

## Exploring 2020 #ENDSARS Protests' Components in Nigeria within the Schematics of Social Semiotics

### *Explorando os componentes dos protestos #ENDSARS de 2020 na Nigéria dentro dos esquemas da semiótica social*

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**Abstract:** This study examined the semiotic resources of the October 2020 #ENDSARS protests in Nigeria, manifesting the affordances operational in the protests. The investigation beckoned on 13 different communicative semiotic configurations, employing Halliday's grammatical group rank, to delineate the structures. This paved the way for tables and graphs to account for the written modes' recurrent components. Kinesics such as proxemics, gestures, and gaze supported the analysis, providing relevant semantic implications to non-verbal elements and body language of protesters. This investigation indicated that #ENDSARS hashtag, functioned in variegated forms, as the initiator of the protest, socializing people even without notable leaders. The texts illustrated the suffering of the people from SARS operatives' gun-punch coercion, as exemplified in a boy-like image's head, and the cry of agony illuminated through a gestural movement of mouths and hands. Parallel to that is the metaphorical castigation of an innocent young man, manifested through chained hands. Significantly, the research revealed the collective unanimity of the protesters, demonstrated through clenched fists, epitomizing camaraderie of purpose. The protesters made their call to abrogate SARS operations pleurably-funny in the appearance of a clown and a sacrificial lamb. Given that the idea of social justice is non-negotiable. Demanding a just course should not lead to brutality; the government should rather respond to the request of protesters to fulfill promises made during electioneering campaigns.

**Keywords:** #ENDSARS; below the clause; kinesics; social justice; social semiotics.

**Resumo:** Este estudo examinou os recursos semióticos dos protestos #ENDSARS de outubro de 2020 na Nigéria, manifestando as affordances operacionais nos protestos gráficos para explicar as escolhas componentes recorrentes dos modos escritos. Dispositivos cinéticos como proxêmica, gestos e olhar apoiaram a análise, fornecendo implicações semânticas relevantes para elementos não verbais e linguagem corporal dos manifestantes. Essa exploração indicou que a hashtag #ENDSARS ocorria de formas variadas, funcionando como iniciadora do protesto, socializando as pessoas para agirem em uníssono mesmo sem líderes notáveis. Os textos ilustravam o sofrimento das pessoas pela coerção dos agentes da SARS, usando o cano e a furadeira, exemplificado na cabeça de uma imagem de menino, e o grito de agonia iluminado por um movimento gestual de bocas e mãos. Paralelo a isso está o castigo metafórico de um jovem inocente, manifestado por meio de mãos acorrentadas. Significativamente, a pesquisa revelou a unidade coletiva dos manifestantes, demonstrada através dos punhos cerrados, simbolizando a solidariedade de propósito. Os manifestantes fizeram seu apelo para revogar as operações da SARS de forma prazerosa - engraçada na aparência de um palhaço e um cordeiro sacrificado. Diante disso, pode-se sugerir que a ideia de justiça social não é negociável. Exigir um curso justo não deve levar à brutalidade; o governo deveria antes atender ao pedido dos manifestantes, como forma de cumprir as promessas feitas durante as campanhas eleitorais.

**Palavras-chave:** #ENDSARS; abaixo da cláusula; cinésica; justiça social; semiótica social.

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## 1 Introduction

Every human being yearns to live a good but comfortable life. That need stimulates the individual to channel efforts towards some avenues that could yield equitable upshots. Besides, as an individual needs a helping hand to achieve successes, satisfying personal necessities, parents and guardians are in a better position to render the obligatory assistance (Prilleltensky; Nelson, 2002; Conyne, 2004). Neighbors could also provide some succor in this regard. However, parents, guardians, and neighbors might not have the resources to cater for the individual when the elements of social machinery are not in a proper shape (Kenny; Hage, 2009).

It is at this juncture perhaps that the government becomes an arbiter, a reference point. That means, the government must organize devices of social systems in place for everyone to subsist and thrive. Indirectly, the government is in the right position to create a conducive environment for citizens' survival. That responsibility reminds one that the sole obligation of the government is to cater for the people (Sue, 2001), who also pay taxes in one way or another to the government. The equitably distribution of commonwealth, from taxes, natural resources, and other sources, is what one could term, social justice. In other words, social justice points to fairness (Van den Bos, 2003) of human and resources management-cum-distribution in terms of equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal treatment (Kenny; Hage, 2009). The deficiency of the aforementioned social parameters provokes people to demand social justice.

Such a need of social justice facilitated the concept of #ENDSARS in Nigeria in October, 2020. The hashtag, #ENDSARS, is a call to put an END to SARS operations in Nigeria. The youths demonstrated the clarion call in the vanguard of social media (the voice of everyone in this digital age), variegated prints, and videos (Lindgren, 2017). SARS means Special Anti-Robbery Squad. One might stress that a demand for social justice could stem from various ways such as protests (violence or peaceful demonstrations), fights of a great magnitude, wars, communiqués, press briefings, editorials, entertainments, revolutions, books, and other publications. Nonetheless, Nigerian #ENDSARS began as a peaceful protest before aggravated into a violent form. The basic demand, as the protesters pinpointed, was a request from the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to abolish the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF's) brutality on citizens. Keeping with Arce and Rice's (2019) ideas, protests pinpoint organized socio-political movements that challenge and resist the power-holders such as governments and business institutions in order to demand some rights. Protests could influence a review of specific organizational or regional policies.

Social justice is a global concern, thus, attracting discussions such as salvaging inequalities (Kozol, 1991), beautification of 'Area Boy' (Soyinka, 1995; Dalamu, 2019c), a theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 2000), and a discourse on 'no more oil but blood and sweat' (Fatunde, 2005). There have been clarion calls regarding eco-socialism ecology for human development (Pepper, 1993; Brofrenbrenner, 1979), respect for diversity (Roaten; Schmidt, 2009; Sabbagh; Schmitt, 2016), prevention

of emotional and mental disorder owing to injustice (O'Connell, Boat; Warner, 2009), promotion of justice, and environmental sustainability (Ucheaga, 1996; Dobson, 1998; Kenny; Hage, 2009). Such petitions become imperative as a means to prevent deviant behaviors (Akers, 1993), an exposure to violence (Schiavone, 2009), social exclusion, and discrimination (Kabeer, 2000).

In respect to that, Fraser (1989) reflects on justice interpretation, enlightening governments to employ social justice as an instrument to actualize universal human development in communities (Kenny; Hage, 2009), and implicit-cum-explicit application of social intelligence (Kosmitzki; John, 1993). These principles, drawing on Bandura (1969), will assist in behavioral modification of youths in terms of evaluation, intervention, and political cogency to influence human cognitive processes (Morsillo; Prilleltensky, 2007). Some of the characteristic values inform the research of Andrew-Essien (2010) on political duplicity, human rights violation, and decline in social standard, which Uya (2000) suggests that civil society groups, where democracy reigns, could expose to checkmate political fraudulence.

As the matter of social justice revolves around psychology, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology, one might wonder at the connection of this study with the subject matter? Human individuals are inseparable from language in all activities (Dalamu; Yang, 2022b). Apart from that, the social life, cultural life, and environment of the people interconnect to determine a particular discourse (Halliday, 1978; Halliday; Hasan, 1985, Fontaine, O'Grady; Bartlett, 2013; Dalamu, 2020c). One could also add that there are other semiotic resources that augment language in order to communicate effectively to the target audience. Devices such as proxemics, gestures, gazes, and musical sounds accompany language to generate meaning potentials (Kress, 2010; Dalamu, 2019d).

