaun, 2021; Uldam, 2018; Bennett & Segerberg, 2011). This transition significantly impacts the construction of collective identities within movements (Treré, 2015).

Even with the scarce scholarship in ephemeral social media, existing studies (Smit, 2020; Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022) predominantly explore social movements through the lens of explicit memory; this research seeks to transcend this paradigm by foregrounding the catalytic role of implicit memory, particularly within the context of the EndSARS protest.

### **1.3. Rationale for the Research**

The rationale driving the research endeavours into the EndSARS movement manifests as a complex interplay of personal involvement and scholarly pursuits, reflecting a convergence of

experiential immersion within the movement and a scholarly commitment to interrogating its socio-political intricacies. This dual motivation aligns with the scholarly discourse articulated by Daphi and Zamponi (2019), emphasising the amalgamation of diverse disciplinary perspectives within social movement studies to unravel the nuanced complexities inherent within contemporary societal dynamics. In the expansive landscape of research on social movements, the discourse pivots towards the pivotal role of the memory framework as a fundamental cornerstone in analysing these phenomena. Social movements scholars (Smit, 2022; della Porta, 2024; Zamponi, 2020) have underscored the significance of engaging with memory frameworks in comprehending the dynamics of social movements. However, while existing studies (Smit et al., 2020; Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Schwarz, 2022) predominantly explore social movements through the lens of explicit memory, this research seeks to transcend this paradigm by foregrounding the catalytic role of implicit memory, particularly within the context of the EndSARS protest. This departure from the conventional emphasis on explicit memory aligns with Zamponi's (2018) advocacy for a heightened research focus on implicit memory, which is posited to harbour concealed potentials overlooked by an exclusive concentration on explicit and episodic memory lenses.

Furthermore, within the realm of social media-centric research on social movements, predominant attention has been directed towards platforms such as Twitter (Xiong et al., 2019; Ahmed, 2020; Siepera et al., 2018). Similarly, research on social media and the EndSARS has focused on Twitter (Dambo et al., 2022; Uwalaka, 2023; Akerele-Popoola, 2022; Asemah & Nwaobili, 2022), and more broadly on social media (Ugochukwu & Nwolu, 2021; Augustine, 2023; Aboh, 2023; Kelvin & Tsegyu, 2022). However, this research endeavours to broaden the scholarly discourse by shedding light on the utilisation of Instagram and WhatsApp within the context of protest. Specifically, it seeks to explore the unique attributes of ephemeral media, such

as Instagram Story and WhatsApp status, and examines their deployment during the protest. This nuanced exploration expands the scope of empirical inquiry into digital activism and underscores the importance of considering diverse digital platforms and their functionalities in shaping collective memory and activism within contemporary socio-political movements. Moreover, amidst the burgeoning landscape of research on the EndSARS movement, a plethora of studies have emerged, yet many lack a firm qualitative grounding. To address this gap, this research integrates an online ethnographic method into its qualitative approach. By adopting a reflexive and interpretive stance, this study aims to unravel the multifaceted and intricately intertwined nature of the EndSARS protest, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of this socio-political phenomenon.

Rigney et al. (2021) posit that commemorations are tangible mechanisms for rejuvenating optimism and demonstrating collective determination within social-change-oriented movements. This assertion aligns with Pearce's (2015) contention regarding the pivotal role of collective commemorations in such movements. Through the lens of Rigney et al. (2021) and Pearce (2015), commemorations emerge as symbolic gestures and active agents in fostering resilience, solidarity, and sustained momentum within movements striving for societal transformation. Consequently, given the continuous protest through its anniversaries, this research endeavours to augment our comprehension of the EndSARS protest by delving into the commemoration of the protest anniversaries in the years 2021, 2022, and 2023. Through this lens, the study aims to enrich our understanding of the multifaceted intricacies and underlying motivations behind protest commemorations. By scrutinising the evolution of these commemorative events over multiple years, this research seeks to unveil the diverse peculiarities and drivers that shape the narratives and dynamics of protest anniversaries within the context of the EndSARS movement. Through the

analysis of these commemorative practices, this study endeavours to provide deeper insights into the enduring significance and evolving discourse surrounding the EndSARS protest, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of its socio-political impact and legacy.

#### **1.4. The Research Aim and the Research Questions**

Given the study's central aim to understand the research participants' experience of the EndSARS protest, this research adopts qualitative research methodologies. Qualitative research methods facilitate the comprehensive analysis of individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions, offering a nuanced exploration of the underlying rationales (Maxwell, 2021). This methodological approach is particularly valuable as it delves into the intricacies of the "why" behind human phenomena. Such an in-depth understanding proves invaluable in deciphering the complex motivations that underpin specific behaviour, shedding light on the myriad factors that drive individuals' actions. Also, scholars (Braun & Clark, 2022; Denzin et al., 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2018) underscore the flexibility of qualitative research approaches, allowing the researcher to drive the research process. This flexibility enables researchers to delve deeply into the intricacies of why and how individuals engage in specific behaviours within the context under investigation. Consequently, the primary research questions guiding this research are as follows:

1. How did the research participants use Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media (Story) during the EndSARS protest?
2. What memory practices did the participants construct on Instagram and WhatsApp in the EndSARS movement?
3. How did the research participants create collective memory through the movement?
4. What are the peculiarities in the first, second, and third anniversaries of the EndSARS movement?

These four research questions serve as the guiding framework that directs this study, informs the collection of primary data, and subsequently shapes the analysis of the gathered data. These research questions are designed to delineate the scope and focus of the research, ensuring that this research remains aligned with its core aim. By providing a clear and structured pathway, these research questions facilitate a systematic approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation.

### **1.5. Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter one serves as an essential foundation for the research, providing an overview of the context and background. This chapter not only situates the study within its broader social and academic context but also delineates the research rationale, objectives, and specific research questions. By establishing the groundwork, this chapter aims to orient the reader to the core themes and purposes that underpin the entire dissertation. Chapter Two encompasses the literature review, examining the existing body of work relevant to the study. This chapter scrutinises the essential literature, providing a critical analysis of the prevailing theories, findings, and debates within the field. Moreover, it highlights the current state of EndSARS studies, offering a detailed synthesis of the advancements and gaps in the literature. This critical examination not only contextualises the study within the broader scholarly discourse but also identifies the unique contribution that this research aims to make. Chapter Three discusses the theoretical frameworks that form the backbone of the study. Central to this discussion is the theoretical framework of memory, which serves as the principal theoretical lens through which the research is conducted. In addition to this primary framework, the chapter explores supplementary theories related to the concepts of anniversary, place, performance, and visual culture. These appendage theories provide a multidimensional perspective that enriches the analysis and interpretation of the research findings. Chapter Four



focuses on the philosophical orientation of the dissertation, providing a detailed exposition of the interpretivist and qualitative perspectives that inform the research methodology. This chapter elucidates the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions that guide the study, emphasising the importance of understanding social phenomena through meanings and interpretations. In Chapter Five, I outline the research methods and procedures employed in this study. This chapter provides a detailed account of the digital ethnographic approach advocated by Pink et al. (2016), which is a cornerstone of the research methodology. Additionally, the chapter elaborates on how the study is grounded in reflexivity, ensuring a transparent and reflective research process. The iterative collection and analysis of data are conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), which is further underpinned by Malterud et al.'s (2016) concept of Information Power. Chapters Six to Nine are dedicated to a combined and integrative laying out on the results and discussion sections concurrently. Each chapter addresses one of the four research questions respectively. These chapters present the findings and discussion in relation to the specific research questions and drawing connections to the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. Finally, Chapter Ten concludes the dissertation by summarising the key findings and discussing their theoretical contributions and implications for the literature. This chapter also reflects on the limitation of the research, and directions for further research.

# Chapter Two: The Literature Review

## 2.1. Introduction

To gain an understanding of the EndSARS protest movement, it is imperative to delve deeply into the intricate socio-economic context that served as the backdrop for the unfolding of this significant socio-political event. Firstly, in this chapter I began by contextualising the socio-economic landscape of Nigeria as it forms the foundational understanding for the subsequent analysis of the EndSARS movement. Further, the chapter unveils the multifaceted religious, ethnic, and cultural complexities characterising the Nigerian social fabric. This exploration provides a nuanced perspective on the diverse elements shaping the societal framework within which the protest emerged. Moreover, I undertook an examination of Nigeria's colonial legacy of police brutality, shedding light on historical antecedents contributing to the prevailing conditions. I delineate the various forms and contexts of police brutality in Nigeria, laying the groundwork for a more profound comprehension of the subsequent events. Continuing the narrative, I presented a historical tracing of the origins and evolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), providing essential context for understanding the subsequent EndSARS protest. This historical trajectory is pivotal in elucidating the roots and developments leading to the emergence of this particular unit, SARS and the ensuing public outcry against it. Given Nigeria's tumultuous history, the chapter also undertakes a review of social protest in the country, tracing its evolution from the colonial era to contemporary times. This historical survey is particularly pertinent as it encapsulates an era when protests lacked the advantages afforded by the ubiquity of social media,

juxtaposed with the contemporary protest landscape characterised by the influence of digital platforms.

In acknowledging the burgeoning research in the field of social movement and memory studies, this chapter also reviews the dynamic interplay between social movements and collective memory. Three key factors that catalyse and sustain this evolving relationship are highlighted, offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics shaping collective memory within the context of social movements. Expanding the discourse into the multidisciplinary realm of social movement and memory studies, I presented a review of the literature on media/communication and memory. Specifically, the discussion examines the role of social media digital memory practices within the broader landscape of social movements, emphasising the transformative impact of digital platforms on memory construction and dissemination. Concluding the chapter, I presented the state of the literature on the expanding EndSARS research area, identifying research gaps and clearly articulating how the present study contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse, thereby positioning itself within the broader academic conversation on the EndSARS protest movement. Now, I discuss Nigeria's socio-economic situation viz-a-viz the EndSARS movement.

## **2.2. Contextualising Nigeria Socio-Economically**

To comprehend the EndSARS protest movement, it is crucial we understand the political and socio-economic context within which the protest occurred in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) (2023) Nigeria's estimated population stood at 216,000,000, and the nation exhibits a noteworthy annual growth rate of 3.2 per cent, positioning it among the countries with the swiftest population expansion globally. Approximately 41 per cent of the populace is under the age of 15, as reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2021). Given this substantial

population growth and fertility rate, projections indicate that the Nigerian population is anticipated to reach 263 million by 2030 and escalate further to 401 million by 2050 (UNOCHA, 2021). Consequently, these projections position Nigeria as the third most populous country in the world, according to (Fayehun & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). In terms of demographic breakdown, approximately 43 per cent of the population comprises children aged 0–14 years, 19 percent falls within the 15–24 age bracket, and 62 per cent are under the age of 25 years (UNECOSOC, 2019). In contrast, individuals aged 60 years and above constitute less than five per cent of the population (Aubyn & Frimpong, 2022), positioning Nigeria as a youthful nation with a median age of around 18 years, notably lower than the respective estimates for Africa (20 years) and the world (29 years) (Fayehun and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020).

These statistics underscore that approximately 70 per cent of the country's population consists of young individuals who bear the challenging repercussions of prevailing governance challenges in the nation. Beyond the expansive demographic structure, the economy's struggles exacerbate pressure on the socioeconomic well-being of the populace. As one of the main producers of oil and natural gas in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria heavily relies on oil exports for foreign exchange earnings. Oil constitutes 80 per cent of all exports, half of the government revenues, and a third of credit in the banking sector (World Bank, 2020a). This reliance renders the dividends from oil exportation susceptible to volatility in the global oil market. Furthermore, the non-oil industrial and service sectors are closely tied to the economic activities and revenue generated by the oil and gas industry (World Bank, 2020a). Consequently, the oil sector's performance plays a pivotal role in steering the broader Nigerian economy, influencing employment rates, government revenues, and the growth of investment and credit markets (World Bank, 2020a). Persistent issues such as endemic corruption, mismanagement, infrastructure gaps,

ongoing insecurity, and a failure to diversify the economy away from petroleum production have, over time, restricted economic growth and hindered the anticipated development driven by the country's oil revenues (Abraham & Michael, 2018).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing challenges facing the Nigerian economy and led to its severe downturn. In 2020, the country witnessed its most significant economic recession since the 1980s, primarily attributed to the pandemic and the decline in global oil prices (World Bank, 2020b). The International Monetary Fund reported an estimated contraction of the economy by 3.2 percent in the same year (IMF, 2021). The adverse effects of this economic downturn on revenue streams have hindered the delivery of social services and negatively impacted government safety net programs designed to support vulnerable populations (World Bank 2020b). Particularly noteworthy is the inflation in food prices, which has affected household consumption and hindered access to food for the most vulnerable Nigerians (World Bank 2020b).

Closely connected to these challenges, different sources such (Amnesty International, 2024; Folarin, 2021) highlight persistent governance issues stemming from mismanagement, institutional corruption, the extravagance of the political elite, nepotism, and neopatrimonialism continue to impede the economic development necessary for improving the population's well-being. The cumulative consequence of these issues manifests in heightened poverty, inequality, unemployment, infrastructural deficiencies, and limited access to high-quality education and healthcare, especially among the burgeoning youthful demographic (Prince et al., 2023). According to the World Bank, 40 per cent (83 million people) of Nigerians live below the poverty line (i.e., US\$1.90 per day), with an additional 25 per cent (53 million) marginally above the line and remaining vulnerable (Bagura, 2022). As of August 2020, the World Economic Forum

reported that 27 per cent of Nigeria's labour force (over 21 million Nigerians) was unemployed, with youth (aged 18 to 35) constituting the largest segment at 13.7 million. The onset of the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated existing governance challenges and further disrupted the socio-economic gains achieved in recent years. Notably, the informal sector, engaging approximately 56 million people in the labour force, primarily young individuals and women, faced severe livelihood disruptions due to the pandemic (Schwettmann, 2020). The implemented restriction measures to curb the spread of the virus led to a surge in unemployment, food prices, poverty, and inequality, particularly affecting the country's youthful population.

Despite comprising the majority of the population, young people in Nigeria find themselves on the outskirts of the decision-making process. The limited involvement of youth in governance can be primarily attributed to the entrenched gerontocratic and neo-patrimonial political system prevalent in the country's politics. Consequently, the extent of youth participation in governance is predominantly confined to the act of voting. Scarce resources further impede the representation of youth in national decision-making bodies. The prevailing narrative surrounding youth exacerbates this situation, portraying them negatively as a social force linked to crimes, violence, and conflicts in discussions about national security (Eze et al., 2021). This portrayal has led to a decline in the trust that the youth place in the institutions of the Nigerian State, causing a ripple effect on social cohesion within the country. Over time, structural vulnerabilities and the demand for improved socio-economic conditions have fueled youth protests and agitations, often resulting in confrontations with state actors (Àkànle et al. 2022; Igwe, 2024). Conversely, a lack of opportunities, heightened poverty, and unemployment have driven numerous individuals to engage in organised crimes, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, and drug trafficking, as a means

of sustaining themselves economically (Oluwaleye, 2021). Haven discussed the socio-economic situation of the country, it is essential to understand its history and complexities.

### **2.3. Knowing Nigeria and its Complexities: A Brief Overview**

The division of Africa by European powers, spearheaded by Otto Von Bismarck during the 1884 to 1885 Berlin Conference before World War I, laid the groundwork for the modern states in Africa (Eric, 2016). Nigeria, counted among these contemporary nations, is considered a product of the Berlin Conference. However, this should not overshadow the existence of pre-colonial Nigerian states, including the Hausa-Fulani, Oyo, Kanem Bornu, the Igbo loose states, and the Benin Kingdom. This is why Hodgkin (1960) characterises the historical narrative of Nigeria as multifaceted, comprising diverse pasts woven together by the histories of various peoples and civilisations that form the present-day nation. This suggests that contemporary Nigeria is an amalgamation of numerous ethnic groups that have coexisted within a single nation. An intriguing aspect of our shared history is the interconnectedness of these ethnicities through myths of origin, cross-border commercial activities, craftsmanship, marital ties, trade, religions, and other factors, solidifying their unity into a cohesive entity (Babawale, 2007).

As early as 1861, Lagos had become a British colony, and by 1885, following the Berlin Act, the oil protectorates in present-day southern Nigeria fell under British control (Charles, 2014). The northern protectorate was brought under British rule by 1900 after the conquest following the downfall of Sultan Attahiru. Simultaneously, eastern Nigeria, influenced by the Royal Niger Company, came under British dominion (Ikelegbe, 1995). Following a series of initiatives aimed at pacification and conquest, three distinct regions materialised: the Colony of Lagos, the Northern Protectorate, and the Southern Protectorate (Eric, 2016). The integration of the Colony of Lagos with the Southern Protectorate by Sir Walter Egerton in 1906 served as a precursor to the

amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 (Hodgkin, 1960). The nomenclature "Nigeria," denoting the "Niger Area," was proposed by Miss Flora Shaw, a reporter for the British Times Newspaper, to Governor Frederick Lugard, whom he later married (Eric, 2016). The consolidation of the protectorates gained significance primarily for administrative expediency, seeking to mitigate internal discord among the protectorates and, ultimately, to streamline administrative costs (Nzongola, 1999).

The imposition of colonial rule, resulting in the establishment of Nigeria, forcibly united numerous ethnically diverse groups into a single state. Nigeria boasts a plethora of ethnicities, with the predominant Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo collectively constituting approximately 60% of the population (Mustapha, 2000). The religious landscape is equally varied, with Christianity and Islam each embraced by roughly half of the population. Islam predominates in the North, but a significant Christian presence exists, particularly in the North-Central region. Conversely, Christianity prevails in the South, yet a substantial Muslim community is present, especially in the South-West (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Upon gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria adopted a federal structure with three self-governing regions: the North, South-East, and South-West. Being significantly larger, the Northern region exerted dominant influence over the federal government (Suberu, 2001), fostering an unequal federation (Ukiwo, 2005) that engendered rivalry among regions and their dominant ethnic groups. The most consequential divide lies between the North and the South, rooted in disparities in ethnic composition, religious practices, political dynamics, and economic structures. Southern apprehensions centred on the demographic majority of the North, while the North was concerned about potential subjugation by the more highly educated Southern elites, particularly in public service (Coleman, 1963; Diamond, 1982; Mustapha, 2009).



Additionally, tensions persist between the South-East and South-West geopolitical zones, homes to the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups, respectively.

With this complex web of individual and intersecting identities, with ethnic, religious, regional, and sub-ethnic (communal) affiliations being the most prominent, these identities serve as primary catalysts for conflicts within the country. This holds true both in terms of identities commonly adopted by citizens, particularly for political purposes, and those implicated in day-to-day disputes over citizenship, as well as competitions and conflicts over resources and privileges (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). To underscore the interwoven nature of ethnic, regional, and religious identities and their tendency to reinforce each other mutually, they are sometimes compounded or hyphenated as ethno-regional and ethno-religious. These terms have historical, geographical, and political origins, stemming from the previous regional structures of the Nigerian federation (Okadigbo, 1989). In these structures, identities were shaped by leaders of dominant ethnic groups—Hausa/Fulani in the Northern region (predominantly Muslim), Igbo in the Eastern region, and Yoruba in the Western region—who exerted hegemonic control over their respective regions.

As a result, ethno-regional identities have been and continue to be shorthand references to the dominant ethnic groups functioning as regional hegemons. This is particularly evident in conflicts among the three dominant groups, commonly referred to as ethno-regional disputes. While the country was divided into six semi-official geopolitical zones in the late 1990s, introducing ethnic references that gained traction in the political discourse, using ethnic-regional references remains the dominant framework for understanding these complex identities.

Ethnicity is widely recognised as Nigeria's foundational and politically significant identity (Brigeovich & Oritsejafor, 2022). This assertion is substantiated by the observation that, whether in competitive or non-competitive contexts, Nigerians are more inclined to define themselves based

on their ethnic affiliations than any other identity (Agbiboa & Okem, 2011). Despite the significance of ethnicity and the considerable body of research dedicated to the subject, the precise count of ethnic groups in the country remains uncertain. Various estimates have been proposed, with figures such as 248 (Coleman, 1958), 62 (Murdock, 1975), 161 (Gandonu, 1978), under 400 (about 394) (Hoffman, 1974), 143 (Odetola, 1978), 619 (Wente-Lukas, 1985), 374 (Otite, 1990), and about 400 (Achimugu et al., 2013). Lewis and Bratton (2000) argue that nearly half (48.2%) of Nigerians chose to identify themselves with ethnic identity, encompassing linguistic and local-regional affiliations, in contrast to almost one-third (28.4%) who identified with class, and 21.0 per cent who opted for a religious identity. However, Brigeovich and Oritsejafor (2022) found that the possession of a prevailing ethnic identity among Nigerians does lead to a reduction in democratic satisfaction.

Between the early 1990s and 2000s, Nigeria witnessed the emergence of micro-nationalist groups, exemplified by groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Survival of a Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Odua People's Congress (OPC), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). These splinter groups within the country signify a need for inherent connection among the various components of the nation.

Amid the zenith of the EndSARS protest, discernible ethnic affiliations manifested among the youth in Nigeria. As observed on Twitter during the EndARS protest, Obia (2023) confirmed that hashtag users directed their attention to their identity as youth, distinct from the general citizenry; they also emphasised their identity as Southern youth, diverging from the broader category of Nigerian youth. The users of the hashtag, identifying more strongly as Southern youths and framing this as a redefined "us," positioned Northern youths as the new "them" (Obia, 2023).

They urged the latter group to join the resistance against the original "them," the government, as they perceived the existing authorities were insufficiently supportive of the EndSARS protest (Obia, 2023). Similarly, in the aftermath of the EndSARS protest in October 2020, and seeing the potential of social media at the protest, on November 2, 2020, the Nigeria Northern Governors' Forum released a communiqué advocating for rigorous oversight and censorship of social media to prevent subversive actions and mitigate the dissemination of fake news (Mhaka, 2020).

In essence, this section has elaborated on the complex characteristics of Nigeria, highlighting its diverse ethno-religious attributes and the challenges it faces in achieving good governance amidst these differences of the EndSARS played a critical role. Besides, it is essential to mention that some elements of this complexities and struggles are also visible in the country's colonial history and its establishment of the Nigerian Police as I will highlight in the next section.

#### **2.4. Nigeria and its Colonial Legacy Experience of Police Brutality**

The inaugural Nigerian police department was established in 1861 under the administration of the British colonial rulers in what is now known as Nigeria (Alemika, 2003). Initially comprising 100 individuals, this force served primarily as a consular protection unit situated in Lagos, subsequently becoming identified as the "Hausa Force" due to the predominant recruitment of individuals from the Hausa ethnic group from the northern region (Alemika, 1993). With the expansion of British influence to the east and north, additional police forces were created, mainly consisting of recruits from outside the local communities where they were to be stationed (Igbino, 1985). These early forces gained notoriety for their misconduct and general lawlessness. In 1891, the consul-general of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, located in present-day eastern Nigeria, expressed dismay at the widespread acts of lawlessness and pillaging carried out by the police, commonly referred to in the community as the "forty thieves" donning police uniforms (Agbibo, 1985).

2015). Similarly, in 1897, the Lagos colony governor acknowledged the Hausa Force's unprofessional behaviour in the hinterland, involving incidents of looting, theft, and exploitation of their positions (Alemika, 2003). As stated earlier, the British consolidated the Lagos colony with the southern and northern protectorates in 1914, christening the amalgamated entity Nigeria. Subsequently, in 1930, the northern and southern regional police forces were merged to establish the country's first national police, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) (Edafe, 2021). Additionally, the British established local police forces under the authority of traditional leaders. For this purpose, it set up the NPF, whose loyalty or allegiance was to the colonial government rather than the people. The Nigerian police used brutal and excessive force on the natives, clamping down on nationalists and suppressing anti-colonial resistance movements such as the 1918 Adubi War, 1929 Aba Women's riot and 1949 Iva Valley Massacre (Edafe, 2021).

Overall, protecting the British political and economic interests was the main goal of the colonial police. By brutally repressing indigenous communities that resisted colonial occupation, the police were able to achieve this goal (Edafe, 2021; Tamuno, 2006). According to this statement, the primary role of setting up the police force was to protect the colonial officials, while its secondary role was the intimidation and subjugation of the people. Public institutions and state agencies, including the police, were not meant to serve the people but to extract resources from them for the benefit of the colonial administration and ultimately in the interest of their British colonialist. There was a disconnection between the government and the governed, where government institutions were designed to intimidate and harass the citizens and serve the government (Buyse, 2018; Kalu, 2018; Malena, 2015). At independence in 1960 and coupled with the eventual militarisation of Nigerian society through military intervention in politics, this tradition continued as the post-colonial state remained intimidating and exploitative (Aniche,

2018a; Aniche & Falola, 2021; Ekwunife et al., 2021; Iwuoha, 2019). The Nigerian political elites that replaced the British colonial administration did little to transform the police system they inherited from their master. As such, the perverse predatory–prey relations continued to define the Nigerian state and its police after independence, both in the democratic and military eras, albeit to differing degrees (Aniche & Iwuoha, 2022).

Despite the return to democracy in 1999, it is known the Nigerian state is still exploitative and authoritarian, turning it into a police state (Aniche, 2018b; Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). In this later post-independence era, the extrajudicial killings in Odi in Bayelsa state and Zaki Biam in Benue state in 1999 and 2001, respectively, were clear examples (Aniche & Iwuoha, 2022). Further, on June 7, 2005, the Nigerian police killed six young people on the false allegation that they were armed robbers (Tsebee, 2011). The killing was later tagged the "Apo Six" because the young people were killed in the Apo district of Abuja, Nigeria. The police were also used in the crackdown, arbitrary arrests, detentions and extrajudicial killings of members of a separatist organisation known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in South East Nigeria and members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) led by Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky between 2017 and 2018 (Amnesty International, 2019). In 2020, the police killed 18 people in mid-April within the first two weeks of implementing lockdown policies when only 12 people had died of COVID-19 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020), and the alleged shooting of Joshua Ambrose on October 3, 2020, which led to the viral EndSARS protest. Recent literature (Ayuk et al. 2019) still indicates that till date the Nigerian police was rather set up to protect and serve the government's interest and to exploit and intimidate the commoners. The global 2024 Amnesty International Report reports that security forces in Nigeria used excessive force, including in the dispersal of peaceful protests and assemblies. Specifically, the Report mentioned that a leaked

government memo indicated that the Lagos state government had in its possession the bodies of 103 people killed during the EndSARS protests in October 2020.

The brutal and predatory characteristics of the Nigerian police can be compared to Didier Fassin's (2013) description of the French police in his classic "An Anthropology of Urban Policing". Fassin, in his ethnographic study of policing in France, asserts that instead of carrying out law enforcement, the police in the Parisian neighbourhood are focused on maintaining an unjust social hierarchy under the guise of ensuring public safety- *enforcing order* rather than *maintaining peace*. The case of the Nigerian police and SARS officers' coercion and infringement on the rights of their victims is a typical example of how the Nigerian police enforce orders given by their superiors or state actors, as the case might be. For instance, a popular case of enforcing orders in Nigeria is the case of a police officer known as Abba Kyari. Abba Kyari, a senior police officer, a relatively young and then celebrated supercop, has been identified as a corrupt and infamous violator of human rights (The African Report, 2021). The allegations of human rights abuses, extortion and extrajudicial killings hanging around Kyari's neck are about a match of the stars on his shoulder. In 2019, after conducting separate investigations, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Amnesty International accused Kyari's unit, the Intelligence Response Team (IRT), of gross human rights abuses and illegal expropriation of suspected proceeds of crime (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2021). It is pertinent to mention that Abba Kyari was the OC (Officer-in-Charge) of SARS, Lagos State, Nigeria, from 2011 to 2016 (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2021). In October 2020, Afeez Mojeed narrated to the Lagos State Judicial Panel on Restitution for Victims of SARS Related Abuses and other Related Matters how Abba Kyari extorted N41 million (USD18,000) from him in 2014 (The Cable, 2020). According to Afeez, Kyari locked him up for 14 days, all the while forcing him to sign bank cheques before

charging him to court over trumped-up charges (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2021). In another event, in January 2022, Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) alleged that Kyari and his men unlawfully tampered with 21.25 kilogrammes worth of cocaine that they seized from two convicted drug traffickers even as it also accused them of dealing in cocaine worth 17.55kg (Premium Times, July 6, 2023). Kyari was also accused of collaborating with a Dubai-based Internet fraudster whom Interpol arrested. A US court had indicted Kyari as a conspirator in a \$1.1 million fraudulent deal with the Dubai-based fraudster who was extradited to the US (Premium Times, July 6, 2023). The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) requested Kyari's extradition to the United States, but the Nigeria police authority neglected the request. However, he was suspended from office in July 2021. Kyari was prosecuted and sent to prison in Nigeria. In a swift turn of events, a Nigerian court granted him a "restricted" bail in July 2023.

This dynamic, characterised by the State as the aggressor and citizens as the vulnerable targets, fostered a growing sense of distrust between the state and its populace, leading to a heightened mutual mistrust between the Nigerian police and the citizenry (Centre for Global Challenges, 2018; Ibezim-Ohaeri, 2020; Iwuoha, 2020; Van Kesteren, 2019). Owing to this increasing distrust as well as corruption and brutality by the Nigerian police (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021), as the literature indicated in the succeeding section, the Nigerian police often harass and brutalise Nigerians, especially young people, even portray their victims as criminals until proven innocent, rather than the other way round as provided by Nigerian laws.

## **2.5. Police Brutality: What is it? How does it Occur?**

Images that come to mind when we hear the phrase "police brutality" might simply be, for instance, the image of a police dog attacking a protester or a police officer forcefully suppressing

and holding down their victim, as in the case of George Floyd, which triggered the Black Live Matter (BLM) movement in the United States. These images, along with countless others like them, are pertinent because police brutality is one of those things that we know when we encounter one, in addition to the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. However, police brutality is beyond these images (Oludayo, 2022).

A universally accepted definition of police brutality remains unexplored. In actuality, perceptions of police brutality vary significantly among different populations. For instance, Reiss (1968) points out that physical force is a necessary element of brutality and that the general public can classify all types of police actions as brutality, including verbal commands and threats. On the other hand, many academics explain how police officers frequently broaden their definitions and perceptions of necessary force to include those actions that the same public might perceive as excessive or unnecessary. For instance, Sykes (1986) offers a moral justification for street justice or informal distributive and retributive justice in situations where individuals have been wronged, violated social norms and interfered with other people's personal and property rights. Nevertheless, given the Weberian idea of the state as the entity with a monopoly on such legitimate use to maintain order, most academics and policing experts concur with Bittner (1970), who believes that using force is at the core of the police role. Now, I am going to discuss what is police brutality in the next paragraphs. In other words, in the context of this research, what are the forms of police brutality?

As I have mentioned in the previous section, the case of police brutality in Nigeria is stated as one of its colonial heritage. However, the current degree of brutality is amplified. Oludayo (2022) asserts that the predominant factor fueling police brutality in Nigeria within the present democratic era is the widespread prevalence of a culture characterised by corruption and deviant



behaviour within the police force. The virus of corruption has consumed the Nigerian Police, both as an institution and in their individual capacities (Nsirim & Nwakanma, 2022). Corruption, brutality, and other deviant practices in the Nigerian Police are institutionalised through a lucrative system of “returns” (Oludayo, 2022). This situation is where police officers give a proportion of the money they make illegally to senior officers higher up the chain of command (Oludayo, 2022).

According to Leonard (2021), forms of police brutality range from assault and battery (e.g., beatings) to mayhem, torture, and murder. However, some broader forms of police brutality also encompass harassment (including false arrest), intimidation, and verbal abuse, among other forms of mistreatment (Nsirim & Nwakanma, 2022). One form of brutality by the Nigerian Police is popularly known as "raid" (Oludayo, 2022). During raiding, the police officers round up groups of people from public spaces, especially restaurants, bars, football viewing centres, and markets (I have had this experience several times), who are then transported to the police station. Sometimes, the officers drive their victims around for hours while bargaining with them on what amount to pay for their release. These raids are often done under the pretext of a crackdown on crime. In most situations, if the victim is adamant about paying the amount requested by the police officer, and they eventually take the victim to the police station, the price for the victim's release may increase, or the victim may be falsely accused of a crime they did not commit. In other words, the victim is not only being unlawfully arrested, they are also detained unlawfully, and framed for a crime.

According to different sources (Adenuga & Oyekanmi, 2023; Famosaya, 2021), another manifestation of police brutality in Nigeria involves the seizure of cars and motorcycles under the pretext of expired or improperly ordered vehicle registration papers. However, upon payment of a negotiated sum of money by the owner or driver, they are permitted to proceed even with the

expired documentation. Commercial drivers frequently find themselves compelled to offer bribes to police officers, with amounts ranging from N20 to N20,000 (\$0.3 to \$26) — a significant sum in the Nigerian context, where over 100 million people subsist on less than US\$2 per day (Agbioa, 2020). Commercial drivers often encounter a predetermined fee, typically ranging from N20 to N200 (depending on the journey's distance), at the initial police checkpoint, after which they are usually allowed to proceed without further inspection. In instances where drivers refuse to pay or face difficulties in understanding the police instructions, their vehicles are halted, and passengers are instructed to disembark. Subsequently, the police officers prompt these passengers to "drop something" (offer a bribe) or negotiate payment directly with the driver to secure passage rights. Commercial vehicle operators have reluctantly come to perceive this as a necessary sacrifice to avert more severe penalties and time wastage (Oludayo, 2022). From the foregoing, we can understand and conclude that police brutality does not necessarily incorporate the use of physical force. Subtle and covert harassment could also be categorised as police brutality

Excessive use of physical violence and force constitutes brutality. However, as others have noted, brutality goes beyond physical force. It includes emotional and sexual violence as well as verbal assault and psychological intimidation. According to Morgan and Morgan (2020), when police use excessive force, and it results in serious injury, victims can sustain tremendous losses, such as medical expenses. They could lose income due to not being able to work. Justin (2020) posits that the physical, emotional, and financial consequences of police brutality can be severe, resulting in both psychological and physical consequences. In my experience, I categorise Yahoo Stereotyping (Nwobodo, 2022) as a form of police brutality. This term is a form of brutality where a police officer harasses someone because of their appearance (Nwobodo, 2022). Typically a young male who wears visible tattoos, a locked hairstyle, and possibly owns an expensive car or

smartphone, especially an iPhone, is profiled and stereotyped as a "Yahoo Boy". In the common Nigerian parlance, "Yahoo Boy" is a young male who engages in Internet scams. In other words, a "Yahoo Boy" is an Internet Fraudster. Nigerian police officers, in their overzealous nature to extort victims, believe that a young person is incapable of legitimating owning a fancy car or an expensive smartphone. Similarly, some of these officers have ingrained in their psyche that someone who keeps specific haircuts or hairstyles, for instance, locked or overgrown hair, is an Internet fraudster. Reflecting on when I travelled for the face-to-face interviews for this research in Nigeria, I remembered how an officer stopped and questioned me at the arrival hall of the Abuja Airport. I had to cut my hair the next day to avoid this stereotype- type of brutality.

These officers go as far as coercing their victims to unlock their phones so they can search the phones and their social media accounts. Some officers collaborate with POS (point of sales) operators to extort people of their money. In May 2023, a police officer in Lagos state, Nigeria, forcefully collected a young man's phone and used a POS operator to forcefully transfer N98,000 (100 USD) out of the young man's bank account to his personal bank account (The Punch Newspaper, 2023). Perhaps the fact that those who resist being coerced by police officers run the risk of being shot dead is arguably the most troubling aspect of police brutality in Nigeria today (Oludayo, 2022). However, the current trend of video-recording acts of police brutality and uploading and sharing such videos or images on social media, especially by young people, just like we experienced during the EndSARS protest, is making young people appropriate these functionalities of digital media as their fundamental human rights. Also, access to these pieces of evidence for public views and scrutiny is gaining momentum in the country. It has also led to unprecedented public discourse on what constitutes brutality and what policies are put in place by the government to curtail the gruesome acts.

The aforementioned instances of police brutality run counter to the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, which explicitly state that every individual is entitled to their liberty, and no person shall be deprived of such liberty except in accordance with a procedure permitted by law (Section 35(1) Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Paradoxically, Nigeria has ratified several international agreements that explicitly prohibit torture, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Oludayo, 2022). Furthermore, the Nigerian Constitution mandates relevant authorities to investigate and prosecute individuals who engage in torture and to provide compensation to those who endure such acts (Walter, 2020). Notwithstanding the discussion on forms of police brutality, we can say that forms of police brutality are not exhaustive. I can say in the Nigerian context; police officers decide how they choose to brutalise or harass their victims. In other words, the absence of standardised forms of police brutality remains challenging to quantify or categorise.

## **2.6. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and the Decentralised EndSARS Protest on the Streets of Nigeria**

In reaction to the surge in violent criminal activities in Lagos State, Nigeria, during the early 1990s, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was instituted as a division within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) in 1992 under the leadership of former Commissioner of Police Simeon Danladi Midenda (Vanguard, 2017). The then commissioner amended Anti-Robbery to include the word "Special" to "Squad", which was operational at the time (Uwalaka et al., 2023). This change in name resulted in the SARS and made the unit familiar to the Nigerian Police as well as the people of Nigeria (Omeni, 2022; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Initially set up to operate

independently to target violent and criminal groups, the success of SARS was hinged on its anonymity and secrecy in its operations (Ayandele, 2021). Over the years, however, SARS officials gained notoriety for perpetrating widespread systemic human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, extortion, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings, and profiling of young Nigerians (Dambo et al., 2021; Ogbette et al., 2018). In Nigeria, people have a terrible opinion of the police in general. According to research (Alemika, 2010, 1993; Akinlabi, 2020), Nigerians no longer trust the police because of several prior instances of bribery and harassment. Despite operating under the oversight of the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) of the Force Criminal Investigations Department and Commissioners of Police in each federal state of Nigeria, the SARS unit faces minimal accountability for its illicit actions against civilians (Agbo, 2021). Additionally, the Nigerian authorities have been unsuccessful in prosecuting members of the unit, even with the existence of anti-torture legislation enacted in 2017 and evidence demonstrating the unit's continued use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment for executing, punishing, and extracting information from suspects (Amnesty International, 2020b). Previous assurances and attempts by Nigerian authorities to reform SARS to align with international human rights principles have proven ineffective in altering the unit's mode of operation (Amnesty International, 2020b; Ogbonnaya, 2020). The preceding assertion was one of the reasons the EndSARS protesters rejected the President's announcement of the supposed dissolution of the SARS unit into SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactic). In summary, the persistence of systemic issues such as the lack of substantial reforms, inadequate oversight within the Nigerian police administration, the absence of accountability, and the failure to prosecute SARS operatives involved in human rights abuses contribute to the unit's ability to operate with impunity. Between January 2017 and May 2020 witnessed over 82 documented cases of abuse and extrajudicial killings by SARS officers, with a

significant number of victims falling within the age bracket of 18 to 35 years (Amnesty International, 2021). Furthermore, the socio-economic challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly affecting young people, catalysed discontent. Against this backdrop, the EndSARS campaign emerged on Twitter in 2017 to voice opposition to the harassment and fatal brutality inflicted upon Nigerian youth by SARS (Amnesty International, 2021, 2024).

In a similar fashion to the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States, the politico-social contestations referred to as the EndSARS protests are a sequence of global mass movements that started on 7 October 2020 against police brutality in Nigeria. Nigerians called for the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). As previously noted, SARS is a distinct division of the Nigerian Police Force that gained infamy due to an extensive history of misconduct. Nigerians have always complained about the crudity with which SARS handles cases. This momentum changed when a video emerged on 3 October 2020 revealing some SARS officers fleeing a scene in a white SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle) that allegedly belonged to a young man named Joshua Ambrose (Agbo, 2021). The officers allegedly shot the victim in front of the Wetland Hotel in Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria (Dambo et al., 2021; Lawal & Olanrewaju, 2020). The audio in the video in the Nigeria Pidgin English: *Na follow we dey follow dem oo; dem dey run. De don kill the boy oo! Who get dat Lexus wey dey front don die oo for front of Wetland Hotel Ughelli* (Agbo, 2021). In the standard English Language, the audio states: We are following them. The police just shot and killed the owner of the Lexus SUV in front of Wetland Hotel, Ughelli and zoomed off his car. The response that ensued after the video circulated on social media was prompt and considerable, with numerous Nigerians expressing their dissent on social media platforms and through street protests in various cities, calling for the dissolution of the police unit. (Uwalaka, 2021).

In the majority of the States in Nigeria, the protests were fierce, with enormous attendance and enthusiasm unseen in previous protests in Nigeria. A good number of youths in Nigeria staged several candle nights, and, in some instances, the protest became a show as many Nigerian artists performed their famous songs while protesters danced along. The initial demands of the protestors were clear-cut: the Federal Government should disband SARS, ensure justice for victims of police brutality, and overhaul the NPF (Ojewale, 2020). Ogbonnaya (2020) additionally observed that, at the outset, the youth demonstrators articulated the following five key points: The prompt release of all detained protesters; Ensuring justice for every deceased victim of police brutality, along with providing suitable compensation for their families; Establishing an autonomous entity tasked with supervising the inquiry and legal proceedings concerning all instances of police misconduct within a ten-day timeframe; Conducting psychological assessments and retraining (subject to verification by an independent body) for all disbanded SARS officers before considering their redeployment, in accordance with the new Police Act; Enhancing police remuneration to ensure adequate compensation for safeguarding the lives and assets of citizens.

The protests were both momentous and joyous at the same time. After a four-day sustained protest, the Nigerian Police Force declared that it had disbanded the SARS unit (Ajaegbu et al., 2022). The announcement was received widely with joy, and thoughts of success enveloped the grounds of the protest (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2022). It was then reported that instead of ending SARS, President Buhari is rebranding them into SWAT – Special Weapons and Tactics. The protesters' delight turned to disenchantment, and protests returned with more vigour and anger (Dambo et al., 2021). On 20 October 2020, following shooting of the peaceful protesters by the military at the Lekki Tollgate, Lagos and subsequent attacks by thugs against the protesters, the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwu-Olu, proclaimed a state-wide dawn-to-dusk restriction (Orjinmo,

2020). The protesters declined to stop the protest, arguing that the Lagos State Government wanted to silence their voices and that the curfew was a ploy to disperse the protest. Subsequently, it was reported that the Nigerian Army personnel fired live ammunition at the protesters and caused the death of numerous demonstrators at the Lekki Tollgate. According to the report, the victims included 51 civilians, 11 police officers, and seven soldiers (BBC, 2020; Uwalaka, 2021).

Like earlier protest movements such as the 'Occupy Nigeria' protests, #BringBackOurGirls protest and #socialmediabill protest (Akpojivi, 2019; Uwalaka, 2016, 2017; Uwalaka et al., 2018), the 2020 EndSARS protests were said to have been impactful due to the popularisation and innovation in digital media technologies (Olaniyan & Akpojivi, 2021; Obia, 2023). It has been argued that the protests attained its goal of disbanding SARS, the police unit, due to digital media platforms and that social media platforms were used to mobilise, communicate and provide instantaneous updates that made the protests possible (Dambo et al., 2021). Previous enquiries on the impact of digital media and mobile social networking applications on the organisation of social movements in Nigeria discovered that social media and mobile social networking applications boosted the coordination of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2017), as we will see in the next section. Despite the burgeoning literature on EndSARS, this research expands the study area by exploring how participants use social media for memory construction in the movement. This is the gap in literature I intend to bridge.

## **2.7. Historicising Social Protest in Nigeria: From Times without Social Media to the Era of Social Media Movements**

The origin of social protest in Nigeria can be traced to the anti-colonial movement advocating for independence (Hari, 2014). Social protesting was rampant in the decades before 1960; activists challenged social issues such as colonialism, slavery, rising inflation,



unemployment and corruption (Akeredolu, 2020). These protests took various forms—print, radio, music and the streets. For instance, the first newspaper in Nigeria and a vocal local medium, *Iwe Irohin*, which operated from 1859 to 1867, was renowned for disseminating anti-colonial messages. Originally conceived with the aim of fostering a reading culture among Nigerians, the newspaper evolved into a robust critic of the slave trade (Kelvin & Tsegysu, 2022). The anticipated response from the British Colonial Office followed as they censured the newspaper for aligning with indigenous causes. Despite this, the publication achieved certain successes. *Iwe Irohin*'s journalism emerged as a potent instrument in the struggle to liberate the Egba people from the dominion of the Dahomey Kingdom, prominent participants in the slave trade alongside the British. Hence, as early as the 19th century, *Iwe Irohin* was evidence of the transformative influence wielded by citizen-driven protest through journalism (Akeredolu, 2020). Years later, during the 1929 Aba Women's Riots, commonly referred to as such by the British, female demonstrators sang and danced to express their grievances outside the residences of warrant chiefs and Native court officials. The women achieved notable victories against the British government, resulting in reduced taxes and the resignation of several local figures appointed by colonial authorities (Uchendu & Okonkwo, 2021). *Iwe Irohin* and the Aba Women's Riots are recognised as impactful and non-violent forms of protest. In the Aba Women's Riots, despite the peaceful demeanour of the women involved, the police tragically caused the deaths of over 50 women (Akeredolu, 2020). Nevertheless, these two occurrences demonstrated that peaceful protesters garner more audience sympathy due to their avoidance of the collateral damage often associated with the violent protests observed throughout Nigeria's history. Also, the railway workers' protest in 1945 significantly influenced the frontiers of social protest in Nigeria (Ayoola & Yusuf, 2021). A notable social protest in northern Nigeria is the tin miners protest in Jos, Plateau State (Freud,

1981, 1982). What triggered the tin miners protest was when Archbold, an engineer employed by the Niger Company, attempted to reduce the daily wage of the miners (Freud, 1981).

It is often overlooked that coup d'etats function as a form of protest, albeit a more forceful one than others. Typically characterised by violence, they represent an aggressive response to a sitting government. In 1966, Nigeria experienced its first coup d'etat. This violent protest resulted in the deaths of prominent regional leaders such as Tafawa Balewa, Ahmadu Bello, and Festus Okotie-Eboh. The motivation behind this protest was the belief that military leaders would govern the newly independent country more effectively (Akeredolu, 2020). From 1966 to 1999, Nigeria witnessed multiple coups and was governed by different military regimes. During this era, there were protests. Notably, Activists such as Ken Saro-Wiwa took the lead in organising regional protests against the government, while activist lawyers such as Gani Fawehinmi pushed the limits of the legal system. Ken Saro-Wiwa paid the ultimate price for his activism with his life (Soyinka, 1996). During his advocacy, Chief Gani Fawehinmi faced multiple arrests, detentions, and court charges (Krishnan & Ajagbe, 2017). Additionally, during this period, the late Afro-beat superstar Fela Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti used his music to protest against social ills, corruption, and military oppression, thereby keeping the spirit of agitation and resistance alive in the public consciousness (Aborishade, 2012). According to Tar (2009), the responses of the Nigerian State to these protests, particularly during periods of military dictatorship, were characterised by violent repression and police brutality, often resulting in the deaths of protesters, imprisonment of protest leaders, and the proscription of labour movements. According to this statement, anyone who expresses dissent against the government is targeted and silenced. The initial goal of eliminating corruption, as espoused by the military, was not achieved. Throughout the 20th century, organised labour in Nigeria has consistently played a leading role in protesting against unfavourable government

policies (Augusta, 2022). Notable groups engaged in such activism include the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS).

In this 21st century, social media has served as a powerful tool that both Nigerians within the country and those in the diaspora have wielded to amplify their voices on a global scale (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Nigerians benefit from increased social awareness due to their access to mobile devices and the Internet. In contrast to previous eras when the government could target a limited number of entities that amplified protesting voices, the advent of the Internet and, precisely, social media has made it nearly difficult to control and intimidate protesters (Poell & van Dijck, 2018). In recent years, numerous social movements owe their success to social media, even in Nigeria.

