

# Discourse Strategies in President Buhari's Speech on the #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

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## *Abstract*

This article examines the discursive strategies employed to negotiate power and ideology in President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria. The data for the study comprises President Muhammadu Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protests. The speech was analysed using both Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, and a discussion of how transitivity patterns and modality choices explain the representation of power, ideology and dominance in the speech followed. The findings of the study show that the transitivity and modality systems used by the president revealed his disposition toward the participants involved in the protests, and his perception of himself in relation to the others: whether they take an active or passive role in the discourse. The paper concludes that transitivity patterns and modality structures can be used to highlight social actors who on the surface appear common and natural, when they essentially perpetuate inequality and injustice.

**Keywords:** #EndSARS, protest, discourse, social actors, framing, legitimisation

## 1. Introduction

#EndSARS is an anti-police movement fuelled by Nigerian youths against police abuses and brutality on Nigerian citizens. The protest with the hashtag #ENDSARS took its name from the slogan started some time in 2017 from a Twitter campaign where Nigerian youths used to share their ordeals on the violence and harassment meted on them by the defunct Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) ([www.bbc.com/news/world-africa](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa)). SARS is a unit of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) known for its long record of notoriety, committing robberies, unlawful arrests, rapes, extrajudicial killings, and extortions with impunity. The recent #EndSARS protest was therefore geared towards facilitating reforms in the NPF.

The protest was a build-up on previous agitations that led to the government's

announcement of the demobilisation of the SARS in 2013, 2014 and 2020. It was again rejuvenated following a video that showed a young police officer, believed to be a member of the SARS, shooting an unarmed young man and racing off in the victim's car in Ugheli Local Government Area of Delta State on October 3, 2020. As the video went viral, the hashtag #EndSARS began to arouse emotions and garnered the sympathy/attention of both young and old persons within and outside the country, calling for a total scrapping of the SARS unit of the NPF. Nigerians took to the social as well as other media platforms, calling on the government to serve justice to the victims of police brutality and effect a change in the Nigeria Police Act. Following the reaction of Nigerians, the Inspector General of Police, Mohammad Adamu, on the 13th of October, 2020, announced the disbandment of the SARS unit and the cessation of routine patrols and low-risk duties, such as stop and search duties, mounting of road blocks, check points, with immediate effects. The members of the defunct police unit were recalled to Abuja for psychological and medical examination and debriefing. The Inspector General of Police further announced the new police unit known as the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT), which would take up the activities of the dissolved SARS. The Vice President of the country also announced the federal government's interest in further reforming the NPF. This seemed not to have, in any way, addressed the demands of the Nigerian youths and thus led to the commencement of a 14-day nationwide mass protest which was later hijacked by hoodlums in different parts of the country. On Sunday, the 11th of October, 2020, the first major physical gatherings of protesters took place along the Lekki-Epe expressway of Lagos State. Subsequently, the Lekki-Victoria Island toll gate became the hub of the protest. The protesters mounted road blocks and barricaded the roads, grounding business activities and displaying placards with various inscriptions, such as #ENDSARS, #IAMANIGERIAN, #JUSTICEFORUSNIGERIANS, #NIGERIAPO LICESTOPKILLINGUS, #ENDPOLICEBRUTALITY, and #SARSMUSTEND.

While some Nigerians took to social media outlets, such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*, to express their grievances, others took to the streets, displaying placards and engaging in street protests. Those in the tech community leveraged on the virality of the internet to recount their experiences in the hands of the SARS officers, and this eventually generated fury outburst and morphed into the largest decentralised youth protest in several parts of the country. For the first time in the history of the country, Nigerian youths within and outside the country simultaneously staged protests against police brutality and the rot in the NPF. #EndSARS protesters further launched a helpline centre and online radio platform named "Sorosoke" (speak up) to aid the coordination of protesters across Nigeria and ensure seamless and effective communication. Similarly, the #EndSARS protest also took place in other countries, such as South Africa, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States of America, to show solidarity with the plights of Nigerian youths back home. Projecting the likely negative effects of the #EndSARS protests, prominent people, including President Muhammadu Buhari, the Senate President, Ahmed Lawan, as well as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamiala, called for an end to the protest. The governors of the 36 states also authorised the State Judicial Panel of Inquiry to look into the reports of abuses levelled against the SARS. During one

of the #EndSARS protests, some unarmed young protesters were reportedly gunned down by some yet-to-be-identified men of the Nigerian army. This further infuriated the Nigerian youths and spiked up violence. The Amnesty International reported that at least 12 persons were killed from the shootings at the Lekki Toll Gate on Tuesday October 20, 2020 by a band of military personnel. The protest took a new turn as more youths took to the streets and decided to employ violence. As a result, state governments began to impose a 24-hour curfew in their states following the various incidents of vandalism and attacks reportedly carried out by the furious youths. The aftermath of the killings made the youths defy the curfew imposed by the state governments in a bid to seek justice for those who lost their lives in the protests. While the protests lingered, groups of hoodlums considered the crises a good opportunity to loot government warehouses, buildings and private businesses and properties. Incidents of such lootings and violence-related activities were constantly reported on various electronic, print and social media.

Incidents of police brutality have been extensively reported in both Nigerian national dailies, online news reports, as well as various social media platforms, blaming such acts on the laxity of the government in serving justice to victims of such brutalities. Pictures and videos have also been used to situate the brutal acts perpetrated by the SARS. Harlow and Johnson (2011, p. 2) have asserted the influence that the media has on public perceptions. According to them, “how the media portray protesters influences not only how the public will perceive protesters and their claims, but also whether the public will support the protesters”. Mcleod and Hertog (1999) opine that the way the media present protesters may relegate or (de)legitimise protesters and their demands and portray them as either villains or heroes. This paper thus explores how discourse strategies are used to represent social actors in President Buhari’s speech on the #EndSARS protests. The study focuses on framing and representation, emphasis, and (de)legitimation of the protest and the social actors involved through the transitivity and modality options. The study is guided by Fairclough and Wodak’s Critical Discourse Analysis and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics. The interpretative orientation of this study is hinged on three of the roles proposed by Fairclough and Wodak’s Critical Discourse Analysis—that there is a relationship between language and power, on the one hand, and the way in which language establishes and maintains unequal power relations on the other, and that discourse is ideologically shaped.

