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# **PROTESTS AND RIOTS IN NIGERIA; APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION**

**Keywords: Protests, Applications, Implication, Transformation**

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## **Abstract:**

Public opinion expressed through organized protests is a long-standing concept which forms an integral component of the nation's pre-colonial and post-colonial environment, not just in the twenty-first century, but dating back to the medieval ages. Protests and demonstrations have traditionally been at the core of democratic and political discourse. Though the dynamics differ throughout dispensations, one aspect remains constant: the goals of pushing for change and expressly expressing dissatisfaction with a policy. However, the recent trends of violence deflate its importance in political decision-making processes. This paper evaluates the prevalence of protest in Nigeria, its root causes, effects and why protest failed to achieve its main objectives. Getting a glimpse of the past agitation in Nigeria from the following: the demands, the organizers, the setbacks, and the successes. This information is important to assess how these protests and demonstrations affect the socioeconomic welfare of the nation. This paper posits that disunity among protesters, corruption, excessive use of force by authorities, violence amongst others constitute the reasons why protest fail to achieve its objectives. This paper offers possible procedures on how protests can be effective in addressing identified challenges through stake holder consultation, deliberate policy initiation, implementations and application.

## **Introduction**

Social and civil discontent that arises from a desire for accountability, transparency, good governance, and justice from institutions and the government are expressed through protests, public rallies, and civil non-violent protest. Fundamental principles codified in law grant citizens certain inalienable rights, such as the freedom of expression and dissent. The country's youth protests are attributed to a number of factors, including insecurity, poor governance, exclusion from political decision-making, unemployment, high costs of living, inequality, hunger,

corruption, and leadership weaknesses, (Sulaiman et al., 2024; Lebakeng & Matebese-Notshulwana, 2024; Hari, 2014; Okwuwada, 2023; Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024). Additionally, to being an avenue of expressing public opinion, these protests frequently compel leaders, legislators, and state officials to embark on more significant but often ignored issues. The long-term consequences of maladministration in Nigeria have hindered advancement and creativity, as well as the prospects of greatness. Resulting in widespread protests and large-scale rallies.

Rallies have been an essential factor in a number of revolutions that have resulted in momentous democratic, cultural, and political transformations, (Searle-White, 2021; Young, 2019). The outcome has been the promotion of harmony, social dialogue, identification of ineffective policies, accountability of leaders, and—above all—the provision of constructive social critique for the advancement of the country. The study's importance stems from its capacity to enhance comprehension of the relationship between historical and contemporary protests. It evaluates its efficacy as a mechanism for initiating change and fostering more transformational leadership. Through an analysis of the political and socioeconomic settings and consequences of the protests, which fell short of expectations, this study illuminates the dimensions and intricacies of demonstrations in Nigeria. To understand why previous demonstrations and protests failed to achieve their motives. A comprehensive, workable strategy for achieving desirable outcomes in the context of protests.

## **Background**

According to Oluwalogbon (2024), demonstrations are essential to the process of holding governments accountable because they give citizens a platform to air grievances and resist statutes they feel are unjust and inhuman. It provides the opportunity for residents to collectively demand reforms in governance for the improvements in society. Considering that their socioeconomic circumstances will be negatively impacted by the government's failures. Ensuring the implementation of policy directives to address underlying socioeconomic difficulties and establishing a prosperous society are shared responsibilities among all citizens. Widespread corruption, underdevelopment, deprivation, dissatisfaction, and poverty are the outcomes of ignoring the essential role that citizens play in a civic and democratic society. Beyond the periodic election process, nonviolent protests are a common means for the public to voice their

dissatisfaction with their leaders, and they are usually successful in controlling the leadership excesses. That's why Younge, (2019) opines that it has been integral to many eras that have ushered in major social and political developments on a global scale.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are just a few examples of the numerous international and local conventions that acknowledge the significance of peaceful protest. Throughout pre- and post-colonial times, there were numerous protests, mostly in the form of large-scale boycotts, general strikes, and mass demonstrations spearheaded by youth organizations, labor unions, and social activists to raise awareness on a range of issues and concerns, (Hari 2024). Nearly identical demands—such as those related to unemployment, low pay, insecurity, political marginalization, policy disapproval, high prevalence of corruption, marginalization and intimidation of minority groups, amongst others—are at the heart of these agitations. An essential precondition for anarchy and turmoil that makes it appear impossible to put an end to widespread insurrection against the government.

