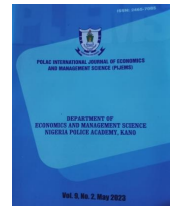




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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF NONVIOLENT MOVEMENTS IN DEMANDING SOCIAL CHANGE AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

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Abstract

The study explores the role of nonviolent movements in demanding social change and government accountability. It sets out with a brief statement on nonviolent movements, concepts and history till date, as well as the views of some notable and influential advocates of nonviolent movement, namely, Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Next, it examines the aims and methods of nonviolent movements, outlining its impacts, achievements and successes. It then explores the role of nonviolent movement in demanding social change and accountability with reference to the Nigerian context. The paper concludes that nonviolent movement in Nigeria has increased societal change, development, and Government accountability. This study combines a case study qualitative research design and documentary research design. The study is based on literary research conducted via electronic documents and field research conducted in Lagos state, Nigeria, during which in-depth interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. This study contributed to the growing research on nonviolent movements and social change. The study established the need for a more organised nonviolent movement.

Keywords: Nonviolent movement, Social change, Government Accountability

1. Introduction

Over the years, the world has experienced a lot of nonviolent movements, and the result of such nonviolent movements has brought about notable positive social changes around the world. Nonviolent movement is a method of struggle in which unarmed people confront an adversary with the use of collective action, including protests, demonstrations, strikes, and non-cooperation, to build power and achieve political goals; sometimes called civil resistance, people power, unarmed struggle, or nonviolent action. Nonviolent movement is a strategy for social change and an act of protest to let the government know what should be done; it describes the quality and power of ordinary people and is used to protest pervasion. The basic principles of nonviolent

movement encompass abstaining from using physical force to achieve an aim and fully engaging in resisting oppression, domination and other forms of injustice. It can thus be applied to oppose both direct (physical) and structural violence. Nonviolence aims at psychological force and pressure on whoever is at the helm of affairs.

This study is structured as follows: a brief introduction, definitional and conceptual discourse focusing on Nonviolent Movements, Social Change and Government Accountability. The research concludes the introductory section by discussing the research problem, objective, scope knowledge gap, and theoretical framework that underpins the study. The Method section provides detailed information on the data collection and analysis research design strategy. In the Results section, research

findings were discussed. The discussion section explores findings in light of the scope. Finally, the conclusion, recommendations, and implications for future research were stated.

Definitional and Conceptual Discourse: Nonviolent movements, Social change and Government accountability

Nonviolent Movements: Nonviolent movements are actions taken to resolve societal injustices. It imposes a "creative tension" into the conflict, and it is most effective when it illustrates the injustice it seeks to correct. Nonviolent movements are disruptive of public order and pose a radical threat to the status quo (Dudouet, 2008). Nonviolent movements include nonviolent activities such as sit-ins, strikes, street blockades and workplace occupations, boycotts - refusal to buy products, marches and rallies, letter-writing and petition campaigns, political action and voting, public art and performance. Methods of nonviolent action include Nonviolent protest and persuasion (54 methods), Non-cooperation (103 methods), and Nonviolent intervention (41 methods) (Sharp, 1973).

Social Change is the alteration of societal attributes with the expectation that the bad attributes are reduced or eliminated, and the good attributes and values are improved or sustained.

Government Accountability: The government's demonstration of its fulfilment and commitment (measurement, evaluation and accountability) to deliver services to its people as the role of the government is to deliver certain services to its citizens.

Statement of problem

This research examines the role of nonviolent movements in clamouring for Social Change and Government accountability in Nigeria towards making Nigerian society a socially just and peaceful country. This study aims to document the incidence and impact of nonviolent movements in Nigeria.

Research Objective

This paper aims to review and document nonviolent movements and their impact on Nigeria's society and government. The study explores nonviolent movements' role in Nigeria in demanding social change and government accountability. Also, the impacts of nonviolent movements in Nigeria will be examined. Three research questions were asked to achieve the study's objectives: (1) what roles do nonviolent movements play in Nigeria? (2) What impact do nonviolent movements have on Nigeria? (3) How can nonviolent movements successfully demand social change and government accountability?

Scope: The study is limited to Nigeria and Africa. This study will cover the period between year 2010 and 2023. This study explores the literature on nonviolent movements, focusing on their impacts and success.

Knowledge Gap

While many scholarly works exist on nonviolent movements, extant literature has not adequately assessed the role nonviolent movement's play in government accountability in Nigeria. This research intends to cover that gap in scholarship. Scientific knowledge in these areas will provide insights that influence nonviolent movements and civil societies.