A considerable range of research has focused on protest discourse in Nigeria, on different issues and from different perspectives. Beginning with the most recent, Osisanwo and Iyoha (2020), for instance, examined the representation of pro-Biafra protests in selected Nigerian newspapers. The study adopted Van Leeuwen’s representation of social actors and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The findings of the study showed that the examined Nigerian newspapers represented the protesters as violent and unruly even when the protesters conducted themselves as law-abiding citizens and activists during the protests. Chiluwa (2015) carried out a critical discourse analysis of *Facebook* posts in the Fuel Subsidy Removal that occurred in 2012 in Nigeria. The analysis was carried out along the ideological divides/imprints of the positive “we” in-group and the negative “others” out-group

representations. The study showed that the protesters employed a blend of Standard Nigerian English, local languages and Pidgin to express solidarity with several groups in the country, as well as to express ethnic affinity/fraternity. In the same vein, Egbunike and Olorunnisola (2015) did a comparative study of the social media and Nigerian newspapers' framing of the 2012 #Occupy Nigeria protest. The study reported that the newspapers negatively represented the protest more than the social media. Using a multimodal analytical approach, Onanuga and Ademilokun (2014) examined the use of graphics as a weapon in the protestations against fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. The authors accounted for the complementary use of humour, realism and surrealism in the visual images used by Internet users to tackle the government on the issue. The study revealed the disenchantments of Nigerians to the government's (in)decisions through the colours, letters and images produced by text producers and circulated by social media users. Humour was also deployed to lighten the people's anger while expressing displeasure in the decision of the government. According to the study, netizens deployed visual images to show that political office holders in Nigeria fed fat on the welfare of their citizens.

While the present study has some similarities with the reviewed studies in terms of theme, its focus is on the recent #EndSARS protests. The overarching aim of this study is to examine how the protest and the social actors involved are represented in President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protest. A study of this nature is relevant because it will help to unveil the ideological underpinnings in the presidential speech on the social protests.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts a broad framework which depends on both Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The two approaches are combined because CDA on its own has no tools for linguistic analysis. Also, CDA and SFL have some things in common in their analytical focus (Graham, 2003). As noted by Fowler et al. (1979), the theoretical perspectives shared by CDA and SFL include the following: first, both view language as an integral element in the society—language shapes society and society shapes language. Second, both advocate for a contextual examination of language, i.e., how different discourse activities influence their context and how contexts influence these discourse activities. The idea of an eclectic approach to discourse analysis is also advocated by Wodak (2001), who suggests that the knowledge of SFL is essential to the understanding of CDA.

CDA is an analytical approach that primarily examines how social power (abuse), dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted in texts (e.g., newspaper, official documents.) and talks (e.g., public speech, advertisement, political propaganda) within specific social and political contexts (Fairclough, 2000; van Dijk, 2001). Its main aim is to explore the relationship between language, ideology and power on the one hand and that between social change and social identity on the other. A major preoccupation of critical discourse analysts is to try to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality (van Dijk, 1985). To this end, they examine the roles that discourse plays in the establishment and maintenance of unequal power

relations and dominance (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). These roles are summarised by Wodak and Fairclough (1979) into seven principles, namely: (a) the roles of discourse in social problems; (b) the relationships between power and discourse; (c) how discourse constitutes culture and society. (d) how discourse is ideologically marked; (e) the historical nature of discourse; (f) the mediated relationship between text and society; and (g) the interpretive and explanatory orientation of CDA. Three of these roles (the relationship between language and power, on the one hand, and the way in which language establishes and maintains unequal power relations on the other, how discourse is ideologically shaped, and the interpretive orientation of CDA) are of direct relevance in this study.

This study is guided by M. A. K Halliday's SFL, which is usually considered the main basis for CDA, as well as other theories in discourse studies. The theory posits that individuals have a wide range of choices available to them to produce linguistic utterances and texts. However, these utterances are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged. The theory has two inseparable, integral components: *systemic grammar* and *functional grammar*. Systemic grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system network, which is made up of subsystems from which language users make choices to create meaning. Functional grammar, on the other hand, aims to examine language as a means of social interaction and is based on the position that language forms are determined by their uses or functions.

According to Halliday (1994), language mainly fulfills three primary functions, which he calls *metafunctions*. These metafunctions include the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function. In the ideational function, a clause is analysed in relation to the "goings-on" (Process), entities involved in the "goings-on" (Participants) and situations in connection with the "goings-on" (Circumstance). This function considers the clause as a representation of reality. This means that speakers convey their experience of the phenomena around them with their language. This includes their experience of the inner world of their own consciousness, their reactions, cognitions and perceptions. The ideational function consists mainly of transitivity and voice. Transitivity comprises six processes: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential (see Section 2.1).

The interpersonal function sees the clause as an interaction between two communicators (speaker and hearer). It is concerned with establishing and maintaining interaction between the speaker and the hearer. This indicates that language is used by the speaker as a means of establishing a conversation, expressing their thoughts, attitudes and evaluations, as well as the relationships that they set up between themselves and the hearer. Hu et al. (1988) suggest that the interpersonal metafunction indicates the personal and social ties between people. The "social ties" here implies whether or not the speakers have a strong relationship with one another. In the interpersonal function, a clause is analysed in terms of Mood and Modality. While Mood shows which role the speaker chooses in the speech situation and which role they assign to the addressee, Modality refers to an intermediate range between extreme positive and negative. It objectively expresses the speaker's evaluation of the subject and shows the social role relationship, the extent of formality and the power

relationship. The textual metafunction deals with the representation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as text. It considers the clause as the message. In the textual function, a clause is analysed in terms of the Theme-Rheme structure. This implies that two sentences may have exactly the same ideational and interpersonal functions and still be different in terms of textual coherence. This is not further discussed in this paper as it is not the focus of our study. This study focuses mainly on the transitivity and modality analyses of President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. These linguistic resources are therefore discussed further in the next sections.

## **2.1 The transitivity system**

The transitivity system deals with the interpretation of the "world of experience" (physical or mental) in a manageable set of process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 170). The main argument of the transitivity system is that our most important conception of reality consists of "goings-on" of doing, happening, feeling, and being. According to Halliday (1994), these goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language and expressed through the grammar of the clause. In other words, the clause is seen as meaning potential and analysed for its potential to represent both the outer and the inner world of human beings. According to Angermuller et al. (2014), transitivity is the genesis of the classification of the various types of processes. Its major focuses are participants, processes and circumstances. The participant is usually the subject of the clause and can take on the role of the actor, say, carrier, agent or goal of the clause (Butt et al., 2000). The process, which is usually the verbal group (depending on the world of experience), can also be broken down into six parts of Material, Relational, Verbal, Mental, Behavioural and Existential (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), and then the circumstance refers to when, where, why, how, with whom and with what the clause process is used. The processes are the most important element in the clause, while the participants, although directly involved in the process, are either used to identify the experience or are themselves affected by the process. Among the processes, material, relational and mental processes are considered as primary, while verbal, behavioural and existential processes are considered as secondary. The three primary processes account for the majority of the process types in the analysis of transitivity. The present study mainly focuses on these three processes. We included the verbal process in our analysis because of the presence of a few significant instances. They are further discussed below.

