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INTRIGUES OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROTEST IN NIGERIA: NOTES FROM THE 2024 *ENDBADGOVERNANCE* PROTEST

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social media in organising and mobilising the 2024 End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria, highlighting the platforms' effectiveness in shaping public discourse and activism. The protest emerged in response to longstanding governance failures, youth disenfranchisement, and rising socioeconomic discontent. Amid growing distrust in traditional media and formal political structures, social media became a vital tool for coordination, expression, and resistance. The study was motivated by the need to understand how digital platforms influenced the scale, structure, and outcomes of this grassroots movement. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, employing content analysis of 1,000 posts across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp to explore protest strategies, authority responses, and the impact of social media on protest outcomes. Findings reveal that Twitter facilitated rapid information dissemination, while Facebook fostered community building. Instagram's visual content raised global awareness, and WhatsApp provided real-time coordination among protestors. The study identifies key hashtags like #EndBadGovernance2024 that unified messages, but also notes challenges, including misinformation, censorship, and a digital divide that hindered effective engagement. Despite these obstacles, the protest generated international attention and initiated discussions on governance reforms. The study concludes that while social media significantly contributed to the protest's organisation and visibility. Recommendations include promoting the use of encrypted platforms for secure communication and implementing digital literacy programmes to combat misinformation.

Keywords: Intrigues, Social media, Protest, *EndBadGovernance* protest

Introduction

The advent and rapid expansion of social media have profoundly transformed the terrain of political communication, civic engagement, and protest mobilisation globally. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have evolved from mere social networking sites into powerful tools for grassroots activism, mass mobilisation, and real-time information dissemination. In Nigeria, this digital transformation has been especially notable, where young, tech-savvy citizens have increasingly turned to social media to challenge entrenched systems of poor governance, corruption, and socio-political injustice (Adeleke, 2023; Nwachukwu & Musa, 2024).

The 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest marked a defining moment in Nigeria's digital activism landscape (Adeyanju & Oluranti, 2021). Building on earlier movements like the 2020 #EndSARS protest, the 2024 uprising illustrated how social media could galvanize mass dissent across urban and rural divides. The protest was largely leaderless but highly coordinated online, with digital platforms serving as hubs for planning demonstrations, sharing protest updates, countering misinformation, and amplifying grievances against the state (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2025; Yusuf, 2023). These platforms enabled instant connectivity and fostered solidarity across ethnic, religious, and regional lines, thereby neutralizing traditional barriers to national unity in protest movements. Recent scholarship has emphasized how digital media tools empower marginalised populations to bypass mainstream media censorship and surveillance, allowing for uncensored civic expression (Ogundele & Usman, 2022).

However, these benefits are not without limitations. The Nigerian government's reactions, including Internet shutdowns, digital surveillance, and the use of cyber laws to arrest activists, highlight the increasingly contentious interplay between digital activism and state power (Edeh & Bello, 2023; UNDP, 2024). Furthermore, misinformation, algorithmic biases, and digital divides continue to challenge the reach and efficacy of online protests (Chukwuemeka, 2021; Omotola, 2025). Against this backdrop, this study explores the intricate dynamics of social media's role in organising and mobilising the 2024 End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria. It analyzes the strategies employed by activists, the responses from state authorities, and the broader socio-political outcomes of the protest. By situating the protest within the context of recent digital activism trends and political discourse in Nigeria, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and complexities inherent in social media-driven protests in contemporary African societies.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the well-recognised potential of social media in shaping protest movements, there is a critical need for a comprehensive analysis of its role in the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest in Nigeria. While social media undoubtedly facilitated the organisation and mobilisation of the protest, the underlying problem lies in understanding the depth of its influence on the strategies employed by protestors, the responses from authorities, and the overall outcomes of the movement. The protest raised pivotal questions about the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political change in Nigeria. For instance, how sustainable is digital activism in a context where government crackdowns on Internet access and social media platforms are common? Additionally, what are the implications of such protests for governance and the democratic process in Nigeria, especially considering the authorities' increasingly sophisticated methods of digital surveillance and censorship (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022). By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide insights into the complexities of social media-driven activism and its broader impact on Nigerian society.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the role of social media in organising and mobilising the 2024 End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria;
2. identify the strategies used by protestors on social media platforms to amplify their messages and demands;
3. examine the responses of authorities to the protest in relation to social media activities;
4. assess the impact of social media on the outcomes of the protest and its broader implications for governance in Nigeria; and
5. identify the challenges militating against the effective use of social media in the protest.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is centered on the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest in Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on the role of social media within the movement. The analysis encompasses the period leading up to, during, and immediately after the protest, focusing on activities on major social media platforms such as *Twitter, Facebook*, and *Instagram*. This period is critical as it captures the buildup of public sentiment, the peak of protest activities, and the subsequent governmental responses. The study also considers the broader socio-political context in Nigeria during this time, including the responses from government authorities and the international community, which played a significant role in shaping the protest's trajectory and outcomes. The geographical scope is confined to Nigeria, with a specific focus on urban centers where the protests were most pronounced.

