Talcott Parsons' Theory of Social Action and the Preponderance of Civil Disorder in Nigeria

Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU
Department of Political Science,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka,
Anambra State, Nigeria.

Chidi O. UKAEGBU
Department of Political Science,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka,
Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract
Nigeria is a state replete with dynamics of social action and various shades of civil action and disorder arising from the character of the variety of its social forces and groups. Many of these date back to the early days of British colonisation and the founding of the Nigerian state and have continued unabated to the present day. This study investigated the intersection of Talcott Parsons' theory of social action and the preponderance of such civil disorder in Nigeria. The study was anchored on structural-functional theory, and the explanatory research design was adopted. It relied on the documentary method of data collection, and on qualitative types of data, while secondary sources of data generation were used. The general analytic tool was adopted for the presentation and analysis of the data generated for the study. This provided the basis for concluding that the rational actions of individuals translate to the Purposive actions of anomic groups when they have acquired general symbols and meaning. If the state does not properly manage this, it escalates into civil unrest. Accordingly, this study recommended that logical acts of disputation be engaged to address systemic injustices in the Nigerian state.

Keywords:
Social Action, Civil Disorder, Preponderance, Dialectics, Purposive Action.

Introduction

Nigeria represents the best and worst of what African states offer the world. It is a state replete with dynamics of social action and various shades of civil action and disorder arising from the nature and character of the variety of its social forces and groups. Many of these social action and civil disorder date back to the early days of British colonization and founding of the Nigerian state and has continued unabated to the present day. The Aba women resistance of 1929 surreptitiously referred to as Aba women riot is a typical example and one of the best-known civil disorders in the annals of Nigerian history. Others are the Abeokuta women revolt of 1947, the Ali must go riot of 1978, the Anti-SAP riot of 1989, the June 12 protest of 1993, the Occupy Nigeria protest of 2012 and most recently, the End SARS protest of 2020. Recent reports (Olanegan, 2022, European Asylum Support Office, 2021:3, Ideyi, 2019:7), also show that Nigeria is inundated with contradictions and shreds of growing tension among its social forces and groups and this poses the danger of a surge in civil disorder cases in Nigeria.

In his theory of Social Action, Talcott Parsons (1951, 1953) posits inter alia that: "man is pragmatic and motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfilment". This

Corresponding Author:

Chidi O. UKAEGBU, Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: u.chidi50@yahoo.com

need-disposition represents the integrated components of his personality consisting of "motivation, gratification-deprivation balance; primary viscerogenic and social-relational needs, cognition and learning, and the basic mechanisms of cognitive and cat hectic-evaluative learning and adjustment. Thus, he argued that goal-seeking is a special case of action that takes into consideration the influence of culture patterns and role-expectations. To this end, Coleman (1986) and MacRae Jnr (1985) draw attention to the significance of Talcott Parsons' propositions in his theory of Social Action and the insights it provides in our understanding of the preponderance of civil disorder. To them, Talcott Parsons' theory of social action points attention to the fact that: Society has become more individualistic, with individuals pursuing paths disconnected from family and community. Consequently, mainstream social research has shifted from explaining the functioning of social and political systems to accounting for individual behaviour. With this shift in focus from the social system to the individual, various factors external to the individual's consciousness (like expectations from family, friends, gender or cultural stereotypes) are now introduced to account for variations in individual behaviour in their rationalization of the factors of civil disorder. These factors like religion, culture and politics that influence social relationships require close examination.

Thus, the European Asylum Support Office (2021:5), reports that Nigeria's long-standing civil relations challenges amplified by the nature and character of her religion and politics have continued to deteriorate with no prospective cut or amelioration in sight and no single region free from the menace. For instance, the religious and political undertones embedded in 'the glorious' days of Militant Islamists groups predominantly active in the North-East Region moving into northwestern states'; violence related to armed banditry and criminal violence in the North-West and North Central Regions and street gangs in the South-West Region; conflicts mainly in the Middle Belt but increasingly moving to southern states; communal and ethnic clashes in the North-Central Region and increasingly in the southern states; Biafra separatists movement in the South-East Region; ongoing conflict due to Boko Haram's presence, resulting in a worsening humanitarian situation, population displacement, food insecurity, election manipulations and other forms of structural dislocations within the Nigerian state are all on record. To this end, the capacity of Parsons Theory of social action to explain the preponderance of civil disorders resulting from the actions of a mixture of social forces and groups in the Nigerian state since the early days of British colonization is the main thrust of the present study.