### *2.1.1 Material processes*

Material processes are simply processes of doing or happening. They are used to describe an action or event. They can help answer the question of what happened. These processes involve physical actions (e.g., running and throwing) and have two inherent participant roles associated with them. The first is the Actor (Agent), i.e., the doer, and the second one is the Goal. The goal is that participant "at whom the process is directed, to whom the action is extended or performed (Eggins, 2004, p. 216). It is also possible, although in restricted cases, for two additional participants to be configured with either the Actor or the Goal. These are Beneficiary and Range. The Beneficiary is the participant to whom something has been given or to whom a service has been



provided. It is usually animate and plays a benefactive role in a nominal group. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) sub-classified the Beneficiary into Recipient (the participant to whom something is given) and Client (the participant to whom something is done). The Range is the participatory role that “indicates the domain over which the process takes place”. They are “less independent participants” and have meanings that are closely tied to the verb (Eggins, 2004, p. 218). The assumption is that every material process has an Actor, although the Actor may not be mentioned in the clause.

### *2.1.2 Relational processes*

Relational processes are processes of “being” and “becoming” in the world of abstract relations. In this process type, the abstract relationship that exists between two participants is considered. In this case, the influence of one participant over the other is not in the physical sense. It is, therefore, possible for a relationship to exist between two participants without any obvious suggestion. Relational processes can be divided into two types: Attributive and Identifying (Thompson, 2004). The attributive relational process expresses the kind of attributes a certain object has, while the identifying relational process expresses the identical properties of two entities. This process contains three subsets of relational processes based on the relationship between the referents. These relationships may be intensive, possessive or circumstantial. The intensive relational process refers to a relationship of equivalence or sameness; the circumstantial relational process refers to the location of a particular entity; and the possessive relational process relates to a possessive carrier (Halliday, 1994).

### *2.1.3 Mental processes*

Mental processes are internalised processes as opposed to the externalised processes of doing and speaking. They refer to our inner experience of the world—something that is going on in the inner world of the mind, our feelings, thoughts, our states of being and our reflection of the outer space. Mental processes always involve at least one human participant who has the mind in which the process occurs (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This participant is known as the Sensor. The entity which is felt, thought, or perceived by the sensor is known as the Phenomenon. These are the only two participants in the mental process. The Phenomenon can be further categorised into macrophenomenon and metaphenomenon. The Macrophenomenon shows that which is perceived as an act while metaphenomenon shows that which is perceived as a fact. The metaphenomenon is limited to the clause that expresses perception and is usually realised by a finite clause, while the macrophenomenon can occur across all types of mental processes.

### *2.1.4 Verbal processes*

Verbal processes are the intermediary processes between mental and relational processes, which encode the processes of saying something or symbolically exchanging meaning. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 171) describe the verbal process as “the symbolic relationship constructed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of like saying and meaning”. The verbal process provides information about “who said what to who”. A verbal process involves three participants: *Sayer*,

*Receiver* and *Verbiage*. Eggins (2004, p. 235) describes the Sayer as “anything capable of putting out a signal”. Thus, the Sayer is usually the human (and may also be an inanimate object) who (which) is usually the informant (Downing & Locke, 2006). The Receiver is the person to whom the information is directed, while the Verbiage is the content of the information.

## 2.2 The modal system

Modality is one of the important features in SFL that is used to express social distance in discourse. According to Halliday (1970, p. 349), modality is “the speaker’s assessment of probability and predictability. It is external to the content, being part of the attitude taken up by the speaker”. This means that the presence of modality markers in a statement does not add any additional meaning to it, but only shows the speaker’s perception of the statement. It also shows the speaker’s opinion and evaluation of the subject of discussion. Modality can be expressed with the use of auxiliary verbs, modal adjuncts and tense (Fowler et al., 1979; Halliday, 1985; Fawcett, 2008). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) state that modality gives speakers the opportunity to bring their point of view into the discourse. It enables them to express their thoughts, beliefs and views about the rights and wrongs of specific situations. Modality thus refers to the (extent of) validity of what is stated, questioned, commanded or suggested. Modality analysis is used in the present study to examine the social roles between the speaker (the president) and the audience (Nigerians).

Two main categories of modality are of importance in this study: modalisation (epistemic) and modulation (deontic) (Palmer, 2003). Modalisation is the degree of certainty or estimates of a probability to which the speaker says something, while modulation is used to show obligation, permission, ability, and willingness. Modality can be used to indicate both proposition and proposal. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), when the clause is used for exchanging information through statements and questions, it takes the form of proposition and the role of modality is to interpret the validity of the information as indicated through probability. In this case, modalisation is involved. On the contrary, if the clause is used for exchanging services through orders and offers, it is called proposal and the modality signals the degree of obligation and inclination. In this case, modulation is involved (Palmer, 2003, p. 7). The speech in this study will be analysed for both modulation and modalisation. The present study attempts to find out how the Modality patterns reveal Buhari’s presuppositions, opinions, views and evaluations of the issues he raised. Table 1 shows the degrees of modality.

Table 1. Degrees of modality

|          | Low                                        | Median                                        | High                                                                        |
|----------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive | can, may, could, might, (dare)             | will, would, should, is/was to                | must, ought to, need, has/had to                                            |
| Negative | needn’t, doesn’t/didn’t + need to, have to | won’t, wouldn’t, shouldn’t, (isn’t/wasn’t to) | mustn’t, oughtn’t to, can’t, couldn’t, (mayn’t, mightn’t, hasn’t/hadn’t to) |



This study is interested in examining the transitivity and modality choices in President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria. This is with the aim of exploring the ideology and power representation in the speech. Analysing the ideological, experiential and interpersonal meanings in the data will help the researchers examine the president's social distance, evaluation and opinion of the #EndSARS protests and the actors involved, as portrayed in the data.

Specifically, we will explore the following research questions:

- i. What are the lexico-grammatical resources signalling transitivity and modality in President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protests?
- ii. How do the transitivity and the modality choices reveal ideology and power representation in the speech?
- iii. What are the implications of the linguistic choices and structures in relation to protest discourse in Nigeria?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Materials

The data for this analysis comprises President Muhammadu Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protest. The researchers downloaded both the video and the transcripts of President Muhammadu Buhari's speech which was delivered on October 22, 2020. The video, which was downloaded from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzpgvXGuxyA>, and was used to represent the real situation of the speech while using the transcripts as the data. For the transcripts, we relied on the publications of two newspapers: *Vanguard* and *The Guardian* (see Appendix).

