

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTHS' MOBILISATION FOR
#ENDBADGOVERNANCE PROTESTS IN AKURE-SOUTH LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated how social media influenced youths' mobilization for the #EndBadGovernance protests in Akure South Local Government Area. It examined the extent of social media usage among residents of Akure-South, identified the most utilized social media platforms for the mobilization of #EndBadGovernance protest, assessed the effectiveness of social media in mobilizing residents of Akure-South for #EndBadGovernance protest, and examined the factors that impeded social media usage for the protest in Akure-South. The Social Movement Theory was adopted, and the survey research design was used, while the questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Taro Yamani's formula was used to determine a sample size of 400. The study employed the multistage sampling technique, and the data were gathered using a well-structured questionnaire. The study found that X (Twitter) was the commonly adopted social media for mobilizing the youth for the #EndBadGovernance protest in Ondo State, and that the major factors that hindered social media usage during the protests were the lack of network access and poor internet connectivity.

Keywords: #EndBadGovernance, Mobilization, Platforms, Protest, Social media

Introduction

Communication for development and social change involves information focusing on issues that directly or indirectly impact people within a society, with significant consequences requiring behavioural changes from individuals, local communities, non-governmental organizations, government, and international actors (White & Muturi, 2023). In essence, communication for social change facilitates meaningful interactions that highlight concerns and promote

sustainable growth through effective collaboration among key development agents and stakeholders. It entails employing a comprehensive communication strategy to address barriers that hinder access to basic human needs while also addressing societal inequalities and social injustices. End police brutality movement and the recent August 1, 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest, among others, have brought attention to youths' active participation in economic struggles.

However, the efficacy of social media roles can be said to have been significant in amplifying the marginalized voices, promoting awareness, and reinforcing citizens' knowledge, influencing and shaping public perception, opinion, attitude, and behaviour on salient issues, mobilizing citizens, facilitating and creating platforms for social discourses. Social media, over the years, played crucial roles in social change and development and have proved to be pivotal tools for strengthening democracy in Nigeria (Gani, Ibrahim, & Nebeife, 2024). The dividend of development and social change can be traced to the emergence of new media, the internet, and social media, through their interactivity and global reach, and connectivity. This development represents one of the most significant innovations that leads to social transformations in Nigeria in the 21st Century (Ngwu, Ejishie & Ukam, 2024).

The increased penetration and usage of social media have significantly impacted and shaped the processes involved in communication and telecommunication all over the world (Chiamogu, Obikeze, & Odikpo, 2021). Social media are new technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, and opinions, and make interactions possible through web-based technologies. According to Kalpana and Haenlein (2010), as cited in Ghoshal (2019), social media are regarded as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Similarly, social media are applications or technological platforms that enhance the creation and dissemination of information, views, thoughts, ideas, and other content through an online or virtual community or networks (Ajibulu & Asemah, n.d).

Over time, social media has been seen as a significant and effective tool that informs, educates, and enlightens the public, and shapes their opinion on salient issues that affect them, and mobilizes the public into action. This means that social media can be more persuasive than traditional media, especially in politics. Social media enhance two-way information flow, that is, it harbors a horizontal flow of information between the users. It promotes coordination between users of the same or similar goals with low or no barrier to access and reliable user-

generated content, thus potentially making it very easy to shape the opinion of others and organize collective actions such as a protest. According to Chiamogu et al. (2021), social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, and WhatsApp have transformed information dissemination and play a crucial role in mobilizing protests in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, social media has been seen as the people's media. It has helped to foster social change and development by amplifying the voice of the marginalized citizens and facilitating collective actions through user-generated content. Social media have provided a new dimension to social movement and nationalism by conceiving, organizing and mobilizing, and communicating protest information in Nigeria (Danladi, Mustapha & Binta, 2024). Over the years, several issues that have led to protests have been recorded in Nigeria, which have necessitated social protests such as the 2012 "Occupy Nigeria", the 2018 "BringBackOurGirls" protests, as well as the "#EndPoliceBrutality" protest in 2020 and the recent "#EndBadGovernance" (Tongshinung, 2023; Danladi, Mustapha & Binta, 2024; Udoudom, Obong, Etifit, & Idiong, 2024). These protests happened as a result of the public's quest for accountability, reformation, and justice. Hence, social media have revolutionized the way people are mobilized for protests in Nigeria, especially for development and social change (Ajayi, 2024).

Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, etc. have become necessary tools and are concomitantly used to represent the voices of the marginalized and agitate for social change through social protests. Social media has been very crucial in advocating for development and socioeconomic change in Nigeria. It is a potent catalyst to drive development, allowing citizens to facilitate mobilization that fosters equity, justice, and social reformation. Basically, a protest campaign is usually promoted on social media to create awareness on issues of social importance, and those mostly affect the public. It helps the citizens to convey their demand or agitation via relevant social media platforms using storytelling technique, hashtags, graphics, images, viral videos and pictures, petitions, and press releases to create a sense of immediacy and nationalism which transcends cultural, religious, and language divides. However, the power of mantras and slogans cannot be overlooked in protests (Udoudom et. al., 2024).

Previous studies have investigated the social media roles in promoting activism and socio-economic change and development, such as Occupy Nigeria and #BringBackOurGirls protest (Danladi, Mustapha & Binta, 2024), and #EndSars protest (Maradun, Yar'Adua, & Aondover, 2021). However, the specific social protest context of the August 1, 2024, "EndBadGovernance" slogan in Nigeria

has not been adequately studied, leaving a gap in knowledge on how social media platforms can impact protest mobilization and collective actions for social change in fighting against bad governance. This research was primarily targeted to examine how social media influenced youths' mobilization for the #EndBadGovernance protests in Akure-South Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

In a nutshell, the study firstly sought to find the extent of social media usage among youths in Akure-South Local Government (LGA) of Ondo State, Nigeria. Secondly, the study attempted to identify the most utilised social media network used in the youth mobilization for the #EndBadGovernance protest in Akure-South LGA. Thirdly, the study investigated the effectiveness of social media in mobilizing the youth residents of Akure-South for the #EndBadGovernance protest. Fourthly, it examined the factors that impinged on the youths' social media usage for the #EndBadGovernance protest in Akure-South.

Literature Review

Social Media and Protest

Social media have shaped the way individuals interact, communicate, and mobilize each other for collective actions and social change. It has reformed the processes and patterns of information dissemination and consumption with a significant influence on people's behaviour, attitude, opinion, and views about various aspects, including politics, media, economics, and cultural landscape (Ajayi, 2024). Social media platforms serve as the means for people to connect with others who share the same or similar interests, ideas, or goals. It helps family and friends to reunite virtually and enjoy moments together. The role of social media in fostering social change and development cannot be overemphasized. Public participation in politics and the decision-making process is enhanced through social media since they provide platforms where the attention of relevant stakeholders or the government is drawn to critical issues that demand intervention.

According to Maradun, Yar'Adua, and Aondover (2021), social media have become indispensable tools in protest mobilization, with a pivotal role in modifying the trajectory of social movements. Abalaka & Ajiteru (2024) explained that the impact of social media is dynamic, influencing the various aspects of protests, from awareness, organization, coordination, and participation. Social media facilitates the dissemination of information, enabling protesters to share their message, goals, and plans with a vast audience. Platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram provide a space for activists to broadcast their demands, creating a sense of urgency and solidarity (Chiamogu et al.,

2021). Social media also enables protesters to coordinate efforts, organize events, and communicate with each other in real-time. Moreover, social media amplifies the voices of marginalized communities, providing a platform for their stories, struggles, and demands to be heard.

Empirical Review

The study of Maradun, Yar'Adua, and Aondover (2021) examined the perceived value of social media in the #EndSARS' Protest in Nigeria. The study found that the majority of the protesters are youths who are within the age bracket of 25-35. It also revealed that social media platforms are an effective media tool for people to express themselves on issues affecting them. The study found that social media is an interactive medium where people come together to discuss issues.