2. Literature Review: Empirical and Theoretical Reviews

History of Nonviolent Movements

Historically, Henry David Thoreau first introduced the nonviolent method of struggle in 1817-1864 (Oduor, 2011). One of the most famous leaders of a non-violent movement was Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), who opposed British imperial rule in India during the 20th century. Gandhi took the religious principle of ahimsa (doing no harm) common to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism and turned it into a non-violent tool for mass action (India, 1930). Noted historical practitioners of nonviolent movements include the American Civil

Rights Movement, the Global Justice Movement, the Suffragettes, and other human rights movements. Martin Luther King opined that the nonviolent movement's goal was to "create such a crisis and foster such a tension" to demand a response that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatise the issue so it can no longer be ignored (Letter from Birmingham Jail, 1963).

A defining political phenomenon of the last century has been the rise of mass nonviolent civil resistance movements as a vehicle for change. Defined as "a civilian-based method used to wage conflict through social, psychological, economic, and political means without the threat or use of violence," nonviolent civil resistance movements arguably have become "the model category of contentious action worldwide." From 1900 till date, researchers have identified a total of not less than 325 large-scale nonviolent campaigns with "maximalist" aims, such as forcing incumbent governmental leaders from power, gaining independence, or causing the withdrawal of foreign occupiers. Smaller-scale campaigns with agendas aimed at domestic reforms numbered thousands or hundreds of thousands more. Nonviolent movements aim to either obstruct another political agent or political organisation from performing some practice to which the activists object or to solve perceived problems that traditional societal institutions (governments, religious organisations or established trade unions) are not addressing to the satisfaction of the direct action participants. According to Ackerman and Duvall (Govier, 2008), A mass nonviolent movement can force a favourable outcome in one of three ways: by coercing a ruler to surrender power or leave, by inducing a regime to compromise and make concessions, or by converting the regime's view of the conflict, so that it believes it should no longer dictate the results.

Nonviolent Movements Worldwide

In July 2019, the governor of Puerto Rico was forced to resign after hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans gathered in mass demonstrations and carried out work stoppages, demanding accountability for his ineptitude

and mocking statements regarding victims of Hurricane Maria (Robles, 2019). Moreover, since October 2019, governments have fallen to popular protest movements in places as diverse as Iraq, Lebanon, and Bolivia. In Chile, protests against austerity measures forced the government into prolonged negotiations over its fiscal policies (Chenoweth, 2023). In Hong Kong, the leaderless movement that emerged to resist a pro-Beijing extradition law bolstered its numbers and escalated its demands following a mismanaged and brutal crackdown, propelling pro-democracy parties to victory in November 2019 local-government elections (Chenoweth, *The Future of Nonviolent Resistance*, 2020). In the first serious challenge to the legitimacy of the right-wing turn carried out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hundreds of thousands of Indians began taking part in a mass campaign to resist citizenship-registration plans that threaten to render millions of Indian Muslims stateless (Iftikhar, 2020). Since 2017, the United States has experienced its wave of mass movements mobilising for racial justice, immigration justice, gun control, women's rights, climate justice, LGBTQ rights, and Donald Trump's impeachment or resignation, among other goals.

Nonviolent Movements in Africa

Where constitutional means of change are closed off, widespread protests may be the only route for "the people" to voice their opinions and demand change. This is particularly true in Africa, where 28 of 54 member states had authoritarian governments as of 2020. From 2009-2019, one-third of all the revolutionary mass nonviolent protests in the world have occurred in Africa - 25 in all (Youssef Cherif et al., 2017), in countries ranging from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Mali to South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, Algeria and Sudan. Almost twice as many nonviolent movements occurred in Africa as in Asia, the next most active region. Moreover, since the 1970s, nonviolent movements in Africa have been more successful than in the rest of the world in achieving governmental change. In that time, roughly 58% of movements have succeeded in ending autocratic regimes, compared to a 44% success rate in the rest of the world (Florian et al. Wilson, 2021).

The Black-led anti-apartheid movement in South Africa succeeded in bringing down the country's regime of legally enshrined racial discrimination, although racism, segregation, and economic inequality persist.

In some cases, these uprisings yielded dramatic results. In April 2019, Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese tyrant who had overseen the massacre of hundreds of thousands in Darfur, given sanctuary to jihadist groups in the 1990s, and terrorised opponents with mass arrests, torture, and summary executions, fell from power (Pinckney, 2022). Weeks later, Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was seeking an unconstitutional fifth term in office, also fell, toppled by a popular uprising known as the Smile Revolution (Rana Jawad, 2019).

