

## **Perception of Agbor youth towards the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance Protest in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the perceptions of Agbor youth regarding media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria. With a focus on the extent of media exposure, perceived representation, coverage accuracy, and the influence of media credibility on trust in news outlets, the research offers an understanding of the interplay between media narratives and youth engagement. Anchored in Social Identity Theory, the study employs a survey design, utilising a structured questionnaire as its primary data collection tool. A sample size of 97 participants was selected through random sampling, with 91 valid responses analysed to derive meaningful insights. The findings indicate substantial exposure of Agbor youth to media coverage of the protests, highlighting the media's significant role in shaping awareness. However, a notable segment of respondents reported feeling misrepresented or excluded in media narratives, reflecting broader concerns about inclusivity in media portrayals. Scepticism about media credibility emerged as a key theme, with many participants questioning the accuracy and fairness of coverage. This scepticism undermines trust in media outlets and, by extension, diminishes youth enthusiasm for civic participation essential for societal transformation. The study underscores the critical need for media organisations to prioritise diversity in reporting to capture a broader spectrum of voices within the protest movement. It also advocates for youth-oriented media literacy programmes to enhance critical engagement with media content and counter misinformation. By addressing these gaps, the research argues for a more responsible and inclusive media landscape, essential for fostering active citizenship and advancing democratic ideals in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Media Representation, Youth Engagement, Social Identity Theory, End Bad Governance Protests

## Introduction

The relationship between governance and media coverage is a crucial aspect of any democratic society, and this is particularly true in Nigeria, where the media serves both as a watchdog and a conduit for public opinion. The End Bad Governance protests, which occurred from August 1 to August 10, 2024, illustrate the media's critical role during social unrest. Triggered by the soaring cost of living and widespread frustration with the government's inability to address pressing economic issues, these protests manifested the collective anger and aspiration for change among the Nigerian populace, particularly the youth. In Nigeria, bad governance has long been a source of discontent. Rampant corruption, lack of accountability, ineffective public services, and economic mismanagement have plagued the nation for decades. The youth, increasingly frustrated with these systemic failures, have become more vocal in demanding accountability and reform (Akpojivi, 2024). The End Bad Governance protests were not merely reactions to the immediate economic crisis but were also symbolic of a broader struggle against entrenched political malpractices (The Punch, 2024).

As the protests gained momentum, the media's role became increasingly significant. Various media outlets—from traditional newspapers and television stations to online platforms and social media—provided coverage that shaped public perception and understanding of the events. However, this coverage was not uniform. Different outlets presented varying narratives, with some focusing on the legitimate grievances of the protesters, while others emphasised incidents of violence, looting, and clashes with law enforcement. This divergence in reporting raises critical questions about the impact of media framing on public perception, particularly among the youth, who are avid consumers of both traditional and digital media. The protests were marked by reports of excessive force used by security agencies, leading to a complex interplay between the protesters and law enforcement. Accusations of police brutality and the militarisation of public spaces further fueled anger and mistrust among the youth, who were already sceptical of the government's intentions (This Day, 2024). In this context, the media's portrayal of the protests became a battleground for narratives, influencing how the events were perceived locally and internationally.

Understanding the perceptions of Agbor youth towards this media coverage offers valuable insights into the broader implications of media influence on social movements in Nigeria. How do they interpret the information presented to them? Do they trust the media outlets reporting on their struggles, or do they feel misrepresented? Addressing these questions is essential for comprehending how media narratives can empower or undermine collective action among young Nigerians. The perception of media coverage during the End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria poses a significant challenge that warrants a thorough investigation, especially among the youth in Agbor. As the country continues to struggle with persistent issues of bad governance—manifested through corruption, economic mismanagement, and social inequality—the role of the media becomes increasingly critical. Research indicates that media narratives can shape public understanding and engagement in social movements, as highlighted by Bassey (2024), who examined the influence of social media on youth involvement in the August 2024 protests. In this context, how media outlets portray the protests can mobilise support for the youth's demands or perpetuate negative stereotypes that undermine their legitimacy. Understanding these perceptions is essential for fostering effective civic engagement and accountability in governance.