In another study that investigated how Twitter was used to mobilise the youth for the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, Ezuka, Okoro, & Eneh (2022) found that most of the youth involved in the EndSARS protest claimed that they were moved by the information they got from Twitter.

Similarly, social media and youth mobilisation during the EndSARS protest were investigated by Olanrewaju, Sanusi, Ajala, & Oluwasanmi (2024). The study found that Twitter/X is the most preferred and utilized platform for youth mobilization for protest. Similarly, it found that social media is mostly suitable because it serves as a channel through which users can express their feelings and voice out their concerns on social issues or policies. The study identified network issues, unprofessionalism, and personal safety threats as the major challenges faced in utilising social media for youth mobilization.

Additionally, Oyewole (2024) examined social media as a means for self-expression against social injustice in Nigeria. The study found that most of the respondents make use of Facebook and WhatsApp platforms to express their grievances against social ills and unfavourable government decisions and make their voices heard. The study concluded that social media is an escape route and an avenue for social assertiveness for the governed. Hence, this study examined how social media influence Nigerian youths in participating in social protests.

Theoretical Framework

Social Movement Theory (SMT) was adopted for this study as some of the tenets would help in explaining the phenomenon under investigation. It was propounded by Charles Tilly in 1978. Although the theory has evolved through earlier contributions by scholars like Karl Marx, Max Weber, and later Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam. The tenets of the theory include collective action,

resource mobilization, political opportunity structures, and framing. It helps in the understanding of collective action, mobilization, and advocacy towards achieving sustainable social change and development. The theory emphasizes that social movement is necessitated by a perceived injustice against a group of people or marginalized voices. Social movements intend to call for reforms to bring about social change. In relation to this study, social media become a significant instrument for mobilizing and organizing people for protest to make their voice heard (Ajayi, 2024).

The social media platforms serve as crucial tools for mobilizing and amplifying the advocacy efforts of activists to express their grievances and facilitate collective action. The media, in the #EndBadGovernance protest, served as a significant catalyst for social change. The social media platforms allowed every individual to contribute to the discourse on the injustice meted out to the public by the government. It provides an avenue for most citizens to share concerns and feelings about poor governance, economic challenges, and insecurity, among other issues.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research method using a survey design. The population of the study included both male and female youths who were registered in Ondo State. According to the record of registered voters in Ondo State, which the Punch newspaper published as released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), youths top voters in Ondo State. The Punch reported that youths aged 18 to 35 years make up 726,944 voters, which stands for 35.41 percent. of the total voters in Ondo State (Habib, 2024). So, the target population for the study is 726,944 (seven hundred and twenty-six thousand, nine hundred and forty-four youths in the state.

The sample size was determined using Leslie Kish's formula for a single population proportion:

$$N = \frac{[Z^2 \times P(1-P)]}{d^2}$$

This is the same as Fisher's formula for estimating sample size, where the population is greater than 10,000.

$$N = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

- N = required sample size
- Z = standard normal deviate at 95% confidence level (1.96)
- P = assumed prevalence (50% or 0.5, since actual prevalence was unknown)

- $d =$ margin of error (0.05)
- $q = (1-p)$

$$N = \frac{[(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)]}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$N = \frac{[3.8416 \times 0.5(0.5)]}{0.0025}$$

$$N = \frac{[3.8416 \times 0.25]}{0.0025}$$

$$N = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$N = 384.16$$

Rounding up, the initial estimated sample size was 385 respondents.

The sample size was adjusted to account for a possible non-response rate of 10%. It was calculated thus:

$$= \frac{10}{100} \times 385 = 38.5$$
$$\approx = 39$$

The 10% anticipated non-respondent rate was added to the minimum sample size,

$$\text{Sample size} = 385 + 39 = 424$$

The adjusted sample size became approximately 424 respondents.

However, a total of 402 valid responses were successfully collected and analysed in the study. At the stage of data collection, a total of 388 valid and usable responses were successfully obtained.