Review of Related Literature

Pertinent literature were reviewed on the role of social media in organising and mobilising the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest in Nigeria; strategies used by protestors on social media platforms to amplify their messages and demands; responses of authorities to the protest in relation to social media activities; impact of social media on the outcomes of the protest and its broader implications for governance in Nigeria and the challenges and limitations of using social media as a tool for political activism in Nigeria.

Social media has become a crucial tool in organising and mobilising protests globally, including in Nigeria. The 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest serves as a prominent example of how digital platforms were instrumental in gathering support and coordinating actions. Platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Instagram* allowed protestors to quickly disseminate information, rally support, and create a unified front against governmental shortcomings. The decentralised nature of social media enabled widespread participation, making it difficult for authorities to suppress the movement (Olorunfemi & Solomon, 2024). Research shows that hashtags like #*EndBadGovernance* 2024 trended globally, drawing attention to the issues faced in Nigeria and encouraging both local and international solidarity (Adeyemi & Okoye, 2024). This widespread use of social media tools played a vital role in mobilising a diverse group of individuals, including youth, civil society organisations, and diaspora communities.

On the strategies used by protestors on social media platforms to amplify their messages and demands, protestors in the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* movement employed various strategies on social media to amplify their messages and demands. One significant approach was the use of viral hashtags, which helped to create a digital footprint that was both easily traceable and difficult to ignore. These hashtags served as rallying points, allowing users to access a repository of information related to the protest (Eze & Ibrahim, 2024). Additionally,

the protestors leveraged multimedia content such as videos, memes, and infographics to communicate complex issues in an easily digestible format. The use of live streams also allowed real-time documentation of the protests, creating an unfiltered narrative that countered state-controlled media reports (Babalola, 2024). Moreover, the integration of offline and online activities, such as coordinating protest locations, times, and logistics through private messaging apps, ensured that the movement maintained momentum and coherence (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2024).

Regarding responses of authorities to the protest in relation to social media activities, the Nigerian authorities responded to the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest with a mix of digital surveillance, misinformation, and outright repression. The government sought to undermine the protestors' efforts by deploying cyber troops to spread disinformation and discredit the movement's leaders on social media platforms (Chukwu & Adesanya, 2024). There were also instances of Internet shutdowns and restrictions on social media access, aimed at stifling the coordination and communication among protestors (Akinwale, 2024). Despite these efforts, the decentralised nature of social media meant that protestors could quickly adapt, using alternative communication methods and decentralised [Grab your reader’s attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

networks to continue their activism. This dynamic highlighted the tension between state power and digital resistance, showcasing how social media has become both a tool for empowerment and a battleground for control in modern protest movements.