#OccupyNigeria is one of Nigeria's initial social media-driven protests that garnered global recognition (Hari, 2014). The reason for the protest was the government's increase in the price of premium motor spirit (PMS), popularly known as petrol in Nigeria. The protest commenced on January 2, 2012, and lasted just over two weeks, following the announcement by the Goodluck Jonathan administration to eliminate subsidies on petroleum products, leading to a significant price hike (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018). As Hari (2014) argues, utilising social media as a catalyst for social protest represents a recent development in Nigeria's history of social activism. Furthermore, Hari asserts that as Internet usage grows in Nigeria, social media will expand, exerting pressure on the government to address a broader range of public concerns.

Yet another social protest that appropriated the potential of social media is the #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG). The movement originated in April 2014 in response to the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls from the Government Secondary School, Chibok, in Borno

State, Nigeria, by the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency group (Ojebode, 2018). Its primary objective is to exert pressure on the government to confront Boko Haram and ensure the safe return of the abducted schoolgirls (Chiamogu et al., 2021). The BBOG movement saw the convergence of online outrage and offline rallies within and outside Nigeria, garnering solidarity and support from various people and countries. Social media played a crucial role in compelling the Federal Government of Nigeria, which initially denied the abduction, to pay attention to the demand for the rescue of the girls and the overall security of its citizens (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018). The protest was an intense social media-driven and female-led initiative with sustained, widespread online advocacy (Maxfield, 2016). The first live tweet of #BringBackOurGirls, which stated, "Bring back our daughters," originated from Ibrahim Abdullahi during a televised speech by Oby Ezekwesili, a notable convener of the protest (Chiamogu et al., 2021). The hashtag gained significant international attention from world leaders, media groups, and celebrities. BBOG evolved from the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls to a tangible movement when its cause resonated with people who had personal stakes in the issue. The widespread sharing of the protest on social media brought international focus to the activities of Boko Haram and the #BringBackOurGirls Movement and sparked protests in Nigeria (Olutokunbo et al., 2015). This led to protests on the streets of Abuja by mothers whose children were abducted, transforming the movement from online activism to physical demonstrations. The BBOG movement broadened its focus from addressing the safety and security of citizens in the face of the Boko Haram insurgency to advocating for good governance in Nigeria.

#NotTooYoungToRun represented another online protest orchestrated by YIAGA Africa, a civil society organisation (Akeredolu, 2020). This movement advocated for constitutional amendments in Nigeria to permit younger individuals to run for political offices. The primary goal

was to decrease the age limit for the Presidential seat from 40 to 35, the House of Representatives from 30 to 25, and the State Houses of Assembly from 30 to 25 (Mohammed, 2022). The Not Too Young To Run campaign is a notable example of the impact when an online movement transitions into sustained offline action. Concerned about the bill's progress, young Nigerians took to the streets and the country's parliaments, blocking entrances and exits to the parliaments to pressure lawmakers to consider passing the bill. The youth-led initiative generated ongoing discussions on social media regarding generational changes in Nigerian politics and the importance of youthful leadership. Although it took some time, President Muhammadu Buhari eventually approved the Age Reduction Bill on May 31, 2018 (Uwalaka, 2020). Since then, more young people have been voted into elective positions (Akeredolu, 2020).

Finally, the EndSARS protest which is the topic of this research and as I have discussed in a previous section is perhaps the most significant and symbolic social movement in Nigeria (Obia, 2023) that has garnered the most social media attention. Nonetheless, the current research approaches the EndSARS movement from the theoretical lens of memory. Having said this, I will now explore the growing intersection and synergy between social movement and memory studies.

## **2.8. Social Movement-Memory Studies Nexus**

The scholarly intersection between social movements and memory is expanding, yet the delineation of study boundaries in this synergy remains unclear (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019). This evolving field is primarily characterised by scattered studies grounded in distinct disciplinary orientations. Three pivotal factors within social movement research have significantly fueled the burgeoning interest in memories. Firstly, the heightened emphasis on collective action, a hallmark of social movement studies (della Porta, 2020, 2014) has given rise to the synergy between movements and memory. The cultural turn in social movement studies has led to increased scrutiny

of how protesters perceive themselves, their surroundings, and the past (della Porta & Diani, 2020; Baumgarten, 2017; Daphi, 2017a; Zamponi, 2018; Baumgarten et al., 2014). Secondly, the social movement-memory connection has experienced substantial growth in response to recent calls for broadening the temporal perspective within social movement studies (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019). Thirdly, the mounting interest in memory study among social movement researchers is driven by debates and the advent of new media, particularly the role of social media in social movements (Ferrari, 2022; Uwalaka, et al., 2023; Smit, 2020; della Porta & Diani, 2020; Merrill & Lindgren, 2020; Chidgey, 2018), even as we can see in the current research. Consequently, the integration of memory studies into social movement research has yielded valuable insights into the symbolic construction of the reality in which collective action unfolds. This approach interprets memory not merely as a reflection of past events but as the outcome of collective practices capable of shedding light on current interpretations of reality (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019).

Amidst the growing fascination with collective memory's provocative, mobilising, and empowering potential, several scholars have redirected their attention to the intersection between memories and social movements (Merrill et al., 2020; Olivari & Badilla, 2024; Bull & Hansen, 2016; Pearce, 2015; Smit, 2020; Karatas & Bek, 2023; Zamponi, 2018). The insistence on transcending traumatic memories and the critique of the habitual and unquestioned focus on violence and victimhood in exploring collective memory have significantly shaped this body of literature (della Porta et al., 2018; Rigney, 2018). In this context, recent studies such as the current one have delved into examining memories as integral components of protest mobilisation and other forms of emancipatory practices.

## **2.9. Mediatising Memory: Digital Memory Practices within Social Movements**

Over the last decades, memory studies, an interdisciplinary academic field, emerged, encompassing communication, media research, cultural studies, anthropology, and sociology. Within this landscape, Edy's (1999) work on the "Journalistic use of collective memory" has become a seminal contribution, particularly for media and journalism. Edy's theoretical paper, grounded in an extensive literature review, posits that mass media can predominantly disseminate a widely shared understanding of the past in society. Edy contends that neither the education system nor scientific media can effectively reach broader segments of society, asserting that the stories of the past presented in the media, especially on television, are far more visceral than those presented in the classroom (Edy, 1999). Besides, Bosch (2016) affirms that our daily lives are in a perpetual state of production and mediation facilitated by memory technologies, and the centrality of mediation in the conceptualisation of memory is a critical consideration in visual culture, cultural studies, and media studies (Karatas & Bek, 2023). Han (2020) contends that the relationship between journalism and memory is intricate. Journalism utilises memory-related practices to facilitate collective reflection on crises and prevailing power dynamics within the confined arena of online expression (Han, 2020). Kitch (2008) extends the argument by affirming that journalism serves as a primary source of information about the past and contributes to a collective understanding of history. It is a pivotal arena for the public formation of memory. Further highlighting the importance of media and journalism in memory construction, Song and Lee (2019) elaborated on the concept of anniversary journalism as an integral part of memory studies. Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014) argue that investigating the function of anniversary journalism as a catalyst for collective memories contributes a crucial aspect to comprehending how journalists employ memory-related efforts to establish their cultural authority. Li and Lee (2013) argued that anniversary journalism can be regarded as a distinct

narrative genre that condenses time to underscore the seemingly sudden nature of events, underscores journalists' credentials as historical witnesses, and strategically utilises history to embellish ideological narratives.

In the context of local news, journalists employ an inclusive language, addressing their audience as members of a social group with shared values, common problems and needs, and a collective understanding of its historical context (Kitch, 2008). The media goes beyond merely reflecting the prevailing historical perspectives within society. While that is undoubtedly part of its role, another aspect involves the co-construction of visions of history through mechanisms such as selection, narration, framing, salience, and adherence to the appropriate logic of the media production process. Zelizer (2022) emphasises that journalism transcends being a profession with its established routines; instead, it serves as a source that furnishes society with interpretations of the past.

While considerable attention has been dedicated to the impact of national mainstream news media, its influence on public recollection faces challenges, particularly during political crises or conflicts (Volkmer & Lee, 2014). Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter contribute to a new memory ecology, disrupting established methodologies in researching the intersection of media and memory (Brown & Hoskins, 2010). The ongoing connective turn is actively shaping the process of memory formation by individuals as they engage, inhabit, and contribute to increasingly intricate and dispersed social networks (Hoskins, 2011a).

Overall, the mass media assumes a crucial role in shaping memory, and the politics of remembrance are inherently intertwined with power issues, such as determining who has the authority to select topics and modes of remembering within public discourse (Erll & Nünning, 2008). Describing media as the "first draft of history," Garde-Hansen (2011, p.3) highlights its



function in documenting events unfolding and actively negotiating history and memory. Notably, media theorists have contributed significantly to recent theoretical explorations of memory. For instance, Landsberg's (2012) examination of cinema and memory examines how film fosters emotional connections between distant audiences and historical events, akin to a form of prosthetic memory. Hoskins (2018) introduces the concept of new memory by analysing 24-hour television news and its mediation of war and terror. Additionally, van Dijck (2007) offers a paradigm of mediated memory. Mediated events, including celebrity deaths, assassinations, funerals, and anniversaries of tragedies, as well as media representations of conflict, serve as pivotal subjects for exploring the intersection of media and collective memory (Garde-Hansen, 2011).

There has been a substantial increase in the influence of social media across various domains. One such domain is social movements and memory, as Olick (1999) conceptualised, or what Halbwachs referred to as collective memory (Halbwachs, 1967; Misztal, 2003). Scholars such as Schudson interchangeably employ terms like social, collective, cultural, and public memory (Schudson, 2014). Moving to social movements, they represent the primary arenas for the cultivation of collective memories, serving as cultural resources that foster the establishment of activist communities, challenging prevailing norms, shaping public opinion, and influencing the political system (Kubal & Becerra, 2014). Memory assumes a central role, particularly in recent prefigurative movements, where it can interpret reality and establish connections between the past and the present (Gongaware, 2010). Nevertheless, the construction of memory does not occur in isolation but within a continual power struggle (Smit, 2020). Past events and memories are transformed into collective identity or shared frameworks through an ongoing process of comparison, negotiation, and reconstruction in interaction with the public sphere (Halbwachs, 1992/1925). Beyond interactions with the public sphere, which encompasses allies, bystanders,

and adversaries, the responses of the ruling group(s) and the political system delineate the opportunities and constraints for collective action. The ruling groups may seek to undermine the movement's framing, turn public opinion against it, and legitimise repressive responses, particularly in movements challenging the dominant political system and symbolic order (Melucci, 1996). This public dimension renders memory an "inherently mediated phenomenon" (Neiger et al., 2011, p. 3), transforming memory-making into an inherently political (Sturken, 1997) and contentious (Zamponi, 2018) endeavour for social movements challenging the prevailing political system and cultural codes. Memory-making in such movements can be characterised as a field where different groups clash because every actor proposes their narrative of the past, which is strictly tied to their collective identity and the future that every group imagines (Zamponi, 2018).

On the other hand, the recent affordances facilitated by information and communication technologies, particularly digitalisation and globalisation with the emergence of social media platforms, exert an influence on and reconfigure the repertoire, frames, organisational structure, memory work, and memory practices within social movements (Hoskins, 2009; Merrill et al., 2020). This convergence, ubiquity, fluidity, and transience in communication, facilitated by the new media ecology, result in diverse and hybrid forms of memory that intertwine and bridge private and public memory, various media formats, memory products, and processes of remembering and forgetting (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009; Hoskins, 2009). The research landscape has diversified significantly in this complex domain. For instance, Wikipedia served as the focal point for exploring its role as a global memory place (Pentzold, 2009), while Ferron and Massa (2014) delved into collective memories in Wikipedia; Facebook, too, has been subject to scholarly inquiry. Garde-Hansen (2009) scrutinised Facebook's archival function, Church (2013) investigated "Digital gravescapes: Digital memorialising on Facebook," and Kaun and Stiernstedt

(2016) explored a community of remembrance on Facebook. The potential for faster, automated, and easier curation, circulation, and revisability of emerging memory forms on social media prompts researchers to reconsider activists' memory work and sociotechnical practices (Karatas & Bek, 2023; Merrill et al., 2020; Smit, 2020).

Recent scholarship indicates avenues for prospective research that must delve into activists' memory practices within the contemporary digital and networked media ecosystem. The ascendancy of social media has prompted a surge in research exploring and scrutinising various memory practices through which the past is recollected and reconstructed by appropriating social media platforms (Karatas & Bek, 2023; Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Smit, 2020; Zamponi, 2020). While these empirical studies have yielded substantial theoretical and methodological implications, they mostly employ narrative and content-based analyses. One seminal empirical study is Smit's (2020) multimodal analysis on the Facebook group page "Justice for Mike Brown." The scholar's analysis discerns four types of memory work: "networked commemoration, memetic resurrection, digital archiving and curation, and crowd reconstruction" (Smit, 2020, p. 96). Smit's classification examines both the capabilities offered by technology and the content, providing insight into an ongoing interaction encompassing practices (actions and methodologies employed by individuals), technology (the tangible artefacts facilitating, influencing, and limiting these actions), and cultural forms (the nature of content or objects generated through the interplay between humans and technologies). In the qualitative analysis of hashtag use for commemoration in Italy and mnemonic practices, Zamponi (2020) identifies five types of digital memory practices on Twitter: online sharing of offline activism, references to mainstream media material, quotes and ritual cultural references, personal biographies in shared commemorations, the appropriation of a specific memory of the past to advance or support political claims situated in the present, and

militant claims of memory struggles. While this typology of digital memory practices is grounded in practices, narratives, and counternarratives, Kaun and Stiernstedt (2016) focus on the technological affordances and constraints of the specific social media platform. Through Facebook page analysis, interviews with users, and employing the media practice approach, their study identifies more overarching types of digital memory practices suggesting "storing practices, representational practices, and connective practices" (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2016, p. 199).

Additionally, Richardson-Little and Merrill's (2020) comparative analysis of the affordances and limitations offered by Facebook and Twitter has contributed to our understanding of contentious memory work within movements. Their examination of Facebook groups and Twitter hashtags revealed that the closed Facebook group facilitated the organisation, mobilisation, and reinforcement of far-right group identity in a safer and uncontested space. Conversely, more open and public terrains, such as street demonstrations and Twitter, engendered counter-demonstrations and digital counter-mobilisations, where claims and opinions were contested.

Building upon existing literature on digital memory practices, empirical data, and contextual considerations, I incorporated Couldry's (2012) conceptual framework, known as the "media practices approach", into this research. This approach proves valuable for empirical investigations that explore the intersection of digital media and activism, as it allows for an exploration of diverse regular and social media practices by audiences in response to their respective needs. The media practices approach diverges from conventional inquiries that treat media as mere objects, texts, apparatuses of perception, or production processes, instead focusing on understanding individuals' actions about media within their specific contexts (Couldry, 2012). This approach reorients the focal point of media research. The broader conception of memory proposed by Smit (2020) and the fluid nature of the media practices approach articulated by

Couldry (2012) enable me to explore the complex and varied digital memory practices associated with the EndSARS movement on Instagram and WhatsApp. Considering that Instagram and WhatsApp incorporate the 24 hour ephemeral function, I will discuss social media ephemerality and personal narratives in the next section.

## **2.10. Social Media Ephemeral Story and Personal Narratives**

The art of storytelling has been an integral part of human history, with our earliest memories encompassing the act of telling or listening to stories to preserve the past (Amâncio, 2017). Stories can captivate our minds, challenge our beliefs, and evoke dormant memories (Garrety, 2008). Over time, the evolution of communication technologies, mainly through the advent of social media, has brought about significant transformations in the modalities of storytelling, even in activism (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022), thereby innovating key elements of this digital narrative format (Amâncio, 2017). Snapchat was the first social media to launch the Story feature in 2011 (Monteiro & Mazzilli, 2016). The platform influenced other social media platforms through its distinctive features. In a digital landscape dominated by established platforms like Facebook and Instagram, the ability to revisit and review past posts is paramount, with the underlying notion that memories endure. Snapchat emerged when ephemeral social interaction gained prominence in social media, and the feature, the 24-hour duration of videos and images, introduced the popular "Stories" feature. This feature enables users to view their own "Story" and the "Stories" shared by individuals they follow. As is typical with viral trends on social media, other platforms swiftly adopted the "Stories" feature: Instagram in August 2016 (Instagram Blog, 2017), WhatsApp in February 2017, and Facebook in May 2017 (Wagner, 2017). Today, other social media platforms have incorporated this feature.

The feature known as "Your Story," "My Story," "Story" on most social media platforms serve crucial purposes in shaping user interactions with this storytelling mechanism. According to Erstad and Wertsh (2008), these possessive expressions hold significant meaning, representing a blend of personal expression, performance and mediational tools used in an integrated manner (Goffman, 2023). While recent research (Johnson & Morley, 2021; Bainotti et al., 2021; Villaespesa & Wowkowych, 2020) has started to explore the Story feature, there remains a paucity of studies examining its intersection with the social movement. One of the research objectives for this research is to ascertain how the research participants used Instagram and WhatsApp Stories during the EndSARS protest. Consequently, examining WhatsApp Status, and Instagram Story in the context of Nigeria's EndSARS protest becomes paramount.

### **2.11. Social Media Activism: A Look at WhatsApp and Instagram**

Positioned as a semi-public arena (Gil de Zúñiga, 2021), WhatsApp offers a nuanced blend of intimacy and control within its environment, thus facilitating political discourse while assuming the pivotal role of a mediator in engendering participatory dynamics. Further, with the pervasive infiltration of messaging apps across expansive social spheres, WhatsApp, particularly, has been characterised as a quintessential technology of life (Cruz & Harindranath, 2020), indicative of its profound impact on contemporary modes of social interaction and cultural practices. WhatsApp stands as a pivotal communication conduit with notably high penetration rates in the Global South (Timcke, 2022), where it assumes a central role as the primary locus for political dialogues and serves as a crucial platform for the dissemination and exchange of news (Milan & Barbosa, 2020; Newman et al., 2019). Its pervasive influence extends beyond mere discourse facilitation, as it emerges as an anchor in the orchestration of resistance movements across diverse geographies in the Global South, such as Ghana, Mexico, Malaysia Brazil, Ethiopia, and Iran (Lynch et al., 2022;

Johns, 2020; Alimardani & Milan, 2018; Potnis et al., 2018; Weber et al., 2018). The symbiotic relationship between WhatsApp and analogous services assumes paramount significance in the socio-political landscape, epitomising a paradigm shift in grassroots mobilisation and collective action. Noteworthy among its catalytic contributions is the phenomenon of "Zero Rating" fees, a telecom initiative prevalent in many non-Western regions, which grants users access to WhatsApp without incurring data charges, effectively supplanting conventional, costlier short-text messaging services (Casaes & Córdova, 2019). This accessibility democratisation not only lowers barriers to entry but also democratises participation in digital discourse, thus engendering a more inclusive socio-political sphere. Gillespie (2018) contends that messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, primarily facilitating communication between known individuals or groups, mitigate several issues inherent in platforms facilitating public interactions and connections with unfamiliar individuals. Other scholars (Pereira & Bojczuk, 2018) argue that WhatsApp functions as a media platform where communication, information exchange, and discussion are constructed and shared. The pervasive adoption of WhatsApp as a crucible for socio-political discourse and engagement is a seminal hallmark of contemporary digital activism, particularly resonant within non-Western contexts. This phenomenon heralds a paradigmatic shift in the landscape of socio-political mobilisation, encapsulating transformative potential on multiple fronts. Two pivotal dynamics underscore its transformative impact: firstly, WhatsApp catalyses a mobile lifestyle paradigm (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2015), where the app assumes a central nexus in users' daily routines, seamlessly mediating an array of timely (Rosenfeld et al., 2018), and essential interactions and nudging people towards increasingly frequent engagements. Secondly, WhatsApp's unique positioning as a partial public platform facilitates the convergence of the private and intimate sphere, characterised by interpersonal exchanges, with the public realm of group interactions, thus effectuating a seamless

integration of the vernacular and the political (Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). This amalgamation transcends traditional dichotomies, fostering a novel synthesis wherein personal narratives intertwine with collective mobilisation efforts, thereby blurring the boundaries between the private and public domains. Consequently, this amalgamation engenders a certain pervasiveness of content, inclusive of political discourse, while simultaneously ensuring the immediacy of its dissemination and fruition—a phenomenon fraught with far-reaching implications for socio-political mobilisation at scale (Milan & Barbosa, 2020). The synergistic reciprocity between WhatsApp's mobile-centric ethos and its feature as a partial public space precipitates a paradigmatic shift in the contours of digital activism, engendering a dynamic ecosystem characterised by fluidity, immediacy, and ubiquity. This nexus beckons scholarly inquiry, offering a nuanced lens to highlight the complex interplay between technological affordances, socio-political dynamics, and collective action imperatives within the contemporary digital environment. Thus, WhatsApp emerges not merely as a communication tool, but as a catalyst for social change, poised at the vanguard of a burgeoning era of digital activism and civic engagement, especially in the Global South.

Similarly, growing research indicates that Instagram is increasingly becoming a medium for activism. Mwaba et al.'s (2021) investigation of Instagram as a medium of activism through personal storytelling aimed at mitigating femicide reveals the potential of the platform. Mwaba and colleagues delve into how women in Turkey employ narratives of interpersonal violence not only for their empowerment but also as a means of advocating for the broader cause. Similarly, Haq et al. (2022) underscore the utilisation of Instagram as a platform for social activism, elucidated through a case study on the 2019 Hong Kong protests. The primary mode of engagement involves users predominantly employing symbols associated with the protests and disseminating personal reflections concerning key participants in the protest events. In her work "Latency and



Crisis", Ferrari (2022) centres on mutual aid groups operating in Philadelphia amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The study explores how these groups' operational methodologies and elucidates how they forge a collective identity. It posits that examining these groups yielded valuable insights for the organisation of future social movements. Moreover, Ferrari (2022) underscores the significance of digital technologies, particularly Instagram Story, in facilitating activism during the pandemic. Furthering the scholarship on Instagram and activism, San Cornelio (2022) emphasised the potential of Instagram aesthetics for visual activism and social change.

Scholars (Turkle, 2011) in media studies have persistently expressed scepticism towards hierarchical viewpoints and condescending analyses of social media, especially ephemeral content and other forms of online self-documentation, which serve as emblematic illustrations of this criticism. They categorise social media content as devoid of intellect or significance. Besides, Public discourse frequently characterises these expressions as narcissistic, vacuous, or insignificant—an assessment that scholars in media studies have consistently refuted. They (Abidin, 2016; Humphreys, 2018; Rettberg, 2014; Tiidenberg, 2018) stress that ostensibly simple and shallow communicative behaviours hold significance not inherently but rather through their integration into everyday life and community dynamics. Baym (2010) furthers this argument by asserting that the significance of social media can be comprehended within their specific contexts. Previous investigations (Ferrari, 2022) into ephemeral communications underscore the significance of this contextual understanding. Specifically, they elucidate, in the case of Instagram, that ephemerality emerges not as an impediment but as the central attribute enabling meaningful communication, with the surrounding contexts in which videos are shared playing a crucial role (Bayer et al., 2016). Acknowledging this importance, I, too, have embraced a contextualist approach in the case of WhatsApp and Instagram use in Nigeria's EndSARS protest.

## **2.12. Nigeria's EndSARS Movement: The EndSARS Literature- Identifying the Research Gaps**

Numerous scholars have examined the EndSARS movement, offering diverse perspectives and conclusions. Some contend that the colonial bequest of the Nigerian police serves as a pivotal variable for police brutality, and the EndSARS protest (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). Olaseni and Oladele (2023) posit that the prevalence of corruption within the ranks of political elites exacerbates the issue of police brutality, while Agbo (2021) argues that the alleged shooting of Joshua Ambrose sparked the protest across the country. Conversely, others seek to establish connections between social media and the EndSARS protest (Obia, 2023; Uwalaka, 2023; Dambo et al., 2022). Considering the multidisciplinary characteristics of social movements studies (Daphi & Zamponi), I considered pieces of literature from different backgrounds.

The EndSARS protests utilised various forms of music, such as solidarity songs, popular music, and satirical songs. Scholars (Adebisi, 2022; Owoaje et al., 2021) specifically examine the use of music and satirical songs in the EndSARS protests. The scholars argue that artistic expressions such as music played a critical role in sustaining the momentum of the protest during its peak. Considering that Nigeria is the entertainment capital of Africa, precisely Lagos State (Mitchell, 2023), the studys' findings indicate that the utilisation of music and musicians effectively mobilises protesters in Nigeria, highlighting the central role of music in their cultural milieu. Nonetheless, these studies note that music alone is inadequate for instigating socio-political change. Agbo (2021) furthers the use of artistic expression. Utilising digital methods encompassing compositional analysis and audience interpretation, Agbo (2021) investigates a selection of EndSARS-related photographs and their associated comments retrieved from social media, shedding light on their impact on street demonstrations. Agbo's inquiry contributes

valuable insights to the evolving discourse on the transformative intersection of photography and social media within the political sphere.

Nwabunnia (2021) and Oyosoro et al. (2022) situate their investigation within theoretical debates on political homophobia and transnational feminist solidarities. Nwabunnia (2021) focused on the complex organising for justice by queer organisers and activists, exploring the forms of solidarities developed and the tensions that emerged during the movement. Oyosoro et al. (2022) elucidate how the Feminist Coalition (FemCo) leveraged digital media to advance feminist causes during the protest, contending that FemCo's active participation and financial support significantly contributed to the global impact of the EndSARS protest. Nwakanma (2022) extends the discussion to a transnational perspective, illustrating the influence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and examining the continuities and discontinuities between anti-police brutality movements across different contexts. Building on transnational Black and African feminist insights, Nwakanma (2022) develops a theory of political behaviour. From the same angle, Wada (2021) compares the EndSARS protest to the Black Lives Matter protests in the US. Wada examines the causes, factors, and impact of the protest and the use of social media for mobilisation. The study also includes a survey of Nigerian youth to understand their views on the protest. Wada (2021) framed her study within social movement theory and discussed various perspectives on social mobilisation and protests. She also explores civil rights struggles in both countries. The limitations of these studies (Nwakanma, 2022; Wada, 2021; Nwabunnia, 2021; Oyosoro et al., 2022) include the lack of in-depth exploration of the protests' root causes and the protesters' grievances. Furthermore, these studies did not delve into the historical context of police brutality in Nigeria, which is crucial for understanding the EndSARS movement. Lastly, the articles could

have included a more extensive discussion of the potential long-term effects of the EndSARS protest on Nigerian society and politics.

Employing the cultural theory of social movements, Adeniyi (2022) argues that EndSARS protesters utilised discursive strategies to enact frames expressing ideological views and achieving specific objectives. Additionally, Adeniyi (2022) utilises Ruth Wodak's discursive frameworks to examine the mechanisms involved in the categorisation of individuals into in-group and out-group in the EndSARS protest movement. Bello et al. (2023) contribute a critical analysis of the online protest, revealing that over 70% of the participation is concentrated within specific Nigerian States, with diaspora communities also lending their voices to the movement. Considering the 70% participation espoused by Bello et al. (2023), Ezeugwu and Ekeh (2021) highlight how youths effectively employed physical spaces to catalyse the protests. The study draws data from diverse sources such as the internet, print media, observations, interviews, and literary works. Notwithstanding the multifaceted research approach employed by Ezeugwu and Ekeh (2021), the clarity and focus of their study remain elusive, particularly when contextualised within the domain of spatial analysis. This ambiguity stems from the diverse methodological frameworks and theoretical perspectives integrated into their research, which, while comprehensive, tend to obscure the central thesis. The interplay of various spatial dimensions and the breadth of the topics covered further complicates the task of pinpointing a cohesive narrative or primary objective. Consequently, the complex and interdisciplinary nature of their work, although commendable, necessitates a more streamlined articulation to enhance its understanding.

Ola's (2021) study scrutinises the events preceding the EndSARS protest and delves into the diverse indicators and symbols emanating from the EndSARS movement. Ola (2021) argues that the dire socio-economic challenges in the country precede the EndSARS protest; hence, it is

an enabler. Similar to Ola (2021), Yusuf et al. (2021) employ content analysis to reveal that the protest extends beyond addressing the brutality and disbandment of SARS, aiming to reform the entire Nigerian Police Force and address government apathy towards Nigerian youths. The argument by Yusuf (2021) implies that the protest is also about the socio-economic challenges young people face in Nigeria, as Olaseni and Oladele (2023) note. Foregrounding this argument of the harsh socio-economic situation in the country, Dami et al. (2021) characterised the EndSARS as a decentralised social movement and a series of mass protests. Dami et al. (2021) argue that the protest serves as a microcosmic manifestation of Nigerians' deep-seated dissatisfaction with the country's social, economic, and political landscape. Employing an online survey to investigate the reasons behind the protest and potential solutions, Aidonojie et al. (2021) describe this challenging socio-economic situation as low sustainable development. The author affirms that this factor is the trigger for the protest, an argument I agree with.

On social media, Abimbade et al. (2021) elucidate the activities characterising the EndSARS protest on social media and the subsequent physical demonstrations, showcasing the youth's adeptness in planning, organising, executing, and compelling action from the Nigerian government. Nonetheless, the study did not consider an analysis of the long-term effects of digital media on the EndSARS protest. Ugochukwu et al. (2021) extend the discussion to the influence of social media framing on audience perception of the EndSARS agenda protest, utilising a survey research method. The study (Ugochukwu et al., 2021) conducted through online distribution of questionnaires via Google Forms, examines the respondents' exposure to social media framing, its motivational impact on the youth, and its contribution to nationwide protests. Uwalaka (2022) analyses survey data and content analysis of tweets from the 2020 EndSARS protests, revealing that older protesters using Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter were more likely motivated to join

on the first day of the protest. The study establishes a connection between social media platforms' perceived ease of use and their utilisation during protests. In a further exploration, using a mix of qualitative content analysis and Netlytic, Uwalaka (2023) analysed tweets and retweets from the hashtag "EndSARSMemorial2" to determine the nature of conversations and crowds that used the hashtag. The number of tweets and retweets and the themes that emerged from the tweets show how digital activists in Nigeria mourned their colleagues that died during the 2020 EndSARS# protest. The data underscore the role of successive memorial protests in sustaining the EndSARS movement and its demands. The key themes and dynamics of online mourning observed in the study included the personalisation of mourning and online connectedness of humanity, the networked relationship among digital mourners in Nigeria, the use of social media to sustain protests and demand justice, the formation of reciprocal relationships on a dyadic level during collective mourning, and the creation of loosely interconnected interpersonal networks for collective mourning. These themes and dynamics highlighted how digital media facilitated mourning, memorialisation, and solidarity among individuals who may not have had direct ties to the deceased but were connected through shared beliefs and connective repertoires.

Still on social media, Obia (2023) elaborates on the practice of "dragging" on Twitter in Nigeria, which contributes to activism by serving as a tool for denigrating, attacking, or criticising specific individuals or organisations for their actions or comments deemed deplorable and needing accountability. This intense form of Twitter conversation is used as a means of dispensing justice, where Twitter users simultaneously act as judge, jury, and executioner. The objects of dragging are often high-profile figures such as public office holders and celebrities, and the focus is on their involvement in perceived wrongdoing that Twitter users feel they should be held accountable for (Obia, 2023). Moreover, dragging goes beyond online shaming and harassment, sometimes serving

as an activism tool. During the EndSARS movement, for instance, celebrities were dragged on Twitter for promoting their work while the protests were ongoing. This demonstrates how dragging is utilised to hold influential individuals accountable and ensure that their actions align with the goals of activist movements. In summary, dragging on Twitter in Nigeria contributes to activism by providing a platform for holding individuals and organisations accountable for their actions, thereby aligning with the goals of the EndSARS movement and serving as a form of social justice activism.

In the same line as Obia (2023), Dambo et al. (2021) examine the EndSARS movement on Twitter. The study focuses on the EndSARS movement on Twitter, potentially overlooking other social media platforms where the movement may have an impact. However, the authors (Obia, 2023; Dambo et al., 2021) discuss the problems within the Nigerian Police Force, such as corruption and brutality, that led to the movement. Like related scholars, Dambo et al. (2021) view the lack of physical street protests as a limitation of the EndSARS online protest. However, in October 2020, the EndSARS protesters went to the streets of Nigeria. In 2022, Dambo et al. revisited the EndSARS study. They explored the Twitter activities of the EndSARS protesters on the night of the Lekki shooting with the specific objective of evaluating the role of influencers within the movement and establishing the various manifestations and expressions of anger or hope as tweeted by the protesters. This latter study debunks the view that online activism or slacktivism (Christensen, 2011) does not contribute to social change. Though Dambo et al.'s (2021, 2022) studies are qualitative, using Leximancer, a software, may lead to unexplained concepts and relationships being included in the analysis. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that Nigeria's political and cultural environment is complex and multifaceted, which may not be fully captured in the analysis. Considering that the EndSARS protest started predominantly online, I argue that these

studies would have benefitted from online participatory research approaches such as digital ethnography. Besides, the literature suggests that the EndSARS scholarship on social media is mainly limited to Twitter and Facebook. My work furthers this discussion by investigating Instagram, and WhatsApp, the two social media which protesters used at the peak of the movement.

On the psychological effect of the protest, in a cross-sectional online survey, Ayinde et al. (2021) gathered data on the incidence of mental health disorders and potential risk factors from 426 Nigerian social media users, distinguishing between participants and non-participants in the protest. The study identifies predictors of poor mental health among both groups, considering factors such as marital status, resilience, region of origin, employment status, economic beliefs, perceived impact of the protest, and willingness to participate in future protests. Furthering the psychological implications of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria, David-Ojukwu et al. (2021) explore the motives behind the protest and the resulting loss of lives, destruction of property, looting, jailbreaks, and other forms of violence. In economic terms, Ochi et al. (2021) scrutinise the impact of the EndSARS protest on the Nigerian economy, with specific objectives aimed at identifying the causes of the protest, evaluating its effects, and proposing solutions to address the underlying issues. The study concludes that the EndSARS protest has not only left a lasting impact on the Nigerian populace and economy but has also resonated globally, particularly concerning issues of police brutality in Nigeria. In the same view as Ochi et al. (2021), Iwuoha and Aniche (2021) argue that State repression, clampdown on protesters and the subsequent destruction of properties and livelihoods during the peak of the protest have negative consequences for economic development, as they scare away foreign investors. In the view of Iwuoha and Aniche (2021), this, in turn, shrinks economic opportunities and activities, hindering the country's development.



While acknowledging the significance of the EndSARS protest in demanding police accountability, Ojedokun et al. (2021) assess the implications for policing and law enforcement in Nigeria. The authors emphasise the need for the Nigeria Police to enhance its protest policing skills and approaches in response to the mass mobilisation witnessed during the EndSARS protest. Iwuoha and Aniche (2021) furthered this discussion as they explored the trust deficit between the government and citizens, the repressive nature of the State, and the implications for democracy, development, and national security. The study (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021) analyses the EndSARS protest, the government's response, and the broader demands of the protesters. According to the authors, the repressive actions of the Nigerian State during the EndSARS protest led to gross violations of human rights, eroding public trust in state institutions and threatening democratic ethos. In a follow-up study anchored on predatory state theory, Aniche and Iwuoha (2023) assess the political and socio-economic undercurrents of the EndSARS protest. They argue that the predatory state-society relations where the State is the predator and citizens are the prey nurtured the increasing distrust between the state and its citizens. This ultimately deepened mutual mistrust between the police and the people. The authors conclude that the EndSARS protest allowed the Nigerian government to intensify and strengthen its growing authoritarian nature rather than diminish it.

From the perspective of transnational activism, Frimpong and Aubyn (2022) explore the impact of digital activism and transnational support on the EndSARS protest. According to the authors, the movement gained momentum through social media and received international attention. However, they argue that the protest faced challenges such as limited staying power, lack of leadership and strategy, and insufficient meaningful contributions from celebrities and politicians. Transnational support was strong but did not result in significant reforms (Frimpong

& Aubyn, 2022). According to the authors, the movement ultimately failed to achieve its goals, highlighting the limitations of armchair activism and celebrity endorsement alone. However, the scholars should have considered an in-depth analysis of the impact of digital activism and transnational support on the EndSARS movement's long-term success. Also, Dambo et al. (2022) confirms the potential of social media, precisely Twitter in catalysing social change in the EndSARS movement. The scholars touch on the limitations of social media's staying power and the lack of sustained engagement with policy-makers but need to delve deeper into the complexities and nuances of these issues. However, on the night of the Lekki Tollgate shooting, Dambo et al. (2022) discovered that social media users relied more on foreign media for coverage, while Nigerians in the diaspora fueled information spreading about the protests.

While acknowledging the significance of the EndSARS protest in demanding police reforms and evaluating this piece of literature on EndSARS, the research gaps lie in the absence of a reflexive qualitative approach and participatory standpoint, which I foreground in my approach. As mentioned earlier, considering the predominantly online characteristics of the EndSARS movement, it is essential to employ the qualitative approach of online research, such as Pink et al.'s digital ethnography, which I deployed for this work. Although the research area of EndSARS is expanding, there is an apparent vacuum from the theoretical perspective of memory and the movement's anniversaries. Moreover, existing scholarly contributions indicate that the body of knowledge surrounding the EndSARS movement, particularly in the area of social media analysis, predominantly focuses on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Through the qualitative approach, this study extends the discourse by examining Instagram and WhatsApp, both of which emerged as pivotal social media channels employed by protesters during the movement's peak. The qualitative methodology would provide an in-depth and detailed

comprehension of the EndSARS movement, focusing on the micro-level dynamics and intricate memory practices associated with the research participants' interactions and personal interpretations of the protest. This approach explores the diverse ways the research participants engage with and attributes meaning to their involvement in the movement, shedding light on the various subconscious, motivational, and symbolic aspects inherent in their experiences. Adopting a qualitative approach affords a nuanced and intricate examination of the EndSARS movement, facilitating a loose exploration of the multifaceted memory practices embedded within the interactions and personal interpretations of the research participants. This methodological framework operates at a micro-level, diving deep into the complexities and intricacies of individual experiences and collective narratives, thus offering a rich and comprehensive understanding of the movement's dynamics. By immersing myself in the qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews and online participant observations, I am able to capture the subtleties and nuances that characterise the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of the EndSARS movement. This in-depth exploration illuminates the diverse array of memory practices, encompassing how the research participants navigate and negotiate their relationship with the protest and the broader sociopolitical context in which it unfolds.

Moreover, the qualitative approach enables me to uncover the underlying meanings and symbolic significance attributed to the protest by the research participants, shedding light on the diverse range of emotions, motivations, and aspirations that underpin their engagement. Through this lens, I am able to gain insight into the complex interplay between memory, identity, and social activism as the research participants construct and negotiate their understanding of the EndSARS movement within the broader landscape of Nigerian socio-political discourse.

### **2.13. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has dealt with the literature review of this study. Mainly, the chapter buttressed the dire socio-economic situation in Nigeria preceding the EndSARS protest. Notwithstanding the huge oil revenue and youthful population, the country suffers from endemic corruption and poverty. For instance, 40 per cent (83 million people) of Nigerians live below the poverty line (i.e., US\$1.90 per day), with an additional 25 per cent (53 million) marginally above the line and remaining vulnerable (Bagura, 2022). Related to this, the chapter exhumes the British colonial legacies in Nigeria, how they impacted the country's ethno-religious and cultural complexities, and how they fueled distrust among the citizens and encouraged micro-group movements. The chapter found that the colonial legacy of the policing system is the main reason the Nigerian police is repressive and brutal. This repressive style of police led to the EndSARS agitation on social media in 2017 and the eventual mass protest in 2020, which was triggered by the alleged shooting of Joshua Ambrose on October 3, 2020. A section on social protest in Nigeria exemplifies the different social protests from the colonial, post-independence, and contemporary times. The section concluded that in this 21st century, social media has served as a powerful tool that Nigerians have wielded to amplify their voices on social movements such as the Occupy Nigeria protest, the Bring Back Our Girls movement, and the EndSARS movement. This literature review also identifies the scholarly intersection between social movements and memory studies and the factors within social movement research which significantly fueled the increasing interest in memory. The identified factors are the heightened emphasis on collective action, a hallmark of social movement studies. Secondly, there is a desire among scholars to expand the temporal perspective in social movement studies. Finally, the advent of new media, particularly the role of social media in social movements, has contributed to this synergy. Furthering the discussion on the multidisciplinary research area of memory, the review delved into media and memory.

Particularly, the review asserts that the recent affordances facilitated by information and communication technologies, particularly digitalisation with the emergence of social media, influence and reconfigure digital memory practices within social movements. Finally, the literature review on EndSARS reveals the research gaps in the body of literature. Firstly, though the research area of EndSARS is expanding, there is an apparent vacuum from the theoretical perspective of memory and the movement's anniversaries. Consequently, the present study approaches the EndSARS research from the theoretical lens of memory. Besides, studies on social movements and memory are predominantly conducted from the Global North (Zamponi, 2018, 2020; Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Smit, 2020). Secondly, the current study foregrounded a reflexive qualitative approach and participatory standpoint, and considering the online characteristics of the EndSARS movement, it is essential to employ the qualitative approach of online research, such as Pink et al.'s (2016) digital ethnography. Moreover, existing scholarly contributions indicate that the body of knowledge surrounding the EndSARS movement, particularly in social media analysis, focuses on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. This study extends the discourse by delving into the examination of Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, which emerged as pivotal social media channels employed by protesters during the movement.

In the next chapter, I will explore the theoretical framework of memory. This examination aims to elucidate the multidimensional facets of memory and its intricate interplay within the context of the research inquiry. The theoretical foundation of memory serves as a pivotal lens through which the complex dynamics of the phenomena under investigation, specifically the EndSARS movement, will be analysed, interpreted, and understood.

# Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

## 3.1. Introduction

Within this chapter, I endeavour to illuminate the theoretical underpinnings of my research, focusing specifically on the intricate theory of memory in social movements. To commence, I briefly traced foundational elements and scholarly antecedents that form the bedrock of the broader discourse on memory and its connection to social movement studies. Building upon this foundation, I delve into an in-depth examination of the symbolic and cultural construction of conflict within public memory. Moreover, this chapter brings to the forefront the concept of implicit memory (Erll, 2022), a facet that has often been relegated to the periphery in the extensive domain of memory and social movement studies. Further, this theoretical exposition explored the intricate intersection of memory, memorialisation, and protest through the lens of protest anniversaries. Also, I reviewed anniversaries as performative actions. The foregoing assertion elucidates the role of commemorations and rituals in shaping collective memory, offering a perspective on the interconnected dynamics of memory and activism.

Furthermore, considering the online nature of the EndSARS protest, this chapter reviews the nuanced concept of place within digital activism. By interrogating the virtual spatiality of online protests, it challenges traditional notions of physical space and redefines the concept of 'place' as it pertains to digital environments. This examination includes an analysis of ephemeral social media story usage in activism, exploring how the transient nature of these digital narratives contributes to the dynamism and immediacy of activist communication. Additionally, the chapter scrutinises the role of visual culture in digital activism, highlighting how images, videos, and other

visual media serve as powerful tools for mobilisation, storytelling, and the dissemination of activist messages.

### **3.2. Memory: Looking at its Complexities and Affiliation to Social Movements Studies**

The research domain of memory studies is a diverse academic field integrating insights from various disciplines, including anthropology, media and communication, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology (Roediger & Wertsch, 2008). Scholars examining collective memory often rely on the foundational work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925, 1941), particularly his seminal publication "Social Frameworks of Memory" in 1925 (Olick & Robbins, 1998). A heightened interest in the social construction of collective identities and the symbolic dimensions inherent in collective action has predominantly driven the integration of collective memory into the examination of social movements. This focus characterises contemporary scholarship on social movements, as evidenced by the works of Merrill et al. (2020), Barrassi & Zamponi (2020), Lundström & Sartoretto (2022), and della Porta (2020). Within this academic milieu, the sociology of memory, particularly rooted in the seminal contributions of Halbwachs, has emerged as a pivotal tool for current research on social movements. Reciprocity defines this relationship between memory studies and the analysis of contentious politics, with the latter serving as a model for investigating contention within memory studies (Jansen, 2007). A prevailing definition of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1925), encompassing symbols and practices referencing the past, is widely accepted among scholars (Zamponi, 2020; 2018; Wertsch, 2008; Halbwachs, 2020; Verovšek, 2016). This shared understanding compels researchers to confront the issue of pluralism, recognising that distinct communities engage with diverse sets of symbols and practices. Furthermore, individuals may belong to multiple groups, cultivating a multi-level identity shaped by varied mnemonic practices. This line of inquiry challenges the entrenched

concept of a monolithic, collective memory tethered to national identity (Habermas, 1987; Halbwachs, 2020). It questions the notion of memory as a unifying force within social imagery, advocating instead for a series of definitions that acknowledge the inherent pluralism of memory. Consequently, collective memory is conceptualised as the shared memory within a specific community or group, while social memory encompasses the memory dispersed across the entire society. Additionally, public memory is identified as the subset of social memory about the public sphere (Zamponi, 2018). However, it is worth noting that scholars often employ these terms interchangeably, reflecting the complexity and fluidity of the discourse surrounding memory studies in the context of social movements.

Contemporary scholars (Hoskins, 2017; O'Connor, 2022) widely acknowledge a robust interconnection between collective memory and group identity within local communities and social organisations. Collective memory assumes a regulatory role, delineating the boundaries of group membership and establishing criteria for the plausibility and relevance of group identity through its selective and exclusionary mechanisms. This process of communal reconstruction of the past is crucial in instructing individuals on what should be remembered or forgotten and the reasons behind these decisions (Smith, 2020; Uwalaka, 2020). Mechanisms of selection (Erll, 2022) enable the shaping of a distinct representation of the past, rendering it an indispensable instrument for group membership. These mechanisms wield significant social power, empowering collective memory to project future plans while encouraging reflection on the past (Zamponi, 2018). The concept of collective memory, as described by Halbwachs (1987) as a living bond of generations, implies a social construction of memory through the symbolic practices of a group. However, the role of memory in identity formation is not confined solely to internal group dynamics but extends into the public sphere. This introduces the notion of contentious memory, a



domain where divergent groups clash as each actor presents their narrative of the past, intricately tied to their collective identity and envisioned future (Ferguson & Halliday, 2020; Nwakanma, 2022). Consequently, a structural condition of this field is the conflict of interest, encompassing the symbolic resources of society, the social legitimation of utilising these resources, and a group's access to the material means of cultural production (Wertsch & Roediger, 2022; Zamponi, 2018). The dynamics of memory within this context underscore the intricate interplay between individual and collective recollections, shaping group identities and influencing broader societal narratives and power structures.

In the 21st century, examining public memory necessitates a nuanced consideration of remembrance practices within the framework of a mediatised public space. Here, the media serves as the primary arena for public discourse and a crucial repository of social representations of the past, as highlighted by Bamber (2019) and Zamponi (2015). This mediatised public memory unfolds as a dynamic field where diverse narratives vie for prominence, influenced by specific cultural, social, political, and commercial interests (Bamber, 2019). Public memory, conceived as the publicly discussed image of the past (Jedlowski, 2005), is pivotal in shaping the criteria of plausibility and relevance within the broader public sphere. Engaging with the actors participating in the public sphere is imperative for a comprehensive analysis of public memory, particularly on social movements. Smit et al. (2018) define social movements as networks of informal interactions among individuals, groups, or associations engaged in socio-political or cultural conflict based on a shared collective identity. This three-dimensional characterisation distinguishes movements from other processes involving collective action, dense informal exchanges, and the presence of a collective identity (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Numerous studies, spanning both recent and older scholarship (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019; Touraine, 1981; Merrill & Lindgren, 2018; Smit et al., 2018;

Melucci, 1996; Dambo et al., 2021) underscore the significance of collective identity in the formation of social movements. It is a strategic device for defining group membership boundaries and motivating collective action. Collective identity establishes connections among actors, provides patterns for individual motivations to join the movement, and fosters a collective consciousness that often extends beyond the initial conflict (della Porta, 2020).