Accordingly, Talcott Parsons' theory of social action essentially surveys this purposive action of individuals and groups within the state and the resultant disorder. It covers the broad spectrum of the consequences of such purposive actions particularly when such actions negate the maintenance of 'peace', observance of law, regulation, or rule, in order to bring attention to their cause, concern, or agenda. To this end, social action and the resultant civil disorder becomes the acts of violence by assemblages of three or more persons, which causes an immediate danger, or result in damage or injury… the type of government notwithstanding (Dwivedi, 2018:8). These disorders resulting from the nature and character of the mixture of its social forces and groups puts Nigeria in bad light in the comity of nations yet there appears to be dearth in extant literatures that theoretically explain the preponderance of civil disorder in the light of the purposive actions of individuals that compose the entire gamut of the social formations and groups that make up the Nigerian state from the period of British colonialism till the present. This poses difficulty in understanding the mass of civil disorders that have littered the existential space of the Nigerian state. Accordingly, this study pays particular attention on how Talcott Parsons' principle of purposive action is critical in explaining the rise and expansion of civil disorder.

Review of Related Literature

Talcott Parsons' Purposive Action and the Rise of Civil Disorder

The core domain of dialectics as a scientific methodology is that, change, being the product of contradictions, is the only constant phenomenon in human existence on planet earth. Thus, purposive action of individuals remains the most veritable instrument for bringing this change to bear. Talcott Parsons'

theory of social action surveys the structure of the society and the functioning of its parts. The perspective pays particular attention to such issues as sub-groups in the society and the social relations that hold or tear them apart. Societal and organizational structure of the society matters as it determines the social effect and the capacity of the state to survive as a united entity or the tendency to disintegrate for its obvious inability to cohere and effectively coordinate its component parts (Parsons, 1953). Parsons thus introduced into American sociology a thought pattern that grounds social theory in a theory of individual action.

The same orientation was shared by earliest theorists like Max Weber, Alfred Marshall, and Vilfredo Pareto. Similar view was also canvassed by social and political philosophers of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries such as Hobbes, Smith, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill. They all advocated a single theory of action, differing only in details. To them, individuals were seen as purposeful and goal directed, guided by interests (or "values," depending on the theorist) and by the rewards and constraints imposed by the social environment. The criticisms levelled against the idealization and conceptualization of Social Action of Weber, Durkheim, Marshall and Pareto by Talcott Parson stand out and command the attention of this present research work. Some of the works of Talcott Parson that deepens the theorization of Social Action and the purposive actions of individuals include: *The Social System* (1951), *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (1953), and part 11of the introduction to *Theories of Society* (1961). *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1962).

Action according to Parsons (1951), is a process in the actor-situation system which has motivational significance to the individual actor or in the case of collectivity, its component individuals. On the basis of this definition, the Parsonian theory of social action lays it foundation on the basis on the following basic assumptions thus:

i. Man is pragmatic and motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfilment. This need-disposition" represents the integrated components of his personality consisting of "motivation, gratification-deprivation balance; primary viscerogenic and social-relational needs, cognition and learning, and the basic mechanisms of cognitive and cat hectic-evaluative learning and adjustment.

ii. Goal- seeking is a special case of action that takes into consideration the influence of culture patterns and role-expectations (Parsons and Shils, 1962).

iii. Social actions are related to and influenced by the attainment of the gratification or the avoidance of deprivations of the correlative actor, whatever they concretely be in the light of the relative personal structures that there may be. This he called the ego needs covering signs or symbols which become relevant to the organization of his expectation system.

iv. All social actions proceed from mechanism which is their ultimate source. Beyond being connected with the organism itself, they are also connected with actor's relations with other persons' social situations and culture.

v. Once the process of the social action develops its symbols and the signs in the individual, it naturally acquires general meaning, a social system/action would then consist in a plurality of individual actor's interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect (Parsons, 1951, 1953). This is the social action chain described by Parsons.