#### 3.2 Analysis procedure

As the first step, a comparison was made between the transcripts and the original video of the president's speech to ensure that the transcripts matched the spoken text. Taking into account the individual clauses that signalled the linguistic resources (i.e., transitivity and modality patterns) under study, the speech was segmented into clause units. In this connection, the transitivity process types were identified by isolating the process types and categorising them into four groups (material, relational, mental and verbal processes) as explained in the theoretical section. The clauses were also analysed for modality as they form part of interpersonal meaning. The frequencies and percentages of transitivity patterns and modality choices were calculated individually, as illustrated below:

$$N: \frac{\text{Each number of transitivity types (e.g., material process)} \times 100\%}{\text{Total number of transitivity types}}$$

The frequency was based on every single instance of the items. For example, five labels of "MATERIAL PROCESS" are identified in Excerpt 1; the excerpt thus counts as containing five occurrences of the material process. The results of how the two linguistic choices explain the representation of power, ideology and dominance in the speech were interpreted and discussed.

## 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Transitivity analysis

Table 2 shows the frequency of the four process types present in the speech. The total number of the process types in the speech is 53. The most frequent process type is the material process 56.6% followed by the verbal process 22.6%, the relational process 9.43%, and then the mental process 7.8%. The process types are discussed in descending order of frequency.

Table 2. Frequency of the process types

| Process type | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Material     | 30        | 56.6       |
| Verbal       | 12        | 22.6       |
| Mental       | 6         | 7.8        |
| Relational   | 5         | 9.43       |
| Total        | 53        | 100        |

#### 4.1.1 Material processes

Below are instances of the material process used in the speech. The expressions in bold indicate the various components of the clause that are relevant for the identification of the process type. The functional names assigned to the various components are enclosed in square brackets.

As will be seen in the following excerpts, the use of human actors *I* and *We* is predominant in the speech, which is ideologically motivated. The significance of this is that, President Buhari consciously uses them to represent himself and his cabinet as the people in power. In other words, they are the chief actors in the decision-making and action-taking process in the country, and therefore deserve to be listened to. He also identifies himself and his administration as the major actors behind some developmental projects carried out in the country, especially those targeted at solving the issues that caused the #EndSARS protests in the first instance. The predominance of *I* and *We* in the speech also signifies President Buhari's attempts to exonerate himself and his administration of the negative pictures that have already been painted of them in society as far as the #EndSARS protests is concerned. His repeated use of *We* also indicates his attempts to show the ideology of inclusiveness (Halliday, 1994; Thompson, 2004), i.e., to show that he carries his team along in the developmental plans and projects that they have in store for the good of the Nigerian populace. The material processes used with the two pronouns *I* and *We* are discussed below.

#### Excerpt 1

As a democratic government {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}, we {ACTOR} **listened to** {MATERIAL PROCESS}, and carefully {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **evaluated** {MATERIAL PROCESS} the five-point demands of the protesters {GOAL}. And, **having accepted** {MATERIAL PROCESS} them {GOAL}, we {ACTOR} immediately {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **scrapped**

{MATERIAL PROCESS} SARS {GOAL}, and **put** {MATERIAL PROCESS} measures {GOAL} in place to address the other demands of our youth {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}.

### Excerpt 2

No Nigerian Government {ACTOR} in the past {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **has** methodically and seriously {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **approached** {MATERIAL PROCESS} poverty-alleviation {GOAL} like we **have done**. With regard to the welfare of police personnel {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}, the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission {GOAL} **has been directed** {MATERIAL PROCESS} to expedite action on the finalization of the new salary structure of members of the Nigeria Police Force {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}. The emoluments of the other paramilitary services {GOAL} **are also being reviewed** {MATERIAL PROCESS} upwards in order to underscore the importance of education in preparing youths for the future, this administration {ACTOR} **has come up** {MATERIAL PROCESS} with a new salary structure and other incentives for our teachers {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}... We {ACTOR} **will continue to improve** {MATERIAL PROCESS} good governance and our democratic process {GOAL}, including through sustained engagement. We {ACTOR} **shall continue to ensure** {MATERIAL PROCESS} that liberty and freedom, as well as the fundamental rights of all citizens are protected {GOAL}.

The material processes are used by the president to foreground and background certain key actors in the #EndSARS protests in a bid to positively represent his administration's approach to the curbing of police brutality in Nigeria. The verbal options "listened to", "evaluated", "accepted", "scrapped", "put", "approached", "has being directed", "are being reviewed", "has come up", "will continue to improve", and "shall continue to ensure" are employed to highlight the systematic steps taken by the government to forestall the #EndSARS protest. In Excerpt 1, the material processes are used to project the president's order of the disbandment of SARS as the first solution to reforming the Nigeria Police Force. Thus, the material processes predominantly position the president as one who has listening ears and knows what to do at the right time. The verbal options are used to metaphorise the perceived sensitivity of the government to the demands of the youths. As opposed to the perceived impression of the general public that the government is insensitive to the plights of the youths, the material processes are used to present the president as foresighted, proactive and caring. In Excerpt 2, the president employs the material process to present the past administrations as lax while presenting the current administration as proactive to the security and welfare of its citizens. The material process is thus used to ascribe a positive identity to the Buhari-led administration and a negative face to the previous administration in light of the police brutality that happens in Nigeria.

### Excerpt 3

The choice to demonstrate peacefully is a fundamental right of citizens as enshrined in Section 40 of our constitution and other enactments; but this right to protest {ACTOR} also **imposes** {MATERIAL PROCESS} on the demonstrators {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} the responsibility to respect the rights of other citizens, and the necessity to operate within the law {GOAL}.

### Excerpt 4

The result of this is clear to all observers: human lives {GOAL} **have been lost** {MATERIAL

PROCESS}; acts of sexual violence {GOAL} **have been reported** {MATERIAL PROCESS}; two major correctional facilities {GOAL} **were attacked** {MATERIAL PROCESS} and convicts {GOAL} **freed** {MATERIAL PROCESS}; public and private properties {GOAL} completely **destroyed or vandalized** {MATERIAL PROCESS}; the sanctity of the Palace of a Peace Maker, the Oba of Lagos {GOAL} **has been violated** {MATERIAL PROCESS}.

#### Excerpt 5

All these {GOAL} **executed** {MATERIAL PROCESS} in the name of the EndSARS protests. Certainly, {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} there is no way whatsoever {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} to **connect** {MATERIAL PROCESS} these bad acts {GOAL} to legitimate expression of grievance of the youth of our country.

#### Excerpt 6

For you to do otherwise will amount to undermining national security and the law and order situation. Under no circumstances will this {GOAL} **be tolerated** {MATERIAL PROCESS}.

#### Excerpt 7

I therefore call on our youths to discontinue the street protests and constructively engage government in finding solutions. Your voice has been heard loud and clear and we {ACTOR} **are responding** {MATERIAL PROCESS}.