Constructing a group's collective identity is an ongoing and dynamic process that requires continuous reproduction and reinforcement through specific symbols, practices, and rituals. Scholars in the past decade, such as Treré (2015), Milan (2015), Merrill & Lindgren (2018), and Smith et al. (2020), have delved into the identity-building process of social movements. Some studies emphasise using evocative cultural symbols by activists to resonate with potential members, motivating collective action (Okesola & Oyebode, 2023). Activists employ frames to help individuals interpret events within a broader meaning system and integrate them into their memory (Zamponi, 2018) and the collective memory of the group (Smit et al., 2018). This strategic use of memory is particularly evident in nationalist movements, where symbols and myths are deeply rooted in historical experience (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Consequently, memory emerges as a strategic feature in the identity-building processes of social movements.

### **3.3. The Construction of Conflict through Symbolic Means and the Influence of Mediated Public Memory**

The interdisciplinary approach of bridging memory studies, sociology, and political culture, enriches our understanding of the intricate interplay between individual and collective memory within the broader societal and political contexts. In a seminal article, Olick (1999) delineated the two primary approaches that have characterised memory studies: the individualistic perspective, which conceptualises collective memory as a compilation of individual memories that

are shaped by social influences with a focus on cognitive factors, and the collectivist perspective, grounded in the Durkheimian sociological tradition, pertains to collective phenomena, accentuating the social and cultural patternings of public and personal memory (Olick, 1999). Notwithstanding this distinction, I argue that in terms of the social construction of public memory, the symbolic processes occur in the mind and in the material world as they are cultural products and cultural processes. Consequently, culture is subjective and embodies social symbols recognised within society (Zamponi, 2015). In light of the collective mobilisation and shared grievances evident in the EndSARS protest, I am drawn to the latter concept, and am inclined to emphasise public discourses about the past as wholes and narratives of the past that speak to the protest. Olick's attempt to synthesise these two approaches into a new historical sociology of mnemonic practices is particularly noteworthy, as it accommodates both public and private contexts, recognising that an array of social and neural networks are in constant interaction, implying that different structures are always relevant, and their relevance is perpetually changing.

Olick's debate aligns with the new political culture perspective, advocating for a renewed focus on the role of culture in politics, especially the symbolic structuring of political discourse (Polletta, 2022). This renewed interest in the role of culture is also evident in social movement studies. Jasper (2011) critiques the structural bias in mainstream social movement paradigms, highlighting the need to understand the symbolism of events and individuals and acknowledge the permeation of culture in political opportunities and mobilising structures. In a related argument, Amenta and Polletta (2019) propose a different conceptualisation of culture as the symbolic dimension encompassing all structures, institutions, and practices—political, economic, educational, etc. This conceptual shift aligns with a broader effort in recent social movement scholarship to shed light on traditionally underestimated aspects, such as emotions (Gutiérrez,

2020) or storytelling (Vivienne, 2020), often linked with the identity-building process. Emotions can be considered as memories, though implicit, in certain situations (Erll, 2022). A more detailed exploration of implicit memory will be provided later in this discussion. From this perspective, every contentious dynamic involves a process in which the identity of a group is a social construction based on traits that unify members into a common 'we' and distinguish them from 'them.' Some scholars term this process the symbolic construction of conflict (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019; Polletta, 2019), where cultural factors play a significant role in structuring the symbolic environment of the conflict.

Within this context, factors such as 'collective memories' (Erll, 2022; Cheng & Yuen, 2019) and protest traditions (Schwarz, 2022) emerge as highly pertinent. Polletta's (2019) exploration of the cultural dimension of structural opportunities emphasises that these traditions, principles, codes, and arrangements exert a supra-individual influence, shaping and constraining individual actions. This often overlooked aspect underscores the significance of memory in influencing collective action, as it can both generate opportunities by drawing from symbolic elements of the past (Smit et al., 2018; Lundström & Sartoretto, 2022) and limit mobilisation by imposing constraints and prohibitions (Zamponi, 2018). This perspective introduces a dimension of pluralism and conflict within the realm of public memory and the identity-building process. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognises the contentious nature of memory and the fluid definition of identity (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Memory, akin to identity, operates within a pluralistic field, challenging the notion of a singular memory of a movement. Multiple narratives, some crafted by the movement itself, engage with the symbols and practices associated with the movement (Dambo et al., 2021). Identity, whether self- or hetero-defined, is a complex social process involving diverse actors, each navigating within existing cultural frameworks

(Baumgarten, 2017; Smit, 2020), none of whom can entirely control the outcomes of the process (della Porta, 2022).

The study area of public memory is structured by the conflict among different past narratives, each vying for hegemony (Zamponi, 2018; Smit, 2020; Merrill & Lindgren, 2018). This conflict transcends a mere clash of traditions; it constitutes a struggle for a group's positioning within the public sphere. If memory plays a strategic role in defining criteria for plausibility and relevance, the narrative that successfully establishes itself can confer legitimacy and symbolic power in the public sphere. As Bamber (2019) suggests, the public dimension of the past becomes a privileged resource, with different social and institutional actors competing in the public arena. Challenging the conventional notion of distortion, Barassi and Zamponi (2020) contend that memory is fundamentally selective, and a 'true' memory, if such a concept were viable, would only be possible if memory operated solely as a registration mechanism. Even with registration mechanisms, there cannot be absolute or true memory. Memory is a dynamic process involving the encoding, storage, and strategic retrieval of information, influenced by social, psychological, and historical factors at every stage (Bai, 2023; Erll, 2022).

Social researchers, including the current research, aim to scrutinise the processes of distortion inherent in memory, aiming to discern the recurring mechanisms and agents shaping them. This distortion can be integral to specific cultural and political projects, yet it frequently arises from intricate interactions among various factors involving agents with distinct interests and objectives. Hence, collective memory is as much a result of conscious manipulation as unconscious absorption, which is always mediated (Scot, 2023; Tiedemann, 2018). Consequently, a crucial distinction exists between potential and actual cultural memories, with only a few mnemonic projects successfully securing a notable position in the field of public memory (Kornetis, 2019).

While memory processes involve individual agency, they are fundamentally rooted in society and its repertoire of signs and symbols (Beiner, 2018). Considering that most narratives about the past, even those designed for future collective memories, often fail to extend beyond a select group of initiates (Almeida, 2019), it becomes apparent that not all stories reach their intended audience. Examining instances of 'failed' collective memory (Hoskins & Halstead, 2021) proves valuable in comprehending the factors influencing the success or failure of mnemonic projects. For clarity, the terms mnemonic project and memory process are used here to denote distinct phenomena. The former denotes a conscious effort to promote a narrative, while the latter encompasses the mechanisms shaping the narrative's trajectory, determining its ultimate success or failure.

Within the framework of public memory, the success of a narrative depends on how well it establishes a position of power relative to other narratives within the same field. In other words, the success of a narrative is determined by its ability to assert influence or dominance over competing narratives within the broader context of public memory, especially on social media, which is one of the drivers of public memory, as in the case of the EndSARS movement. Therefore, evaluating a memory process's outcome necessitates examining the broader field. To gauge the success of promoting a collective memory in the mediatised public sphere, such as social media, in the context of this research, an analysis of the content of the public sphere is crucial. This involves assessing the frequency and position of symbolic traits characterising the narrative. However, the impact of a memory process extends beyond the realm of public memory. The latter serves as a pertinent factor in the cultural context where social conflicts unfold, contributing to the symbolic construction of conflict. Collective memories that secure a significant standing in the public memory domain play a vital role in shaping the symbolic environment within which modern social movements unfold (Zamponi, 2015). Consequently, the success or failure of a mnemonic

project can also be appraised by analysing contemporary social movements, such as the EndSARS movement, to identify the cleavages imposed on protesters and their actions by public representations of the past. As mentioned earlier, social movements operate within a world constructed with symbols, where public memory plays a crucial role. They represent a unique category of social actors whose engagement with memory can be investigated from two perspectives: social movements can be analysed as agents influencing memory in the public sphere, competing with other actors conveying narratives, and collective memories can be explored as strategic components contributing to the formation of a group's identity. This dual analysis offers a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate interconnections among memory, social movements, and the shaping of collective identities.

### **3.4. Foregrounding Implicit Memory in the Context of the EndSARS Movement**

This work also expands upon the prevailing focus of social movements studies on explicit memory to focus on implicit memory as a driving force for social movements in the context of the EndSARS. Besides, memory studies have not fully explored implicit collective memory's often concealed yet influential dynamic in social movements. Roediger (1990) describes implicit memory as memory retention without conscious recollection. Carlston (2010) describes it as the enduring impact of previous experiences on subsequent performance, even when there is no conscious recollection of the initial experiences. Daphi and Zamponi (2019) contend that focusing solely on memory studies through episodic acts overlooks the concealed potentials of implicit memory. Schudson (2014) notes that societies do not always recollect through deliberate or purposeful memory initiatives. Instead, the past is frequently integrated into the present in ways not geared towards commemoration. Schudson, therefore, makes a crucial differentiation between

commemorative memory on one side and a wide array of alternative collective memory forms-non-commemorative memory.

The question is: How can we begin to conceptualise implicit memory as a collective occurrence? In memory studies, memory is only recognised in this expanded context as a memory ecology (Hoskins, 2016; Erll, 2022). Therefore, 'collective memory' is somewhat redundant. We employ this term solely for clarity and as a nod to a terminology tradition from Halbwachs (1925), who argued that all memory is inherently collective. The concept of collective memory suggests, as expressed by memory scholars (Beiner, 2018; Hoskins, 2018) that the processes of remembering and forgetting vary across various communities, groups, and individuals. Implicit collective memory must also be understood within this framework. What may go unnoticed by most individuals can be readily apparent to certain observers (Erll, 2022). As Erll further notes, implicit collective memory's everyday manifestations and impacts are immediately noticeable to specific individuals, such as newcomers to an environment or critical observers. For instance, as an insider researcher, I possess a closer knowledge or personal involvement within the context of the study, enabling me to recognise and interpret implicit manifestations of collective struggles (poverty, unemployment, and acts of corruption) within the EndSARS protest. In other words, this insider perspective grants a unique understanding of the historical and cultural context surrounding the protest (Ragon & Reyes, 2023; Schwander, 2019), allowing me to identify subtle yet significant elements of collective memory embedded within the protest.

### **3.5. Protest Anniversaries as Memorialisation and Protest**

In the case of the EndSARS protest anniversary, for those participating in it, the commemorative activities connect to their individual life stories. The fact that the EndSARS protest anniversaries were both physically, mainly at the Lekki Tollgate and spatially across



different social media platforms validated the ceremonies, simultaneously infusing renewed significance into the movement and, by extension, the Lekki Tollgate through their enactment. While certain individuals perceive the Lekki Tollgate as an aesthetically pleasing infrastructure contributing to governmental revenue, the commemorative events and associated activities planned for 2021, 2022, and 2023 transform the Lekki Tollgate and social media platform into sacred spaces imbued with the manifestation of envisioned futures. As Wagoner & Bresc  (2022), memorial sites transform and encapsulate poignant experiences, encompassing grief, loss, and trauma, within a tangible and spatially defined symbol. The anniversary activities transcended mere nostalgic reminiscence for those actively involved, symbolising renewed occupation.

White (2019) asserts that anniversaries exemplify employing commemorative practices to disrupt and redefine the trajectory of national history. These events, however, deviate significantly from the conventional national anniversaries routinely incorporated into the annual calendar of federal or regional holidays. These juxtapositions are instrumental in examining the sociocultural dynamics of anniversaries, conceiving them as dynamic events inherently bound by temporal contexts, thus mirroring fluctuations in the contemporary interpretation of historical occurrences. The predicament faced by widely recognised and prominently celebrated national anniversaries such as Independence Day lies in the inherent routinisation, which can often signify a diminution of personal significance for individuals and communities that may perceive limited connections to these commemorative events. As scholars (Subotić, 2019; Ezeani, 2023; Winter, 2008) in the field of memory studies have observed, routinisation poses a challenge to the process of remembering and, more precisely, to the preservation of emotional significance. Besides, recurring anniversaries integrated into the calendars of nations serve as opportunities for holidays and commercial activities rather than fostering a culture of historical contemplation (White, 2019). Specific

constituencies often experience a distinct sense of connection during any commemorative anniversary. In the context of the EndSARS anniversary, it was predominantly the young people. However, the challenge for national anniversaries lies in extending that relevance to encompass the entire national population—a task that is inherently partial and, at best, tentative (White, 2019). What types of anniversaries inspire a collective sense of participation across a national populace's extensive and diverse spectrum? One overarching theme takes precedence: the celebration of a country's independence. National Independence yearly celebrations emerge as exceptionally relevant as points of convergence between individual and familial histories on the one hand and the overarching trajectory of national history on the other. Given that citizens from varied socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds are nationals of a country, they inherently cultivate a national narrative with broad resonance, particularly within certain generational and gendered segments of the population. Interestingly, the commemoration of the EndSARS anniversary happens every October 20, and the Nigerian government on 1st of October observes its commemoration of independence from British rule. The correlation between these seemingly disparate forms of anniversaries exemplifies the reasons and orientations which informed the different anniversaries.

In serving as platforms for commemorative practices, anniversaries serve as a mechanism for publicly indicating which aspects of history hold significance or are expected to hold significance for those actively participating in the events. For instance, conventional war anniversaries often transmute individual deaths into a celebration, portraying the fallen as heroes who made sacrifices for their nation. The act of remembering is intricately intertwined with selective forgetting (Wagoner & Brescó, 2022), as some events and aspects of remembered occurrences that diverge from the 'social framework of memory' are omitted (Halbwachs, 1925).

Illustratively, despite the extensive efforts invested in memorialising those who perished in World War I and II, the millions who were left incapacitated by the wars were largely overlooked (Connerton, 2009). Therefore, anniversaries serve as memorial sites for communal spaces of shared memory that offer diverse avenues for expressing and interpreting individual and collective losses. This transformative process extends beyond mere mourning; it allows individuals and societies to reinterpret the past, consequently facilitating the construction of new perspectives for the future (Wagoner, 2017). Viewed through this lens, moments of anniversaries and the emphasis they garner in commemorative events and media channels gauge the extent and profoundness of community engagement—a dynamic map that evolves as the elements considered significant in the anniversary undergo changes and transformations. The role of anniversaries as instrumental tools in shaping collective perceptions and sentiments toward events is significant (White, 2019). Instead of viewing anniversaries primarily as occasions for "remembering" (the predominant framing of this concept), it is more apt we consider them as enactments of the present—performances carried out by individuals who perceive the relevance of historical events to their contemporary lives, as in the context of the EndSARS anniversaries.

The EndSARS protest, precisely the shooting of Joshua Ambrose on October 3, 2023, and the protesters at the Lekki Tollgate in Lagos on October 20, 2020, and its subsequent dissemination on social media, is a continuous flashbulb memory for many protesters, including myself. Flashbulb memory is a moment of profound significance that virtually every individual would later be able to vividly recall the specific details of where they were when they first learned of an event (Winningham et al., 2000). Initial efforts to elucidate the phenomenon of flashbulb memories concentrated on physiological explanations (Bohannon III, 1988), considering the possibility of perceptual imprinting occurring during heightened moments of stress. However, more compelling

theories attribute the potency of flashbulb memories to the influential role of storytelling (Erlil & Hirst, 2023), functioning as a form of direction that endeavours to position subjective experiences in the context of profound shifts in the social environment. Regardless of the explanation, personal affiliations with historical events are temporal and shaped by generational experiences. Each generation possesses flashbulb memories that encapsulate its historical benchmarks—landmarks that will inevitably hold significance for subsequent generations. The events of the shooting of EndSARS protesters at the Lekki Tollgate and its virality on social media exemplify such a moment for those who witnessed or learned about the occurrences of that day.

### **3.6. Anniversaries as Performative: A Form of Action**

The EndSARS movement marked its first anniversary on 20 October 2021; its second and third anniversaries were equally marked on the date and month in 2022 and 2023, respectively. This date and month- 20 October, has become what Pearce (2015) describes as a "crowd magnet" and "magnified moment". For the past three years, this date and month have held a significant place in the lives of people in Nigeria, especially young people. It was on this date the military allegedly shot at peaceful EndSARS protesters at the popular Lekki Tollgate, Lagos, Nigeria. I chose to explore the EndSARS through the lens of its anniversary because of the importance of commemoration in human history. Anniversaries are the annually recurring dates of past events of personal, group or historical importance. Anniversaries are not insignificant or inherent, but they hold grave significance and have thus been a subject of interest for sociologists and anthropologists (Whitlinger, 2023; Jerne, 2020). Some of the most obvious cases are anniversaries which memorialise rather than simply celebrate events, for instance, the annual remembrance of the victims of the 9/11 bombing of 2001 in the United States. Both the celebratory and sorrowful

forms of anniversaries have the potential to solidify a collection of shared understandings concerning the past and, inevitably, about the current times (Volks, 2020).

Harvey (1989) argues that one approach to interpreting an anniversary is a response to the concept of 'time-space compression', where cultural life has accelerated to the point that the framework of history has transformed. Recent pasts have immediately become a topic for historical contemplation, and the present is promptly assessed for its historical significance (O'Doherty, 2023). How can we preserve meaning when confronted with the relentless momentum of speed? Grey (2013) espouses that anniversaries address this scenario in two manners. Firstly, they offer reference points that allow us to grasp and make sense of rapidly changing times. Secondly, they fulfil the need for historical context by structuring the events around us and granting us the feeling that we are participating in a historical moment. In other words, anniversaries permit us not only to comprehend history but also, by commemorating them, we become a part of history: they enable us to declare, 'it occurred then, it is happening now, and I am present for it' (Grey, 2013, p.9). Scholars (Rigney et al., 2021) assert that memorials serve as tangible ways to rejuvenate optimism and showcase determination, and collective commemorations play an essential role across social-change-oriented movements (Pearce, 2015). Furthermore, social movements scholars (della Porta, 2015; Zamponi, 2018; Rigney et al., 2021; Merrill & Lindgren, 2020; Viol et al., 2023) have emphasised anniversaries as performative activities. In this context, the term "performative", according to Rigney et al. (2021), is employed broadly to highlight that the actions of remembering, which make up what we refer to as memory, involve various forms of activity occurring in the present.

Returning to Grey's (2013) argument on how anniversaries address the time-space challenge, anniversaries allow us to participate in time and space historical moments and thereby

solidify a feeling of collective belonging. If we consider Paul Ricoeur's assertion that cultures shape identity by narrating their past (see Kearney, 1984), then anniversaries function as a specific instance of that creative process. This process and activities are not a neutral or inherent way of indicating the passage of time, I see it as a continual socio-cultural progression where institutions, identity, and meanings are constructed, and we need to acknowledge this instead of taking it for granted.

### **3.7. The Concept of “Place” in Digital Activism**

The concept of place has profoundly transformed in the digital age, particularly within social media and digital activism. Traditionally, place has been understood as a physical location with tangible geographical boundaries imbued with cultural, social, and historical significance (Harvey, 2013). However, the advent of digital technologies and the rise of social media and platforms have redefined the notion of place, blurring the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces and reshaping how individuals and communities engage with their surroundings. In social media, the concept of place takes on new dimensions as online platforms become virtual spaces where social interactions, cultural practices, and identity formation unfold (Witteborn, 2021). In the context of the present research, Instagram and WhatsApp serve as digital "places" where the research participants, myself included, congregate, connect, and share our feelings and experiences about the EndSARS movement. These places transcend geographical barriers, such as the EndSARS memorial site- Lekki Tollgate in Lagos State, and expand the notion of community beyond traditional boundaries. These platforms facilitate virtual interaction and communities based on shared interests, identities, or causes, allowing participants to form connections and relationships with others irrespective of their physical location.

Moreover, social media enables people to construct and curate their identities (Warburton, 2012), shaping how they present themselves and interact with others in digital spaces (Amancio, 2017), even in digital activism practices (Barassi & Zamponi, 2020; Barassi, 2018). The concept of digital placemaking (Halegoua & Polson, 2021; Baranaba, 2023) emerges as people actively participate in the co-creation of virtual environments through their online activities, including posting content (Amancio, 2017), engaging in discussions, and shaping online digital activist narratives (Gonsalves et al., 2021). This process of digital placemaking is central to understanding how people and communities navigate and negotiate their identities and relationships in the digital realm.

Within digital activism and social movements, the concept of place takes on added significance as activists and organisers leverage social media platforms to mobilise supporters, raise awareness, and advocate for social change (Karatat & Bek, 2023). Digital platforms serve as virtual places of resistance (Fife et al., 2023), where activists challenge dominant narratives, amplify marginalised voices, and organise collective action to address social injustices. The hashtag #MeToo, for instance, emerged as a powerful digital space where survivors of sexual harassment and assault shared their stories (Clark-Parsons, 2021), sparking a global movement to confront and combat gender-based violence. Digital places could also be viewed as memory sites in the context of social movements such as the EndSARS protest. As Wagoner and Bresc  (2022) argue memorial sites undergo a transformational process wherein they serve as repositories that encapsulate poignant experiences, including but not limited to grief, loss, and trauma. According to Wagoner and Bresc , these sites assume a tangible and spatially defined form, symbolically representing the collective memory of individuals or communities affected by historical events or tragedies. Social media, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, in the context of this research, function

as digital memory sites by facilitating the storage, sharing, and interpretation of memories and narratives related to the EndSARS movement. These platforms (places) enable the protesters to document and archive their experiences, grievances, and achievements in real-time, creating a digital repository of collective memory that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. Through memes, videos, and other multimedia content, social media users construct narratives that challenge mainstream representations and amplify marginalised voices.

However, the concept of place on social media has challenges and limitations. The virtual nature of online spaces can sometimes lead to disconnection or dislocation as people navigate digital environments lacking traditional places' tangible physicality (Saker & Frith, 2019; Sheller, 2016). Moreover, the anonymity and fluidity of online interactions can undermine a sense of belonging and community, as individuals engage in superficial or fleeting connections that lack the depth and authenticity of face-to-face interactions (Phirangee & Malec, 2020). In light of the aforementioned assertion, scholarly discourse has emerged regarding the efficacy of digital activism, with certain scholars characterising it as slacktivism (Christensen, 2011) or clicktivism (Butler, 2011). This discourse critically interrogates the perceived potency of online forms of activism, raising questions about the depth of engagement and tangible impact achieved through digital places in contrast to traditional modes of activism. Furthermore, the algorithmic design of social media and platforms can shape digital activism in ways that privilege certain voices and perspectives while marginalising others (Treré, 2018), reinforcing existing power dynamics and inequalities (Bonini & Trere, 2024). The concept of digital gentrification (Lingel, 2021; Opillard, 2015) highlights how algorithms prioritise content and interactions that cater to dominant cultural norms and preferences, marginalising dissenting voices and alternative narratives in the process.



In conclusion, the concept of place on social media and digital activism is complex and multifaceted, encompassing a range of virtual and physical dimensions that shape how individuals and communities engage with their surroundings and mobilise for social change. As digital technologies continue to evolve and shape our social and political landscapes, it is essential to critically examine the dynamics of place in digital spaces and its implications for identity, community, and collective action.

### **3.8. Understanding Ephemeral Story: A Conceptual Background**

A critical framework that has shaped our understanding of Instagram and WhatsApp Story as a medium for the EndSARS socio-political activism is Barassi's (2018) description of self-representation on social media. Barassi (2018) elucidates self-presentation on social media as the crafting of a "political biography." Barassi asserts that activists shape a political biography through digital storytelling, a process akin to a form of performance (Barassi, 2018). Engaging in political activities on social media is intricately personalised, contingent upon the exhibition of one's identity and self-presentation (Barassi, 2018). This framework offers insights into how self-presentation, an integral facet of online participation, operates as a performative act, influencing the manner and rationale behind an individual's political involvement.

Linked to Barassi's self-representation, Goffman's (1959) conceptualisation of performance finds application in utilising ephemeral Stories for political and activism-related purposes despite predating the advent of such technology. In Goffman's framework, the self is perceived as a series of performances enacted within specific contexts, with contemporary social media platforms constituting one such context for self-presentation. Goffman's (2016, 2023) conceptualisation of performance does not entirely differ from the term performativity, frequently invoked by the research participants during interviews. Performativity, or performative activism

articulated by the research participants, carries a more positive connotation, aligning closely with Goffman's genuine performance concept. Ultimately, Goffman's (2016, 2023) framework significantly contributes to comprehending performative activism, concepts particularly pertinent to my participant's engagement with politics and activism through their Instagram Stories. Bonilla and Rosa's (2015) examination of hashtag activism on Twitter within the context of the 2014 Ferguson protests addressing police brutality and racialised violence further provides an understanding of ephemeral Story and socio-political activism. Their research establishes a conceptual framework for comprehending the political potentials inherent in social media platforms, emphasising essential considerations for navigating political discourse on these platforms. Moreover, they posit that social media activism fosters aggregation despite its seemingly transitory or fleeting nature.

### **3.9. Visual Culture, Digital Activism and the EndSARS Movement**

The concept of visual culture has become increasingly central to understanding contemporary social movements, particularly in the context of digital activism. Visual culture encompasses the production, circulation, and consumption of images, memes, videos, and other visual artefacts that shape our understanding of the world and influence social and political discourse (Mirzoeff, 1999). In social movements, visual culture plays a critical role in mobilising supporters (Flam & Doerr, 2015), conveying messages (Smit, 2020) and challenging dominant narratives through powerful and evocative imagery (Casas & Williams, 2019). In the context of digital activism, incorporating visuals enables activists and organisers to subvert dominant narratives and challenge oppressive systems through the strategic use of imagery and symbolism (Karatas & Bek, 2023). Images and videos can serve as potent forms of resistance (Merill et al.,

2020), disrupting conventional ways of seeing and understanding the world by foregrounding alternative perspectives and experiences (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022).

These multimedia have emerged as potent digital activism tools capable of transcending linguistic and cultural barriers to communicate complex ideas and emotions succinctly and impactfully. Memes, in particular, have gained widespread popularity as a form of visual communication characterised by humour, irony (Fahmy & Ibrahim, 2021), cultural references (Wiggins, 2019), activist tool (Mina, 2019; Moussa et al., 2020) and specifically, memory activism (Ristić, 2023; González-Aguilar & Makhortykh, 2022). Memes often employ familiar images or symbols repurposed and shared across digital platforms to convey political messages, critique authority, or express solidarity with marginalised groups. One of the critical strengths of visual culture in digital activism is its ability to evoke emotional responses and spark engagement among audiences (Moreno-Almeida, 2021). Images and videos can elicit empathy, outrage, or inspiration, compelling viewers to take action or reconsider their perspectives on social issues. For example, the viral social media video of Joshua Ambrose, the young Nigerian that SARS officers allegedly shot on 3 October 2020, galvanised public attention and mobilised support for the transnational EndSARS protest in 2020. Indeed, within digital activism mobilisation, visuals constitute a strategic facet that exerts considerable influence. These visual representations are potent tools in contesting prevailing narratives, engendering a paradigmatic shift through their emotive and compelling nature. By intertwining symbolic imagery with the core tenets of the EndSARS movement, my participants challenge entrenched ideologies, fostering a fertile ground for discourse and societal transformation. This multifaceted role of visuals encompasses the research participants' ability to transcend linguistic barriers, encapsulate complex ideologies, and evoke visceral responses within supporters and detractors alike. Consequently, the strategic deployment

of visuals within the EndSARS protest is a testament to the nuanced interplay between imagery, rhetoric, and power dynamics, underscoring their pivotal role in reshaping societal narratives and fostering progressive change.

Furthermore, visual culture facilitates the democratisation of storytelling and representation within social movements (Davies, 2002; Polleta, 2009), allowing marginalised communities to reclaim their narratives and assert their visibility in public discourse. Digital platforms provide a space for individuals and communities to share their stories and lived experiences through images and videos (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022), challenging stereotypes and amplifying diverse voices that are often marginalised (Ristić, 2023) or silenced in mainstream media (Karatas & Bek, 2023).

However, some scholars argue that using visuals in digital activism is not without its complexities and ethical considerations. The viral nature of images and videos can sometimes lead to the oversimplification or distortion of complex social issues (Neumayer & Rossi, 2018), reducing them to sensationalised or decontextualised narratives. Moreover, the rapid circulation of visual content on digital platforms can make verifying the authenticity and accuracy of images and videos difficult (Shen et al., 2019; della Porta, 2013), which may lead to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Furthermore, visual culture in digital activism raises questions about representation and power dynamics within social movements (Ristić, 2023), particularly in relation to issues of race, gender, and privilege (Doerr et al., 2013; Matich et al., 2020). The proliferation of images can sometimes perpetuate harmful stereotypes or reinforce existing inequalities by privileging certain voices and experiences over others (Nikunen, 2018; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). Consequently, it is essential for activists and organisers to critically reflect

on how visual culture shapes their activism and consider how to use images and videos ethically and responsibly to advance social justice goals.

Overall, the concept of visuals is integral to understanding the dynamics of digital activism within the context of EndSARS movement. Memes, images, videos, and other visual artefacts are powerful tools that were employed to mobilise supporters, challenge dominant narratives, and amplify diverse voices in the pursuit of social change. However, incorporating visual culture in digital activism requires careful consideration of its ethical implications and the complexities of representation and power within social movements. As digital technologies evolve, visual culture will remain a central aspect of contemporary activism, shaping how people and communities engage with social and political issues in the digital age.

### **3.10. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has examined the theoretical framework of memory, emphasising its interdisciplinary nature and mainly focusing on the seminal work of Maurice Halbwachs to underscore the social dimension inherent in memory. The primary emphasis has been on the assimilation of collective memory into social movements, with a specific concentration on the sociology of memory rooted in Halbwachs's foundational contributions. The chapter also examines the reciprocal relationship between memory studies and the analysis of contentious politics. Scholars commonly accept a prevailing definition of collective memory as encompassing symbols and practices referencing the past. However, the discourse within the chapter is cognisant of the issue of pluralism, challenging the notion of a monolithic collective memory tethered to national identity. Within the chapter, collective memory is elucidated as a regulatory force, actively delineating boundaries for group membership and significantly influencing the criteria for the plausibility and relevance of group identity. The introduction of the concept of contentious

memory sheds light on the clashes between divergent groups presenting their narratives of the past. Moreover, the chapter contextualised and scrutinised public memory within a mediatised public space, with a nuanced exploration of the media's central role in shaping social representations of the past. The dynamic nature of public memory is thoroughly discussed, emphasising the competition between diverse narratives influenced by cultural, social, political, and commercial interests. This discussion unveils the complex interplay between memory, conflict, and societal frameworks contributing to the formation and perpetuation of collective memories. Further, the chapter discusses the debate between individualistic and collectivistic perspectives in memory studies, underscoring the cultural patterns embedded in public and personal memory. I accentuated Olick's synthesis of these perspectives into a new historical sociology of mnemonic practices. Additionally, implicit memory is foregrounded as a collective occurrence, specifically focusing on its concealed yet influential dynamic within social movements. Notably, the role of implicit memory in shaping collective identities within broader societal and political contexts, with specific consideration given to the EndSARS protest, is emphasised. The chapter highlights the significance of implicit memory and its potential contributions to our understanding of memory processes within the context of social movements, particularly the EndSARS protest. Finally, the chapter accentuates the significance of protest anniversaries as memories, specifically framing some of the experiences of the EndSARS protest as a flashbulb memory. This discussion elucidates the role of anniversaries as rituals in shaping collective memory, offering a unique perspective on the interconnected dynamics of memory and activism. Furthermore, this chapter has reviewed the concept of place within digital activism, interrogating the virtual spatiality of online protests and challenging traditional notions of physical space. It redefines 'place' in digital environments and examines ephemeral social media stories, highlighting how their transient nature enhances the

dynamism and immediacy of activist communication. Additionally, the chapter scrutinises the pivotal role of visual culture in digital activism, demonstrating how images, videos, and other visual media act as powerful tools for mobilisation, storytelling, and message dissemination. Through this multifaceted approach, the chapter provides an understanding of how memory intersects with digital activism and how digital platforms create impactful, place-based activism in the virtual sphere. In the next chapter, I will discuss the philosophical orientation of this research, specifically focusing on interpretivism.

# Chapter Four: Philosophical Orientation

## 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the considerations and assumptions regarding the philosophical position of this research, and why I employed the interpretivist standpoint of this research. The philosophical standpoint of a research study helps to underpin the choices and decisions to be made in how the research is conducted (Babchuk, 2019). To reveal the impact of studies, researchers should identify and disclose these decisions and choices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this way, they can provide a clear purpose with a deeper and wider perspective for the research (Ritter, 2022). As with every research project, this study's philosophical standpoint shows how the research position was shaped. This chapter outlines the initial conceptual process, which ultimately leads to the philosophical standpoint of this study.

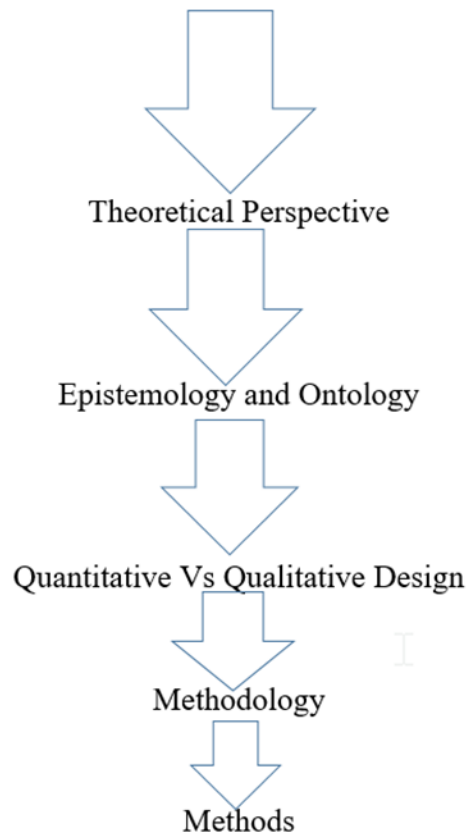
Over the decades, terminologies and typologies of research philosophies in social science literature are not consistent; it is not exceptional to find the same term used with various meanings (Crotty, 1998; Goulding, 1999). Crotty (1998) identified positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry and postmodernism as four different types of theoretical perspective, whereas Carson et al. (2001) placed seven different research philosophies (critical theory, realism, constructivism, hermeneutics, humanism, natural inquiry and phenomenology) on a continuum between positivism and interpretivism, and Bryman (2016) dichotomised epistemological positions only as positivism and interpretivism and identified others as subcategories of these two. Also, different paradigms with particular philosophies and strategies sometimes overlap in existing data sources and/or methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, different researchers sometimes identify one concept with different names. For instance,



interpretivism has been given other names, such as naturalism by Belk et al. (1988), constructivism by Guba and Lincoln (1994), and qualitative paradigm by Creswell (2015).

The theoretical perspective describes the researcher's way of looking at and making sense of the world by providing a context for the research and grounding its logic and criteria (Whiting & Prichard, 2017). Therefore, assumptions regarding the theoretical perspective should lie behind the other philosophical considerations. Basic beliefs about reality and knowledge shape the worldview of the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These are based on the individual's theoretical considerations. Therefore, we can refer to epistemology (nature of knowledge about reality) and ontology (nature of reality) inherent in the theoretical perspective (Grass, 2024). Although researchers (Erickson, 2018; Demzin et al., 2023 Creswell & Creswell, 2018) still prefer to differentiate research into two broad perspectives as qualitative and quantitative research and refer to these umbrella terms for their other epistemological decisions, these are better used for the description of research types and methods. These discussions should be secondary to questions of the theoretical perspective and epistemological and ontological considerations (Lincoln et al., 2017), followed by specific research methods.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the route map of these relationships, which starts with broad and abstract issues and moves to the concrete tools and techniques of the methodology.



**Figure 4.1. A shrinking schema of research design**

Base on Istanbuluoğlu (2014)

Section 4.2 of this chapter discusses the epistemological and ontological considerations, aligning the discussion to interpretivist perspectives. Section 4.3 briefly explains research and the dominant theoretical perspective. In subsection 4.3.1, I elaborated positivism and neopositivism, whereas, in subsection 4.3.2, I described the interpretivist approach- interpretivism. Section 4.4 specifically discusses why I chose the interpretivist perspective. In section 4.5, I explain why I chose the qualitative research methods for this research. Employing Braun and Clark's (2013, 2021) idea of qualitative sensibility reliability as a guide, sub-section 4.5.1 further expands the qualitative design of this research by describing how my qualitative orientation evolved. To corroborate Braun and Clark's idea of qualitative sensibility, and my qualitative trajectory in sub-section 4.5.2, I described my standpoint on

the issue of generalizability in qualitative research and how I applied Smith's (2018) argument on qualitative generalisation in this research. Finally, section 4.6 summarises the discussion this chapter.

## **4.2. Epistemology and Ontology**

Researchers' standpoints regarding the nature of knowledge about reality (epistemology) and the nature of reality (ontology) are mostly hidden in the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, social science researchers should identify and explain their standpoints to reveal their study's structure and effectiveness. This is why I used this section to introduce these concepts and explain the choices regarding the epistemology and ontology of this study.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and questions what acceptable knowledge in a given research context is (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). Central epistemological issues provide grounds for discussing what kinds of knowledge are possible and how researchers can ensure that the knowledge is adequate and legitimate (Erickson, 2018). Ontology is the study of the nature of social entities (Creswell, 2015). The main point of ontological consideration is the question of what is the form and nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Reyes (2018) summarise the relationship between ontology and epistemology: Ontology is reality, and epistemology is the relationship between reality and the researcher.

In debates in social sciences, positivist ontology assumes that social entities and the real world should be considered objectively and that reality should be external to social actors (Hays & McKibben, 2021). Conversely, the interpretivist ontology holds that realities are social constructions built by the perceptions and actions of social actors, and knowledge of the real world is meaningful to social actors on its own terms (Boswell, 2021b; Smith, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2017).

Under the umbrella term of interpretivism fall many accepted epistemological and ontological ideas with their philosophies, strategies and methods (Reyes, 2018). Perspectives such

as realism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and constructionism are primarily concerned with understanding human experience and are widely applied within social movements studies (Treré, 2016; Zamponi, 2018; Smit, 2020; Ferrari, 2022; della Porta, 2020). Hence, no interpretation of the world can be made independently of human interactions, perceptions, information processing, feelings and actions. In other words, without individuals who interpret the world, there will be no reality or meaning. Therefore, meanings and truth, as in the findings of a study, cannot be described as objective facts, but they can be presented as the interpretations of the research participants, including the researcher's (Myself). Now let us go into discussing the two dominant theoretical perspectives in research, positivism and interpretivism.

#### **4.3. Research and the Dominant Theoretical Perspectives**

In the social sciences, and for a long time, debates about the theoretical perspective centre on the choices of informing and guiding enquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The main question is, how can we know and represent what we know about reality (Carminati, 2018)? The answer illuminates the issue of how the social world can and should be studied: Do we follow the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences apply, or use a different logic of research procedure that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order (Bryman, 2016). Supporters of the former position are known as “positivists” and of the latter as “interpretivists”. Positivists follow the same principles and procedures to study human interactions, whereas interpretivists believe that social study requires different and specialised procedures.

Many social scientists (Denzin et al., 2023; Lincoln et al., 2017; Denzin et al., 2020; Darby, 2019) have discussed the arguments between the two paradigms. Furthermore, qualitative and online digital researchers (Braun & Clark, 2021; Hine, 2000, 2015; Vivienne, 2016; Pink et al., 2016; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2020) have also delved into this argument. The controversy in digital

online research over different perspectives creates a need to examine and understand the different theoretical perspectives to select the suited one for this research. In subsection 4.3.1 and subsection 4.3.2 I elaborated on positivism and interpretivism, respectively.

#### **4.3.1. The Position of Positivism/Neopositivism**

Positivists hold that science should be concerned with verifying the meanings and existence of objects using applied and statistical methods (Lincoln et al., 2017). Positivist and neo-positivist approaches advocate that the world is external and objective, with an apprehendable single reality driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Positivist research aims to discover and measure independent elements of reality scientifically. To maintain this approach, positivists seek objectivity and employ rational and analytical approaches through scientific techniques such as causality analysis, hypothesis testing and theory development (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017; Denzin et al., 2023). For positivists, data and analysis should be kept value-free without external influence (Visokolskis, 2021), maintaining a clear distinction between facts and value judgements (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). In other words, this also means that the researcher and object of investigation (e.g. research participants) should be kept separate. This is achieved by eliminating or reducing any influence from the investigator to the object or from the object to the investigator which threatens the validity of the research using particular empirical methods and methodologies (Alharahsheh, 2020).

Positivism adopts mainly quantitative data processing methods such as statistics and mathematical techniques. In this way, positivism can concentrate on describing and explaining the object of research with scientific and normative statements (Erwing & Park, 2020). It uses structured techniques to reach law-like generalisations, which is believed to lead to the further development of theories (Small & Calarco, 2022). Positivism has been the dominant physical and

social sciences perspective for centuries (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As claimed by its proponents, some of the benefits of positivism include objectivity, validity and generalisability. However, critics of positivism suggest that it is not an appropriate study method for social phenomena involving humans and their experiences (Small & Calarco, 2022). The constitution of positivism contrasts with humans' opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions (Alharahsheh, 2020) because it is believed that these cannot be value-free, independent and objective.

#### **4.3.2. Interpretivism and its Standpoint**

Interpretivists believe that the 'scientific world' (i.e. the world addressed by positivist science) is not the everyday world we experience because scientific structures impose a linear world that contrasts with uncertain, ambiguous, idiosyncratic and changeful manners of the everyday world experienced by humans (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018; Coleman, 2022 ). Furthermore, the subject matter of social sciences (i.e. people and their institutions) fundamentally differs from the objects of the natural sciences (Ryan, 2019). Human behaviour is complex, subjective and voluntaristic in a way that prevents causal conclusions (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Denzin & Salvo, 2020). Consequently, due to the distinctiveness of humans as opposed to highly linear natural sciences, interpretivists believe that different principles and procedures are needed to identify and understand the subjective matters of the social sciences.

Interpretivism seeks to reach deep understandings and detailed descriptions of the subject of research. Generally, this happens in the form of understanding and interpreting the meanings and experiences of the research participants (Elliot et al., 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue, the primary purpose of interpretivist methodologies is to achieve substantive meaning and understanding of how and why questions in relation to the phenomena under investigation. In order to ensure this, interpretivist research should take into account (1)

multiple realities and different perspectives of people, (2) the researcher's involvement, and (3) contextual understanding and interpretation of data (Braun & Clark, 2021).

Contrary to positivism's belief in a single reality, interpretivism recognises the multiple realities constructed by human beings (Creswell, 2015; Pope & May, 2020). Humans do not have one reality about the world, but their knowledge about the world is meaningful in their terms and may change according to different perspectives. Therefore, it is impossible to demonstrate one concrete truth using scientific principles (Fusch et al., 2018). Nonetheless, this does not mean that interpretivist research rejects the positivist objectivism, but it holds that reality is subjectively experienced by humans, including researchers. It can be understood and interpreted only in their own terms by using qualitative approaches (Elliot et al., 2019; Braun & Clark, 2022).

Secondly, according to interpretivism, the researcher and the phenomenon under study are linked (Whiting & Prichard, 2017). Interpretivist researchers take part in the study directly through their involvement with the social phenomena from the research participants' perspective rather than studying them as a part of the physical world (Small & Calarco, 2022; Boswell, 2021b). Therefore, understanding arises from the researcher's direct experience rather than by manipulation of experimental variables (Coleman, 2022). Also, scholars (Hine, 2015; Gray, 2018; Bluteau, 2019) highlight that the interaction between the researcher and participants is one factor that creates findings. In some situations, the researcher is not solely an external observer but also part of the object of investigation, and the researcher is also the research instrument (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020; Lincoln et al., 2017; Cruz & Ardevol, 2017).

Interpretivist studies focus on the understanding of social phenomena in the given context. Hirose and Creswell (2023) state that every social context is unique. Since realities are identified by what people have in their minds based on a particular social context, they change according to their

context (Small & Calarco, 2022). Therefore, interpretivist social science investigates reality by taking account of the contexts of the phenomena under study. In this way, it is possible to understand and interpret each reality according to its particular contextual terms. Also, it should be kept in mind that this is one of the reasons that the findings of interpretivist studies are only relevant and valid in the particular context of that research. Interpretivists support the idea of social phenomena emerging through time (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). Constructions about the phenomenon under study are subject to continuous creation and revision by social actors (Corlett & Mavin, 2018; Freeman, 2017). Therefore, interpretivist researchers examine their subjects in continuous emergence rather than focusing on only one aspect at a point in time: the research design evolves with the changing constructions and contexts through time (Braun & Clark, 2021).

Researchers have compared positivist and interpretivist approaches based on ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives to understand their fundamental principles and divisions. Table 4.1 illustrates the main differences between these two paradigms.



**Table 4.1 Basic disparities between Positivism and Interpretivism**

<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
Objective	Subjective
Single (true) Findings/Meanings	Multiple created Findings/Meanings
Direct access to real world	No direct access to real-world
Focus on Realism	Focus on Relativism
Focus on Generalisation	Focus on Specific and Concrete
Description and Explanation (cause and effect relationships)	Understanding and Interpretation
External Observer	Insider Researcher
Value-free (the distinction between facts and values)	Value-bound (no clear distinction between facts values)
Statistical and mathematical methods	Primarily non-quantitative methods

Source: Own elaboration based on Alharahsheh & Pius (2020)

The central division between these two approaches can be summarised; thus, positivist approaches use objectivism and statistical analysis to explain causal relationships and make statistical generalisations, while interpretivist approaches try to understand reality through qualitative procedures tailored to suit each case (Erwing & Park, 2020). Another way to look at the difference is to focus on their purpose for social sciences: while positivists emphasise the

explanation of human behaviour, interpretivists focus on understanding human behaviour (Small & Calarco, 2022).

#### **4.4. Choosing a Philosophical Paradigm: Interpretivism**

Since there is no single best social movement research approach (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019), one should examine the value and validity of the available approaches. Considering the above discussions, researchers (Nassaji, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Darby et al., 2019) believe that the choice of an approach can be considered in relation to the following factors: (1) focus of the research (2) objectives of the research (3) role of the researcher, and (4) worldview of the researcher.

An examination of the characteristics of this study shows that an interpretivist approach is most appropriate. Through Pink et al.'s (2016) digital ethnographic approach, this research focuses on understanding the memory practices and experiences of the EndSARS research participants rather than measuring variables related to their experiences. Besides, the findings are sought to be used to understand context-specific conditions. Since the subject matter is complex and changeable, this study does not aim to make context-free generalisations. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is the craftsman in interpretivist studies; as an insider, I engaged closely with the research process. This study's meaning and knowledge construction was a constant interaction with all facets of the research itineraries. Regarding the researcher's worldview, I believe the research participants' experiences are ambiguous and contextual. Facts and value judgements do not have a clear distinction, and both can be used as data to understand and explain why people have different experiences. Additionally, social media is a cultural context shaped by individuals' online and offline experiences (Hine, 2015), beliefs and practices. Therefore, exploring these different experiences is a way to understand how they construct their realities.

To sum up, interpretivism emphasises interpretive processes as a way to understand the subject matter in its specific context. Also, as Lincoln et al. (2017) state, the primary purpose of interpretivist methodologies is to achieve substantive meaning and understanding of how and why questions in relation to the phenomena under investigation. In other words, interpretivism aims to get at the meaning contained or hidden in the data obtained through scientific investigation (Rivera, 2018). Interpretivism offers an account of the process of understanding the research conundrum and the data the investigation yielded (Aldridge, 2018). For these reasons, the interpretivist philosophical standpoint is believed to be appropriate for this study.

#### **4.5. The Use of Qualitative Methods for the Current Research**

Qualitative studies require mostly textual and multimodal explanations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies extend beyond the issue of using numbers or words. Both approaches also differ in terms of their research strategies. In this section, I explain the reasons for choosing qualitative methods for the present study.