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents. Multi-sampling includes the simple random sampling, purposive sampling, and systematic sampling techniques. A simple random technique was used to randomly select three wards within the Local Governments. The selected wards are Oda, Aponmu, and Oke-Aro/Uro 1. After that, purposive sampling was used to pick a community from each of the selected wards, which include Emiloru, Oke Agbe, and Basiri communities. Finally, the convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents across the communities. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher and two research assistants. In total, 424 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, but 388 were valid for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data collected using frequency and percentages.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

From the total number of 428 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, 388 were retrieved, while the remaining 40 were not valid for analysis.

Table 1: Utilisation of Social Media

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	369	95%
No	19	5%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 above shows respondents’ social media utilization. The majority of the respondents agreed that they use social media.

Table 2: Extent of Social Media usage during the protest

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Very Large Extent	213	55%
Large Extent	60	15%
Some Extent	88	23%
Low Extent	27	7%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 above shows that respondents’ social media usage for the #EndBadGovernance Protest was to a very large extent.

Table 3: Responses on Whether Respondents Participated in the #EndBadGovernance Protest

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	312	80%
No	67	18%
Not really	9	2%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 above shows the respondents’ responses on whether they participated in the #EndBadGovernance protest. The table shows that the majority of the respondents participated in the social protest.

Table 4: Frequency of Respondents' Social Media Usage

Frequency of Usage	Frequency	Percentages
Always (Daily)	134	34%
Frequently (Several times a week)	105	27%
Occasionally	23	6%
Rarely	89	23%
Never	37	10%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 above shows that most of the respondents agreed that they always make use of social media every day. This implies that most of the respondents have greater access to social media and its contents.

Table 5: Respondents' Responses on the most Utilized social media for the Mobilization of #EndBadGovernance Protest.

Level of Usage	Frequency	Percentages
WhatsApp	88	23%
Facebook	66	17%
Youtube	19	5%
MySpace	16	4%
X	121	31%
Telegram	25	6%
Instagram	46	12%
LinkedIn	7	2%
Others	0	0%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 5 above shows that X (Twitter) is the most utilized social media for the mobilization of the youths for the #EndBadGovernance protest.

Table 6: Responses on the Effectiveness of social media in Mobilizing for #EndBadGovernance protest in Akure.

Level of Usage	Frequency	Percentages
Very Effective	217	56%
Effective	103	26%
Neutral	37	10%
Ineffective	31	8%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

It was revealed from the data presented in table 6 above that social media was very effective in mobilizing respondents for #EndBadGovernance.

Table 7: Responses on Factors that Impinged on Social Media Usage for #EndBadGovernance Protest

Level of Usage	Frequenc y	Percentage s
Fear of reprisal	46	12%
Censorship	69	18%
Misinformation	86	22%
Network Access/Internet Connectivity	164	42%
Social media algorithms	23	6%
Total	388	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

It was revealed from table 7 above that factors that hindered the use of social media for the #EndBadGovernance Protest in Akure include Network Access/Internet Connectivity, Censorship, Misinformation, and Social media algorithms.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Extent of Social Media Usage among Residents of Akure-South

The data in tables 1 and 2 showed that a significant portion of the respondents make use of social media for protests, while over an average of them (55%) to a very large extent. This means that more than the average of the respondents actively use social media to engage in protest activities. This aligns with the findings of Chiamogu et al. (2021) that social media has become a dominant medium for mobilizing people, especially for social causes such as protests. The high engagement rate can be attributed to the increasing internet penetration and the interactive nature of social media platforms, which allow for real-time discussions and mobilization efforts. The above finding of this current study corroborate the submission of an earlier study which affirmed efficacy of social media sites as veritable public sphere for people to push their leaders for responsibility. Over the years, social media sites used across different countries of the world, have proven to be effective in creating platforms for marginalized voices and providing a space where the public can demand accountability from their leaders (Ajayi, 2024).