While protests and demonstrations provide people a chance to spark progressive dialogue about public ideas and oppose government policies, decisions, or indifferences towards a particular need of the society. If they are not handled properly, they may also be used as a weapon to wreak havoc in a peaceful nation. That's why the government, through state agencies, tries everything possible to stop any form of insurrection. Regardless of the organization participating, it is a common occurrence that anarchy and destruction will prevail in the absence of well-controlled, coordinated demonstrations, (Ives, & Lewis, 2019). For instance, demonstrations against injustice turned violent in certain municipalities in France, the UK, Kenya, and many other nations, resulting in the deaths of protesters and civilians defending their rights. This is due to the fact that criminals and outlaws infiltrate the demonstrations, stealing, killing, and destroying public properties. In certain cases, demonstrators also assault civilians, law enforcement officers and destroy public infrastructures. Bloody demonstrations heralded Nigerian protests in recent times.

More importantly, demonstrations and protests are tools frequently used by the nationalists and Pan-Africanists in their quest for independence and freedom. According to Cranes (2004), its

existence helps to guarantee that authorities continue to be responsible, sensitive, and receptive to public opinion and necessary policy modifications. A significant part of the discontent of residents facing a gargantuan rise in inflation, depreciating currency, rising gas prices, economic hardship, and organized corruption promotes the concept of protests, (Adekunle, 2024). Painting a rather fragmented economic growth. That is why Falola (2024), argues that it served as a national appeal across racial, religious, and socioeconomic barriers, fostering a sense of dissatisfaction and acrimony towards the ruling class. Igniting a class conflict between the haves and the have-nots.

Motivated by the ambiguity around its efficacy as a weapon for social change, the study aims to evaluate the impact of protest in Nigeria. Although previous studies have shown the importance of protests and their relevance in Nigeria (Akintola, 2010; Oyediran, 2024; Adebowale, 2020; Udoudom, *et.al* 2024; Ojo & Aforlarin, 2024). However, examining the effectiveness of these protests, their failures, and why they failed to engender much result has been omitted in past literature. Therefore, this article seeks to examine the effects of protests and why they achieved so little despite its popularity. For example, the recent end-hunger demonstration in Nigeria resulted in an instantaneous increase in the cost of necessities rather than the expected decrease in living expenses. For example, depending on the locality, the pump price of fuel ranged from 500 to 600 Naira, but immediately after the protest, fuel price moved from 900 and 1300 Naira. The instant result of the demonstration was the increase in commodities prices across the country. Relegating more people into the deepest trench of multi-dynamic poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

Notwithstanding the fact that widespread dissatisfaction is exacerbated by societal distrust and irresponsible leadership spiraling into widespread protests. To put it succinctly, the data indicates that massive protests and demonstrations in Nigeria have not produced much of an impact, in contrast to nationalist agitations for independence against colonial administrators that resulted in the regaining of independence. According to Adesoji (2024), nationalism was sparked by the ideals of freedom, equality, justice, and independence. Protests and demonstrations in modern Nigeria and throughout Africa are preceded by issues of poor governance, economic emancipation, poverty, unemployment, ethnic disdain, and the acts of political gladiators. Although demonstration is ingrained in contemporary worldwide democratic ideals and principles, the underlying causes vary across industrialized and developing nations. Recently, riots broke out in Kenya in response to the passage of a financial law that would increase taxes on already

impoverished citizens. Accordingly, the protest in the United Kingdom, which were sparked by far-right activists' endorsement of the murder of children attributed to immigrants, a deviation from the motives behind demonstrations in Africa.