Qualitative studies mainly adopt inductive processes (theory building) (Hirose & Creswell, 2023; Ewing & Park, 2020). Also, qualitative approaches emphasise ways of interpreting the social world from personal perspectives (Myers, 2019; Bryman, 2016). Unlike quantitative research which focuses on summarising statistical data, qualitative research tries to present complex descriptions and explain meanings. Lincoln et al. (2017) explain that qualitative research is most applicable when the primary focus of the investigation is gaining a profound comprehension of the underlying reasons, mechanisms, and contextual occurrences of particular phenomena, as well as the factors that affect or shape them. This approach is better suited for situations where understanding and explaining behaviour or activities carry greater significance, as in the context

of the current research. Therefore, considering this research's primary purposes and philosophical standpoint, it is more appropriate to adopt qualitative methods for this study. Besides, in the next section I described how my qualitative standpoint evolved taking into account Braun and Clark's idea of qualitative sensibility.

#### **4.5.1 The Concept of Qualitative Sensibility**

In 2013, Braun and Clark developed the notion of qualitative sensibility to strengthen the argument for qualitative research. According to Braun and Clark (2021), qualitative sensibility refers to an orientation towards research – in terms of research questions and analysing data – that fits within the qualitative paradigm. In a more recent book, Braun and Clark (2021) refer to qualitative sensibility as capturing the assumptions, values, orientation, and skills needed to carry out a reflexive thematic analysis. More broadly, they argue that being qualitative sensible is akin to Big Q- an entirely qualitative research approach. Decades ago, Kidder and Fine (1987) distinguished Big Q with the use of qualitative data in a limited way or with orientations that are more in consonance with the quantitative positivist approach. Louise Kidder and Michelle Fine called this orientation or value small q. Braun and Clark (2013) identify four skills and orientations which are essential to qualitative sensibility: An interest in process and meaning, over and above cause and effect; A critical and questioning approach to life and knowledge – you do not take things at face value and simply accept the way they are, but ask questions about why they may be that way; The ability to reflect on the dominant assumptions embedded in one's cultural context- being both a cultural member and cultural commentator at the same time: The ability to develop double consciousness or an analytic 'eye' or 'ear,' where you can listen intently and critically reflect on what is said simultaneously. For instance, when collecting primary data, I focused on the

obvious content and possible analytic ideas within them. This helped me think, and I made notes during this process. The results are rich, nuanced and complex data/findings.

Due to the dynamics and nuance of qualitative research, Braun and Clark (2021) added three orientations: A desire to be open and understand the complexities, contradictions and nuances of qualitative research; Acknowledging and embracing the idea that knowledge emerges from positions and the disinterest in the notion of a monolithic universal truth; The ability to withstand some level of uncertainty in the process.

Developing a qualitative sensibility takes time; there are always processes of learning and analytical thinking to be done (Braun & Clark, 2021). In my experience, it has improved to a significant extent. I was steeped in quantitative –positivism for some time. I was more of the small q (Kidder & Fine, 1987). This was my research orientation during my first degree. Nevertheless, during my master's degree, I moved to the mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative paradigms), and gradually, I began to understand and build the orientation of Big Q (Kidder & Fine, 1987). Due to my earlier positivist research background, I sometimes fall into the trap of positivism creep. Positivism creep refers to the unintentional importation of quantitative research orientations into qualitative research (Braun & Clark, 2013; 2021). Such values or orientations include the search for a singular truth, controlling bias, and valuing objectivity (Braun & Clark, 2021). I have realised that developing a qualitative sensibility is an activity a researcher needs to engage with. The more a researcher reads, reflects, continually, and crucially conducts qualitative research, the more developed one's qualitative sensibility will become. Embracing uncertainty, complexity, and subjectivity and always reflexing is a critical tool and process for qualitative researchers (Braun & Clark, 2019; 2021), and this process also shapes how qualitative researchers analyse and interpret their dataset.

#### **4.5.2. Qualitative Research and Generalizability: Explaining the Positionality of this Study**

Due to its prevalent application in quantitative research methodologies, generalizability is commonly linked with statistical-probabilistic generalizability (Carminati, 2018). This refers to the situation where a study generates knowledge that is deemed universally applicable and representative of a broader population, achieved by employing a sample selected at random (Smith, 2018). However, this understanding of generalizability has its limitations. Firstly, achieving complete generalizability is an unattainable goal due to the inherent errors in sampling and measurement processes (Hays & McKibben, 2021). Researchers cannot entirely eliminate the influence of study context from their analysis, nor should they, as well as statistical assumptions, being compromised by these errors and contextual factors during data analysis (Levitt et al., 2018). Secondly, the philosophical foundations, both ontological and epistemological, that underpin statistical-probabilistic generalizability are aligned with positivism (Lincoln et al., 2017; Smith, 2018). Positivism assumes the existence of an objective truth that can be directly measured and universally applied. Therefore, applying statistical/probabilistic generalizability to qualitative research is problematic. Besides, this perspective contradicts the strengths of qualitative research methodology (Yarkoni, 2022). Particularly, concepts concerning human behaviour and attitudes encompass inherent errors throughout the research design, are strongly influenced by context, and are subject to change over time, in varying spaces, and within power dynamics and other relational intricacies. Consequently, this type of generalizability needs to be more relevant and suitable for qualitative approaches (Carminati, 2018; Yarkoni, 2022; Smith, 2018; Yadav, 2022).

Within qualitative research, there exists a perspective held by researchers that reality is multifaceted and influenced by a variety of factors, including the researchers themselves, participants, and other individuals involved (Scolari et al., 2020; Gray, 2018). Similarly, there is a

common belief that knowledge is not something inherently separate that researchers stumble upon objectively; instead, it is believed to be formed and influenced by subjectivity, with researchers playing an active role in its construction. This viewpoint contrasts with the notion of independent discovery and objective revelation of quantitative research (Lincoln et al., 2017; FitzPatrick, 2019). The idea of generalizability has become more defined in qualitative research, with a stronger focus on ensuring research quality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2017). Decades ago, scholars (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) put forward various qualitative benchmarks such as credibility, transferability, and dependability. In recent years, qualitative researchers have also elucidated the notion of trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2017) and introduced fresh standards for assessing qualitative rigour (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019).

Smith's (2018) argument provides four opportunities for generalizability in qualitative research. These four routes for qualitative research generalizability include naturalistic generalizability, transferability, analytical generalizability, and intersectional generalizability. I made my argument for this research based on Smith's (2018) naturalistic generalisation and transferability. According to Smith (2018), naturalistic generalizability occurs when the research connects with the reader's personal involvement in real-life matters or their indirect, frequently unspoken encounters. To put it differently, the research exhibits similarities akin to familiar resemblances with the readers' encounters, the environments they interact within, incidents they have witnessed or been informed of, and individuals they have conversed with. In order to facilitate naturalistic generalizability, the researcher must furnish the audience with sufficient participant life details backed by substantial 'evidence' like interview excerpts, observational field notes, or visual materials (Smith, 2018). The current study aligns with the foregoing argument. Chapter 5, the methodology and the research design section, elaborates on the steps and procedures taken in

this study; it provides a contextual understanding of the research process. The findings were presented (Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9) with explanations and additional information where necessary to allow readers to understand the context. The research participants' quotes were also included to illustrate the findings. Additionally, ample contextual information is necessary to actualise naturalistic generalisation and intricately woven theoretical explanations of the reality being studied (Sparks & Brighton, 2017). I believe this approach, as adopted for this study, assists readers in contemplating these elements and establishing links to their own experiences.

Somewhat similar to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of transferability, which is grounded in qualitative research epistemological foundation as a form of procedure or method to achieve trustworthiness in the interpretation of reality, Smith's (2018) idea of transferability is supported by the belief that knowledge is shaped and influenced by individual perspectives, that reality is diverse and shaped by the mind, and that methods cannot offer knowledge that is devoid of theoretical influences. In other words, transferability, as conceptualised here, entails where an individual or a group within a particular context contemplates incorporating something identified in the research from a different setting. For instance, in the context of this research, when a reader or a policymaker comes across this study and feels they can apply the research to their circumstances – when they perceive an alignment between the study and their situation, or when they can instinctively relate the findings to their practical endeavours – then the research can be deemed to achieve generalisation through transferability.

In as much the goal of qualitative research is not to make absolute generalisations, it is still essential to make qualitative generalisations. While probabilistic-statistical generalizability typically places the burden of establishing generalizability on the researcher (Hays & McKibben, 2021), in qualitative forms of generalizability, the reader is frequently encouraged to participate



actively in drawing general conclusions (Smith, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2017). For instance, comprehensive and detailed explanations of the research are essential to facilitate naturalistic generalizability or transferability. This enables readers to identify resemblances and distinctions concerning their circumstances independently. The generalisation process in qualitative research hinges on the researcher's capacity to conduct in-depth studies on meaningful subjects and present them with a rich interpretation (Smith, 2018). While researchers aim to enable specific generalisations through a meticulously crafted qualitative report, the responsibility also falls on the readers to interact with the report (Lewis et al., 2014). They must then decide whether to endorse or dismiss the findings as applicable to their situations. Hence, from this standpoint, researchers and readers jointly must evaluate the significance of a given collection of qualitative research outcomes beyond the initial study's specific context and details. Besides, as qualitative researchers, we should always be reflexive throughout the research process and challenge the topic of generalisation as a process (Smith, 2018).

#### **4.6. Chapter Summary**

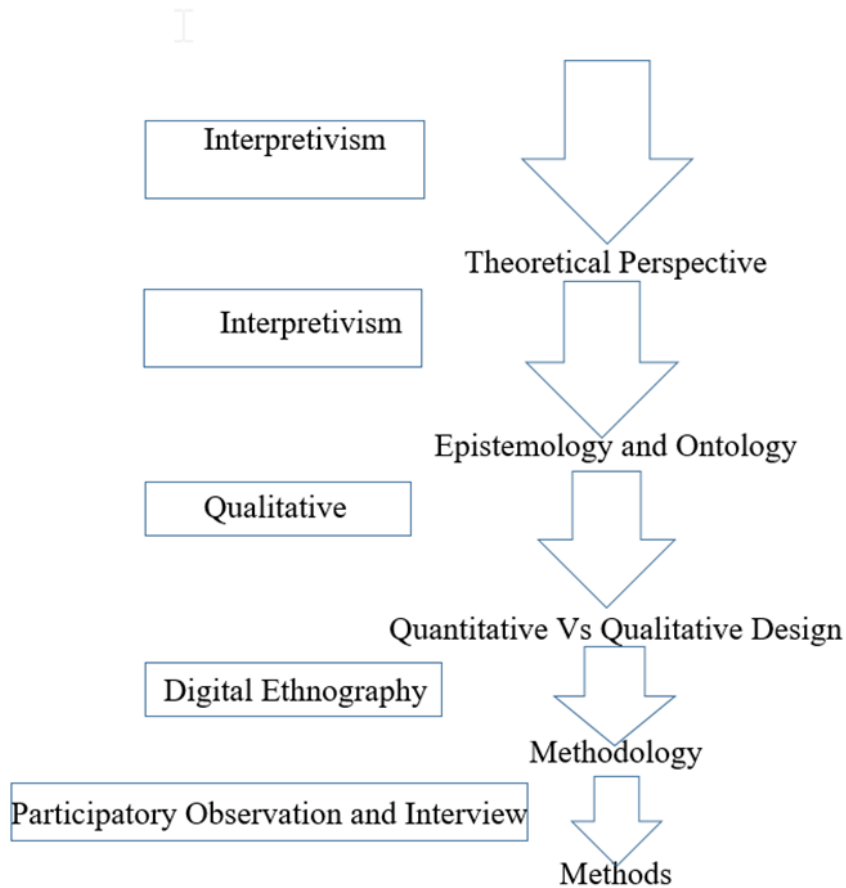
This chapter has presented the philosophical standpoint of the current study. The exploration and review of theoretical perspectives suggested 'interpretivism' as the appropriate research perspective for this study. Interpretivism aims to reach deep understandings and detailed descriptions of the subject of research. In interpretivist studies, there is no one true reality; individuals have different perspectives about their realities. Considering that the perceptions of reality can change in different contexts, the research findings are based on contextual understanding and interpretation of data. Moreover, to help the researcher grasp participants' perspectives of reality, interpretivist studies sometimes require the researcher to be involved with the research context; hence, I added some fraction of constructivism. Constructionism, which

views reality as being continually constructed by individuals and their interactions, addresses this study's epistemological and ontological questions. In particular, reality is seen as individuals' own constructs of their online identities and behaviours, and it is acknowledged that reality might change with different participants, the researcher or the context. I used Braun and Clarke's (2013; 2021) idea of qualitative sensibility to describe my journey from the positivist research orientation to the Big Q research orientation- qualitative sensibility. Furthermore, I explained why interpretivist research, such as the current one, disassociates from quantitative research's statistical-probabilistic generalisation. Instead, the current research embarrasses the naturalistic generalisation and transferability as espoused by Smith (2018). Besides, I reiterated that in qualitative research, generalizability is a process. The next chapter builds upon this discussion by presenting the methodological considerations and the research design of this research.

# Chapter Five: Methodological Considerations and Research Design

## 5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4, I explored the philosophical perspective that serves as the foundation for this study, discussing the decisions made concerning research methods and procedures. Building upon the insights from Chapter 4, the present chapter focuses on methodological considerations and introduces the research design. This study adopts an interpretivist approach to gain profound insights and detailed descriptions of research participants' experiences in the EndSARS movement. Consequently, the research methodology chosen is ethnography, which aims to comprehend and depict social phenomena. Since the study revolves around my participants' online/offline experiences, digital ethnography emerges as the primary methodology. It involves two essential data collection methods: online participant observation and in-depth interviews. Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4 visually represents the underlying philosophical framework, while Figure 5.1 (Istanbulluoğlu, 2014) illustrates the connection between the philosophical standpoint, methodology and methods used in this study.



**Figure 5.1. Shrinking Schema: Distinct Techniques Adopted for this Research**

Base on Istanbulluoğlu (2014)

This chapter addresses the methodology and main methods employed in this study. Section 5.2 describes ethnography. Section 5.3 discusses the different strands of online ethnography. Section 5.4 elaborates on why I chose Pink et al.'s (2016) digital ethnography from these varieties of online ethnography. From subsection 5.4.1 to subsection 5.4.5, I described the principles of Pink et al.'s (2016) digital ethnography vis-a-vis my work. Considering the argument about human activities in cyberspace, and the physical world, section 5.5 discusses the need to understand the blurring synergy of human activities in the material world and on the Internet. In section 5.6, I highlighted the importance of the "field" in qualitative research, especially in digital ethnographic studies such as the current one. As an insider researcher, in section 5.7, I reflexively positioned

myself as an engaged researcher. I discussed and argued about qualitative sampling in section 5.8. Section 5.9, 1 describes how I collected online primary data, while subsection 5.9.1 buttresses my journey during the period of face-to-face interviews in Nigeria. In section 5.10 argues how I contextualised memory in the primary data- the online participant's observation and the interviews. While section 5.11 clarifies why and how this research is driven by Malterud et al.'s (2016) concept of information power. Section 5.12 describes how I employed Buzz, a transcription software, to transcribe the audio interviews to text. In section 5.13, I described how I used Braun and Clark's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis, using Nvivo 12, whereas subsection 5.13.1 argues about the idea of meaning-making from the transcripts. Subsection 5.13.2 to subsection 5.13.7 take us through the iterative phases of reflexive thematic analysis I went through for the data analysis. Section 5.14, subsections 5.14.1, 5.14.2, 5.14.3, 5.14.4, and 5.14.5, highlight the various ethical and legal considerations I made. Finally, section 5.15 summarises the chapter.

## **5.2. The Foundation: Ethnography**

The word ethnography comes from the Greek words "ethnos" (nation) and "graphein" (writing) and literally means the writing of culture. Ethnography has its roots in anthropology and covers a wide variety of styles of research, which vary across different disciplines (Hine, 2000, 2015). What they do have in common is that ethnographic researchers aim to study people, their social worlds, how they live their lives (Pink et al., 2016) and how they understand themselves (Madsen et al., 2018). In its basic form, ethnography consists of an extended period of immersion in a field setting, allowing the researcher to understand the activities and relationships of a culture or subculture from an emic perspective (Hine, 2000; Goulding, 2005). Hine (2015) comments that the ethnographer inhabits somewhat of a strange no man's land: a stranger in a strange land but trying to live as a native. However, as Baym (2016) points out, qualitative methods such as

ethnography are always subjective, as the researcher becomes deeply immersed in the community under study.

There is support for the argument that ethnography is more suitable than quantitative methods to study social worlds, such as social movements (Fassin, 2013; Smit, 2020; Barassi, 2017), on two counts. Firstly, ethnography gives an insider's (or emic) perspective rather than a rational outside view. This gives the researcher situated knowledge rather than universal truth (Light et al., 2018). As protesters are socially-connected beings (Merrill & Lindgren, 2018), an ethnographic study of movement, participants can provide useful insights for the researcher. By being an insider, the researcher can experience the dynamic process of the research participants' experiences and gain a deep understanding of the narratives and meanings involved.

There are different approaches to ethnography, and the researcher could choose the approach they wish to use depending on the study. Ritter (2022) suggests that a researcher may use participant observation, which has four possible modes: (a) complete participation, (b) the participant-as-observer, (c) the observer-as-participant, and (d) the complete observer. Participatory observation as an approach to ethnographic and anthropological research is well-established and has been applied to social movement research (della Porta, 1995, 1996; Fassins, 2013; Zamponi, 2018; Merrill & Lindgren, 2018). Next, I discussed the different variants of online ethnography.

### **5.3. Internet Ethnography, Virtual Ethnography, Netnography or Digital Ethnography?**

Given that this is an interpretivist study which aims to explore and understand online as well as offline experience, an online ethnographic research method, digital ethnography, was used as the research methodology. This section explains online ethnography and presents the ethnographic methods used in this study. Ethnography as a research method aims to understand

participants' experiences through rich and detailed descriptions (Crowe et al., 2019). Ethnographic research methods try to understand and describe a social and cultural phenomenon from the emic or insider's perspective (Hine, 2015). This way, ethnographies can be used to understand and develop insights about naturally occurring phenomena (Whiting & Prichard, 2017). Ethnographers are typically participant observers, but they can combine other methods, such as interviews, to broaden their understanding (Møller & Robards, 2019). Ethnographic research methods can be adapted to computer-mediated communications to understand online social groups and cultures deeply. Although there will be physical distance between participants and researchers, online environments can offer rich and insightful data through reflexive and rigorous practices (Sheller, 2018). Some researchers have preferred to give their online ethnographies distinctive terms and developed these as separate methodologies.

As ethnography goes online and digital, its epistemological remit remains much the same. Ethnography is about telling social stories. When an ethnographer comes back from 'the field', they, like Walter Benjamin's (1969) 'storyteller', have 'something to tell about'. Whyte's (1993[1943]) seminal work in *Street Corner Society*, among other examples, demonstrates how good ethnography effectively communicates a social story, drawing the audience into the respondents' daily lives. Some of the pioneering work in online ethnography (Coover, 2004; Couldry & McCarthy, 2004; Dicks et al., 2005; Jenkins, 2006; Jones, 1999; Pink, 2007) laid the ground for further shaping the method by contemporary online ethnographic scholars such as Kozinets's (2010) work on "netnography", Hine's (2000) "virtual ethnography", Boellstorff et al. (2012) "ethnography in virtual worlds" and recently, Pink et al. (2016) work on "digital ethnography", the methodological lens upon which this research rests.

#### **5.4. Rationale for Using Pink et al.'s Digital Ethnography in this Research**

For this work, I employed Pink et al. (2016) strand of online ethnography, "digital ethnography". Pink and her colleagues' digital ethnography reiterates how digital media has become part of an ethnography involving direct and sustained interaction with human agents within their daily lives. Drawing on Murthy's (2011) explanation, Pink et al. (2016) describe digital ethnography as centring on data-gathering methods mediated by computer-mediated communication. The authors enumerated some of the approaches for digital ethnography to include digitally mediated field notes, online participant observation blogs with contributions by participants, and online groups and can also include accounts of offline approaches. During my reading, I realised that considering the topic and the nature of my investigation, Pink et al. (2016) digital ethnography would be essential. The scholars' principles for a digital ethnography project include (a) multiplicity, (b) non-digital-centric-ness, (c) openness, (d) reflexivity, and (e) unorthodox. I elaborate on these principles below vis-a-vis my work.

##### **5.4.1. Multiplicity**

Digital ethnography is a multidirectional process. In simpler terms, it is frequently shaped by distinct theoretical foundations tied to academic fields, along with the desires and curiosities of various research collaborators, invested parties, and contributors. It is important to recognize the symbiotic relationship between digital technologies, media, and people's activities, which are interconnected with the structures of their daily existence (Pink et al., 2016). These digital technologies should be accessible and usable by the individuals under investigation, whose lifestyles and media consumption we aim to analyse. In the case of my research, the EndSARS movement is significantly driven by social media, and about 70% of Nigeria's population is under 30, and 42% are under the age of 15 (NOI Polls, 2021). Further, a considerable percentage of the



protesters of the EndSARS are young people. Also, the Internet penetration in Nigeria is 61% (NOI Polls, 2021). A significant number of these young people use social media- WhatsApp (84%) and Instagram (86%) (Statista, 2022). Given this information, it is safe to say that my choice of digital ethnography satisfies both the needs of the researcher- myself, and the research participants. As Pink et al. (2016) submit, the infrastructures that support digital media use should clearly impact both the research participants and the researcher. In this context, Internet and social media connections are part of my research process. When I eventually moved to Barcelona for my doctoral study, the Internet bandwidth speed was considerably better; this also impacted my investigation and shaped my digital-ethnographic practice.

#### **5.4.2. Non-Digital-Centric-Ness**

This principle entails that digital ethnography should not entirely be about the "digital" or media. Assessing media with a constant focus solely on media itself would present issues, as it would overlook the significance of understanding how media form integral components of broader contexts and relationships (Pink et al., 2016). Studying media in a way that always puts media at the centre of analysis would be problematic because it would pay too little attention to how media are part of wider sets of environments and relations. Taking this assertion into cognisance, my decision to study the EndSARS movement through the theoretical framework of memory allowed me to understand the event through digital ethnography practices and principles; it means that I am able to understand more than just the role of digital media in the EndSARS movement- in this situation, memory practices and construction, its implications and other entanglements. I did not situate the fieldwork as wholly digital or mediacentric during the online participant observation. Rather, I contextualised the interaction with the subject of investigation from a distanced and demediated perspective. However, I was cognizant of the research objective while keeping my

online field notes. Additionally, when I conducted interviews, I did not directly ask the research participants about memory or social media, but instead, I interacted and studied the research participants' routine activities involving the utilisation of social media, the EndSARS movement, and memory. Besides, I treated this research's primary dataset as memory repertoires (see section 5.10). I looked beyond the digital to understand how they played out in the research participants' experience of the EndSARS movement during the period of this study.

Digital media form part of human experiences. Moreover, the qualities and affordances of social media and smartphones enable new aspects of those experiences. In the case of this research, memory practices- collective and implicit memories and related experiences. As Pink et al. (2016) advise, digital ethnography projects should not be prefaced with the idea of needing to use digital methods. Rather, digital methods should always be developed and designed specifically in relation to the research questions being asked. Hence, by maintaining the context of digital media within the broader context of various components and aspects related to the research subject, location, and methodologies, I am able to perceive the digital aspect as an integral part of a larger framework rather than positioning it as the central focus of this study.

### **5.4.3. Openness**

Pink et al. (2016) argue that digital ethnography is not a bounded research' method'. In other words, the method adopts a flexible approach. According to the scholars (Pink et al., 2016), it is not a unit of activity or a technique with a beginning or end. Rather, it is processual. Applying the notion of openness to the process of digital ethnography research aids me in comprehending how to conduct digital ethnography in a manner receptive to external influences as well as to the needs of other disciplines and methods, especially the nonlinear Braun and Clark's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis, the method of data analysis for this research. Furthermore, this principle is

multifacet considering my background as a media/communication student researching memory studies and employing a methodological approach from anthropology-cum-ethnography. Consequently, the openness inherent in digital ethnography highlights its nature as an eclectic and collaborative undertaking. Put differently, we make knowledge and ways of knowing with others, and not as a lone researcher.

#### **5.4.4. Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an integral ingredient in qualitative research. Generally, reflexivity in ethnography requires a researcher to undertake a constant analytical and evaluative process of their own actions and beliefs (Braun & Clark, 2021). In other words, it is a process of self-reference. Reflexivity allows the researcher to acknowledge that their opinions and preconceptions will affect their perceptions of the subject under study because a researcher always has to interpret the data. Part of the ways digital ethnographers might reflexively engage with their worlds is to ask themselves precisely those inquiries concerning how knowledge is generated (Pink et al., 2016). Considering the milieu of "borrowedness" in the choice of digital ethnography, it is essential that I negotiate and self-reference myself through this eclecticism- my disciplinary background, the topic of investigation, and the method, among others (see section 5.7). Ultimately, this self-referencing will affect how I interpret the data and findings of this research. Researchers' relationships with the digital are pivotal to the specific ways of knowing and being we will encounter in our research practice (Bluteau, 2019). However, Pink and her colleagues (2016) write that reflexivity goes beyond the simple idea of 'bias', and engages oneself with the personal perspective (subjectivity) of the research interaction and the interpretive aspect of ethnographic writing is viewed as a constructive and imaginative pathway for generating insights or understanding about individuals, their lifestyles, encounters, and surroundings. The practice of

reflection is also seen as an ethical and moral approach, as it allows researchers to recognise the collaborative manner in which knowledge is shaped within the ethnographic journey (Cera, 2023).

#### **5.4.5. Unorthodoxy**

Pink et al. (2016) submit that digital ethnography projects go against the traditional ritual of scientific research formats, especially in structure and writing styles. Like the classic Walter Benjamin's (1969) *Illuminations*, an ethnographer is a "storyteller", and he chooses how to tell his or her in as much as it satisfies the craving of his or her audience. Digital ethnographers are beginning to see the importance of writing in unconventional ways. (Miller & Slater, 2000; Ardevol, 2012; Gomez Cruz, 2012). A developing form of digital visual ethnography has arisen, encompassing the utilisation of visual elements as a research technique, which possesses considerable prospects for employing visuals in digital dissemination (Pink, 2012). In the context of my research, I contextualise and write in a storytelling style. For example, in Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, I utilised an integrative approach, seamlessly intertwining the results and discussion sections to enhance the narrative flow and immediate theoretical understanding. Also, the inclusion of images of the EndSARS movement from social media in my work is by no means a coincidence. The inclusion of images does not only function as depictions but also as means of eliciting emotions, materialities, activities and configurations of these things that formed part of my research context. These unconventional ways of disseminating research methods create novel connections between digital ethnography fieldwork, ongoing collaborations, and conversations with my participants. They also facilitate the integration of different timelines and locations involved in the research, analysis, and dissemination processes. Given the flexibility of digital ethnography, next I will discuss how we attempt to understand humans when researching both offline and online.

## **5.5. Researching Humans: Understanding the Material World and the Internet**

The line between daily life and the Internet cannot be drawn with any degree of certainty or principle (Hine, 2015). According to Hine, when the Internet was first becoming widely used, and people tended to refer to online events as occurring in "cyberspace," it seemed strange to consider them commonplace everyday events. Now, however, for many Internet users, the Internet has lost its exotic edge, and we think about the events that happen online as a part of everyday life rather than separate from it (Hine, 2014). In other words, this is not to say that the Internet is a perfect mirror of life, accurately reflecting everything that occurs in material-world settings. The Internet is an existing multiple and variable cultural object, not equally accessible to all and not universally understood by its users. According to a wide range of influences, users develop an understanding of what is reasonable and commonplace to do on the Internet. Bakardjieva (2005) argues, we observe the behaviour of others in the various platforms we use online, adapting our behaviour to fit in with the conventions and affordances of each platform. We also watch and learn from those around us, get ideas about what the Internet is for from the media, and get ideas about how to use it from others. These factors introduce biases and limitations in everyday life that are reflected on the Internet. It functions as a mirror of the offline world to some extent. However, it is a distorted mirror that does not reflect everything that is present in the offline world and that preferentially depicts some aspects over others (Bakardjieva, 2015).

The same applies in face-to-face situations. We tend to believe that face-to-face interactions are natural and that what is said and done in these situations has some authenticity as a reflection of our deeply held values (Hine, 2015). However, this "natural" interaction is just as much influenced by social norms and the opportunities presented by various occasions as anything online. I somehow agree with Hine (2015), who argues that there is no compelling reason to view in-person interactions as the ideal form of fair communication with which to measure unfair online

interactions. However, it is crucial for an ethnographer to remain aware of the factors that affect everyday life, both online and offline, as well as the various conventions and limitations that determine what constitutes appropriate behaviour in each environment.

Though the Internet may distort daily life happenings, however, it also offers many valuable resources for an ethnographer looking to understand the banal elements of daily life (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2020). More and more of life's trivial mundanities are being reflected online as technical and social barriers to participation have decreased, and the participatory expectation built around social media has grown (Pink et al., 2016; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2020). Therefore, the Internet, in the case of this study, social media, is used as a tool and a field to research a variety of subjects that might be challenging to observe in person and to supplement other, more structured methods of researching a subject of interest.

## **5.6. Fieldwork: Where is the "Field"?**

For decades, researchers' access to behavioural traces and experiences has significantly increased due to the development of social media and the participatory web (Møller & Robards, 2019). This has led to innovative studies such as Ferrari's (2022) exploration of online activism on Instagram using information from publicly accessible data on Instagram. Traditional methods, such as interviews, may seem expensive and time-consuming compared to the wealth of publicly available data on various types of everyday activity. For instance, Bainotti et al. (2021) used an online research method to investigate ephemeral content on social media, and they found that the technique is easier, quick, and affordable. Bainotti et al.'s finding corroborated Christine Hine's (2014) study, which used available data on Mumsnet to explore how parents discuss the problem of head lice in children. According to Hine, while the challenge of headlice is widespread among British children in primary school, there can still be a stigma associated with it, and many parents

find it difficult and embarrassing to discuss the subject face-to-face. So, we can say that social scientists have discovered that the publicly accessible data on the Internet allows for some unique insight into behaviours outside of the Internet and can be a useful way to explore some questions about routine behaviours that are otherwise unanswerable. But the question still is, where is the field?

A critical component of an ethnographer's methodological approach is the idea of "being there" (Hine, 2015, p.19), as it allows for a direct, embodied experience of the field and prevents reliance on overly generalised second-hand accounts. The co-presence of an ethnographer with the setting can cause the ethnographer to form a bond with the setting's inhabitants because close contact involves interacting daily and makes it challenging to maintain an impartial stance. Besides, this co-presence is reflected in the closeness and sense of shared commitment between research participants, and the ethnographer is frequently reflected in the written research findings by ethnographers.

Although we routinely speak of "the field" in the singular, the object of study in ethnographic tradition has, in practice, rarely been a tightly bounded geographic space or cultural unit (Ardévol & Gómez-Cruz, 2014; Hine, 2015). As ethnographic research progresses, new locations and connections with other groups of people come into view as relevant to understanding the original focus of the research (Hine, 2015). Consequently, I situate or describe the "field" within the third wave of online ethnography as identified by Robinson and Schulz (2009) because my notion and focus of the "field" is not entirely online. In other words, the "field" in digital ethnography could be online and offline. Pioneer ethnographers studied field sites on the Internet because they appeared to offer different conditions from the offline world. Subsequently, they explored the transfer of offline ethnographic practice and concepts such as the site of and

participant observations into the online domain (Hine, 2000). In contrast, the third wave of online ethnography, as espoused by Robinson and Schulz (2009) is less dedicated to a fundamental distinction between online and offline. Following on the claim that the Internet is a legitimate territory for ethnographic insight, Robinson and Schulz (2009) describe how subsequent ethnographic approaches to the Internet increasingly became multi-modal, exploring the use by participants of combinations of face-to-face and mediated interaction. Platforms can be studied ethnographically in and of itself, as Boellstorff (2010) contends. However, ethnographic studies can also concentrate on the interactions between various platforms or the interactions between the virtual and physical worlds. Though, just as Miller and Slater (2000), and Hine (2015), I would reject the idea that there is a preexisting distinction between the virtual and real worlds, it is this latter group of ethnographic studies that I focus on. I took the latter position based on the notion that ethnography can be more concerned with following connections than with focusing on a particular location. I argue that such an approach is consistent with the long-standing ethnographic commitment to concentrate on holistic understanding, albeit one understood in terms of openness to connections.

In this work, I contextualised the "field" as the social media I explored, the itineraries of activities I engaged in, such as the journaling, and the travel I embarked on for the face-to-face interviews in Abuja, Lagos, and Anambra States in Nigeria. Furthermore, I add that the "field" is also in the psychic process of meaning-making during the period of putting this work together. As Hine (2015) puts it, the focus is on ethnography *for*, and not *in* the Internet. I see the field site in digital ethnography as an embedded, embodied, everyday ethnography. I view co-presence with the field as a process which involves critical and analytical meaning-making, mediated interaction, or face-to-face engagement. To further buttress my stand, I draw on the argument of Cohen (1985):



ethnographic fields are fluid, situated, and sometimes symbolically constructed- rather than existing in an objective, transcendental sense. Because ethnography is an exploratory and adaptive method that sets out to find out how things make sense, and It is typically not thought possible to predetermine the exact boundaries of the study because boundaries themselves may not objectively preexist the specific circumstances in which they are referenced.

### **5.7. My Experience as an Insider and Engaged Researcher**

The distance between the researcher and the object of study has often been debated in social movement studies (Kaun, 2017). Some scholars have criticised the 'divide between the practice of social change and the study of such efforts' as 'artificial' due to the progressive institutionalisation of the discipline (della Porta & Diani, 2006). My experience in this research project has been quite the opposite, given that identifying this divide in my work and my everyday life has been a delicate issue from the methodological, epistemological and ethical points of view, the implications of which I will now examine in the most transparent possible way.

In fact, I have been an EndSARS advocate for over seven years, advocating for the end of police brutality predominantly through social media. In 2020 I was at the protest venue in Abuja, Nigeria, for more than four days. When I moved from Nigeria to Barcelona, Spain for my PhD at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) in 2021, through social media, I was still involved in the movement. The first anniversary of the EndSARS movement was held two days (20/10/2021) before my enrolment at the UOC (22/10/2021).

Thus, my research has to be defined as 'engaged' even from the point of view of simple factual observation, without needing any further elaboration: I have been 'engaged' for some time in the same field that I have been investigating. It is not something that I was directly looking for. In fact, when I started developing the research project on the relationship between memory and

movements, I did not plan to base it on the EndSARS movement. In fact, I was occupied with the thought of social change, but I was not seeing the theoretical perspective of memory in the picture at the time. I was able to navigate the murky waters of finally identifying this topic with the guidance of my supervisors. My supervisors' scholarly counsel opened my eyes to the need to limit my work to a specific subject of study. Through their scholarly advice and journal papers, and book recommendations, I brought the memory perspective to the EndSARS.

This peculiar, structural condition as an 'engaged researcher' means that I experience some of the traits the scholarship has identified. Milan (2014) defines engaged research as an investigation concerning the social realm characterised by their adherence to systematic and evidence-based research methods within the social science domain. However, their primary goal is not solely confined to academic pursuits but extends towards positively impacting marginalised communities and individuals. These inquiries might address matters that directly affect the disadvantaged or offer support to social movement activists striving to influence policymakers' decisions.

However, as Milan and Milan (2016) further explains, 'engaged research does not call for the blurring of the boundaries between an insider and researchers; rather, it acknowledges the reciprocal roles, with their own strengths and drawbacks, and tries to build on those' (Milan, 2014). In my case, this has meant establishing boundaries between different activities and experiences without losing the favourable conditions that my peculiar position has provided. In fact, investigating a movement with which I am very familiar has proven advantageous in at least two ways: on the one hand, it was easier, for me, than for an 'outsider' to understand what the research participants meant when they shared their experiences, what background informed their choices, in what socio-economic context their references were situated; on the other hand, due to the

relationships I had established during the period, I had effortless access to a large number of EndSARS protesters mainly in Abuja, Lagos, and Anambra; which proved very useful as interviewees.

There is at least one downside for each of these advantages: my deep knowledge of the EndSARS movement meant that my interviewees might take certain things for granted and avoid mentioning them explicitly. Given that this is the structural condition in which I conducted my research, my only option is to acknowledge it, problematise it in the most transparent way possible, and discuss the research strategies that I have used to face these challenges.

First of all, I have to say that factionalism, both during the sampling phase, i.e. when I chose my interviewees and when conducting the interviews was not challenging. I managed to interview protesters across three States- Abuja, Lagos, and Anambra. It is pertinent to mention that these research participants share different ethnoreligious and political ideologies. The research participants are predominantly Muslims and Christians, and a good number of them are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (the three main languages in Nigeria). Some of them support the current political party in power- All Progressive Congress (APC). Others align with the two major opposition- Labour Party (LP) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). However, the commonality of the movement made it impossible for me not to encounter any socio-political hostility from the research participants. The declines I received from some potential interviewees were never explained in ethnoreligious or political terms.

Furthermore, the structure of the interviews was mainly based on the reconstruction – led by the research participants – their stories of the movement. This choice created a relaxed atmosphere and a feeling of empathy in the interviews, given that remembering intense and enjoyable moments of the previous years created the suitable emotional climate. Finally, in order

to avoid the risk of the research participants being influenced by previous interactions with me about my research interests, I avoided interviewing the people that had been closest to me during the movement and with whom I had shared some of my ideas and thoughts about the research. This does not mean that there is no content in the interviews material, that my ideas or thoughts did not influence, but it means that what is of 'mine' in the research participants' discourse is the result of my interaction with them as an insider and not of predetermined scholarly hypotheses. At the end of the day, the entire EndSARS movement discourse results from complex interactions between all the actors involved in the movement, and I was one of them.

As far as the content of the interviews is concerned, the only challenge I had, which was connected with my peculiar status as an insider researcher, was the tendency of some research participants to take for granted that I understood certain things without the need for much elaboration on their part. However, this problem was easily solved in direct interaction with the interviewees, thanks to their kindness and patience when I asked them to elaborate a little further on things they had said. The interviews were conducted in the English Language with the intermittent usage of Nigerian Pidgin English, and they were analysed in their versions before being translated, especially phrases and sentences in the Nigerian Pidgin English.

### **5.8. Qualitative Sampling**

Data gathering for interpretive research is randomised, but it does need to be systematic and/or theoretically informed because, in interpretative studies, the researcher seeks to arrive at insights for which they will offer as much evidence and reasoning as possible (Gill, 2020). Considering the philosophical orientation of this research, I used purposive sampling methods rather than probability sampling. Due to the flexibility of the qualitative research approach, the researcher may combine sampling techniques for a study; the process of qualitative sampling may

change as the research process is iterative (Farrugia, 2019). I combined the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques for this study. I will start by explaining the purposive or judgemental sampling technique and why and how I deployed it in the current study. Afterwards, I describe why and how I used the snowballing technique.

The purposive sampling strategy moves away from any random form of sampling and ensures that specific kinds of cases that could be included are part of the final sample in the research study (Hennick, 2019). For Lincoln et al. (2017), purposive sampling is based on informational considerations and maximisation. The technique gives the researcher the power to decide the phenomenon they intend to include in their study; in this case, the phenomenon that would be most beneficial to the study (Small et al., 2022). The technique is cost-effective and flexible (Gill, 2020). In a qualitative study, a relatively small and purposively selected sample may be employed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to increase the depth (Small, 2009) as opposed to the breadth of understanding (Camp et al., 2020).

In this research, I aim to understand how protesters construct diverse memory practices, and how they use ephemeral media (Story) during the protest to construct memory practices of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. Specifically, I purposively explored WhatsApp, and Instagram, as stated earlier, these social media are among the most popular in Nigeria. These purposively selected social media are among the most used by young people (Statista, 2022), and they were the most used in the EndSARS protest (Uwalaka, 2022). In qualitative research, "sample" may refer to the phenomenon of study (Sandelowski, 1995), as in the case of the social media, Instagram and WhatsApp, I purposefully and participatory observed. A "sample" may also mean the number of interviews or events sampled. Nonetheless, my focus is not on numbers but on rich qualitative data and meaning-making; hence, the purposive selection of WhatsApp, and Instagram.

In particular, I used the snowball sampling strategy for the interviewing process. Snowball sampling is a technique for recruiting study participants not easily accessible or unknown to the researcher (Naderifar et al., 2017; Reagan et al., 2019; Wohl et al., 2017). In other words, it is a common sampling method in qualitative research where the researcher does not directly recruit participants but recruits prospective research participants through an already known person or participant (Marcus et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2019). As an insider, I was privileged to know participants that fit my research. However, through these known participants, I was able to recruit additional research participants. I refer to these known participants as referrals. For Instance, one of the research participants in Abuja, Nigeria I have known since 2020 from the protest site in Abuja, Nigeria. This research participant was instrumental in linking me with two research participants. In addition, I had other research participants snowballed through social media. Dosek (2021) argues that social media solves some of the inherent drawbacks of the snowballing technique by gathering background information and identifying and establishing contact with salient participants unknown to the researcher. As one of the processes of recruiting participants for the research, I created a participants screener in a Google Form, which contains the description of the study and the characteristics of prospective participants. I shared the link to the Google Form on three WhatsApp groups and on Twitter. I got to recruit one of the participants for this study through one of the WhatsApp groups where one of my known participants is a member. The known research participant, a former classmate, referred me to the participants who reside in Lagos, Nigeria. Furthermore, one of my participants on Twitter snowballed two people. Haven discussed the sampling process, I will now elaborate on the digital ethnographic online data collection.

## 5.9. Collecting Primary Data: My Online and Digital Experience

Having established that the field is fluid and unstable, I would say I started garnering primary data during the heat of the EndSARS protest in 2020. As an insider, I can vividly recall the activities of my participation in the protest on social media and on the street of the capital of Nigeria, Abuja, in the first week of October 2020. This immersive and engaged process of ethnography is part of what Hine (2015) describes as learning-by-doing, and this experience informed this research. However, I formally commenced my ethnographic fieldwork on WhatsApp and Instagram on October 18, 2021 when I moved from Nigeria to Barcelona, Spain, for my doctoral study. The field lasted until October 22, 2023. I am not new to these social media. I signed on to WhatsApp in 2010 and started using Instagram in 2012. Consequently, I can say that my knowledge and understanding of these social media is adequate for this study. My experience is in line with Hine's (2015) position that with the rise of social media, many ethnographers will have an easily accessible online presence that far exceeds that which they have created for ethnographic purposes. Besides, travelling to Barcelona for my PhD gave me more tools for my research. For instance, compared to Nigeria, the Internet bandwidth in Barcelona is stronger. As I discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, this improved Internet strength is part of what Pink et al. (2016) refer to in their discussion of multiplicity as a key principle of digital ethnography- it is not a one-way thing; it considers the needs of the researcher, their participants, and other stakeholders. With the improved Internet connection, I was able to fully use social media as both a tool and a field (Cruz & Ardèvol, 2017).

Furthermore, my changing of location from Nigeria to Barcelona, Spain, did not disrupt my investigation. Rather, the social media connection afforded me a sense of co-presence with the field; it facilitated periodic *visits* and helped me build an experiential understanding of the EndSARS movement. Therefore, social media provide a way to establish co-presence with

research subjects and to expand a field in both time and space beyond the idea of a particular, delimited online or offline site (Ferrari, 2022; Hine, 2015)

As discussed earlier, ethnographic research places significant emphasis on immersion in the setting to generate knowledge. However, remarkable knowledge and expertise of the chosen setting are critical (Pink et al., 2016; Hine, 2015); in the context of this research, my knowledge of the chosen social media was critical. Besides, the number of years I have spent on these social media corroborates Pink et al. (2016) assertion; I am not a novice on these social media; my technical knowledge of them is advanced.

Digital ethnography is not simply the excavation of digital trace (Møller & Robards, 2019); it entails the researcher's interaction with the phenomenon of investigation (Markham, 1998; Boellstorff et al., 2012; Hine, 2015; Pink et al., 2016). Aside from WhatsApp, which I describe as a semi-public domain, it is essential to mention that this research did not investigate closed pages or groups in the chosen social media. Rather, I explored publicly available data and interaction on these social media. Hine (2015) notes that online ethnographic research might engage with at least two types of digital traces: those readily available on social media, such as the one I just described, and those that the ethnographer shapes through interventionist strategies to represent activity and make it available for collaborative interpretation. It is my active process of commenting, interpreting, engaging, and questioning assumptions with available data on these social media that served as the interventionist approach I employed. In other words, I did not merely observe and read the information on these social media. Instead, I was immersed and engaged with posts which directly and indirectly relate to the EndSARS. Furthermore, with my knowledge of the EndSARS before 2020, and my eventual research interest in the movement, as stated earlier, I conducted a three-years digital ethnography on Instagram and WhatsApp from October 18, 2021 to October



22, 2023. Besides, I realised that the research participants start making more posts on these social media from the first week of October before October 20, which has come to be known as the day of the anniversary because of the shooting of unarmed protesters at the Lekki Tollgate on October 20 2020. However, throughout the period of this study, whenever there are issues connected to the EndSARS, I follow them up. For instance, the 2023 general elections were a topic that discussed the EndSARS. Overall, building on my experience of the EndSARS, I engaged in the above-described digital ethnographic research in the EndSARS, and its anniversaries in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

#### **5.9.1. The Journey to Nigeria for Fieldwork: The Face-to-Face Qualitative Interviews**

Given the multi-modal approach of digital ethnography research (Møller & Robards, 2019; Pink et al., 2016; Hine, 2015), and the characteristic of moving around different sites of ethnographic research (Marcus, 1995), on April 17, 2023, I travelled from Barcelona, Spain to Nigeria to carry out face-to-face interviews with the participants of this study. Moreover, it is widely accepted that face-to-face interview is a suitable method for qualitative research to gain insights from people who have experience in the phenomenon of study (Majid et al., 2017; Robert, 2020).

Before I started interviewing the research participants, I carried out two pilot interviews with them in Abuja. Qualitative researchers (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015) advocate for pilot interviews, especially for novice researchers. Pilot Interviews enable the qualitative researcher to develop further and refine their interview guide (Majid et al., 2017; Williams-McBean, 2019; Yin, 2018). Also, for the cub researcher such as me, pilot interviews may help improve interviewing skills and confidence (Yeong et al., 2018). The pilot interviews were productive and they enabled me to fine-tune the interviewer guide. Also, the order of the questions was changed for a better

conversation flow, and some questions were rephrased for the research participants' understanding. However, the interview guide keeps improving and changing during the interviews with the research participants. This experience is in tandem with interpretivist scholars' (Braun & Clark, 2019b, 2021; Hine, 2015) description of the fluidity and openness of qualitative research. Besides, this is the reason Harding (2013) argues that the need for piloting qualitative interviews is not particularly obvious because the interview guide's quality improves as the interviews progress (see appendix II). However, Harding (2013) submits that before beginning a comprehensive study, it is beneficial to test the interview questions and modify the guide accordingly. Hence, my decision to conduct two pilot interviews before I embarked on the main interviews.

As stated earlier, the participants selected for this research are people who are familiar with the EndSARS movement, and they also use the selected social media for the protest. Before travelling to Nigeria, I informed the research participants about the study's purpose, what is required of them, and that their personal data would be treated with utmost anonymity. Besides, at the start of each interview, I reiterate the purpose of the study. I also took the time to explain the informed consent document to the interviewees. I encouraged each interviewee to read the informed consent document before signing. All the interviewees voluntarily signed the informed consent form. However, a few refused to indicate their national identity number on the informed consent document. My understanding of why some of the interviewees did not indicate their national identity number is probably, the national identity number is too private to disclose, especially for a sensitive topic such as the EndSARS- police brutality. Further, the research participants were informed beforehand that the conversation would be audio-recorded.

