

Media Framing and Regional Politicization of Social Movements in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of Northern and Southern Newspapers' Coverage of the #EndSARS and #BadGovernance Protests

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of ethno-regional factors on Nigerian newspaper reportage of social movements, focusing on the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests. Using the framing theory as a theoretical lens, the study analyzed frames such as motivational, diagnostic, prognostic, ethno-regional identity, legitimacy, violence, and political bias frames across northern and southern newspapers. Findings reveal significant regional biases: northern newspapers (Daily Trust and Leadership) emphasized violence and ethno-regional identity frames during the #EndSARS protest, indicating skepticism toward the movement, whereas southern newspapers (The Punch and Tribune) foregrounded legitimacy and motivational frames that aligned with the movement's objectives. In the #EndBadGovernance protest, northern outlets adopted responsibility and regional frames, whereas southern newspapers applied a wider range of frames but with less overall coverage. The study concludes that regional bias distinctly influenced newspaper coverage of both protests, with northern outlets tending to defend northern leadership during #EndSARS, while southern newspapers subtly shielded southern leadership during #EndBadGovernance. The findings underscore the influence of ethno-regional and political affiliations on media framing, confirming previous findings on the politicisation of social movements in Nigeria. The study recommends adherence to ethical framing practices, inter-regional media collaboration, and strengthened regulatory oversight to foster balanced reporting and enhance national cohesion.

Keywords: Newspaper, Framing, EndSARS, BadGovernance, Protests

Introduction

Historically, social movements and protests have served as a critical mechanism for influencing government policies worldwide. In recent times, the world has witnessed numerous social movements championed by various marginalised or oppressed groups (Prince, 2023). Notable examples include the *Black Lives Matter* protest and *#Occupy Wall Street* in the United States, as well as the *Arab Spring*, which spread across Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Yemen, and other nations. Similarly, Nigeria has experienced several social movements, from the colonial era to the present day (Targema *et al.*, 2024). More recent examples include the *#EndSARS* and *#EndBadGovernance* protests. These protests gained momentum with the rapid penetration of digital media, which facilitated networking among protesters, primarily young people who felt marginalised and discontented with the status quo, demanding radical change. The protests also attracted significant attention from both national and international groups and institutions, including traditional media such as newspapers.

In Nigeria, social movements are often subject to political interpretation, where the agendas and activities of protesters are viewed through prisms deeply intertwined with the country's regional, tribal, and religious divisions. For instance, the *#EndSARS* protest, which primarily aimed to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)—a unit of the Nigerian Police known for brutality and extrajudicial killings (Prince, 2023)—was perceived by many in the northern region as an attempt by southern elites and youth to undermine the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner. As a result, the protest received minimal acceptance in the northern region (Targema *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, the *#EndBadGovernance* protest of 2024, which sought to draw the government's attention to the hardships caused by the removal of fuel subsidies and the resulting high cost of living (*Arise TV*, 2024), received greater support in the northern region. However, many in the southern region viewed the protest as orchestrated by northern actors to discredit and potentially destabilise President Bola Tinubu's administration, given that he is from the south (Ezeamalu, 2024). This sentiment was further fuelled by reports of Russian flags being displayed during protests in some northern states (Agence France-Presse, 2024).

The media play a pivotal role in the political life of any nation, including Nigeria, by shaping public perceptions and constructing societal realities. They act as a lens through which many people view the world. Mainstream media significantly influence the sustainability of protests and public perceptions of such movements (Boyle *et al.*, 2012). Media outlets employ various narrative conventions and interpretive structures, referred to as frames, to craft persuasive stories that highlight certain aspects of a social movement while downplaying others (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The choice of language, sources, and narratives adopted by the media can either legitimise or delegitimise a social movement (Harlow *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, social factors such as the location of protests, media organisations, the tactics adopted by protesters, and the issues being protested influence how the media frame a movement (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019).

Nigeria's media landscape is also divided along regional lines, with northern and southern presses reflecting different perspectives (Okaiyeto, Dance & Reuben, 2022). Furthermore, most media outlets in the country are owned by political actors or government entities (Governor, Clever & Akata, 2021). This ownership structure subtly influences media narratives on various issues, including social movements. Supporting this view, Aimufua (2007) notes that the Nigerian press tends to be divisive, promoting the sectional aspirations of their owners. Similarly, Sobowale (2002) argues that the majority of Nigerian media outlets have historically "promoted inter-ethnic hatred as well as inter-ethnic distrust and acrimony" (p. 273).

