Covid-19 and Democratic Backsliding:

Citizens’ Perception of Democracy and Human Rights in Nigeria

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Abstract

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic poses a range of new threats to democracy and human rights, and the Nigerian government has reacted to the pandemic in a way that benefits their political interests. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the covid-19 measures and shrinking political space in Nigeria through a case study analysis. This study analyzed the perception of Nigerian citizens on the state of democracy and human rights in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has a negative impact on democracy and human rights despite Nigerians’ support for democracy. As such, the Covid-19 measures have been used by the Nigerian government for strategic executive aggrandizement to attack vital political institutions and as a pretext to erode democracy and violate human rights to consolidate power. This study answered the question regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, yet further studies are needed to establish the impact of Covid-19 on democratic backsliding in more African states and develop preventative measures.

Key words: Covid-19, Democracy, Human Rights, Nigeria, Democratic backsliding, Democratic backsliding, Perception, #EndSARS, Political institutions, Human rights violation, Accountability, Police brutality, Dahl Robert, Diamond Larry, Ake Claude.
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1 Introduction

There has been a growing concern about the backsliding of democracy and civil liberties in new and established democracies worldwide in recent years, yet the outbreak of the coronavirus makes it worse. According to the Freedom House, the sudden outbreak of the coronavirus raises new challenges to human rights and democracy around the world, the state of democracy and human rights have deteriorated in 80 countries since the epidemic of the coronavirus started\(^1\). Repressive regimes have used the pandemic containment measures at the expense of the citizen's human rights and civil liberties in a manner that suits their political interests. These governments have responded by undermining critical political institutions, silencing critics, and journalists, and engaging in power abuses\(^2\).

The pandemic's impact on democracy was also heavily felt in Europe, with only 10 percent of the region are not democracies while the other European countries are high-performing democracies. However, democracy in Europe has undergone backsliding and reversal in recent years; it is reported that over half of European democracy has eroded, particularly Hungary, Poland, and Serbia\(^3\). These pre-existing challenges have been compounded by the pandemic, such as the restriction of civil liberties, the growing number of domestic violence, gender inequality, disruption of electoral cycles, vulnerability for disadvantaged groups, and a rise in corruption cases. However, most European countries' resilience in the democratic system has been sufficient to have encouraged electoral transparency and social movements\(^4\).

\(^1\) Freedom House. (2020)
\(^2\) Ibid
\(^3\) International IDEA. (2020)
\(^4\) Ibid
Democratic resilience cannot be said for most African counties; only six countries are 'free,' and other African countries are either 'partly free' or 'not free.' In 2020 alone, there was a decline in political rights and civil liberties in most countries that are scored as 'partly free' and 'not free', including Ghana (free), compared to the 2019 scores by the Freedom House. Even though most African countries' electoral processes have not been a road to democratic institutional changes and political reform, the pandemic has aggravated a sharp decline in democracy and human rights in Africa. Several African governments have placed extreme controls on the freedom of speech and movement in reaction to the pandemic; government forces in Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, and Nigeria have allegedly engaged in arbitrary arrest, torture, extrajudicial killings of citizens while enforcing the Covid-19 measures. Besides, countries like Tanzania, Uganda, including Nigeria have used the Covid-19 containment measures to suppress citizens' peaceful protests and threaten opposition leaders, journalists, and activists.

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to rapid democratic backsliding in Africa, causing significant disruption to the region's electoral processes and heightening the risks of regime change towards autocracy. Electoral processes have been used as a democratic façade to maintain and justify the ruling party's or government's hold on power. Cases could be seen in Togo, Guinea, Uganda, and Egypt, where repression of opposition candidates and parties and election fraud marred the integrity of the polls. Cases of postponement of the election have been observed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria by-election, Chad, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated restrictions on fundamental

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5 Freedom House. (2020)
6 International IDEA. (2020b)
7 Ibid
8 Ibid
rights, such as the restriction on freedom of assembly and association, restriction on freedom of expression; it has also potentially worsened the vulnerabilities of women and girls while impeding progress toward gender equality in the continent and above all, deepening of economic and social inequalities in the continent.\textsuperscript{9}

The deepening of economic and social inequalities was heavily felt in Nigeria due to the pandemic and as inequalities and poverty rise, so does political repression. Claude Ake highlighted that repression of political rights ensures that the ordinary people do not address their grievances and remain silent\textsuperscript{10}. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, political repression has heightened, there have been series of political restrictions, restrictions on media freedom, lack of media integrity, restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression, gross human right violation by Nigerian security agents and vulnerability of women and girls\textsuperscript{11}. This study shows Nigerians' undying supports for democracy and human rights despite an increasing vertical strategy of democratic backsliding through executive aggrandizement. The Nigerian government is using the Covid-19 measures (legal means) as a pretext to restrict civil liberties, making it more difficult to counter these strategic manipulations. Then a crucial question needs to be asked, then why is #EndSARS and #OccupyLekkiTollgate protests a violation of the Covid-19 measures, but the ruling party's Flag-off Governorship campaigns involving thousands of party supporters in both Ondo and Edo state is not? #EndSARS is a decentralized social movement and a recent protest against police brutality and bad governance in Nigeria. The Nigerian government allegedly tried every avenue to sabotage the protest until they resorted to violent repression. On 20 October 2020, the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Claude Ake. (1987). P. 7-8
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid
\end{itemize}
Nigerian Army officers were seen shooting at peaceful protesters at one of the protests centres at the Lekki Tollgate, killing at least 12 people\textsuperscript{12}.

After the #EndSARS killings, Nigerian authorities have attempted to conceal the Lekki Toll Gate Shooting events, frozen #EndSARS organizer's bank accounts, fined news agencies that disseminated footage of the shooting, restricted media freedom, intimidated journalists, suppressed future protests by intimidated #OccupyLekkiTollgate protesters\textsuperscript{13}. #OccupyLekkiTollgate protest was a demonstration against the reopening of the Lekki tollgate (reintroduction of toll fines) until justice for the #EndSARS protesters killed is served. As a result of these violations, this study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by assessing how the Nigerian government has used the Covid-19 pandemic measures to erode democracy, violated human rights, and silence dissents.

1.1 Problem Statement.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant concern for the world's countries. The continuous global spread of the virus has led to the introduction of rules, regulation, and legislature containment measures to reduce the spread of the virus, as such, the Nigerian government followed suit by enacting some rules, regulations, and guidelines to be complied by all its citizens or legal residents in the country. Part of rules and regulations have severely impacted democratic institutions and human rights by temporarily restricting Nigerians' civil liberties, most importantly, media freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, and freedom of movement. However, the Nigerian government has used these regulations

\textsuperscript{12} Amnesty International. (2020)
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
and the need to protect national security from justifying silencing journalists and peaceful protesters on police brutality, which led to a massacre at the Lekki tollgate protest venue in Lagos. In addition, security agencies such as the Nigerian Police and the Nigerian Army have also used the COVID-19 containment measures to brutalize and violate members of the public's human rights.

The issue lies with eliminating the Covid-19 global pandemic, which is particularly challenging and paved with uncertainty. There is a need to worry about the continuous use of the covid-19 containment measure to restrict human rights and the crackdown on civil liberties, which could have a lasting effect on democratic institutions in Nigeria and could plunge the country back to its former authoritative state. There is a need for the Nigerian government to remember that the world is evolving, so has the referent object of security. The state ceases to be the key referent object of security, humans are, and as such, the Nigerian government ought to be the provider of security for Nigerians rather than the final recipients.

1.2 Relevance of study

The aim of democracy entails a moral obligation on the part of the state to serve its citizens and foster political and socioeconomic well-being. Democracy also encompasses the basic notion of universal human rights, promotes human prosperity and civil society. It seeks to achieve a social order of equality that ensures protection and inclusion for all people and deter the government from its citizens' oppression. The inclusiveness, freedom, rights, and opportunities democracy offer to citizens is crucial in ethnically diverse country like Nigeria.
There should be more focus on strengthening democratic practices and institutions in Nigeria, most importantly during the Covid-19 pandemic period, in order for democracy to be consolidated so that the country can survive the test of time in cases of religious conflict, ethnic or political crisis.

1.3 Research objective and question.

This research is intended to analyse the impact of the shrinking political space in Nigeria concerning the Covid-19 containment measures and the consistent violations of Nigerians' human rights and civil liberties during the pandemic. The overarching question is aimed at fulfilling the research objective and problem of the research:

- What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the repression of human rights and democracy in Nigeria?
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter would include a summary of what has already been published to demonstrate my understanding in the related topic. To begin, existing discussion on the state of democracy and human rights prior to the Covid-19 pandemic will be presented in order to move onto the existing discussion on the state of democracy and human rights during the Covid-19 pandemic and finally, on the lack of accountability of human rights abuses. Prior to the theoretical context in this study, a wider debate would allow for a deeper understanding of the subject, and it could be used to an extent to support my finding or not.

2.1 The State Democracy and Human Rights Before the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

Most of the previous research on the state of democracy and human rights in Nigeria before the Covid-19 pandemic has always focused on the same pattern, how the Nigerian government has continuously violated its citizens' human rights. Ozoigbo highlights that respect for human rights and commitment to the rule of law enriches democracy, yet Nigerian democracy has been deprived of the most important component, upholding human rights by the security forces and the political leaders\(^\text{14}\). Linz added, by emphasizing freedom as important, if not more important than electoral competition, and as such, democracy without giving importance to freedom can be dangerous. However, the possibility of democratic consensus votes without human rights and civil liberties, which are the prerequisite of a democratic government, should be investigated\(^\text{15}\). Research has shown that Nigeria's democratic

\(^{14}\) Ozoigbo, B. (2017)
\(^{15}\) Linz, J. (2000). P. 19-20
practice and human rights are not what they should be due to governmental agencies' deliberate human rights abuses casting doubt on the genuine democratic practice in Nigeria.\(^\text{16}\)

The sad thing is that the democratic principle has not been developed in Nigeria after more than twenty-one years of democratic transition. Besides, Ozoigbo insisted that the principle of separation of power, which prevents the misuse of authority and preserves freedom for all, is an illusion in Nigeria; the judiciary and legislature arm of government has been reduced to empty puppets, always at the will of the executive.\(^\text{17}\) As a result, widespread violations of human rights and civil liberties have been perpetrated by the security forces, restriction of freedom of speech and press, suppression of basic freedom of association, and violence against women.

