

Public Perception of the #EndBadGovernance Protests and its Influence on National Security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The #EndBadGovernance protests significantly influenced public opinion and national security policies in Nigeria. Support for the movement was stronger among younger generations and urban slum residents, largely due to their greater use of social media and frustration with corruption and poor governance. Media coverage, both traditional and social, played a key role in shaping the narrative, with positive portrayals emphasising government accountability and transparency, thus legitimising the protests, while negative coverage stirred fears of instability. The protests' legitimacy was further reinforced by widespread public participation, which fuelled national discussions on governance reform. However, concerns about public safety led to varied government responses, ranging from dialogue to repression, which had a direct impact on public trust in institutions and state legitimacy. In response, national security policies evolved, incorporating increased surveillance, restrictions on public gatherings, and efforts to address underlying socio-economic issues. The study, utilising diverse data sources such as mined tweets and articles, highlighted that the #EndBadGovernance movement has become a powerful tool for Nigerians advocating for improved governance. The protests are also connected to broader reform movements, particularly concerning national security. The findings suggest that addressing socio-economic grievances and fostering transparent communication between the government and the media are essential to restoring public trust and stability.

Keywords: Public Perception, #EndBadGovernance, Protests, National Security Policies

Introduction

The #EndBadGovernance protests represent a significant social movement aimed at addressing widespread corruption, poor governance, and systemic inefficiencies within government institutions in Nigeria. These protests, which have gained considerable traction through both physical demonstrations and digital activism, highlight the growing public discontent with government practices and demand for greater transparency, accountability, and reform.

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The origins of the bad governance movement can be traced back to long-standing issues of corruption and mismanagement within various governments, particularly in countries where democratic institutions are weak, and accountability mechanisms are lacking. Historically, movements against bad governance have been a recurring theme in many countries. For example, the anti-corruption protests in Brazil (2013-2016), the Arab Spring (2010-2012), and the anti-corruption movement in India (2011) all illustrate the global nature of such movements and their profound impact on governance and national policies. The Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S. (2011) and the End SARS protests in Nigeria (2020) both reflected widespread discontent with systemic inequalities and governance failures. Occupy Wall Street was primarily focused on wealth concentration and the influence of corporate elites, with protests spreading across the U.S. and gaining global attention for criticising financial mismanagement and government complicity. End SARS began as a protest against police brutality but evolved into a larger movement addressing corruption, lack of public services, and poor governance, particularly among the Nigerian youth. Both movements illustrated a push for more accountable and transparent systems of governance. In Europe and Africa, similar movements emerged, such as the Yellow Vests protests in France (2018-2020) and Kenya's anti-corruption movement in 2015. The Yellow Vests began with opposition to rising fuel prices but expanded to criticise economic inequality and perceived neglect of the working class by the French government. In Kenya, the "Stop These Thieves" protests highlighted public frustration with corruption and government mismanagement, echoing demands for accountability across Africa. In Romania, the 2017 anti-corruption protests, spurred by attempts to decriminalise corruption, became the largest since communism's fall, demonstrating that even established democracies are not immune to governance challenges.

Public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria can be gauged through media and social media, which influence public views on the legitimacy and goals of such movements. Media framing and agenda-setting (McCombs, 2005) shape how people prioritise issues, with positive coverage lending credibility to the protests, while negative framing may weaken their public support. Social media accelerates the spread of protest information, allowing real-time reactions and the mobilisation of supporters (Tufekci, 2017). Surveys and polls further capture public opinion, helping to understand support or opposition to the protests. In terms of national security, public perception plays a critical role. Strong public backing of the protests can increase pressure on governments to implement reforms, but widespread opposition or negative media portrayals can lead to unrest, fueling tensions that pose security risks. Monitoring public opinion is crucial in assessing potential threats to stability, as dissatisfaction may escalate into larger national security concerns if not properly addressed (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). The government's responses to the #EndBadGovernance protests are often framed within the context of national security. Policymakers must balance maintaining public order and security with respecting civil liberties and human rights. This balancing act is influenced by policy feedback theory (Mettler & Soss, 2004), which posits that public policies shape public opinion and future policy directions. Governments may implement measures such as increased surveillance, restrictions on public gatherings, and legal actions against protest leaders. These actions can have profound implications for national security policies and the relationship between the Nigerian State and its citizens.