Qualitative interviews are a suitable technique if a researcher wants to comprehend the research participant's subjective perspective on what they experienced or are experiencing

(Roberts, 2020). Researchers have privileged access to people's fundamental experience of the lived world when they conduct qualitative interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). This kind of interview is conducted to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (Robert, 2020). The objective is to understand the research participant's perspective on the meaning and experience of the real world as expressed in their own words and described in great detail to the researcher, who is receptive and willing to put aside their own opinions and prior knowledge about the experience under consideration (Gray, 2018). The continued emphasis on qualitative interviews as a technique for gathering qualitative data is justified in light of the intention and aim of qualitative research as well as the notion that interviews are the main road to multiple realities (Yeong et al., 2018).

I started off the face-to-face interviews in Abuja, Nigeria. From April 19, 2023, to May 2, 2023, I conducted four interviews with the selected research participants in Abuja, Nigeria. The interviews were carried out at the convenience of the participants. For instance, I had to reschedule an interview with a research participant three times. On another occasion, I had to follow an interviewee to his workplace, and I waited until the close of work before we could start the interview. After twelve days of working in Abuja, I travelled by road from Abuja to Awka, Anambra State. By bus, the journey from Abuja to Awka took me approximately eight hours.

From May 3, 2023, to May 7, 2023, I was in the Anambra State capital city, Awka. While in Awka, I interviewed a research participant. The interview in Awka was flexible and straightforward. The research participant is a young man and former coursemate during my bachelor's degree at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Coincidentally, he works at the administrative unit of the same University where we had studied eleven years ago. At the research

participant's convenience and after work hours, we held the interview at the University's staff bar. The discussion with the interviewee was more or less an informal conversation. A recent study (Swain & King, 2022) shows that using a conversational approach for qualitative interviews creates a relaxed atmosphere for both the researcher and the research participants.

I arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 8 2023, and for fourteen days (two weeks), I navigated the crowded traffic gridlock of the city to get to my interlocutors. I interviewed six research participants in my fourteen days of fieldwork in Lagos, Nigeria. I was to conduct seven interviews in Lagos, but at the time, a research participant had to cancel an interview because of the distance between my residence and theirs. Poor mobile network connection restrained efforts to conduct the interview through a phone call. On one occasion, I spent over one hour in a traffic gridlock on my way from Mushin (My location while in Lagos State) to interview a research participant in Ketu (The interviewee's residence in Lagos State). Ideally, from Mushin to Ketu is approximately thirteen kilometres, about a twenty minutes ride on public transport. To mitigate this challenge of traffic gridlock, I was able to do some of the interviews on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays because my interlocutors close early from work on Fridays, and Saturdays and Sundays are not work days for most of them. The unique thing about my experience in Lagos is that I had to develop strong stamina to withstand the characteristics of the environment, especially its rowdiness and the traffic gridlock. Luckily, the interviewees in Lagos were flexible with their time. I understand that they are already accustomed to the flexibility of changing the time for appointments due to the transport system's unforeseen nature and traffic gridlocks.

I conducted eleven interviews across three State capitals in my thirty-six days of fieldwork in Nigeria. The mean age of the interviewees stands at 25 years, indicative of a predominantly youthful cohort. Moreover, the upper bound of the age spectrum is 35 years, underscoring a

relatively narrow age distribution within the sample. Furthermore, gender representation among the research participants is seven male and four female. On average, each interview lasted a little above fifty minutes.

**Table 5.1. A Descriptive Table of the Research Participants**

<b>Research Participants</b>	<b>State/Location</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	Abuja	25	Male
2	Abuja	32	Male
3	Abuja	27	Female
4	Abuja	35	Male
5	Anambra	31	Male
6	Lagos	26	Female
7	Lagos	34	Male
8	Lagos	29	Female
9	Lagos	30	Male
10	Lagos	24	Female
11	Lagos	35	Male

However, the longest interview lasted one hour and twenty-seven minutes. I conducted the interviews with a prepared semi-structured interviewer's guide (see appendix II). My choice of semi-structured interview format is informed by its flexibility (Creswell, 2007) and openness (Baumbusch, 2010). Very popular in the Humanities, the semi-structured interview is an exploratory technique used most often for qualitative research. While the technique follows a prepared guide or protocol prior to the interview, it allows the researcher to amend the questions and drive the interview process as the conversation unfolds (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

As a former British colony, the lingua franca or official language in Nigeria is the English Language. A large proportion, especially youth, speak and understand the English Language. Besides, from preschool to higher education, the English Language is the medium of instruction and examination. Though Nigeria has over five hundred local languages (Akindele et al., 2022), the English Language is one of the British bequeathed cultural colonial heritage to the nation. However, the common language binder for the country is Nigerian Pidgin English (Udenze & Roig, 2023). Consequently, the language of the interviews was English, and depending on the flow of the conversation and the context, we switched to Nigerian Pidgin English. As Nigerians, speaking the Nigerian Pidgin English comes naturally; this created a relaxed atmosphere for the interlocutors. At the next section, I elaborated on how I contextualised the dataset from the online participant observation and face-to-face as a repertoire of memory.

### **5.10. The Dataset as Repertoire of Memory**

How can memories be traced in individuals? Moreover, how does memory emerge from the dataset? Epistemological and methodological issues are deeply intertwined, especially since my work is based on a subjective, relational, and structural conceptualisation of culture as something that 'is not just in our head. We have the flexibility to perceive culture from various perspectives. One way to approach it is by considering it as the symbolic aspect of all systems, organisations, and activities (e.g., political, economic, educational, etc.). Symbols, which carry meaning and significance through their connections, form the fabric of culture (Zamponi, 2015). This cultural pattern both shapes and is shaped by our actions. It not only provides opportunities but also imposes limitations. Culture becomes observable in our language usage, institutional regulations, and social customs rather than being confined solely to individuals' thoughts. (Polletta, 2004, 2019).

If we want to understand collective memories, which are part of an intersubjective culture located in social practices, then how can this phenomenon be traced through individual narratives? One of the techniques used to collect primary data for this research, interviews, was used to establish a direct dialogue with research participants. Interviews have traditionally proved to be a highly useful tool for addressing the symbolic aspects of collective action, particularly the processes of meaning construction rooted in the institutionalised practice of social movement research (Merill et al., 2020; Fassin, 2013). In terms of the online research approach, social media narratives have been helpful in addressing the topic of collective action, memory, and activism (Zamponi, 2020; Smit et al., 2017; Ferrari, 2022; Smit et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant for the research on memory: if memory, in the Halbwachsian tradition, happens in social frameworks, and if individual remembering is embedded in the meaning-making of a collective, then individual interviews and online participant engagement provide a way of tapping into a collective discourse. Individual memories reveal traces of the social frameworks in which such memories have been produced and reproduced, while individually retold, memories reflect collective patterns of interpretation. These patterns are the cultural material from which memory is made. Thus, face-to-face interviews and online ethnographic interaction offer a pivotal way of assessing collective memories. Therefore, I treat the entire dataset as a memory repertoire that is able to voice a collective imagination. Individual narratives, both online and offline, are linked to broader (and, of course, intrinsically plural and contentious) collective narratives, taking into account that the psychic and the social, if formally distinct, are in practice always intertwined (Ferrari, 2022; Kuhn, 2010). Through the collected online narratives and the face-to-face interviews of this research, I reconstruct the patterns that constitute the traces of mnemonic practices and social rituals.

Producing these 'memory repertoires' involves collecting the primary data for this study in ways that do not aim at gathering information about what happened during a certain episode of collective action but at reconstructing the ways in which those episodes are described. If collective memory is situated in the patterns that structure individual accounts, then the material needed by the researcher consists, above all, of these individual accounts. This is why I never opened any of my interviews by stating that it was part of a research project about memory or asked the research participants directly about the collective memories of the EndSARS movement. Confounding research questions with interview questions and asking interviewees the questions the research should answer is a common and recognised pitfall in social science (Denzin et al., 2023). In this case, it would have been even more dangerous since this work aims to understand how the research participants use social media to construct a memory of the EndSARS movement. I presented this work as a study on the research participants' experience of the EndSARS movement in the context of a broader experience of mobilisation, asking research participants to recount, from the beginning, their own stories: how they became involved in the movement, what their experiences have been, etc. Later, the interviews developed from the particular (the research objective/questions) to the general, in the process of gradual and progressive abstraction from the individual experience to general considerations of the movement. In the case of my online participant observation, I approached it from the perspective of a repertoire of narratives which encompasses multimedia rituals of networked conversations about the EndSARS movement, taking into account the primary purpose of the research.

In these processes, treated as 'memory repertoire', I later looked for traces of memories (both collective and implicit); the analysis is presented in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. For this work, memory repertoires produced in the collected data of the online participant observation and in



qualitative interviews are the data analysed. Even though interviews are the most prevalent research tool in this field (particularly when it involves qualitative analysis of collective action and, in particular, research on the symbolic and cultural aspects of mobilisation), the limits of the interview technique cannot be ignored. In particular, one-on-one oral dialogues cannot always account for the institutional but implicit aspects of symbolic and material culture, such as, in my case, the memories embedded in certain spaces, settings, and traditions. Participant observation is a useful tool to address this issue, which is why I was able to provide more insight and context through digital-ethnographic participatory observation. During the interviews, I gathered as much information as possible by situating it in physical and symbolic spaces coherent with the purposes of this research. In other words, this iterative research is guided by the concept of information power.

### **5.11. Driven by the Concept of Information Power**

Information is knowledge, details, and data learned or elicited from an inquiry or investigation. On the other hand, power is possessing the ability, capacity or potential to act or produce an effect. Malterud et al. (2016), in their paper, *Sample Size in Qualitative Interviews Studies: Guided by Information Power*, recommend that qualitative research, especially those which adopt the interview approach should reflect on the information power in their work- the richness of the dataset. Though their submission is not exhaustive, the authors identify five elements that may impact the information power of qualitative research: (1) the aim or purpose of the study, (2) the precision of the sample, (3) using an ingrained theory, (4) the quality of the conversation, (5) the strategy of the analysis. I dovetailed my work into these five items, as Malterud et al. (2016) submitted.

According to the authors (Malterud et al., 2016), research with a broad aim will have less information power compared to a study with a narrow aim which offers considerable information power because the phenomenon under study is more comprehensive. In the current study, I explored how protesters use social media to construct a memory of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria from 2020 until its Anniversaries in 2021, 2022, and 2023. It is important to reiterate that the social media assessed for this narrow aim are WhatsApp, and Instagram. Besides, Sandelowski (1996) argues that the detailed study of a specific subject, such as the EndSAR movement, and the delimited social media is the hallmark and basic unit of analysis in any qualitative study.

In tandem with Patton's (2015) submission about qualitative sampling, Malterud et al. (2016) argue that the specificity of the sample enhances information power. In others, the research participants' homogeneity, shared knowledge, and experiences. Precision or specificity in this regard concerns research participants who are members of a specified group whilst exhibiting some contrast within the experiences to be assessed (LaDonna et al., 2021). The eleven interviewees for the current research are people who participated in the EndSARS movement. Also, they used the selected social media for the protest. If I had not limited the recruitment of research participants to people who participated and used the selected social media for the EndSARS, a much larger number of interviewees would have been needed to generate a higher information power. During the interviews with the selected research participants, the depth (Lareau & Rao, 2016) of their information was convincing. The social media I studied were purposively and specifically selected because they were among the top-used social media for the EndSARS movement.

The current research is established on the philosophical standpoint of interpretivism. Also, this study is ingrained in the theoretical framework of memory. Studies underpinned by contrived theoretical perspectives would typically need a larger sample compared to studies that apply

specific theories for planning and analysis to provide adequate information power (Malterud et al., 2016). The current study built on the already established theoretical framework, memory, to explain certain relations between different aspects of the empirical data. For instance, the iterative meaning-making of the dataset shows that memory, in the context of the EndSARS, is both implicit and explicit.

Information power and the level of quality of the interview conversation are related (Malterud et al., 2016). In other words, studies with a robust dialogue between researcher and participants require fewer research participants to offer sufficient information power than studies with vague, ambiguous or distorted dialogues. Braun and Clark (2019b,2022) argue that approaches used in other types of thematic analysis rely on structured interview guides for data gathering. This approach to thematic analysis is not flexible enough to allow for a complex construction of empirical data between the researcher, the research participants, and other factors determining robust meaning-making. For Hine (2015), the matter of understanding processes of meaning-making, which is rudimentary to ethnographic studies, can become highly complicated and problematic when we rely on structured or unobtrusive techniques. The quality of the conversation I had with my research participants was excellent. The research participant's extensive knowledge and experience about the topic of investigation is outstanding. This blend of experience and knowledge gave the unstructured interview depth, made it robust and informal, and also made the interview guide to constantly evolve. For Braun and Clark (2019b), qualitative interview data are usually "messy," created in a setting where the interviewer is flexible with the research participant's evolving account rather than strictly following a pre-established interview guide. Further, As Malterud et al. (2016) argue, the analytic worth of the empirical data rests on

the researcher's skills, the knowledge and articulateness of the research participant, and the endearment between them.

Finally, information power is linked to the technique of analysis deployed in a study, whether a case or cross-case approach (Malterud et al., 2016). An exploratory single-case study such as the EndSARS is streamlined and will provide more information power, taking into cognisance its dense sample specificity. Also, the adoption of reflexive thematic analysis as the analysis strategy contributes to its rich qualitative data. Reflexive thematic analysis is founded on the belief that meaning, rich information power, resides in the fluidity of data and the researcher's contextual and theoretical interpretative practices (Braun & Clark, 2019b, 2021, 2023). This research is conceptualised as an iterative, reflexive, and theoretically embedded ritual of knowledge construction, where potential new insights are always possible. Besides, within an interpretative study, the goal is not to cover the whole range of phenomena but to interact with patterns which are essential for the study's aim (Mason, 2010). More so, in the process of reflexive analysis, data analysis is not necessarily complete (Low, 2019); rather, as I mentioned earlier, the researcher decides on the situated and interpretative judgement to make. Also, the researcher iteratively advances back and forth between reading the transcript, coding, and theme development (Braun & Clark, 2019b), so there are always opportunities for new insight and meaning-making.

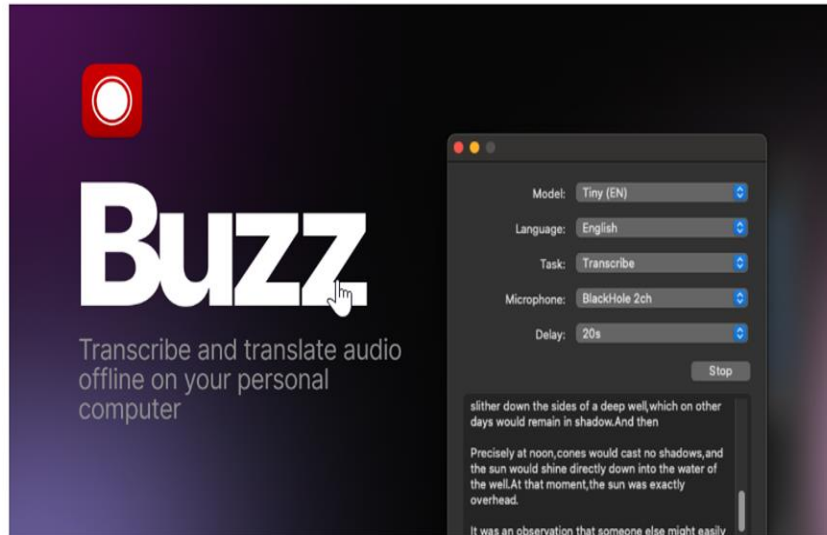
### **5.12. Transcribing the Interviews- Buzz did the Work**

Transcription holds significant importance in qualitative analysis (Bokhove & Downey, 2018; McMullin, 2023), and it is widely acknowledged that valuable meaning and insights from the data surface through this process. Failing to fully engage with the data during transcription would mean passing up a valuable opportunity (McMullin, 2023). Through this process, the interview is revisited multiple times, allowing for deep immersion. Moreover, it involves crucial

decision-making, such as selecting appropriate conventions, determining the required level of detail, and identifying what could be omitted.

In recent years, voice and speech recognition technologies have made significant advancements, reaching a point where they can offer researchers satisfactory initial transcripts (Bokhove & Downey, 2018). Employing these technologies can be a time and cost-saving option for researchers (Hammersley, 2020; McMullin, 2023). Though these transcription technologies provide a more cost-effective and rapid solution than human transcription, researchers must diligently review these transcripts to guarantee accuracy, address gaps, and make edits for context and readability. Additionally, utilising cloud-based transcription services raises ethical considerations regarding data protection and confidentiality (Da Silva, 2021; Swain & King, 2022). However, it is pertinent to note that Buzz does not retain input data. Consequently, my participants' views and related content are protected.

The current study went through the phase of transcribing the face-to-face interviews conducted during the period. I used a software known as Buzz to manage the transcribing of the interviews. While doing a Google search, I discovered Buzz on GitHub. GitHub is a web-based platform and service used for version control and collaboration on software development projects. It gives developers a centralised location to host, manage, and share their code repositories. GitHub is built around the popular version control system called Git. Buzz was created by a Nigerian software developer, Chidi Williams, and having studied a video tutorial of Buzz, I discovered that the application is ideal for transcribing interviews because, to a significant extent, it recognises the Nigerian English Language accent, unlike some other foreign applications which find it challenging to recognise Africa English speakers.



**Figure 5.2. A Screenshot of the Buzz Application**

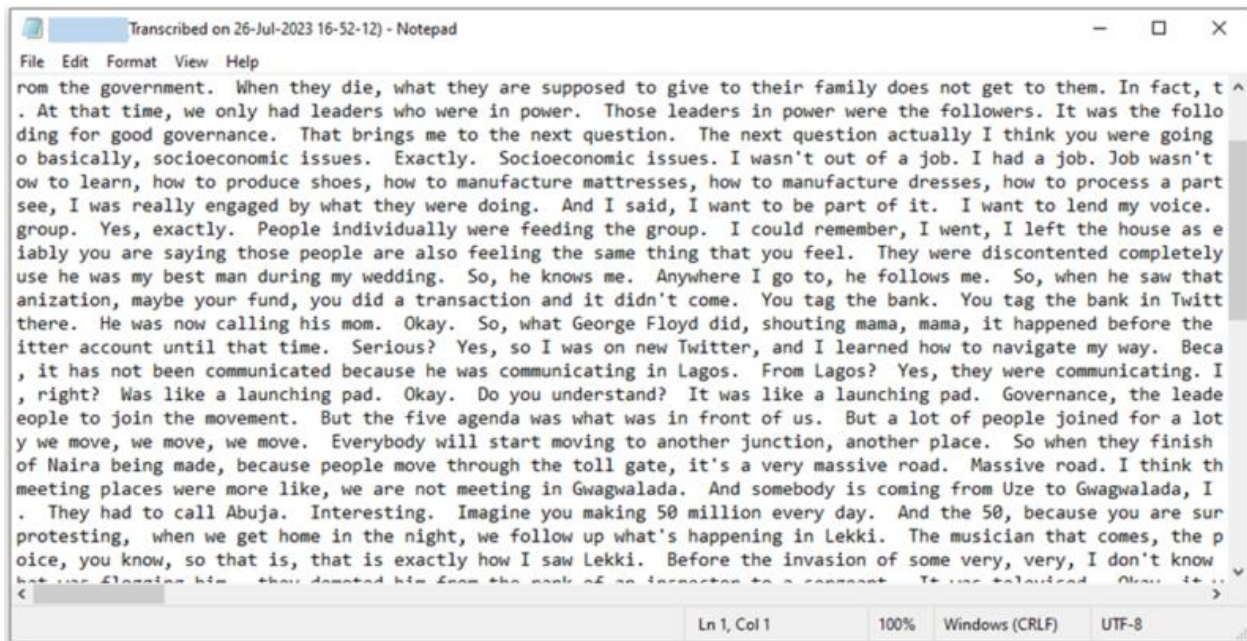
Using Buzz is simple. I just clicked on the File (see image below) section to upload the interview I needed to transcribe, and I allowed the application to read the audio, and it started transcribing gradually. The speed and time at which the application transcribes depends on the weight of the audio file. As it transcribes, it displays the time in percentage (see figure 5.3 below).

File Name	Status
[REDACTED].p3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	Completed
[REDACTED].mp3	In Progress (5%)

**Figure 5.3. The Buzz Software Transcribing Interviews from Audio to Text**

After transcribing, Buzz marks the transcribed audio "Completed". At this stage, I double-click the completed work to export it as a TXT file in Microsoft Notepad. A TXT file is a typical text document comprising plain text. It is compatible with text-editing or word-processing software, enabling easy opening and editing. I copied the transcribed content from Microsoft Notepad to Microsoft Word for thorough cleansing. As Hai-Jew (2014) submits, no definitive or most accurate transcribing style exists. Instead, researchers should consider their study's specific theoretical framework and research objectives.





**Figure 5.4. The extracted TXT file from the Buzz Software to Microsoft Notepad**

Irrespective of how CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) is portrayed, revolutionary (Rainford, 2020) or a 'curse' (Van der Kleij et al., 2017), what remains crucial is being familiar with the dataset. In other words, the qualitative researcher is the craftsman. Familiarisation is a typical preliminary step before conducting formal qualitative data analysis. It involves the researcher immersing themselves in the data by listening to audiotapes, studying the field notes, or reading the transcripts. In this research, I did not delegate the transcribing of the interviews to a research assistant. Besides, after transcribing each interview on Buzz, I clean up the transcript by listening to the audio. This process made me immersed in the analytical process. As McMullin (2023) argues, the transcription process is an integral part of the analytical and meaning-making process. Hence, it is typically advisable for researchers to undertake the transcription themselves rather than entirely delegating the task to research assistants. In other words, conducting the interviews by myself and listening to the audio files while cleaning the transcripts from Buzz allows for profound insight, and entrusting these tasks to



another person could result in overlooking crucial moments of the research process. Besides being a qualitative researcher, I am aware of my position as both an interpreter and the research instrument in this research. Consequently, the reflexive and iterative decisions I made as an active participant were integral to the research process.

### **5.13. Braun and Clark's (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis is one of the famous and foundational qualitative analysis methods. Due to the dynamism of qualitative research methods and the misapplication of the method, the authors have consistently refined the technique to suit evolving qualitative trends over the years. This improvement results from their 2021 book, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. The authors (Braun & Clark, 2021) reflexive thematic analysis approach involves a six-phase approach. In the current book, Braun and Clark emphasised the use of the term *phase* instead of step because language and context are essential in qualitative research. *Steps* evoke a linear and unilateral process. The different phases of reflexive thematic analysis are flexible; it is not sharply delineated (Braun & Clark, 2021, 2022). In other words, it is a back-and-forth itinerary process that needs the researcher's craftsmanship. The six-phase process of reflexive thematic analysis includes (a) familiarisation with data, (b) coding, (c) generating initial themes, (d) developing and receiving themes, (e) refining, defining and naming themes, and (f) writing the research report. I will now discuss these phases in line with how I made meaning of the transcript of my fieldwork.

#### **5.13.1. Making Meaning of My Transcript: Developing Themes from Narratives**

The starting point for the analysis was the online participatory digital ethnography, myself, and the face-to-face interviews. As an insider, I examined my trajectory in this study viz-a-viz the online participant observation on social media and the interviews I carried out with my

participants. Ging and Garvey (2018) state that humans make sense of their experiences by casting them into narrative form; such narratives are often "messy" multimedia content based on epiphanies or extraordinary experiences in people's lives (Abidin, 2020). These narratives are the conduit pipe to reflexive thematic analysis. This is the case with the engagement and interactions about EndSARS on Instagram and WhatsApp. Social media is a repertoire of text, audio, and visual content. Moreover, these multimedia are rich sources of qualitative data. Where stories, accounts, tales or descriptions are the main source of data (Kennedy, 2016), and the objective of the research is to understand the meaning of the story itself (Syvertsen, 2020; Obia, 2023), elements of narrative analysis can be used. It is suited to studies of subjectivity and experience and can be single or multiple cases (Zeng & Schäfer, 2020). As Heng (2019) pointed out, images can supplement participant observation by illustrating the key points, although a complete consideration may overwhelm the intended analysis. I must reiterate that images from my online field notes were used to supplement the textual nature of my work. The analysis considered the inclusion of these images to enhance the written word. Therefore, whilst narrative analysis was used, Braun & Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis is the overall form.

### **5.13.2. Phase One- Familiarisation Myself with the Dataset**

This phase of reflexive thematic analysis requires that the researcher is deeply and intimately involved with the content of their dataset. However, I would argue that as an insider researcher in the context of this study, before my fieldwork, I had been immersed and familiar with the EndSARS movement. I was already making- meaning of the different narratives about the EndSARS and how they impact my study. However, during the online participant observation, and when I eventually went for the face-to-face fieldwork in Nigeria, I became further immersed in the topic with a more distanced critical engagement. After conducting the interviews, to put



(Braun & Clark, 2021). The semantic level means coding at the explicit level. In other words, it means coding the dataset from the surface meaning of the transcript. On the other hand, latent coding is more conceptual beyond the surface level. It is implicit. At this level, I made deeper meanings from the coded material. My interpretation of the dataset and subjective position fuelled this coding. It was a meaning-making process for me rather than truth-seeking or discovery. The subjective position I brought to the dataset was my strength rather than weakness. I assigned a code name to each code I created. Some of the code names or labels I created include “Collective Memory”, “Mourning”, “Bad Governance”, “Umbrella”, “Unity”, “One Nation”, “Implicit Memory”, “Lekki Tollgate”, “Social media and EndSARS”, “Obidient Movement”. These codes capture richer analytic ideas. On Nvivo, I drag and drop these analytic excerpts into the code labels. To answer my research questions easily, I coded the dataset by each of the four research questions. However, I created a fifth section I named “Other important findings”. In as much as the goal is to tell a story about the dataset that answers the research questions, Braun and Clark (2019b; 2021) advise that it is essential to safe-keep codes that do not fit into the initial analytical lens because as the analyses develop, these codes may become an essential addition to the analysis.

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by
(RQ1) Memory Work Constructed	7	42	6/16/2023 12:59 PM	SU
Lekki Tollgate	5	10	6/16/2023 2:06 PM	SU
Love for Country	1	1	6/19/2023 11:18 AM	SU
Mourning	5	8	6/16/2023 2:04 PM	SU
Neglect	1	3	6/16/2023 2:07 PM	SU
Unheard Cases	1	2	6/16/2023 2:02 PM	SU
Unity	6	18	6/16/2023 1:59 PM	SU
(RQ2) Collective Memory	4	8	6/16/2023 1:00 PM	SU
Implicit Memory	4	5	6/16/2023 4:02 PM	SU
One Nation	3	3	6/16/2023 3:43 PM	SU
(RQ3) Elements of Social Media and Memory	5	17	6/16/2023 1:02 PM	SU
Live Streaming	1	1	6/16/2023 5:49 PM	SU
Story	4	11	6/16/2023 4:52 PM	SU
The Backstage	3	3	6/22/2023 12:42 PM	SU
Videos	2	2	6/19/2023 12:03 PM	SU
(RQ4) Peculiarities in EndSARS Anniversaries	7	17	6/16/2023 1:03 PM	SU
Continual	7	10	6/16/2023 4:22 PM	SU
First Anniversary- Twitter Preponderance	2	2	6/16/2023 3:35 PM	SU
Goal-oriented Anniversaries	1	2	6/19/2023 1:28 PM	SU
Security Conscious	1	1	6/16/2023 4:00 PM	SU
social media	1	2	6/19/2023 3:29 PM	SU
Other Important Findings	7	104	6/16/2023 1:38 PM	SU
Aisha Yusufu	7	11	6/16/2023 3:53 PM	SU
Bad Governance	2	3	6/16/2023 1:52 PM	SU
Centrality	1	1	6/19/2023 11:41 AM	SU
Government and Social Media	3	5	6/16/2023 5:51 PM	SU

**Figure 5.6. A Screenshot of the Space in Nvivo 12**

My decision to use Nvivo was informed by its speed and data management function. I am not saying the software is better for qualitative analysis. However, the convenience it provides is worth it. Notwithstanding using Nvivo, I am aware that the researcher is the craftsman of their qualitative dataset. Qualitative data analysis is a mind process (Ever, 2018). Besides, there is no exhaustive and decontextualised qualitative analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

#### **5.13.4. Phase Three- Generating the Initial Theme**

During this critical phase of the analysis, I engaged in the process of forging alliances and establishing networks between the individual codes, thereby delving into the realms of shared meanings and discernible patterns that permeate the entirety of the dataset. In essence, my objective was to compile a cohesive cluster of codes that coalesce around a core idea or concept, each of which corresponds to and addresses the fundamental inquiries posed by my research questions. Indeed, while themes serve as encompassing constructs that encapsulate multiple dimensions of an idea or concept, codes represent discrete and singular expressions of specific notions or phenomena. Through the amalgamation and integration of these codes into coherent and expansive patterns, I crafted meaningful narratives, offering insightful reflections pertinent to the overarching objectives of the research endeavour. In other words, this iterative process of merging codes distils disparate data points into cohesive and nuanced stories that resonate deeply with the central inquiries driving the research agenda. For example, the thematic construct entitled "Implicit Collective Memory: Shared Socio-Economic Trauma" emerged from the synthesis of various codes, such as "bad governance," "poverty," "youth unemployment," and "corruption." This thematic framework encapsulates the interplay of deeply entrenched socio-economic challenges that permeate the collective consciousness, serving as a repository of shared experiences and historical traumas within the societal fabric of Nigeria as portrayed by the data. Furthermore, upon a comprehensive review of the coded data, I found a discernible pattern where most codes exhibited a dual narrative trajectory, encompassing both retrospective reflections and prospective considerations. This intricate interplay between past experiences and future expectations prompted the formulation of the thematic construct termed "Dual Retrospective-Prospective Memory." Within this thematic framework, three distinct yet interconnected subthemes were delineated: "Inherent Suffering," "Resilience: Overcoming the Adversities," and

"We Will Never." Each subtheme encapsulates multifaceted dimensions of memory, encapsulating the collective narrative of enduring hardship, fortitude in the face of adversity, and an unwavering commitment to remembrance and commemoration.

The reflexive analysis undertaken in this phase encapsulates a comprehensive array of datasets, each imbued with a cohesive thread of evidence, shared ideas, or underlying meanings tethered to a central organising concept. Navigating through these expressions of shared meaning dispersed across the entire dataset, due consideration was given to the overarching research questions guiding the inquiry. This phase of analysis can aptly be described as both adventurous and inherently messy. It entailed a dynamic process of traversing back and forth through the entirety of the dataset, scrutinising and synthesising data gleaned from online field notes, and aligning them with the diverse central organising concepts that underpin the identified themes. This iterative process involved a continual interplay between immersion in the dataset and the iterative refinement of thematic connections, fostering a holistic understanding of the nuanced intricacies inherent within the dataset.

#### **5.13.5. Phase Four- Developing and Reviewing the Themes**

During this analysis phase, I embarked on an in-depth exploration and validation process aimed at refining the initial theme development established in the preceding phase. Through a rigorous re-engagement with both the coded data and the entirety of the dataset, my objective was twofold: firstly, to critically review the efficacy and viability of the initial clustering of themes, and secondly, to identify opportunities for enhancing the robustness and coherence of pattern development within the dataset. This iterative process involved a comprehensive examination of the prospective main themes, wherein I scrutinised their alignment with the core points and nuanced aspects of the dataset essential for addressing the research questions in depth. It is evident

to me that not all prospective candidate themes adequately captured the breadth and depth of the dataset's nuances, necessitating a thorough validity check to ensure the integrity and comprehensiveness of the thematic framework. In light of the recursive nature inherent within reflexive thematic analysis, I found it imperative to exercise flexibility and thoughtful deliberation in revising and refining the identified themes. This iterative refinement process often entailed revisiting and tweaking certain themes to better align with the overarching research objectives and the complexities inherent within the dataset.

Moreover, recognising the interrelatedness and common threads woven throughout the dataset, I made strategic decisions to collapse and merge certain prospective themes into broader, more encompassing constructs. For instance, upon recognising the inherent link between "Endemic Public Sector Corruption" and "Poor Police Welfare," I opted to consolidate these themes into a unified construct titled "Endemic Public Sector Corruption and Poor Police Welfare." This strategic decision enhanced the coherence and cohesion of the thematic framework and facilitated a more comprehensive analysis of the intertwined socio-political dynamics at play within the dataset. As Braun and Clarke (2021) aptly assert, cultivating flexibility and applying thoughtful reflexivity are indispensable tools in navigating this phase. This flexibility feature resonates with the notion that the qualitative researcher is akin to a skilled craftsman, adept at moulding and shaping the thematic landscape to unearth the rich meaning embedded within the dataset.

#### **5.13.6. Phase Five- Refining, Defining and Naming the Themes**

Recursively and iteratively, during this phase of analysis, I engaged in a dynamic process of oscillating between various phases, specifically transitioning between phase four and venturing marginally into phase three. The overarching aim was to critically refine and elucidate the



identified themes, thereby sculpting the structural framework and augmenting the fluidity of the analytical discourse, thus laying a robust foundation for the subsequent writing-up phase. At the core of this iterative process was the imperative task of refining the identified themes to discern a coherent and cohesive flow within the analysis, ensuring that each theme encapsulates the intricacies and nuances of the dataset in a comprehensive manner. This involved an examination of the thematic landscape to ascertain the logical progression and interconnectivity of themes, thereby facilitating a seamless transition from one thematic construct to another. Furthermore, to provide an immediate and vivid comprehension of the essence of each theme, I adopted a strategic approach of incorporating brief data quotations from the dataset as thematic labels. For instance, themes such as "The EndSARS Movement is an Umbrella for Other Challenges" and "We know how to Unveil and Defend the Truth": Countering Fake and Fabricated State Memories" serve as poignant exemplars of this approach, offering succinct yet evocative insights into the overarching narrative interwoven throughout the analytical discourse.

#### **5.13.7. Phase Six- Writing-up the Research Report**

In this culminating phase, I integrated the identified themes into a coherent and multifaceted analytic narrative, thereby imbuing the data with depth, meaning, and interpretive richness. This endeavour involved a strategic deployment of illustrative excerpts drawn directly from the dataset, chosen to underpin and elucidate each theme while providing nuanced context for their interpretation. Adhering to the conventions of qualitative inquiry, I eschewed the conventional separation of results and discussion sections, opting to merge these components instead. This approach facilitated a fluid connection between the analytic narrative and the broader scholarly discourse, fostering a nuanced exploration of the interplay between the identified themes and their resonance within the existing literature. In other words, the writing-up phase aims to

convey the research findings compellingly and persuasively, highlighting the significance of the identified themes and their implications for theory, practice, or policy.

#### **5.14. Ethics-Related Matters**

In this section, I will discuss the ethical and legal considerations I made in the journey of working on this dissertation. Some of the subtopics I will elaborate on are my experience with the UOC Ethics Committee, what counts as private or public space, consent in online research, anonymisation, and legal considerations.

##### **5.14.1. My Experience with the UOC Internal Ethics Committee**

In December 2021, I started working on submitting my then-proposed work to the UOC Internal Ethics Review Board. Since I am researching humans, it is essential that I painstakingly explain every phase involved. After several meetings and counsel from my supervisors, I submitted the Ethics and Data form on March 1 2023. On April 26, 2023, I received a positive resolution from the Ethics Committee (see appendix I). The news propelled, re-energised, and boosted my confidence in my proposed research.

##### **5.14.2. What Counts as Private/Public Space?**

As Matzner and Ochs (2017) point out, discussions about what constitutes private and public discourse date all the way back to Ancient Greece. Traditional ethnographers have had to strike a balance between being transparent about their presence out of moral obligation and attempting to obtain behind the scenes perspectives (Cera, 2023). Howard Becker discusses how sociologists should balance public and private spaces. Regarding what information can and should be made available to the public, he thought sociologists of his time were still at odds (Becker, 1974).

The Association of Internet Researchers is now frequently consulted by those with an interest in digital ethnography (AoIR, 2020). The AoIR has emerged as the industry norm. This international organisation (AoIR) offers frequently updated recommendations for academics who conduct internet research. The guidelines' third edition, released in 2019, focuses on three main topics: privacy, informed consent, and ethical pluralism. The AoIR advises treating ethics as a case-by-case approach to consider the values and perspectives of other cultures, much like Nissenbaum (2011) and Eynon et al. (2016). At the start of the research process, informed consent and ethical considerations, in general, should be viewed as a process rather than a box to be checked (AoIR, 2020).

Internet researchers now have to deal with enduring arguments over what is public and what is private as they relate to online social networks. The risks of privacy violations are frequently increased by digital research (Marres, 2017). Approaches differ significantly between disciplines as well as within them. While some contend that since everything on the Internet is public, researchers can use it without receiving informed consent, others go out of their way to ensure that every participant knows how their information will be used. Sugiura et al. (2017) adopt the former stand. The authors consider two crucial concerns associated with digital ethnography: (1) What exactly is public and private on the Internet? Moreover, (2) Should internet users expect anonymity and confidentiality? Sugiura et al. (2017) contend that since the Internet is, by nature, is a predominantly public domain, users cannot expect privacy or anonymity. I concurred with the scholars mentioned above' points of view. As I digitally ethnographed the social media during the fieldwork, I realised that some extent these social media are public spaces, except WhatsApp, which I consider semi-public because I needed the personal phone numbers of the research participants to connect with them. From the information about EndSARS on Instagram, the

research participants curate this information as public content, and they usually want this information to reach a larger audience.

Boyd (2008) observes that her participants have difficulty distinguishing between public and private. Individual-centred notions of privacy obscure the contextually-mediated nature of digital spaces as well as the role of technical affordances, and there are cultural differences in how people and groups understand privacy. Networked privacy is the name given to this idea by Marwick and Boyd (2014). In addition, Nissenbaum (2020) contends that privacy expectations are influenced by the context in which we live. Even though people might post on a public website, they might not be aware that their content is visible to everyone. Ultimately, it's important to pay attention to how participants define public and private (Boellstorff, 2020), nonetheless. Besides, many researchers have argued for sensitivity to cultural differences throughout the entire research process (Hongladarom, 2017; Hutchinson et al., 2017; Luka et al., 2017; Weller & Kinder-Kurlanda, 2017). As I refer to WhatsApp as a semi-public space, Reilly and Trevisan (2016) also refer to Facebook as "semi-public". For WhatsApp, I had to seek informed consent from the research participants within my connection. According to Eynon et al. (2008), some areas are considered in-between. In other words, what is public and what is private online are not clearly defined.

### **5.14.3. Consent in Digital Ethnography Research**

One of the integral parts of research ethics is obtaining the informed consent of those who will be studied. Some writers have argued that this should apply to online research (Bluteau, 2019; de Seta, 2020); however, given the widespread use of pseudonyms online, it may be logistically challenging to get in touch with the actual person who is hiding behind the avatar (Cera, 2023).

According to the MRA- Marketing Research Association's (2010) guide to social media research, most participants are aware that their conversations are public. However, they do not anticipate that researchers will be able to access their data. However, MRA contends that informed consent is not required because online interactions are public. Lurking, as we call it in this situation, improves the quality of the data the researcher collects (Grincheva, 2017). According to Kaufmann and Tzanetakis (2020), the permanent connectivity of online spaces enables the researcher to be present continuously. This first-hand, in-the-moment experience is essential for qualitative research such as this. Digital platforms make it simpler for researchers to involve their participants throughout the entire process, according to Marres (2017).

Back to lurking, Grincheva (2017) argues that lurking enables a researcher to observe participants in a more natural setting. Online researchers can observe interactions as they would in their absence (Forberg, 2022), whereas researchers in offline settings are forced to influence the interactions they observe. Informed consent must be obtained when research participants interact *directly* with researchers, according to the social media guidelines published by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO, 2011). However, the CASRO did not define what direct interaction is. In my view, direct interaction in the context of my research is the kind which takes place in a semi-public space such as WhatsApp. As stated earlier, in the case of WhatsApp, I had to seek the informed consent of the research participants I observed and interacted with. However, it should not be assumed that all instances of the use of participatory observation aim to put the observed at risk (Lugosi, 2006). It is difficult to determine which level of disclosure is "ethical" or "unethical" because there is not a distinct line that can be drawn between the two (Lugosi, 2006). When there is publicly available material online, basing the study on existing

material that the researcher cannot influence is one possible way of avoiding such difficulties (Bluteau, 2019; de Seta, 2020), as is the case with the other social media I studied- Instagram.

It is pertinent to reiterate that I conducted face-to-face interviews with the research participants I recruited for this study. The research participants I interviewed physically are people that are on the social media I studied. I informed them about the nature of my study; they were duly informed beforehand. When I met with the selected participants, and after I explained the research, they read and voluntarily signed the informed consent document before I started interviewing them.

#### **5.14.4. Anonymization**

Anonymity, or what other scholars (Cera, 2023) calls data anonymisation, is the process researchers use to modify or paraphrase the original speech or text produced by study participants to prevent participant identification after publication. Offline ethnographers have always struggled with the fair and accurate presentation of their data, even though digital ethnography has brought these issues back to light (Pink et al., 2016). Offline ethnographers have always been impacted by decisions about who should be quoted, when, and how. The difficulties of maintaining participant confidentiality, particularly for those living in vulnerable communities, have been extensively discussed by a number of renowned ethnographers (Desmond, 2016; Miller & Horst, 2020). They do not specifically address quoting, but they do talk about the dangers of representing and recreating data.

One of the main issues for digital researchers is the use of traceable or searchable data in the social sciences (Townsend & Wallace, 2016; Lane & Lingel, 2022). The likelihood that participants will be found and searched increases as digital tools get more powerful (Shklovski & Vertesi, 2013). This subject is also covered in the most recent version of the AoIR guidelines.

Those who choose to paraphrase data contend that the privacy and anonymity of research participants should be protected as our top priority as researchers. According to Boellstorff et al. (2012), it is crucial to consider the effects of participant identification.

Many social media scholars contend that we should paraphrase this type of data, and they have done so in their own work. According to Boyd (2016, p. 91), "When I quote text from profiles, I often alter the quotes to maintain the meaning but to make the quote itself unsearchable." Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) victims are a vulnerable community that Mukherjee (2017) studies, and to protect her participants, she paraphrases every piece of information she uses in her publications. According to Markham (2012), it is possible to anonymise posts while staying true to the major themes of the data. Furthering the point, de Seta (2020) writes that anonymisation is thus inextricably linked to the idea of expertise. Sugiura et al. (2017) argue that more than removing identifying data is required for search engines' advanced technology. In other words, advanced search engines can decipher excerpts even when identifiable data has been removed. In the words of de Seta (2020), in grasping our roles as translators and editors of multimedia content, digital ethnographers implicitly demonstrate and establish proficiency and familiarity with a specific sociotechnical context. But how can a researcher establish authority over a social environment while also tampering and distorting the information it generates?

Going by this argument, I did not engage in heavy distortion or anonymisation of data I got from social media and the interviews. Like Markham (2012), I engaged in data anonymisation while maintaining the genuineness of themes of the data. I anonymised and paraphrased content that I felt could be easily traced online. Also, anonymisation occurs when treating participants' demographics, such as their names, residence, and essential personal data. For privacy and

confidentiality, I anonymised the research participants' names. I used numbers (see table 5.1) to identify them. I also blurred their social media pseudonyms.

#### **5.14.5. Legal Considerations**

When I submitted my work for ethical approval, I realised that much emphasis was placed on the 2016 European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). I was not surprised because, of course, my institution is domiciled in the European Union region. But as my study evolved, and with the assistance of my supervisors, I asked myself some critical questions. Where am I collecting my data from? From whom am I gathering information? Where would I conduct the face-to-face interviews? The answer to these questions is Nigeria and Nigerians. Considering the answers to my questions, I started researching the relevant regulations and laws on data protection in Nigeria. I found the 2019 Nigerian Data Protection Regulation (NDPR). The NDPR is a regulation, not an Act of Nigeria's parliament; it was issued by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), a federal government institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy. My study of the regulation revealed that the NDPR is modelled after the EU's GDPR, which this research adhered to because I stored the primary data on the UOC server. Besides, the regulation applies to natural persons residing in Nigeria and citizens of Nigeria residing outside the country. The foregoing assertion positioned me to carry out my work per the current data protection regulations in my country.

The following are a few of the regulations' key points in terms of consent:

- No data shall be obtained except if the specific purpose of collection is made known to the data subject.
- A data controller is under obligation to ensure that the consent of a data subject has been obtained without fraud, coercion or undue influence.



- No consent shall be sought, given or accepted in any circumstance that may give rise to direct or indirect propagation of atrocities, hate, child rights violation, criminal acts and anti-social conduct.
- Data subjects must be informed of their rights to withdraw consent. However, the withdrawal of consent shall not affect the lawfulness of processing based on consent given before its withdrawal.
- Consent must be sought from the data subject before personal data is transferred to a third party for any reason whatsoever.

From the preceding statements, it is clear that the regulation aims to safeguard data subjects' interests by requiring that they give their consent before having their personal information used.

However, on June 12 2023, Nigeria's President signed the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA), providing a legal and an Act of Parliament-approved document for data protection and regulation in the country. In other words, the new Act is the first law enacted to provide a legal framework for protecting personal information and data protection in Nigeria. The NPDA Act 2023 is a significant improvement on the NDPR Regulation, and after studying the document, I am safe to say that I was working within the ambit of the law. Before the President's assent to the NDPA 2023, the NDPR was the regulation guiding the protection of personal information in Nigeria.

### **5.15. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described and reviewed the methodological considerations and research design adopted by this study. The chapter started with a description of ethnography before delving into explaining the different strands of online ethnography; it explains Pink et al.'s (2016) digital ethnography and why it was adopted for this research. Based on scholarly arguments, this chapter

also argues that there are no clear distinctions in human interactions in the "real" (physical) world and on the Internet. Similarly, in this chapter, I submit that the "field" in the context of this study is multiple, fluid, and a process. Further, I narrated the process and story of the primary data gathering for this research- the online participant observation and my trip to Nigeria, where I carried out face-to-face interviews with eleven research participants. Given the continuous argument about saturation in qualitative research, I argued why I did not adopt the idea of saturation. Instead, I reiterated that the meaning-making and knowledge construction in the context of this research is driven by Malterud et al. 's (2016) concept of information power. Transcribing interviews is an essential process in qualitative research; hence, I described how I employed an indigenous transcription software, Buzz, to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews. Afterwards, I elaborated on Braun and Clark's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), why and how I adopted the technique vis-a-vis the data analysis on Nvivo. Considering the theoretical framework of this study, memory, I described why I contextualised the dataset of this research as a repertoire of memory. Taking into cognisance the essentiality of ethical/legal considerations and clarifications in research, I gave accounts of the different ethical and legal I considered and clarified in respect of this study.

In the subsequent chapters, 6, 7, 8, and 9, I undertook an integrative/combined approach in laying out the findings and discussion of the research. In qualitative research, the findings and discussion sections can be combined (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Integrating these sections may offer a seamless narrative, enabling readers to follow the progression from data to interpretation and theoretical implications. As findings are presented, they are immediately contextualised within the theoretical framework, aiding an immediate comprehension of their significance. This method facilitates a more complex and layered interpretation of data, as the continuous interplay between

empirical evidence and theory is explored, especially in a cross-disciplinary research context such as the present one. However, Bryman (2007) advises researchers to integrate carefully.

In Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, each chapter begins with a title that introduces its content. The results, discussion and interpretation of the research findings are presented in themes, contextualising them within the framework of the research questions and pertinent literature within the field of study. By synthesising empirical data and theoretical insights derived from the existing body of research, I presented the intricacies of the research domain, uncovering subtle patterns and clarifying the significant implications derived from the analysis.