In order give a clear view of the human right abuses by security forces, Johnson and Salau looked at their constitutional duties. The Nigerian Police and Army's power is counterbalanced by safeguarding the fundamental human rights in the Nigerian constitution. Chapter 4 of the 1999 constitution guarantees the right to life, civil liberty, human dignity, and the right to privacy. It also includes the right to bail, the right to be held innocent unless proved guilty, etc.\(^\text{18}\) However, Johnson and Salau insisted that, despite the constitution's provision to protect citizens' human rights, the security forces have continuously infringed on these rights due to police and judicial misconduct, manipulation of the judiciary, and excesses of political leaders and politicians.\(^\text{19}\) Ojo accounts that the police and military personnel have perpetrated widespread extrajudicial killing, used lethal force to suppress peaceful protest or civil unrest, torture, make an illegal arrest, and used the

\(^{16}\) Ozoigbo, B. (2017).  
\(^{17}\) Ibid  
\(^{19}\) Ibid
inhuman and degrading treatment on criminal suspects. Prevalence in the inhuman ways the security forces carry out their duties is what Ojo described as the blurring constitutional roles between the police and the military. He highlighted the military meddling in police duties, for instance, the military's presence in seemingly strictly police affairs in civil unrest in Odi, a town in Bayelsa state, and in an ethnic clash between the Tiv and Jukun exposed the military's excesses. A massacre and demolition of Odi town were allegedly perpetrated, involving several hundred inhabitants by the military because ethnic militiamen allegedly killed 12 police officers. Similarly, 70 inhabitants were allegedly killed at the first instance after the military invaded Tiv land due to 19 soldiers killed in a conflict between Tiv and Jukun, which is contrary to the human rights law on respect for a person's integrity.

Apart from the brutality of the security forces, freedom of speech and press is under attack by the Nigerian government. Saliu emphasized how free speech and freedom of the press are more in theory than in practice, even though it is enshrined in the Nigerian constitution and article 9 of the African charter.

Previous research has shown that the Cybercrime Act of 2015 undermines the press's autonomy and has been used as an instrument for several arbitrary arrests. This act has been used to crackdown on journalists and political critics, physically assault and torture citizens, and sometimes obtain false confessions from them by the Nigerian security forces. Although, prior to the existence of the Cybercrime Act, infringement of freedom of the press and expression existed in several cases, after the Act, freedom of speech and freedom of the media continues to steadily decline due to many challenges.

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20 Ojo, E. O. (2009)  
22 Ibid  
23 Saliu, V. A (2019)  
24 Ibid
such as unlawful detention and arbitrary arrest of a journalist in the country\textsuperscript{25}. Salii cited few incidences on two Premium Times journalists' arbitrary arrest cases in January 2018, the same year in June, Ibraheem Yakubu, a radio service journalist, was arrested and detained unlawfully. Another journalist, Danjuma Katsina, was arrested and detained, and tortured over his post on Facebook about a politician\textsuperscript{26}.

Nevertheless, another form of human rights violation, such as abuse toward women, is widespread in many cultures in the country. Gender disparity, according to Nnadi Ine’s research, is faced by women and is reflected in virtually all spheres of human endeavour in Nigeria, irrespective of how rich, poor, educated, or uneducated a woman is. This violation includes social, physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence and affects all spheres irrespective of status, age, culture, or race\textsuperscript{27}. Emakhu also to cited that the Nigerian law, which is meant to protect any form of gender discrimination is the very instrument used to reinforce gender disparity. The language used in the Nigerian Constitution is male dominated as the word "He" is constantly used, and the word "She" is completely excluded. The Nigeria constitution also legalizes marital rape in section 6 of the Nigerian criminal code; section 55 legalizes wife chastisement, which created a condition for violence against women etc.\textsuperscript{28} The most devastating violation is the violation inflicted on females by the very institution responsible for protecting them; besides, much attention has not been given to female violations by enforcement officials. Previous Research made by Kraska and Kappeler indicates sexual violence committed by police officers on-duty against female suspects or detainees. Besides, indiscriminate arrests and charges of prostitution are made on females, either walking on the road at

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid

\textsuperscript{27} Nnadi, Ine. (2012). P. 48-49

\textsuperscript{28} Emakhu, I. S. (2013). P. 779-780
night, in nightclubs, or those on skimpy clothing. Nigerian police officers' violations led to street marches and social media movements by human rights groups and women activists\textsuperscript{29}.

\textbf{2.2 Democracy and Human Right During the Covid-19 Pandemics in Nigeria.}

Following the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian government has taken steps to protect its citizen's life and health. Several steps were introduced included shutdown, closure, travels, cancelation, or postponement of athletic events etc., to deter the dissemination of the virus. Hence, to ensure compliance with the Covid-19 containment measures, the security agencies have been empowered to ensure that Nigerians adhere to the lockdown order. However, Amadasun, S reported that the Nigerian security forces, especially the police and the army, are known for their brutality, and enforcement has triggered torture, beatings, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings\textsuperscript{30}. Reports show that Nigeria has enforced the Covid-19 lockdown rules with significant human rights violations; there have been several cases of extrajudicial killing and different forms of human rights violation within a short period the lockdown rule was imposed. In fact, the security forces have killed more people more than the Coronavirus itself; 18 Nigerian were killed by the security forces within two weeks the lockdown was imposed compared to the 12 people killed by Coronavirus within the same period\textsuperscript{31}

The National Human Rights Commission reports indicates that during 31 March to 13 April 2020, a total of 105 complaints was received in 24 out of

\textsuperscript{29} Kraska, P. B., & Kappeler, V. E. (1995).
\textsuperscript{30} Amadasun, S. (2020).
\textsuperscript{31} National Human Right Commission Report (2020)
36 States, Lagos has the highest records of human right abuses, followed by Abuja. Other forms of abuses were reported during the same span to include 33 cases of torture and inhumane treatment, illicit detention and arrests, 19 cases of seizure/confiscation of properties, 27 cases including violations of freedom of movements, 13 cases of extortion, 4 cases sexual and gender-based violence. NHRC reports indicate that the Nigerian Police perpetrate 90 percent of these violations, and the Nigerian Army takes the second lead. The extension of the lockdown for another two weeks was followed by a press statement by President Muhammadu Buhari; his press statement sent a mix signals, Nigerians were unsure if the president is commending the security agencies for their use of force, brutality, and gross violation of rights to enforce the lockdown or not.

“The security agencies have risen to the challenges posed by this situation with gallantry, and I commend them. I urge them to continue to maintain utmost vigilance, firmness as well as restraint in enforcing the restrictions orders, while not neglecting statutory security responsibilities.”

The lockdown extension followed the same pattern, NHRC documented 11 cases of extrajudicial killings by security agencies, 104 cases of other related human rights violations in 27 out of 36 States within three weeks. On the 4th of May, the partial lifting of the lockdown extended to the 21st of May 2020 was also marred with 6 cases of extrajudicial killing with 9 deaths and 22 cases of other human rights abuses relating to torture, SGBV, illegal arrest, extortion, etc.

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32 Ibid
33 Justice Okoro (2020).
34 Ibid
Amnesty International reported excessive extrajudicial killings and brutality by security forces, especially from Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad which led to a nationwide peaceful protest. It was confirmed that, while hundreds were severely injured, at least 12 Nigerian were killed at the Lekki Toll Gate and Alausa protest centres, eyewitnesses accounts on social media that number of deaths allegedly exceeded 12 and men of the Nigerian Army took away majority of the people shot dead\textsuperscript{36}. State repression is reportedly perceived to crack down on the protest movement as the CCTV at the Lekki toll gate was dismantled, and electricity was cut off few hours before the shooting to cover up the mass murder\textsuperscript{37}. The #ENDSARS movement has been trending online for four years before becoming a popular nationwide protest. Ohia et al highlighted that the protest began on the 2nd of October 2020 after a video of an alleged extrajudicial killing of a civilian by police officers circulated social media and lasted for a period of three weeks in virtually all the states, including Lagos and Abuja. Protestors include mostly young people who marched to condemn the suspected shootings, abuses, assaults and rape, and brutality of the Special Robbery Squad (SARS) of a Nigeria Police Force\textsuperscript{38}.

Amadasun highlighted the circumstances in which the SARS unit was formed and how the unit have allegedly turned against the very people they were meant to protect by allegedly extorting, violating, harassing, and killing them\textsuperscript{39}. Amnesty International reports that civilians' brutality by the SARS unit intensified with the use of the pandemic measures as a pretext to abuse power. Despite the announcement of the SARS units' disbandment by the Nigerian government, the institutional authorities' lack of trust led to the spread of the protest movements #ENDSARS to other parts of the world.

\textsuperscript{36} Amnesty International (2020)
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid
\textsuperscript{38} Ohia, C., & Salawu, M. M. (2020).
\textsuperscript{39} Amadasun, S. (2020).
Amnesty International accounts that eyewitnesses, video clips from Instagram live video reveal that the Nigerian military opened fire on thousands of Nigerian citizens protesting over bad governance and police brutality\(^{40}\). While singing the National Anthem and holding the Nigerian flag, the military opened fires between 6.45 pm to 9.00 pm on the 20th of October 2020 at the Lekki Tollgate protest ground while eyewitnesses on the Alausa protest ground confirmed they were targeted by a team of soldiers and police from the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) Unit at around 8:00 pm, leaving at least two people dead and one seriously wounded\(^{41}\).

Freedom of expression and media have also been violated amidst the Covid-19 pandemic according to the Amnesty International’s report\(^{42}\). Prior research has revealed that the Nigerian government has allegedly used the Covid-19 measures to harass, illegally arrest, and jail journalists, suppress critics of Covid-19 management, and silence whistle-blowers covering the outbreak\(^{43}\). For instance, the Media Foundation for West Africa reported that, eight journalists have either been fined or imprisoned on six separate incidents in connection to various Covid-19 publications or coverage of the pandemic activities\(^{44}\). One other incident involving the state Chairman of the National Union of Journalist (NUJ), Mr. Ishaka Donald Deden, and eleven others were arrested on their office premises. The journalists were sent to a detention centre in the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on the grounds of disrupting and breaking the COVID-19 lock-down rules\(^{45}\).