Among Nigeria's mass media, newspapers stand out as the oldest medium. They have played significant roles in the fight for independence, opposition to authoritarian regimes such as military rule, and the general promotion of democracy. In recent years, newspapers have evolved from traditional hardcopy formats to digital versions, making them more accessible to the younger generation. This evolution positions newspapers as key players in shaping public opinion and setting the agenda in Nigeria's polity, including issues related to social movements. Against this backdrop, this study examines how newspapers in northern and southern Nigeria reported the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's socio-political landscape is profoundly influenced by ethno-regional and religious cleavages, which shape the nation's political dynamics, including voting behavior, interpretations of political events, and participation in social movements or protests. Within this context, the media play a pivotal role in framing public opinion and influencing societal responses to such issues. On one hand, research (e.g., Shadrach & Tsokwa, 2024; Alfred et al., 2024; Okeke et al., 2019; Bala, 2019) suggests that the Nigerian media often conform to the protest paradigm by portraying protests negatively and emphasizing disorder over discourse. On the other hand, other studies (e.g., Targema et al., 2024; Jibril, 2017; Egbunike, 2015; Oso et al., 2009) argue that some Nigerian media outlets have taken a pro-protester stance, legitimizing demonstrations, amplifying protester voices, and articulating their demands to authorities. Despite the extensive research on media coverage of social movements, there remains a significant gap in understanding how ethno-regional divisions in Nigeria shape media framing of social movements, particularly the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests. These two movements represent two of the most recent and impactful social movements in Nigeria, both drawing nationwide and international attention. This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of the coverage of northern and southern Nigerian newspapers of the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance movements. By examining how regional biases and political alignments influence framing patterns, this research aims to determine how such framing shapes public perception and engagement with the protests. The analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship among regional cleavages, media framing, and political mobilization in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to analyze differences in how the media framed the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests across northern and southern Nigerian newspapers.

Literature Review

Social Movements and Protests in Nigeria

The terms Protests and social movements are somehow different but much interconnected. Protest is a form of public expression by individuals or groups aimed at demonstrating dissatisfaction or opposition to particular policies, actions, or societal conditions. Protests can take various forms, including marches, strikes, sit-ins, rallies, or even virtual campaigns, and are often organised to draw attention to perceived injustices or to demand change (Oyedemi, 2018). A social movement, on the other hand, is a sustained organized effort by a group of individuals or organizations to promote, resist, or reverse social, political, or cultural change (Grinspun et al., 2022). The differences between the two terms are that protests are usually episodic, emerging as responses to specific grievances or events, while social movements are long-term campaigns driven by shared values, ideologies, or goals (Quaranta, 2017). In simple terms, protests serve as tools or expressions within broader social movements. For example, the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria were part of the larger social movement advocating for police reform and justice.

Over the years, social movements and protests have been an integral part of the democratic process of Nigeria, providing avenues for citizens to voice dissent and demand accountability from the government. Historically, several social movements and protests have been witnessed in Nigeria. For instance, during the colonial era, protests, such as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, were recorded. Others include the General Strike of 1945, which was a labour movement protest led by workers demanding better wages and working conditions (Afolabi, 2024). Another pre-independence social movement is the Enugu Coal Miners' Strike of 1949, which protested against poor working conditions and low wages, culminating in the colonial police killing several miners (Afolabi, 2024).

In the post-independence era, several social movements and protests were recorded. This includes the Students' Movement against Military Rule in the 1970s, where students protested against corruption and military rule, including the famous "Ali Must Go" protests in 1978 over education policies under General Olusegun Obasanjo. Others are the anti-structural adjustment protests between 1986 and 1990 against IMF-mandated austerity measures. In 1993, civil society groups and pro-democracy activists led the June 12 Movement, which followed the annulment of the presidential election (Abdullahi, et al, 2014).

Also, several movements and protests are recorded in the fourth republic. These include the #Occupy Nigeria of 2012, nationwide protests against the removal of fuel subsidies by the Goodluck Jonathan administration; the #BringBackOurGirls Movement of 2014, which is advocating for the release of over 200 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in Chibok, Borno State; and more recent, and the focus of the study, is the #EndSARS of 2020 and #BadGovernance Protests of 2024 (Afolabi, 2024). The #EndSARS protest began in early October 2020 and peaked between October 8 and October 20, 2020. The #EndSARS movement originated as a campaign against police brutality, particularly targeting the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian Police Force accused of extrajudicial killings, harassment, and corruption. Protesters demanded the disbandment of SARS and broader police reforms, including justice for

victims of police violence and improved security measures (Targema *et al*, 2024). The protest gained momentum on social media, with hashtags like *#EndSARS* trending globally. Youths across major cities, including Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, organized peaceful marches, sit-ins, and rallies. International celebrities, organizations, and human rights groups amplify the campaign (Usman & Oghuvbu, 2021). However, the protest took a tragic turn on October 20, 2020, when military personnel allegedly opened fire on peaceful protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos, a controversial event often referred to as the "Lekki Massacre."