# **Chapter Six: “Woke” Self-Representation, and Not-Entirely Performative Activist Practice: Social Media Story as a Distinct Medium for Activism**

## **6.1. Introduction**

The scholarly discourse surrounding the intersection of social media and social movements has expanded significantly in recent years, as evidenced by the contributions of researchers such as Treere (2015, 2023) and Gerbaudo (2022). However, despite this burgeoning interest, the examination of ephemeral social media features within the context of digital activism still needs to be developed, akin to an embryonic stage of scholarly inquiry. This chapter endeavours to address this gap by presenting the research findings relevant to the first research question, thereby contributing to the nascent discourse surrounding ephemeral social media and its features in digital activism. This chapter serves as the initial series delineating the research findings and delving into the pivotal themes arising from the data analysis pertaining to the research question: What feature(s) of Instagram and WhatsApp did the selected research participants use during the EndSARS protest? How did the research participants use this feature(s)? The ensuing discussion expounds upon four primary sections (themes), providing detailed elucidation and exploration. Based on the findings derived from this research, it becomes evident that the research participants exhibit a predominant inclination towards utilising WhatsApp status and Instagram Story features platforms as primary conduits for their engagement in EndSARS activist endeavours. This discernible pattern underscores the pronounced role played by these specific digital mediums within the context of EndSARS activism, shedding light on the preferences and practices adopted

by research participants in leveraging these platforms for activist purposes. In this chapter, I use the term Story for Instagram and WhatsApp 24-hour ephemeral media

## **6.2. Woke Self-Representation and the EndSARS Protest**

Notwithstanding the ephemerality of Instagram and WhatsApp Stories, in my observation, I discovered that the research participants curated their personalities on their Stories as woke youth and socio-politically aware (Cook, 2023). The phrase "woke" delineates a demographic cohort of young individuals characterised by their heightened social awareness, specifically about issues about social justice, equality, and activism. Within the context of "woke youth," this designation encapsulates young individuals actively participating in dialogues and initiatives to address and ameliorate diverse societal challenges, including but not limited to activism, as I found in this study. The defining features of the research participant's self-representation in this study include a steadfast commitment to the EndSARS movement and advocacy for constructive societal transformation in Nigeria. The socio-political awareness of the study participants is synonymous with Barassi's (2018) notion of self-presentation on social media- formulation of a political biography. This construct is shaped through the mechanisms of digital storytelling and performative acts. According to Barassi, the resultant political biography, crafted through an individual's social media profile, significantly influences their online political engagement. Zillich and Riesmeyer (2021) delineate self-presentation on social media as the systematic effort individuals undertake to shape the impressions held by their social network. Within this deliberative process of self-presentation, users on social media platforms navigate a spectrum of social and personal norms, aligning their portrayal with specific objectives and motivations for sharing content. However, the participants of this study articulated that they are not reluctant to post EndSARS content on their WhatsApp and Instagram Stories due to concerns about potential

perceptions of performative behaviour by their connections. In other words, the participants did not care about the impressions their networks held about them. Besides, The woke self-representation curated by the research participants is ideal and true (Jun, 2022). Considering the importance of the EndSARS protest in shaping a better society in Nigeria, the selected participants see their engagement on their WhatsApp status and Instagram Story as an obligation, influencing their inclination to share content on their Stories notwithstanding the perception of their network. As Research Participant 9 notes: “I found it a duty to carry everybody along. So, I share and post on Instagram Story and WhatsApp status so those people who find it hard to access Twitter can”. Additionally, most research participants intentionally omitted their political affiliations and ideologies from the narrative they constructed and presented in their Stories. This decision may also be linked to the importance and centrality of fighting police brutality in Nigeria, regardless of tribe, religion or political affiliations.

### **6.3. Not-Entirely Performative Activism**

Engaging in social media necessitates the projection of authenticity and genuineness. Nevertheless, the utilisation of social media is inherently performative, demanding strategic considerations from users to shape their desired perception (Goffman, 2016, 2023; Maares et al., 2021). Goffman's (2016, 2023) conceptualisation of the self as a series of performances unfolds within specific locations, one of which is the study participants' Story in the contemporary context. According to Goffman (2023), any activity conducted in the presence of others, such as sharing activist content on one's social media Story, involves accentuating certain aspects in a front region or onstage while suppressing others in the backstage. In the context of WhatsApp and Instagram ephemeral content, the Story becomes the front stage performance (Trere, 2020), while the individual's offline presence serves as the backstage area. This dualistic framework delineates the

dynamic interplay between curated online performances and the concealed, often unpolished aspects of an individual's existence.

Goffman's conceptualisation of performance dovetails with the not-entirely performative activism I discovered on WhatsApp status and Instagram Story. Goffman employs the term performance to denote the continuous and nuanced process by which individuals present themselves to the world. In his framework, the term carries a neutral stance, encompassing the multifaceted ways individuals actively construct and project their identities in various social contexts. I argue that the not-entirely performative activism is an instance that carries positive connotations, signifying the study participants' presentation of themselves in a manner perceived as authentic or genuine. The research participants I observed and interviewed appear to interpret the term performative with a positive connotation, suggesting authenticity. Participant 2 narrates thus: "...the post on my Stories are to let people know the cause we are fighting for and for the government to also know that the youths of Nigeria are wiser". In Goffman's framework, performance denotes a more neutral concept, representing an ongoing method of self-presentation inherent to people's daily actions. The interpretation reflects the nuanced perspectives surrounding the authenticity of actions and expressions, particularly within the context of activism and self-representation. While studying the Stories of my research participants, performativity was constructed as a subject of considerable interest. I discovered various instances of positive performativity such as the one described by Participant Number 2. Ross's (2019) notion of media ideologies and the propensity of Instagram users to transition between different platform uses, influenced by their media ideologies, carries significant implications for the understanding of performativity in the context of this study. As I observed, the media ideologies of research participants pertaining to Instagram and WhatsApp Stories prompt them to alternate between

conventional Story usage and using Stories for activist purposes- the EndSARS. This transition between different modes of employing their Stories—specifically, the shift between activist and traditional use—necessitates my study participants to engage in a toggling of performances, adapting their presentation style accordingly. Consequently, the media ideologies of the users not only guide their oscillation between different uses of Stories but also shape how they enact their performances through story posting.

Notably, a prominent manifestation of some sort of performative activism occurs when research participants repost identical content shared by others, especially EndSARS content shared by prominent activists or celebrities. Reposting from prominent activists and celebrities reiterates Zillich and Riesmeyer's (2021) argument that distal reference groups predominantly consist of influencers and celebrities, and they serve as an additional reservoir of information and inspiration for users' self-presentation strategies. Participant (8) posits that an additional indicator of performative activism hinges on one's intent and motivation for posting. The research participants assert that performativity extends beyond reposting a celebrity's content. According to the participants, if someone has a personal connection to the posted issue, it may look performative, yet authentic. For instance, Participant 3 highlights this point: “Most of the posts on my WhatsApp status are triggered by my experience and what is happening in the country, even if the image is popular, it is my feelings that I am putting out there”.

Another form of not-entirely performative activist practice discovered in the online ethnographic field note is virtue signalling. Virtue signalling involves the deliberate expression of specific opinions or stances on one's social media profile to showcase wokeness or dedication to particular issues (Cook, 2023). An instance of some sort of neutral performative activism and virtue signalling that were dominant in the Stories, mainly during the first and second anniversaries



of the EndSARS, include the clutched raised fist, blood-stained Nigerian flag, black squares, the artistic image of "Sóró Sóké (Means speak up in Yoruba language), textual and artistic writings such as 20 10 20, "We will never forget" "Lekki massacre," " Never again".



**Figure 6.1. Images of the Stained Nigerian Flag and Clutched-Fist**

Also, the concept of virtue signalling emerged consistently in the narratives shared by my interlocutors during the interviews. The study participants concurred that virtue signalling was used prominently, and they portrayed it in a positive light. According to Participant 1, "I remember how people uploaded the blood-littered flag to their social media profiles". This assertion is a symbolic gesture of people's solidarity with and endorsement of the EndSARS movement. Though performative in some sense, virtue signalling may also yield positive outcomes by facilitating learning. My research participants underscored that they gained valuable insights about the EndSARS through posts by other individuals, which may have served as instances of virtue

signalling. From my observation and reflexive perspective, this phenomenon is construed as positive, signifying that virtue signalling serves as an effective modality for activism on social media. Another research participant (5) narrates the importance of virtue signalling:

“...all these images, like the sorosoke, the flag, microphone, the dark square, all of them, I can tell you are moving the EndSARS movement... you see them almost everywhere, on social media, in the streets, and even in the protest ground, and they will remain for a long time”.

Engaging in ephemeral social media activism inevitably involves grappling with performativity. Whether navigating through one's primary feed or contemplating the creation of an activist story post, performativity typically looms as a significant consideration. Although performativity is commonly depicted as exerting a detrimental impact on social media activism (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2022), its consequences for the current study are not as adverse as perceived.

#### **6.4. Engaging with a Proximate Audience on WhatsApp**

The study participants under examination exhibit a range of follower counts on Instagram, with one research participant boasting over five thousand followers. However, it was impossible to ascertain the number of people they interact with on WhatsApp because of the private nature of WhatsApp messaging. During interviews, the research participants frequently referred to their proximate audience, especially on WhatsApp, emphasising the significance of engagement with individuals such as close friends, family, and those aligned with the EndSARS movement. As

Participant 11 stated, "I have to engage people with my post, especially people around me, and people I know stand for the EndSARS." Interlocutor 3 narrates thus:

...you have to have the person's number to be able to... WhatsApp is not that public or open. So, since I have the person's number, I believe he is a family or a friend, someone who is very dear and close to me. So, I have to, I oblige myself to post them or share the stories so that they will be able to see.

These identified groups operate as proximate audiences, significantly influencing the study participants' posting habits and how they present themselves on their WhatsApp status. Zillich and Riesmeyer (2021) provide valuable insights into the impact of proximal groups on individuals' political biography (Barassi, 2018; Barassi & Zamponi, 2020) and self-presentation within social media platforms, including Instagram. Building upon Rose's (2016) fourth site of meaning-making- circulation, I posit that when posting on WhatsApp, the architecture strategically moderates the circulation and reach of the content. This strategic approach is rooted in the anticipation that their posts will exert influence primarily within their proximate audience, encompassing those individuals with whom they have a close connection and shared values, particularly concerning the EndSARS movement. In other words, I contextualise this form of activist interaction as private activism.

Another discernable effect of engaging with proximate audiences based on the interviews with my study participants is the likelihood of offline participation in the EndSARS protest. The participants' activist engagement with a proximal audience, friends and family resulted in offline pursuits associated with the EndSARS protest. An illustration of this sustained engagement in an offline environment is clear when research participants narrate how they engaged in solid face-to-

face debates and advocacies with people on the issues of EndSARS. Participant 4 exemplifies this offline participation of a proximate audience:

“... after so much engagement on my WhatsApp Story, my two cousins, and a friend joined me at the Unity Fountain for the protest, here in Abuja, and my cousins attended subsequent protest march”

Examining the efficacy of social media, Juris (2012) argues that network-based structures in social movement organisations, coupled with digital tools, play a pivotal role in facilitating the dissemination of movements and expanding their operational scale. This is achieved through enabling efficient communication and coordination. Yet another commonly referenced offline pursuit prompted by research participants' involvement with EndSARS activism on WhatsApp status is attending the protest in person. Similarly to Participant's 4 view above, three research participants (5, 11, and 3) exemplify how their posts snowballed their friends to the second commemoration of the EndSARS offline protest. This discovery corroborates Kim and Ellison's (2022) argument on the correlation between activity on social media and offline involvement in politics. Kim and Ellison ascribe this correlation to social learning theory, emphasising how individuals acquire knowledge by observing the conduct of their peers within their social media through the affordances of visibility, persistence, and association.

Given this finding, investigations into online activism consistently overlook the pivotal mediating role played by this distinct feature of social media, despite the entire media (WhatsApp and Instagram) being disproportionate utilisation as the primary subject of inquiry in various studies (Haq et al., 2022; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2021; Yuen & Tang 2023; Scharff, 2023). This oversight implies a constrained understanding of the contemporary dynamics and practices of activism within online domains, particularly concerning the specific functionalities of digital

platforms, such as WhatsApp status. Consequently, I advocate for a more deliberate acknowledgement by social movement researchers of the central position of ephemeral media, such as WhatsApp's status as a distinct medium for activism. This acknowledgement underscores WhatsApp state's significance and contextualises the transformations and nuances in utilising emerging media technologies.

### **6.5. WhatsApp and Instagram Story as a Newsreel**

Social media have gained widespread prominence as favoured channels for disseminating online news, owing to their convenience and user-friendly interfaces for news publication (Masip et al., 2021; Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). When questioned about the influence of their WhatsApp and Instagram Stories usage on their beliefs and values, the research participants redirected the discourse toward the feature's impact on their awareness of contemporary news about the EndSARS protest. Participant 7 said they routinely acquire new information through WhatsApp and Instagram Stories.

“There is a lot of information about the EndSARS on Instagram. That time when I wake up, I will just go and start viewing people`s status to know the latest update and what action I am going to take”.

Despite the casual tone with which study participants addressed this aspect, it is imperative to underscore the multifaceted implications inherent in this distinct medium`s role as a facilitator of such informational exchange. In the era marked by the emergence of other social media platforms, this medium has progressively assumed a significant role in news dissemination, characterised by distinctive interactivity and transitory nature (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018). Social media have gained prominence as convenient and user-friendly channels for disseminating online news. Notably, in the case of Instagram Story, Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2019) call it ephemeral

journalism. According to Vázquez-Herrero et al., users on Instagram wield the authority to curate, share, and interpret news content, actively participating in the collaborative production of news within the contemporary networked paradigm. Towner and Muñoz (2018) confirm the potential of ephemeral media as an agenda-setting platform during elections. Participant 10 highlights another aspect regarding Instagram and WhatsApp Stories roles as conduit for news:

“...not only topics about the EndSARS, there are a lot of political news and conversations that take place on peoples’ WhatsApp status and Instagram Story... it makes you stay aware of other things happening around, even as the EndSARS topic is hot”.

He conveyed that Instagram and WhatsApp Stories have broadened her understanding of political matters, not only about the EndSARS potentially fostering heightened political engagement or future participation, even if not immediately evident. In this line, Skoric and Zhu (2016) identified a positive correlation between informational uses, such as news consumption on social media such as Instagram, and political participation. The findings of this investigation underscore that when WhatsApp and Instagram Story serve as a medium for news, as articulated by the interlocutors, there is an observable augmentation in an individual's inclination toward offline political involvement. Therefore, using WhatsApp and Instagram Stories for news dissemination and consumption during the EndSARS protest can potentially enhance political knowledge and participation.

## **6.6. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated the nuanced and multifaceted role of ephemeral media platforms, specifically Instagram Story and WhatsApp status, as integral tools for diverse activist practices within the context of the EndSARS movement. Firstly, the research participants

strategically utilised these platforms to present themselves as socially conscious "woke" youths, effectively crafting political biographies that underscored their engagement with socio-political issues (Barassi & Zamponi, 2020; Barassi, 2018). Secondly, the ephemeral Story feature was found to align with Goffman's (2016, 2023) conceptualisation of the self as a series of performative acts within a specific spatial context. However, contrary to a purely performative interpretation, the study revealed that the participants' activist presentations on their Stories were imbued with genuine sincerity and commitment to their cause. Additionally, the data indicated that the research participants strategically utilised the backstage, as conceptualised by Trere (2015), in their activist practice, effectively leveraging private communication channels to organise and coordinate activism efforts away from the public eye. Thirdly, this chapter elucidates how the study participants engaged in proximate discussions (Zillich & Riesmeyer, 2021) about the EndSARS movement with their immediate social circles, including friends and family members. This form of intimate activist dialogue, described herein as private activism, was a vital means for the study participants to exchange perspectives, share information, and mobilise support within their personal networks. Lastly, the data revealed that ephemeral media platforms, particularly Instagram Story and WhatsApp status, were appropriated by research participants as dynamic newsreels for both receiving and disseminating information about the EndSARS protest. These platforms functioned as real-time conduits for sharing updates, eyewitness accounts, and breaking news related to the movement, thereby amplifying awareness and facilitating collective mobilisation among activists. Overall, this chapter presented an analysis of the multifaceted roles played by ephemeral media platforms in the context of the EndSARS movement, shedding light on their significance as both personal identity-building tools and strategic mediums for activism and information dissemination.

# **Chapter Seven: Memorialising the Endsars Movement on WhatsApp and Instagram: Strands of Memory Construction and Practices**

## **7.1. Introduction**

Amidst the burgeoning scholarship exploring the intersection of memory, social media, and social movements, as evidenced by the works of Zamponi (2020), Poell (2020), Kuo and Jackso (2024), Merrill et al. (2020), Lee and Fong (2023), and Smit (2020), among other scholars, it becomes increasingly apparent that the construction of memory within social movements is inherently unique to the specific dynamics of each movement. In other words, memory practices within social movements manifest in diverse dimensions and forms (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). Furthermore, the literature reflects a notable ambiguity and lack of consensus regarding the precise conceptualisation of memory within social movement studies (Reading, 2020; Eyerman, 2019). This chapter explores the multifaceted landscape of memory construction and practices observed on Instagram and WhatsApp in the EndSARS protest. This chapter seeks to elucidate the complex interplay between memory, social movements, and digital platforms by analysing and discussing the various kinds and strands of memory present in the data. By examining the empirical findings, this chapter endeavours to unravel the diverse manifestations of memory on Instagram and WhatsApp, shedding light on the intricate mechanisms through which collective memory is shaped, negotiated, and perpetuated within the context of contemporary social movements.



## 7.2. Digital Memory in the EndSARS Protest

The digital memory construction surrounding the EndSARS movement on WhatsApp and Instagram is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by various factors, including user interactions, content dissemination, and the evolving nature of digital communication technologies. This construction of memory encompasses the collective recollection, representation, and preservation of events, narratives, and emotions related to the EndSARS movement within the digital realm. On WhatsApp, users often utilise the "status" feature to share ephemeral updates, including photos, videos, and text, which disappear after 24 hours. During the EndSARS protests, this feature became a crucial tool for people to express solidarity, share real-time updates from protest locations, and disseminate information about ongoing events. These status updates served as digital snapshots capturing moments of activism, resilience, and community mobilisation, thus contributing to constructing a digital memory archive documenting the movement's progression. As Merrill et al. (2020) note, the emergence of social media has impacted and reshaped the strategies, frameworks, organisational dynamics, and memory-related activities and practices within social movements.

As Ferrari (2020) identified in her study, in this research Instagram's Story feature enabled users to share temporary posts comprising images, videos, and text overlays, fostering a narrative-driven content-sharing approach. Instagram and WhatsApp Stories emerged as popular mediums for the research participants and their supporters to amplify their voices, raise awareness about systemic issues, and commemorate significant events such as peaceful demonstrations, acts of solidarity, and instances of police brutality. The transient nature of Instagram and WhatsApp Stories mirrored the fluidity and dynamism of the protests, reflecting the evolving nature of digital memory construction in real-time. These media facilitated collective memory construction by

providing platforms for the study participants to contribute their perspectives, experiences, and reflections on the EndSARS movement. Through visual storytelling, hashtags, and interactive features such as polls and quizzes, the research participants engaged in a dialogue-driven approach to memory-making, fostering community and solidarity among the study participants. Moreover, the accessibility and widespread usage of these platforms ensured the democratisation of memory construction, allowing diverse voices to be heard and archived within the digital sphere. Nevertheless, as the digital memory centred on a shared apprehension (Karatas & Bek, 2023), in the context of this research, police brutality and related challenges, this instigated a sense of collective mourning and connective memory (Uwalaka et al., 2023; Smit, 2020), thereby establishing a collective memorial landscape that facilitated the construction of a lasting memory (Morse, 2023).

Though not necessarily the concern of this research, the algorithms and data-driven functionalities of WhatsApp and Instagram would have played a significant role in shaping digital memory construction. These platforms employ algorithms to curate content, prioritise specific posts over others, and facilitate content discoverability based on user preferences and engagement patterns (Treré & Bonini, 2022, 2024; Poell, 2020; Pedwell, 2019). As a result, digital memories related to the EndSARS movement were not only shaped by user-generated content but also influenced by the platform's algorithmic interventions, highlighting the complex interplay between human agency and technological affordances in memory-making processes. The digital memory construction surrounding the EndSARS movement on WhatsApp and Instagram exemplifies the convergence of personal narratives, collective activism, and technological mediation. By leveraging the affordances of digital communication technologies, my participants co-created a dynamic and inclusive digital memory archive, reflecting the resilience, solidarity, and demands

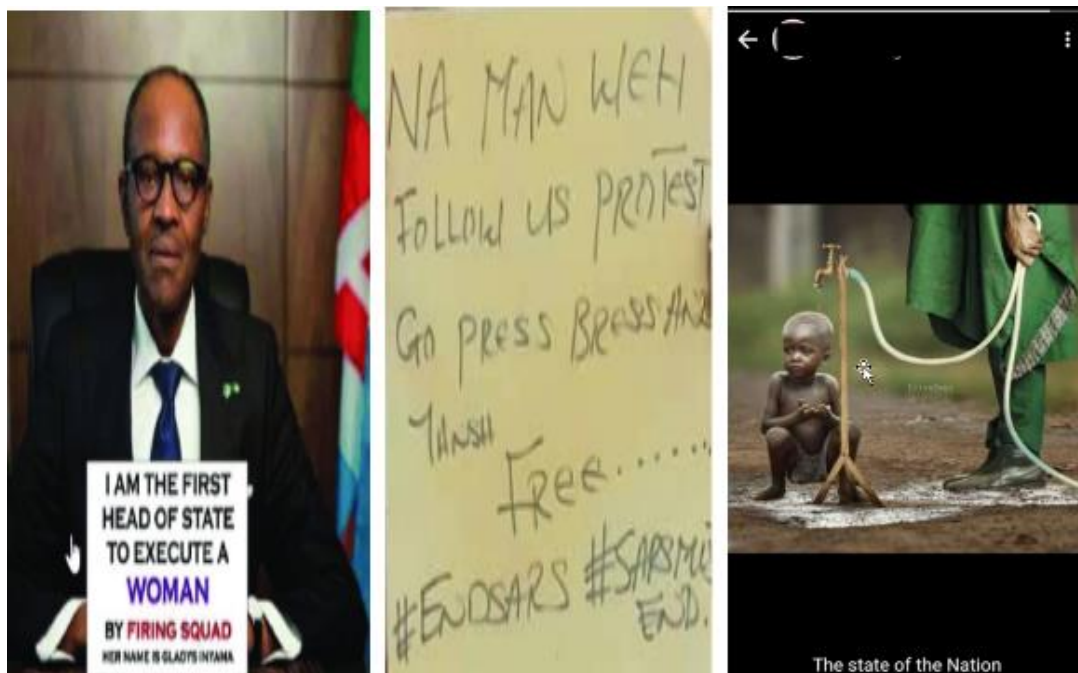
for justice embodied by the EndSARS movement within the digital sphere. Despite the individual nature of the research participants' actions on these media, a shared objective unified them: the quest for justice for the deceased protesters and policy change. This collective bonding in grief was not forged through familial lineage or deep interpersonal bonds but rather through a collective resonance of indignation and shared objectives to rectify societal systemic injustices (Uwalaka et al., 2023).

### **7.3. Memefying Collective Memory on Instagram and WhatsApp**

Another form of memory practice in the EndSARS protest entails the recycling, asserting ownership of, and repurposing of iconic visuals, symbols, and individuals, a phenomenon Smit (2020) called memetic revival within social media activism. Memefying the past within the context of the EndSARS protest on WhatsApp and Instagram represents a unique form of memory construction characterised by transforming historical events, narratives, and symbols into humorous, satirical, or visually engaging memes. This phenomenon underscores the intersection of activism, humour, and digital culture in shaping collective memory and discourse surrounding the protest movement. On WhatsApp and Instagram, memes emerged as powerful tools for encapsulating complex socio-political issues, critiquing power structures, and fostering solidarity among protesters and supporters (see figure 7.1 below). Memes often leverage recognisable imagery, symbols, or catch phrases associated with the EndSARS movement, recontextualising them humorously or ironically to convey nuanced messages and critique societal norms or governmental actions. For instance, memes such as the ones below were widely circulated on these platforms, often accompanied by witty captions or visual elements that satirised the actions of political leaders or other stakeholders in the protest movement. By memefying these images, the

study participants transformed them into viral symbols of resistance and solidarity, amplifying their reach and impact within digital communities.

The prominence of renowned images correlates with their widespread visibility and frequent reappearance on these platforms, especially Instagram. This phenomenon can be partially attributed to the functioning mechanism of social media, where increased engagement with a digital entity leads to its heightened prominence in news feeds and comment sections. This algorithmic principle operates surreptitiously during interactions on these platforms, exerting considerable influence on its overall ambience and substance (Markham, 2021). Furthermore, it influences the prominence of specific symbolic content and practices from the past in the present context, suggesting that the platform actively shapes the politics of visibility.



**Figure 7.1. Meme images from Instagram and WhatsApp of Participants 2, 7 and 10**

This practice has historically been present within collective action networks (Gray, 2001; Milner, 2013; Mina, 2019; Okesola & Oyebode, 2023). However, the distinction in this research lies not only in the sheer volume but also in utilising these images and icons as vehicles for personal

expressions and ideas and in the ease of their creation and dissemination. Further, the transient nature of memes on WhatsApp and Instagram played a role in the adaptability and liveliness of digital memory formation, enabling immediate reactions to evolving occurrences, progressions, and discussions within the protest movement. Moreover, these memes were crucial in breaking down complex socio-political issues into digestible and shareable content, facilitating broader public engagement and awareness about the EndSARS movement. Through humour, irony, or hyperbole, memes encouraged critical reflection, dialogue, and solidarity among users, fostering a sense of community and collective identity within digital spaces. Despite its commonly observed reactionary and stereotypical tendencies (Smit, 2020), the phenomenon of meme functions as a method of memory that presents an accessible avenue for contributing to the development of mutually shared narratives, a pivotal element that influences the collective identities of movements (Daphi, 2017). The revival of iconic images through memetic means facilitated the process of constructing a collective identity among geographically dispersed protesters by facilitating the exchange and negotiation of a particular worldview, thereby delineating distinct boundaries between insiders and outsiders and fostering emotional intimacy among individuals (Daphi, 2017). This practice serves as a means of reaffirming collective memory and plays a crucial role in shaping the collective consciousness and solidarity within social movements, highlighting the significance of meme revival resurrection as a formative aspect of contemporary activism (Smit, 2020).

The phenomenon of memefication within the context of the EndSARS protest on WhatsApp and Instagram exemplifies the participatory dynamics inherent in constructing collective memory. Within this framework, the research participants engaged in a multifaceted process of actively reinterpreting and remixing historical narratives to mirror contemporary socio-

political concerns and perspectives. This process transcends mere consumption or dissemination of information; rather, it underscores a profound agency wielded by the research participants in shaping the discourse surrounding pivotal societal events. Creating and disseminating memes about the EndSARS protest not only constitutes a form of digital expression but also represents a significant contribution to the ongoing dialogue concerning entrenched systemic concerns, including but not limited to police brutality, institutional corruption, and the quest for youth empowerment. Through the strategic amalgamation of imagery, text, and cultural references inherent in meme production, my participants engaged in a nuanced critique of prevailing power structures and societal norms, amplifying their voices within the digital realm. Moreover, the proliferation of such memes within the digital ecosystem engenders a collective reimagining and reconstruction of the memory landscape about the EndSARS protests. By infusing historical narratives with contemporary insights and perspectives, individuals actively shape the evolving collective memory of the protest movement, thereby imbuing it with renewed relevance and resonance within the socio-cultural landscape. In essence, the memefication of the EndSARS protest on WhatsApp and Instagram underscores the intricate interplay between digital culture, collective memory, and participatory engagement. Through creating and disseminating memes, the study participants navigate and negotiate complex socio-political realities and contribute to the continuous reshaping of historical narratives, thereby perpetuating a dynamic discourse that reflects the evolving contours of societal consciousness and activism.

#### **7.4. Digital Archiving and Curating**

Traditionally, activists have incorporated the documentation and archiving of injustices and protests into their repertoire (Smits, 2022; Liebermann, 2021; Jules et al., 2018; Cannoli & Musso, 2022). Presently, proficiency in digital archival practices on social media platforms has

become crucial for activists. The curation of such content is contextualised within the parameters of the platform used, as exemplified by Instagram and WhatsApp in this research. For instance, the participants of this study uploaded images and videos of police brutality and connected them to related cases through hashtags, especially on Instagram. In this research, digital archiving and curation on WhatsApp and Instagram played pivotal roles in documenting and disseminating information about the movement. The selected participants utilised these platforms to archive photos, videos, and messages related to the protests, effectively creating a digital repository of the events as they unfolded. Some of my research participants narrated how they created WhatsApp groups dedicated to sharing real-time updates, eyewitness accounts, and multimedia content capturing various aspects of the protests. These groups functioned as digital archives, preserving critical information and personal testimonies that might have been lost or overlooked. The research participants also curated content within these groups. As Participant 5 notes: “WhatsApp group is where we drop a lot of information; people in the group are always giving updates and debates”. Yet another says, “The group, of course, is a meeting place for making decisions for the next move, and the group is very coordinated”. Notwithstanding the digital archiving and curation on WhatsApp status, WhatsApp groups, in this case, are essential backstage activism (Trere, 2015, 2020).

Similarly, on Instagram, the study participants utilised features such as Stories, posts, and hashtags to curate and disseminate content related to the EndSARS movement. Instagram Story provided a platform for sharing real-time updates and behind-the-scenes glimpses of the protests, allowing my participants to archive short-lived but impactful moments. Posts served as more permanent digital artefacts, capturing significant milestones, protests, and acts of solidarity. Hashtags such as #EndSARS and #EndPoliceBrutality were used to aggregate related content,

facilitating easy access to curated information for users seeking to learn more about the movement. This strategic approach essentially constitutes archival practice by enhancing the traceability and searchability of the content. Additionally, on Instagram, various metrics such as the date, the number of views, likes, and shares are omnipresent in these posts, influencing their visibility and rhetorical impact. The higher the number of likes and shares, the more significant the post becomes as a document of importance.

These platforms (WhatsApp and Instagram) functioned as a conduit pipe for sharing and storing EndSARS content, specifically related to protests and police brutality, contributing to the collective identity of the protests. The research participants fostered an inclusive sense of unity by including visual evidence of various forms of injustice and the corresponding activist responses. This practice serves a dual purpose of immediate communication and long-term archival preservation, aligning with the concept of mediated prospective memory (Moroz, 2020; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022), which has the propensity to resurface and influence future socio-political agendas, serving as visual reminders of injustice that fuel ongoing activism. Despite these social media's orientation towards prioritising current and new content, they are designed to also allow older posts to resurface based on user interaction, highlighting the role of relevance metrics in determining the representation of archived material. This illustrates WhatsApp and Instagram's involvement in the crucial aspect of memory creation, archival and curation within the digital realm. Through digital archiving and curation on WhatsApp and Instagram, the EndSARS movement was able to transcend physical boundaries. These platforms served as digital archives, preserving the collective memory of the protests and providing tools for the research participants to curate and organise information according to their



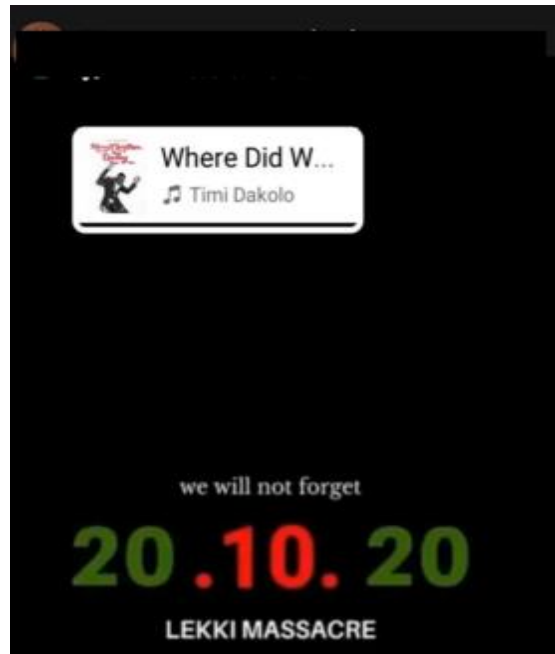
preferences. By leveraging the power of digital media, the study participants were able to amplify their voices, raise awareness, and mobilise support for their cause in unprecedented ways.

### **7.5. The Memory of Mourning and Commemoration**

Another prevalent practice observed was the mourning and commemoration of EndSARS martyrs and the quest for justice concerning the deaths of these protesters, as Karataş and Bek (2023) and Smit (2020) identified in their studies about mourning and commemorating the death of protesters and marginalised victims. Particularly in the initial week of the Lekki Tollgate shooting of EndSARS protesters, the study participants' WhatsApp and Instagram page evolved into a virtual arena where they found solace in sharing their grief and extending condolences to victims of the shooting, essentially transforming into a digital memorial (see figure 7.2 in the next page). Also, during the protest's first anniversary, as I elaborated in chapter nine, the mourning of deceased protesters was significant. Mourning the victims not only facilitated emotional connections among the research participants but also enabled them to intertwine their individual experiences of grief and indignation with broader socio-political concerns. The finding corroborates Bennett et al. (2008), who conclude that the diversity of personal networks offers a more robust explanation for the prevalent utilisation of digital media, surpassing mere affiliations with organisations sponsoring a protest.

On Instagram, my participants utilised features such as posts, stories, and IGTV to memorialise victims of police violence and share messages of solidarity with the EndSARS movement. Some profiles were adorned with black squares, symbolic of mourning and resistance, while captions and hashtags conveyed heartfelt messages of remembrance and call for justice. The research participants curated their feeds to highlight stories and images of victims, ensuring that

their memories were not forgotten amidst the ongoing struggle for accountability and systemic reform.



**Figure 7.2. A Screenshot from a Participant 11's Instagram page**

Figure 7.2 originates from an Instagram Story, a digital narrative shared by a research participant. Within this evocative image, one is struck by the profound melancholy that permeates the psyche of the protester portrayed. The choice of a dark background serves as a poignant symbol, metaphorically encapsulating the collective mourning and profound sorrow experienced by the protesters amidst the tumultuous events unfolding during the EndSARS movement. The deliberate inclusion of the date is of particular significance, highlighted to draw attention to the ominous timestamp of October 20, 2020. This specific date holds immense symbolic weight, serving as a solemn reminder of the tragic and harrowing events that transpired on that fateful day, particularly the grievous loss of innocent lives at the infamous Lekki Tollgate. Furthermore, the intentional rendering of the numerical representation of the month "10" in a striking shade of red

adds another layer of symbolic depth to the visual narrative. This colour serves as a metaphor, symbolically representing the bloodshed and violence inflicted upon the unarmed protesters who courageously advocated for justice and societal reform.

Moreover, an additional layer of emotional resonance is introduced within figure 7.2 with the inclusion of a musical element. Specifically, a song by a Nigerian vocalist, Timi Dakolo, titled "Where Did We Go Wrong?" is interwoven into the overall display. This song serves as a backdrop, enriching the narrative depicted within the image. The opening segment (*"There's a cry from a young boy in a city, running wild; There's a cry from a mother who just lost another child; There's a cry from a people who have nothing more to lose; Everything that they lived for, has been wasted and abused"*) of the song encapsulates a profound reflection on the state of affairs, both personal and societal. Dakolo's evocative lyrics resonate with themes of introspective memory (Smit, 2020; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022), societal disillusionment (Scott, 2023), and the quest for understanding amidst adversity. This lyrical excerpt accompanies the visual imagery, amplifying the emotional depth and introspectiveness of the protest movement captured within the Instagram Story. By integrating musical expression into the digital narrative, this participant adds a multi-sensory dimension to their storytelling and invites viewers to engage with a broader spectrum of emotional and cognitive responses. The synergy between visual and auditory elements within the digital underscores the nuanced and multifaceted nature of contemporary forms of protest expression. In essence, this visually compelling narrative encapsulates the sombre reality and profound emotional resonance of the EndSARS movement, serving as a testament to the resilience and unwavering spirit of those who stood protesting against police brutality and oppression. This image transcends temporal and spatial boundaries, resonating on a deeply emotional and empathetic level while simultaneously bearing witness to the indelible mark left by

this historic moment in the collective memory of Nigeria. The narrative of the image aligns with Bublitz et al. (2024) argument about storytelling of individual (me) stories and movement (we) stories in social movements. Narratives concerning "me" encapsulate the personal accounts of individual change agents, while narratives about "we" encompass the collective stories these individuals share regarding the movement.

Another manifestation of mourning and commemoration arose from physically visiting the memorial site (Lekki Tollgate) and sharing this deeply personal experience on Instagram. This particular instance, recounted by one of the research participants (8) who visited the site of the Lekki Tollgate, stands as a testament to the multifaceted and evolving nature of grief expression in contemporary society. The research participant's decision to undertake the physical visit to the Lekki Tollgate, a site laden with historical significance and symbolic resonance due to its association with the October 20, 2020, shooting incident during the EndSARS protests, underscores a profound engagement with the process of mourning and remembrance. By physically immersing oneself in the physical space where the tragedy unfolded, the participant embarked on a deeply introspective and emotive journey, seeking solace, closure, and connection with the collective memory of the event.



**Figure 7.3. An Image from the WhatsApp Story of Research Participant 8 who was at the Lekki Tollgate**

The visual representation encapsulated in figure 7.3 delineates a situation where protesters congregate in a demonstrative display of solidarity, their interlaced hands symbolising a collective ethos of unity amidst the solemn backdrop of the Lekki Tollgate. This gathering happened during the third commemoration of the EndSARS protest, where protesters sought to imbue the location with renewed significance through acts of remembrance and communal solidarity. However, a disconcerting narrative emerges from the discourse articulated by the research participant 8, detailing the thwarted attempts by security forces to impede their physical proximity to the Lekki Tollgate. This obstruction underscores the persistent challenges demonstrators encounter in asserting their right to commemorate and reclaim contested spaces and the ongoing struggle for public memory and collective commemoration amidst hegemonic forces seeking to suppress dissent (Nora, 1989; Winter, 1998). The attire donned by the protesters (figure 7.3), characterised by the sombre colour of black garments, serves as a visual marker of mourning, emblematic of the collective grief and sombre reflection that permeate the commemorative gathering. Moreover, the deliberate formation of a human chain encircling the perimeter of the Tollgate serves as a powerful

visual allegory, signifying the communal fortification and protective embrace afforded to this sacred site of memory, underscoring its indelible significance within the collective consciousness of the protest movement. The image is a testament to the enduring legacy of the EndSARS protest. It illuminates the multifaceted struggle in preserving and commemorating contested sites such as the Lekki Tollgate. Through their collective presence and symbolic gestures, the protesters articulate a profound assertion of agency and resilience, reaffirming the intrinsic value of public memory and the indomitable spirit of resistance amidst attempts at erasure and suppression.

This interesting dualistic engagement underscores the nuanced interplay between online and offline modalities of mourning, revealing the intricate intersections between the physical and digital within the commemorative landscape. The act of physically journeying to the memorial site and subsequently sharing these lived experiences on Instagram manifests the symbiotic relationship between the virtual and tangible dimensions of the commemorative endeavour. This phenomenon elucidates the dynamic fluidity and intrinsic interconnectedness characterising contemporary memory practices, wherein individuals adeptly traverse between virtual and material domains to uphold and perpetuate collective acts of remembrance.

Furthermore, the symbolic gestures depicted within these images exemplify the profound emotional and symbolic resonance inherent in memorialisation. Particularly noteworthy is the gesture of locked hands depicted in figure 7.3, which underscores their remarkable ability to transcend the constraints of physical space and reverberate across digital platforms. This phenomenon amplifies the impact of commemorative acts, extending their reach and significance within the expansive realm of the online community, thus perpetuating the enduring legacy of remembrance in a digital age. Essentially, the confluence of physically visiting the memorial site by research participant 8, and digitally sharing these experiences on Instagram epitomises a layered

approach to mourning and commemoration. It epitomises the dynamic evolution of memory practices in the digital era, wherein people leverage the capabilities of online platforms to enrich and broaden traditional forms of commemorative expression. This dynamic integration fosters a fluid and inclusive remembrance culture, adapting to contemporary modes of communication and engaging a diverse range of participants in the collective act of honouring and preserving memory.

## **7.6. Chapter Summary**

This part of this research has been dedicated to discussing the different strands of EndSARS memory constructed on Instagram and WhatsApp. Specifically, this chapter highlighted the peculiarities of digital memory. As seen in the discussion, the transient feature of Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media mirrored the fluidity and dynamism of the EndSARS, reflecting the evolving nature of digital memory construction in real-time. Also, this highlighted how the research participants use memes to construct digital memory; a digital memory practice Smit (2020) calls memetic resurrection. Closely related to digital memory, this chapter has also highlighted how the study participants constructed memory through digital archiving and curation. This practice serves a dual purpose of immediate communication and long-term archival preservation, aligning with the concept of mediated prospective memory (Moroz, 2020; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022), which has the propensity to resurface and influence future socio-political agendas, serving as visual reminders of injustice that fuel ongoing activism. As similar studies on digital activism (Karatas & Bek, 2023; Smith, 2020; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022) have contributed, this chapter also discussed the theme of the EndSARS memory of mourning and commemoration on Instagram and WhatsApp. Interestingly, this research discovered the physical act of visiting the memorial site of the EndSARS and subsequently sharing these lived experiences on Instagram. This dualistic engagement underscores

the nuanced interplay between online and offline modalities of mourning, revealing the intricate intersections between the physical and digital within the commemorative landscape. In other words, this phenomenon elucidates the dynamic fluidity and intrinsic interconnectedness characterising contemporary memory practices, wherein individuals adeptly traverse between virtual and material domains to uphold and perpetuate collective acts of remembrance. This chapter acknowledges that WhatsApp and Instagram would have significantly shaped memory construction in the EndSARS movement. These platforms employ algorithms to curate content, prioritise specific posts over others, and facilitate content discoverability based on user preferences and engagement patterns (Pedwell, 2019; Poell, 2020).



# **Chapter Eight: “The EndSARS Movement is an Umbrella for Other Challenges”: Implicit Collective Memory and Other Complex Memory Engagements**

## **8.1. Introduction**

Social movement studies are interwoven with the threads of transdisciplinary inquiry (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019), including but not confined to media and communication, political science, sociology and anthropology, which converge in intellectual discourse. This multifaceted approach, characterised by its embrace of diverse epistemological paradigms, has endowed scholars with the methodological versatility requisite for navigating the intricate complexities of contemporary societal phenomena (Kaun & Treré, 2020; della Porta et al., 2024; Noll & Budniok, 2023). Indeed, the polyphony of academic voices resonating within the interdisciplinary arena of social movements scholarship reverberates with a resounding call to action, beckoning scholars to embark on an odyssey of exploration into the myriad cultural, economic, and socio-political exigencies pervading the fabric of modernity. From the pulsating heartbeats of urban activism MacGregor (2021) to the whispered cadences of rural resistance (Padilla, 2020; Sachs, 2023), the heterogeneity of social movements studies serves as a lens through which to scrutinise the multifarious contours of societal transformation. In alignment with this scholarly ethos, the present research endeavours to illuminate the profound intricacies inherent within the EndSARS movement, which aims to pursue social justice. Against the backdrop of socio-political turbulence and existential upheaval, the EndSARS movement emerges as a crucible of collective memory, wherein the research participants coalesce to forge a narrative of shared experiences and collective

aspirations. It is within this cauldron of collective memory that the study participants of this research transcend the temporal confines of the present moment, imbuing their actions with a sense of implicit and historical continuum of collective identity. Through the various mnemonic rites and commemorative rituals, the research participants inscribe their collective consciousness upon the annals of history, carving out a space for their voices to resonate across the temporal expanse. Moreover, the transformative potential inherent within these memory practices transcends the confines of individual agency, catalysing a ripple effect that reverberates throughout the socio-political landscape. As memories are transmuted into narratives and narratives into movements, the participants of this study metamorphose from passive spectators into active agents of societal change. Consequently, this chapter discusses how research participants created collective memory through the protest, elucidating how the mnemonic practices of the EndSARS movement serve as a crucible for the cultivation of societal consciousness and the agential mobilisation of social change. Through an in-depth exploration of the intricate interplay between memory, protest, and social transformation, this chapter endeavours to illuminate the dialectical nexus wherein collective memory becomes both a repository of past grievances and a harbinger of future possibilities.

## **8.2. Implicit Collective Memory: Shared Socio-Economic Trauma**

The idea of implicit collective memory stems from an in-depth analysis of ethnographic fieldnotes and interviews, which provided rich insights into the lived experiences and socioeconomic challenges confronted by the study participants. Specifically, this exploration revealed a recurrent pattern wherein the research participants articulated various socioeconomic adversities, notably encompassing issues of unemployment, poverty, and corruption. I describe these adversities as shared trauma, denoting the pervasive and enduring hardships endured by the

research participants while navigating the socioeconomic landscape of their country. Within the analysis framework, these challenges were conceptualised as constituting an implicit collective memory, representing experiences deeply ingrained within the study participants' consciousness. This finding validates Zamponi's (2018) argument, which posits that the over-concentration of memory within social movement studies through the lens of explicit and episodic acts fails to fully acknowledge and harness the hidden potentials inherent in implicit memory. By elucidating the limitations of solely examining memory through episodic events within the context of social movements, this research underscores the imperative of adopting a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach that encompasses implicit memory. Furthermore, Schudson (2014) highlights that societies often engage in recollection without relying on deliberate or purposeful memory initiatives. Rather, the past is frequently assimilated into the present in ways not necessarily oriented towards commemoration, as in the case of implicit collective memory in the current research. According to Participant 2: "No bi today (It has been a long time), I have been holding up so many challenges that have been happening in this country... I don't have a job...". This nuanced observation underscores the multifaceted nature of collective memory formation, indicating that memory is not always a consciously orchestrated endeavour but can emerge organically as part of the ongoing socio-cultural fabric.

Implicit memory operates by evoking shared or common experiences among individuals, engendering a collective resonance that fuels a shared sense of outrage and mobilisation. In the context of this study, the implicit memory of socioeconomic traumatic experiences catalysed driving the intensity and determination exhibited by the study participants in their engagement with the protests. As argued by Wertsch (2021), implicit memory is characterised by the impact of prior experiences on subsequent performance, even without conscious recollection. However, I

argue that implicit memory, in the context of this study, extends beyond mere recollection of the past; rather, it embodies a dynamic and continuous process that shapes individuals' perceptions and responses to ongoing challenges. As Participant 5 puts it:

“...You know you've bottled something for a very long time, and it gets to the point where you can no longer take it again and just explode. That was what that movement was all about. Saying enough is enough”.

The narratives shared by the study participants underscored the enduring struggles and frustrations associated with socioeconomic disparities, as exemplified by another research participant- Participant 9 poignant recollection of familial struggles and personal challenges in accessing educational and employment opportunities: “My parents struggled to send me to school. I am out of the university now and still no job for me”. Importantly, this narrative highlights how implicit memory operates beneath the surface, subtly influencing the research participants' perspectives and motivations. Implicit memory, with its ability to shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours on a subconscious level, plays a pivotal role in influencing collective action, shaping group identities, and perpetuating cultural narratives within social movements. As Erll (2022) posits, implicit memory operates with high efficiency, yet remains concealed from conscious awareness, operating without intentional control.

Moreover, despite its significant contribution to the existing literature on the EndSARS movement from a memory perspective, this study acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the socio-economic factors underpinning the protests. Previous studies on the EndSARS movement have highlighted related results as a pivotal catalyst for the protests. For instance, Olaseni and

Oladele (2023) argue that the EndSARS protests were not solely a response to police brutality but also stemmed from broader grievances stemming from dissatisfaction with the performance of the ruling class. Similarly, Dambo et al. (2022) affirm that corruption within the Nigerian political system was a significant driver of the protest, exacerbating public discontent and fueling calls for systemic reform. As Onyeozili (2005) argues, corruption in Nigeria is a pervasive and entrenched phenomenon that permeates various facets of the society. As Participant 3 notes: "...corruption, government, and lackadaisical attitude to the citizens... they embezzle monies meant for social amenities. And it has created a lot of inequality".