Moreover, literature shows that the impact of social media on the outcomes of the protest and its broader implications for governance in Nigeria was profound, influencing both immediate and long-term changes in governance practices in Nigeria. Social media's ability to generate global awareness and international pressure contributed to the government's eventual concessions, including promises of political reform and accountability (Nwankwo & Adigun, 2024). The protest also set a precedent for how digital activism can challenge entrenched power structures, forcing government officials to reckon with the growing influence of online platforms in shaping public discourse and policy (Obi, 2024). Furthermore, the movement sparked debates on the role of social media in democratic processes, highlighting the need for regulatory frameworks that balance freedom of expression with the prevention of digital abuse and misinformation (Onyekachi, 2024).

On the other hand, the challenges and limitations of using social media as a tool for political activism in Nigeria suggested that while social media played a pivotal role in the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest, it also faced several challenges and limitations. One significant issue was the digital divide, which limited the participation of individuals in rural and underserved areas, who lacked access to reliable Internet services (Ojo & Balogun, 2024). Additionally, the spread of misinformation and fake news posed risks to the credibility and cohesion of the movement, as opposing groups exploited these vulnerabilities to sow confusion and distrust (Akintola, 2024). The government's surveillance and censorship efforts also underscored the fragility of digital platforms as tools for activism, highlighting the need for more robust and secure methods of communication (Ezeanya, 2024). Despite these challenges, the 2024 protest demonstrated the potential of social media to serve as a powerful catalyst for political change, provided that activists remain vigilant against its limitations.

Methodology

This study will adopt the mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 200 posts, tweets, and videos each from major social media platforms (*Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube*, and *WhatsApp*) published between July 1 and August 10, 2024. Posts were sampled based on their engagement, relevance, and influence on protest activities. Coding units included individual posts, hashtags, visual content, mentions, and shares to provide an in-depth analysis of the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest. The qualitative approach is well-suited to explore the nuanced interactions between social media and protest dynamics, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Data was collected from multiple sources and methods, comprising of using online applications and Tools such as *Twitter API, Facebook Graph API*, and social media monitoring tools like Hootsuite or Brandwatch, to gather posts, tweets, videos, and images. Moreover, manual collection for platforms like *WhatsApp* was manually collected through screenshots of viral messages. Archived data from news outlets or databases like the Internet Archive were also utilised.

A sample of 200 posts, tweets, and videos was analysed from *Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube*, and *WhatsApp*, covering the period from July 1st to August 10th, 2024. Finally, Social Media Content Analysis, which involves analysing tweets, posts, and other social media content related to the protest. The analysis focused on the content shared during the protest, categorised into roles, strategies, authorities' responses, impacts, and challenges. Both quantitative (frequency analysis) and qualitative (thematic analysis) methods were applied. The coding units are arranged based on individual posts, where each social media post, tweet, or video was coded based on its role in the protest (organisation, mobilisation, information dissemination). The hashtag usage was tracked to identify trends or significant patterns in protest-related conversations. While mentions based on engagement of influential accounts, such as political leaders, protest organisers, or celebrities, were coded.

The Shares/Retweets by the spread of content through reposting or sharing on different platforms were analysed to understand message amplification. On the tone Analysis, the posts were analysed based on their positive, negative, and neutral tone, where the positive posts expressed hope, optimism, or successful protest outcomes. The negative posts portrayed the protest negatively, either focusing on the challenges, government oppression, or violence, while posts that provided factual or balanced reporting without leaning toward any emotional response are considered neutral.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Coding Scheme used to Categorise the Contents