### **The women's Perspective**

Villagers and chiefs from the precolonial era occasionally demonstrated against the actions of local chiefs and colonial forces. The women of southern Nigeria (now Rivers State and Calabar) were the first to express their discontent and resentment of precolonial policies that imposed and raised taxes on women (Effiong, 2018; Adebawale 2020; Adam 2018; Abah 2019; Evans 2009; Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2019; Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024). A group of ethnic women for Rivers State became the originator of the radical social disobedience demonstrated through intense and deliberate protest before it escalated to other regions of the southeast. The protest prompted other sections of the country to participate in solidarity, considering the aim was for the common welfare of everyone. A great number of women from the country's eastern region joined the protest, and as a result of their numbers and organization, it was re-nicknamed the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. According to Brown (2011), the enactment of numerous indiscriminate taxes, the diminution of women's economic independence, the installation of warrant chiefs as local authorities contributed to the growing number of people experiencing financial difficulties and the dissolution of traditional political structures.

This imposition became necessary for the colonial British in furtherance of their grip over the colony as a brute method of submission and administration. The restrictive policies had a profound impact on women, who were highly influential in the society both economically and culturally, violation of their rights, autonomy, and humanity, (Oluwalogbon, 2024). The mobilization and coordination of the protest by the women provided a strong positive response, exposing the rot in the colonial administrative policies that impoverished people. The protest paved up opportunities for subsequent activism and resistance to colonialism in Nigeria by demonstrating the oppressive nature of the colonial system. This became one of the most successful protests recorded in the history of the country.

Suffice to say that the success of any protest must be judged by the accomplishment or the response it received from the authorities. Protest must be towards addressing a clearly defined identified societal problem. An unsuccessful protest is one in which after the protest have taken place the main issue of the protest persists and nothing done to address the challenges. As a fundamental principle of democracy which grants peaceful, total and unrestricted expression of dissatisfaction towards political leaders and their actions. When the citizens no longer benefit from the dividends of democracy they will protest. Enacting laws, ordinances, and decrees that promote economic success, societal respect, and security is essential to the survival of democracy and the rule of law, (Odegard & Helms 1974). Anything short of these basic provisions is robbery of the masses which ignites a series a protest across a nation. Even after numerous protests, there is still a lot of corruption in governance, institutionalized corruption, the absence of transparency and accountability, irresponsible legislation, and dishonesty by those in power, (Tonye, & Idibhar 2024). The cancellation of gasoline subsidies, the imposition and increase of taxes, excessive corruption, trepidation and insecurity, inadequate resource management, unemployment, and infrastructural deficiencies are the main causes of protests across the nation since precolonial times.

### **LIST OF PROTESTS, THEIR PURPOSES, ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIA**

YEAR	REASON	ACHIEVEMENTS	GROUP
1929	Reductions in women's economic independence, discriminatory levies, and the establishment of warrant chiefs as local authorities, (Oluwagbon 2024)	Protest succeeded in their goal of abolishing taxes and warrants chief	South-South women initiated it, and women from the Southeast joined. (Abah 2019).
1947	disproportionate taxes on individuals, particularly in Abeokuta, (Afolabi 2024)	Women were given council seats, and the repeal of taxes.	Abeokuta women's union
1978	'Ali' must go' protesting the unilateral hike in fees and levies for the canteen and student residence halls.	This demonstration failed. Rather, the administration adopted a more oppressive stance.	young people and students nationwide.

1989	Anti SAP, protest against the IMF induced Structural adjustment program	Significantly successful, SAP assistance included, among other things, more jobs, food for the underprivileged and needy, student bursaries of Naira 500, and the removal of import taxes on spare parts and other essential commodity. (Afolabi 2024)	Youths, students, unemployed, labor unions, complete nationwide protests ensued. Total economic shutdown
1993	Protest against the annulment of 1993 election won by M.K.O Abiola	Protest was not successful because Abiola was never sworn in as President	Predominantly in the west but visible in other parts
2001	Demonstrations against the implementation of sharia law in the country's northern region	Partially effective because the laws were temporarily repealed in some states.	Mostly in the north
2003	Protest against the deliberate increase in petrol price by the government	Fuel was lowered from 40 to 34, which made it partially successful. The Naira	Participation in the protest was nationwide.
2012	Protest against the removal of fuel subsidy i.e. (fuel moved N65 to N140) and high cost of living	Due to the restoration of subsidies and the provision of relief to lessen the impact, the Occupy Nigeria demonstration was only partially effective.	Students, young people, and labor organizations from across the nation took part in the demonstration.
2014	Bring back our girls protest against the illegal abduction female students from a school in Chibok	The government's inability to obtain the immediate release of the Chibok girls made it largely unsuccessful.	Local and international participation
2016	Biafra agitation protesting for succession	Unsuccessful	People from Eastern Nigeria, (Igbos).