#### Excerpt 8

Let me {ACTOR} **pay** {MATERIAL PROCESS} tribute {PHENOMENON} to officers of the Nigeria Police Force who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty {BENEFICIARY}. This government **respects** {MATERIAL PROCESS} and **will continue to respect** {MATERIAL PROCESS} all the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people {BENEFICIARY}, but it {ACTOR} **will not allow** {MATERIAL} anybody or groups {PHENOMENON} to disrupt the peace of our nation.

In Excerpt 3, the president employs the material process to projects his authority over the citizens. The verbal option “imposes” is slanted to limit the extent of freedom that protesters have in airing their demands to the government. The choice of the nominal phrase “the rights of citizens” is used to incite other Nigerians to kick against the lingering street protests. Excerpt 4 expresses the violent acts of #EndSARS protesters in different parts of the country. The protesters were made to assume the roles of “agents of destruction”. The president foregrounds the *affecteds* of the protest to push its claims that the street protests has only yielded irrevocable damages across several parts of the country. The linguistic structures express the negative disposition of the president to the activities of the protesters. Ideologically, the president uses the material process to condemn the activities of the protesters and characterise their demonstrations as only yielding mass destruction. In Excerpts 5 to 8, the president also reiterates the havoc that the lingered protests has caused the nation, and other reasons why such acts “will not be tolerated” any more. He emphasises the government’s intention to always “respect” the rights of the citizens, only that everybody is expected to be subject to the laws and dictates of the government. This is a subtle way to correct the impression of those who have always believed that the

Buhari-led administration has no respect for the rights of the citizens.

Overall, through the use of the material process, Buhari represents himself as an active leader, as a person who believes in his values, and is proud of the things he and his administration have achieved, and that they will continue in that direction. He identifies himself as a leader with the support of his team and will not accept any blame for the disaster that has befallen the nation, or see the mishap as a result of his (in)decisions or (in)actions. He thus uses the material process to restore the confidence of the people in his leadership, to douse the flame of negativity that was already in the air, and to regain the trust of the people by recapitulating on his administration's economic and political plans for the nation, what they are doing and what other projects they plan to do for the nation.

#### 4.1.2 Verbal process

The analysis reveals that there are 12 instances of the use of the verbal process in the speech and they are all used to perform ideological functions, particularly to frame the social actors and their actions. According to Entmann (1993, p. 52), "framing is [used] to select aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and or treatment recommendation for the problem described". Framing is a discursive strategy that involves constructing issues in certain ways in order for the audience to see these issues in a particular light. The 12 instances are found in Excerpts 9 to 11.

#### Excerpt 9

I {SAYER} must **warn** {VERBAL PROCESS} those who have hijacked and misdirected the initial, genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths in parts of the country, against excesses of some members of the now disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) {RECEIVER}.

The president's use of the verbal process "warn" in Excerpt 9 suggests his negative impression of those who are currently involved in the #EndSARS protests. The lexemes "hijacked" and "misdirected" give credence to the president's view of these people as ill-meaning Nigerians. Thus, this group of people are framed as selfish, opportunistic and criminal-minded crooks, who have used the avenue of the protest to enrich themselves and cause mayhem in several parts of the country. Subtly, the president's choice of the nominal phrase "the initial, genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths" suggests an accession with the plights of those who started the protests. Although the verbiage (the exact message) is not explicitly stated in the excerpt, the verbal process "must **warn**" issues a cautionary statement to protesters to immediately desist from the protests or face unverballed consequences. Fairclough (2003) asserts that what is unuttered in a text is also clear and comprehensible as that which is overtly articulated. The president's silence on the verbiage could be considered an important strategy loaded with grave consequences for those who refuse to halt the protests.

#### Excerpt 10

On approving the termination of SARS {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}, I {SAYER} already

{CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **made it clear** {VERBAL PROCESS} that it was in line with our commitment to the implementation of extensive Police reforms {VERBIAGE}.

### Excerpt 11

Let me {SAYER} at this point {CIRCUMSTANTIAL} **reaffirm** {VERBAL PROCESS} the Federal Government's commitment to preserving the unity of the country {VERBIAGE}.

Excerpts 10 and 11 above both have Sayers and Verbiages but no overt Receivers. Although the verbal choices in Excerpt 10 suggests the president's intention to correct the public impression that the government is not interested in police reforms, the nuances of unacceptability towards the #EndSARS protest is reflected in the president's linguistic choices. The president deploys these verbal processes to label the #EndSARS protests (which eventually did not end well) as unnecessary, divisive and inimical to the progress and stability of the country. In Excerpt 11, the assertive tone reflected in the imperative sentence signals the asymmetrical representation of power and suggests that the opinions of the members of the public on protests being instrumental in pushing their demands for Police reforms and justice for victims of police brutality is not as important as the speaker's opinion of it.

### Excerpt 12

I {SAYER} would like to **appeal** {VERBAL PROCESS} to protesters {RECEIVER} to note and take advantage of the various well-thought-out initiatives of this administration designed to make their lives better and more meaningful, and resist the temptation of being used by some subversive elements to cause chaos with the aim of truncating our nascent democracy {VERBIAGE}.

### Excerpt 13

I {SAYER} therefore **call on** {VERBAL PROCESS} our youths {RECEIVER} to discontinue the street protests and constructively engage government in finding solutions {VERBIAGE}. And I {SAYER} **call on** {VERBAL PROCESS} all Nigerians {RECEIVER} to go about their normal businesses, and **enjoin** {VERBAL PROCESS} security agencies {RECEIVER} to protect lives and properties of all law-abiding citizens without doing harm to those they are meant to protect {VERBIAGE}.

Excerpts 12 and 13 show the different language weapons available in the communication arsenal of the president. In the excerpts, the president switches from authoritative verbal processes to less authoritative and more cajoling ones. In Excerpt 12, the president uses the verbal process "appeal" to appease the protesters to desist from destructive adventures, but instead should capitalise on the available opportunities already provided by his administration for their benefits. He continues in this direction in Excerpt 13, where he uses the verb process "call on" a number of times. He channels the verbiage, to the "the youths" and "all Nigerians" (both of who are the receivers) to stop the protests, and resume their normal life. Although he speaks as the major actor, one who has authority to influence the public, he tries some diplomacy, which is likely to make the people more willing to yield to his cautionary advice.



#### Excerpt 14

I {SAYER} would like to **thank** {VERBAL PROCESS} those state Governors, traditional and religious leaders {RECEIVER} who have **appealed** for calm and restraint. I also **thank** youth leaders who have restrained their followers from taking the law into their hands. We {SAYER} **thank** you and **urge** {VERBAL PROCESS} you all {RECEIVER} to seek to know all the facts available before taking a position or rushing to judgment and making hasty pronouncements {VERBIAGE}.