Moreover, the rapid shift toward digital media consumption among youth complicates this landscape. As noted by Akpojivi (2024), the politicisation of social media in Nigeria has created opportunities and challenges for young activists, who often encounter a mix of credible information and sensationalised reporting. This raises critical questions about media literacy and the ability of young individuals to navigate complex

narratives. Chukwuemeka (2023) highlights the transformative potential of youth-led protests, yet the effectiveness of these movements can be jeopardised by misrepresentation in media coverage. Therefore, investigating how Agbor youth perceive the media's portrayal of the End Bad Governance protests is crucial for understanding their impact on public discourse and the future of political engagement in Nigeria. The objectives of this study are to: 1. Find out the extent to which Agbor youth were exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests in Nigeria; 2. Examine the extent to which Agbor youth feel represented in media narratives about the protests; 3. Investigate how Agbor youth perceive the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria; and 4. Investigate how perceptions of media credibility influence Agbor youth's trust in various media outlets during the protests.

## Overview of Bad Governance

Bad governance refers to the failure of governmental institutions to meet the needs and expectations of the populace, leading to systemic issues that undermine political stability and social progress. Bad governance is characterised by a lack of accountability and transparency, resulting in widespread corruption and mismanagement of public resources. Moore (2001) argues that political underdevelopment, which encompasses the inability of governments to respond to citizens' needs effectively, often stems from entrenched corruption and a lack of institutional integrity. In such environments, public officials prioritise personal gain over the welfare of the populace, leading to a disconnection between the government and the citizens it is meant to serve. Another important aspect of bad governance is the erosion of the rule of law, which Combat, Dzango, Modeawi, Ngiala, Ridwan & Ngbolua (2021) highlight as a critical index in evaluating governance quality. In contexts where legal frameworks are weak or selectively enforced, citizens may find themselves without recourse for injustices, exacerbating feelings of insecurity and disenfranchisement. This lack of legal protection diminishes trust in governmental institutions and fosters an environment where human rights abuses can occur unchecked. The authors emphasise that in countries like the Central African Republic and Uganda, the absence of effective governance structures has led to pervasive human rights violations and social unrest. Okorie (2022) further elaborates on the implications of bad governance by linking it to broader security challenges. He describes bad governance as a catalyst for insecurity, particularly in Nigeria's South-East region, where citizens' grievances regarding inadequate governance have led to planned protests. The disconnect between government actions and public expectations fuels societal tensions, creating unrest that undermines security and development. This perspective highlights that bad governance is not merely a political issue; it has tangible consequences for the safety and well-being of citizens, making it a central concern for any society striving for stability and progress.

The 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria were a series of nationwide demonstrations from August 1 to August 10, 2024. These protests were sparked by the rising cost of living in the country, fueled by record inflation and economic hardship, particularly the removal of fuel subsidies and devaluation of the Naira. Some people tagged it the "End Hunger Protest". The protests began peacefully but turned violent after Nigerian security agencies attempted to quell them. On the first day of the demonstrations, scores were killed by the Army and Police in a bid to disperse the protesters across Nigeria. At least 14 protesters were killed, with four shot dead in Borno State and four in Niger State (This Day, 2024). The protests were decentralised, organised by various activist groups, and were met with force by security agencies, resulting in casualties, arrests, and reports of human rights abuses. The Nigerian government's response to the protests was criticised by international organisations,

such as Amnesty International, which condemned the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters (Amnesty International, 2024). Some notable events during the protests include protesters waving Russian flags. In Kano State, protesters waved Russian flags, calling for President Vladimir Putin's intervention and showing discontent with President Bola Tinubu's administration (Daily Trust, 2024). There were also arrests and detentions. Over 1,000 protesters were arrested, and several deaths were reported (This Day, 2024). A journalist, Jide Oyekunle, was also arrested and detained by police while reporting on the protests (The Punch, 2024). President Bola Tinubu addressed the protests, acknowledging the public's pain and frustration and urging protesters to suspend further action to allow for dialogue.

## **Mass Media and the Coverage of Protests in Nigeria**

Mass media plays a vital role in covering protests in Nigeria, serving as a platform for citizens to express their grievances and bring attention to social and economic issues. The media's coverage of protests helps shape public opinion and influences government policies. Media coverage of protests in Nigeria is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a voice for marginalised communities and helps amplify their concerns. Social media platforms, in particular, have become essential tools for mobilising protests and spreading awareness about social and economic issues (Bassey, 2024). Secondly, media coverage helps hold those in power accountable for their actions. By reporting on protests and the government's response, the media ensures that the public is informed and engaged in the democratic process (Chukwuemeka, 2023). The media's coverage of protests in Nigeria has led to several successes. For instance, the #EndSARS protests 2020, extensively covered by local and international media, led to the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Chukwuemeka, 2023). Similarly, the media's coverage of the 2024 #EndBadGovernance protests helped bring attention to the country's economic woes and the need for governance reforms (Hassan et al., 2024). Despite the successes, the media faces several challenges when covering protests in Nigeria. One major challenge is the risk of censorship and harassment by government authorities (Akpojivi, 2024). Additionally, the media often struggles to maintain objectivity and balance in their reporting, mainly when covering sensitive or controversial issues (Bassey, 2024).