2018	Minimum wage increment protest	Partially successful minimum wage moved from 18,000 to 30,000 Naira	Organized and non-organized labor unions across the country.
2020	Protest against police brutality, corrupt and bad governance called END SARS protest	unsuccessful as the government merely disbanded SARS and reintegrated its personnel into another unit. Corruption, poor governance, and police brutality are all still prevalent in Nigerian society today.	Young people from all throughout the nation took part in the demonstration.
2023	Protest that erupted against Naira scarcity as a result of CBN Naira redesign policy	The protest's primary goals were never achieved since the Naira was redesigned. Although the deadline was extended, the new currency's scarcity caused immense hardship.	The majority of Nigerians, labor unions, and young people participated in the protest
2024	The End Bad governance protest encompasses the high cost of living, the elimination of fuel subsidies, corruption, rapidly rising inflation, executive abuses.	The goal was not achieved; instead, living expenses increased dramatically as the price of gasoline rose from roughly 500 to 1300 Naira.	Young and old people, CSOs, amongst others.

### **The past, the present and the future of protest**

Throughout history, people have protested to express their displeasure with policies that infringe upon their right to personal freedom and well-being. An efficient worldwide tool to promote social inclusion and fairness through interactions between leaders and followers. Prior to the colonial era, it was a part of human civilization in all societies. Political, social, and economic factors form the fundamental tripod that all protests are built on. According to Afolabi (2024), the planned

demonstration is primarily motivated by issues including perceived inefficiency of the leadership, economic hardship, and corruption in the administration. There is an abundance of these trends across the Nigerian space. Okuwada (2023) asserts that the nation is plagued by extensive corruption and misappropriation of public funds, a significant budget deficit, declining infrastructure, social decadence, unemployment, and poverty. In actuality, the precolonial causes of protest continue to be relevant in the current Nigerian setting, despite the fact that these factors may alter in terminology the reality is that they are same.

Even though the nation's protests of discontent have become more violent and dictatorial, the motivations behind the 1929 women's protests are still pertinent today. The distinction is that the women's approach that attracted prompt colonial authorities' responses and remedies varies with time. The conundrum presented by today's rallies, however, is whether the protest organizers are working for the benefit of the general public or for their personal parochial benefit. The organizers' self-serving agenda and pervasive corrupt tendencies make it seemingly impossible to realize the set goal of marches, (Nsirimovu 2023). The women's desperation and solidarity prevented them from enduring the colonialists' imposition of levies that would further deprive them of their resources, which is why the 1929 rally was successful. Colonists, warrant chiefs, and traditional leaders united and used harsh, violent, and savage means to collect taxes. The confiscation of animals, the burning of homes, the seizure of land, the forceful abduction of women and children, and sometimes the employment of forced labor on farms to make up for the unpaid taxes are the common consequences of nonpayment. When their husbands flee or are imprisoned, these women are subjected to the laborious tendencies of a bread winner, (Gwaindepi 2024; Burton 2008).

Nigerian protests and demonstrations, which have mostly taken the form of strikes and protest activities since 1929, have focused on a variety of issues but may be distilled into three main areas of interest: social, political, and economic factors (Iwuoha & Aniche 2021). Almost all factors that led to the 1929 riots, the 1948 protest, the Ali must go demonstration in 1978, the anti-SAP protest in 1989, the end SARS protest in 2020, the fuel increment protests, the Naira shortage protest in 2023, and the current end of bad governance represents a myriad of economic factors plaguing the country. Even the southeast's agitation for succession would have been eliminated if there had been an even national economic distribution of wealth. While social protests are the result of reactive social elements, which means that people react to government, agency, and other entities'

actions or inactions that endanger their peace, culture, and coexistence. For example, the Bring Back Our Girls campaign was a protest geared toward forcing the government to facilitate the release of kidnapped girls.