Such tenet of communication that attracts holistic elements motivates Kress (2011) and Dalamu (2023a) to label all devices of communication (language inclusive) as modes. Therefore, it is the communicative modes, which the #ENDSARS protesters deployed, that this study investigates. This analysis is a bit different from earlier research efforts, owing to its social semiotic inclinations. Consequently, Halliday's systemic grammar of group (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) visual grammar, as illustrated in Baldry and Thibault (2010) explore the communicative affordances. The concept of group,

gesture, gaze, and proxemics exemplify how spoken and kinesic modes entwine to yield holistic meaning (Kendon, 2004; Dalamu; Ogunlusi, 2020). A demand of social justice elucidated in this investigation requires some questions to serve as a pilot to understand the multimodality field of this discourse.

Thus, the following points channel a direction for the study.

- How have the written modes' frequencies expressed the meaning potentials of the texts?
- Are there relationships between the wordings and images in the semiotic systems?
- What roles have gestural attitudes of protesters played in realizing meaning from the texts?

### 1.1 SARS, a face of synchrony(ic) attractions

The acronym, SARS, means Special Anti-Robbery Squad. As an arm of the NPF, a matter of security propelled its conception and establishment. Historical accounts reveal that Simeon Midunda, a former Commissioner of Police, founded this police unit in 1992 (Nnadozie, 2017), as a result of some clashes between the NPF and Nigeria Army (henceforth: NA) (Odit, 2020), which consumed the life of Colonel Israel Rindam. That incident provoked NA to deploy soldiers to the streets of Lagos, witch-hunting the policemen. In no time, the policemen vacated the streets of Lagos to go a hiding. The escape of the policemen from check points seemingly increased crime rates. A strategy to bring back the police to their various posts stemmed the formation of *SARS* and its commissioning in November, 1992, beginning with 15 men. After many years of successful operational conducts, *SARS* grew in size in 2009, owing to the proliferation of the Internet fraudsters, popularly known as Yahoo Boys.

As the 14th unit of the NPF Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (henceforth: FCIID), the body is to prosecute criminal offences regarding motor vehicle theft, kidnapping, armed robbery, fire arms possessions, etc. One could also stress that there had been a three-police anti-robbery squad in place since 1984 before the emergence of *SARS*, a child of necessity (Al Jazeera., 2020a). Though the image in Figure 1, below, indicates the appearance of SARS officers,

usually, these men go about in disguise, not appearing as normal police officers because of the nature of the shouldered investigative functions (Nnadozie, 2017).

Figure 1 – Images of SARS operatives



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/federal-special-anti-robbery-squad-check-disturbances-by-news-photo/1126895716?adppopup=true>

More often than not, vicious venoms beclouded the operations of *SARS*, becoming a burden to the FGN and an enigma to the innocent citizens than the unit that it is meant to protect. President Muhammadu Buhari (henceforth: PMB) confirmed the acts of excessive force of *SARS* in his 22nd October 2020 live broadcast (Parkinson, Hinshaw; Akingbule, 2020). Thus, the media practitioners reported so many incidents in that regard. US Department of State (1998) attests that in 1996, *SARS* arrested two security guards, who, according to a report, were assisting armed robbers to conduct their nefarious activities in order to achieve their goals. Without a legal prosecution, those men were killed and their death bodies placed in the morgue devoid explanations. As the harassment of innocent and young people continued, a *SARS* person killed a bus driver in Obiaruku,

Delta State, without a tangible offence or court trial. The claim was that the individual refused to pay a token as a bribe. Nonetheless, the particular operative involved was charged for murder in the law court.

There have been many unusual extra-judicial killings associated to *SARS* operatives such as the killing of a school boy on the 20th May 2010, a stray bullet killing a pregnant woman on the 10th August 2010 at Ijegan, Ikotun, Lagos, and a brutal beating on three cyclists after being arrested in May 2010 (PM News, 2010). Surprisingly, a *SARS* member, Musa Agbu, attempted to bomb the NPF Headquarters, Abuja, on the 3rd June 2011. These pieces of evidence have shown the height of horrific criminal acts that *SARS* operatives committed (Omonobi, 2011).

Consequently, the FGN has made several efforts to reform *SARS* into a befitting status of human dignity. The human rights' violations of *SARS* stimulated Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (henceforth: PYO), Acting President, Nigeria, on the 14th August 2018, to request an overhaul of *SARS*. Ibrahim Kpotun, Inspector General of Police (henceforth: IGP), after some investigations renamed the unit as being Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS) with the appointment of a new police chief (Sahara Report, 2018). However, Mohammed Adamu, the then IGP, decentralized the unit on the 21st January, 2019, as placed under the sole management of DIG FCIID. The Commissioners of Police in the 36 states were empowered to directly oversee the *SARS* operations in their various states.

The FGN's efforts to revitalize *SARS* to make a difference proved abortive. Instead of the reforms to correct the police segment, the operatives tended to be much more horribly brutal than never before. The nefarious attitudes served as a platform for Segun Awosanya to construct a hash tag #ENDSARS in December 2017, being an online discourse emblem against the *SARS* men. As Al Jazeera (2017) pointed out, the Awosanya's ardent campaign initiative became a welcome idea to the Nigerians, serving as an appropriate channel that sensitizes people to share their experiences regarding *SARS* savagery. Probably, such an avenue could shape *SARS* for the security of Nigeria future. The then NPF Public Relation Officer, Jimoh Moshood, labelled the campaigners of such movement as robbers and criminals, whose activities must be seriously investigated. Unfortunately for Moshood, the 8th National Assembly of Nigeria's Senate endorsed the call to scrap *SARS*.

By and large, the shooting of a young man at Wetland Hotel, Ughelli, Delta State, upsurge a sombre call to exterminate *SARS*. Bloggers

shared the video of the man's killing process in many social media domains, which sensitized Nigerians in the Diaspora to rise against the SARS operations. As the upsurge of celebrities upturned the awareness, people practically 'imported' the online campaign to the streets of Nigeria in October 2020 (Omilana, 2020). Some of the placards of the protesters across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria read: #ENDSARS, #ENDSWAT, #SARSMUSTEND, and #RememberJimoh. Jimoh Isiaq was a victim killed on 9th October, 2020 during the protest in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. Instead of the FGN to quickly address the peaceful protesters, the NPF officers became angry, attacking and beating people in Abuja and other parts of the country, as BBC and other international media reported.

The entire security operatives in Nigeria made several arrests but were later released at the pronouncement of the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation. The case of the NA opening fire arms and ammunition on undefended innocent Nigerians at the Lekki, Toll Gate, Lagos, on the 20th October 2020, as BBC Africa and Al Jazeera reported, was unimaginable. The ruthless crudity attracted the attention of the world leaders to Nigeria (Al Jazeera, 2020b). Perhaps, the influence of the world leaders compelled the IGP to restrict his officers from further extra-judicial killings, road blocks and check points, and abrogation of SARS, which was followed with a new label of Special Weapons and Tactics (henceforth: SWAT) (BBC, 2020). Protesters rejected *SWAT*, requesting an adequate reform of the NPF. The 16th October 2020 support of Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey, releasing a vibrantly convincing #ENDSARS Emoji on Twitter, encoded in Nigeria national flag colors (Larnyoh, 2020) might have stimulated the PYO to quickly use the same Twitter medium to persuade protesters, commenting that he held a meeting with the governors, directing them to set up judicial panels of enquiry for fast justice for the victims. Moreover, PMB, on the 2nd October 2020 confirmed to sensitize Nigerians that the FGN has dismantled *SARS* operatives because of cruel barbarity, with a further plan to prosecute offenders of human rights violation (Parkinson, Hinshaw; Akingbule, 2020).