The media plays a crucial role in shaping youth perceptions of social justice issues, acting as both a source of information and a platform for advocacy. In today's digital age, young people are increasingly exposed to various media narratives that can either empower them or perpetuate misconceptions. Research indicates that the media's portrayal of social justice issues significantly influences youth's understanding and engagement with these topics. For instance, Moore (2001) highlights that media representation can either highlight systemic injustices or obscure them, depending on the framing employed by journalists and content creators. When media outlets prioritise sensationalism over accuracy, they risk distorting young people's understanding of critical social issues, thus shaping their perceptions in ways that may not reflect reality. Moreover, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for youth engagement, allowing for direct participation in conversations surrounding social justice. As Kombeto et al. (2021) noted, platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow young activists to share their experiences and advocate for change. This democratisation of information can lead to increased awareness and mobilisation around issues like racial inequality, gender rights, and environmental justice. However, the challenge lies in the prevalence of misinformation and biased narratives that can dilute the effectiveness of these movements. Youth may encounter conflicting messages that can shape their perceptions in contradictory ways, complicating their understanding of social justice issues.

Okorie (2022) also emphasises that the media's role in framing social justice issues can have far-reaching implications for political engagement among youth. When media coverage aligns with the values and concerns of young people, it can foster a sense of solidarity and urgency regarding social justice movements. Conversely, when coverage is dismissive or trivialises these issues, it can lead to apathy or disengagement. This dynamic shows the importance of responsible and accurate media representation, as the way problems are presented can significantly influence youth activism and their perceptions of what constitutes social justice. Overall, the influence of media on youth perceptions of social justice issues is profound and multifaceted. As young people navigate an increasingly complex media landscape, understanding the implications of media narratives becomes essential for fostering informed and engaged citizens equipped to advocate for meaningful change.

Chigozie (2024) examined the perceived effects of the End Bad Governance protests on poverty alleviation among academic staff at public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey research design to answer two research questions and test two null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 150 participants, and data was gathered using a researcher-constructed questionnaire titled the End Bad Governance Protest and Poverty Alleviation Scale (EBGPPAS). Three research experts confirmed the validity of the EBGPPAS, and the reliability was established through a test-retest method, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.80. The researcher and four assistants administered the questionnaires over three weeks. Data analysis involved calculating means and applying Chi-square tests for hypotheses. The findings indicated that the demands made during the protests have not significantly contributed to poverty reduction, and the Federal Government's responses have similarly failed to alleviate poverty. The demonstrations primarily reflected public discontent with ineffective governmental responses to widespread hardship in Nigeria rather than resulting in tangible improvements in poverty alleviation. A recommendation was made for the government to take actionable steps to address the populace's demands. This study aligns with the current research by highlighting the disconnect between protest actions and tangible outcomes, suggesting that both studies emphasise the need for effective governmental response in addressing public grievances.

Similarly, Asemah and Nwaoboli (2022) explored the influence of Folarin Falana's Twitter campaigns on youth participation in the 2020 EndSARS protests in Lagos. Using a survey research design, the study relied on questionnaires for data collection from 384 out of 10 million Lagos youth. The findings revealed that while exposure to celebrity social media campaigns can mobilise protest participation, other factors also play significant roles in influencing engagement. The researchers recommended that celebrities actively participate in social media discussions about governance issues, leveraging their platforms to advocate for the voiceless and demonstrate that even they are not immune to the consequences of bad governance. This study supports the current research by underscoring the importance of media and social influence in mobilising youth protest participation. Both studies highlight the critical role of representation and engagement in fostering active participation among youth, suggesting that effective communication strategies can enhance the impact of protest movements. The current study used a survey research design to investigate the perceptions of Agbor youth regarding media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria, similar to the Asemah and Nwaoboli (2022) research design. More so, the current study used the Social Identity Theory. This theoretical framework aligns with Chigozie and Asemah & Nwaoboli (2022) findings, as it emphasises the significance of group identity in shaping perceptions and responses to media narratives during protests.