### **Why protests are not really successful**

When properly evaluated and its procedures integrated, protests and citizens demonstrations are developmental and policy tools, potentially a catalyst for change (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021; Oluwalogbon, 2024; Akintola, 2010). The primary motivation behind protests is to compel a shift in the political or economic system. Nevertheless, the numerous protests in Nigeria haven't accomplished meaningful success. Successful protests indicate that reasons for the protest would have been addressed after the protest. Essentially, the removal of the warrant officer and the tax levied on the ladies made the 1929 and 1947 protests most successful. On the contrary, the 'End Bad Governance' protest accomplished next to nothing because it was held while the gasoline level was 600, and the intention was to lower it; instead, it rose to 1300, rendering the demonstration ineffective. Protests that should alleviate people's suffering and hardship have turned counterproductive. Disunity and disloyalty, inadequate protest planning, bandit and criminal elements infiltration, the government's use of violent force, damage of public and private property, looting and murder, and financial inducement are all closely related to the reasons why protests fail.

Unity has been recognized as the thread that unites individuals and groups to pursue a shared goal. Nations with a history of violent nationalist sentiment are distinguished by inequality, significant amounts of nepotism, and partially permanent discrimination based on ethnicity (Nagle, 2012). The premise that racial ideological concordance is the primary factor producing conflict minimizes the impact of organized protest. While standards that prejudice aimed at particular groups can cause social friction and conflict, standards that promote collaboration and justice can strengthen trust and collaboration. The capacity of friendly principles to bring disparate interests together for a same goal is one example of the strength of protesters (Gillies, 2014). Unity acts as a stimulant for group endeavor, motivating people to work toward a common goal. Accordingly, people will become invincible if they get together and decide on anything. In this regard successful protest is attributed to the unity of thought and purpose demonstrated by all participants. However,

Balkanization during protests due to political ideological lines, greed, ethnicity, and tribalism affects whether or not the protests will accomplish their goals.

As demonstrated in 1929, when all the women were united on a common course and achieved a tremendous result, success may be easily achieved if individuals are linked on a common course. Nevertheless, given the current state of centrifugal tendencies, which have detrimentally polarized the nation into ethnic aggression, where federation units contend for its existence and significance. The advancement of the country threatened by tribalism and ethnicity, causing it increasingly challenging to hold individuals with questionable attributes accountable through protest. Emphasizing the importance of momentary unity before, during and after street demonstrations. Additionally, an invitation to protest will be rejected by members of the same ethnic group if the subject of the protest is a member of their tribe or clan. Contrarily, heterogeneity and multifaceted diversity should not be prohibited, every society requires a certain level of unity and a core set of shared values. Allowing minority views helps to douse social unrest and discontent in the country.

Protest failures can also be traced to politicians' propensity to infiltrate protesters and make them susceptible to manipulation. In a society grappling with a multiplicity of multi-dynamic poverty (Okwuwada 2024). Applying financial inducement to micromanage and manipulate protesters is a common practice employed to subvert conscience. Protesters susceptible to compromise will vacate the demonstration location, undermining the process. Prompting a majority of protestors to find it impossible to continue, which will inevitably cause other demonstrators to find it unfeasible to persist, which will inevitably result in the demonstrators' indifference. In Nigeria, financial incentives are a fundamental contributor to protests failure to achieve their main objectives. Organizers of the protest avail themselves to dialogue with the government representatives with a mindset of personal interest defeats the very purpose. This platform if not watched carefully and the negotiators yield to compromise by a way of accepting financial inducement and settlement from the government at the expense of the overall agitations. That will lead to abruptly calling off the demonstrations prematurely.

Consequently, protest must have an already identified challenge that requires authority's attention and action. When people protest for different reasons in a single protest it becomes seemingly impossible to understand and act. For example, during the end bad governance some groups were

also protesting for unemployment and insecurity, and many other reasons. An impossible task for the government to subscribe and manage. Protest with multiple demands tends not to be successful, however protest with single or double demands with unanimity of purpose achieves its purpose. The recent bad governance protest was indeed a failure because it lacks unanimity and oneness of purpose and target. The inability of having a predefined and definite purpose or agenda defeats the very reason for a protest. What is bad governance? what are the factors defining it and what was the protest main focus, these and many more were the questions lagging for answers. Defining and having a well predetermined objective is crucial, a highly nonpolitically exposed individual on a negotiating table is cardinal to success or failure of a protest. Citizens with good high moral capacity couple with competent and knowledge and skills representing at the table is necessary for success.