Present-Day Nonviolent Movements

The year 2019 till date saw what may have been the largest wave of mass, nonviolent anti-government movements in recorded history. Large-scale protests, strikes, and demonstrations erupted across dozens of countries on an unprecedented scale. Nonviolent resistance has become a mainstay of political action across the globe. Armed struggle was the primary way movements fought for change from outside the political system. Today, campaigns where people rely overwhelmingly on nonviolent resistance have replaced armed struggle as the most common approach to contentious action worldwide. In recent times, there have been several instances where nonviolent struggle has been used to address burning issues in society, such as racial segregation and oppressive regimes. The Arab Spring in Northern Africa (Adraoui, 2021) and the #BlackLives# Matters (Hatfield, 2023) in the United States of America (Larry Buchanan et al., 2020). Another instance was the extrajudicial murder of George Floyd by racist U.S. Police Officers (Jarrar, 2021); the brutal murder led to widespread peaceful protest against racism in the United States of America.

Nonviolent Movements in Nigeria

Nonviolent protest is not limited to Nigeria but is a universal phenomenon; it has been used against empires, foreign entities, and dictatorial regimes, even in modern states. Prearranged police brutality is a global issue. It happens in every society, whether developed or developing. The state police are vested with the power to enforce laws. However, over time, the police abused these powers bestowed on them. There are several cases of torture, brutality and killing of innocent citizens by the Nigeria Police. The EndSARS movement was a protest hashtagged #ENDSARS#, which commenced with a demand for the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit in Nigeria occasioned by police brutality and other criminal activities alleged by Nigerian youth (Ogele, 2021). The Nigerian youths organised the EndSARS protest to register displeasure against police brutality, extortions, and extrajudicial killing of the Special Anti-Robbery (SARS) Unit of the Nigeria Police Force. The EndSARS mass protest attracted solidarity and demonstration by Nigerians in the diaspora and sympathisers globally. On October 11 2020, the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar Adamu, dissolved the SARS Unit. Nevertheless, the protest continued despite the dissolution of SARS. The protesters included other items such as good governance, devolution of power, and true federalism.

The protest commenced in a peaceful atmosphere with the demand for the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), whose modus operandi was considered a threat to the lives and property of their victims. The protesters achieved their initial objective when the federal government disbanded SARS and set up SWAT (Ogele, The Paradox of Non-Violent Movement in Covid 19 pandemic era. The study of 2020 #EndSARS# protest in Nigeria, 2021).

Table 1: Notable Nonviolent Movements (2010-2023) in Nigeria Source Authors Compilation

S/N	Date	Name of Nonviolent Movement	Methods	Demands
1)	2012 (2-14 January)	#Occupy Nigeria#	Protest	The reinstatement of fuel subsidies and reduction of fuel prices and a review of the Federal Government spending.
2)	2020 2021 (A memorial protest of the 2020 Lekki toll gate shooting).	#EndSARS#	Protest, Marches, Slogans, Caricatures, and symbols. Banners, posters, and displayed communications. Vigils. Social disobedience.	An end to police brutality. The disbandment of a specialised police unit, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

Roles of Nonviolent Movements

- 1) Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice and evil.
- 2) Nonviolence seeks to bring about social change
- 3) Mitigate violence

Impacts, Successes and Limits of Nonviolent Movements

The impact of nonviolent movements in demanding social change and government accountability in different parts of the world over the years has been tremendous. It is recorded to have effected many social reforms, reduction of oppression and dominations in different facets of society. Scholars of civil resistance generally define “success” as the overthrow of a government or territorial independence achieved because of a campaign within a year of its peak. Among the campaigns that have both begun and ended over the past 120 years, about 51 percent of nonviolent campaigns have succeeded outright. Not only are nonviolent resistance movements growing in frequency, but they also demonstrate their effectiveness as an alternative to violence. Research by political scientists Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (2021) has shown that large-scale nonviolent resistance movements are over twice as effective (53% versus 26%) as violent movements in achieving their goals. Moreover, research shows that nonviolent revolutions are the most crucial driver for democratic transitions in authoritarian environments, resulting in enduring democracies two

and a half times more often than violent revolutions (74% versus 29%). People seeking political change have increasingly been turning to civil resistance because more people worldwide have seen nonviolent resistance as a legitimate and successful method for creating change.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain and understand phenomena. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory, explaining why the research problem exists. This study is guided by social movement theory, pertinent to the issues discussed in this study that explores nonviolent movements and methods in Nigeria. The theory will guide this research in data collection, analysis, and discussion of the findings.