More so, Adedokun (2022) examined the role of social networks in the #EndSARS agitation against police brutality and bad governance in Nigeria. The study highlights how recent protests have garnered global attention and sparked various interpretations regarding their underlying causes. While violence can occasionally erupt during protests, Adedokun suggests that such occurrences are typically driven by additional factors. Employing a Social Network Theory framework, the research focuses on the #EndSARS movement, which emerged as a response to extrajudicial police actions and a broader call for improved governance. Key motivations for this study include the increasing prominence of social media, the rise of social media activism worldwide, and the rapid dissemination of information by users. The analysis asserts that the longevity of movements like #EndSARS relies on specific characteristics of individuals within the network, such as their resistance to influence, responsiveness, and the emotional impact of the movement on them. Findings indicate that protesters utilise emotional dynamics, collective identities, symbolic artefacts, and shared values to maintain momentum in their demands, particularly when responses from authorities are delayed. This study aligns with the current research by emphasizing the crucial role of social media in mobilizing and sustaining youth protests, highlighting how collective identity influences engagement and participation.

## Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) originated from the work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s. Tajfel, a British social psychologist, sought to understand group behaviour and intergroup relations and collaborated with Turner, an Australian social psychologist, to develop SIT as an extension of Tajfel's earlier work on intergroup conflict. The theory posits that individuals derive a sense of self from group memberships, categorising themselves and others into groups (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). At its core, SIT suggests that individuals categorise themselves into groups, known as the in-group, and distinguish from others, referred to as the out-group. Group membership significantly influences self-concept and self-esteem, and individuals strive for positive distinctiveness, seeking to differentiate their in-group favourably (Hornsey, 2008). When group boundaries are threatened, individuals use strategies to maintain or restore positive distinctiveness. Despite its contributions, SIT has faced criticism. Some, such as Hornsey (2008) argue that the theory overemphasises group categorisation, neglecting individual differences. Others point out the lack of clear boundaries between social identity and other identity theories and insufficient attention to power dynamics and social context. Additionally, SIT has difficulty explaining intra-group conflicts. The theory applies to the current study as it involves understanding how Agbor youth categorise themselves about the protests and media coverage and analysing how group membership shapes their perceptions. SIT can also reveal how media representation affects Agbor youth's social identity and self-esteem.

## Methodology and Results

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the perception of Agbor youth towards media coverage of the 2024 'end bad governance' in Nigeria. The study population is comprised of Agbor youth, which, according to the Nation Population Commission (2020), is estimated to be 43,000. To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was utilised with a 0.10 margin of error, resulting in a sample size of 97 participants. The formula for the calculation was  $n = (N \times E^2) / ((N - 1) E^2 + d^2)$ ; computing the figures  $n = (43,000 \times 0.10^2) / ((43,000 - 1)0.10^2 + 0.10^2)$  and thus,  $n \approx 97$ . Random sampling technique was adopted to select participants, ensuring that every A random sampling technique was adopted to select participants, ensuring

that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. This technique helped minimise bias and ensured the sample's representativeness. A questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection, allowing participants to express their perceptions and opinions on the media coverage. Out of the 100 copies of a questionnaire distributed, all were retrieved, but six copies were deemed unsuitable for analysis due to improper questionnaire filling. Using a questionnaire allowed for efficient data collection and enabled participants to provide thoughtful responses.

**Table 1: How exposed Agbor youth are to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests**

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very Exposed	17	18.7%
Exposed	40	43.9%
Somewhat Exposed	22	24.2%
Rarely Exposed	12	13.2%
Not Exposed	0	0%
Total	91	100%

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 1 shows that many Agbor youth were exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests, suggesting that media plays a significant role in shaping their awareness and understanding of the events. However, a considerable number of youth are either rarely or somewhat exposed to this coverage, which suggests that the people either have no access to the media or that the media coverage was insufficient for them to be exposed to it.

**Table 2: How well Agbor youth feel represented in media narratives about the protests**

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very Well Represented	10	11.0%
Well Represented	26	28.6%
Somewhat Represented	31	34.1%
Poorly Represented	14	15.4%
Not Represented at All	10	11.0%
Total	91	100%

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 2 showed that while some Agbor youth feel adequately represented in media narratives about the protests, a notable portion (26.4%) feel overlooked or misrepresented. This divide could foster disconnection and dissatisfaction among those who believe their perspectives are not being reflected, potentially diminishing their engagement with the media and the protest movement.

**Table 3: How Agbor youth perceive the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests**

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
It accurately represents the voices of the protesters	18	19.8%
It provides a balanced view of the events	24	26.4%
It fails to capture the full	25	27.5%

scope of the protests		
It tends to exaggerate the situation	17	18.7%
It misrepresents the protesters' messages	7	7.7%
Total	91	100%

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 3 revealed a sense of scepticism as the major perception of media coverage among the 2024 end bad governance protest among Agbor youth. While some believe that the media accurately represents the protests, many feel it fails to capture the full scope of the events or misrepresents the protesters' messages.