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\(^{40}\) Amnesty International (2020)
\(^{41}\) Ibid
\(^{42}\) Amnesty International (2020)
\(^{43}\) Ibid
\(^{44}\) Media Foundation for West Africa (2020)
\(^{45}\) Ibid
2.3 Lack of Accountability of Human Right Abuses in Nigeria.

The literature review conclusion will have a brief look at previous research on the level of accountability of the Nigerian government on human rights abuses. The shock Nigerians felt after the horrific shooting by Military men on unarmed #EndSARS protesters exercising their political rights at Lekki Tollgate was further aggravated after the presidential speech following the shooting. Many Nigerians were confident that the presidential speech would call for accountability and justice for the civilians who lost their lives. Well, the presidential speech left Nigerians "speechless," neither did President Muhammed mention the massacre that happened at the Lekki toll gate on the 20th of October 2020, nor did he call for justice and accountability for the lost lives.

The Nigerian authorities have continually denied any shooting that day, #EndSARS supporters continue to face repression and intimidation, and the authorities have made no concrete police reform. According to Amnesty International, 100 days after the attacks, Nigerian authorities have refused to put the security forces accused of being responsible for the violent crackdown of unarmed #EndSARS protesters at Lekki toll gate and Alausa in Lagos in October 2020 to justice. They have blatantly tried to cover up the brutality.

Before the #EndSARS protest, the lack of accountability of human rights abuses is widespread; after all, the protest was triggered due to the continuous lack of accountability even when it involves brutality and extrajudicial killing by security forces. Besides, the Special Rapporteur on

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46 Justice Okoro (2020)  
47 Amnesty International (2020C)  
48 Amnesty International (2020C)
torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment confirmed on a first-hand account the Nigerian government's failure to adequately prosecute complaints, protect victims of serious human rights abuses, and hold law enforcement authorities accountable\textsuperscript{49}. Following the Special Rapporteur mission to assess Nigeria's compliance on ill-treatment and torture, two detainees with gunshot wounds were interviewed at a Criminal Investigation Department in Lagos in March 2007. According to the Special Rapporteur, both detainees could die without medical attention, so an appeal for medical help was sent to the appropriate authorities. The special Rapporteur follow-up visit on the 3 April noticed that the two detainees were neither in the police custody, hospital, nor any record of them in prison. No records, no case related to the two detainees, were found\textsuperscript{50}.

\textsuperscript{49} Nowak, M. (2007).
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To better understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the repression of democracy and human rights in Nigeria, this chapter will provide a theoretical framework that draws on a variety of democratic theories. This section will provide a narrative about democracy and how its definition has broadened overtime, from Joseph Schumpeter's views on democracy (minimalist), Robert Dahl’s liberal democracy to substantive democracy (maximalist). Furthermore, this chapter will draw on the concept of the quality of democracy, human rights theory, challenges to the promotion of human right in Africa, and the concept of democracy backsliding, to provide a solid framework for the analysis.

3.1 Defining Democracy.

The term 'democracy' was coined by the Greeks -most likely the Athenians. The Greek term 'demos' means the people, and Kratos means to 'rule.' democracy as a form of government goes way back to the classical era of ancient Greece in which ordinary male adult citizens played a significant and direct role in the administration of the affair of the state, these practices were also carried out in a type of direct democracy, based on a public assembly.51

Joseph Schumpeter formulated an important contemporary version of the minimalist principle of democracy during half of the twentieth century. He defined democracy as "the will of the people" and sees democracy as a way for citizens to choose their leaders. Joseph Schumpeter's views on democracy provides an interesting perspective. He holds an elitist viewpoint, believing that only society's elites should be allowed to govern. Highlighting the

citizen's role and how a democracy should be run, Schumpeter makes a compelling case for why he believes this. According to Schumpeter, Democracy's sole purpose in society is to help aid decision-making. Hence, Schumpeter's democratic theory can be compared to the model of representative democracy. This is because, as in Schumpeter's ideals, a representative view sees an elite or individual being allowed to represent a group of many in a political system, with the individual being the elite. It will also be necessary to present a political analyst's opposing viewpoints like Zakaria Fareed, who views this concept of electoral democracy as 'illiberal democracy.' The main argument against this form of minimalist democracy does not incorporate civil liberties such as the freedom of association and freedom of speech.

Democracy, according to Robert Dahl, simply means "rule by the many," where he introduced polyarchal democracy. Dahl simply expanded on the minimalist concept of democracy with key political rights and institutions, thereby laying out the six required criteria for a large-scale democracy. Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule, possess inclusive citizenship and associational autonomy. Dahl believes that a democratic process must allow all adults subject to society's binding collective decisions to participate effectively and vote equally. Democracy must also provide citizens with opportunities to learn about civic issues and give them control over the issues that are brought before decision-makers. Dahl bases his argument for democracy on the fundamental principle of all people's inherent equality. Intrinsic equality, according to Dahl, means that all people's interests should be considered when making collective decisions. A democratic process in which each person has the right to participate in

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collective decision-making is the best way to ensure equal consideration of interests. 56

Although, Dahl’s expanded theoretical approach on democracy has been criticized for its narrow focus on elections and the procedures and the formal aspects of democracy. Elections per se will not necessarily lead to a democratic or democratization process if powerful elites control the various procedures for electing candidates, control access to the media and information controls conducting election campaigns, and controls access to resources57. Diamond Larry stresses the word “fallacy of electionalism” to explain and comprehend what is happening regarding the democratization process, which sparked a debate about the need to broaden the definition of democracy and democratization58. Diamond expands on the definition of democracy and further builds on the concept of liberal democracy, resulting in what is now considered the mainstream theory of democracy. In addition to electoral democracy, Diamond claims that liberal democracy requires three additional elements: Horizontal accountability of officeholders, that is, to constrain the authority at the executive branch. Accountability makes it less possible for officeholders to defy the deliberative process because they are kept accountable to one another, including the judiciary, while vertical accountability is secured primarily through elections and civil society groups59. Secondly, no power should rest on the institutional bodies or actors that are not answerable to the electorate, for instance, the military. Finally, equality and freedom of individuals and associations and democratic and civil pluralism are needed to express and represent conflicting interests and values beyond electoral processes60.

56 Ibid
58 Ibid
60 Ibid
Finally, substantive democracy theory focuses on a bottom-up approach to democracy; this theoretical approach aims to expand the concept of democracy from its formalist and minimalist concept by focusing on actual outcomes such as human rights, equal participation, and poverty alleviation\(^\text{61}\). Advocates of substantive democracy theory have been vocal critics of liberal democracy, claiming that the liberal democratic theory is extremely narrow in its focus on the political institutional aspect of democracy, and liberal democracy is founded on the notion of individual human liberty against the state. The state is directed towards political rights and civil liberties, rather than socioeconomic rights and equity for both people and non-elects\(^\text{62}\). Substantive theory points to the fact that power structure within and between elites is not adequately considered in the liberal democratic theory. If the representative body's real power lies in the hands of a tiny minority or few elites, "liberal democracy" could give the oligarchy a cloak of legitimacy rather than establish a governing structure where redistribution of resources and emancipation of the poor and oppressed is put into consideration. Hence, a wider concept of democracy is a concern not only on political processes but also the consistency and quality of democracy in terms of outcomes\(^\text{63}\).

\(^{62}\) Ibid
\(^{63}\) Ibid
3.2 Quality of Democracy

It is crucial to draw on Larry Diamond’s concept for gauging democratic quality. This approach makes it easier to evaluate a country’s democratic deepening, improvement or perhaps, towards democratic backsliding.

3.2.1 The rule of law

The rule of law is one of the fundamental frameworks on which every high-quality democracy is based on. Democracy requires a fully democratic rule of law that guarantees civil liberties, political freedom, and a mechanism for accountability, which directly upholds all people's political dignity and equality and constrain future violations of state power. States governed by the rule of law respect and recognize the rights of the weak and subordinate groups. All citizens are equals before the law, which is extended fairly and universally to all by an independent and impartial judiciary. There are a significant number of illiberal democracies, as describe by Zakaria, around the world, where electoral competition does not transition to liberal democracy or democratization but leads to potential abuse of power and state lawlessness. These are cases where the rule of law is weak which imply that the involvement of the marginalized or the poor in the political activities of the state is suppressed, misuse of power and corruption is widespread, the uncertainty of individual freedom and civil liberties, lack of accountability, political competition is either unfree or unfair, state resources are channel exclusively to few elites, and above all, civil groups are suppressed and prevented to organize and advocate. Diamond claims that no funding and foreign assistance in terms of aids will be enough until elected officials

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demonstrate both political will and sufficient self-restraint. This includes a mobilized and conscious civil society, as well as effective mechanisms for political competition and an independent-impartial judiciary so that electors can oust officials who obstruct the change.

3.2.2 Participation

No state or regime should be referred to as a democracy if citizens' rights to political participation are not included in the constitution. In other words, a democracy guarantees citizens' right to electoral and political participation in theory and practice. It is not enough for political participation to be included in the constitution. However, a good democracy is required to ensure that every citizen, irrespective of sex, religion, economic status, etc., are empowered to use these rights to influence the decision-making process in the state, such as the power to vote, the rights to protest bad policies, the rights to organize and assemble and the right to lobby for groups interest. Democratic quality can be accessed through the level of political participation, which is directly related to political equality; which Linz argues that illiberal democracy or authoritarian regimes are based on political apathy either by demobilizing the population or controls mobilization. Hence, if political apathy is a mechanism used by authoritarian regimes, then political participation in a truly democratic state requires not only through voting but participation in both civil societies and political parties, in debating public policy concerns, seeking transparency from elected officials, in observing official actions and engaging directly with the public. Thus, a vital prerequisite for universal political participation in a good society is the

67 Ibid
68 Ibid
widespread dissemination of basic education and literacy and enlightening of the general publics about governmental policies.\(^{70}\)

### 3.2.3 Competition

For a state to be democratic, the constitutional arrangement of the state should include frequent, free and fair electoral competition between various political parties.\(^{71}\) Democracies, moreover, varies in its degree of competitiveness, as Linz points out, antiliberal regimes who had access to power through electoral competition, though not free and fair election such as Nazis and Communist usually claim to be democratic.\(^{72}\) Hence, electoral competition requires openness, a level playing field for new political forces and opposing parties, in terms of access to campaign funding and mass media with a possibility for incumbents to be defeated or replaced with ease without any form of suppression. Of necessity, the democratic competition also relies on parity in access to mass media, pluralism of media control, diffusion of economic resources in society, and reinforcement of political rights by an impartial and independent judiciary.\(^{73}\) There is also a significant correlation between horizontal accountability on the one hand and the other hand, freedom, equality. These will reinforce a fair electoral competition and strengthen the transparency of an independent electoral commission.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{71}\) Dahl, R., (1998)

\(^{72}\) Linz, J. (2000). P.20


\(^{74}\) Ibid
3.2.4 Vertical Accountability

Niccolò Machiavelli has revealed that the ruling elites are driven by the motivation to dominate or oppress the people; hence, the affairs of the state should not solely rest on them with vigorous supervision by the people who put them in the position\(^{75}\). In a well-functioning democratic structure, the elected government officials are subject to accountability. Vertical accountability is accomplished in a democracy when the state government, institutions, its organs, and other affiliated government agencies are called to account for their actions. This form of accountability offers the general public, especially the civil society, media, and ordinary people, the opportunity to impose good governance practices on the public sector\(^{76}\).