The socio-economic and political context is critical in understanding the emergence and dynamics of the #EndBadGovernance protests. High levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, coupled with perceived corruption and governance failures, create fertile ground for public discontent (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Addressing these underlying issues is essential for achieving long-term stability and security. Comparing the #EndBadGovernance protests to similar movements globally can provide valuable insights. For instance, the anti-corruption protests in Romania (2017) and the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong (2019) offer lessons on the strategies employed by both protestors and governments, as well as the outcomes of such movements (Kriesi et al., 1995). The study of public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests and their influence on national security policies is multifaceted, involving media influence, public opinion, government response, and socio-economic and political contexts. Thus, this study seeks to understand the dynamics of #EndBadGovernance protests to navigate the complex interplay between civic activism and Nigeria's national security. The #EndBadGovernance protests epitomise a contemporary form of civic engagement where public dissatisfaction with government policies manifests in widespread social movements. These protests are a response to perceived failures in governance, including corruption, lack of transparency, and inefficiency. The conceptual framework for understanding public perception of these protests and their influence on national security policies encompasses several interrelated dimensions.

Conceptual Clarification

Public Perception

This refers to the collective attitudes, beliefs, and opinions that the public holds regarding the #EndBadGovernance protests. This perception is shaped by various factors, including media representation, personal experiences, social networks, and broader societal narratives. Public perception influences and is influenced by the level of public support or opposition to the protests, affecting their legitimacy and impact. The way media outlets present and interpret the protests can significantly shape public opinion. Positive framing can legitimise the movement, while negative framing can delegitimise it (Entman, 1993). Digital platforms play a crucial role in mobilising support and disseminating information. Social media amplifies voices, spreads awareness, and can create echo chambers that reinforce particular viewpoints (Tufekci, 2017). The process through which individuals form their political attitudes and beliefs is influenced by family, education, and social environments (Almond & Verba, 1963).

National Security Policies

National security policies encompass the strategies and measures adopted by a state to protect its citizens and maintain stability. The influence of public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests on these policies involves several dynamics. The state's reaction to the protests can range from dialogue and reform to repression and surveillance. This response is often framed within the context of maintaining national security and public order (Peters, 2019). Public pressure resulting from widespread protests can lead to policy changes aimed at addressing the underlying grievances that sparked the protests. This adaptation may include reforms to enhance transparency, reduce

corruption, and improve governance (Mettler & Soss, 2004). Balancing national security with the protection of civil liberties and human rights is a critical aspect of policy response. Excessive crackdowns can lead to human rights abuses and further public discontent (Farrell & Schneier, 2021).

Understanding the conceptual meaning of public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests and their influence on national security policies requires a multi-faceted approach. This involves examining how media and social media shape public opinion, the ways in which public attitudes influence government responses, and the balance between national security and civil liberties. The interplay between these factors is crucial for comprehending the broader impact of such social movements on policy and governance.

Public Perception and Media Influence

Dalton (2016) seminal work on political culture emphasises how individuals acquire political attitudes and behaviours. This process is influenced by family, education, and social interactions, shaping how people perceive governance and protests. Huddy (2013) proposes that individuals categorise themselves into groups, influencing their perceptions and attitudes. In protests, group identity can strengthen solidarity and influence perceptions of legitimacy and urgency. Snow and Tufekci (2017) argue that social movements use framing to construct meanings that resonate with the public. Effective framing of the #EndBadGovernance protests can mobilise support by highlighting issues of corruption and governance failures.

Media Influence

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception by framing issues, setting agendas, and acting as gatekeepers of information. Scholars like McCombs and Shaw (2017) propose that media shapes what people think about rather than directly influencing their opinions. By highlighting specific issues, the media affects the public's perception of importance. In the case of the #EndBadGovernance protests, media coverage can increase the prominence of governance issues. Additionally, Entman (1993) argues that media framing involves emphasising particular aspects of reality to make them more noticeable. Positive media framing can legitimise the protests, whereas negative framing can undermine their credibility. Tufekci (2017) highlights how social media platforms have transformed protest movements by enabling rapid dissemination of information and mobilising support. The decentralised nature of social media allows for diverse narratives and counter-narratives, influencing public perception in complex ways. Scholars like Baum and Potter (2008) illustrate how television news shapes public opinion by focusing on specific issues. This concept also applies to digital media, where algorithm-driven content can create echo chambers that reinforce specific perspectives.