The verbal process also serves other purposes in the speech: to thank, express appreciation and make recommendations and instructions. In Excerpt 14, Buhari uses the verbal processes “thank” and “urge” to round off his speech. Recipients include religious leaders and political leaders. These are people of great influence in the country. His appeal and appreciation to them is an indirect and subtle way of influencing the public, as these is the group of people that the people often listen to and they have many followers who obey their wishes and command.

#### 4.1.3 Mental processes

Our analysis reveals the presence of six cognitive verbs in the speech: “acknowledge”, “misconstrued”, “evaluated”, “listen”, “heard”, and “remember”. They are discussed below.

#### Excerpt 15

On Monday 12th October {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}, I {SENDER} **acknowledged** {MENTAL PROCESS} the genuine concerns and agitations of members of the public regarding the excessive use of force by some members of SARS {PHENOMENON}.

#### Excerpt 16

Sadly {CIRCUMSTANTIAL}, the promptness with which we have acted {PHENOMENON} **seemed to have been misconstrued** {MENTAL PROCESS} as a sign of weakness {PHENOMENON}...

#### Excerpt 17

As a democratic government, we {SENSOR} listened to, and carefully **evaluated** {MENTAL PROCESS} the five-point demands of the protesters {PHENOMENON}.

#### Excerpt 18

I therefore call on our youths to discontinue the street protests and constructively engage government in finding solutions. Your voice {PHENOMENON} has been **heard** {MENTAL PROCESS} loud and clear.

#### Excerpt 19

But remember {MENTAL PROCESS} that government also has the obligation to protect lives and properties, as well as the right of citizens to go about their daily businesses freely and protected from acts of violence {PHENOMENON}.

In Excerpt 15, the choice of the mental process “acknowledged” is suggestive of the fact that the #EndSARS protest was pointless and could have been stalled if

Nigerians had paid close attention to the Nigerian government's position on the issue. The mental process has a hegemonic implication that blames the breakdown of law and order resulting from the protests on the lack of attention of Nigerians to the details of the president's position on and the attempt of his administration to curb the indiscipline among some members of the SARS in an earlier address. The mental process is used to present the president as being sensitive and proactive on the matter, as well as to correct the impression of an insensitive government towards the security of lives and properties of its citizens. The president may have used the mental process to validate the disbandment of SARS (which seemed unsatisfactory to the youths) as the first step to be taken in seeking reforms in the NPF thus positions the youths as narrow-minded and oblivious of the consequences of their actions in the future.

In Excerpt 16, the president adopts a passivised verbal group "seemed to have been misconstrued" to situate his views on the #EndSARS protests. The foregrounding of the Phenomenon (the promptness with which we have acted) and backgrounding or deletion of the Senser is a major strategy of authenticating the disbandment of SARS as the first major step to carrying out a reform in the Nigeria Police Force. The ellipted Senser could recoverably be discerned to be all the #EndSARS protests supporters and sponsors (within and outside the country) who may have perceived President Buhari's administration as apathetic to the yearnings of Nigerians on police brutality and misconducts in Nigeria. The nominal phrase "promptness" situates the president's intention to correct the seemingly erroneous impression of the government's laxity on the issue at hand.

Likewise, in Excerpts 17 and 18, the president reiterates the attempts he and his administration have made to take into account the demands of the #EndSARS protesters. The mental process "evaluated" is used by the president to indicate that the yearnings of the protesters have been heard. He, therefore, sees no reason why the protests should persist. And then in Excerpt 19, he affirms the obligation of the government to protect lives and properties, reassures the people to calm their nerves and get back to work, and indirectly warns the defaulters to desist from disturbing the peace and security of the nation with their protest.

#### *4.1.4 Relational processes*

The relational processes used in the speech are mostly used to achieve the purpose of (de)legitimation. (De)legitimation is the process of authorising or countering a standpoint in such a way that the audience is influenced to accept or refute such a standpoint as the case may be (van Leeuwen, 2008; Ademilokun, 2019). The relational process is suitable for explaining the complex relationships between specific abstract items because it sounds definite. As a result, the process is used for a large proportion in the speech to elaborate the relationship between the conventional public perception and the speaker's beliefs. Such elaboration can facilitate the president's attempt of making his argument naturally accepted by the audience. As the analysis will show, Buhari evenly distributes attributive and identification processes in his speech. While he uses the identifying processes to provide definitions and explanations of the power he wields, his position regarding the protest, and his further plans and intentions, he presents himself as the major social actor in the best position to assign attributes to the participants involved, tactically choosing identifications of positive values to create

good impression of himself to the citizens, but terrifying images of the havoc that the protest and their sponsors can cause.

#### **Excerpt 20**

The choice to demonstrate peacefully {IDENTIFIED} **is** {RELATIONAL PROCESS} a fundamental right of citizens {IDENTIFIER} as enshrined in Section 40 of our constitution and other enactments...

#### **Excerpt 21**

The spreading of deliberate falsehood and misinformation through the social media in particular, that this government is oblivious to the pains and plights of its citizens {IDENTIFIED} **is** {RELATIONAL PROCESS} a ploy to mislead the unwary within and outside Nigeria into unfair judgement and disruptive behavior {IDENTIFIER}.

#### **Excerpt 22**

In the circumstances, I would like to appeal to protesters to note and take advantage of the various well-thought-out initiatives of this administration designed to make their lives better and more meaningful, and resist the temptation of being used by some subversive elements to cause chaos with the aim of truncating our nascent democracy. For you to do otherwise {IDENTIFIED} will **amount to** {RELATIONAL PROCESS} undermining national security and the law and order situation {IDENTIFIED}. Under no circumstances will this be tolerated.

Excerpts 20 and 22 above contain instances of Identifying relational clauses while Excerpts 23 and 24 below contain instances of Attributive relational clause. In Excerpt 20, the president adopts the copular verb “is” to legitimise peaceful protest as a weapon that is recognised by the Nigerian constitution to push the plights of Nigerians on any issue. The choice of the Identifying relational clauses suggests that the president considers protests unantagonistic to the peace and development of the nation. In Excerpt 21, the president equates the spreading of information about Buhari’s perceived insensitivity to its citizen’s welfare to a malicious plan of an opposition group. The lexemes “deliberate falsehood”, “misinformation”, “ploy”, “mislead”, “unwary” are deployed by the president to delegitimise such acts by making Nigerians (home and abroad) see that shunning provocative or inciting information is in the interest of the nation’s unity, peace and progress. The president believes that the social media was instrumental in fueling the #EndSARS protests; the identifying relational process is thus used to both subvert future occurrences and delegitimise the ongoing ones in the most persuasive way. In Excerpt 22, the president’s use of the relational process “will amount” reveals his dispositions to the ongoing #EndSARS protests, and unequivocally states a strong prediction that a continued demonstration will produce no positive result but the destabilisation of national peace and security. The choice of the relational process decries the protests and labels further demonstration as inimical to the interest of the nation. The president adopts the process option to both delegitimise the continuation of the #EndSARS protests and issues a subtle command for such acts to stop with immediate effects.