Diamond's emphasis on accountability could be seen through three key features: information, motivation, and punishment. It is crucial for citizens to learn about public policies, know the motivation for such policies and decide either to reward or punish them by voting against such political leaders\(^{77}\). Continuous process of surveillance, challenging and demanding justification of policies from the political leaders by the civil society organization such as think tanks, media, pressure groups, and ordinary people require freedom, civil liberty, and a functioning rule of law to protect them from coercion\(^{78}\).

3.2.5 Horizontal Accountability

Horizontal accountability is based on the underlying concept of checks and balances underpinning the theory of division of powers; unlike vertical

\(^{75}\) Fombad, Charles Manga. (2020). P.79
\(^{76}\) Ibid.,
\(^{78}\) Ibid
accountability, which runs "upward" from citizens to leaders, horizontal accountability hinges on a functioning rule of law and legal system. The concept of checks and balance in a political structure requires each organ of government to amend or veto another branch's actions to prevent any branch from exercising too much power. It means that other branches of government can check an executive branch from abusively performing all three functions. Hence, the two big horizontal constraints on the executive are contained in the judicial and legislative branches. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of horizontal accountability lies on a regulatory system that allows the exercise of checks and balances by government entities that are independent of, and which do not compete with, the government as an option.

3.2.6 Freedom

Diamond suggests that freedom comprises three categories of rights: political, socio-economic, and civil rights. Political rights entail political participation and competition, such as the right to vote and be voted for, the right to protest bad policies, the right to organize political parties, and campaign for political support. These rights enforce vertical accountability between the three organs of government. Political economist has argued the socio-economic rights to be necessary for an individual’s realization of her political and civil right. Socio-economic rights include the rights to private property, the right to education, the right to health, the right to housing, equal wages, the right to an adequate standard of living, etc. Finally, the civil rights include freedom of speech, freedom of assembling and association, freedom to access information, the right to a fair trial, right to public facilities, right to

79 Ibid
80 Fombad, Charles Manga. (2020). P.69
82 Ibid
be free from unfair treatment and discrimination, the right to fair representation, right to protection and privacy and right to movement and residency, etc. To guarantee political and civil rights requires horizontal accountability in representation, competition, and vertical accountability. It also requires an independent, impartial judiciary that guarantees fairness and upholds the rule of law, an active civil society organization ready to defend the rights, freedoms, and integrity of the democratic process.

3.2.7 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is related to vertical accountability, though strengthened by participation and competition, which influences citizens' satisfaction with democracy's success and perception of its legitimacy. According to G. Bingham Powell, Jr., elected governments are open because the democratic process motivates them to enforce policies that the people want. Powell explains that democratic responsiveness is like a chain, linked to each other in a complex way. The first linkage involves structuring choices from the stage of citizens' preferences and citizens' voting behaviour. The second linkage involves institutional aggregation to a stage of selecting policymakers. Finally, the third linkage involves policymaking, at this stage, public policies, and outcomes. Powell stresses that in a high-quality democracy, the institutional arrangement is crucial in reinforcing responsiveness's linkages. The first linkage (citizens' preferences and citizens' voting behaviour) facilitates ousting incompetent policymakers and replacing them with someone keen on citizens' desires. The second linkage facilitates electing of a promise-keeping government and, finally, the election

84 Ibid
85 Powell, G. Bingham. (2004). The Quality of Democracy:
of various representative parties to act as agents on behalf of the people who chose them\textsuperscript{87}.

### 3.2.8 Equality

Diamond points out the equality is never perfectly achieved, yet a quality democratic government’s goal is to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. An individual with economic rights, quality education, sound health, and more information have more power to influence public discourse and has more political power to decide leaders' choice\textsuperscript{88}. Dahl points out that only through political equality can democracy be actualized\textsuperscript{89}. Yet, as Diamond observes, substantive economic and social policies might not be a precondition for democracy, but it is indeed important in practice. Political equality cannot be actualized if socioeconomic inequalities are too extreme, access to education, healthcare, and evenly distribution of wealth reinforces political equality and freedom\textsuperscript{90}.

### 3.3 Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 has served as a symbol and a standard for a better future for humans' security\textsuperscript{91}. However, the task of bringing the values to life is far from complete. Around the world, systematic and gross human rights violations continue at an unprecedented pace. These evils are perpetrated, especially by those in positions of authority, and they are hostile to or unconcerned about human rights allegations. In the meantime, our global

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid
\textsuperscript{89} Dahl, R., (1998). P.43
\textsuperscript{91} United Nation
interdependence grows, so as the growing concern of basic human rights of every group and people in the world\textsuperscript{92}.

Human rights can only be achieved when security for individual humans exists. On the other hand, according to Ken Booth, security can be attained only through the emancipation of individual humans\textsuperscript{93}. Booth emphasizes that security is the absence of threats whereas, emancipation is achieved through the liberation of people from both human and physical constraints that hinder or limit them from carrying out what they would freely want to do. Booths added that those constraints are poor education, poverty, political oppression (suppression of peaceful protesters and media), gross human right violations (torture, inhuman treatment, and extrajudicial killings)\textsuperscript{94}.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is considered a milestone for providing concise and universal principles in a politically unbiased and secular document that goes beyond religion, cultures, or political ideologies. The recognition of individual human emancipation and inalienable rights can only be achieved through the foundation of justice, freedom, and peace; thus, the international community is all bound by these set of human rights principles irrespective of the political system\textsuperscript{95}. Article 3 of the document states, "everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person", which means every individual human irrespective of identity, religion has the right to life which goes contrary to abuses such as extrajudicial killing or genocide\textsuperscript{96}. Article 5 prohibits the use of torture, inhuman treatment on no individual, and the Convention for the

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. P.37-38
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid. P.37-38
\textsuperscript{95} United Nations
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid
Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted in January 1951 to protect against any such human rights abuses. Article 9 also states, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile," while Article 10 strengthened Article 9, which states, "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and any criminal charge against him." All individuals are entitled to equal protection before the law in Article 7 of the UNHR document.

3.3.1 Challenges to the Promotion of Human Right in Africa.

Globalization is the increasing interconnectedness and interaction between different societies so that an event in a society or a part of the world will have an increasing impact on the other part of the world. It has been argued that the increasing interconnectedness between societies is a force for good, yet it has its global risk. This greater interconnectedness of people between societies has raised public concern for common threats on human rights; for instance, just as terrorism has created concern on the human rights issue, so is the Covid-19 pandemic.

Global interconnectedness due to globalization has made it possible for the dissemination of the virus to every part of the world, which directly impacts human security and human rights. The world is facing a “pandemic of human rights abuse,” according to the exact words of the UNSG Antonio Guterres. The pandemic has been used as a pretext to curb the basic rights

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
102 Ibid., P. 465
and freedom of people, restrict freedom of speech, protest, censor media, the
 crack down on dissents and journalist.

Claude Ake pointed out other challenges on human rights; he claims that the
Western notion of human rights does not fit the African realities and lacks
concreteness. He claimed that the legal framework of human rights "ascribes
abstracts rights to abstract beings." According to Ake, freedom of speech, the
right to protest, a fair trial is enjoyed by a few of those who have the means
to exercise such rights\textsuperscript{104}. The few do not require a bill of rights because their
power protects them. The majority are helpless; they simply have no means
to exercise these rights; hence they are not helped by such rights. Their
powerlessness and existential insecurities constrain them. How does an
ignorant reflect on free speech or influence public policies? Neither is there
freedom for people who are hungry or those who are eternally marginalized
by illness. According to Ake, the realization of human rights is not through
granting the poor more unattainable rights and begging the powerful to grant
them concessions on the pretence of justice and humanity but through the
empowerment of the common people\textsuperscript{105}.