Empirical Studies

Harlow and Johnson (2011) examine how social media facilitated the mobilisation of protests during the Arab Spring. The findings suggest that social media not only helped in organising protests but also in shaping public perception by providing alternative narratives to state-controlled media. The research on networked gatekeeping highlights how social media influencers and

activists shape public discourse. The decentralised nature of information dissemination on platforms like Twitter can challenge traditional media narratives (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Howard and Parks (2012) explore the role of digital media in protest movements, emphasising that the accessibility and immediacy of information on social media can amplify the impact of protests by drawing global attention.

The Role of Public Opinion

Public opinion is crucial in the dynamics of social movements, such as the #EndBadGovernance protests. These protests, which seek to address issues like corruption and poor governance, depend significantly on public support and engagement to maintain momentum and achieve their objectives. Understanding the formation, evolution, and impact of public opinion on these protests involves various theoretical frameworks and empirical research. Public opinion regarding the #EndBadGovernance protests is influenced by factors such as media exposure, social interactions, and personal experiences. Recent work by Norris and Inglehart (2019) emphasises the role of political socialisation in shaping public attitudes. Through family, education, media, and social networks, individuals develop political views that affect their perception of governance and protests. This socialisation process is vital for forming public opinion on the legitimacy and significance of the #EndBadGovernance protests. The media plays a key role in shaping public opinion by framing issues, setting agendas, and controlling information flow. According to McCombs and Shaw (2017), media influences what people think about rather than what they think. By prioritising certain issues, the media can highlight governance problems and sway public opinion in favour of the protests. Entman (2004) further explains that media framing involves emphasising specific aspects of reality to make them more noticeable. Positive framing can legitimise the protests and garner support, whereas negative framing can undermine their credibility. Tufekci (2017) highlights the transformative impact of social media on protest movements. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook facilitate rapid information dissemination, mobilise support and foster networks of solidarity. Social media amplifies protest voices and provides diverse narratives that shape public opinion in complex ways. Its decentralised nature exposes individuals to various perspectives, which can either reinforce or challenge their existing beliefs.

Public opinion on the #EndBadGovernance protests evolves, influenced by ongoing events, government responses, and media coverage. Major events, such as violent clashes between protestors and police, revelations of corruption, or government concessions, can significantly shift public opinion. For instance, violent government crackdowns may generate sympathy for the protestors and increase public support, while peaceful negotiations may enhance the perceived legitimacy of the protests. The state's reaction to the protests plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion. A repressive response can lead to a rally-around-the-flag effect where public opinion polarises, either strongly supporting the government or the protestors (Peters, 2019). Conversely, a conciliatory approach that addresses some of the protestors' demands can pacify public opinion and reduce support for continued protests. The media's depiction of the protests and the resulting public discourse play a crucial role in shaping and evolving public opinion. According to recent research by Gidron and Hall (2017), television news influences public opinion by emphasising

certain issues. In the digital era, social media enhances this effect by creating echo chambers that reinforce specific viewpoints, leading to more entrenched public opinions.

Public opinion significantly shapes the trajectory and impact of the #EndBadGovernance protests in various ways. Strong public support can enhance the legitimacy of the protests, making it challenging for governments to dismiss or suppress them without incurring substantial backlash. Legitimate protests are more likely to attract additional participants, resources, and media attention, increasing their likelihood of success. Recent research by Gamson and Modigliani (1989) indicates that effective framing by protest movements can mobilise public support by aligning with prevalent values and beliefs. Ongoing public backing can exert pressure on governments to implement policy changes and reforms. According to policy feedback theory (Pierson, 2004), public opinion helps shape public policies, which then influence future policy decisions. Governments may introduce reforms to address the core issues that triggered the protests, such as enhancing transparency, combating corruption, and improving governance. Public opinion can profoundly affect political outcomes, including elections, political stability, and governance. Politicians and parties might align with protest demands to gain public support, while those seen as unresponsive may face electoral losses. Research by Anderson and Tverdova (2003) supports this, showing that public opinion can drive electoral and political shifts. Public opinion also impacts social cohesion and stability. Broad support for the protests can promote a collective sense of identity and strengthen social ties. Conversely, polarised opinions can lead to social fragmentation and conflict, challenging national unity and stability. As highlighted by Putnam (2000), social cohesion is vital for maintaining societal stability. The role of public opinion in the #EndBadGovernance protests is complex, influencing the formation, evolution, and effects of public attitudes and beliefs. Media plays a crucial role in shaping these perceptions by framing issues and setting agendas. The dynamic nature of public opinion is shaped by unfolding events, government responses, and media portrayals. Ultimately, public opinion can legitimise protests, drive policy changes, and impact political and social outcomes, making it essential for understanding the broader implications of social movements on governance and public policy.