The findings express how extensive instances of corruption influence on governance, economic development, and social cohesion, thereby contributing to widespread disillusionment and grievances among the populace. The EndSARS protests, therefore, represented a convergence of discontentment and frustration stemming from not only police brutality but also governmental systemic failures and injustices.

In the subsequent sections, I discussed these socio-economic challenges in the context of collective memory, highlighting their intricate manifestations and implications.

### **8.3. "The EndSARS Movement is an Umbrella for Other Challenges"**

The most prominent and broad theme from the interviews that explains the EndSARS Movement's root cause is the EndSARS protest's description as an Umbrella. In this context, the EndSARS protest is the mother of several socio-economic challenges bedeviling the citizens, especially the young people. In other words, the EndSARS Movement acts as a collective term encompassing various other demands and concerns. The study participants pointed out that they utilised the EndSARS protest to express their discontent and assertively address the government.

They viewed it as a suitable platform to voice their concerns and demand accountability from the government, extending beyond just the police. Participant 1 describes the EndSARS Movement thus:

“The way the country is going, we have a whole lot of unemployment issues, we have police brutality issues, we don't have enough voltage power, we don't have enough source of income. So these are all the problems that need to be addressed. So, in a nutshell, the EndSARS movement is not just about police brutality. It is an umbrella for other challenges. It's not just about police brutality”.

The statement implies that the EndSARS Movement is an amalgam of other socio-economic challenges citizens face, especially young people. The protest motivates them to actively participate in addressing social issues, such as unemployment and hunger/poverty. "We actually know what we want, how we want the country to be going, the development and infrastructural needs of the country, and how to better the citizens of the country" (Participant 3). To fully understand the EndSARS protest as an Umbrella, it is essential to consider the political and socio-economic backdrop in which the protest took root in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa. As of March 2021, Nigeria's population was estimated to be around 209,843,780 (Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). With an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent, Nigeria boasts one of the world's most rapidly expanding populations, with 41 per cent of its people under 15 (UNOCHA 2021). Given such a high population growth and fertility rates, Nigeria's population is projected to reach 263 million by 2030 and 401 million by 2050, making it the third most populous country globally (Fayehun et al., 2020). Considering the foregoing statistics, it is safe to say that with slow human

capital development, there are bound to be challenges, as we have seen in the EndSARS Movement. I will present the four themes that describe the EndSARS movement as an umbrella.

### **8.3.1. Growing Youth Unemployment**

When referring to the EndSARS, the interviewees highlighted that youth unemployment is one of the root causes. Like other social justice movements in Europe (Zamponi & Bosi, 2018; Chesta et al., 2019) and North America (Smit, 2020; Merrill and Lindgren, 2020) that are youth-driven, the EndSARS draws from the power of the young population of Nigeria. However, most of the youths in the country are unemployed. Participant 7 notes:

“There were other demands, like the government not providing jobs for us: not doing what they said they would do. Most of us who are protesting are unemployed. Some are under-employed. But it was just the police brutality that sparked it”.

Breaking down Nigeria's population by age groups, approximately 43 per cent of the population consists of children aged 0 to 14 years, while 19 per cent fall in the 15 to 24 age bracket. An impressive 62 per cent of the population is below 25 years of age (UNECOSOC, 2019). In contrast, those aged 60 and older comprise less than five per cent of the population. This demographic makeup characterises Nigeria as a youthful nation, with a median age of around 18 years, which is lower than the respective estimates for Africa (20 years) and the world (29 years) (Fayehun and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). These statistics underscore that around 70 per cent of the country's population consists of young people who continue to experience the challenging consequences of deep-rooted governance issues.

Despite making up the majority of the population, young people in Nigeria continue to have limited involvement in decision-making. This lack of inclusive participation in governance can

largely be attributed to the entrenched gerontocratic and neo-patrimonial political system within the country's political landscape. Consequently, youth engagement in governance primarily revolves around the act of voting. Moreover, the need for more availability of resources further obstructs the representation of young individuals in national decision-making bodies. This predicament is exacerbated by the prevalent portrayal of youth as a negative social force, often associated with crimes, violence, and conflicts in discussions about national security (Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). "...no work for us. Instead of creating employment, they are accusing the youth of being fraudsters" (Participant 2). The trust of young people in Nigeria's institutions has diminished, leading to broader repercussions on social unity within the nation. In 2018, the former president, Muhammadu Buhari, described Nigerian youths as lazy, uneducated, and waiting for the government to care for them. In a February 2016 interview with the UK Telegraph, Mr Buhari stated that young Nigerians are mostly disposed to criminality (Ogundipe, 2018). For the section of a population that is described by the Financial Times (2020) as the most highly educated group and successful immigrant with representation across various professional domains to be portrayed in such light by its president buttresses the gerontocratic and neo-patrimonial political system entrenched in the body politics against young people in Nigeria. Notably, among the unemployed, the largest demographic group is youth aged between 18 and 35 years, numbering approximately 13.7 million in Nigeria (Bello et al., 2021). Participant 1 says, "Unemployment had nothing to do with SARS. But like I said, EndSARS is like a vehicle. It is a microcosm of the bigger demands".

### **8.3.2. Endemic Public Sector Corruption and Poor Police Welfare**

As stated by different sources we have seen, endemic public sector corruption has been the bane of socio-economic growth and development in the country. Corruption in Nigeria is a deeply ingrained and pervasive issue that has profoundly impacted the country's political, economic, and



social landscape. The research participants paint a picture of the horrid situation in the country. Participant 6, as it affects the health sector, and women in particular:

“...corruption is still there. Monies were given for you to build facilities, you don't build it. People are dying, maternal health, you know, all manner of things are happening”.

Corruption in Nigeria has historical roots dating back to the colonial era when colonial authorities employed corruption as a political weapon against their subordinates (Apata, 2019). Post-independence, political leaders and public officials continued these practices, exacerbating corruption. Politicians and their cronies divert public resources from essential services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure, leading to poor development outcomes and a high poverty rate. As William et al. state (2023), the oil sector, the backbone of Nigeria's economy, has been plagued by corruption. Mismanagement of oil revenue, theft of crude oil, and bribery in the sector have led to vast economic losses and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region (Abraham & Michael, 2018). These political elites do not only mismanage financial resources; they engage in electoral fraud and political assassinations. "The politicians are so corrupt that they influence our election. You know the ways they buy votes. That is corruption" (Participant 2). This theme corroborates other studies (Dambo et al., 2021; Dami, 2021; William et al., 2023) highlighting corruption as the chief cause of social unrest and underdevelopment in Nigeria. As argued by the different sources we have seen, the combined consequence of public sector corruption is evident in the rising levels of poverty, inequality, joblessness, deficiencies in infrastructure, and restricted availability of quality education and healthcare, especially among the expanding young population.

The situation of poor police welfare is in tandem with previous studies (Gholami and Salihu, 2018; Salihu, 2019), which reveal the mismanagement of funds by the Nigerian police. As Participant 3 notes:

“...police officers, since their job is to protect us from crime, they should be remunerated accordingly. They should be given good welfare packages. Because seeing what these guys are doing well to protect our lives and property, they should be taken care of”.

Salihu (2019) argues that financial mismanagement is endemic among executive-level police officials. This involves misappropriating funds and assets designated for essential police operations, the upkeep and provision of police gear and facilities, and enhancements to officers' well-being, including incentives, pensions, and gratuities (Akinyetun, 2021). Data shows that the consequences of this type of corruption are substantial, with its repercussions being deeply experienced both within the police force's lower ranks and throughout the entire country. One of these consequences is highlighted by Participant 4: "An average policeman cannot send his child to a private school that pays about 70,000 Naira". This assertion is reflected in Karimu's (2015) finding of the dire state of police barracks, the failure to disburse allowances and incentives to active officers, and pensions and gratuities to retired officers. Similarly, as described by Participant 4, "Average policeman", Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2016) link these subpar living conditions to junior police officers. Furthermore, junior police officers who sustain injuries while performing their duties are not adequately looked after. The same goes for those who lose their lives in the course of duty, as they do not receive proper burial ceremonies. Their families often do not receive the necessary compensation, as indicated by Karimu (2015). "Police officers die in the line of duty,

and nothing comes from the government. When they die, what they are supposed to give to their family does not get to them" (Participant 6).

Omoroghomwan and Abanimebon's (2020) study indicates that, among other factors, insufficient funding for the police, a shortage of personnel within the police force, inadequate compensation, and corruption within the police substantially impact the Nigerian police's effectiveness. Numerous instances of fund mismanagement, diversion, and illicit enrichment have been reported among senior police officers within the Nigerian police. Among the significant cases that posed a severe threat to the institution is the case of the former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun, who was convicted in 2005 for embezzling 17.7 billion Naira from police funds (Salihu, 2019). Similarly, another former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, along with some other senior officers, faced accusations of misappropriating 16.4 million Naira allocated for the purchase of police equipment in 2012 (PM News Nigeria, 2018). The consequences of this poor welfare on officers' motivation and dedication to their work are clearly noticed among the population. The outcome of the neglected welfare of the police force in Nigeria is manifested in the rising levels of uncontrolled criminal activities, illicit behaviour, and insecurity within the nation (Karimu, 2015). Additionally, it contributes to officers' indiscipline and the inhumane treatment that many Nigerians have experienced at the hands of the police, such as harassment and brutality, resulting in the EndSARS protest.

### **8.3.3. Poverty: "Not Everybody in the Country can Boast of Having Three Square Meals a Day"**

Another challenge beneath the EndSARS protest as an umbrella discovered in my analysis is the high prevalence of poverty. According to data from the World Bank, approximately 40 percent of Nigeria's population, equivalent to 83 million individuals, live below the poverty threshold, defined as an income of less than US\$1.90 per day (Aubyn & Frimpong, 2022).

Additionally, another 25 per cent, or 53 million people, hover slightly above this poverty line, remaining in a vulnerable economic position. Specifically, the inflation of food costs has impacted household spending and hindered the ability of the most disadvantaged Nigerians to obtain food (World Bank 2020b). Furthermore, in August 2020, the World Economic Forum highlighted that a staggering 27 per cent of Nigeria's workforce, comprising over 21 million individuals, were unemployed.

The shortage of prospects and rising poverty rates have driven many young people to engage in organised criminal activities such as armed robbery, banditry, and other illicit means of securing their economic livelihood (Oluwaleye, 2021). Participant 8 corroborates the foregoing assertion when they commented on mini robberies: "...petty robberies...You are at home, and someone comes to steal the shoes outside your house, that has nothing to do with SARS. It is poverty". Coincidentally, the police officers are not immune to poverty, which has negatively impacted their welfare, as discussed in the next theme.

#### **8.3.4. Police Brutality- Perennial Human Rights Abuse**

Nigeria, a nation with a rich and diverse culture, has unfortunately garnered a less-than-flattering reputation when it comes to human rights abuses committed by its police force (Amnesty International Reports 2021, 2023). For years, the Nigerian police have been plagued by persistent and deeply concerning issues related to human rights violations. Notwithstanding that, I found that the immediate cause of the EndSARS protest was incessant abuse by the police, as exemplified in the literature that the repressive characteristics of the Nigerian police are one of the legacies the colonial master bequeathed to her (Alemika, 2013). Consequently, the Nigerian police continue perpetuating this authoritarian style of intimidating its citizens. As I found from the research

participants, the immediate reason for the EndSARS Movement is the continued inhumane treatment police meted out to Nigerians, especially the youth. Participant 10 paints the image thus:

“The police are always intimidating us. They don't need to do that. They stop you for no reason and start shouting at you just to put fear in you. Sometimes, you dare not respond to them, or else they will frame you for crimes you don't know anything about”.

This discovery aligns with Uwazuruike's perspective in 2020, asserting that SARS operatives frequently subject suspects to torture to obtain "confessions." According to the 2010 Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) report, this practice is so prevalent that many police stations assign a specific staff member responsible for overseeing detainee torture and designate a dedicated room. Moreover, police personnel have developed their own jargon to describe various torture methods (Amnesty International, 2016), which has extensively reported on instances of abuse, human rights violations, and torture, with a significant number linked to SARS. In an ironic twist, SARS personnel, originally tasked with combating violent crimes, have now taken it upon themselves to identify individuals they label as "Yahoo boys" (internet fraudsters). To achieve this, they frequently stop young people and insist on inspecting their mobile devices. Simply possessing an iPhone can be sufficient to arouse suspicion. "We can't own an iPhone in peace in this country because of SARS " (Participant 11). Incidents have been reported where individuals were detained merely for keeping dreadlocked styled hair and for owning smart devices such as iPhones (Uwazuruike, 2020). In a comparable severe scenario, both the SARS and various units of the Nigerian police habitually incarcerate people, often for extended periods, without subjecting them to a trial. Nigeria's average pre-trial detention duration is three years and ten months (OSJI, 2010). Such prolonged detentions are typically carried out by applying a holding charge. A holding charge

entails the police filing charges against a suspect in a lower court that lacks the authority to adjudicate the offence, pending guidance from the Director of Public Prosecutions. Although the Nigerian Court has declared this practice unconstitutional, it continues to persist (Ozekhome, 2015), the practice persists.

The Nigerian police's perennial human rights abuses are an ongoing challenge that has garnered international attention and condemnation. While there have been some efforts at police reform, the persisting issues are a stark reminder that a positive change is desperately needed. The voices of the Nigerian people, amplified through social media and research, are crucial in bringing about accountability and lasting change within the country's law enforcement agencies.

#### **8.4. Forging Connections between Collective Memory and Topical Societal Agenda**

Another prevalent memory ritual observed during the EndSARS protest involved the convergence of collective memory with contemporary public agendas, a phenomenon elucidated by Zamponi (2020) as the appropriation of a specific past memory to propel or bolster political assertions contextualised in the present. This process entails strategically utilising historical narratives and commemorative symbols to advocate for or reinforce present-day political objectives, thereby imbuing the act of remembering with a tangible relevance to contemporary socio-political contexts. As an example, the research participants alluded to the unfavourable economic conditions in Nigeria. Participant 2 remarks:

“People are angry...the economy today is a mess. At least in 2014, 2015 with 10,000 naira we can afford a bag of rice and even other things. But today, see what they have done to the economy: total destruction”.

In parallel with the above excerpt, other interlocutors presented substantiating evidence by juxtaposing the prevailing public agenda with historical contentions of adversaries, employing a sarcastic tone to underscore their incongruence. This strategic manoeuvre undermined counternarratives and contested populist rhetoric surrounding the protests (Karatas & Bek, 2023). Consequently, the research participants engaged in a dialectical process wherein they confronted past assertions and depictions, subsequently integrating these counter-memories retrospectively to discredit counternarratives. This analytical approach underscores the intricate interplay between memory, discourse, and political contestation, illustrating how activists strategically leverage collective recollections to challenge dominant narratives and shape the discourse surrounding social movements. In addition, the study participants established symbolic linkages between the EndSARS protests and other movements and uprisings suppressed by the government. The EndSARS protest also leveraged symbolic connections with other global movements and historical events that resonated with the overarching goals of the movement (Wada, 2021). For instance, protesters adopted slogans, imagery, and tactics inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, highlighting the universal nature of struggles against state violence and racial injustice. This strategic alignment with international movements served to amplify the visibility of the EndSARS protest on a global scale and underscored the interconnectedness of social justice movements across different contexts. As Zamponi (2020) notes, activists possess a repertoire of memory, comprising various mnemonic strategies deployed by social actors in relation to historical events. This suggests that activists draw upon a diverse range of memory-related practices to evoke and contextualise past events within present-day socio-political discourses, thereby facilitating the creation of interconnected narratives highlighting the broader implications and interconnectedness of dissent and resistance movements.

The integration of other mini resistance, such as gender protest (Nwabunnia, 2021; Faniyi, 2023) and student demands (Onivehu, 2021) within the broader EndSARS movement exemplifies what researchers (Dykstra & Rivera, 2016; Chouhy, 2020) describes as the dialectical interplay wherein actors concurrently employ historical perspectives to comprehend contemporary circumstances and current perspectives to interpret historical events. This observation underscores a complex and dynamic relationship between collective memory, social activism, and identity formation, wherein people draw upon past experiences and narratives to contextualise their present struggles while simultaneously using their current contexts to reinterpret and reframe historical events. Such multifaceted engagements with collective memory contribute to the nuanced understanding of social movements as dynamic processes shaped by the interplay between past and present narratives, ideologies, and objectives.

### **8.5. “We know how to Unveil and Defend the Truth”: Countering Fake and Fabricated State Memories**

In contrast to conventional memory practices documented in existing literature, this research identified deliberate and distinctive strategies employed by the study participants to assert the legitimacy of the EndSARS movement. These strategies directly challenge false memories and dominant narratives disseminated by the government. The research participants assumed the responsibility of reminding us about fabricated memories and their sources while resisting their influence. They accomplished this by offering corrective information and presenting evidence, particularly in relation to events such as the Lekki Tollgate shooting in Lagos and the government's use of hired thugs to disrupt peaceful protesters.

An illustrative example is the emergence of a video shared on social media by a Nigerian female disc jockey (DJ) named Obianuju Catherine Udeh, widely known as DJ Switch, which



became a pivotal moment for some research participants. This video, depicting the events of the Lekki shooting, served as compelling evidence that contradicted the initial assertions by the government regarding the incident. Specifically, the study participants recounted how DJ Switch's video directly challenged the government's initial claims, propagated through official channels and media outlets, that the military did not employ live ammunition against the protesters and that no lives were lost during the altercation. For instance, Participant 11 narrates: "... she went to exile for making the video public, the video really showed how the government treats people". Furthermore, Participant 3 exemplifies how the video impacted her: "... the video reinspired me and consolidated my belief in the Nigerian youth". Subsequently, a detailed investigation conducted by the CNN (Cable News Network) delved into the Lekki shooting, analysing a multitude of sources, including eyewitness testimonies, video footage, and forensic evidence. This report reconstructed the events surrounding the incident, ultimately corroborating DJ Switch's video and providing evidence contradicting the government's narrative. The CNN report shed light on the challenges citizens face in obtaining accurate information amidst government-imposed censorship and restrictions on media coverage. The significance of these events extends beyond mere factual discrepancies; they underscore broader issues surrounding access to information, media freedom, and transparency within the Nigerian context. The juxtaposition of conflicting narratives highlights the complexities of navigating a media landscape characterised by government censorship and manipulation (Amnesty International, 2024). Furthermore, these incidents serve as poignant reminders of the critical role played by independent journalism and citizen media in exposing the truth and holding those in power accountable.

An additional instance of distorted recollection involves the government's assertion that the opposition party within the nation harbours intentions to co-opt the protests for their personal

and partisan advantage (Punch October 19, 2020). This statement perpetuates the narrative that the EndSARS protest is susceptible to manipulation by political entities with ulterior motives, an attempt to cast doubt on the authenticity and integrity of the demonstrators' objectives. The government's dissemination of such misinformation would serve to delegitimise the protestors' grievances while diverting attention away from the systemic issues underpinning the protest movement. This false memory, propagated by state actors, attempts to contribute to a climate of distrust and polarisation, undermine efforts to address the root causes of social unrest and perpetuate a narrative of political opportunism and manipulation. Nevertheless, the research participants countered this misinformation by providing and rectifying details and presenting corroborative evidence. The participants of this study demonstrated concerted efforts to confront and dismantle this proliferation of fabricated or counterfeit memories by unequivocally characterising such occurrences as lies and rendering the fabrication as subaltern memories (Zamponi, 2018; Olivari & Badilla, 2024). A notable aspect of their strategy involved directing their scrutiny towards pro-government mainstream media outlets and holding them accountable for their involvement in creating and disseminating Misinformation.

Furthermore, some research participants opted to augment their critique by sharing screenshots of news articles published or broadcasts aired during the protests. These screenshots served as tangible reminders to the public, effectively highlighting the fallacious and deceptive nature of the allegations propagated by these media sources. Through these multifaceted tactics, the study participants challenged the credibility of mainstream media narratives and disrupted the perpetuation of false memories, thereby fostering a more informed and discerning public discourse during the protests. Through this substantiation technique, they undermined the veracity of the false narrative, thereby elucidating the factual accuracy of the situation at hand. This proactive

response entailed a comprehensive and detailed analysis aimed at discrediting the erroneous claim, thereby upholding the integrity of the discourse and fostering a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. This strategy is synonymous with Obia's (2023, p.7) concept of "dragging" on Nigeria's Twittersphere and holding people responsible for their actions. In this context, the act of "dragging" is perceived as a form of online criticism that transforms into a mechanism of digital shaming (Thompson & Cover, 2022; Shenton, 2020; Laidlaw, 2017). This practice is regarded as a humbling experience and is perceived by the research participants as a justified response to hold individuals accountable for their social transgressions. Subsequently, the study participants rationalise their actions through the concept Marwick (2021) described as morally motivated networked harassment. This entails the utilisation of online platforms to engage in harassment with the purported aim of upholding moral standards or social norms.

Given the context of state repressive media control and populist political agendas in Nigeria, my study participants extensively endeavoured to document and disseminate evidence of pseudo-events and illegitimate government actions. This included instances of police violence during both the protests and subsequent anniversary commemorations. By documenting such occurrences and presenting irrefutable evidence, the research participants undermined the credibility of state narratives while asserting the authenticity and legitimacy of the EndSARS movement. The strategic deployment of these practices underscores a nuanced understanding of memory politics and resistance within the context of socio-political upheaval. By actively confronting false memories and hegemonic representations, the participants of this research engaged in a form of memory activism aimed at challenging the dominant discourse and reshaping collective memory narratives. This analytical perspective sheds light on the complex dynamics of memory-making and contestation within the context of contentious political environments,

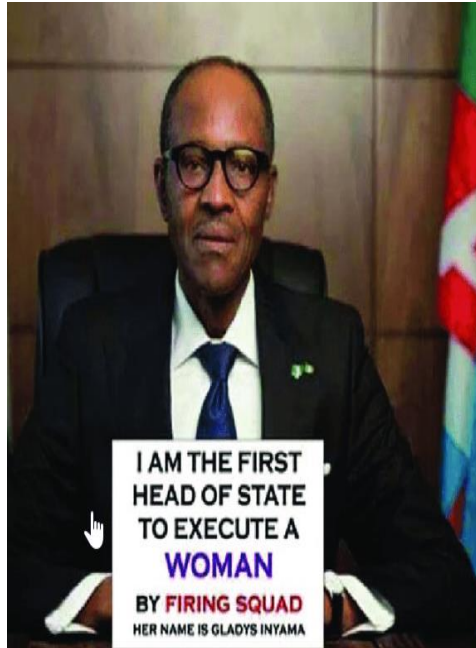
highlighting the role of memory in shaping social movements and challenging entrenched power structures.

## **8.6. Dual Retrospective-Prospective Memory Narratives**

Within this discourse of collective memory in the context of the EndSARS protest, I argue that three distinct memory narratives are discernible: namely, "Inherent Suffering", "Resilience: Overcoming the Adversities", and "We Will Never Forget". Overall, each of these narratives employs a combination of visual and textual elements to narrate police brutality and related matters while framing the current situation and the ramifications of the requested acknowledgement in distinct manners. I classify Inherent Suffering and Resilience: Overcoming the adversities as retrospective memory narratives, as they reminisce about past occurrences from the vantage point of the present- "Look where we came from" (Smit, 2020, p.105). We Will Never Forget is identified as a prospective memory narrative, which perpetuates the remembrance of unresolved issues or unaddressed grievances stemming from past events (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022).

### **8.6.1. Inherent Suffering**

Suffering is the first retrospective memory narrative identified in this study. It underscores the research participants' enduring lamentations stemming from police brutality. Within this narrative framework, past events are revisited through the lens of the present, highlighting the ongoing suffering experienced by Nigerians. The government is depicted as a distinctly negative entity, "them," as conceptualised by Eyerman (2015). The visuality of Instagram and WhatsApp contribute to shaping this narrative; visuality assumes a pivotal role as the narrative endeavours to assert rhetorically persuasive and emotionally resonant assertions about the past (Awopetu & Chilwa, 2023).



**Figure 8.1. A Meme of President Muhammadu Buhari**

Figure 8.1 serves as a poignant illustration of retrospective recollection within the discourse surrounding the EndSARS protest, particularly in the context of accusations levied against President Buhari. Specifically, the image captures the explicit accusation directed at the President, attributing to him the orchestration of the execution of a lady named Gladys by firing squad during his reign as a military Head of State in the 1980s. Furthermore, figure 8.1 indirectly implicates President Buhari in the tragic events that unfolded at the Lekki Tollgate massacre. This retrospective recollection encapsulated in the image highlights the attribution of responsibility for past atrocities and underscores the enduring significance of accountability within the collective memory of the protest movement. Figure 8.1 contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding systemic issues of state violence and impunity by invoking historical grievances and holding political figures accountable for their alleged actions.

Moreover, the explicit accusation against President Buhari within figure 8.1 underscores the complex interplay between individual agency and institutional power dynamics within the

socio-political landscape of Nigeria. It reflects a broader sentiment of disillusionment and distrust towards governmental authorities as protesters and activists seek to confront historical injustices and demand accountability for past transgressions. The image is a manifestation of retrospective recollection within the EndSARS protest, encapsulating the collective memory of past grievances and injustices while simultaneously asserting a call to action for accountability and justice in the present socio-political context. Further, figure 8.1 underscores the complex interplay between historical events and the perpetuation of collective memory within the digital sphere. Moreover, the enduring symbolism of the EndSARS protests underscores the protracted and systemic afflictions endured by Nigerian citizens under governmental repression.

Further, research participants draw parallels similarity between the EndSARS protest and past instances of police brutality and State violence in Nigeria. For instance, Participant 8 recollects the popular killing of six young people in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2005:

“It has been happening. They have been killing us, the same police that killed those Apo six victims so many years ago. We are not complaining about today, it has been happening, but today we are wiser”.

Another interlocutor (Participant 6) highlights the historical military killing to underscore the systemic nature of the issues being protested, “Former president Obasanjo did massacre innocent people in Odi some years ago”. Other interviewees shared personal testimonies and narratives of their experiences of police brutality and related harassment. These first hand accounts serve as retrospective reflections on the trauma, and collective struggle witnessed during the EndSARS movement, contributing to a collective memory of the events.

Yet another image, prominently featured on the WhatsApp status of Participant 1, serves as a striking representation of historical retrospection and symbolic resonance within the discourse surrounding the EndSARS protest. The image depicts a bird adorned in the colours associated with the Biafran secessionist movement, accompanied by the inscription "The Biafran Question." Upon further inquiry with the informant, it becomes evident that the protest movement evokes memories of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970, particularly the secessionist aspirations of the people of the eastern region to establish an independent state of Biafra. This imagery invokes historical parallels with the tumultuous events of the Nigerian Civil War and underscores the enduring legacy of regional tensions and grievances within the Nigerian socio-political landscape. The representation of the bird adorned in Biafran colours is a potent symbol of resilience and defiance, echoing the aspirations for self-determination and autonomy that characterised the Biafran secessionist movement. Moreover, the analogy drawn between the image and the prominence of the EndSARS protest in the southern region of Nigeria further accentuates the regional dynamics within the protest movement. It underscores the complex intersectionality of historical memory, regional identity, and socio-political mobilisation, highlighting the diverse array of perspectives and motivations driving participation in the protest across different regions of the country.

### **8.6.2. Resilience: Overcoming the Adversities**

In the narrative termed "Resilience," the research participants are portrayed as resilient and flourishing despite enduring adversities, particularly in the face of challenges posed by the government. This narrative is clear both in the interviews and images I observed and collected. The images are mostly accompanied by captions or quotes evoking themes of resilience and survival. For instance, in October 2022, research participant 8 shared the figure 8.2 below.



**Figure 8.2. An Image from WhatsApp Depicting Resilience**

The caption in figure 8.2 reads: “They killed Charles, and I was scared to Talk!!! I hope you are proud to see me out here”. In the context of the EndSARS protest, the quoted statement reflects a deeply personal and emotionally charged response to the loss of an individual named Charles, presumably at the hands of security forces or other agents of violence. The first-person narrative "I" imbues the statement with immediacy and authenticity, conveying the speaker's direct experience and emotional turmoil in the aftermath of Charles' death. Analytically, the statement underscores the pervasive climate of fear and intimidation that characterised the protest movement, wherein protesters faced the risk of reprisals or harm for speaking out against injustices. The reference to being "scared to talk" highlights the chilling effect of state violence and intimidation tactics employed to suppress dissent and silence opposition voices. Furthermore, the speaker's public invocation of pride asserts resilience and defiance in the face of adversity. Despite the fear and apprehension stemming from Charles' death, the protester chooses to participate in the protest, perhaps as a form of tribute to Charles or as a means of seeking justice for his untimely demise.



Within the context of the EndSARS protest, figure 8.2 highlights the complex interplay between resilience, personal grief, collective trauma, and the pursuit of justice within a socio-political movement characterised by widespread mobilisation against police brutality and systemic injustice. The statement serves as a reminder of the human cost of state violence and protesters' indomitable spirit of resistance in their quest for accountability and reform.

Furthermore, upon analysis of the interview transcript, I discerned a plethora of narratives elucidating resilience among the research participants. These narratives underscore the study participants' unwavering determination to persist in their demands for a more equitable and just Nigeria. Through these diverse narratives, the research participants articulate their experiences of navigating adversities and enduring socio-economic challenges, thus exemplifying their resilience in the face of systemic injustices and hardships. These narratives of resilience and survival offer valuable insights into the underlying motivations and driving forces behind the research participants' continued advocacy efforts. By delving into personal stories of perseverance and tenacity, the interview transcript provides a nuanced understanding of the study participants' unwavering commitment to effecting positive change within their communities and society. Moreover, these narratives highlight the interconnectedness between individual experiences of hardship and collective aspirations for a better future, underscoring the collective agency inherent within the EndSARS movement. Furthermore, these narratives within the interview transcript suggest a collective consciousness among the research participants, wherein shared experiences of adversity foster a sense of solidarity, strength, and collective purpose. This collective consciousness serves as a driving force behind the research participants' ongoing demands for societal transformation and reform. One of the study participants (11) describes their feelings thus:

“...I protested to lend my voice so that Nigeria becomes the country we desire; even if people die, I was ready to be part of those who will be killed if possible. For it to get better. Because I love my country”.

As scholars Davidjants and Tiidenberg (2022) and Smit (2020) delineated, resilience emerges as a fundamental retrospective lens within the discourse of social movements. This analytical framework underscores the significance of reflecting on past experiences and enduring challenges within collective action and activism. Through the lens of resilience, social movements not only revisit historical grievances and adversities (Karatas & Berk, 2023) but articulate narratives of resilience and perseverance in the face of systemic injustices and obstacles (Davies, 2024). Thus, perseverance is a critical analytical tool for understanding the complexities of social mobilisation, resilience, and the enduring legacies of past struggles within contemporary socio-political movements.

The predominant narrative among the research participants encapsulates a diverse array of encounters with police brutality, spanning a continuum from comparatively minor incidents to exceedingly severe and egregious manifestations of violence perpetrated by law enforcement authorities. This spectrum of experiences underscores the multifaceted and pervasive nature of police brutality within the context under examination. According to one of my participants (2) narrates in Nigerian Pidgin English:

“Me and police don tey ooo. No bi today ooo. I don collect from their hand tire. Dem don collect my moni tire, abi na the

intimidation? E too much. Dis period na our time to let dem know say we sabi wetin dem don dey do us”.

*(Translation: I have had terrible experiences from the police. They have extorted me financially several times. This time we have to let them know that we are aware of what they have been doing to us)*

Moreover, this nuanced portrayal highlights the varying degrees of impact and trauma inflicted upon individuals subjected to such acts of violence, illustrating the profound and far-reaching consequences of systemic issues within law enforcement agencies. Through the recollections of the research participants, an understanding of the complex interplay between power dynamics, institutional structures, and individual experiences within the broader discourse surrounding police brutality is clear.

### **8.6.3. We Will Never Forget**

In Nigeria, the topic of police brutality and its attendant challenges stands as an unresolved historical tragedy, imbuing the EndSARS anniversaries with a mission-oriented imperative and positioning it as an integral component of prospective memory narration, which is clearly present in the data of this result. In the narrative of "We Will Never Forget", emphasis is placed explicitly on the outstanding tasks that remain to be addressed, underscoring the ongoing significance of remembrance and the imperative to address unresolved issues stemming from the protest (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022; Smit, 2020).

Within the discourse surrounding the "Survival" and "Resilience" narratives, themes of responsibility, reparations, and anticipation of future risks are subtly implied, underscoring the enduring impact of historical traumas and systemic injustices. However, within the "We Will

Never Forget" narrative, explicit demands for accountability, restitution, and preventative measures take centre stage, elevating the discourse from a mere retrospective reflection to a proactive call to action. In the "We Will Never Forget" narrative, the emphasis is placed squarely on acknowledging past brutality, ensuring accountability for perpetrators, and advocating for reparative justice for affected people. This narrative not only serves to preserve the memory of past injustices but also seeks to mobilise collective action to address the lingering effects of historical traumas and prevent their recurrence in the future. Moreover, the explicit demands articulated within the "We Will Never Forget" narrative extend beyond individual grievances to encompass broader societal issues, such as tackling corruption and poverty, institutional reforms, and public acknowledgement of the Lekki shooting and other political and socio-economic challenges. The narrative catalyses socio-political transformation by foregrounding these demands, challenging existing power structures and advocating for a more just and equitable Nigeria.



Figure 8.3. Prospective Images of “We Will Never Forget”

A typical example is the first image on the left in figure 8.3. The image bears the powerful inscription: "We can never forget, and we will correct it in 2023," accompanied by the symbolic date "20.10.20." Through this visual representation, the EndSARS struggle is poignantly tethered to the 2023 general elections, imbued with the promise that elections present opportune moments to rectify the systemic anomalies and injustices that precipitated the protests. The image on the left operates on multiple levels of meaning and significance. Firstly, the proclamation of "We can never forget" is a solemn reaffirmation of the enduring commitment to preserving the memory of the EndSARS movement and its underlying grievances within the collective consciousness. It underscores the resilience and determination of activists and supporters to ensure that the struggles and sacrifices of the protest movement are not relegated to oblivion but remain a potent force for social change and accountability. Secondly, the explicit linkage between the EndSARS struggle and the 2023 general elections underscores the belief that electoral participation represents a pivotal mechanism for effecting substantive change within the political landscape (Uwalaka, 2021). By aligning the aspirations of the protest movement with the electoral calendar, the message conveys the conviction that the democratic process offers a legitimate avenue for addressing systemic injustices, holding political actors accountable, and enacting meaningful reforms. True to this promise, voter registration during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria witnessed a historic surge in the enrollment of young voters. According to data released by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), before the election, 10.49 million new voters registered (Bloomberg, 2023). Notably, a significant demographic trend emerges from this data, as evidenced by the fact that approximately 84 per cent of these newly enrolled voters fall within the age bracket of 34 years and below (Aljazeera, 2022). This statistical revelation underscores a profound generational shift in the electorate landscape of Nigeria, signalling the increasing political

engagement and demographic influence wielded by the younger cohort of citizens. Such a demographic composition holds implications for the future trajectory of Nigerian politics, as the burgeoning youth demographic emerges as a potent force in shaping electoral outcomes and driving socio-political change within the nation.

The above observation aligns with existing research findings (Kitanova, 2020; Wasserman et al., 2018; Postill, 2020), highlighting a positive correlation between protest participation and enhanced political engagement and efficacy. These studies underscore that individuals actively engaging in protest activities are likely to demonstrate heightened political awareness, participation in formal political processes, and efficacy in influencing political outcomes.

The second image on the right with black background (figure 8.3) traced the trajectory of the EndSARS protest from its apex in 2020 to its third commemoration, encapsulating a continuum of resilience, remembrance, and ongoing advocacy. Featuring the powerful inscriptions "Aluta Continua" and "We Will Never Forget," this image embodies a multifaceted narrative that resonates with both historical consciousness and a steadfast commitment to sustained activism. The phrase "Aluta Continua," rooted in the Latin word "aluta", meaning struggle, and the Portuguese "continua", signifying continuation, epitomises the enduring spirit of resistance and perseverance that characterises the EndSARS movement. It serves as a rallying cry for sustained engagement and collective action in the face of persistent challenges and injustices. This inscription evokes a legacy of resistance, drawing upon historical antecedents of liberation struggles and social movements across the globe (Martins et al., 2022; Miller, 2023) while simultaneously situating the EndSARS protest within this broader tradition of resistance and social change. Similarly, the declaration "We Will Never Forget" reverberates with profound

significance, encapsulating a commitment to preserving the memory of the EndSARS protests and the grievances that precipitated them.

Moreover, the juxtaposition of these inscriptions against the backdrop of the protest's third commemoration underscores the ongoing relevance and resonance of the movement. It signifies a continuation of the struggle for justice, accountability, and systemic reform, even as time passes and the initial fervour of the protest wanes. These images serve as a reminder of the enduring impact of the EndSARS protests, transcending temporal boundaries to underscore the enduring legacy of resistance and remembrance.

Also, a recurrent theme from my interviews with my interlocutors consistently underscores the significant potential inherent within young people to catalyse positive societal transformation in the future, particularly in light of their overwhelming engagement and active participation in the EndSARS protest. This observation highlights the pivotal role played by youth in instigating and driving movements for social change and emphasises the broader implications of their mobilisation within the context of contemporary activism. According to Participant 5: “These old politicians are scared of us... they know we will bring good things to this country”. Further, Participant 1 remarks: “The number of youths in this protest tells a lot about the future of Nigeria”. This recognition of young people's agency and efficacy in effecting change indicates a paradigm shift in societal perceptions of youth as passive recipients of social norms and structures to proactive agents of societal transformation. It acknowledges the unique perspectives, energy, and innovative approaches that young people bring to social and political movements, challenging traditional power dynamics and reshaping youth engagement and activism discourse.

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of young people's overwhelming involvement in the EndSARS protest underscores the collective recognition of their capacity to challenge systemic

injustices, amplify marginalised voices, and advocate for meaningful reforms within the socio-political landscape. This acknowledgement speaks to the transformative potential of youth-led movements in reshaping public discourse, influencing policy agendas, and effecting tangible change at local, national, and even global levels. Moreover, the emphasis on young people's involvement in the EndSARS protest serves as a catalyst for broader discussions surrounding youth empowerment, civic engagement, and intergenerational solidarity. It prompts critical reflection on the barriers and opportunities that shape young people's participation in civic and political processes and the importance of creating enabling environments that foster their meaningful inclusion and participation in decision-making processes.

The analysis presented herein highlights that memory narratives within the EndSARS movement encompass both retrospective and prospective dimensions. Retrospectively, it entails a critical examination of police brutality and systemic inequalities the research participants face, serving to contextualise and understand the ongoing struggles and challenges confronting people in the country. This retrospective aspect of collective memory allows the protesters to "look where we came from," providing a foundation for understanding the root causes of the challenges and informing contemporary advocacy efforts. Conversely, collective memory within the EndSARS movement also possesses a prospective orientation, embodying a commitment to ensuring that police brutality and dire challenges endured by the study participants are never forgotten or overlooked. This prospective dimension of memory narrative emphasises learning from the past and taking proactive measures to address ongoing issues, prevent future injustices, and advocate for systemic change. It sums up the mantra of "We Will Never Forget," serving as a rallying cry for sustained activism and advocacy efforts to achieve justice and accountability.



Notably, the dual retrospective-prospective nature of memory narrative within the EndSARS movement forms a repertoire that transcends temporal boundaries and unites activists across generations. By drawing upon historical memory to inform present-day activism and advocacy while also looking towards the future to prevent the recurrence of police brutality and injustice, these collective memory narratives are unifying forces that bridge past, present, and future struggles. Furthermore, these repertoires of memory narratives galvanise the protesters and lay the groundwork for future activists to continue the struggle for a better Nigeria. By preserving and passing down collective memories of resistance and resilience, memory narratives within the EndSARS movement contribute to keeping the fight against police brutality and related socio-economic challenges alive and relevant, fostering intergenerational solidarity and continuity of activism.

## **8.7. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has delved into the intricate dynamics surrounding the construction of collective memory within the EndSARS movement, as articulated by the research participants. The chapter casts a discerning gaze upon the underexplored terrain of implicit memory within social movement studies, shedding light on its significance in shaping the narrative fabric of societal upheaval. Implicit collective memory, situated within the socio-economic predicaments of the EndSARS protest, finds resonance amidst the palpable struggles against entrenched adversities such as youth unemployment, widespread poverty, and the pervasive spectre of public sector corruption as stated by the research participants. Within this economic and socio-political turmoil, the study participants grapple with the myriad challenges that beset their daily lives, their collective memory serving as a crucible to contextualise and articulate their grievances. What

emerges from this intricate complexity of collective memory is a profound revelation: the EndSARS movement transcends the singular discourse of police brutality, metamorphosing into a sweeping umbrella under which a multiplicity of socio-economic demands converge. It becomes clear that the protest encapsulates a constellation of grievances, each tethered to the collective memory of past injustices and systemic inequalities. In navigating this multifaceted landscape, the research participants deftly bridge the chasm between collective memory and the pressing public agenda, unveiling and vehemently resisting the government's attempts to obfuscate and distort memory during the protest. The research participant's collective memory practices are a potent tool for unpacking the layers of official narratives, revealing the stark disparity between lived experiences and fabricated realities. Of particular interest is the nuanced interplay between retrospective reflection and prospective anticipation that characterises the collective memory practices of the research participants. Through this dual temporality, the study participant not only reckons with past injustices but also envisages a future imbued with the promise of societal transformation, thereby imbuing their activism with a sense of historical continuum and aspirational fervour. In essence, this chapter illuminates the complex interplay between memory, resistance, and socio-political agency within the EndSARS movement, underscoring collective memory's pivotal role in shaping contemporary activism's contours. It unravels the intricate mnemonic practices that underpin the research participants' quest for social justice, offering profound insights into the dialectical nexus between memory and societal change.

# **Chapter Nine: Commemorating the Life of a Movement: The Episodic EndSARS Movement through the Lens of its First, Second, and Third Anniversaries**

## **9.1. Introduction**

The EndSARS protest on October 20, 2020, marked a critical and tragic moment in the movement's history, particularly due to the shooting incident at the Lekki Tollgate in Lagos, Nigeria. On that fateful night, peaceful protesters gathered at the tollgate to call for an end to police brutality and demand justice for victims of such abuses. As the night unfolded, security forces, including the Nigerian Army, were deployed to disperse the protesters. The events took another turn when, despite initial denials by authorities, live ammunition was allegedly fired into the crowd. This resulted in the loss of lives and numerous injuries among the demonstrators. The Lekki Tollgate shooting sparked widespread outrage both nationally and internationally (Ogele, 2021). It intensified calls for accountability, transparency, and justice for the victims. The incident further galvanised the EndSARS movement, drawing attention to the broader issues of human rights abuses, police brutality, and the need for systemic reforms in Nigeria. The aftermath of the Lekki Tollgate shooting prompted investigations, legal actions, and continued advocacy for justice. The incident remains a symbol of the challenges faced by activists and citizens striving for change in the face of oppressive systems, as well as the importance of addressing issues of police misconduct and brutality worldwide. Since the shooting at the Lekki Tollgate, the EndSARS movement has had anniversaries in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Following my observation and statement of the

research participants, this chapter discusses the peculiarities and commonalities in these commemorations.

## **9.2. EndSARS first anniversary in 2021: “We will never forget”- collective mourning, the call for police reform**

The commemoration of the first anniversary of the EndSARS movement witnessed a remarkable surge in the active involvement of young people. Social media, specifically Instagram, emerged as a powerful and unifying tool, serving as a dynamic platform for expression, organisation, and the dissemination of information. Notably, this digital space allowed for amplifying the movement's core message, ensuring that the voices of the youth resonated far beyond physical boundaries. A key focus during this anniversary was the collective mourning for the protesters who tragically lost their lives in the shocking incident at the Lekki Tollgate. The embodiment of memory and historical consciousness through symbolic gestures and commemorative rituals during the first anniversary of the EndSARS protests indicates the enduring legacy of resistance and resilience within Nigerian society. By constantly converging at the Lekki Tollgate as the digital ethnographic data indicate, and erecting makeshift memorials, and engaging in collective acts of remembrance, the research participants imbued the protests with a profound sense of historical continuity, invoking the memory of past struggles while simultaneously advocating for transformative change in the present. As the research participants affirmed during the interview, the Lekki Tollgate is the driver of the EndSARS movement. For instance, Participant 7 notes: “The sanctity of Lekki Tollgate has spurred me to advocate for an end to police brutality”. Another research participant (3) narrates: "I am experiencing hardship and suffering brutality from the police. I was there in 2020 when they shot at us, and I went to the Tollgate in 2021... it is an important place for the struggle for a better Nigeria”. The foregoing assertion corroborates

Wagoner and Brescó's (2022) argument that memorial sites such as the Lekki Tollgate transmute and embody profound experiences, integrating grief and hope into a concrete and spatially delineated symbol. Further, the experiences of the research participants indicate that while the EndSARS protest is a collective movement unified by a common cause, the anniversary of the protest resonates on a personal level for each of the study participants. This suggests that the research participants have experiences and emotional connections to the event, reflecting personal impacts that go beyond the shared goals and collective actions of the protest. It highlights the dual nature of social movements, where collective action and individual experiences coexist and interweave.

As stated earlier, this memorialisation effort especially at the Lekki Tollgate paid homage to those who had become symbols of resilience and courage and reignited the passion and determination reminiscent of the initial protests in October 2020. The emotional weight of this collective mourning further fueled the movement's commitment to justice and police reform. This result corroborates Uwalaka's (2021) quantitative study of the EndSARS first anniversary on Facebook and Nairaland, which the author argues focused on remembrance and honouring the deceased of the Lekki Tollgate shooting. It is safe to say that the topic of collective mourning at the Lekki Tollgate dominated the first anniversary because the incident of 20 October 2020 is still fresh in the minds of the protesters. This result further resonates with Aguilar et al. (2024), who argue that protests are fueled by common challenges, a spirit of camaraderie, and a collective commitment that sparks outrage against a shared issue.

Moreover, utilising digital platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp further augmented the scope of embodied communication, facilitating the dissemination of visual narratives, emotive

imagery, and performative acts to a global audience. Figure 9.1 below from the Instagram page of a research participant buttresses this argument.



**Figure 9.1. WhatsApp Story: An image from the 2021 EndSARS commemoration**

A famous slogan at the first anniversary of the EndSARS is “We will never forget”. “We will never forget” is a phrase often used in social movements and tragic events to convey a commitment to remembering and commemorating a particular event, injustice, or tragedy that has occurred (Clark, 2023; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). It serves as a rallying cry to ensure that the memory of significant moments or losses remains alive within the collective consciousness of movement's participants and supporters (Merill, 2019). In the context of EndSARS, “We will never forget” symbolises the movement's cause, such as acts of police brutality, and precisely the shooting at Lekki Tollgate on 20 October 2020. I elaborated on “We will never forget” in the section of the discussion section which I entitled the episodic EndSARS anniversaries.

The flag of Nigeria, besmirched with the stain of blood (figure, 9.1), serves as a symbol encapsulating the profound sadness of the prevailing circumstances within the nation, reflective of

the tragic loss of countless lives, not only at the Lekki Tollgate, but in the hands of rogue police officers. The field notes from the online participant observation indicate that the above image was prominent on the Instagram pages of the research participants in the first anniversary and it was repeatedly referred to in the interviews. The prominence of figure 9.1 underscores the significant implications of Instagram's visuality in advancing socio-political causes. Moreover, it further aligns with Castells' (2015) argument about the networked society, where social actors harness the expansive reach and connectivity of social media as strategic avenues for contesting and subverting entrenched power hierarchies. This alignment not only underscores the potency of digital platforms in reshaping discourse and mobilising social movements but also highlights the evolving dynamics of power and resistance in contemporary socio-political landscapes. Nonetheless, I recognise that WhatsApp and Instagram's algorithms may have influenced the visibility, prominence, and curation of the images in this study, a dimension that was not considered in this research.