\subsection*{3.4 Democratic Backsliding.}

Drawing on the earlier work of Robert Dahl and Larry Diamond et al’s the
quality of democracy, which defines democracy, not only in terms of
political participation and competition but it entails additional component
such as vertical and horizontal accountability, respect for human rights,
government responsiveness and equality\textsuperscript{106}. In 2011, the future of democracy
looks promising as 100 countries out of 174 countries passed the threshold

\textsuperscript{104} Claude Ake. (1987).
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid
for democracy compared to the “third wave” where only 35 countries were democracies according to the V-Dem datasets. At the end of 2016, it has been observed that the number of democracies has declined, and the Covid-19 pandemic has made it worse.\footnote{Göteborgs universitet (2017)}

The decline in democracies is as a result of state-led weakening or elimination of all/any component of political institutions that uphold an existing democracy, hence, we now see different manifestations of democracy erosion that are legitimized by the same institutions, democratic advocates resisted and prioritized. In the nutshell, democratic backsliding takes different forms, either when a wide variety of institutions experience rapid change and dramatic change as a result of a complete democratic breakdown and unambiguously oppressive regime or through a slow and gradual extractive change of institutions which is likely to produce a façade democratic regime or might not led to total regime change.\footnote{Bermeo, Nancy. (2016)}

While identifying trends in democratic backsliding or erosion, Satterwhite, A., et al categorized democratic erosion into two major groups and sub-groups. The first category of democratic erosion is intentional erosion which happens when one or more actors purposely weaken democratic norms and institutions over time. This is sub-divided into calculated and pluralistic erosion. Calculated erosion as its name implies, is when a single actor or party degenerates’ institutions in order to consolidate power either through restriction of civil liberties or executive aggrandizement.\footnote{Satterwhite, A.; Paulson, A., Brian, & Thompson (2019)., P. 6-13} In most cases, it disproportionately affects weak democracies or those with a shorter history of democracy which gives aspiring authoritarians the opportunity to weaken democratic institutions, consolidate power because democracy has not been
fully consolidated. Pluralistic erosion on the other hand, is when a number of uncoordinated actors undermine democratic norms and principles in order to increase their own influence, hence, it’s an event when several sectors of society deliberately promote the degradation of democracy. It is not a calculated attack on democratic institutions and norms by a single actor or group of actors, but rather a coalition of power centres attempting to gain control by undermining democratic norms. Opportunity erosion is divided into two subgroups, that is deep and superficial erosion. Deep erosion implies when an eroding actor has the ability to significantly breakdown democratic institutions and norms in times of a crisis while superficial erosion is characterized by events with little or no symptoms yet threatens to lead to severe democratic erosion but rather returns to its previous state.

Furthermore, Satterwhite, A., et al argues that the strategies used by authoritarian actor(s) to erode democratic norms and institutions is an attack on what both vertical and horizontal accountability stands for. Vertical erosion is an attack on the freedom of electoral rights, civil liberties and civil societies such as the NGOs, media etc, as outlined by Bermeo, it takes a form of strategic election manipulation, misuse of government resources for incumbent campaigns, hindering of media access or using security forces to repress dissent. Horizontal erosion is as a result of too much power concentrated on the executive branch of government whereby the concept of checks and balances are eliminated from a political structure.

110 Ibid., P. 6-13
111 Ibid., P. 21-23
112 Ibid
113 Bermeo, Nancy. (2016), 13-14
114 Satterwhite, A., Paulson, A., Brian, & Thompson (2019), P.6-13
3.5 Hypotheses

While theories on democracy, human rights, and democratic backsliding have been previously examined, this study will propose hypotheses to validate the theories implemented in the study. Does opportunistic democratic erosion trigger by crisis, lead to a decline or rollback in democracy quality and human rights? However, given the above background of the study, the following hypotheses will hereby be formulated.

H1: Covid-19 is more likely to have a negative effect on democracy and human rights.

H2. The lack of justice and increasing police brutality while enforcing the covid-19 rule have resulted in a decline in democracy and human rights.
4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodologies used to perform the research. This chapter also provides information on the methods and approaches used for this specific study. Besides, to provide readers with a thorough understanding of the research, the sample design, sample size, and mode of data collection are discussed in detail. Finally, research ethics is considered based on mutual respect, fairness, and moral value between the respondents and me.

4.1 Case selection

Political repression is a result of democratic backsliding and human rights violations which various factors can influence. There are studies on opportunistic erosion of democracy, whereby a crisis allows an actor the opportunity to erode democratic institution systematically. The Covid-19 pandemic is a peculiar case; it has eroded democratic institutions in many states, especially in Africa, and as such, this study should be limited to a particular geographical location.

In this case, Nigeria has been chosen as a case study. A focus on democratic backsliding and human rights in Nigeria due to the Covid-19 will provide in-depth knowledge, interpretation, and understanding of the current events and the potential to draw broader generalizations that could be applied to other African countries\textsuperscript{115}. However, since a case study can be used to trace major political processes and explore potential causal pathways between two or more variables, examining the effect of Covid-19 on democracy and human rights in the most populous country in Africa becomes imperative\textsuperscript{116}.

\textsuperscript{115} Landman, T., & Carvalho, E. (2017)., P.94
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., P.91
The fact that the majority of Nigerians embraces democracy and human rights, still, a drastic rollback of democratic institutions could be perceived during the pandemic is an interesting case to study in order to help evaluate rival explanations and provide a research plan, which involves problematizing the Nigerian political structure, actors, democracy and democratic institutions. Consequently, emphasis on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on human rights and democracy in Nigeria will provide a new classification on the political phenomena that is important for comparative research on a wide array of topics.

Finally, using a intra-case comparisons, which is compatible with a case study, will help examine human rights and democracy before and during the pandemic in Nigeria extensively over time while the key features are kept constant.

4.2 Research Methods

A quantitative approach using statistical analysis.

To investigating the impact of the Covid-19 containment measures on the repression of human rights and democracy in Nigeria, a quantitative methodological approach was used through the SPSS statistical software. This approach is used to interpret the socio-political events in Nigeria in details rather than describe it and try to as much as possible to be objective in the interpretation. Besides, quantifying the recent political event in Nigeria and basing the research on numbers and statistics helps to describe the

117 Ibid., P.90
118 Ibid., P.89
119 Ibid., P.76
phenomenon with some precision and even predict how the phenomenon will evolve\textsuperscript{120}.

4.3 Research Design, Data Collection Instrument, Sampling Techniques and Sampling Size

Research design is based on primary data collection through a survey by administering structured questionnaires on the internet exclusively for residents of Nigeria, using a non-probability method called convenient sampling. The survey involved asking 138 respondents specific closed-ended questions on democracy and human rights before and after the covid pandemic through questionnaires by taking a sample of the population to make statistical inferences. In addition, seven categories of the Likert scale were primarily used in the questionnaire because it includes a broad range of responses so that the respondents can articulate exactly how they feel; the odd number of responses implies that there will be a middle neutral answer for respondents who are unsure to answer a question\textsuperscript{121}.

A sampling design is an essential feature of all forms of quantitative research, and as such, the sampling design used was convenient sampling. Although a probability sampling design, representative of the entire population, would have been appropriate for this research, but the restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were a limitation. Convenient sampling is a non-probability sampling method focused on data collection from a member of the population who are readily available to participate in the study\textsuperscript{122}. However, that was the only available alternative sampling design available due to the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the short

\textsuperscript{120} Antonius, R. (2013), Chpt 2., P.2
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., Chpt 1., P.17
\textsuperscript{122} Denscombe, M. (2010), P.37-38
duration of time to get the study done. A web link for the survey was created from the SurveyMonkey to collect responses on social media from voluntary Nigerian participants, willing to participate in the study.

It is evident that the choice of sampling design, which is a non-probability sampling method, has its limitation. Sampling bias, response bias, or non-response bias has always been a pitfall for most researchers; after all, it also happens in a probability sampling design even though it happens without the researcher's knowledge\textsuperscript{123}. In a nutshell, it is possible that the convenient sampling design might not correctly reflect the population it is meant to represent; as Agresti highlights, inferences drawn from non-probability samples are unreliable and result in sampling bias\textsuperscript{124}. Hence, this study has taken steps to reduce sampling bias and unreliable inference by taking large samples, secondly, by cross-examination of results. At times, data could be misleading when dealing with numbers, especially with a non-probability sample design. The ability for a researcher to make sure she has enough supporting evidence to justify the more significant effect of the phenomena under investigation is necessary. Cross-checking the results helps to ensure that the conclusions are true and accurate. The result from this study will be cross-examined with Nigeria's score for the Pandemic Violation of Democratic Standard Index and the Pandemic Backsliding Index of Varieties of Democracy.

4.4 Ethical Consideration

The protection of participants' interests is critical. As a result of the complexity of this study, I expected potential threats to participants' personal safety and took precautions to prevent them by respecting participants'
privacy and sensitivity. Maintain the confidentiality of all information disclosed during the research, refrain from disclosing it to other participants or those not involved in the research and assure the respondents’ anonymity\textsuperscript{125}.

I specified on the questionnaire that participation is voluntary and not compelled or coerced. As researcher, I made it very clear to the participants, that involvement in the research was completely voluntary. Additionally, I informed participants about the research and specified the level of commitment expected of them\textsuperscript{126}.

Finally, I ensured that this study was conducted with fairness and integrity. While interacting with participants, I avoid deceit and misrepresentation. I ensure, I presented a fair and objective analysis of the findings and avoid plagiarizing the work of other researchers\textsuperscript{127}.

4.5 Analysis Method

A questionnaire has been used as a form of data collection for this study. These data have been examined for the analytical framework. Descriptive frequencies were used through graphs and tables to condense the vast amount of data into a simple form for the reader. Furthermore, correlation analysis will be used to see the relationships or associations between two variables and a bivariate and multivariate regression analysis with be used to for hypotheses testing.

\textsuperscript{125} Denscombe, M. (2010)., P.331-332
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., P.333
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., P.336-337
4.5.1 Operationalization and measurement of variables

Dependent variables

This study is based on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the repression of human rights and democracy; then, it is logical that the dependent variables are democracy and human rights. The shrinking political state in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic calls for a study case, and as such, a questionnaire was created to understand public opinion on the state of democracy and human rights during the pandemic. The question goes as follows.
Question 7: How do you view the democracy in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic?
Question 9: How do you view the human rights in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic?

A seven Likert scale with a close-ended linear set of questions was used to collect data, that is, from responses that decrease in intensity to responses that increase in intensity, and a ‘neutral’ response was placed in the middle. These variables were later recoded into three responses for a straightforward interpretation; however, the neutral response was still placed in the middle. Finally, for the regression analysis, these two dependent variables datasets were later combined through the SPSS to form another variable because both variables come from the same dataset, and secondly, democracy and human rights are both highly correlated. Democracy is sustainable where there are human rights and vice versa.

The combination of the two dependent variables was later renamed and made the new dependent variable “perception of human rights and democracy"
during the Covid-19 pandemic”. It was to regress against the independent variables in the bivariate and multivariate regression model.

**Independent Variable**

This study is based on the interaction of the Covid-19 measures on democracy and human rights in Nigeria. It is not only based on the Covid-19 measures alone but how the Nigerian government has used the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate the freedom of the people. The principal independent variable is:

**Question 7**: Do you perceive that the Nigerian Authorities are using the Covid-19 pandemic measures (Lockdown Restrictions) to violate human rights in Nigeria.