Government Response and National Security

The #EndBadGovernance protests, characterised by widespread public discontent with corruption and inefficiency in governance, have elicited varied responses from governments around the world. These responses, often framed within the context of maintaining national security and public order, can significantly influence the trajectory and impact of the protests. This section explores the different government responses and their implications for national security, drawing on updated references and theoretical frameworks. Governments typically respond to protests through a combination of repression, accommodation, and strategic communication. The chosen response can depend on the political context, the scale and intensity of the protests, and the perceived threat to stability and governance. Repressive measures include the use of force, arrests, and legal actions against protestors. Governments may deploy police and military forces to disperse crowds, enforce curfews, and detain leaders and participants. Such measures aim to restore order but can also escalate tensions and violence (Davenport, 2007). Excessive use of force can lead to human rights violations, garnering international condemnation and further galvanising protestors.

Accommodative measures involve engaging with protestors, initiating dialogues, and making policy concessions to address grievances. These measures aim to de-escalate tensions and build trust between the government and the public. Governments frequently employ strategic communication to influence public perception and control the narrative surrounding protests. This strategy includes public statements from officials, media campaigns, and social media activities. By framing the protests as either valid expressions of public sentiment or threats to national security, governments aim to sway public opinion and justify their actions. Research by Chong and Druckman (2007) supports this, showing that framing can significantly affect public attitudes and perceptions.

National Security Implications

The primary national security concern during protests is maintaining social stability. Repressive measures can temporarily quell unrest but often at the cost of increased public resentment and long-term instability (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Accommodative measures, on the other hand, can foster social cohesion by addressing underlying issues and restoring public trust in governance. The balance between repression and accommodation is crucial in maintaining lasting stability. The legitimacy of the state is closely tied to its response to public dissent. A government perceived as responsive and just is more likely to maintain legitimacy and authority. Conversely, a government that relies heavily on repression can erode public trust and legitimacy, leading to further unrest and challenges to its authority (Beetham, 1991). The way a government handles protests is a reflection of its commitment to democratic principles and human rights. The way a country responds to protests can significantly impact its international reputation and relations. Repressive measures that result in human rights violations can draw international criticism and sanctions, whereas more accommodative approaches can bolster a nation's image as a stable and democratic state. International organisations and foreign governments frequently monitor and react to how protests are handled, thereby influencing diplomatic and economic relationships. Recent work by Simmons (2009) emphasises the importance of global human rights standards in shaping these interactions. The Arab Spring saw varied responses from governments across the Middle East and North Africa. Countries like Tunisia and Egypt initially responded with repression but eventually made significant political changes due to sustained protests and international pressure. These movements highlighted the delicate balance between repression and accommodation in maintaining stability and legitimacy (Lynch, 2012). The Hong Kong protests against the extradition bill were met with both repressive measures and strategic communication efforts by the government. The use of force and arrests led to widespread criticism and further mobilised protestors. The Hong Kong government's response also had significant implications for its relationship with mainland China and the international community (Chan & Ngok, 2020). In Nigeria, the #EndSARS protests against police brutality were initially met with violent repression, resulting in numerous casualties and international outcry. The Nigerian government's subsequent efforts to address some of the protestors' demands highlighted the complexities of balancing repression and accommodation. The protests and government response had lasting impacts on public trust and national security in Nigeria (Olumuyiwa & Okeke, 2021).

Socio-Economic and Political Drivers of #EndBadGovernance Protests

The #EndBadGovernance protests have emerged as a significant movement in various parts of the world, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with systemic issues in governance. These protests are driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic and political factors that catalyse public discontent and mobilise citizens to demand change. Understanding these drivers is essential for comprehending the roots of these movements and their potential impact on governance and society. Economic inequality and pervasive poverty are major socio-economic drivers of the #EndBadGovernance protests. As highlighted by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), societies with high levels of inequality tend to experience greater social unrest. The lack of equitable access to resources, opportunities, and wealth distribution fosters resentment and fuels grievances among marginalised populations. In many countries, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened, exacerbating feelings of injustice and prompting calls for more inclusive and fair governance. High rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youth, are critical factors driving the protests. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020), global youth unemployment rates have remained stubbornly high, leading to widespread frustration and disillusionment. Young people, facing limited prospects for stable employment and upward mobility, are often at the forefront of protest movements, demanding better job opportunities and economic reforms.