The fear of vituperative and physical violence attacks makes it difficult for people to willingly join protests. It is crucial to note that both the government and security personnel bear responsibility for the many abuses in Nigeria, (Iwuoha & Anichie 2021). While some government agencies were assiduously dedicated to fulfilling their obligations to the public by applying best practices, others cause unimaginable suffering, terror, and abuse to residents. For example, demonstrators were subjected to brutality during the ENDSARS and end poor governance protests that they were forced to flee for their lives. Contrarily, the police and military are forced to use force in order to restore order when peaceful protest turn to hooliganism, chaos, killing, and property destruction. This leads to the conclusion that a key component of a successful protest is in its planning and management; without them, the demonstration will degenerate into violence, undermining any aspirations of success.

The government's use of force or paramilitaries to quash protests as a method of control has become a recurring event in Nigerian political history, resulting in a horrific clash between police and protesters. According to Iwuoha & Aniche (2021), on multiple occasions, Nigerians have detailed their awful interactions with police officers and other security forces, particularly the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The innumerable incidents of police brutality in Nigeria, such as sexual assault, armed assault, abuse, coercion, extrajudicial execution, brutality, excessive use of force, kidnapping, unlawful detention, and all other constitutional rights violations, (Campbell, 2019; Amnesty International, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2000,). Illuminating the

contemporary political discussion in Africa galvanized around military brutality against protesters. However, this violations of the rule of law, freedom of expression, and freedom of association forms part of the reason Nigerians demonstrate.

Agencies, employs constant monitoring, public enslavement efforts, and the dismantling of citizen-cooperative power systems to instill a profound sense of insecurity in the populace (Heywood, 2007). Furthermore, in an effort to minimize the number of public subject matters, they outlaw public assemblies, institute capricious obstacles, and promote the use of coercion by officials. (Kesteren, 2019; Ezeibe et al., 2020). This conduct alternatively exacerbates an already volatile security architecture of the citizen rather than ameliorating the sufferings. The irony is that, should the demands be fulfilled, even the government agencies that are used to quell protests benefits. The reason for this is that the police and other paramilitary groups utilize the same public service that protesters are calling for to be improved. For example, during the insecurity protest the demand was for government among other things end kidnapping, banditry and all kinds of insecurity in the country. Unfortunately, but recently there were numerous reports of law enforcement officers being abducted and slain.

When a nation's military machinery serves as agents of suppression, intimidation, and violence against the citizens they pledged to protect, the citizens will rebel. This cannot be disconnected from the history of colonial suppression, repression, violence, and intimidation experienced in Nigeria (Mkhize & Madumi, 2016). Where the native population became the victim of one of the most predatory, barbaric exploitations by the colonialist during its dominance supervised by the religious extremist. To protect the interests of the ruling class, the state broadens the powers of its coercive system, reducing public space. In light of this, the state serves more as an umbrella for discrimination and abuse other than for promoting citizen safety and prosperity, (Ihonvbere, 2003). Turned against its citizens as a result of the provocative implementation of marginal suppression against the peaceful protest of citizens' displeasure with policies and actions. Culminating into a canker that lay like an albatross on the shoulders of the country.

#### Theoretical framework

Robert K. Merton, an American sociologist, formulated the deprivation hypothesis, (Houghton & Drivion 2023). According to this view, relative deprivation is caused by an upward comparison

that implies that one's disadvantaged circumstances are disproportionate, combined with resentment and frustration. (Smith et al., 2020). This theory articulates a variety of upheavals, emanating from the 1948 women's riots to the 2024 protests against poor government. Intentional exclusion from the economic distribution of social amenities increases resentment and dissatisfaction. Reduced emotional well-being, increased psychosocial eccentricity, and discontent in the community are all indicative of relative deprivation. Propelling more of the marginalized into a vicious cycle of poverty, dire need, hopelessness, and despondency, which influences them to stage large-scale insurrection against the ruling elite. Despite the fact that many social movements may fail to achieve all of their goals, the majority of successful ones produce observable advancements that have the potential to drastically influence society. The hypothesis posits that individuals who are denied specific privileges and rights to actively participate in state economic activity would be encouraged to express their disenchantment through social demonstrations, (Houghton & Drivion 2023). That is why Okuwada (2023), Nsirimovu (2023) argues that Nigeria is rife with all the ingredients for widespread social disobedience and protest, including entrenched ethnicity and tribalism, poverty, corruption, inequality, insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition.