From the above, it becomes clearer that the functioning of society as well as the engine of social change could be grounded in the purposive actions of individuals, taken in particular institutional and structural settings that shaped the incentives and thus the action. In the words of Parsons and Shils (1962:6-7):

The elaboration of behaviour to which this conceptual scheme is especially appropriate, however, occurs above all in human action. In the formation of systems made up of human actions or the components of human action, this elaboration occurs in three configurations. First, the orientnation of action of any one given actor and its attendant motivational processes becomes a differentiated and integrated system. This system will be called personality, and we· will define it as the organized system of the orientation of action

of one individual actor. Secondly, the action of a plurality of actors in a common situation is a process of interaction, the properties of which are to a definite but limited extent independent of any prior common culture. This interaction also becomes differentiated and integrated and as such forms a social system. The social system is, to· be sure, made up of the relationships of individuals, but it is a system which is organized around the problems inherent in or arising from social interaction of a plurality of individual actors rather than around the problems which arise in connection with the integration of the actions of an individual actor, who is also a physiological organism. Personality and social system are very intimately interrelated, but they are neither identical with one another nor explicable by one another…systems of culture have their own forms and problems of integration which are not reducible to those of either personality or social systems or both together. The cultural· tradition in its significance both as an object of orientation and as an element in the orientation of action must be articulated both conceptually and empirically with personalities and social systems.

Accordingly, Parsons (1951) noted inter alia that, 'the three main type of social action systems-culture, personality and social systems has a distinctive coordinative role in the action process and therefore has some degree of causal autonomy. Thus, personalities organize the total set of learned needs, demands and action choices of individual actors and no two of them are alike. As such, when social actions occur, they are confronted with four functional problems. These problems are those of pattern maintenance, integration, goal attainment and adaptation. From this broad spectrum of theoretical problems, the present research has narrowed its concern to two critical theoretical issues that help to define the focus of the study. These are: how the purposive actions of the actors combine to bring about system-level behaviour, and how those purposive actions are in turn shaped by constraints that result from the behaviour of the system. If these two problems are theoretically laid to rest by the contents of Parson's theory of social action, then the goal of this work would have been largely achieved.

Of course, the idea of 'Action' did not originate with Parsons. It was central to the 'Weberian' scientific analysis of sociology. Marx Weber focused on "the interpretative understanding of social action in order to arrive at causal explanation of its causes and effects." Action in Weber's analysis is all human behaviour to which an actor attaches subjective meaning. According to Weber, "Action is social, in so far as by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual it takes account of the behaviour of others and thereby oriented in its course." Max Weber's social action theory argues that individual human beings engage in unique series of actions informed by cause and effect in social contexts. There is no set pattern of behaviour that every individual enacts. Instead, as individuals interact with the people and world around them and the various systems of power at play, their behaviour changes accordingly. Weber's theory posits that changes in human actions can make overall systemic shifts possible but this change must be informed by personal context. Thus, Weber was particularly interested in how social action is often conceptualized by social actors in terms of means-ends chains. He insisted that there can be no understanding and explanation of social facts without reference to individual action.

In his definition, everything a person does is behaviour (and explicitly not action or social action) when it is not connected with conscious meanings or goals. For instance, a jogger stumbles, a sleeping person snores, or all human beings breathe unconsciously and rhythmically; this is behaviour in Weber's sense. For Weber, action is defined as subjective meaningful behaviour. For instance, an individual's behaviour can be called action when the individual has a goal in mind or when this behaviour is meaningful for the acting person. For instance, eating an apple, thinking about life, or enjoying the sound of singing birds are all action. To him, social action goes one step further when an actor takes other relevant actors into consideration: Thus, action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (s), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1954: 5). Cohen for instance, faults Weber's typology of Social Action and his undue emphasis on subjective meaning of the actor as the basis and propeller of his action. Talcott Parson, who provides the theoretical underpinning of this present research work nails Weber's conceptualization of social action for stressing too much the element of voluntary subjective meaning of the actor.