A five Likert scale with a close-ended linear set of questions was used to collect data, and a ‘neutral’ response was also placed in the middle. The datasets were later recoded into three responses for straightforward interpretation and renamed as “perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights” but the neutral response was still placed in the middle.

In addition, enforcement of the Covid-19 lockdown measures by security officers was met with brutality, which violates human rights; hence, this study will introduce two additional independent variables in the multivariate regression analysis. These are.

**Question 15**: How Likely Is Police Brutality, Harassment, Physical Assault, Arbitrary Detention During the Covid Pandemic?

**Question 16**: How Often Do You Get Justice for Police Brutality, Harassment, Physical Assault, Arbitrary Detention?

These independent variables were later recoded into three responses for easy interpretation.
**Control Variable.**

The control variables in this study include gender and education qualification. These questionnaire close-ended questions are as follows.

Question 1; What Gender Do You Identify As?
Question 3; What Is the Highest Level of Education You Have Completed?

The variable for level of education was a five scales variable which includes primary, secondary, technical, university and post-graduate level of education. This variable was later recoded into three scales which includes low, middle (secondary and technical) and higher-level education (university and post-graduate).

This study aimed to get see the perception of female respondents on democracy and human rights in Nigeria and based on the level of education.
5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The statistical data gathered from the survey will be used in this part of the paper. The data will be analyzed through the SPSS statistical application to give a comprehensive report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the repression of human rights and democracy in Nigeria.

5.1 Descriptive Results

It is crucial to highlight Nigerians’ attitudes towards democracy and human rights before analysing the impact of the crisis on democracy and human rights. This is will partly give an insight on the recent events if backsliding was caused due to the fact that ordinary Nigerians cease to see democracy as “the only game in town,” or they do. Hence, Nigerians’ perception on democracy and human rights was analysed using a descriptive statistic.

5.1.1 Nigerians’ perception of democracy and human rights.

This study shows that democracy and human rights are highly correlated. Table 1 show Nigerian’s support for democracy and human rights as most of the respondents perceive democracy and human rights as important. From the tables below, 85.5 percent of respondents see democracy as important, and 81.2 percent see human rights as an important element compared to 12.3 and 15.2 respondents, who feel democracy and human rights unimportant.
How Important is Democracy?                 How Important is Human Rights?

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<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Calculations from author’s primary data

Since majority of the respondents support democracy and human rights, it is logical that they will also perceive media freedom as component of democracy for scrutinizing elected officials. This study shows Nigerians supports for media freedom as an instrument for dissemination of information. 81.9 respondents in this study perceive media freedom as important while 13 percent respondents do not perceive media freedom as important.

How Important Is the Media for The Dissemination of Information?

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<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Calculations from author’s primary data

5.1.2 Nigerians’ perception of the Covid-19 measures.

The table below reveal the lack of trust between the people and the Nigerian government. This study reveals that 58 percent of the respondent perceive the Nigerian authorities are using the Covid-19 pandemic measures as a pretext to
violate human rights in Nigeria. 22.5 percent disagrees while 18.8 neither agree nor disagree.

Do You Perceive That the Nigerian Authorities Are Using the Covid-19 Pandemic Measures To Violate Human Rights In Nigeria?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Calculations from author’s primary data

5.1.2.1 Civil Liberties

Apart from the fact that most Nigerians perceive the Covid-19 measures as partly used as a pretext to violates human rights, 56.5 respondents believe the containment measures are partly used to suppress Nigeria from politically demonstrating or protest. 31.2 respondent feels it is unlikely that the measure is used to suppress the freedom to protest while 2.4 remained neutral.

How Likely Is the Covid-19 Containment Measures Partly Used To Supress Your Freedom To Politically Demonstrate Or Protest?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Calculations from author’s primary data
Table 5 shows a comparatively little difference between respondents who answered ‘likely’ and ‘unlikely.’ Although, the highest of respondents, 45.7 percent, believes it is likely that the Covid-19 measures are partly used to suppress the freedom of speech of Nigerians compared to 43.5, who believes it is unlikely that the Covid-19 measure is used to suppress freedom of speech. In a nutshell, millions of Nigerians are active social media users, and as such, this survey shows that Nigerians feel that the Covid-19 measures could not suppress them from voicing their opinions or dissatisfaction with government policies on networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.

How Likely Is the Covid-19 Containment Measures Partly Used to Suppress Your Freedom Of Speech?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Calculations from author’s primary data

5.1.2.2 Media Freedom

This study shows that most of the respondents believe, it is likely that the Nigerian government tries to suppress media freedom during the Covid-19 pandemic. 65.2 percent of respondents perceive strategic suppression of media freedom during the pandemic, while 22.5 feel it is unlikely that the Nigerian government tries to suppress media freedom. 12.3 percent of respondents remained neutral.
How Likely Is It That the Nigerian Government Tries To Suppress Media Freedom During The Covid Pandemic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Calculations from author’s primary data

Out of 138 respondents, only 48 respondents were a journalist. Hence, when asked how often they get harassed, detained, tortures for try to do their job, the highest number of the respondent (53.5 percent) denied any form of abuse while trying to do their job. 37.2 percent often get brutalized, harassed while trying to do their job, while 9.3 percent remain neutral.

This result is contrary to the series of reports on intimidation and harassment of journalists; hence, interpretation should be made with caution. The result might be partly because most television and radio broadcasting stations in the country are either owned by the Nigerian government, the state government, or privately owned and controlled by powerful elites. Logically, journalists whom either work for the government or State-owned media outlets are often biased since the content they cover is often influenced by the government or politicians; therefore, they hardly get brutalized or harassed.

How Often Do You Get Harassed, Detained, Tortured for Trying to Do Your Job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

128 Dr. Mrs. Christiana Ogeri Chukwu. (2015)
5.1.3 Nigerians’ perception on democracy and human rights before and during the pandemic.

This section is motivated to strengthen the study under investigation and identify if Covid-19 has led to democratic backsliding in Nigeria.

The tables below reveal a drastic decline in democracy in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic. 75.4 percent of respondents view Nigeria as undemocratic during the pandemic compared to the 63.2 percent of respondents, who view Nigeria as undemocratic before the Covid-19 pandemic. 18.8 percent of respondents view Nigeria as democratic during the pandemic compared to 26.8 percent of respondents who view Nigeria as democratic before the pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undemocratic</td>
<td>Undemocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.4 Percent</td>
<td>62.3 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Percent</td>
<td>10.9 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.8 Percent</td>
<td>26.8 Percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result shown in the descriptive statistics shows a decline in human rights during the pandemic. 80.4 percent of respondents reveal an increase in human rights violations during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to 78.3 percent of respondents who perceive some human rights violations before the Covid-19 Pandemic. In addition, 15.6 percent of respondents view respect for human rights in Nigeria before the pandemic, while a lower percentage of
respondents of 11.6 percent view respect for human right during the pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human rights violations</td>
<td>80.4 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8.0 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for human rights</td>
<td>11.6 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human rights violations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Calculations from author’s primary data

This result shows the prevalence of police brutality, physical assault, harassment before the covid-19 pandemic rather than during the Covid-19 pandemic. 63 percent of respondents perceive police brutality before the pandemic compared with 56.5 percent of respondents who perceive the prevalence of police brutality during the covid. This result is contrary to several reports on the abusive way security agencies carry out the Covid-19 lockdown order. However, the interpretation of this result should come with caution because many years of police brutality of security officers before the pandemic cannot be compared to few months of police brutality during the pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How likely is police brutality, physical assault during the Covid pandemic?</th>
<th>How likely is police brutality, physical assault before the Covid?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>56.5 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14.5 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>28.9 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>63 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7.2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>29.7 Percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Calculations from author’s primary data
5.2 Bivariate Results

The section will focus on two steps, verifying the association and effect of both dependent and the principal independent variables. A correlation model will be used to determine the degree of association between the DV and IV, at the same time, a regression model will be introduced to see the level of effect Covid-19 has on the democracy and human rights in Nigeria.

5.2.1 Correlations

The table below shows the relationship between the dependent variable (perception of democracy and human rights during Covid-19) and the principal independent variable (Perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights). The correlation coefficient of -.402 signifies that both variables tend to move in an opposite direction; that is, as the Nigerian government increases or toughens the Covid-19 measures, democracy, and human rights decline by .402. This result tends to explain that Covid-19, democracy, and human rights are negatively correlated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.402**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9. Calculations from author’s primary data
The regression model shown below indicates a 16.1 percent variability in the dependent variable (Perception of democracy and human rights during Covid-19 Pandemic) by the independent variable (Perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights). The low R-squared value does not fit the data perfectly probably due to the small sample size. Although, we cannot be too hasty to dismiss the model, hence, conclusion on the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable can still be drawn, if the independent variable is statistically significant.

The analysis of variance shows good model fit at a significant level of .001. This means that P-value is less than 0.05.

The interaction and the effect between the dependent and the independent variable could be seen in the bivariate regression analysis in the table below. The result from the table shows good model fit but it is crucial to discuss the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. A negative effect could be seen on the dependent variable, B-coefficient at -.589 signify that at 1 percent increase in using the Covid-19 pandemic measures to violate human rights by the Nigerian authorities will lead to a decline of .589 in democracy and human right in Nigeria. This means that the Covid pandemic measure is causing a rollback in democracy quality in Nigeria.

According to the result below, the P-value is at .001 which is less than 0.05, this show that the result is statistically significant, and we can easily accept the first hypothesis. Covid-19 do have negative effect on democracy and human rights. Therefore, we can advance to investigate the second hypothesis in multivariate regression model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights.</td>
<td>14.353***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights.</td>
<td>-5.114***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2 = .161$

Standard error of estimate = 1.116

F statistic = 26.149***

N = 137

a. Perception of democracy and human rights during Covid-19 Pandemic?

Note: ***p significant at .001

Table 10. Regression model Between Dependent and Independent Variable with researcher’s primary data

5.3 Multivariate Regression Result

Regression

The regression model indicates a 22.5 percent variability in the dependent variable (perception of democracy and human rights during the pandemic) by the independent variable (perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights). The low R-squared value does not fits the data perfectly probably due to the small sample size. Although, we cannot be too hasty to dismiss the model, hence, conclusion on the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable can still be drawn, if the independent variable is statistically significant.