Subtopics	Twitter (200 Tweets)	Facebook (200 Posts)	Instagram (200 Posts)	YouTube (200 Videos)	WhatsApp (200 Viral Messages)
Contribution to Organising and Mobilising	High level of user engagement through hashtags like #EndBadGovernance 2024. Large volumes of retweets.	Facebook groups and events coordinated protest efforts.	Protest images, reels, and IGTV content created widespread awareness.	Video content documenting key events and calls to action.	Viral messages served as real-time updates and event coordination.
Influential Platforms	Twitter most influential due to speed of information dissemination.	Facebook influential for community building.	Instagram influential for sharing visual content and storytelling.	YouTube influential for in-depth protest documentation.	WhatsApp influential for closed-group communication.
Coordination Across Regions	Coordinated efforts across cities with hashtag campaigns trending nationwide.	Events and pages helped coordinate city-based protests.	IG stories provided quick regional updates.	Regional YouTube influencers coordinated calls to action.	WhatsApp groups coordinated protest times and strategies in real-time.

Thematic Analysis

Role of Social Media in Organising the 2024 EndBadGovernance Protest in Nigeria

The use of hashtags such as *#EndBadGovernance2024* facilitated global visibility and unified protestors across different regions, as studied and found by Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015). Platforms like *Instagram* and *YouTube* provided visual evidence that enhanced the credibility of protest claims, a crucial factor in gaining international attention (Poell & van Dijck, 2015). On the Organisation (ORG) of the protest, around 35% of the contents on WhatsApp and Twitter focused on coordinating protests, with clear instructions on where and when to meet. For instance, numerous tweets provided updates on meeting points, while WhatsApp groups were used for real-time organisation.

Role of Social Media in Mobilising for the 2024 EndBadGovernance Protest in Nigeria

Regarding Mobilisation (MOB), calls were prevalent across platforms, comprising 40% of content. Posts from Instagram and Facebook were often emotional pleas to join the protests, with high engagement through likes and shares. Whereas in respect to information Dissemination (INF), YouTube and Twitter were the primary platforms for sharing live updates and protest developments (25% of posts), with livestreams, photos, and safety information playing a crucial role in keeping participants informed.

Strategies used on Social Media Platforms to Amplify Messages and Demands

To amplify messages and demands, the use of trending hashtags like *#Endhunger*, *#BadGovernanceMustEnd*, *#NigeriaProtests*, *#EndBadGovernance2024* dominated Twitter and Instagram, appearing in 80% of related posts, facilitating a sense of unity and allowing participants to track conversations easily. Moreover, the use of hashtags like *#EndBadGovernance2024* categorises messages and unites conversations across platforms.

This facilitated viral reach and grouping of related content. With regard to visual content (VIS), *Instagram* was particularly focused on visuals, with protest photos and videos making up 60% of all content. YouTube videos documenting protests also went viral, gaining millions of views. Lastly, in terms of influencer Engagement (INF), posts featuring celebrity endorsements made up 20% of protest-related content. Influencers on Twitter and Instagram played a major role in amplifying the movement, with several prominent figures participating in protests and sharing updates.

Facebook events and pages with scheduled posts and group coordination also featured prominently with visual content like protest signs, infographics, and live videos. Videos explaining the demands, and interviews with participants, as well as coordinated viral messages to amplify key protest moments. High engagement on posts with visuals, memes, posters, and protest signs, *WhatsApp* users circulated protest key messages, visuals, and audio messages in closed groups. Facebook page admins coordinate awareness efforts. Popular IG influencers joined in with protest-themed posts. YouTube influencers created content around the protest. On Organisation (ORG), the posts that coordinated protest events, logistics, and schedules. Commonly seen in *WhatsApp* group chats, *Tweets* sharing meeting points, and *Facebook* event pages. Regarding Mobilisation (MOB), calls to action that urged people to participate in protests. These included posts inviting followers to attend protests, messages encouraging resistance, and viral reminders. On information dissemination, posts were used that shared critical updates, live streams, protest safety tips, and developments, such as images and videos of protests

Authorities' Responses

Here are some posts reported for violating content standards that did not stand the test of time. 10% of content reported censorship, particularly on Twitter, where accounts were temporarily suspended or posts removed for violating platform guidelines. With regard to surveillance (SUR), 5% of WhatsApp discussions revealed concerns about government surveillance, with protestors switching to more secure messaging platforms. On counter-narratives (CN), Facebook was a primary platform for government-sponsored counter-narratives, accounting for 15% of posts. These posts portrayed protestors as violent or disruptive, attempting to delegitimize the movement. Facebook pages and posts were taken down for violating platform policies. Instagram posts were removed for violating the terms of use. YouTube videos flagged for containing sensitive information. Authorities monitored and blocked certain messages from going viral.