In corollary, the demand of social justice to annihilate SARS men's violent brutalism, expressed in protest, is a multimodality activity. This is because the protesters employed modes (historio-cultural devises of meaning-making) in terms of spoken and written languages, images in several forms, gestures, music and sounds, and varieties of color schemas to send messages to concerned authorities. The communicative



elements are quite complex in parti-colored-cum-pied shapes. This motive propels this research to act within the scope of suitable semiotic systems of pictures and creativity of protesters, functioning as supportive communicative devices of the #ENDSARS campaign.

## 1.2 Theoretical space

The nature of #ENDSARS communication requires theoretical substances that could vividly analyze the embedded semiotic resources. The photographs, particularly, have their texts in respect to wordings and images. The communicative affordances (meaning-making entities) thus motivate the authors to consider Halliday's insight of group (Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014) and Birdwhistell's (1970) idea of kinesics as the conceptual lenses of exploring the texts.

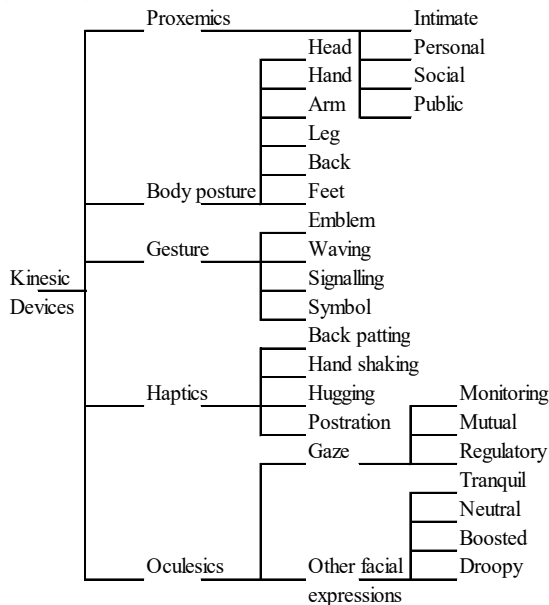
Regarding the systemic group, the authors understand that the clause is an entity as well as the core value in which Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) predicates its analysis. The clause functions in the spheres of systemic structures of declarative, interrogative, and imperative linguistic environments (Thompson, 2004). Though negligible the minor clause has its communicative model in the systemic structures of English. Given these enterprising contexts, Halliday (1995) theorizes that the three metafunctional triads of interpersonal, ideational, and textual are viable mechanisms of interpreting the structures of English. The systemic groups are orbital in any situation where the interpersonal metafunction (Mood), ideational metafunction (Transitivity), and textual metafunction (Theme-Rheme) operate. The viability of the groups, otherwise known as below the clause, to generate meaning potential in the three domains inform the choice of deploying the systemic groups in this study (Dalamu, 2019b).

Within the ranks of English structures, there are: clause, group, word, and morpheme. Focusing on the group, Thompson (2004) describes the group as a meaningful logical component (single or cluster) contributing moderately to the entire meaning of the clause. In Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) descriptive spirit, the systemic group operates in the form of nominal group, verbal group, prepositional group, adverbial group, and conjunction group (Eggins, 2004; Dalamu, 2018b). It is worth stressing that the phrase is still a systemic device of the English grammatical rank scale. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) explain that, unlike other grammatical postulations, there is only one phrase – prepositional phrase – in English; other elements are labelled group.

Prepositional phrase has head and preposition; whereas prepositional group has head and modifier(s) domiciled in its terrain. Nominal group accommodates pre-modifier, head and post-modifier, where only head functions as a compulsorily compelling artefact (Bloor; Bloor, 2013). The main verb and auxiliary (primary and secondary) are the elements of the verbal group; conjunction group and prepositional group express the head and modifier as their communicative modes.

The claim of multimodality enthusiasts (van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2011; Bateman, 2013; Bateman, Wildfeuer; Hiippala, 2017; Norris, 2019; Forceville, 2020, Kress; van Leeuwen, 2021; Dalamu, 2023b) is that language only provides partial meaning into semiotic systems, such as the #ENDSARS images. Thus, the deployment of kinesic devices is to deduce a holistic meaning potential from the #ENDSARS pictures. Some of these kinesic concepts are gesture, gaze, body movement and posture, haptics, color, and oculusics, as illustrated in Figure 2. These attitudes are physical actions that simultaneously operate to escort spoken and written language (Kendon, 2004).

Figure 2 – A system of kinesic devices



Source: Adapted from Hall, 1966; Kendon, 2004; McNeil, 2016.

Sometimes, kinesic elements might function as substitutes to wordings in order to reflect human anger, fear, disgust, contempt, emotion, confidence, feelings, happiness, nervousness, friendliness, sadness, comfort, and tranquillity. Figure 2 illustrates some gestures accompanying verbal communication as being biologically programmed edifice (Beattie, 2016).

There are no doubts that kinesics is an embodiment of theoretical manifestations; the authors elucidate some of these terms to pave the way for kinesic configurations. Proxemics denotes the space utilization by the individual regarding other communicative modes. Other modes might be an animate or inanimate object. Space here is in terms of relationship. Hall (1966) articulates that the dynamism of space has to do with actors' behaviors. As illustrated in Figure 2, proxemics denotes a range of possible spacing, culturally habitual in the form of intimate, personal, social, and public distances (van Leeuwen, 2008; Marquardt, Greenberg, Ballendat, Diaz-Marino; Wang, 2011). Regarding posture, Norris (2019) certifies that the frame of human body is one thing, how the individual constructs such a body is another. The summation then is that the positioning of the human body communicates different meanings in different occasions and sometimes in different cultural environments.

In multimodal communication, gaze plays a prominent role. Gaze, in Beattie's (2016) argument, focuses on the organization, direction, and intensity of looking, observable between the coder and decoder, which might be systematic or unsystematic. As gaze plays a subordinate role in communication, the speaker tends to gaze, more often than not, than the hearer. Gesture is a web of modes, deployed with language to communicate ideas. Kendon (2004) perceives gesture as an excursion of deliberate movements of the body parts that express meaning alongside with textual discourses. Particularly, the hands and mouth are domineering subjects of gesture, appearing as being metaphoric, iconic, and deictic. Because time is invaluable in gesture, beat represents the functional length of a gestural mode (McNeil, 2016).

Head movement is the positioning of the head during interaction. Norris (2019) constructs the movement of the head into three kinds. These are: rotational, lateral, and sagittal demonstrations. In Norris' (2019) conceptualization, the interlocutor's positioning of the head expedites gaze, augments deictic movement, connotes acceptance of event, authenticates a fact, rejects a proposal, and displays a change in

focus. In a nutshell, gesture is a probable encyclopedic framework that accommodates to harmonize all the other non-verbal communicative interactions as a unified entity.

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Participants**

The issue of social justice, to iterate, is the concern of this study, where social semiotic tools assist in exploring the texts. That informed the harvest of the demonstrators' images regarding the 2020 #ENDSARS protests in Nigeria. Apart from the exploration of images from the Internet, The Guardian, and Leadership Newspapers, Mrs. Bonke and the authors gathered some texts from some locations in Lagos such as Lekki Toll Gate, Oshodi-Apapa overhead bridge, Lagos-Sango Toll Gate, Maryland-Ojota expressway, and Opebi and Awolowo Roads, Ikeja. The choice of text collection in Lagos rested on being: (i) a state of many interconnected cities, which demarcations are difficult to define, (ii) the Nigerian most densely populated commercial centre; (iii) a state which the governor is referred to as Governor-General. Besides, Lagos accommodates mostly all the nationalities in Nigeria, whose young people considered as a market place of struggle for survival. The Internet and the newspapers became necessary as means of gathering the knowledge of protesters' image nature of happenings outside Lagos metropolis.