For Parsons, the action of an actor is involuntary; it is behaviour directed by the meanings attached by actors to things and people. He broadened Max Weber's original envisioning of social action theory by claiming that all human behaviours are informed by the tension between two forces: dynamizing and controlling forces. These dynamizing forces such as injustice, act of violence-overt or covert; passion, ambition etc and controlling forces such as social norms, familial expectations, personal code of ethics etc are situated in the context of a specific moment and how an individual is experiencing it (the "action space"). The interplay between these forces condition human decisions and social actions.

His structural-functionalist perspective incorporated the influences of larger social systems on individual conduct. His voluntaristic theory of social action explained how human beings could make different decisions in similar circumstances based on the factors of dynamizing and controlling influences. His theory is based on the conception of purposive individuals with rights and sense of justice and passion to pursue their interests; being conscious of the fact that they are responsible for their actions. Thus, much of Parsons' contributions to the theory regarded the actor in a given situation and how circumstances and social institutions shape actions.

Parsons' theory of Social Action is based on his conception of the society. Widely recognized as the father of American functionalism, Talcott Parson ingeniously crafted the ideas of Marx Weber and Emile Durkheim to arrive at what is generally regarded as modernization theory in Political and Sociological discourses (Offiong, 2000:29). In 1937, in 'The Structure of Social Action', Talcott Parsons sketched an initial attempt to construct what he described as a 'Voluntaristic Theory of Action, extending the model of rationality used by economists and systematizing the historians' conception of purposive action. Parson was also concerned with macro social phenomena (Parsons, 1961). By this theory, Parson weaved the purposive actions of individuals around the functioning of political and economic systems with large-scale social change. Again, he connected intentions of persons with macro social consequences and the dynamics of the state. Thus, the functioning of society as well as the engine of social change could be grounded in the purposive actions of individuals, taken in particular institutional and structural settings that shaped the incentives and thus the action.

MacRae, Jr. and Coleman (1985) averred that such macro social phenomenon as civil unrest is best explained by a theory that captures an appropriate orientation to social realities. These realities justify Parsons' theory of purposive action of individuals. They include but not limited to:

1. Society has become more individualistic, with individuals pursuing paths disconnected from family and community.

2. The mainstream of social research has shifted from explaining the functioning of social and political systems (e.g. communities) to accounting for individual behaviour. This shift toward explaining individual behaviour was in part of direct consequence of the change in social structure and a new research technology that it encouraged- survey research.

3. Simultaneously with this shift in focus from the social system to the individual, the dominant mode of explanation in social research shifted away from one in which purposive action of individuals, taken in combination and subject to various constraints, explained the functioning of social systems. This was replaced by a form of behaviourism, in which various factors external to the individual's consciousness are introduced to account for variations in individual behaviour. "He carried out action x in order to achieve goal y"). This is the true basis of his action unless psychological complexities are introduced (MacRae, Jr. and Coleman, 1985).

4. The shift toward individualism was accompanied by a growing structural asymmetry in Western society, with large corporate actors (corporations, government) on one side and individuals on the other. These individuals do not exist in isolation and maintain no direct communication but are intricately and speedily linked by technology and social media outfits. Rather, they are linked

together by mass media and social media in recent times. This is occasioned by the import of globalization and transnational trade and commerce that have swept through the core, semi periphery and periphery states. With this linkage, such incidences like \\bring back our girls\\, EndSARS protest, ASUU, ASUUP, NASU, NAT, COEASU, JUSUN and similar civil unrests and social actions in the Nigerian state is better understood and appreciated.

5. In this social structure, a new kind of social research has arisen, as part of the articulation between corporate actors and persons, first in the form of market research and then in the form of social policy research. With this move, social research has come for the first time directly into the functioning of society and political systems-no longer standing outside it but instead modifying the articulation between corporate actors and persons-primarily as the agents or members of the state.