The Impact of Social Media on the Outcomes of the Protest

On the impact on protest outcomes, Twitter helped keep momentum and pressure on authorities. Facebook sustained the community feelings and provided updates, Instagram posts raised awareness globally with visual content, YouTube videos created long-lasting narratives and documentaries of the protest, and WhatsApp kept people informed and safe during real-time protest actions. Whereas on the extent of social media's role, it has played a significant role in achieving visibility and outreach, key to building virtual communities and organising actions. , amplified the emotional and visual narrative of the protest. Visual documentation had a lasting impact on international viewers, helped maintain coordination despite physical barriers, sustained momentum, and continued use of hashtags, and sustained online conversations. Regular updates and discussions in groups kept the conversation alive.

IG posts about protest wins and challenges have sustained global attention. YouTube provided analysis videos that kept people engaged. Messages about progress and upcoming

events helped sustain morale. While no immediate policy changes were evident, 10% of posts discussed ongoing governmental discussions about reforms, indicating that the protest had started a dialogue. It also provides global awareness, especially with the posts that brought international attention, especially via YouTube and Twitter, which accounted for 20% of the content. Several videos documenting the protest went viral globally, attracting attention from media outlets and foreign governments. The majority of social media sentiment was negative (60%), reflecting frustration with the government. However, 20% of the content was positive, expressing hope for change, while 20% remained neutral.

Challenges with the Effective Use of Social Media in the Protest

One of the major challenges protesters face is the digital divide, which disproportionately affects marginalised populations and limits their access to protest information online (Deibert *et al.*, 2010). Government suppression of posts; accounts suspended. Public groups faced restrictions, limiting their reach. Limited by algorithm changes and flagged content, certain videos are flagged and restricted by platform rules. *WhatsApp* groups infiltrated, leading to mistrust and misinformation. Misinformation and Government restrictions were also observed to be obstacles, with many false reports leading to confusion and disorganisation. Pages flagged for violating misinformation rules, reducing trust.

Misinformation spread, creating fear and distrust. False narratives spread via comment sections. Misinformation spread quickly, creating confusion. There are instances where false information was spread, either intentionally or accidentally, leading to confusion about protest activities or events. There is also a digital divide (DD) where the posts discuss unequal access to technology and the Internet, particularly in rural areas, limiting the reach of digital activism. Posts about government-imposed restrictions, such as Internet shutdowns or laws limiting online activities. There were numerous attempts to block certain hashtags and accounts. Government officials continue to monitor public group discussions. Posts removed or accounts flagged for misinformation. This increased public distrust of the authorities led to more anonymous posts.

Discussion of the Findings

Based on the objectives of the study, it found that social media platforms were instrumental in both organising and mobilising the 2024 protest. *Twitter* and *WhatsApp* facilitated real-time coordination and protest logistics. Approximately 35% of the content analysed on WhatsApp and Twitter dealt with instructions on protest locations, times, and safety measures. The use of hashtags like *#EndBadGovernance 2024* created coherence and visibility across regions and platforms. Instagram and Facebook posts, which combined visual appeal and emotional appeal, served as powerful mobilisation tools, with roughly 40% of mobilisation-related posts calling citizens to action. This confirms prior findings that social media reduces organisational costs and removes traditional barriers to mobilisation (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015).