### **2.2 Instrument and design**

At the initial stage the protest was quite peaceful. That enabled us to capture some images with a *WB50F Samsung*<sup>®</sup> camera, which has the capacity to transfer the images to the laptop. In respect to that, an *hp2000*<sup>®</sup> laptop was another instrument of operation, assisting the researchers to receive the texts and regulate the objects into required shapes. The analysts considered the stratified sampling procedure as a sustainable method for selecting the necessary images to be analyzed (Maxwell, 2013; Dalamu, 2018a). This is owing to its cost effectiveness that aids a quick decision making amidst a quantum of texts.

### 2.3 Procedure

The large number of images harvested influenced the researchers to employ some research terms such as population, strata, and subject. Bonke and the authors succeeded in gathering a population of 65 images from all spheres, which were stratified into thirteen segments. Out of the strata, the researchers chose one image from each unit. The 13 images were prioritized as the subject of analysis (Patton, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the images were not selected haphazardly. Some motivating factors for the selection of the analyzed texts were: the visibility of the nitty-gritty of the protesters' demand; expressions of terrific tortures that *SARS* operatives have unleashed on Nigerians; demonstrations of collective unity among protesters; turning of demonstrators' request into fun and pleasure; and ironic pretense of protesters to move away from facts into sarcasm. The relationships of written modes with images and gestures in the texts were also considerable parameters (Dalamu; Yang, 2022a). Because there were no vehicular movements during the protest era, Bonke and the authors needed to trek for over one week from one location to another as to harvest appropriate texts.

Halliday's insight of systemic below the clause predicated on the written modes, exemplifying their componential structures as well as meaning potentials. The gestural inclination of the communicative modes attracted the application of kinesic devices as to understand their affordances. The vitality of SFL on text provided a leeway for tables and graphs to account for the functional wordings of the images (Charmaz, 2014; Dalamu, 2019a). The calibration elucidated the partial contribution of written modes to semiotic landscapes. All in all, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and Kendon (2004) offered some insights into the social semiotic implications of the 2020 #*ENDSARS* protesters' activities in Nigeria.

It is worth mentioning that the authors have deliberately labelled TX 1, TX 2 to TX 13 as such in order to differentiate the analyzed images in focus from any other figures in the study. Figure 3, Figure 4 to Figure 13 are the analysis of the written words available in TX 1, TX 2 to TX 13), as reflected in the Analysis and Discussion section. Table 1 publicizes the written modes functional in the #*ENDSARS* protests' images.

Table 1 – Written modes of the semiotic configurations

TX	Written Modes
1a	Enough is enough
1b	#ENDSARS
1c	We are bleeding!
1d	We are weeping!
2	END SARS
3	
4	
5	END SARS NOW
6	END SARS
7	#END SARS
8	
9	
10	ENDSARS NOW
11	#We demand outright disbandment and total police reform
12	#END SARS
13a	#We have no leaders
13b	ENDSARS
13c	#ENDSWAT

Source: own elaboration.

### 3 Analysis and discussion

The multimodal nature of the text inspires the adoption of the dual-perspective of theoretical evidence as to clearly explore meaning potential of the #ENDSARS' semiotic resources. That points to the fact that this multimodality enquiry as a representative of social justice, elucidates, in this section, the application of systemic groups, kinesic devices, and other communicative affordances. These concepts are annotated in the

following scopes of: the crux of protesters’ demand; pains and agonies of demonstrators that *SARS* unleashed on Nigerians; unison of demonstrators; pleasure and fun of/in demonstration; and irony of demonstration. Expression of irony is a moving away from justifiable facts into a sarcastic pretentious fable. Because the semiotic system of the text is a configuration of wordings, images, colors, and gestures, the study taps some explanatory currencies from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Kendon (2004), and McNeil (2016).

TX 1 – Enough is enough



Source: <https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/14/endsars-protest-feminist-coalition-group-raise-additional-n31-million-crowdfund-in-four-days/>

Figure 3 – Analyzed wordings of TX 1

1a	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Enough</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">is</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">enough</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NG</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">VG</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NG</td> </tr> </table>	Enough	is	enough	NG	VG	NG
Enough	is	enough					
NG	VG	NG					

1b	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">#ENDSARS</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NG</td> </tr> </table>	#ENDSARS	NG
#ENDSARS			
NG			

1c	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">We</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">are bleeding!</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NG</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">VG</td> </tr> </table>	We	are bleeding!	NG	VG
We	are bleeding!				
NG	VG				

1d	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">We</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">are weeping!</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NG</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">VG</td> </tr> </table>	We	are weeping!	NG	VG
We	are weeping!				
NG	VG				

Source: own elaboration.

To recapitulate, the phenomenal *SARS* is the thought that this study contextualizes. That is, the model of social justice in this course focuses on the demand of Nigerians requesting the government to abrogate *SARS* operatives from society, as promoted through the hashtag #*ENDSARS* to initiate a movement (Meikle, 2016; Burns, 2017). That reveals the reason for proliferating #*ENDSARS* mode in all the analyzed texts. As displayed in TX 1, for instance, two linguistic philosophical contexts are obvious in #*ENDSARS*. The first is its morphological formation. The second is the marker, hashtag (#).

From a morphological point of view, #*ENDSARS* represents a combination of three structures of: # + *END* + *SARS*. The analysts exemplify the hash tag, #, latter simply because the device is the score card of the #*ENDSARS* communicative components. On the one hand, *END* is a lexical morpheme from a verbal group sphere. The process, *END*, is a free morpheme that can stand alone to convey meaning (Yule, 2020; Dalamu, 2020b), such as the death of an era, or the termination of an event. The lexeme, *END*, also suggests the completion or finishing of sequential developments or evolutions, and the final point within a specific time. *SARS*, on the other hand, is an acronym that depicts Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Nigeria.

With Egyptian and Roman historical accounts, the idea of hash tag (#) has a constructive affiliation with Chomsky and Halle (1968) to reflect a space within lexemes and boundaries (Clark; Yallop, 2006, p. 134). Nonetheless, Twitter makes Octothorpe (#) (among other labels, hash tag is also known as Crunch, Diamond, Sharp, Mesh, Crosshatch, Thud, Thump, Splat, and Scratchmark) popular as a glyph that leads other symbols in communication. Since the coinage of this ‘spacing device’, some communication stakeholders have been employing hashtag as a stimulant to provoke a community of individuals into a concerted social jurisdiction to chase a common goal. Vander Wal (2007) considers such a collective but topical informational indexing as being ‘folksonomy.’ As a result, one could bethink hashtag as a displayed marker that functions with a particular contextual environment. The impression might channel ad-hoc protesters’ emotions into a status that construe heteroglossia insights, hypothesizing an assembly of individuals of a common ambition. The # is a great tool of mobilizing Nigerian to demand social justice against *SARS*.

The keyword of the hash tag is germane, briskly animating the protesters to pursue a determined course, which might be revolutionary.



Drawing on Zappavigna's (2011) manifestation, the hash tag character is a derivative of the historical and conventional naming content of the Internet Relay Chat in 1988. This falls within the inline metadata that integrates a linguistic device into a certain communicative structure. The relational role of hash tag sensitizes its classification as being functional within the attributive relational process (Eggins, 2004; Halliday; Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Dalamu, 2020a).