### Excerpt 23

The result of this {CARRIER} **is** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} clear {ATTRIBUTE} to all observers: human lives have been lost; acts of sexual violence have been reported; two major correctional facilities were attacked and convicts freed; public and private properties completely destroyed or vandalized; the sanctity of the Palace of a Peace Maker, the Oba of Lagos has been violated... All these executed in the name of the EndSARS protests. I {CARRIER} **am** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} indeed deeply pained {ATTRIBUTE} that innocent lives {CARRIER} **have been** lost {ATTRIBUTE}. These tragedies {CARRIER} **are** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} uncalled for and unnecessary {ATTRIBUTE}.

### Excerpt 24

On approving the termination of SARS, I already made it clear that it {IDENTIFIED} **was** {ATTRIBUTIVE PROCESS} in line with our commitment to the implementation of extensive Police reforms {ATTRIBUTE}.

In Excerpt 23, the attributive relational processes are used to garner the sympathy of the audience and reiterate the need to put a stop to the protests as it has only birthed violence. And then in Excerpt 24, he makes it clear that the grievance of the protesters towards police reforms is among the plans and commitments of his administration, and suggests that his administration is working on it; and therefore, there is no reason for the protest to linger anymore. The attributive processes are used to only present proofs of the negative effects of the protests in a bid to delegitimise its continuity.

## 4.2 Modality system

The presidential speech on the #EndSARS protests features a few instances of modal verbs. As indicated in Table 3, the high politeness modal verbs are the most frequently used, followed by the median politeness modal verbs. Low politeness modal verbs do not occur at all. Of the eight instances of modal verbs, the epistemic modal verb “will” occurs five times to express a high degree of commitment or conviction to a propositional content. Below, we present examples of the use of modal verbs in the speech. The frequency of occurrences of the modal verbs is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of modal verbs

|           | Low politeness |   | Median politeness |    | High politeness |    |
|-----------|----------------|---|-------------------|----|-----------------|----|
| Total No. | Freq.          | % | Freq.             | %  | Freq.           | %  |
| 8         | 0              | 0 | 7                 | 88 | 1               | 12 |

### Excerpt 25

Let me at this point reaffirm the Federal Government's commitment to preserving the unity of this country. We **will** continue to improve good governance and our democratic process, including through sustained engagement. We **shall** continue to ensure that liberty and freedom, as well as the fundamental rights of all citizens are protected.

### Excerpt 26

I **would** like to thank those state Governors, traditional and religious leaders who have

appealed for calm and restraint. I also thank youth leaders who have restrained their followers from taking the law into their hands. This government respects and **will** continue to respect all the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people, but it **will** not allow anybody or groups to disrupt the peace of our nation.

### Excerpt 27

In the circumstances, I would like to appeal to protesters to note and take advantage of the various well-thought-out initiatives of this administration designed to make their lives better and more meaningful, and resist the temptation of being used by some subversive elements to cause chaos with the aim of truncating our nascent democracy. For you to do otherwise will amount to undermining national security and the law and order situation. Under no circumstances will this be tolerated.

The excerpts above show how epistemic modals are used by the president to gauge his commitment to the truth of the propositions in his utterances about the #EndSARS protests. The modal “will” is the most dominant epistemic modal in the discourse. In Excerpts 25, 26 and 27, the modal “will” is used by the president to show a high sense of commitment to the responsibilities expected of the government by its citizens as a way of cooling off the effect of the ongoing protests and preventing future/impending protests. The collocates “continue” of the modal “will” in the excerpts gives an impression that the nominal phrases “good governance”, “democratic process”, “sustained engagement”, “liberty and freedom”, and the protection of “fundamental rights” have always been on the front burner of the Buhari-led administration. Ideologically, the modal is deployed to correct the impression of a scare-free government. The president in Excerpt 26 adopts the moderate modal “would” to express appreciation and ultimately appeal to key stakeholders to help put an end to the ongoing #EndSARS protests in various parts of the country. Rather than being assertive all through, the president recognises the need to request that the protests be stopped in a persuasive way.

### Excerpt 28

I **must** warn those who have hijacked and misdirected the initial, genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths in parts of the country, against the excesses of some members of the now disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

In the entire discourse, there is only one instance of the use of the deontic modality to influence the thoughts of the audience by presenting the need to address the nation and ban the street protests as expediently required. In Excerpt 28, the modal option “must” expresses power as it issues a strong warning to the street protesters to restrain from their demonstrations. There is the use of “must” by the president to get the attention of all Nigerians against the protesters, who are represented as hijackers and opportunists. Having presented the resultant effect of the protests staged few days before, and the emergency meeting that has stemmed from the negative turn of the #EndSARS protests on the peace and security in the country, the president attempts not only to instruct but also to compel the audience, i.e., youths, to halt the protests or face grave consequences. The collocate of the modal “must” in the excerpt “warn” also conveys an air of authority to the modal

as it is a metaphorical verbal expression which is meant to immediately disengage the protesting crowds in the different parts of the country.

## 5. Conclusion

The study has attempted to uncover the transitivity and modality patterns in President Buhari's speech on the #EndSARS protest, and to investigate how power and ideology are enacted in the speech. Our analysis shows that speech makers not only use language to shape ideology and power in society, but also to sustain and maintain ideology and power (Fairclough, 2001). This is evident in President Buhari's choice of words and expressions to uphold the positive ideology that people had for him and his administration before the #EndSARS protests.

The analysis shows that the president uses the material process more than any other process types in the address, followed by the verbal process. In contrast to the studies by Wang (2010) and Adjei and Ewusi-Mensah (2016), in which the verbal process was ranked third, the verbal process ranks second in our study. While the use of the material process implies that the president mostly focuses on the current events such as violence and destruction in Nigeria, the verbal process is used in the speech to perform ideological functions, particularly to frame the social actors and their actions (Entmann, 1993). This is followed by the relational process. The relational process is used mainly to create a very positive image of the president and his administration, and also to create in the minds of the people the negative outcome of continuing the protest. Also, the president uses the mental process to incite mental reactions such as perception, thoughts and feelings, from the audience. This process also gives insight into the president's consciousness and how he interprets events around him. The modality analysis shows that "will" is the most used modal in the president's speech. It shows that the issues and topics discussed in the speech are significant and urgent. They need immediate attention from the audience.