**Table 4: Agbor youth perception of media credibility influence on the trust in various media outlets during the protests**

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
It has increased my confidence in the media	20	22.0%
I feel more informed about the protests	27	29.7%
It has not changed my opinion about the media	22	24.2%
It has discouraged me from participating in protests	15	16.5%
I do not trust any media outlets	7	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 4 indicates a mixed level of trust in media coverage among Agbor youth. While some feel more informed and confident in the media, others express neutrality or a lack of trust, which may discourage participation in future protests. This complex relationship suggests that media credibility is critical in shaping youth perceptions and engagement, emphasising the importance of responsible and inclusive reporting.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a detailed examination of how Agbor youth perceive media coverage surrounding the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria. The data reveals a significant level of exposure to media coverage, which suggests that media plays a crucial role in shaping awareness and understanding of these protests among the youth. However, the varying degrees of exposure, particularly the presence of only somewhat or rarely exposed youth, indicate potential gaps in access to comprehensive media narratives. This aligns with Akpojivi (2024), who discusses the politicisation of social media in Nigeria and highlights how selective media access can influence youth perceptions and engagement. If segments of the youth population are inadequately informed, it may impede their ability to participate actively in civic discourse, thereby limiting the overall impact of the protests. Regarding representation, the findings reveal a divide among Agbor youth regarding how well they feel represented in media narratives. While a portion feels adequately represented, a notable number express feelings of being overlooked or misrepresented. This sentiment can foster disconnection and dissatisfaction, echoing Bassey's (2024) observations on the influence of social media in shaping youth engagement. When young people perceive their experiences and voices not reflected



in media coverage, their motivation to engage in protests may diminish. This situation underscores the importance of inclusive media narratives that accurately reflect the diverse perspectives within the protest movement.

The data also reveals a prevailing scepticism regarding the media's portrayal of the protests. Many Agbor youth feel that media coverage either fails to capture the full scope of the events or misrepresents the protesters' messages. This scepticism resonates with the findings of Chukwuemeka (2023), who notes that past protests in Nigeria have often been misrepresented in media narratives. Such misrepresentation can lead to a lack of trust in media outlets, further complicating the relationship between the youth and the information sources that shape their understanding of critical social movements. If youth perceive media coverage as biased or inadequate, their engagement with media and protest activities may be adversely affected. Furthermore, the findings from this study indicate a mixed level of trust in media coverage among Agbor youth. While some express increased confidence and feel better informed, others remain sceptical or outright distrustful of media outlets. This complex relationship suggests that media credibility is a vital factor influencing youth engagement in protests, as highlighted by Hassan et al. (2024). When media coverage is perceived as credible and informative, it can enhance youth participation; conversely, a lack of trust can discourage involvement. This underscores the need for responsible and accurate reporting and the importance of fostering a media landscape prioritising transparency and inclusivity. Overall, the implications of this study are significant. They point to media outlets' need to engage with young audiences more meaningfully, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and accurately represented. As Obadare (2021) argues in discussing the hashtag revolution in Nigeria, the power of media lies not just in its capacity to inform but also in its ability to empower citizens. Thus, addressing the gaps in media exposure and representation can enhance youth engagement in Nigeria's ongoing struggles for better governance, ultimately fostering a more informed and active citizenry.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that while Agbor youth are significantly exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests, there are notable gaps in representation and trust in media narratives. Many youths feel their voices are either misrepresented or overlooked, leading to scepticism about the media's role in accurately portraying the protests. This scepticism can hinder youth engagement and participation in civic activities crucial for driving change. It is therefore recommended that:

1. Media organisations should prioritise diverse voices and perspectives in their coverage of protests. This can be achieved by seeking input from youth activists and community representatives, ensuring that the narratives presented reflect the broader spectrum of experiences within the protest movement.
2. Youth organisations should develop programs to improve media literacy among young people. By educating them on critically engaging with media content, these programmes can empower youth to discern credible information, counter misinformation, and understand the media's role in shaping public perceptions.
3. Policymakers should promote regulations encouraging transparency and ethical practices in media reporting. This includes supporting initiatives that hold media outlets accountable for misrepresentation and bias, ultimately fostering a more trustworthy media environment.

4. Schools and universities should integrate civic education into their curricula, emphasising the importance of media engagement and participation in societal issues. Educational institutions can cultivate a generation of informed and active citizens by equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate media landscapes.

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