As the hash tag pinpoints a subject matter, the linguistic fabrication also references a propagated topic of concern that the community of individuals adopts to campaign a represented notion. Thus, at the inception, the #ENDSARS created the online social sub-community followership. Though temporary the online alignment transformed into a routine social bond of national protesters, demanding justice regarding the security of lives and property. In the writers' opinion, it was the hashtag emblem that changed the protesters' behaviors as to act in unison in order to pursue a course of social justice. Simply put: a hashtag is manufactured for a specific purpose and outside that motif that hashtag might remain obsoletely inefficient and impractically un-functional. That means, space, time, and purpose are critical determinants of hashtag to communicate imminent idea or ideology.

Apart from the #ENDSARS written mode that foregrounds the semiotic system of TX 1, in terms of color, there are other wordings such as *Enough is enough; We are bleeding!*; and *We are weeping!*, as in 1a, 1c, and 1d. The #ENDSARS is a compound structure, classifiable as NG. The other written entities are declarative clauses of NG + VG + NG (1a), NG + NG (1c) and NG + VG (1d). Following the indicative statements, *Enough is enough* expresses the sufficiency of the molestation that innocent Nigerians have received from SARS operatives. The mode appears figurative – a clarion call that intends to compel the officers to stop forms of harassment all day. *Enough is enough* is as simple as saying: Do not hurt Nigerians anymore. Nigerians have taken a great number of embarrassments from the operatives, so they are to desist from further tortures and killings.

*We are bleeding!* is generic as the clause refers to all Nigerians. That is, Nigerians have lost *enough* blood to SARS operatives. The shedding of innocent blood informs the *weeping* that the protesters represent, printed in the banner as *We are weeping! Enough is enough*

is a call on the government to end the profuse *weeping* of Nigerians, as caused by the police.

TX 2 – ENDSARS statue



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Lekki Toll Gate.

Figure 4 – Analyzed wordings of TX 2

2	END	SARS
	VG	NG

Source: own elaboration.

The deliberate pestering that people have undergone apprises the communicative mode of *We are bleeding!* and *We are weeping!*, which are further illustrated in TX 2, TX 3, and TX 4 in the likenesses of a metaphor (Forceville; Urios-Aparisi, 2009) and gestural demonstrations (McNeil, 2016). Two lexemes of *bleeding* and *weeping* are directly referential to the modes of TX 2, TX 3, and TX 4, in fact, with interjections to

indicate a similitude of emphasis – a prominence calling for a special attention. For instance, TX 2 appears as a cake-like object of photograph. The punctuated portrait depicts a young man who is helplessly gazing, creating a vector between him and the entire audience. The direct gaze shows a demand of justice – that is the effect of the represented communicative act (Kress; van Leeuwen, 2006).

The hair style, one might say, suggests a resemblance of a young man. Surprisingly, between the left ear and the eye of the individual is a bleeding portion representing an injury cause by a bullet of a *SARS* officer. As the bullet point has penetrated into the brain, the image suggests that a process of death has commenced and that must be stopped with immediate effect. The flow of the blood from the head down to the chest, staining the white apparel of the young man, shows the torment that young and energetic Nigerians undergo from the activities of nefarious *SARS*. Such agonies influence the inscription of *END SARS* at the chest of the boy-like to culminate bleeding, affected through the barrel of gun.

#### TX 3 – Opening of the mouth



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Maryland-Ojota.

The behavior of the young woman in TX 3 is a probable reaction to the bullet point on the head of the young man in TX 2, above. As the lady's gesture correlates *weeping* unveiled in TX 1, one observes that

several on-lookers are at her back, gazing left, right, and center, Some of these participants are wearing their nose masks – the COVID-19 apparatus of protection, as the woman who foregrounds the photograph marks agony of a special weight. The thickness of her gestures reliably reflects through kinesic activities such as the eyes, the mouth, the neck, and the hand. The woman, most obvious in the picture plane, remains fashionable as she lifts her eyes up, though closed, focusing on the sky at a specific angle of inclination, as perhaps, seeking helps from heaven.

One might remark that such an action interconnects the opening wide of the mouth maximally at its natural V-shape. This is an indicator of a paroxysm of striving pains that enable the muscles of the woman's neck to develop mercurially. In order to avoid an extreme pain that could cause contortion and writhing of the body, this eminent social actor stretches her right hand to cover her right ear. The stroke of the hand is without beats because the gesture is timeless (Beattie, 2016). The hand positioning is seemingly permanent as the neck moves to a sagittal point of a probable angle  $45^{\circ}$ . It is worth stressing that there is no social distance among all the social actors (van Leeuwen, 2005) in the pictorial image.

The social actor's (woman's) behavior demonstrates, per excellence, a cry for justice to the evil that the police have descended on Nigerians.

#### TX 4 – Handcuffed hands



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Ikeja.

TX 4, demonstrating panged distress to support TX 2 and TX 3, is an element that showcases the partiality of language in communicating messages to viewers, being a clear-cut idea that multimodality propagates (Kress, 2011; Jewitt, Bezemer; O'Halloran, 2016; Dalamu, 2021). As TX 4 illuminates, there are many images (such as walking men and women, cars, trees, and buildings) functional in the pictorial scheme. Nonetheless, the fragmented image of a young man, wearing a pair of glasses and a band around his head, is the most visible in the pictorial plane. It is self-explanatory that the man is conspicuous owing to the chain tying his two hands together as to prevent the usefulness of the hands for meaningful activities.

The appearance of the young man projects the chain in the two hands to advocate a free man castigated to be a prisoner (perhaps, a prisoner of conscience). As a result, he raises his hands to surrender his thoughts unwillingly to the authorities. That seems the motif for opening his mouth as a surprise to the reprimand that he currently experiences. This analysis could certify the modality as the affordance that promotes a call on the international community to come and rescue the Nigerian youth from the SARS's oppression. To cap off the scene, the man is in a black T-shirt as a representative of serious darkness that requires a shedding of some light; the light that could eradicate mourning in order to channel in joy at a moment (Ladu, 1989; Engelbrecht, 2003).

#### TX 5 – *End SARS now*



Source: <https://guardian.ng/opinion/endsars-protests-before-it-is-too-late/>

Figure 5 – Analyzed wordings of TX 5

5	End	SARS	now
	VG	NG	Adv G

Source: own elaboration.

The written mode in the semiotic configuration of TX 5 pictures to augment the reason for people's gathering. In Barthes' (1977) perspective, *END SARS NOW* is the anchorage that pinpoints the motif of the assembly. The structures of the imperative clause (Fontaine, 2013) are of VG + NG +Adv G components. The adjunct, *NOW*, enhances the imperative narrative to exhibit the urgent need of the FGN to respond to the popular call to *END SARS* without a second thought. In other words, the statement, *END SARS NOW* pinpoints to the government the immediate need to terminate the SARS operations in the streets. The written mode, *END SARS NOW*, fabricated on the white portion of the Nigerian national flag green-white-green is a metaphor that embarrasses the entire nation. This is because the flag of any nation is the identity of its citizens.

For instance, the Nigerian national flag has green-white-green, where green denotes a wealthy nation and white represents peace. That colorful identity projects Nigeria to the global world as a wealthy nation encircling with peace in its centrality. It is the claim of peace dominance that the protesters marred with the inscription *END SAR NOW*. The reddish shallow deformation of the flag portion portrays negativity. Red color engraved upon the white connotes a sudden loss, damage, and consumption of peace from Nigerian society. Protesters would not have mutilated the national flag irrespective of their anger. People might have done this out of ignorance. The semiotic affordances in the communication system actually send wrong and pathetic signals to stakeholders, who understand social semiotic relativity of information.

## TX 6 – Nose mask demonstration



Source: <https://www.okayafrica.com/endsars-how-you-can-help/>

Figure 6 – Analyzed wordings of TX 6

6	END	SARS
	VG	NG

Source: own elaboration.