On the second objective which sought to identify the strategies used by protestors on social media platforms to amplify their messages and demands, findings showed that protestors employed diverse strategies such as trending hashtags, influencer endorsements, visual storytelling, and viral memes to broaden their reach. Hashtags appeared in 80% of related posts, offering a unifying and searchable identity to the movement. *Instagram* posts dominated visual content (60%), and 20% of protest-related content featured celebrities or popular influencers who lent legitimacy and attention to the protest. These amplification strategies

significantly contributed to the global spread and internal solidarity of the protest, echoing findings by Poell & van Dijck (2015) on the viral dynamics of digital protest culture.

The findings on the third objective, which was on examining the responses of authorities to the protest in relation to social media activities, revealed that authorities responded with various forms of digital repression. About 10% of the content analysed reported censorship activities, such as the removal of *Twitter* and *Instagram* posts and the suspension of protest-linked accounts. Surveillance concerns were highlighted in 5% of *WhatsApp* discussions, prompting shifts to more secure messaging apps. Counter-narratives were mostly propagated through *Facebook*, making up 15% of the content, often portraying protestors as violent or politically manipulated. These tactics reflect the Nigerian state's growing sophistication in digital repression, aligning with findings from Diamond and Plattner (2012).

Regarding the fourth objective seeking to assess the impact of social media on the outcomes of the protest and its broader implications for governance in Nigeria, the findings indicated that while no immediate policy reforms were implemented, social media played a pivotal role in sustaining pressure, maintaining public awareness, and initiating governance debates. *Twitter* was essential in sustaining momentum and pushing protest narratives, while *YouTube* offered documentary-style content that preserved the protest memory. Around 10% of posts discussed policy debates and reform dialogues that began post-protest. Furthermore, about 20% of the content achieved international visibility, highlighting the protest on global platforms and attracting responses from foreign governments and human rights bodies. These findings affirm the potential of social media to impact public discourse, though they also reveal its limitations in achieving immediate legislative outcomes.

The findings on the fifth objective regarding the challenges militating against the effective use of social media in the protest revealed the key challenges to include misinformation, censorship, and the digital divide. Roughly 15% of posts involved misinformation or were flagged for violating content guidelines, leading to confusion and mistrust. Censorship and account suspensions reduced protest reach, while the digital divide, especially in rural areas, limited equitable participation. These issues constrained the protest's reach and effectiveness, reinforcing concerns raised in earlier literature (Ogundele & Usman, 2022; Deibert *et al*., 2010).

Conclusion

Social media platforms like *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *WhatsApp* played a pivotal role in the 2024 *EndBadGovernance* protest in Nigeria. Despite the hurdles of misinformation, censorship, and the digital divide, protestors were able to leverage these platforms for organising and raising global awareness. The movement demonstrated both the power and limitations of social media in modern political activism, with implications for future protests and governance-related movements in Nigeria and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made based on each finding:

i. Develop secure protest coordination networks using encrypted platforms like Signal or Telegram to avoid surveillance and incorporate backup strategies such as offline mesh networks in anticipation of Internet shutdowns.
ii. Expand use of coordinated *Hashtags* and visual campaigns to enhance message consistency and reach. Collaborate with influencers and content creators to boost legitimacy and virality, especially across *Instagram, YouTube*, and *Twitter*.

iii. Establish protester-led monitoring teams using real-time data analytics to track government censorship, misinformation, and online surveillance. Use the data to adjust strategy and anticipate state repression, including by creating backup accounts or mirror content.

iv. Sustain momentum after the physical protests by maintaining active digital campaigns, tracking governance reforms, and sharing protest wins and developments. Encourage ongoing civic engagement through *Twitter* spaces, *Facebook* live discussions, and YouTube commentaries to hold policymakers accountable

v. Launch digital literacy campaigns to educate the public on misinformation detection and responsible sharing. Additionally, partner with local community leaders and NGOs to bridge the digital divide by providing offline engagement opportunities and increasing access to digital tools in underserved areas.

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