The analysis of variance shows good model fit at a significant level of .001. This means that P-value is less than 0.05.
The effect between the dependent and the three independent variables could be seen in the multivariate regression analysis in the table below. All three independent variables show a negative effect on the dependent variable through the B-coefficient. The B-coefficient of the dependent variable against the principal independent variable “perception of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext to violate rights” in the multivariate regression model is -.531, which slightly reduced compared to the value of the bivariate regression model. Hence, democracy and human rights during the Covid-19 pandemic decline as the independent variable increases by 1 percent.

However, the second independent variable, “police brutality during pandemic” against the dependent variable, also shows a negative effect, with a B-coefficient of -.113. However, we cannot deny that the P-value at .297 is greater than 0.05. It indicates that it is not statistically significant. It does not mean there was no excessive abusive enforcement of the Covid-19 rule by security forces; respondents of this study answered the survey based on their perception. Respondents perceive more police brutality before the Covid-19 pandemic compared to during the pandemic. After all, we cannot compare police brutality existing after 1999 to few months during the Covid-19 pandemic. Varieties of democracy reported alleged major violations on abusive enforcement of security officers in enforcing the Covid-19 emergency measures.

In addition, the table below indicates a decline in democracy and human rights against the third independent variable at a B-coefficients of -.520. A percent increase in the lack of justice against police brutality will lead to a decline in democracy and human rights at .493 percent. In addition, the P-value at .003, which is less than 0.05, shows the result is statistically significant.
Finally, the dummy variable of gender and educational qualification has been chosen for this model. The dummy variable male has been selected as the reference category, and the table below shows the dummy variable for females deviated positively from the reference category at .099. This signifies that the female in this model strongly perceive a decline in democracy and human right more than the male counterpart but unfortunately, it is not statistically significant at the P-value of .606, which is greater than 0.05.

For the dummy variable for educational qualification, the low-level education variable has been chosen as the reference category. The table below shows the mid-level education deviated negatively from the reference category while high-level education deviated positively. This signifies that the respondents with higher-level education in this study strongly perceive a decline in democracy and human rights more than the other level of education. Mid-level education perceives less decline in democracy and human right more compared to other levels of education, but unfortunately, both dummy variables are not statistically significant at the P-value of .865 and .953 which is greater than 0.05.

For this model, by putting the statistical significance of the ANOVA table into consideration at .001, we can easily accept the second hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.571</td>
<td>5.659</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice for police brutality</td>
<td>-.520</td>
<td>-3.042</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police brutality during pandemic</td>
<td>-.113</td>
<td>-1.047</td>
<td>.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the Covid-19</td>
<td>-.531</td>
<td>-4.509</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measures as a pretext to violate rights.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Level of Education</td>
<td>-.143</td>
<td>-.171</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Level of Education</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Robustness Check: V-Dem assessment of democratic backsliding in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic

To validate the accuracy of the results of this study, cross-examination of Nigeria’s score on Pandemic violation of Democratic standard index and the Pandemic Backsliding Index of Varieties of Democracy is necessary.

5.4.1 The rule of Law

In a democratic setting, all citizens are equal before the law, and as such, the law is enforced on everyone, including the local oligarchs, government officials, or political bosses\textsuperscript{129}. In the Nigerian context, all citizens are not equal before the law; at least, elected officials and security forces act above the law. The framework of the rule of law is weak; whereby, the nation is degraded to a \textit{banana republic} in which the rule of law replaces the rule of

\textsuperscript{129} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005)., P.4-6
rulers. In most cases, the constitution is intentionally undermined for the sake of political expediency or to benefit a select few influential individuals.\textsuperscript{130}

Since Nigeria was founded on the ground of democratic values, the security and welfare of Nigerians should be of utmost priority to the government under the constitution. The promotion of freedom for all residents and citizens, political participation, media freedom, accountability, access to alternative sources of information should all be protected by the government.\textsuperscript{131} The major findings in this study reveal how elected officials have undermined the rule of law by using the Covid-19 measures to repress Nigerians.\textsuperscript{132} In addition, due to the violation of democratic standard by the Nigerian authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic, V-Dem research also show a high risk of democratic decline in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic.\textsuperscript{133}

\section*{5.4.2 Competition}

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic poses a serious threat to electoral conduct, yet only two state gubernatorial elections took place amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Electoral competition in both states was between different political parties, but both elections might be regular but not free and fair.\textsuperscript{134} Not free and fair in the sense that there were growing concerns about arms hoarding ahead of the election. There have been instances of rival political groups publicly exhibiting weapons or participating in gunfire exchanges simply to demonstrate that they, too, have access to guns – a means of oppression of political opponents. Much of the time, they do so in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{130} Falana Femi. (2019)
\bibitem{131} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005)
\bibitem{132} Falana Femi. (2019)
\bibitem{133} Varieties of Democracy (2020B)
\bibitem{134} Peter Dada. (2020)
\end{thebibliography}
the presence of police officers who pose as advisors to political actors and look the other way\textsuperscript{135}.

Although, this study is unable to identify if election fraud took place in Ondo’s governorship election (incumbent retains power), apart from arms stunts. Nancy Bermeo highlighted that strategic election manipulation differs from election-day fraud; it occurs in a way electoral competition does not appear to be fraudulent. It happens in advance of the polling day and rarely involves a breach of the law\textsuperscript{136}. On the other hand, the opposition party won the gubernatorial seat in Edo.

5.4.3 Participation

No regime can be considered democratic unless it grants all adult citizens formal political participation rights, such as the right to vote, organize, protest, assembly, lobby for their interests, or influence decision-making processes\textsuperscript{137}. However, the political atmosphere in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic has undermined every citizen's right to political participation. The right to vote is not restricted, yet the heightened level of violence and the arm tussle between political parties has resulted in voters' fear and political apathy in the recently concluded gubernatorial election in both states\textsuperscript{138}. This study indicates that the rights to organize, protest, the assembly has been restricted using the Covid-19 as a pretext for political repression as the Nigerian government restrict citizens' movement, imposed curfews to curb the spread of the protest and, began to clamp down on #EndSARS organizers.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid
\textsuperscript{136} Bermeo, Nancy. (2016), P.7-9
\textsuperscript{137} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005), P.4-6
\textsuperscript{138} Peter Dada. (2020)
across the state in bid to suppress further protest. #OccupyLekkiTollGate protesters were also de-humanized at the police custody to inflict fear to prevent further protest\(^{139}\).

Besides, the Central Bank of Nigeria directed that #EndSARS organizer's bank account be frozen; in addition, there were prevented from traveling abroad, and their passport seized. It is important to note that the interest of Nigerian did not influence decision-making processes because police corruption and brutality is still at large\(^ {140}\). This study perceives political repression using the Covid-19 as a pretext for executive aggrandizement resulting in a drastic democracy backsliding ever experienced after 1999.

### 5.4.4 Horizontal Accountability

Officeholders must also be accountable to other institutional actors who have the competence and legal authority to monitor and sanction their actions. This is where the principle of checks and balances comes to play\(^ {141}\). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the executive arm of government enjoyed excessive power while other institutional actors were always at the executives' will; hence the status quo remains during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the Nigerian President has sole executive authority, including the authority to appoint and fire cabinet members and other institutional actors, he is not accountable. For instance, on 24 February 2021, the President appointed the Acting Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)\(^ {142}\); subsequently, the Judiciary Staff of Nigeria (JUSUN) is presently on an indefinite nationwide strike (as at the time of writing). On 4 April

\(^{139}\) Sahara Reporters. (2021*)
\(^{140}\) Eniola Akinikuotu. (2020)
\(^{141}\) Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005)., P. 19-25
\(^{142}\) Premium Times. (2021)
2021, the union ordered the closure of all courts unless the judiciary is granted financial autonomy from the executive.\textsuperscript{143}

The lack of horizontal accountability has made it possible for gradual strategic executive aggrandizement before the pandemic. However, the Covid-19 measures have been instrumental in enhancing the executive's power to justify the excessive executive aggrandizement, which led to a severe democratic backsliding during the covid-19 pandemic.

\subsection*{5.4.5 Vertical Accountability}

As Diamond and Morlino highlighted, the vertical accountability dynamic is beyond political competition and the interaction between elected officials and Nigerian voters; it also involves the mass media, civil association, think tanks, social movements, and NGOs to keep the government accountable\textsuperscript{144}. If the Nigerian executives do not see themselves as an equal political actor to other government institutional actors, then it is unlikely the executives will be accountable to the civil society organizations and unlikely to be accountable to Nigerians.

More than 90 percent of TV stations are either owned, financed, and controlled by the federal or state government, which can be directly linked to a saying, “he who pays the piper dictates the tune\textsuperscript{145}.” Besides, with over 100 media agencies in the country, the #EndSARS protest was aired by only three media stations; the stations were later fined the sum of 3 million naira each, this means that the Nigerian private media thrives, but their survival is dependent on not overriding or overstepping government authority\textsuperscript{146}. Media

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{143} Don Silas. (2021)  \\
\textsuperscript{144} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005)., P. 19-25  \\
\textsuperscript{145} Chukwu, C. (2015)  \\
\textsuperscript{146} Yusuf Akinpelu. (2020)
\end{flushleft}
restriction is the centre of democratic backsliding in Nigeria. In addition, this study shows Nigerian are aware of these restrictions as most of the respondents believe it is extremely likely that the Nigerian government tries to suppress media freedom.

This study also shows that the highest number of journalists refute any form of harassment or tortured while trying to do their job, although; previous reports indicate attacks on journalists, especially journalism involving private individuals or freelance journalists. Enola Daniel working with Guardian Newspaper (private-owned), was stripped, slapped, arrested, and his phone destroyed by policemen from the Lagos State Police Command while on duty on February 28, 2021, he later released. A similar incident happened to freelancer journalist Frederick Olatunde odimayo; he was attacked due to his report on drug trafficking by unknown men on April 6, 2021.

Finally, the level of media restriction during the Covid-19 pandemic by the government has created limited room for the civil society organization to operate, the political repression of the #EndSARS and #OccupyLekkiTollGate protesters was enough to create fear and suppress any form of opposition of the government. Besides, in comparison to Pandemic violation of democratic standard index, Varieties of Democracy observes a major violation of media freedom in Nigeria.