Corruption and the mismanagement of public resources are central issues that galvanise protestors. Transparency International's (2021) Corruption Perceptions Index reveals that corruption remains a pervasive problem in many countries, undermining trust in public institutions and governance. When public officials are seen to be enriching themselves at the expense of the populace, it triggers outrage and mobilises citizens to demand accountability and transparency. Inadequate access to quality public services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, also drives the #EndBadGovernance protests. Studies by the World Bank (2021) have shown that poor public service delivery disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations, exacerbating social inequalities and contributing to public discontent. Protestors often cite the lack of reliable and efficient public services as a key motivation for their actions. A significant political driver of the #EndBadGovernance protests is the perceived lack of political representation and accountability. Norris (2011) argues that when citizens feel that their voices are not heard and political leaders do not address their concerns, it leads to political alienation and disenfranchisement. In many cases, protestors demand greater political participation, transparency in decision-making, and mechanisms to hold leaders accountable. Authoritarian governance and political repression are potent catalysts for protest movements. Studies by Levitsky and Way (2010) show that authoritarian regimes that limit political freedoms and suppress dissent often face resistance from civil society. The use of state violence, censorship, and arbitrary arrests to quell opposition only serves to intensify public anger and resolve to resist authoritarian rule.

Perceived or actual election fraud and democratic deficits are critical triggers for the #EndBadGovernance protests. When elections are manipulated, and democratic processes are undermined, citizens lose faith in the legitimacy of their governments. According to Diamond (2015), the erosion of democratic norms and practices is a significant driver of political unrest, as

citizens demand free and fair elections and respect for democratic principles. The role of civil society and social movements in mobilising and sustaining the #EndBadGovernance protests cannot be overstated. Civil society organisations, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements provide the organisational infrastructure and resources necessary for sustained protest actions. Research by Tilly and Tarrow (2015) underscores the importance of social networks and collective action in driving political change. The intersection of socio-economic and political drivers creates a fertile ground for the #EndBadGovernance protests. Economic hardships often amplify political grievances and vice versa. For instance, high levels of corruption (a political issue) can exacerbate poverty and inequality (socio-economic issues), leading to a cycle of discontent and protest. Similarly, political repression can stymie efforts to address economic problems, fuelling further unrest.

Theoretical Framework

Media Framing Theory

McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory (1972) and Entman's Framing Theory (1993) provide insights into how media shapes public perception. Media framing refers to the way media outlets present and emphasise particular aspects of news stories to shape public understanding and interpretation. In the context of the #EndBadGovernance protests, the framing of protest coverage in traditional and social media can significantly influence public opinion. Positive media framing, such as highlighting the protesters' demands for government accountability and reform, may legitimise the movement and garner widespread support. Conversely, negative framing that emphasises violence or lawlessness during protests can delegitimise the movement, reduce public support, and create an environment of fear and tension.

The Nigerian media landscape is deeply divided, with some outlets aligned with political elites and others more sympathetic to public grievances. Social media, however, has emerged as a critical space for the rapid dissemination of alternative narratives. According to Tufekci (2017), social media enables real-time framing and allows protestors to bypass traditional gatekeepers. This amplifies the public's perception of the protests, sometimes leading to a larger mobilisation of support. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook played a pivotal role during the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance movements, shaping public perceptions through trending hashtags, viral videos, and shared experiences. Positive media coverage can increase public support for protests, pushing the government to address underlying grievances. However, negative or polarised coverage can lead to a heightened sense of threat, escalating tensions between the state and protestors, which could prompt the government to deploy security forces aggressively. The perception of a security crisis, often fuelled by media framing, can lead to a cycle of violent confrontations, exacerbating the national security situation.