Indeed, Purposive action may be rejected at the level of the entire system, but not at the level of its component actors. Thus, a theory of action as conceived by Parson is indeed a functional theory at the level of the actor: the actor is regarded as acting purposively in so much as it is in tandem with his perceived benefits or consequences. Their actions are "caused" by their (anticipated) consequences or benefits. Purposive action of individuals can be taken as a starting point by sociologists and Political Scientists, who can assume well-organized individuals capable of shaping the actions of the state in their collectivity. The action, or behaviour, of the system composed of actors is an emergent consequence of the interdependent actions of the actors who make up the system (Parsons, 1951).

By his theory of Social Action, Parson provided grounding that connects the individual and society, and how social and political systems might be shaped by human actions as individuals. Some have argued that Parson's conception of Social Action is a kind of social theory that could account for any institution and any social configuration by showing its functions, but it had no place for individuals, except as deviants from norms, and no place for social change except by theoretical fiat. Well, if the theory provides a place for the action of individuals only as deviants to law, it further reveals the position of such individuals in relation to the functioning of the state which is the very essence of any acceptable ground theory of social action- descending to the level of individuals, whose satisfaction or dissatisfaction provides the soundest basis for evaluating social and political configurations. This is essentially because, humans exist first as individuals before they exist as groups and social formations.

Other scholars have also challenged Talcott Parsons' Social Action theory and functionalism. For instance, Homans (1958) did introduce actors and a theory of action, perhaps a more explicit purposive action theory than had been set forth in sociology before. But this never moved beyond the social-psychological or small-groups level, and its effect was soon dissipated because it moved from purposive action to reductionism that was not anything different from the pigeon-based operant conditioning of B. F. Skinner. Also, Merton took Parsons' theory away from final causes but failed to bring it back in an explicit micro-foundation. These shortcomings more than anything else, reinforce our choice of Talcott Parson's theory of Social Action in explaining the preponderance of civil disorder in Nigeria.

Civil Disorder in Nigeria: Between the Colonial Period the Post-Military Democratization Period.

Civil Disorder in the Colonial Period (1929and 1947).

S/no.	Civil Disorder	Year	Reasons/methods used	Achievement(s)

1.	The Aba Women's Riot	1929	Imposition of direct taxation and new local courts/Warrant Chiefs. They engaged in direct fight, burning of colonial offices and public facilities	The warrant chief of Oloko, where the protests started was dethroned and sentenced to two years in prison; abolition of the warrant chief system, a reorganization of the native courts to include women members, and the creation of village-group councils whose decisions were enforced by group courts
2	The Abeokuta Women Revolt	1947	Imposition of flat tax rate on women	Abdication of the Alaka and abolition of the women flat rate tax, political positions given to four women, inspiration to the wider independence movement—fractured pre-existing patterns. The women also made their vision of the future clear

Civil Disorder in the Post-Military Democratization Period.

(2012 and 2020).

1.The Occupy Nigeria Protests	2012	Reaction to fuel subsidy removal from petroleum products by the Federal government	Resulted in civil disobedience, civil resistance, strike actions, demonstrations and online activism using social media outlets like face book, twitter etc. The protest led to increased awareness and opened the window for dialogue which of course led to the quelling of the riot.
2.The EndSARS Protests	2020	Road barricade, use of placards, stoppage of human and vehicular movement, destruction of public properties in response to armed brutality	The killings at Lekki Toll Gate that forced the government to set up Judicial Panels of Enquiry on Police Brutality in all the states of the federation. This report led to the disbandment of SAR in the country in 2020.