A well-dressed young girl in TX 6 campaigns peacefully in support of a call to exterminate SARS operations in Nigeria. Though repetitive there is an inscription of *END SARS* in her nose mask in the form of VG + NG. The linguistic structure is a command that does not provide any alternative to the authorities in question. The girl is a peaceful demonstrator, who is not interested in violence. The new normal, COVID-19, has made the posture of the lady significant. She obeys the rule of the new normal; the rule also serves the individual to be mute, regardless of the pressure of the current situation. Silence is golden as much as being the best answer for a fool. Above all things, the written mode, *END SARS*, in the nose mask is an historical account, so to say,

for generations yet unborn as to intimate such individuals that a protest against *SARS* operatives took place in Nigeria during COVID-19 that spanned through 2020. Perhaps, that animates the girl's gazing pattern that directly focuses on the target audience. In Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) theorisation, the gaze of the lady is direct, demanding justice from the higher authorities in order to rescue people from the disturbing attitudes of *SARS* activities.

TX 7 – A fist hand in the Nigerian map



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Alausa, Ikeja.

Figure 7 – Analyzed wordings of TX 7

7	#END	SARS
	VG	NG

Source: own elaboration.



There are several patterns of *#ENDSARS* cross hash, such as *#ENDSARS*, *END SARS*, and *#END SARS*. These varieties are meant to show that diverse Nigerians were interested in the termination of *SARS* operations. In addition, the structure of the crunch is not a considerable factor to protesters; but rather the messages embedded in the hash tag. In occasions as this setting deviant constructs are permitted. One more thing is that the clarion call of the *SARS* abrogation is not about educational statuses; it rather concerns the social lives of Nigerians. In that sense, the message is the priority and not the model of its constructs; after all some Nigerians are not highly educated.

Coming back to TX 7, there are semiotic resources of the written mode, *#END SARS*, the gesture of a clenched fist, the map of Nigeria, and colors. The textual wordings of *#END SARS* are group components of VG + NG (Bloor; Bloor, 2013; Dalamu, 2018b), which fall in parallel with the explanations offered for *#ENDSARS* above. Of importance is the clenched fist, as painted in black. The black color might have a connection with the black dress of the man in TX 4, and the black color of the nose mask of the girl in TX 6. It is perhaps incontestable that black in this environment positions Nigeria as a black nation. Black then might be contextualized in this setting to explain the illegitimate actions of *SARS* operatives (Fehrman; Fehrman, 2000), which have overwhelmed the natural light that brightens the lives of Nigerians.

Thus, black is seemingly gloomy, evil, ill-omened, and bad, notwithstanding of the metaphorical positivism that Guinness has positioned and promoted black (Dalamu, 2020c). Integral to the clenched fist is an electrical signature of firry spark. The fire-spark could symbolize the gallant kindling of fire arms on innocent Nigerian citizens instead of using the weapons to chase away criminals such as kidnappers, armed robbers, and car snatchers. TX 7 reveals that the image of the fire of *SARS* operatives on Nigerians has shed more blood than necessary across the country. That could be the reason for protesters to paint the placard carrying Nigerian map as red. Red is an old color that could denote excitement, passion, dynamism, and richness (Pile, 1997). However, in this context, red signifies fire, blood, and force in order to characterize the habitual behavior of operatives, intensely warring to terrify innocent Nigerians.

## TX 8 – A collective fist hands



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Lekki Toll Gate)

Regarding the clenched fist, the analysts might comment that the hand gesture is peculiar to communists in Russia as well as associated with the Black Power Movement in the USA in 1960s. Given that connectivity, clenched fist is a signal of solidarity and perhaps, defiance. This is owing to the fact that clenched fist is a social symbol that might threaten to ignite physical violence, sparking demonstrators to be hostile in their deeds. The gesture could also invite revolution as shown in TX 8, where demonstrators collectively raise up their clenched fists in one accord. As such a communal synchronized gesture usually goes with a song or the national anthem, if not quickly curbed the masses might advance to venture into a revolutionary movement. The clenched fist activates protesters' resentment on the wrong that the government has done, as the case of *SARS* operatives in Nigeria. In a normal circumstance, when observing a growth of such magnitude, the government might raise a voice to call on the military to checkmate any clenched fist gestural excesses.

## TX 9 – A collective placing of hands on the heads



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Lagos-Sango Toll Gate

TX 9 illustrates an extension of demonstrators' cooperation in their demand to *END SARS*. This time tens of youthful Nigerians place their hands on their heads to typify pity, cheating, and hopeless situation. Some of the protesters are holding the Nigerian flag as a solidarity sign. Bearing in mind that these individuals are from different homes, religious backgrounds, and nationalities, the people have disregarded sentiments as to achieve their goal of sending *SARS* men away from the streets of Nigeria. To recapitulate, it is a quick action from the government at the center that could quench such a synchronous harmony simultaneously operational in all the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. That becomes inevitable so that the movement could not aggravate to a revolution.

## TX 10 – The image of a clown



Source: Bonke and the authors' captured image at Lekki Toll Gate

Figure 8 – Analyzed wordings of TX 10

10	#ENDSARS	NOW
	NG	Adv G

Source: own elaboration.

Most protesters, as illustrated in the texts are youths. Upon that backdrop, the researchers might attest that a peculiarity about the youth is the unavoidably inclination to fun. The seriousness of a demand to exterminate the presence of *SARS* in Nigeria could not take away fun from the youth demonstrators. TX 10 vividly exemplifies the youthful exuberance even in hard times. There are many semiotic resources of people, cars, building, and trees in TX 10. Nonetheless, the image of a young man underscores the semiotic configuration. The young man has a metaphorical appearance of a clown and an insane person. The former

could be factual; the latter is not. The latter is untrue because such an appearance is contextual for a purpose (in demand justice against SARS) known to the entire world.

There are no doubts that the young man is simply protesting, as the affordances of communication around him and in him suggest to viewers that the young man conveys his thoughts to the world in a dramatic form. In fact, this unusual appearance does not only distinguish him from other protesters; it also attracts people's attention to popularize him. It is amazing to see the man half-naked, wearing an ordinary pant that shows the shapes of his private manhood part, putting a book on his head (to represent the learned), covered with a wig, as joined with a pair of funny spectacles on his face. Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) pinpoints such a posture as being analytical, with Carrier and Attributes, fitted together to display wholeness of a larger form. As the man does not wear a pair of shoes, one could refer to him as being a jester or an insane individual. However, other circumstantial modes nullify that position. There are a megaphone and a banner in his hand. The megaphone assists the individual to loudly express his feelings, as the banner supposedly reads: *#ENDSARS NOW* with some thematic written discourse that are not completely visible.

Besides, the location of his appearance greatly dictates the message of the half-naked person. The setting is Lekki Toll Gate. The beautiful road and Oriental Hotel at the left further acknowledge that assertion. There seems to be a deliberate public distance between the protester and other semiotic resources in TX 10 so that the camera man could feature the individual apparently. Of course, the Nigerian national flag tied around his body plays a significant role of shelter. That means, the young man is a Nigerian expecting Nigeria to shield and protect him in all situations. In the protester's point of view, Nigeria is the only home of his and there is no any other home elsewhere. That standpoint might be the cogent reason for wearing white underwear (pant), which strictly interconnects him to the white color of the flag. This relationship is a probable demand for peace in Nigeria.

TX 11 – Protesters on a car



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/endsars-protesters-occupy-lagos-state-house-of-assembly-news-photo/1228989950?adppopup=true>

Figure 9 – Analyzed wordings of Text 11

11	#We	demand	outright disbandment and total police reform
	NG	VG	NG

Source: own elaboration.