Social Movements Theory was used to underpin this study as the study seeks to understand social change in society and construct a conceptual framework through data collection and analysis of the study. The term social movement was introduced in (1850) by the German sociologist Lorenz von Stein in his book *History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present* (1850). The dynamics of social movements are that social movements are not eternal. They have a life cycle: They are created, grow, achieve successes or failures, and eventually dissolve and cease to exist. Social movements are any broad social alliances of people connected through their shared interest in creating or affecting social change. Social movements do not have

to be formally organised. Multiple alliances may work separately for common causes and still be considered a social movement. Generally, the emergence of social movements is tied to a perceived need for social change and the opportunity for the general public to express their protest. Social movements are large informal groupings of individuals or organisations focused on specific political or social issues. They are a type of group action. This theory is instrumental for the study as it investigates the role of nonviolent movements in demanding social change and government accountability in Nigeria.

3. Methodology

Research design

This study adopted a case study qualitative research design. The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources of data collection were carried out using interviews. The latter will consist of secondary data sources such as various scholarly journals obtained via Google Scholar, newspaper articles and relevant published theses that were used to fulfil the study objectives in terms of literature review and theoretical framework. The probability sampling method (simple random sampling technique) was used to select hundred (50) individuals that participated in the research, 25 males and 25 females. The data was garnered from a sample of respondents (adults and youths).

Research Analytical Framework

This study is based on field research conducted in Lagos, during which interviews were conducted on fifty (50) people. The field research aims to get firsthand and undiluted information from the participants to answer the research questions. During this field exercise, 25 males and 25 females were interviewed to address the research questions. Ethical issues involved in social research, particularly confidentiality and anonymity, were strictly adhered to during the exercise. The research adopted a qualitative, empirical methodology of data gathering and analysis. The use of case study, interviews

and literary sources, in particular, added value to this study's analytical and evaluative perspective. The methods and techniques adopted helped incorporate the important views of key informants, who played a role in expressing their views and thoughts on nonviolent movements in Nigeria. Through the qualitative findings from the field, underpinned by a robust exposition and interpretation, the empirical findings were linked to the key issues and themes under investigation. The study used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

Data analysis

Qualitative Data analysis

The process of data analysis involves making sense of text and image data. Qualitative data may take the form of interview transcripts collected from research participants or other identified texts that reflect experientially on the topic of study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data to interpret and describe meaningfully the answers to the interview questions framed against the research objectives of this study. The analysis aims to identify those relevant to answering a particular research question. The approaches adopted in analysing information obtained via interviews followed the thematic process of themes in research.

4. Findings and Discussions

Study findings revealed that nonviolent movements with the most popular method, protest and strike actions, in Nigeria have positively affected government accountability and social change. The perspective of people in Lagos, Nigeria, about nonviolent movements as a tool for social change and government accountability is strengthened with positive results and impacts that have been achieved in times past. The study established a general complacent attitude of Lagos, Nigeria, residents towards nonviolent movements.

Furthermore, in the fieldwork, it was noticed that citizens have an inclining interest and zeal in nonviolent movements, notwithstanding the negativity involved. Also, there is a feeling that that is the most effective way

for the government to listen to the masses' demands. The study findings established the need for more futuristic, organised, nonviolent movements where peaceful means of expression are propagated in society.

One of the most notable nonviolent movements, #EndSARS protests, termed youth movement, in Nigeria repeated past mistakes of nonviolent movements, such as a lack of coordination and a hijack of protests in some parts of Nigeria by hoodlums, which resulted in the loss of lives and property. This was because there was no central leadership, different people were saying different things, and there needed to be more coordination in message and action. The positive side to the EndSARS protest witnessed centralised advocacy, and the government met the protest's demands. This also created public awareness, resulting in positive social change in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendation

- 1) Society must become better at coordinating nonviolent movements.

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 - 2) Knowledge should be garnered from previous nonviolent movements' successes and failures, their tactics and methods.
 - 3) Nonviolent movements should always be seen as a legitimate avenue towards policy change and influence, and one that must professionalise to make politics more reflective of societies' wants, needs and demands.
 - 4) Effective leadership in nonviolent movements is pertinent to its success.
 - 5) Demands should be clearly stated and clear to the government or the affected institution when conducting a nonviolent movement.
- Conclusion**
- Nonviolent movements have historically been an assertive regular feature of the tactics employed by social movements; they involve a challenge to established methods of exercising social change and settling conflicts. Non-violence does not just mean not doing violence; it is also a way of taking positive action to resist oppression or bring about change. Nonviolent movement is generally seen as the voice of the voiceless, its main drive is a unified goal.
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