5.4.6 Freedom and Equality

Diamond and Morlino sees freedom as the possession of political, civil, and socioeconomic rights. On the other hand, equality means that every Nigerian

\[147\] Sahara Reporters. (2021)
\[148\] Premium Times. (2021) (B)
\[149\] Varieties of Democracy. (20202)
has equal political, civil, and socioeconomic rights\textsuperscript{150}. The survey shows that limited freedom and equality exist in Nigeria. Though these rights are enshrined in the Nigerian constitution, it is practically an illusion. Apart from the increasing rate of poverty, hunger, and socioeconomic inequality due to the flawed warfare system in the country during the covid-19, brutality, arbitrary killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture were perpetrated by the security forces, especially the Nigerian Police and the Nigerian army\textsuperscript{151}.

This study has established the prevalence of violence against women by security forces; out of the respondents who reported being brutalized, harassed, or torture, the highest percentage are females rather than their male counterparts. In addition, the United Nations Nigeria report on GBV during the Covid-19 pandemic during March 2020 reflects a significant increase in GBV during the lockdown period. It has been reported that GBV incidents reports of 24 states out of 36 states were 346\textsuperscript{152}. GBV incidents skyrocket by 56 percent in two weeks to 794 incidents. Unfortunately, some of these violent events resulted in the death of victims, abuse of girls, rape of children, and tenant-landlord attacks\textsuperscript{153}.

5.4.7 Responsiveness

The Nigerian government could be said to be responsive when democratic processes compel them to create and enforce policies according to the wishes of ordinary Nigerians\textsuperscript{154}. The Nigerian government's lack of responsiveness was visible during the Covid-19 pandemic period, for instance, from increasing poverty, socioeconomic inequalities, corruption- the Covid-19 palliates to alleviate hunger was hoarded by elected officials, continuous

\textsuperscript{150} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005), P. 33-40
\textsuperscript{151} National Human Right Commission Report. (2020)
\textsuperscript{152} United Nation Nigeria., (2020), P., 4-7
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid
\textsuperscript{154} Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2005), P. 63-67
police brutality even after the #EndSARS protest, political repression, political instability and lack of accountability, mainly on account of the #EndSARS protesters who were massacred by security forces at the Lekki Tollgate on the 20th October, 2020.
6 Conclusion.

This study sort to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the repression of democracy and human rights in Nigeria. As such, theories of democracy, human rights, and democratic backsliding have been used to explain the political atmosphere in Nigeria. This study analyzed the impact of the covid-19 measures through a case study to know the perception of Nigerians on democracy and human rights during the pandemic; alas, findings in this research show a drastic democratic backsliding during the covid-19 pandemic when compared before the covid-19 pandemic. We found a moderate negative correlation between the Covid-19 pandemic measures, democracy, and human rights in Nigeria; that is, the Covid-19 pandemic measure has led to a decline in democracy and human rights in Nigeria. Finding also show increasing democratic backsliding of media freedom, political participation, especially on citizens' ability to protest, freedom of speech, police brutality, though respondents perceive more brutality before the pandemic compared to during the pandemic and lack of justice on issues of police brutality.

The Nigerian government needs to know that political repression does not come without implications and its citizens are not entirely a piece of plastic that they can mould as its dime fit and every human are motivated by emotions that are directly linked to their needs. John Burton believes that human needs include the feeling of belonging to a particular group (equality), and the need for freedom is an appropriate condition for the gratification of needs\(^{155}\). While investigating the perception of Nigerians on democracy and human rights, this study shows the highest number of respondents support democracy and human rights. Hence, Nigerians’ search for social justice, 

\(^{155}\) Burton, J. (1990)., P., 13-32
social equality, freedom, economic needs, cultural needs, pursuit for good welfare, and political involvement in issues that directly affect them could be linked to their support for democracy.

Besides, these needs are not negotiable, yet, when humans get deprived of these needs, it creates a threat to physical security, which activates the emotion of fear, frustration which subsequently leads to anger. The #EndSARS protest was a reaction of anger, though based on interests, not on the needs of Nigerians. The underlying needs for the protest was an end to poverty, bad governance, social injustice, human right violations, political inequality, socioeconomic inequalities. However, when force is used on people already reacting to anger, aggression or conflict occurs.

Continuous political repression by the Nigerian government using the Covid-19 measures could potentially lead to violent conflict in the country; after all, it only took Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, to set himself ablaze in protest against police harassment to spark the Arab Spring. Once conflict erupts, Nigeria could lock in a “conflict trap,” according to Paul Collier, once conflict has begun, the cycle of aggression and violence becomes a trap that is impossible to escape. Mary Kaldor also emphasizes that new war in the globalized era is usually messy and complicated, violence is mainly directed on women and children, conflict becomes a vicious cycle, persists for so many years.

Nigerians’ needs demand gratification such as political equality, social justice, socioeconomic equality, freedom, etc., but unfortunately, it is not

156 Burton, J. (1990)., P., 5-60
157 Ibid.
158 Marc Fisher. (2011)
159 Collier, & Collier, Paul. (2007)., P.24-41
161 Burton, J. (1990)., P., 29
going to happen soon because “The leaders of many of the poorest countries” in the world are themselves among the global superrich. They like things the way they are, and so it pays to keep their citizens uneducated and ill-informed. Unfortunately, many of the politicians and senior public officials in the countries of the bottom billion are villains\(^{162}\). This study has revealed that the Nigerian leaders lack the political will to make things right, and if political repression persists with the use of the Covid-19 measures as a pretext, the future of Nigeria is unknown.

However, there is need to develop future studies on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on democracy and human right in other African states, focus should be more on electoral competition and political participation and preventive measures on how to keep democracy healthy amidst the pandemic to prevent the implication of political repression (conflict) in the region.

\(^{162}\) Collier, & Collier, Paul. (2007), P.67
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Appendix 1
Note that appendices have separate pagination and that they have to be listed manually in table of contents.

Democracy and Human rights: Survey Monkey

Democracy and human rights

Hello everyone, I'm a master's student of International Affairs at the Linnaeus University. I am currently writing a master thesis that concerns a decline in democracy and human rights in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. This survey aims to assess Nigerians’ perception of the deteriorating human rights due to the Covid19 containment measures/lockdown restrictions. Research Ethics is put into consideration. This survey is anonymous and confidential. I do not require any personal information, and participation is voluntary. I will be grateful if I can borrow 2-4 minutes of your time to answer these questions. Please disregard this survey, if you do not reside in Nigeria.

Thanks

* 1. WHAT GENDER DO YOU IDENTIFY AS?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Prefer not to say
☐ Others

* 2. WHAT IS YOUR AGE?

☐ Under 18 years old
☐ 18-24 years old
☐ 25-34 years old
☐ 35-44 years old
☐ 45-54 years old
☐ 55-64 years old
3. WHAT IS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION YOU HAVE COMPLETED?

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Technical school training
- University Graduates: BA, B.Sc., HND
- Post Graduate degree: Master’s or Doctorate degree

* 4. HOW IMPORTANT IS DEMOCRACY?

- Extremely unimportant
- Unimportant
- Somewhat unimportant
- Neutral
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Extremely Important

* 5. HOW IMPORTANT IS HUMAN RIGHTS?

- Extremely Unimportant
- Unimportant
- Somewhat unimportant
- Neutral
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Extremely Important
6. HOW DO YOU VIEW DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- [ ] Extremely Undemocratic
- [ ] Undemocratic
- [ ] Somewhat Undemocratic
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Somewhat Democratic
- [ ] Democratic
- [ ] Extremely Democratic

* 7. HOW DO YOU VIEW DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- [ ] Extremely Undemocratic
- [ ] Undemocratic
- [ ] Somewhat Undemocratic
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Somewhat Democratic
- [ ] Democratic
- [ ] Extremely Democratic

* 8. HOW DO YOU VIEW HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- [ ] Extreme human rights violations
- [ ] None
9. HOW DO YOU VIEW HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?
- Extreme human rights violation
- Lack of human rights
- Neutral
- Somewhat respect of human rights
- Respect for human rights
- Extremely high respect for human rights

* 10. DO YOU PERCEIVE THAT THE NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES ARE USING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEASURES (LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS) TO VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
11. HOW LIKELY IS THE COVID-19 CONTAINMENT MEASURES (LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS) PARTLY USED TO SUPPRESS YOUR FREEDOM OF SPEECH?
- Extremely Unlikely
- Not Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

12. HOW LIKELY IS THE COVID-19 CONTAINMENT MEASURES (LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS) PARTLY USED TO SUPPRESS YOUR FREEDOM TO POLITICALLY DEMONSTRATE OR PROTEST?
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

13. HAVE YOU BEEN BRUTALIZED, HARASSED, PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED BY THE POLICE, MILITARY OR OTHER SECURITY FORCES?
- Yes
* 14. HOW LIKELY WAS POLICE BRUTALITY, HARASSMENT, PHYSICAL ASSAULT, ARBITRARY DETENTION BEFORE THE COVID PANDEMIC?

- No
- Maybe

- Extremely Unlikely
- Not Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

15. HOW LIKELY IS POLICE BRUTALITY, HARASSMENT, PHYSICAL ASSAULT, ARBITRARY DETENTION DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC?

- Extremely Unlikely
- Not Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

* 16. HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET JUSTICE FOR
POLICE BRUTALITY, HARASSMENT, PHYSICAL ASSAULT, ARBITRARY DETENTION?

- Never
- Very Rarely
- Rarely
- Neutral
- Occasionally
- Often
- Very Often

* 17. HOW IMPORTANT IS THE MEDIA FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION?

- Extremely Unimportant
- Unimportant
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Neutral
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Extremely Important

18. HOW likely IS IT THAT THE NIGERIAN GOVERNEMENT TRYS TO SUPPRESS MEDIA FREEDOM DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC?

- Extremely Unlikely
- Not Likely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
19. HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET HARASSED, DETAINED, TORTURED FOR TRYING TO DO YOUR JOB? (JOURNALIST ONLY... IF YOU ARE NOT A JOURNALIST, PLEASE CLICK "NOT APPLICABLE")

- Never
- Very Rarely
- Rarely
- Neutral
- Occasionally
- Often
- Very Often
- Not Applicable