The semiotic devices in TX 11, moreover, advance youthful exuberance in a visual-oriented-petition for a serious demand to terminate SARS operations. Though the banner reads: *#We demand outright disbandment and total police reform*, there are other young men standing in a car protruding from its open-roof. The banner at their disposal is not discernable. The declarative clause possesses its group elements as NG + VG + NG, where *#We* points to all Nigerians as the pronoun functioning in a generic term. The cross-hash of this kind has exceeded the notion

of topic-marking to a state of socialization and expression of attitudes (Mikstron, 2014; Laucuka, 2018), populating the functions of hash tags.

The material process, *demand*, is a forceful request without any apologetic contemplation. This time the protesters require the FGN to issue a statement against the existence of SARS. The issuance of the order will out rightly remove SARS from the streets. The banner that carries the image of the Nigerian national flag at its upper right-hand corner goes ahead to *demand* a police reform. The reform, perhaps, will overhaul the current decadent attitudinal status of the NPF. Indirectly, the protesters are clamoring that SARS is an arm of the NPF, where the two seemingly parallel institutions might be leprous fingers in one hand. The active two young men protruding from the open-roof of a car keeps intimate distance.

TX 12 – The construction of *ENDSAR* in the cheek



Source: Bonke & aurchors' captured image at Oshodi-Apapa expressway

Figure 10 – Analyzed wordings of TX 12

12	#END	SARS
	VG	NG

Source: own elaboration.

TX 12 is an extension of fun during the 2020 #ENDSARS demonstration in Nigeria. As appeared, the head-cum-neck of the young man seems a disjunctive human body as similar to an elliptical grammatical clause. As the young man gazes against the viewers, there are two #ENDSARS semiotic modes in his body. The first is the band on his head with an #ENDSARS inscription (though not fully apparent). The second is the inscription of #end sars on his left cheek, as written in white. By implication, the young man uses his body as a sacrificial sign (instead of cardboard) to convey emotional thoughts. That is, the young man is prepared to offer his life to exterminate SARS operations. Furthermore, the #endsars inscription on the cheek demonstrates the depth of personal painful feelings. This inscription is a construct of emotion.

TX 13 – Modes of we have no leaders



Source: <https://leadership.ng/endsars-cj-asks-lagos-to-reconstruct-igbosere-high-court/>



Figure 11 – Analyzed wordings of TX 13

13a	#We	have no	leaders	13b	#ENDSARS	13c	#ENDSWAT
	NG	VG	NG		NG		NG

Source: own elaboration.

It is crystal clear that protest is a channel to engender socio-political vices affecting people. The analysts observe such a hidden agenda in TX 13, where the written modes clearly maintain that *We have no leaders*. This statement is an exaggerated-irony that swiftly moves away from facts to a sarcastic pretense. As the linguistic structure reveals NG + VG + NG, a striking group there is the VG, *HAVE NO*, which Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) certify as a negative polarity. Literally, *NO* negates the existence of leaders in Nigeria. The question is: If there are no leaders in Nigeria, to whom are the protesters calling to abrogate *SARS* operations?

One might submit that the declarative clause is a hyperbolic over-statement, where the protesters consider Nigerian leaders as being epileptic. Rather, the people are asking government officials to rise to the current challenge in order to protect lives and property. As shown in 13c, there is a conjoining of #ENDSARS with #ENDSWAT in the placard. The reason is that in the midst of the protest, the FGN attempted to rebrand *SARS* to *SWAT* as a strategy to douse the tension. Importantly, the placard carries a gestural image of a clenched fist, as observable earlier in TX 7 and TX 8. Here, the protesters support the solidarity emblem with their mouths being opened wide, as discussed in TX 2 above, to reflect a desperate struggle that could rescue their lives from *SARS* operatives.

At this juncture, the authors could add that *ENDSARS* is the crux of the campaigns as shown in most of the modes. *ENDSARS* therefore represents the core of the demand of Nigerians. That is the motive for its repetition to show emphasis.

#### 4 Results

This section reveals the answering parameters of the Research Questions (RQs), highlighted earlier in the Introduction. Sub-sections 4.1, 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 are responses to the first question; sub-sections 4.2 and 4.3 elucidate the outcomes of the second and third questions.

### 4.1 Recurrence models of group written modes

There are two cumulative insights in Table 2. The first, vertically on the extreme right, depicts the frequencies of the systemic groups of the 13 analyzed texts. The second is in the horizontally base of the table, representing the cumulative of the systemic group of each analyzed text.

Table 2 – Frequency of 13 texts’ group modes

Group	TX																		Total
	1a	1b	1c	1d	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13a	13b	13c	
NG	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	1	17
VG	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	10
Prep G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adv G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Conj G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	3	2	3	1	1	
	8				2	0	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	3	2	5			

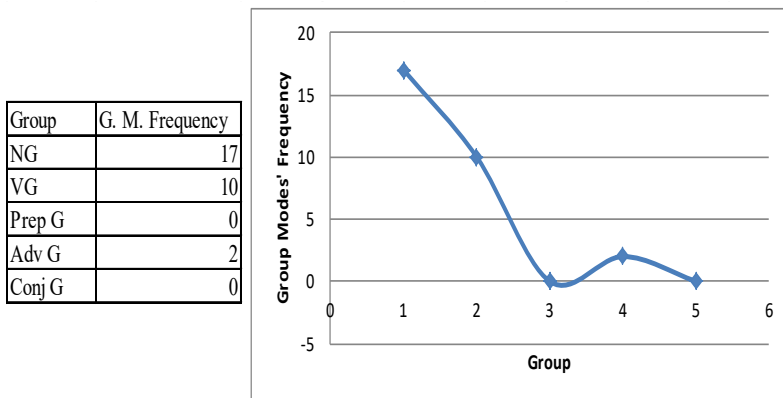
Source: own elaboration.

Figures 12 and 13 are the principal inferences from Table 2. The deductions place the frequencies at par of below the clause, regarding the 13 texts and each text, operational in the semiotic resources of the #ENDSARS protesters.

#### 4.1.1 Cumulative systemic group of 13 texts

Figure 12 indicates that only three elements of below the clause are functional in the communications of the #ENDSARS protesters.

Figure 12 – Group modes' frequency of 13 texts



Source: own elaboration.

These are: NG, VG, and Adv G. The same order of appearances represents the hierarchical functions of the systemic group rank. NG operates 17 times in the entire 13 analyzed texts, where VG functions about 10 times. The usage significant kind of Adv G makes the demonstrators to neglect this structure. Nevertheless, the urgency of the demand influences the protesters to apply the circumstantial device of *NOW* only two times in TX 5 and TX 10 respectively.

That being said, NG is the most applicable mode of the communications. This is because the hash tag of #ENDSARS is a compound lexeme that serves as the central wheel of the protesters' request. The VG element would not have appeared at all if not that some protesters inscribe the item, #ENDSARS, in haphazard ways, separating #END from SARS. Although some lexical modes such as *demand* and *have no* also provide a framework for VG as a communicative device. Prep G and Conj G do not make any sensible meaning to the semiotic repertoires of the protesters. It then implies that demonstrators are interested in pungent linguistic structures. That informs the focus on nominal modes.