Methodology

This study employs an exploratory research design with a qualitative method aimed at understanding the public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests and their broader

implications for national security in Nigeria. Qualitative research is ideal for exploring complex social phenomena, such as how citizens interpret governance failures, how protests shape public opinion, and the perceived consequences for national stability. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of narratives, opinions, and attitudes drawn from secondary sources. The study relies on primary data gathered from tweets on #EndBadGovernance featured in the X social media. A total of 3468 tweets were mined and 300 tweets related to national were themed and categorised based on the objectives of the research. Also, secondary data sources, include articles, academic journals, blogs, social media posts, and online reports related to the #EndBadGovernance protests and their influence on Nigerian public perception and security. The data gathered from primary and secondary sources was analysed using content analysis. This technique involves systematically examining and interpreting textual data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and narratives regarding the public's views on the #EndBadGovernance protests, media framing of the protests, perceptions of government responses and the broader implications for national security.

Influence of Public Perception of the #EndBadGovernance Protests on National Security in Nigeria

Public perception of the #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria reveals significant disillusionment with the current government, a sentiment fueled by rising economic hardship and a lack of trust in political institutions. Protesters, largely driven by dissatisfaction with economic policies such as fuel price hikes, inflation, and rising costs of essential goods, view the government's actions as neglecting the welfare of ordinary citizens. This has contributed to the widespread support for the protests, with many seeing them as a necessary response to poor governance and ineffective leadership ([Businessday NG](#), 2024).

According to a report from the National Economic Empowerment Dial, *it is a dark day in the country and many of you are scared following the subsequent shootings in kyanja. Unfortunately, there is much confusion on the concept of security, there is state security and personal security.* From a national security perspective, the protests have heightened tensions. Government authorities have expressed concerns about the involvement of foreign influences and the potential for the protests to be hijacked by violent elements. The use of social media to organise and amplify the protests has also raised alarms, with security agencies alleging that cryptocurrencies were being used to fund protest activities ([TheCable](#), 2024).

According to Olu (2024), *"I found these treason charges against the EndBadGovernance protesters ferocious and oppressive. There is more danger ahead of the security forces than people demanding equilibriums of justice for common people. FGovt cannot suppress the voice of the masses"*. This has led to government crackdowns on protests, including arrests, media censorship, and the use of force to disperse crowds, further exacerbating the public's frustration with the government([The Nation](#), 2024).

According to Instablog9ja: *"#EndBadGovernanceProtest: We will not tolerate foreign interference in our domestic affairs — FG warns Russia, others. The Federal Government has vowed to take appropriate action against any country that might be behind the ongoing #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria"*. Additionally, some segments of the population have voiced support for military intervention, reflecting a growing frustration with the democratic process in Nigeria. This shift towards considering alternative forms of governance indicates a deeper concern about the

sustainability of Nigeria's political system and its ability to address the needs of the people([TheCable](#), 2024).

The protests' impact on national security is evident in the violent confrontations between protesters and security forces, the looting of government properties, and the increasing militarisation of the state's response. Overall, the public perception is that these protests are a direct result of the government's failure to meet the people's basic needs, with national security increasingly at risk as social unrest grows.

Discussion of Findings

The #EndBadGovernance protests, which began as a grassroots response to widespread dissatisfaction with governance in Nigeria, have highlighted significant challenges in public trust toward political leadership and the nation's security infrastructure. Key findings from the literature reveal several critical dimensions of these protests. The protests garnered massive public support, particularly from the youth, who were vocal about their frustration with government corruption, poor service delivery, and rising unemployment. As Okafor (2021) points out, public perception of the protests was largely shaped by the economic hardship facing many Nigerians, exacerbated by poor governance and escalating inflation rates ([Businessday NG](#), 2024). Austerity measures, such as fuel price hikes and VAT increases, played a role in igniting discontent, creating a fertile ground for mass mobilisation against the state. Moreover, social media acted as a key tool for amplifying public sentiment. Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook helped shape the narrative and broaden the appeal of the protests, attracting global attention and increasing pressure on the Nigerian government ([TheCable](#), 2024). This use of digital platforms represents a shift in how citizens engage with governance, with social media increasingly becoming a space for activism and organising.

The government's response to the protests underscores the tension between the state and civil society. Authorities viewed the protests as a significant threat to national stability, with allegations of foreign involvement, cryptocurrency funding, and potential hijacking by violent elements. Security forces, particularly the military, were deployed in several instances, resulting in violent clashes, such as the infamous Lekki Toll Gate shooting. This heavy-handed approach did little to quell public anger and may have exacerbated tensions between citizens and the state. Security analysts argue that the government's focus on maintaining order through force, rather than addressing the root causes of the protests, has led to an increase in public mistrust. In the context of Nigeria's fragile security environment—where insurgencies, kidnappings, and ethnic tensions already pose significant threats—the protests exposed further vulnerabilities within the national security framework ([TheCable](#), 2024). The perceived failure of the government to engage meaningfully with the protesters or initiate substantial reforms was seen as a missed opportunity to bridge the divide between the state and the citizenry.