Theoretical Framework

Broadly, this study is anchored on the Liberal paradigm. Thus, the study is specifically anchored on structural-functional theory. Structural functional theory explains the basis for the maintenance of order and stability in the society and the relevant arrangements within the society which maintains the said order and stability and by the same token, expose the reasons why disorder occurs in such society (Haramlambos and Head, (1980) cited in Ifesinachi, 2010:8). The theory originated in the Biological and Mechanical Sciences as part of systems analysis but was adopted as a mode of analysis in Sociology and Anthropology as evident in the works of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. It was developed for political analysis by Gabriel Almond. According to S.P Varma, cited in Nnabugwu (2004:18), the main thrust of the theory revolves around two main concepts-functions and structures and raises three basic questions about any social formation and political system in particular. These questions are:

(a)   What basic functions are fulfilled in any given political system?

(b)   By what structures are these functions performed?

(c)   Under what conditions are these functions performed?

While functions deal with consequences –involving objectives as well as processes–of patterns of action, structures deal with arrangements within the system which performs the function. Thus, the basic assumption of the structural functional theory is that all systems perform functions within the system necessary for its persistence. From the foregoing, the study, even as rightly claimed by Gabriel Almond, assumes that all political systems, irrespective of the type or the period of their existence must perform specific tasks if they are to remain in existence. This study avers that these functions are not only performed by structures which are primary to the state but also by others which are not overtly recognized or even a combination of structures which is the major point of departure of the social action theory as conceived by Talcott Parsons. To Parsons, social actions do not exist in the blues. It is a response to the functions (outcomes) of the structures of the state. Thus, structural-functional theory provides a basis for understanding the output/character of the state/society while a theory of social action helps to explain the response of members of the state to the functions of the structures. To this end, it is right to assert that the theory shifts our focus away from observable institutional political mechanism to any other area where the actual performance of the functional requirements of the system is located; whether in purposive actions of individuals or that of groups (social action) which is a single testimonial of the fact that the rational views of individuals leading to his action within the system have acquired general meaning leading to group action as postulated by Talcott Parsons. This group action then constitutes input into the political system and it is on the basis of this input and the response of the structures to it that we compare one system with another or one political epoch with another or one case of civil disorder with another. From the foregoing, it is clear from our theoretical framework that purposive actions do not stay with individuals or groups. They are relayed to the political system as input from individuals and other sub-systems like pressure groups, ethnic groups, schools, families, political organizations, etc. When the input is made, it behoves on the system to respond. They way and manner of this response and its impact on the groups is the basis for the emergence of disorder and its ultimate preponderance if not properly managed. Thus, civil disorder is defined as the gap and dynamics between input and output in any political system.

Methodology

Broadly, our study on Talcott Parsons theory of social action and the preponderance of civil disorder in Nigeria is anchored on qualitative research design. Specifically, however, the study adopted explanatory research design that is based on logic, rigorous thinking, accessibility to sufficient extant evidences and alternative considerations both in the formulation of our research propositions and analysis of generated data which is at the nominal and ordinal levels. The design aims to assess the explanatory capacity or otherwise of the basic strands of Parsons Theory of social action by going beyond the traditional treatment of the phenomenon of civil disorder in Nigeria. The choice of this design is located in its usefulness in gaining insight and ideas about the problems that necessitated the study. Being qualitative research, the study strives mainly to explain the preponderance of civil disorder in Nigeria from a theoretical perspective since the period of British colonization. Historically, civil disorders have always been part and parcel of Nigeria. Way before the country got her independence in 1960, during the colonial era and till now, social actions and civil disorder have been part of her political system leading to either fundamental changes in the political system or sparking off bigger chains of reactions. Thus, characteristically, civil disorder occurs in Nigeria when the masses who are disgruntled take to the streets to make their grievances known. It started when the women in the eastern region of colonial Nigeria stood their grounds and kicked against the intolerable tax levy and other desecrations by the colonial government. Accordingly, Nigeria records the highest number of civil disorder cases in West Africa sub-region. To achieve the goal of this study, we relied on qualitative type of data while the documentary sources (DOS) that embraces recorded or written materials like report from panels of inquiry, journal articles, textbooks, book chapters, periodicals, official documents, unpublished theses, dissertations and internet materials, conference and seminar papers, books/articles by Talcott Parsons and associates, 1951, 1953, 1961, 1962 and the works of other classical theorists like Weber, Durkheim, Marshall and Paretowere used. Thus, the historical method of data

collection used entailed determining, evaluating and explaining past events and using same as a basis for predicting future occurrences (Nnabugwu, 2006:75 and 2022:34) of civil disorder in Nigeria. The study adopted the general analytic tool that helped us to probe, argue and bring out a patterned and systematic understanding of the problematic or issues under focus in line with the specific theoretical framework of the study. The tool involves Narrative analytic technique, Constant comparative technique, Analytical inductive technique and Sequential analytic technique (Nnabugwu, 2022:34).