The study confirms that the choice of linguistic forms in any discourse is consciously motivated (Halliday, 1971; Simpson, 2004) and affirms that the transitivity system can be used by speech makers to express their experience (Bloor & Bloor, 1995; Halliday, 1985). The study has revealed that language structures can produce certain meanings and ideologies which are not always explicit to the audience. This means that transitivity and modality systems have proven very useful in revealing the participants involved, how the president positions himself in relation to the others, and whether other actors take an active or passive role in the discourse. Furthermore, the study shows that language can be used to create consent, and in that case language becomes hegemonic. This is because most of the actions and what the actions bring about are abstractions and may not sufficiently represent what exists in the real world. They are mostly unrealised ideas in the imaginations of the president and the people.

Based on these observations, the paper ends with the following conclusions. Transitivity patterns and modality structures can be used to highlight social actors who on the surface appear common and natural, when they essentially perpetuate inequality and injustice, as can be seen in the analysis of the recurrent process types and modality choices in the president's speech. These perceptions can have hidden



meanings unless the listeners are able to extract them through CDA. If not deciphered, they can influence the audience to accept the prevailing view as an unchallenged truth. Also, the president's speech turns out to be a self-preservation attempt, whose textual focus on the self-referentials "I" and "we" enables an ego-centric representation of his power and influence during the period of chaotic protests. Buhari's speech seems to focus more on the subjective self-presentation of his administration than on the objective portrayal of the protests and the protesters.

Finally, it is recommended that future research apply the same combined (SFL and CDA) approach to other political speeches made by President Buhari before and after the #EndSARS protests, especially his first speech in response to the #EndSARS protest on October 12, 2020, and the New Year speech for 2021, with the purpose of identifying the potential differences in how he conveys his message to the same Nigerian audience. It may also be of interest for other studies to focus on the narratives in the Nigerian newspapers on the #EndSARS protest. This will ensure a balanced examination of the topic of #EndSARS protests in Nigeria.

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**Appendix:** Transcript of President Buhari's speech on #EndSARS delivered on October 22, 2020

Fellow Nigerians,

1. It has become necessary for me to address you having heard from many concerned Nigerians and having concluded a meeting with all the Security Chiefs.
2. I must warn those who have hijacked and misdirected the initial, genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths in parts of the country, against the excesses of some members of the now-disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).
3. On Monday 12th October, I acknowledged the genuine concerns and agitations of members of the public regarding the excessive use of force by some members of SARS.
4. The choice to demonstrate peacefully is a fundamental right of citizens as enshrined in Section 40 of our Constitution and other enactments; but this right to protest also imposes on the demonstrators the responsibility to respect the rights of other citizens, and the necessity to operate within the law.
5. As a democratic government, we listened to, and carefully evaluated the five-point demands of the protesters. And, having accepted them, we immediately scrapped SARS, and put measures in place to address the other demands of our youth.
6. On approving the termination of SARS, I already made it clear that it was in line with our commitment to the implementation of extensive Police reforms.
7. Sadly, the promptness with which we have acted seemed to have been misconstrued as a sign of weakness and twisted by some for their selfish unpatriotic interests.
8. The result of this is clear to all observers: human lives have been lost; acts of sexual violence have been reported; two major correctional facilities were attacked and convicts freed; public and private properties completely destroyed or vandalised; the sanctity of the Palace of a Peace Maker, the Oba of Lagos has been violated. So-called protesters have invaded an International Airport and in the process disrupted the travel plans of fellow Nigerians and our visitors.
9. All these executed in the name of the EndSARS protests. I am indeed deeply pained that innocent lives have been lost. These tragedies are uncalled for and unnecessary. Certainly, there is no way whatsoever to connect these bad acts to legitimate expression of grievance of the youth of our country.
10. The spreading of deliberate falsehood and misinformation through the social media in particular, that this government is oblivious to the pains and plight of its citizens is a ploy to mislead the unwary within and outside Nigeria into unfair judgement and disruptive behaviour.
11. On the contrary, both our deeds and words have shown how committed this administration has been to the wellbeing and welfare of citizens, even with the steadily dwindling revenues, and the added responsibilities and restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
12. Government has put in place measures and initiatives principally targeted at youths, women and the most vulnerable groups in our society. These included our broad plan to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in the next 10 years; the creation of N75 billion National Youth Investment Fund to provide opportunities for the youths and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Survival Fund, through which government is:
  - a. paying three months salaries of the staff of 100,000 micro, small—and medium—enterprises,
  - b. paying for the registration of 250,000 businesses at the Corporate Affairs Commission,
  - c. giving a grant of N30,000 to 100,000 artisans; and
  - d. guaranteeing market for the products of traders.
13. These are in addition to many other initiatives such as;

- a. Farmermoni,
- b. Tradermoni,
- c. Marketmoni,
- d. N-Power,
- e. N-Tech and
- f. N-Agro.

14. No Nigerian Government in the past has methodically and seriously approached poverty-alleviation like we have done.

15. With regard to the welfare of police personnel, the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission has been directed to expedite action on the finalization of the new salary structure of members of the Nigeria Police Force. The emoluments of other paramilitary services are also being reviewed upwards.

16. In order to underscore the importance of education in preparing youths for the future, this administration has come up with a new salary structure and other incentives for our teachers.

17. Let me at this point reaffirm the Federal Government's commitment to preserving the unity of this country.

18. We will continue to improve good governance and our democratic process, including through sustained engagement.

19. We shall continue to ensure that liberty and freedom, as well as the fundamental rights of all citizens are protected.

20. But remember that government also has the obligation to protect lives and properties, as well as the right of citizens to go about their daily businesses freely and protected from acts of violence.

21. To our neighbours in particular, and members of the international community, many of whom have expressed concern about the ongoing development in Nigeria, we thank you and urge you all to seek to know all the facts available before taking a position or rushing to judgment and making hasty pronouncements.

22. In the circumstances, I would like to appeal to protesters to note and take advantage of the various well-thought-out initiatives of this administration designed to make their lives better and more meaningful, and resist the temptation of being used by some subversive elements to cause chaos with the aim of truncating our nascent democracy.

23. For you to do otherwise will amount to undermining national security and the law and order situation. Under no circumstances will this be tolerated.

24. I therefore call on our youths to discontinue the street protests and constructively engage government in finding solutions. Your voice has been heard loud and clear and we are responding.

25. And I call on all Nigerians to go about their normal businesses, and enjoin security agencies to protect lives and properties of all law-abiding citizens without doing harm to those they are meant to protect. Let me pay tribute to officers of the Nigeria Police Force who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty.

26. I would like to thank those state Governors, traditional and religious leaders who have appealed for calm and restraint. I also thank youth leaders who have restrained their followers from taking the law into their hands.

27. This government respects and will continue to respect all the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people, but it will not allow anybody or groups to disrupt the peace of our nation.

Thank you all. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.