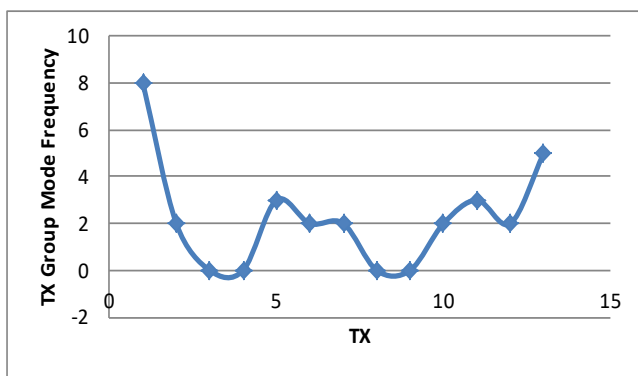
#### 4.1.2 Cumulative systemic group of each text

The illustration of Figure 13 exemplifies that TX 4, TX 8, and TX 9 do not employ the written mode to communicate the concerned authorities. That means gestural adequacies suffice enough to convey

relevant information to the government officials. This result of zero lexical elements in Figure 13 supports Kress’ (2010) theorization that language is a unit of modes in any multimodal semiotic configuration and thereby performing a partial role in contributing its meaning potential. T. G. M. means Text Group Mode.

Figure 13 – Each text’s group modes’ cumulative frequency

TX	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
T.G.M Frequency	8	2	0	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	3	2	5



Source: own elaboration.

Other modes outside language (written or spoken) are communicative affordances in a semiotic system. Good examples are: a clenched fist in TX 8 and open mouth in TX 3.

Nevertheless, TX 1 records eight groups in order to be the highest deployment of written modes. TX 13 occupies the second position by pulling only five points of group components. As TX 5 and TX 11 score three points each to be the third, TX 2, TX 6, TX 7, and TX 12 operate with only two groups to support other gestural communicative devices.

Therefore, it is deducible that the semiotic resources of #ENDSARS protesters are written modes and gestures, making the written mode, #ENDSARS, centrally critical in their demand of social justice. As NG dominates the written affordances, colors also play some fascinating functions in providing metaphorical beautifications for all semiotic resources.

## 4.2 Relationships of wordings and images

#ENDSARS is the obvious and repeated written modes in most of the TXs. That means, images relate with the #ENDSARS lexeme in order to generate desired meanings. The configuration of #ENDSARS exhibits a morphological framework of a hashtag, #, plus *END* plus *SARS* to make a larger whole of #ENDSARS. The #ENDSARS is the scorecard of the campaign, inviting Nigerians to participate in the protest. Thus, the hashtag symbolizes a general acceptance niche to promote a demand of social justice, which reveals a general intention to stampede *SARS* operatives. TX 2 reflects the construct, *We are bleeding*, shown in TX 1. The *bleeding* initiated on the head of a fragmented cake-like image of a boy, connotes the torture that Nigerians experienced from the *SARS* men.

*The structure, END SARS NOW*, written on the white segment of the Nigerian National flag, is a way of embarrassing the Buhari's government and the entire nation. As green means wealth on the flag, white is an indicator of peace. It is the idea of peaceful co-existence that the protesters tend to counter, contradict, and nullify, punctuating the white part of the flag with some red inscriptions of *END SARS NOW*. Red deforms the flag to depict a sudden damage, loss, and consumption of peace in Nigerian society. Along that side are peaceful demonstrators in TX 6 and TX 12, quiet with the COVID-19 nose mask and written words, indicating that the protest was staged during the pandemic. Moreover, the banner of TX 13 seems to raise a conclusion with the construct, *We have no leaders*, as supported with clenched fists in a drawing and pictures. The sarcastic trick becomes vital because the leaders have disappointed the youth by not caring for that population.

## 4.3 Roles of gestural attitudes

First and foremost, it is worth stressing that the hash tag, #, operates as the driver to motivate Nigerians into the *ENDSARS* propagation – a provocative marker that stimulates the Nigerian people to demand social justice from the government, regarding incessant killings from the *SARS* men. The hash tag influences people to chase a common goal, which is a determined course stressing towards a revolution of a sort. TX1 demonstrates the holding of a large banner with a foregrounded #ENDSARS, where the demonstrators gaze at different directions, without a movement of legs. Despite a rigor of COVID-19,

the protesters neglected social distancing. The gestural behavior of the ellipted cake-like image of a young boy focuses directly pitifully on the audience, perhaps, to demand some help, if there is any.

There is an agonizing lady in TX 3, depicting the nefarious actions of *SARS* operatives. The agony is of a terrific weight, as reflected through some kinetic elements of closed eyes, opened mouth, slightly bent neck, and the placing of the right hand on the right ear. The stroke of the hand is without beats for its timelessness. However, TX 3, TX 4, TX 9, and TX 10 communicate to readers the partiality of language in semiotic systems. The raised chained hands of the young man in TX 4 characterizes the young man as a prisoner of conscience, who is free yet his fundamental rights are denied. The individual has no liberty. The wearing of black might depict darkness, which *SARS* people's actions legitimize in order to overwhelm the natural light illuminating in the social sector.

The image of the clenched fist in the midst of the red map of Nigeria in TX 7, support that claim, where red represents substances such as fire, shedding of blood, ignominy, and force. The matter of clenched fist is common in the texts as symbols of solidarity and seeming defiance, which could ignite violence and hostility, leading to a revolution. As there are placements of hands on the protesters' heads to typify pity, cheating, and hopelessness of a high magnitude; TX 10 exhibits a representation of fun in the midst of national anger. These authors observe a youthful exuberance in hard times with a half-naked individual, embodied with a megaphone, a bible, a pair of glasses as the person in enwrapped with the Nigerian National flag. The young man is Carrier with peculiar Attributes, as mentioned above, around him.

## 5 Conclusion

This study has validated an exercise of social justice demand in Nigeria – a call to exterminate the concept of *SARS* and its operations. As exemplified through social semiotics, the actions of protesters, observable in TX 1 to TX 13, are the semiotic resources that convey specific meanings to governments, viewers, researchers, and the international community. The investigation reveals that images are much more pronounced than words in the communications. This characteristic supports the conceptualization that language carries a partial responsibility in multimodality constructs. In most cases that written modes occur in

the semiotic systems, the wordings operate as anchoring devices such as in TX 1, TX 2 and TX 6.

Observations factorize the information conveyed in semiotic devices as being: the core of the request, which is a clarion call to end *SARS* operations, contextualized as #*ENDSARS* hashtag – a movement that Segun Awosanya originated initially in December 2017. There are modes that manifest the sufferings of the people. One observes the unpleasant aches and displeasure griefs through gestural movements of hands, mouths, and forehead penetration of bullet that creates a *bleeding* contour. The tormented distresses motivate people to demonstrate affordances of collectivism without any authorized leadership instructions. Such cooperative communicative resources are in the form of clenched fists' solidarity signs, and the tint of the Nigerian National Flag.

As the mental sadness and physical anguish could not suppress youthful exuberances; protesters add fun to their call to abrogate *SARS* operations. The pleasure in the demonstrators appears in comical rituals and sacrificial norms. The renegeing of the FGN to quickly exterminate *SARS* stimulated the protesters to facetiously ridicule the Buhari administration as being non-existence, with a conclusion that *We have no leaders*.

By and large, it is unarguable that protest is a fundamental right of any human being, most especially, when such a strong objective is conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. The government, suggestively, now, needs to quickly arise to respond to the crux and demand of protesters. Such rapidity could prevent further coercion of people whose *SARS* operatives' salvage acts and cruel excesses are still memorable in their cognitive hemispheres. In sum, channeling social justice to appropriate quarters should be an unwavering responsibility of any administration. Else, people's forceful demanding of rights might be decisively expensive, leading to the loss of lives and property as well as shedding of blood of innocent Nigerians in an unprecedented magnitude.

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## Declaration of the authors

The two authors contributed to this research. Taofeek Dalamu wrote the introduction, theoretical framework, the discussion, part of the result section, and the concluding remarks. Ke Yang wrote the literature review, the analysis and the graphical illustrations in the result section.

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