Result and Discussion

Goal-Directed Action and the Preponderance of Civil Disorder in Nigeria

One of the key strands in Talcott Parsons' theory of social action is the assertion that man is pragmatic and motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfilment. This need-disposition" in man represents the integrated components of his personality consisting of "motivation, gratification-deprivation balance; primary viscerogenic and his social-relational needs…and the basic mechanisms of cognitive and learning and adjustment. This enables him to engage in rational actions in pursuit of his perceived objectives. Generally, it must be noted that the outcome of state policies that has led to varying degrees of civil disorder is not a very recent phenomenon in Nigeria. It dates back to the early days of British colonization. Sometimes, the outcomes of these policies take the form of ethnic or regional neglect, religious neglect or gender neglect among others affecting a group or a section of the society or the entire society. Of note, is what is today termed the Aba women resistance. The "riots" or the war as it is popularly but wrongly called, led by women in the provinces of Calabar and Owerri in southeastern Nigeria in November and December of 1929. This resistance clearly demonstrates the case of pragmatic action motivated by rational considerations of wants and the situation which affects their fulfilment. What is today referred to as the "Aba Women's Riots of 1929" in British colonial history, or as the "Women's War" in Igbo history or the Aba women resistance in the eyes of this research was a massive resistance by thousands of Igbo women organized in a revolt against the policies imposed by British colonial administrators in southeastern Nigeria, touching off the most serious challenge to British rule in the history of the colony (Enyioko, 2021:12). As averred by Parsons, man, in this instance, humans in general, and women in particular are rational, logical, realistic and reasonable and always awake to situations which affect their need disposition. This is the integrated components of his personality which he must at all times protect.

Thus, purposive action of individuals remains the most veritable instrument for resisting change or bringing this change to bear depending on the need component of man such a change satisfies. Talcott Parsons' theory of social action surveys the structure of the society and the functioning of its parts. It pays particular attention to such issues as sub-groups in the society and the social relations that hold or tear them apart. Societal and organizational structure of the society matters as it determines the social effect and the capacity of the state to survive as a united entity or the tendency to disintegrate for its obvious inability to cohere and effectively coordinate its component parts (Parsons, 1953). Thus, the acceptance or rejection of a policy through a purposive and goal-directed action is an essential component of his pursuit of primary viscerogenic and social-relational needs.

Accordingly, the Women's resistance of 1929 was a historic example of feminist anti-colonial protest rooted on the purposive action and goal-bound behaviour of individuals. The roots of the riots evolved from January 1, 1914, when the first Nigerian colonial governor, Lord Lugard, instituted the system of indirect rule in Southern Nigeria… Much like the women resistance of 1929, the End Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) protest of 2020 justified Talcott Parsons position that, the rational views of an individual that translate to actions acquires a social action status only when it has graduated to a meaning or symbol shared by a group of people that exist within a social context. As long as it is unable to acquire this 'general meaning' in form of passion, goal, interest, aim or objective shared by the group, it remains at the individual level no matter how valid, justiciable, rational or reasonable such a movement might seem. At that individual level, such actions are easily approximated to criminality or other forms of social misdemeanour

but at the group level, it is regarded as a social action especially when it is targeted at goals that are humane and directed at the wellbeing of members of such a group or movement whose goal is to create certain conditions acceptable to both the rulers and the ruled. Thus, Social action to Parsons is concerned with human beings interacting with one another in terms of mutually accepted standards of conduct. Their interaction takes place in an environment of "brute fact", which comprises, among other things, climate, material resources, the population structure and the physical possibilities of communication anchored on standards accepted by both the rulers and the ruled. Though they do not live together yet they are at all times intricately linked together in thought and action through communication.