It is crucial to underscore that the first anniversary was also a retrospective reflection on past events and a strategic reiteration of the movement's fundamental demands. As the first anniversary of the EndSARS movement unfolded, it became clear that the legacy of October 2020 persisted in the collective consciousness of the study participants. The engagement on Instagram, the commemorative efforts at the Lekki Tollgate, and the commitment to police reform all contributed to a narrative beyond the confines of a specific date. The first anniversary stood as a testament to the enduring spirit of the EndSARS movement and its ongoing impact on the discourse surrounding justice, accountability, and societal change in Nigeria.

### **9.3. Sociopolitical Challenges, Nigeria`s 2023 General Elections- The Birth of the Obidient Movement in the Second EndSARS Commemoration**

Data from the online participant observation and interviews indicate the peculiarity of the second anniversary of the EndSARS protest is the 2023 general elections. The topic of the choice of preferred political candidates for the general elections, especially the presidential election, came up during the period. The topic of governance and accountability, especially at the level of the federal government, came into play. This indication confirms the argument (Oliver et al., 2022; della Porta, 2020) that events or topics sustain movements. Within the context of the general Nigerian youths, there were disparities in young people's preferred candidates. This situation balkanised supporters of the EndSARS. Some persons believed and supported the candidacy of Mr Peter Obi, the ex-governor of Anambra State in Southeast Nigeria and a former senior bank executive and the standard bearer of the Labour Party (LP), a little-known opposition party which became popular a few months before the presidential election. Another group supported the candidacy of Bola Tinubu, the standard bearer of the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). Another faction threw their support behind the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar. Mainly, the second anniversary focused on the role of youth activism, particularly those involved in the EndSARS movement, in shaping political discourse and potential influence on electoral outcomes. According to Participant 11:

“The EndSARS should teach we young people a lesson about the choice of leadership we make in this country. Election is coming, and you see how people making efforts to support their preferred candidate in the presidential election. For me, Obi is the right person to lead this country”.



Notably, data from the ethnographic field notes indicate that during this period, the Obidient movement gained popularity as the research participants made posts connecting the Obidient movement to the EndSARS movement. Besides, according to data from the interviews, the study participants affirm the synergy between the Obidient movement and the EndSARS protest. As Participant 2 notes:

“...Obidient movement as an upgrade of the EndSARS. Just like I said earlier, it's still situated on development of the country, both infrastructure, and other economic aspects of making the country better for the citizens. If you check those who championed the EndSARS movement, a lot of them were also behind the drive for Labour Party. They are also behind the drive in the Obidient movement because we need a change and good governance”.

The implication is that the Obidient movement was a continuation of the EndSARS movement. Both movements share a common goal of advancing the country's socio-economic prosperity. This suggests a continuity of activism and a collective drive towards reforming the socio-political landscape of Nigeria. As noted by a recent study (Agbim et al., 2023), the Obidient movement is a sign of political consciousness and quest for accountability and a better Nigeria among the young people in Nigeria .



**Figure 9.2. Image from the Instagram page of Participant 5- Yusuf Alami in front of Mr Peter Obi presidential campaign convoy**

On February 11, 2023, a teenager identified as Yusuf Alami positioned himself in front of a vehicle transporting Peter Obi (figure 9.2), the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, extending his arms as the candidate warmly acknowledged him through the car's sunroof with a smile. The photograph quickly gained widespread attention on social media, symbolising Obi's supporters' profound affection for their candidate. Probing further into the popularity of this image (figure 9.2) on some research participants' Instagram, research participants 4 narrated how they were influenced by the candidacy of Mr Obi, and how they eventually persisted in registering for the 2023 general elections:

“I registered for my voter's card in school, but I didn't get it. That was in 2019, February 2. I didn't get it. Besides, no one was inspiring me to vote. But after the EndSARS movement, I saw the line-up of candidates. I stopped and thought, I must get this card. I transferred

from my school to Lagos, which made it possible for me to vote for Peter Obi”.

These narrations by the participants underscores the surge in voters’ registration in the 2023 general elections. Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reports the enrollment of 10.49 million new voters. Among these, 84 per cent are individuals aged 34 and below (Aljazeera, 2022). Another report by Bloomberg (2023), presents the number of registered voters for the election as 93.5 million, compared to the previous election in 2019 which was 84 million registered voters (Statista, 2022).

A WhatsApp image (see figure 8.3) from the second anniversary; displaying an assemblage of EndSARS protesters with text in the image states: “We can never forget and we will correct in 2023”, indirectly inferring that they would elect credible candidates into political positions in the 2023 general elections. The multifaceted and dynamic nature inherent in social media multimedia imagery serves to underscore the profound implications of its aesthetic components in not only promoting the agenda of visual activism but also in catalysing social change (Ferrari, 2022; San Cornelio, 2022). This observation underscores the pivotal role played by visual representations in leveraging digital platforms to engage, inform, and mobilise audiences toward broader socio-political objectives, thereby highlighting the intricate interplay between technology, aesthetics, and social change in contemporary digital landscapes. As I observed reflexively, during the 2023 general elections, novice politicians triumphed over political heavyweights. The EndSARS protest through the Obidient movement threw up some shocking results during the 2023 general elections. For instance, many legislators in the federal parliament lost to newcomers. Also, some sitting governors lost their bid to return to the Senate.

Overall, the second memorial of the EndSARS movement was intertwined with the agitation to elect leaders that would take Nigeria out of its socio-economic woes. As related studies (Dambo et al., 2022; Olaseni & Oladele, 2023) have shown, aside from police brutality, the EndSARS protest resulted from the harsh socio-economic challenges that the masses have to endure. As we have seen the intertwined and influence of the EndSARS movement's second anniversary on the Obidient movement, Aboh and Okoi (2023) note that the impact of the Obidient movement on Nigerian politics will extend beyond the 2023 general elections. In other words, the EndSARS movement, precisely, through its second anniversary, reinvigorated the political awareness of young Nigerians, which birthed a movement- the Obidient, which resulted in aroused political consciousness among voters in Nigeria.

#### **9.4. The Protest Anniversary Waned- The Third Commemoration**

In stark contrast to the spirited commemorations characterising the inaugural and second anniversaries, the third anniversary of the EndSARS movement witnessed a palpable diminution of fervour. This subdued ambience mirrored the prevailing sentiments permeating the youth demographic subsequent to the 2023 presidential election's denouement. A prevailing sense of disillusionment pervaded among the research participants, who perceived themselves as disenfranchised from effecting tangible change amidst the persistent socio-economic vicissitudes besetting the nation. Within this temporal context, the focal point of discourse shifted markedly towards the ramifications of the presidential election's outcome and the overarching narrative of an inherently flawed and rigged electoral system. Follow-up interviews conducted unveiled a discernible downtrend in the collective disposition surrounding the third anniversary. Notably, there emerged a perceptible wane in the level of engagement among the research participants. Participant 1 notes: “I have done my part, and so have other youths that I know... I am not *really*

tired, but let's see what the future holds for our country". The implication is that the participant does not entirely feel a sense of fulfilment regarding their efforts in contributing to the movement in the third anniversary. However, despite not being exhausted as they portrayed, their nonverbal expression indicates an underlying uncertainty or cautious optimism about the future trajectory of the EndSARS movement and Nigeria's socio-economic situation. This reflects a combination of personal disillusionment, sustained commitment, and a hopeful yet uncertain outlook on the broader outcomes and progress that may unfold in the future.

Also, there was a conspicuous decline in the frequency of EndSARS-related content dissemination observed on research participants' Instagram pages. This reticence to actively champion the cause on social media platforms, traditionally vibrant bastions of activism and advocacy, underscores the ripple effects of disillusionment stemming from the outcome of the presidential election. The palpable diminishment of enthusiasm on the third anniversary of the EndSARS movement serves as a poignant testament to the profound impact of socio-political events on the collective psyche of the research participants.

However, serving as an avenue for commemorative practices, the EndSARS anniversaries function as a means of publicly acknowledging and emphasising the historical significance of the EndSARS protest. By marking the EndSARS anniversary across three years, I argue that the study participants personally and collectively signal the importance of the event of the Lekki Tollgate shooting, the endemic police brutality and the socio-economic challenges in the country and how these issues deserve constant remembrance and reiteration. These anniversaries help shape the public memory and narratives surrounding the movement, ensuring that the issues it highlighted remain relevant and recognised in societal discourse.

## **9.5. The Episodic EndSARS Anniversaries**

In the three anniversaries, I discovered the memorialisation of the EndSARS was episodic (Poell, 2020), an image event (Delicath & Deluca, 2003), that is, attention-grabbing and demonstrative and tended to feed the 24-hour news cycle of the media, especially the traditional media. The acceleration of the news cycle has had a significant impact, leading to increased competition for market share among media companies. This heightened competition has caused media outlets to shift their focus towards spectacle and entertainment to attract viewers and readers (Oltmann et al., 2020; Lee & Chan, 2016). The current research exemplifies this pattern. Firstly, utilising Instagram and WhatsApp Stories orchestrated some sort of performative (Goffman, 2016, 2023) protest actions to capture widespread audience attention. However, I argue in chapter six (section 6.3), the performance is not entirely negative. Besides, as indicated by the entire dataset, the digital ethnographic field notes, and interview transcripts, the continual congregation at and recurrent references to the Lekki Tollgate—augmented by the persistent coverage and attention from traditional news organisations—substantially reinforced the episodic nature of the EndSARS anniversaries. However, this confluence of factors not only perpetuated the commemorative momentum but also ensured that the symbolic significance of the Lekki Tollgate as a focal point of the protests remained central to the public consciousness, thereby embedding the anniversaries within a broader narrative of ongoing social and political engagement.

As mentioned earlier, this protest strategy is synonymous with accelerating the 24-hour news cycle and the temporal orientation of mainstream news reporting (Poell, 2020). As indicated by this result, I argue that the 24-hour news cycle style of protest from the 1980s (Smith et al., 2001; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) has not changed even in this era of social media. This specific orientation is a crucial component of what is known as the protest paradigm, a standard framework that journalists employ for reporting on protests (Gil-Lopez, 2021; Kim & Shahin, 2020). Further,

I argue that adhering to this episodic template, the emphasis lies predominantly on the noise, performance, and conflict evident in demonstrations, which the media, especially, the traditional media sell. This temporal focus has significant implications for how the public makes sense of protests. Approaching protest with an episodic orientation shifts attention away from systemic explanations for the problems protesters seek to address and instead encourages non-societal attributions to the topic of the protest (Smith et al., 2001). However, I recognise the influence of social media algorithms in pushing out protest content, thereby possibly contributing to the episodic feature of the EndSARS anniversaries.

Notwithstanding the episodic feature of the EndSARS anniversaries, within the complex amalgam of collective memory surrounding the EndSARS anniversaries, I posit the existence of three discernible and nuanced narrative threads, each weaving a distinctive portrayal of the events under the thematic umbrellas of "Inherent Suffering," "Resilience," and "We Will Never Forget." In the entire dataset, I observe that these narratives draw upon a rich tapestry of visual and textual elements to articulate the experiences of police brutality and associated themes while contextualising the contemporary landscape and projecting the implications of acknowledging these events in divergent manners. I identify "Inherent Suffering" and "Resilience" as retrospective memory narratives, characterised by the study participants' reflective engagement with past events from the present. Within these narratives, there exists a poignant reflection on the enduring pain and trauma inflicted by instances of police brutality juxtaposed against narratives of resilience and fortitude in the face of adversity. These narratives echo sentiments echoed by Smit (2020), who elucidates the sentiment of "Look where we came from," encapsulating the retrospective lens through which these narratives are crafted.

Conversely, I categorised "We Will Never Forget" as a prospective memory narrative, distinguished by its forward-looking orientation towards perpetuating the remembrance of unresolved issues and unaddressed grievances stemming from past events. This narrative trajectory, as articulated by Davidjants and Tiidenberg (2022), underscores the enduring significance of collective memory in sustaining the momentum of social movements, thus imbuing the commemoration of the EndSARS anniversaries with a sense of urgency and relevance in the present moment. In synthesising these disparate narrative strands, I navigate the intricate interplay between memory, temporality, and socio-political dynamics, thereby enriching our understanding of the multifaceted nature of collective memory construction within the context of the EndSARS movement.

## **9.6. Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter has highlighted the distinct characteristics and shared elements observed during the commemorations of the EndSARS protests in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The central argument presented herein revolves around the varying focal points evident in each anniversary. A notable aspect was the heightened political discourse surrounding the Nigeria 2023 general elections during the 2022 commemoration. This discourse gave rise to the Obedient movement, a political initiative that disrupted the traditional dominance of the major parties—the PDP and the All Progressives Congress (APC) and spurred an unprecedented surge in voter registration, particularly among the youth demographic. Despite the diverse peculiarities witnessed across the three anniversaries, a consistent pattern in the anniversaries is their episodic or performative nature. I contend that these anniversaries predominantly centred around demonstrations. As previously highlighted, episodic protests are characterised by a focus on the immediate and unfolding events of the protest. However, my argument suggests that while



capturing attention, this episodic approach tends to divert focus away from the core issues at the heart of the challenge. Instead, it often succeeds in perpetuating the 24-hour news cycle of media organisations, emphasising the performative aspects of the protests over sustained and nuanced discussions of the underlying issues.

# Chapter Ten: Conclusion, Implication for Literature and Future Research Directions

## 10.1. Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters, specifically chapters six through nine, I discussed the research findings in tandem with the relevant literature, digesting diverse dimensions of the EndSARS movement in the context of this research. These chapters dissected the concept of implicit collective memory within the movement, elucidated the multifaceted demands articulated by the research participants, examined the intricate complexity of memory practices manifested on Instagram and WhatsApp, scrutinised the peculiarities surrounding the movement's anniversaries, and delved into the nuanced interplay between retrospective and prospective memory practices inherent within the protest. As I transition into the concluding section of this dissertation, it becomes imperative to synthesise and summarise the plethora of insights garnered thus far. An overview of the research findings is presented by answering the research questions, providing an understanding of the nuanced dynamics of the research. Subsequently, a critical examination of this research's theoretical contribution and implications for literature is contextualised and presented. Also, this study's methodological contributions were accentuated, highlighting its approach and analytical rigour. Furthermore, I outlined the potential avenues for future research endeavours, thereby delineating pathways for further exploration and inquiry within the EndSARS movement, collective memory and social movements.

## 10.2. Answering the Research Questions

As an active participant in the EndSARS movement since its nascent stages in 2017 and participating in the street protests of 2020, my engagement with the movement has spurred

profound inquiries and highlighted notable lacunae within the existing scholarly discourse. Motivated by these introspections and scholarly gaps, the primary objective of this research endeavour has been to examine the complex processes by which selected research participants construct and negotiate the collective memory of the protest movement. Central to this investigation is an examination of how the research participants navigate and imbue meaning into the memory of the EndSARS movement, particularly through the lens of Instagram and WhatsApp. Furthermore, this inquiry extends to scrutinising the commemorative rituals and practices surrounding the anniversaries of the movement, spanning the years 2021, 2022, and 2023. To unravel the multifaceted nature of memory practices within the EndSARS movement, I employed the qualitative research approach. This methodology encompasses applying Pink et al. 's (2016) digital ethnography techniques, allowing for a nuanced exploration of study participants' online interactions and engagements about the movement. Additionally, face-to-face interviews with the selected research participants provided invaluable insights into their subjective experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore the adoption of a solid reflexive position throughout this research endeavour. This reflexive stance entails a critical interrogation of my positionality, biases, and preconceptions, thereby enhancing the rigour and validity of the research findings. Against this backdrop, the following research questions serve as guiding beacons for this inquiry:

**Research question 1:** How did the research participants use Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media (Story) during the EndSARS protest?

**Research question 2:** What memory practices did the research participants construct on Instagram and WhatsApp in the EndSARS movement?

**Research question 3:** How did the research participants create collective memory through the movement?

**Research question 4:** What are the peculiarities in the first, second, and third anniversaries of the EndSARS movement?

These research questions shaped the analysis and discourse in this research. Chapter 6 primarily focused on addressing research question one, while Chapters seven, eight, and nine address research questions two, three, and four, respectively. Within this section, I aim to consolidate and summarise the findings expounded upon in these four chapters by providing responses to the respective research questions.

#### **10.2.1. Research Question 1**

How did the research participants use Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media (Story) during the EndSARS protest?

During the EndSARS movement, various social media platforms became pivotal arenas for expressing views on the protests. However, my attention was particularly drawn to the widespread use of ephemeral media, notably Instagram Story and WhatsApp status. This curiosity became the focal point of my research inquiry, prompting an investigation into the underlying dynamics. I employed a digital ethnographic approach complemented by face-to-face interviews to address this research question. Despite the fleeting nature of Stories, the study unearthed a deliberate curation of online personas by the research participants to reflect the archetype of woke youth and socio-political consciousness (Kanai & Gill, 2020; Farinde-Wu, 2021; Cook, 2023). Within the context of "woke youth," this characterisation encompasses active engagement in dialogues and actions aimed at addressing issues such as police brutality and related societal concerns. Central

to study participants' self-presentation in this study is a resolute commitment to the EndSARS movement and advocacy for positive societal transformation in Nigeria.

Their socio-political awareness resonates with Barassi's (2018) concept of self-presentation on social media, which underscores the construction of a political biography. This narrative is shaped through the mechanisms of performance (Goffman, 2016, 2023), which are traditionally associated with negative connotations. However, this study concludes that the "performance" exhibited by the research participants in their Stories is not inherently negative. Thus, the theme of "not-entirely performative activism", as discussed in Chapter 6. One of the key implications of this discussion lies in the nuanced understanding of self-presentation and identity construction within online spaces. Participants in the study were found to deliberately curate their online personas to align with the archetype of woke youth and socio-political consciousness. This phenomenon sheds light on the intersection of digital identity formation and social activism, highlighting how individuals leverage digital platforms to express their sociopolitical beliefs and engage in meaningful dialogues surrounding pertinent societal issues such as police brutality. Furthermore, the concept of "not-entirely performative activism" challenges traditional notions of online activism as superficial or insincere. Despite the performative nature of digital storytelling and self-presentation on Instagram and WhatsApp Stories, the study concludes that research participants' engagement in online activism during the EndSARS movement was genuine and driven by a resolute commitment to effecting positive societal change. This finding underscores the transformative potential of digital spaces in facilitating authentic and impactful forms of activism.

Furthermore, within the context of WhatsApp, the phenomenon of private activism was also elucidated in relation to this research question. The research participants highlighted their

engagement with proximate audiences (Zillich & Riesmeyer, 2021), namely friends and family, due to the significance they attributed to the EndSARS topic. This aspect emphasises the significance of interpersonal networks and offline interactions in complementing online activism efforts, thereby illustrating the interconnectedness of digital and offline spheres in shaping collective action. In WhatsApp and Instagram ephemeral content, the Story serves as the frontstage performance (Trere, 2015; 2020), while the study participant's offline presence discussions constitute the backstage area (Trere, 2015; Ferrari, 2022). The delineation of the frontstage and backstage dynamics within WhatsApp and Instagram ephemeral content provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of online engagement. This dualistic framework illuminates the complex reciprocity between public performances and behind-the-scenes interactions, underscoring the need for a holistic understanding of digital activism that encompasses both visible and hidden dimensions of participation.

In essence, the discussion on the utilisation of Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media in the EndSARS movement offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital activism, highlighting the complexities of self-presentation, the authenticity of online engagement, and the interconnectedness of digital and offline spheres in shaping contemporary forms of social activism.

### **10.2.2. Research Question 2**

What memory practices did the research participants construct on Instagram and WhatsApp in the EndSARS movement?

While the first research question addresses how the study participants used Instagram and WhatsApp ephemeral media (Story) in the EndSARS movement, the second question attempts to understand what kinds of memory practises the research participants constructed on Instagram and WhatsApp. Firstly, considering the predominantly online and digital features of the protest, digital

memory narration (Karatas & Bek, 2023) becomes integral in the memory practices that the research participants constructed. Merrill et al. (2020) accentuate how social media has not merely influenced but also intricately reconfigured the strategies, frameworks, and organisational dynamics inherently entrenched within social movements. The digital memory which characterised the EndSARS movement on WhatsApp and Instagram epitomises a fusion of personal narratives, collective activism, and the mediating influence of technology. Despite this convergence, the digital memory predominantly orbits around a shared apprehension, particularly concerning police brutality and its correlated challenges, thereby nurturing a collective sentiment of mourning and cohesive memory among research participants (Uwalaka et al., 2023; Smit, 2020), thereby fostering the formation of a collective memorial landscape that, in turn, facilitates the establishment of enduring memory constructs (Morse, 2023).

Secondly, memes emerge as a notable memory practice present within the dataset. Referred to as memetic revival by Smit (2020), this practice entails the metamorphosis of historical events, narratives, and symbols linked to the EndSARS protest into humorous, satirical, or visually captivating memes disseminated across WhatsApp and Instagram. This phenomenon underscores the intersecting realms of activism, humour, and digital culture in shaping collective memory and discourse surrounding the protest movement. By harnessing memes, the study participants disseminate viral symbols of resistance and solidarity within digital communities. While historically pervasive within collective action networks, this research sets itself apart through the sheer volume and utilisation of memes as conduits for personal expressions and ideas facilitated by the streamlined creation and dissemination process.

Thirdly, the research participants integrate digital archiving and curation as an integral facet of their memory practices. This entails the uploading of images and videos portraying

instances of police brutality on WhatsApp and Instagram, often accompanied by pertinent hashtags to link them with related cases. Digital archiving and curation on WhatsApp and Instagram play pivotal roles in documenting and disseminating information about the movement, thereby effectively engendering the creation of a digital repository encapsulating the challenges at hand. Noteworthy is the establishment of dedicated WhatsApp groups for the real-time sharing of updates and multimedia content about various facets of the protests, serving as digital archives that preserve crucial information and personal testimonies that might otherwise slip into obscurity. Similarly, metrics such as date, views, likes, and shares on Instagram posts significantly influence their visibility and rhetorical impact, thereby serving the dual purpose of immediate communication and long-term archival preservation. This resonates with the concept of mediated prospective memory, suggesting that these digital artefacts can resurface and shape future socio-political agendas (Moroz, 2020; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013; Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022).

Lastly, the prevailing memory practice of mourning and commemoration materialises in the grief expressed for EndSARS martyrs and the relentless pursuit of justice concerning the deaths of protesters. This mourning not only forges emotional connections among the research participants but also facilitates intertwining individual experiences of grief and indignation with broader socio-political concerns. Leveraging features such as Stories and posts, the research participants memorialise victims of police violence and convey messages of unwavering solidarity with the EndSARS movement. Profiles adorned with black squares, symbolising mourning and resistance, coupled with heartfelt captions and hashtags, further fortify this memory practice. The finding corroborates arguments positing that the diversity of personal networks offers a more robust explanation for the extensive utilisation of digital media (Bennett et al., 2008; Smith, 2020; Karatas & Bek, 2023). Interestingly, an additional manifestation of mourning and commemoration



stems from physical visits to memorial sites, with the study participants subsequently sharing these deeply personal experiences on social media. This dualistic engagement underscores the nuanced interplay between online and offline modalities of mourning, thereby unveiling the intricate intersections between the physical and digital realms within the commemorative landscape. Such phenomena highlights the dynamic fluidity and intrinsic interconnectedness characterising contemporary memory practices, wherein protesters adeptly navigate between virtual and material domains to sustain collective acts of remembrance.

### **10.2.3. Research Question 3**

How did the research participants create collective memory through the movement?

As discerned from extant literature, scholarly inquiries into social movements and memory predominantly emphasise explicit memory practices, often sidelining implicit memory considerations. Consequently, this study endeavours to redress this scholarly oversight by exhuming the relatively unexplored realm of implicit collective memory. Through the analysis of ethnographic fieldnotes and interviews, a concept termed implicit collective memory emerged, interpreting nuanced insights into the lived experiences and socioeconomic challenges encountered by research participants. A recurrent thematic pattern surfaced, wherein the research participants reiterated various socioeconomic adversities, notably revolving around issues of unemployment, poverty, and corruption. Termed as shared trauma, these adversities signify the pervasive and enduring hardships endured by the study participants while navigating the socioeconomic landscape in Nigeria. Within the analytical framework, these challenges are conceptualised as constituting implicit collective memory, signifying experiences deeply embedded within research participants' collective consciousness. As Schudson (2014) elucidates,

societies often engage in recollection without explicit reliance on deliberate or purposeful memory initiatives. Instead, the past seamlessly integrates into the present in ways not necessarily oriented towards commemoration, as evidenced by implicit collective memory explained in this research. This nuanced observation underscores the multifaceted nature of collective memory formation, suggesting that memory is not always a consciously orchestrated endeavour but can organically emerge as an integral aspect of the ongoing socio-cultural fabric. This finding resonates with Zamponi's (2018) contention that an overemphasis on explicit and episodic memory acts within social movement studies fails to fully acknowledge and harness the latent potentials intrinsic to implicit memory. Prior investigations into the EndSARS movement corroborate these findings, positioning socio-economic and political challenges as pivotal catalysts for the protests. For instance, Olaseni and Oladele (2023) argue that the protests were not solely a reaction to police brutality but also stemmed from broader grievances emanating from dissatisfaction with the ruling class's performance. Similarly, Dambo et al. (2022) affirm that corruption within the Nigerian political system significantly fueled the protests, exacerbating public discontent and fostering calls for systemic reform.

Moreover, prevalent memory rituals observed during the EndSARS protests involve the convergence of collective memory with contemporary public agendas. This phenomenon, the appropriation of past memory (Zamponi, 2020), entails strategically employing historical narratives and commemorative symbols to advocate for or reinforce present-day political objectives, thereby infusing the act of remembering with tangible relevance to contemporary socio-political contexts. Additionally, the integration of other mini-resistance movements, such as gender protests (Nwabunnia, 2021; Faniyi, 2023) and student demands (Onivehu, 2021), within the broader EndSARS movement exemplifies the dialectical interplay wherein activists

concurrently employ historical perspectives to comprehend contemporary circumstances and use current perspectives to interpret historical events.

In contrast to conventional memory practices documented in existing literature, this research identified deliberate and distinctive strategies employed by the study participants to assert the legitimacy of the EndSARS movement while challenging dominant narratives by the government. The research participants demonstrated concerted efforts to confront and dismantle the proliferation of fabricated or counterfeit memories by characterising such occurrences as lies and rendering them as subaltern memories (Zamponi, 2018; Olivari & Badilla, 2024). A notable aspect of their strategy involved scrutinising pro-government mainstream media outlets and holding them accountable for their involvement in creating and disseminating misinformation. The research participants augmented their critique by sharing screenshots of news articles published or broadcasts aired during the protests, serving as tangible reminders that highlighted the fallacious and deceptive nature of the allegations propagated by these media sources. This proactive strategy entailed a detailed analysis aimed at discrediting erroneous claims, thereby upholding the integrity of discourse and fostering a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. In this context, the approach mirrors Obia's (2023, p.7) notion of "dragging" within Nigeria's Twittersphere, where people are held accountable for their conduct. Within this framework, "dragging" is construed as a mode of online critique that evolves into a mechanism of digital shaming (Thompson & Cover, 2022; Shenton, 2020).

In the discourse surrounding collective memory within the EndSARS protest context, I posit the presence of both retrospective and prospective memory narratives, delineating distinct themes within the dataset. These narratives, namely "Suffering," "Resilience," and "We Will Never Forget," encapsulate nuanced reflections on past events and their implications for the present and

future. Retrospective memory narratives, exemplified by *Suffering and Survival*, evoke contemplation of historical adversities from the lens of contemporary experiences, echoing sentiments akin to "Look where we came from" (Smit, 2020, p.105). Conversely, *We Will Never Forget* embodies a prospective memory narrative, continuously reminding us of unresolved issues and unaddressed grievances stemming from antecedent occurrences (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022). The interplay of these retrospective-prospective memory narratives engenders a dual temporality wherein research participants engage with the past to inform present actions and envision a future characterised by societal metamorphosis. This multifaceted engagement with memory facilitates a critical reflection on past injustices and fosters a forward-looking perspective imbued with the promise of transformative change. By navigating this complex duality of memory, the research participants infuse their activism with a profound sense of historical continuity and aspirational zeal, thereby advancing their collective pursuit of socio-political reformation.

#### **10.2.4. Research Question 4**

What are the peculiarities in the first, second, and third anniversaries of the EndSARS movement?

The dataset reveals distinctive characteristics of the three commemorative anniversaries marking the EndSARS movement. Owing to the recentness of the 2020 events, the protest's first anniversary predominantly focuses on commemorating the deceased victims of the movement. Notably, a prominent catchphrase employed during this initial commemoration is "We will never forget," a rhetoric commonly employed within socio-political movements and calamitous occurrences to signify an enduring commitment to the remembrance and memorialisation of a specific event, injustice or tragedy (Clark, 2023). Despite its retrospective essence, the inaugural anniversary incorporates elements of prospective narrativity (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2022),

encapsulating ongoing challenges yet to be resolved. As expounded upon in the previous chapter, the phrase, we will never forget assumes the guise of a prospective memory narrative (Smit, 2020), serving as a mechanism for perpetuating the remembrance of unresolved issues or unaddressed grievances.

The second commemoration of the EndSARS movement witnessed a convergence of EndSARS ideologies and demands in the context of Nigeria's 2023 general elections and, more importantly, the presidential election. Intriguingly, irrespective of ethnic or religious backgrounds, the research participants identified themselves as "Obidients," aligning with the ethos of the Labour Party's presidential standard-bearer, Peter Gregory Obi. In other words, the second anniversary of the EndSARS movement became intricately entwined with the fervour to elect leaders capable of extricating Nigeria from its entrenched socio-economic malaise. Aboh and Okoi (2023) underscore that the influence of the Obidient movement on Nigerian political dynamics is poised to transcend the confines of the 2023 electoral cycle. In succinct terms, the EndSARS movement, particularly through its second anniversary, sparked a resurgence in the political consciousness of youthful Nigerians, thereby engendering heightened political awareness among Nigerian voters with potential longevity. In stark contrast to the exuberant and dynamic observances characterising the first and second anniversaries, the third commemoration of the EndSARS movement was marked by a discernible lack of zeal. This subdued ambience mirrored the prevailing sentiments among young Nigerians in the aftermath of the 2023 presidential election, which Peter Gregory Obi supposedly lost. A considerable portion of the research participants expressed disillusionment, perceiving themselves as marginalised from actively contributing to ameliorating the arduous socio-economic landscape of the nation. During this juncture, deliberations predominantly centred on the repercussions of the presidential election and

the overarching discourse on effective governance. The aftermath of the electoral outcome notably dampened the overall enthusiasm surrounding the third anniversary, evidenced by a waning level of engagement among protesters and prominent figures compared to preceding commemorations.

The multifaceted dynamics of embodied communication, operationalised through diverse modalities, played a pivotal role in catalysing and advancing the EndSARS protests throughout the commemorative anniversaries. Through a complex interplay of physical gestures, symbolic actions, and non-verbal expressions, participants engaged in a nuanced socio-political discourse that transcended conventional verbal dialogues. This intricate fusion of embodied communication, encompassing gestures such as the raised clenched fists, the adoption of symbolic attire, and the enactment of collective rituals, functioned as potent channels for expressing dissent, solidarity, and collective memory. Furthermore, the utilisation of social media platforms substantially expanded the scope and impact of embodied communication, facilitating the dissemination of visual narratives, emotive imagery, and performative acts to a global audience.

Across the three commemorative anniversaries, this research discerned a pattern of episodic memorialisation of the EndSARS movement (Poell, 2020), characterised by its adoption of an image-event paradigm (Delicath & Deluca, 2003) and its propensity to feed into the 24-hour news cycle of mainstream media outlets. The EndSARS movement exemplifies this pattern by leveraging the media's gaze and orchestrating symbolic, entirely non-violent protest actions aimed at garnering widespread media attention. This orientation constitutes a pivotal element of what is commonly referred to as the protest paradigm, a standardised framework that journalists adhere to when reporting on protest movements (Kim & Shahin, 2020; Coombs et al., 2020). Within this paradigmatic framework, the focal point primarily revolves around the auditory and visual

spectacle, performance, and conflict characteristic of street demonstrations, and not mainly on the topic of the protest.

### **10.3. Theoretical Contributions and Implication for Literature**

By applying the framework of memory studies, this study advances our understanding of social movements and digital activism by exploring the intricacies of memory construction among research participants during the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. In contrast to prior research predominantly centred on Twitter (Dambo et al., 2022; Uwalaka et al., 2023) and broader social media platforms (Ugochukwu & Nwolu, 2021; Augustine, 2023; Aboh, 2023; Kelvin & Tsegwu, 2022), this investigation extends the scholarly discourse by spotlighting the utilisation of Instagram and WhatsApp within the protest context. Specifically, the study explicates the attributes of ephemeral media, namely Instagram Story and WhatsApp status, and examines their deployment by research participants throughout the protest period. This nuanced exploration broadens the scope of empirical inquiry into digital activism and underscores the importance of considering diverse digital platforms and their functionalities in shaping collective memory and activism within contemporary socio-political movements.

In contrast to Christensen's (2011) contention that social media activism lacks efficacy in driving collective action, this research enriches the scholarly discourse by asserting the pivotal role of ephemeral media, specifically Instagram Stories and WhatsApp statuses, as indispensable tools for activism within the context of the EndSARS movement. By examining the participatory practices of research subjects, this study unveils the robust construction of politically conscious narratives within their Stories, thus challenging the notion of social media's ineffectiveness in fostering activist engagement. Furthermore, the study highlights WhatsApp's role in facilitating private activism; fostering engagement with proximate audiences (Zillich & Riesmeyer, 2021),

such as friends and family of the research participants. Moreover, the ephemeral nature of these media platforms is underscored as a conduit for real-time news dissemination, serving as a dynamic newsreel for participants and potentially fostering heightened political awareness and civic engagement among the participants. Through this nuanced analysis, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted ways in which ephemeral media platforms intersect with activism, challenging prevailing scepticism regarding the efficacy of social media in catalysing collective action and highlighting their distinct significance in contemporary socio-political movements.

This study contributes significantly to the scholarly discourse on digital media and social movements, which is the discovered act of the research participants embarking on a physical journey to the protest site during its anniversary and sharing these firsthand experiences on Instagram. This deliberate action underscores the symbiotic relationship between commemorative endeavours' virtual and tangible dimensions. The dualistic engagement observed in this study highlights the nuanced interplay between online and offline modalities of mourning, shedding light on the complex intersections between the physical and digital realms within the commemorative landscape. Essentially, this phenomenon explains the dynamic fluidity and intrinsic interconnectedness characterising contemporary memory practices. It demonstrates how protesters adeptly navigate between virtual and material domains to uphold and perpetuate collective acts of remembrance, underscoring the evolving nature of commemorative practices in the digital age and offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics of memory construction within the context of social movements.

In the ongoing expansion of research on the EndSARS movement, scholarly discourse underscores the necessity of probing the theoretical framework of memory, which is a fundamental



cornerstone in analysing social movements (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019). While extant literature has explored social movements through the theoretical lens of memory (Smit et al., 2020; Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Zamponi, 2018), this study advances beyond the predominant emphasis on explicit memory to foreground the role of implicit memory as a catalytic force driving social movements within the context of the EndSARS protest. Zamponi (2018) advocates for a heightened research focus on implicit memory, positing that an exclusive concentration on memory and social movements through explicit memory overlooks the concealed potentials inherent within implicit memory. In this vein, a critical contribution of this study lies in its revelation of a recurrent pattern wherein the study participants implicitly articulate various socio-economic adversities, prominently encompassing unemployment, poverty, and corruption. These adversities which I termed as shared trauma, denote the pervasive and enduring hardships endured by research participants while traversing the intricate socio-economic landscape of the country. Within the analytical framework, these challenges are conceptualised as constituting an implicit collective memory emblematic of experiences deeply ingrained within the research participants' consciousness. This discernment accentuates the imperative of transcending superficial analyses of social movements, advocating for a nuanced approach that encapsulates implicit memory. Moreover, echoing Schudson's (2014) observations, societies often engage in recollection without relying on deliberate or purposeful memory initiatives. Instead, the past is assimilated into the present in manners not necessarily aligned with commemorative intentions, as exemplified by the phenomenon of implicit collective memory observed within the EndSARS movement. In summation, this study contributes to the evolving discourse on social movements by illuminating the significance of implicit memory as a propulsive force behind collective action, thus broadening

the theoretical paradigms utilised in examining contemporary socio-political movements such as the EndSARS protest.

Finally, in the expanding landscape of EndSARS research, a plethora of studies (Dambo et al., 2022; Wada, 2021; Nwabunnia, 2021; Omeni, 2022; Uwalaka, 2022) have been conducted. However, what distinguishes this study is its reflexive and interpretive approach. The qualitative methodology employed in this research proved indispensable in uncovering the multifaceted and intricately intertwined nature of the EndSARS protest. The findings of this study suggest that the protest serves as a conglomeration of various socio-economic challenges faced by citizens, particularly the youth. These challenges encompass youth unemployment, poverty, endemic public sector corruption, and persistent police hostility. This discovery significantly enriches our understanding of the nuanced and multifaceted dynamics characterising collective action and social movements. It underscores the intricate interplay among diverse factors such as socio-economic conditions, political structures, cultural influences, and individual motivations within the realm of collective mobilisation. By elucidating these complex relationships, this finding provides invaluable insights into the underlying mechanisms propelling collective action, thereby highlighting the interdependent nature of social movements. Furthermore, it emphasises the necessity of considering diverse factors when analysing and interpreting collective behaviour, thereby augmenting our theoretical frameworks and empirical comprehension of the protest.

#### **10.4. Limitations of the Research**

This section outlines the limitations of the research taking into account the various decisions I have to make in conducting this research. Firstly, verifying the genuine nature of peoples' identities in online research could pose challenges. The research participants might present themselves in a manner that diverges from their actual identity, a common tendency among

Internet users in virtual spaces (Hine, 2015; Markham, 2017). Despite recognising the issue of authenticity as a constraint, this study views peoples' online identities and interactions as an authentic representation of their online persona (Boyd, 2016). Besides, this study employed the face-to-face interview approach to compensate for this deficiency. Also, my engagement in the online participant observation might be seen as intrusive and unnatural. Nonetheless, Pink et al. (2016) argue that the potential impact of a conscientious and thoughtful researcher on altering participants' conduct is outweighed by the potential loss of valuable insights. Despite my online participant observation, the potential limitations associated with this participation were acknowledged, and I proceeded cautiously. Secondly, I recognised the interview approach as a limitation. The interviews were not video-recorded, though I observed the research participants' non-verbal expressions during the interviews. However, video-recorded interviews would have enabled me to revisit the interviews and make meaning of the research participants' nonverbal gestures that I am unable to remember.

Furthermore, in the context of my profound familiarity and knowledge with the EndSARS movement, a critical aspect of my research methodology entails a nuanced consideration of potential biases or assumptions that might influence the interviewees' responses. This heightened awareness prompts a deliberate examination of indirect assumptions that could shape interview dynamics, potentially leading the study participants to overlook or omit specific salient details they perceive as commonly understood within the discourse surrounding EndSARS. During the analysis phase, my biases may have influenced the coding, categorisation, and interpretation of data. I am aware that I might have selectively focused on specific themes while unintentionally neglecting others. This potential bias could undermine the integrity of the study's findings, potentially misrepresenting the perspectives of the research participants or distorting the reality of

the phenomenon being studied. To mitigate this limitation, I actively practised reflexivity, consistently scrutinising and acknowledging my biases in relation to the experiences of the research participants to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

Despite the acknowledged benefits inherent in integrating the findings and discussion sections, it is important to recognize that this approach may introduce confusion, particularly when contrasted with the conventional practice of maintaining separate sections. Moreover, there exists a notable risk of redundancy, as the same findings might be reiterated both during their initial presentation and subsequently during their discussion. Additionally, the merging of these sections often results in lengthier passages, consequently key points may be revisited within a complex and intertwined narrative, potentially leading to redundancy and dilution of the overall clarity of the research findings.

Another limitation of this research was the inability to conduct an interview with one of the intended participants in Lagos, Nigeria, due to the severe traffic gridlock that impeded access. The omission of this interview represents a potential gap in the study, as the participant might have offered unique and essential insights that are not captured in the existing data, as each research participant brings a distinct perspective. The logistical challenge posed by the notorious traffic congestion in Lagos highlights a broader accessibility issue in field research. Traffic delays hindered access to the participant and disrupted the planned schedule data collection. This limitation underscores the importance of contingency planning and flexible scheduling in fieldwork, particularly in urban environments known for their infrastructural challenges.

I acknowledge encountering challenges in managing the substantial volume of qualitative data during the course of my research, which I categorised as a limitation. The overwhelming amount of qualitative data posed significant difficulties in organising and systematically analysing

the necessary information. I struggled to identify key themes and patterns amidst the extensive details and nuances captured in the online field notes and interviews. Additionally, I acknowledge that the process of coding and categorising large amounts of qualitative data is time-consuming and requires attention to detail. This may have led to difficulties in maintaining consistency and coherence in the analysis.

Another notable limitation of this research is its focus on ephemeral social media platforms, specifically Instagram and WhatsApp Stories. The transient nature of content on these platforms inherently challenges comprehensive data collection. Given that posts on these platforms are only accessible for a limited duration, it is plausible that some significant posts were missed during the data-gathering process. This potential gap in data inadvertently excluded content that provided critical insights or contributed substantially to the study's findings.

### **10.5. Future Research Directions**

The central objective of this research has been to explicate the complexities of the EndSARS movement through the theoretical framework of memory. However, amidst the analysis of the movement's dynamics, the study unearthed various socio-economic challenges plaguing Nigeria, including but not limited to youth unemployment, widespread poverty, endemic corruption within the public sector, and recurrent human rights violations perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. In light of these findings, future research endeavours stand to benefit significantly from adopting an intersectional theoretical framework to unravel the interconnectedness of these multifaceted challenges and their profound implications on societal structures.

Furthermore, the pervasive influence of social media algorithms in shaping collective action and social movements presents a compelling avenue for further inquiry. Understanding how

these algorithms amplify or diminish the impact of movements like EndSARS and exploring the strategies protesters employ to navigate or subvert these algorithmic mechanisms represents a fertile area for future investigation. Moreover, given the prominent role of social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp in mobilising and disseminating information during the EndSARS protests, a nuanced examination from an insider perspective, utilising social media autoethnography, could yield invaluable insights. This approach would provide a personalised understanding of the protest dynamics and shed light on the implications for digital archiving practices within social media activism.

One significant finding of this research highlights the emergence of the Obidient movement as a distinctive feature of the EndSARS anniversaries as I discussed in section 9.3 in Chapter nine. Moving forward, a crucial avenue for future research would be to conduct a critical exploration to understand the synergy between the EndSARS movement and the Obidient movement as I was unable to fully explore this essential discovery in this current research.

Lastly, to capture the dynamics of the EndSARS movement, it is imperative to explore the role of state actors, particularly the Nigerian government, in leveraging social media platforms during the protest. Investigating how governmental entities appropriate social media for various purposes during civil unrest would offer critical insights into the broader socio-political landscape and the power dynamics within the digital sphere. In summation, future research endeavours that integrate these diverse perspectives and methodologies have the potential to yield an understanding of the EndSARS movement, its socio-political ramifications, and the broader implications for digital activism.

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## Appendix I: Ethics Committee Approval



### Evaluation by the Ethics Committee of the UOC

Exp.: CE22-TE19

Dr. Marta Aymerich, president of the Ethics Committee of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

CERTIFIES

That the Committee has evaluated the proposal submitted by Silas Udenze regarding the “Young Nigerians, Social Change and their Digital Storytelling Experience on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram Stories” project, a PhD thesis at the Humanities and Communication Doctoral Programme under the supervision of Dr. Antoni Roig Telo.

AND

That regarding the PhD project:

- The ability of the PhD student, and the facilities and resources available are adequate to carry out the study.
- The established experimental protocol ensures the integrity and dignity of the participants.
- The protocol is adequate to the objectives of the study and the possible risks and discomfort for participants are adequate given the expected benefits.
- The procedure for obtaining informed consent of participants, including the information sheet, and the procedure for the recruitment of subjects are adequate.
- The PhD student of the project will ever respect the obligations derived from the Organic Law 3/2018 on Personal Data Protection and Digital Rights, General Regulation on Data Protection (UE) 2016/679 and the current complementary legislation.

Having met on April 26, 2022, and having considered the ethical implications concerning human experimentation and the processing of personal data, this committee APPROVES the PhD thesis project.

For the record, I sign this document in Barcelona, April 26, 2022.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marta Aymerich', is written over a faint, circular stamp or watermark.

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**Appendix II: Interview Guide**

**Interview Guide**

*Backstage  
Communication  
via social media*

*Experiences  
Cynthia*

**Main Objective:** to understand how protesters use social media to construct memory of the EndSARS Movement in Nigeria from 2020 until its Anniversaries in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Additionally, the specific objectives are:

- To ascertain what form of memory works were created or constructed in the EndSARS Movement.
- To understand to what extent participants were able to create collective memory and action through the Movement.
- To discern what mnemonic elements represent and drive the EndSARS protest.
- to understand how protesters use Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram "Stories" (Ephemeral; 24-hour Story) to construct memory of the EndSARS Movement

**NB: Tie interviewees to their Stories in order to bridge the gap of faceless accounts.**

**Opening**

1. Considering the situation of the EndSARS Movement, would you describe yourself as an activist? *activist*
2. How would you describe the EndSARS Movement? *collective movement* *Go back to demands are they met?*
3. What factors influenced or are influencing your participation in the Movement?
4. To what extent would you say your involvement in the Movement prompted other persons to partake in it?

**Memory**

5. Considering your participation, what memories do you think the EndSARS evokes? *Anger-Cynicism* *Memory of Motivation* *Anxiety* *Before the EndSARS life were lost*
6. How would you describe the Lekki Tollgate in the annal of EndSARS? *Memory of unity - coming* *for Sarajin's in the Police force*

*party membership* *Monday Struggle* *Cynicism* *Monday* *lack of attraction* *Sadness* *Unity of purpose* *like Mole*

*P.T.O*



- Secretly when  
 → Get along with  
 → Mending means  
 → fallen ~~between~~  
 → We will never forget  
 → Mummy  
 - National Day of Honour for the Common Man

- 7. What would you say is driving the anniversaries of EndSARS?
- 8. After these years, from October 2020, looking back, what comes to your mind?

**Story: Not just studying the Stories but engaging with it; not just following traces**

9. Would you explain why you use the Story for the agitation? *- Venky Place / Exhibition*

10. At what point did you feel that using Story was necessary? *family*

11. How would you describe your experience or feeling putting the agitation on your Story? *→ social influence - brings it to people*

12. The content you upload to your Story disappears after 24 hours; why do you still put it up if it vanishes after 24 hours? Does it make any sense?

13. Would you say social media is instrumental in bringing the EndSARS movement to the fore?

14. How would you describe the disposition of the govt towards social media?

→ Would you participate in the next anniversary online?

→ Gives the wrong of the present govt

→ How would you describe Ashe Yusuf and the EndSARS *Kenya Movement*

→ North → what factors influenced the low participation of youths from the North?

→ Would you say the ~~obedient~~ EndSARS Movement influenced the obedient ~~wave~~

→ How would you describe the use of social media in the EndSARS Movement and Obedient Movement

→ What other comment or input would you give?

Implicit memory - poverty endemic corruption,

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Leikki Tullgate - Democratized, Immortalized,  
closed

Indicators: Yahoo Boyz; LGBT, Police brutality;  
social-economic demands

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Facebook.  
Story

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Soro Suki Generations

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