Mass society theory is a complex and multifaceted perspective that explains collective actions. The underlying principle is that those who are socially isolated are more vulnerable to the appeal of revolutionary movements across the world (Deininger, 1960). It is sometimes used disparagingly to describe a contemporary state in which conventional human associational patterns have disintegrated and been supplanted by conservative or even dictatorial behaviors. The mass demonstration reflects the idea of collective behavior with a distant focus of attention. Developing an exacerbated impression of obligation and actuality, in addition to rapidly different consciousness and responsiveness magnitude (Kornhauser 1959). Thus, this representation correlates a group's economy with the irrational and radical economic decisions of the elite to the more impoverished masses. For example, the social distribution of income and opportunities across the length and breadth of the country is so unidirectional to the detriment of the poor majority that it has sparked a current wave of anti-government protests. Those who feel anonymous, helpless, alienated, and disassociated are among the crucial hallmarks of mass society.

Conclusively, the right to a peaceful protest is a fundamental right of all citizens enshrined in the country's precept and practice, not only because it helps in holding government accountable, it also serves as a medium of policy change and direction. Having a successful protest means that the youths and all citizens must be united in a common course devoid of ethnic sentiment. Predefining the reason for a protest is also a factor that requires the commonality of thought among protesters.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that protests arise as a result of social and economic distrust between the protesters and the authorities. It is necessary and important for all stakeholders to unify in the interest of the nation. In ensuring that the citizens are treated with respect and the provision of basic amenities is not the preserve of only the privileged elite but a necessity for all citizens irrespective of social and ethnic background. The rise in violence during demonstrations to express discontent, as well as the general disregard and devaluation of their combined abilities and strengths in the nation's governance, to the point where young people are ostracized, singled out, and mistreated by the authorities, should raise concerns. If the trend is not contained through social intervention programs that alleviate hunger, poverty, insecurity, and unemployment, as well as social and ethnic mistrust, it can escalate to threaten the very fabric of nationhood. The signs are already visible and audible for all sundry. The majority of young people who take part in protests do so in response to the bad decisions that result in high rates of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and injustice among the youth population. The truth is no society can prosper with a disjointed and disconnected youth. In the state of intolerance, it is important to formulate and implement people-friendly policies that solve economic, financial, political, and social challenges.

## **Recommendation**

Governments must put policies in place that protect people's freedoms to peaceful assembly and protest while making sure that their actions don't jeopardize national security and the safety of others.

Young people as co stake holders in nation building should be given equal opportunity to serve in any capacity according to their knowledge skills and competence.

To avoid unnecessary confrontation with the central government the youth should be actively involved in political decision making across the country. To be precise they should join political parties and vie to be elected into higher offices to effect changes in our society.



Effective leadership would have addressed economic challenges; addressing economic issues will eliminate most protests, leaving few grounds for protest.

When a nation takes proactive and swift action to address the economic challenges plaguing the nation, the likelihood of citizens demonstrations will decrease, if not be eliminated.

In addition to preventing protests and strikes that exacerbate economic problems and security threats, a concerted and tangible attempt to proactively solve economic, political, and social challenges would have been a useful instrument for the advancement of the country. For a successful and effective demonstration against any policy citizen must unite, acting in a responsible manner devoid of ethnicity and tribalism.

Protest organizers and the law enforcement agent must collaborate to effectively manage many protesters, so that the probability of rascality and destruction of property will be eradicated to avoid the introduction of high handedness of the military.

Government be proactive in providing economic, social and financial incentives to all young population by way of meaningful employment and avoid policies that trigger mass protest.

For protest to be successful in addressing the cause of action organizers must be neutral and not self-serving in the interest of the general public.

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The author has declared that there are no competing interests.

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