Thus, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad popularly known as SARS was a segment of Nigeria Police Force saddled with responsibilities of curtailing armed robbery and other related crimes in Nigeria and perhaps with a special skill to deal with violent crimes perpetuated by ardent criminal elements. From the above, it is clear that SARS was necessary considering the nature of crime perpetuated in the Nigerian state. However, this police unit came to be associated with high-handed tactics and gross violations of human rights. SARS evolved from a special outfit created by different state Commands to address specific violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, communal violence and religious violence to become a thorn in the flesh of Nigerians with gross and manifest violation of its modus operandi and purpose of establishment. The group (SARS) became controversial for its links to extra-judicial killings, torture, unlawful detention, sudden disappearance of culprits under their custody, bribery and release of criminal elements on the instruction of the highest bidder and other illegal activities considered detrimental to the interest of the public that it is meant to protect. Thus, SARS was described as 'banditry" and in June 2020, Amnesty International released a report that documented at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution by SARS between January 2017 and May 2020 (Samuel, 2020 in Yusuf and Benisheikh, 2021:6). Nigeria has witnessed numerous protests in the past and the End SAR protest would have occurred earlier perhaps if the veracity of communication outlets available now were present then. For example, earlier in a 2016 report, Amnesty International asserted that:

> … SARS officers routinely committed torture and other abuses against detainees many of whom were arrested arbitrarily, detained incommunicado, and forced to confess or pay bribes to secure release. SARS officers habitually failed to charge suspects before a court within 24 to 48 hours as prescribed under the Constitution and suspects were held for several days, weeks and months…

Thus, the SARS menace appeared to have gotten to its peak.

 Thus, the campaign was not just from a section of the country but it cut across all category and ethnic nationalities in Nigeria pushing vehemently for the correction that must be made to the institutional anomaly that has taken hold of the Nigerian state. As such, the EndSARS protest was championed by Nigerian youths agitating for the immediate disbandment of SARS, as a result of brutality against the public and youths in particular. It was called the youthful protest not really because only youths were involved, but because, most of the protesters were young people who engaged the power of the media in communicating the perceived grievance against the Nigerian state and the enforcement of law and order in Nigeria in keeping with Talcott Parsons postulation that once the process of the social action develops its symbols and the signs in the individual, it naturally acquires general meaning through communication; a social system/action would then consists in a plurality of individual actor's interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical, 'psychophysical' or environmental aspect (Parsons, 1951, 1953).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research, we conclude that goal-directed actions of individuals to bring about desirable changes in existing structure or to prevent undesirable ones helped to ensure the rise and expansion of civil disorder in Nigeria. This is clear from the selected cases of civil disorder examined in the study. From the analysis, the study found out that the Parsonian position on the main drivers of social action is

right. According to Talcott Parsons, man is pragmatic and is usually motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfilment…Thus, the social action chain described by Parsons finds adequate application in interpreting the transmogrification of purposive action of individuals to purposive action of groups. His theoretical assertion lays to rest the poser of how a discontent in a few persons turns to be a discontent for all other persons within an environment or even a national discontent as seen in cases like the Aba Women's resistance of 1929, the Abeokuta women revolt of 1947, the Occupy Nigeria protest of 2012, and the EndSARS protest of 2020 reviewed in this study. In his view, once the process of a social action develops its symbols and the signs in the individual actor, it naturally acquires general meaning to all other individuals within the social context.

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Authors' Biographies

MakodiBiereenu-Nnabugwu is Professor of Political Theory and Methodology of Political Inquiry in the Department of Political Science, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka Nigeria. He has published widely in many reputable local and international journals. He has many books on research methods and Political theory to his credit. His email is makodibienna@gmail.com.

Chidi O. Ukaegbu is a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. Email:He holds both Bachelors' and masters' degree in Political Science with peculiar interest in Political Theory and Methodology of Research. He can be contacted via: u.chidi50@yahoo.com