However, public opinion on the protests was not universally homogenous. While there was significant support for the movement in urban areas like Lagos and Abuja, rural areas and northern states, which are more affected by terrorism and banditry, exhibited less enthusiasm. Some viewed the protests as destabilising, fearing that continued unrest could worsen the already precarious security situation in the country (Adeniran, 2020). This regional divide reflects broader societal

fractures in Nigeria, where different parts of the country experience governance and security challenges in distinct ways. The protests had an undeniable impact on Nigeria's national security landscape. In the immediate aftermath, the disruption of economic activities, attacks on public infrastructure, and clashes with security forces were clear indicators of the escalating crisis. However, the long-term implications could be even more profound. As Ndimele (2022) suggests, the protests exposed deep-rooted discontent with the democratic process, fueling calls for alternative governance models, including military intervention. This disillusionment with democratic institutions, particularly among the youth, presents a potential risk for future instability. If left unaddressed, the grievances expressed during the #EndBadGovernance protests could resurface in more violent forms, threatening both political stability and national security. The government's failure to implement meaningful reforms or address the underlying socio-economic issues could lead to a cycle of unrest that further weakens the state's legitimacy. The role of the Nigerian diaspora in amplifying the protests internationally was significant. Solidarity marches in cities such as London, Washington, and Toronto brought international attention to the movement and increased scrutiny of Nigeria's human rights record. The international community, including human rights organisations like Amnesty International, condemned the government's response, calling for accountability for the excessive use of force by security agents ([Businessday NG](#), 2024). This global pressure highlighted the interconnectedness of national protests and global governance concerns, signalling that the Nigerian government could no longer operate in isolation from international norms and expectations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria played a pivotal role in shaping public perception and influencing national security policies. These protests gained significant traction, particularly among younger generations and urban populations, driven largely by dissatisfaction with governance, corruption, and a high degree of social media exposure. Media coverage, both social and traditional, was instrumental in shaping the narrative around the protests. Positive portrayals legitimised the movement, emphasising calls for government accountability and transparency, while negative media coverage often stoked fears of national instability. Public participation underscored the legitimacy of the protests, broadening societal discussions on governance reforms and raising concerns about the state's approach to maintaining order. In response to the protests, the Nigerian government faced the challenge of balancing public safety with civil liberties. Varied governmental reactions, ranging from repressive measures to calls for dialogue, had a profound impact on public trust in institutions and perceptions of state legitimacy. National security policies evolved, incorporating increased surveillance, restrictions on public gatherings, and some efforts to address the socio-economic grievances driving the protests. These policy adjustments reflect a tension between maintaining national security and addressing the root causes of public discontent, particularly corruption and governance failures.

Findings revealed that the protests gained widespread support primarily from younger generations and populations in urban slums. These groups, often more exposed to social media, were deeply dissatisfied with corruption and poor governance, making them active participants in the movement. Their involvement highlights the role of socio-economic marginalisation in driving

civil unrest. Also, traditional and social media significantly influenced public perception of the protests. Positive media narratives legitimised the movement by emphasising government accountability and transparency, while negative portrayals heightened fears of instability. This dual framing shaped how both the public and the government responded to the protests.

Conclusively, it is recommended that the government adopt a more inclusive and transparent approach to governance, prioritising dialogue with civil society and addressing underlying socio-economic issues to restore public trust. Implementing reforms in national security policies should ensure a balance between maintaining order and respecting civil liberties, thereby fostering a more secure and stable society. However, to address the root causes of dissatisfaction in urban slums and among the youth, the government should implement policies aimed at reducing poverty, improving governance, and increasing access to basic services. Thus, proactive engagement with these communities through dialogue and inclusive policies can mitigate future unrest. Hence, the government should utilise the media as a platform for constructive dialogue between citizens and state institutions; by encouraging transparent and positive media coverage, the state can rebuild trust and foster a collaborative environment for addressing socio-political grievances and implementing necessary governance reforms.

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