Most Utilized Social Media Platforms for Mobilization

The data in Table 5 reveals that "X" (formerly known as Twitter) was the most utilized platform for mobilizing residents of Akure-South for #EndBadGovernance

protests, accounting for 31% of responses. The prominence of Twitter can be attributed to its widespread use in sharing protest hashtags, viral posts, and real-time updates during protests. Social media platforms like Twitter have been described as pivotal in social movement theories, allowing for the rapid dissemination of information and organizing collective actions (Maradun, Yar'Adua, & Aondover, 2021). The ability to share information quickly, paired with the use of trending hashtags, made Twitter the ideal platform for protest coordination, while WhatsApp played a supplementary role in smaller group discussions and local organization efforts. The effectiveness of these platforms in bringing people together reflects their inherent design that fosters fast, interactive communication; as researchers have observed that the interactivity attribute of social media and other online platforms offers their users a distinct flavour of communication, unlike what they obtain from other media genres (Bakker & Sadaba, 2012; Edogor, Jonah, & Ojo, 2014)

Effectiveness of Social Media in Mobilizing for #EndBadGovernance Protests

According to Table 6, 56% of respondents stated that social media was "very effective" in mobilizing for the protests, with another 26% rating it as "effective." This high majority indicates the transformative role that social media plays in modern protest movements. The decentralized nature of social media allows for greater participation without the need for physical meetings, which may be restricted due to security concerns. This is consistent with other studies that emphasize the potency of social media in fostering solidarity and amplifying marginalized voices (Oyewole, 2024). Social media served not only as a tool for protest coordination but also as a space where grievances against bad governance could be aired, allowing the public to engage in collective decision-making processes (Ngwu, Ejishie, & Ukam, 2024).

Furthermore, social media provides a means to bypass traditional media outlets, which are sometimes perceived as biased or controlled by the government. This independence made social media an effective tool for disseminating uncensored information about the #EndBadGovernance movement. As a result, it became a significant catalyst for mobilizing the youth and other community members who may have been disenfranchised by conventional media coverage (Olanrewaju et al, 2024).

Factors Impinging on Social Media Usage for the Protest

Table 7 presents the major factors that hindered social media usage during the protests. Network access and internet connectivity were the most significant barriers, affecting 42% of respondents, aligning with the findings of Olanrewaju

et al. (2024). This finding underscores the infrastructural challenges that still exist in many parts of Nigeria, where reliable internet access is often lacking, particularly in rural areas. This factor has been highlighted in other studies, which found that poor internet access can greatly impede the success of social media-driven protests (Enikolopov & Petrova, 2015).

Additionally, misinformation (22%) and censorship (18%) were other notable impediments. The spread of false information is a recognized risk of social media, as rapid sharing can lead to the dissemination of unverified or misleading content. This was particularly evident during the #EndBadGovernance protests, where misinformation could derail the movement's objectives or create unnecessary panic (Ezuka et al., 2022). Censorship also emerged as a significant concern, with the government and other actors sometimes restricting access to social media platforms or monitoring conversations, which instilled fear among some participants. Fear of reprisal (12%) further discouraged active participation, reflecting concerns about potential governmental crackdowns on protest organizers and participants.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the pivotal role of social media in mobilizing residents of Akure-South for the #EndBadGovernance Protest. With a high level of social media engagement, platforms like X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook emerged as powerful tools for organizing and amplifying the voices of the people. The findings revealed that social media was very effective in facilitating collective action for social justice. The decentralized and interactive nature of these platforms allowed users to express grievances and organize protests without the need for physical gatherings. However, challenges such as poor internet connectivity, misinformation, censorship, and fear of reprisal significantly hindered social media's full potential and usage for the protest.

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Bodunrin Oniye and Chika Asogwa initiated the idea of this paper and wrote separate parts of the first draft; Asogwa coordinated the data gathering with assistance from Oniye; Asogwa also did the proofreading, and while Oniye reworked the paper based on the comments from the reviewers.

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There was no conflict of interest with any sources or persons throughout the process of this paper.

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