The *#BadGovernance* protests began in early 2024 and escalated significantly by mid-year. The protests addressed systemic failures in governance, including rising unemployment, insecurity, and the economic hardship exacerbated by the removal of fuel subsidies under President Bola Tinubu's administration. The movement was fuelled by worsening inflation and the inability of many Nigerians to afford basic necessities. The protest, like *#EndSARS*, relied heavily on digital platforms, with hashtags like *#BadGovernance* amplifying calls for accountability (Shadrach & Tsokwa, 2024). Protests occurred nationwide but received more momentum in the northern region, with places like Kano, Abuja, and Jos witnessing the largest demonstrations.

The Nigerian Media Landscape and Regional Dichotomy

The Nigerian media has a rich history, dating back to pre-colonial times with early publications such as *Iwe Iroyin*, which primarily served as a tool for propagating religion. However, the advent of colonialism significantly shaped Nigeria's media landscape, with newspapers such as *The Lagos Weekly Record* (published in 1854) established to promote colonial interests. As Nigeria moved towards independence in 1960, the media began to reflect the emerging national identity (Okon, 2014). Following independence, particularly between 1960 and 1966, Aimufua (2007) observed that the Nigerian press became preoccupied with promoting sectional interests and ethnic loyalty, setting a negative precedent for the media landscape in the country. Daramola (2013) argues that in Nigeria, newspaper ownership is closely tied to ethnicity, which extends into political reporting. Scholars examining media bias in Nigeria often highlight variables such as ethnicity, geopolitical zone, religious affiliation, political party allegiance, and proximity to federal or state regimes (James & Ahmed, 2017). Batta and Isine (2011) assert that the Nigerian press mirrors the ethnic composition of the country, with distinct regional press identities, such as the Hausa/Fulani press, Yoruba press, Igbo press, and so on.

In support of the above view, Omebije (2012) observes that the media in Nigeria can be divided into northern and southern press, which greatly influences how issues of national importance are reported. Scholars such as Ibrahim (2006) further argue that ethnic, geopolitical, and religious factors are intertwined in Nigerian media reporting, often leading to accusations of bias in favour of one bloc. Adebayo (2006) in Ikiebe (2017) explains that northern newspapers like *The New Nigerian* and *Daily Trust* are often perceived as favouring northern interests, presenting issues in a way that resonates with the predominantly Hausa-Fulani Muslim population. In contrast, southern-based media outlets like *The Guardian* and *ThisDay* cater to a more secular, Christian, and ethnically diverse demographic, including the Yoruba and Igbo communities. Okon (2018) highlights that the Northern media tends to downplay issues that challenge northern political leaders, while the Southern media is often more vocal in critiquing federal government policies, especially when those policies are seen as detrimental to the South.

Furthermore, Yusha'u (2009) describes the state of the Nigerian media as "regional parallelism," which refers to the influence of regional considerations on journalistic practices. He asserts that the intertwining of regional factors determines media reportage in Nigeria, with elites using the media to promote their regional or personal interests, or even to manipulate public opinion to their advantage. Adebayo and Agbaje (2010) support this view, arguing that the Nigerian media serves as an instrument in the hands of the ruling class, reflecting intra-ruling class competition, often exercised in ethnic terms. Alegu, Maku, and Onu (2020) contend that Nigerian media outlets fail to "de-ethnicise" their reporting, which leads to the promotion of ethnic agendas and disunity. They further argue that while national newspapers may have wide circulation, they rarely adopt a truly national outlook in terms of news reportage, especially when the interests of the owners, their ethnic groups, or political affiliations are involved.

The above discussion indicates that although the Nigerian media is expected to be objective, balanced, and fair in its reportage as outlined by the Nigerian Union of Journalists and other regulatory bodies, the media has historically struggled to meet these standards. Ethnic, political, and other affiliations influence media ownership and reporting, leading the press to often serve the interests of specific blocs and groups, rather than the nation as a whole.

Nigerian Newspaper Coverage of Protests: Review of Empirical Studies

Protests traditionally attract media attention and media reportage of protest around the world and in Nigeria in particular has attracted a number of studies. Egbunike (2015) examined the framing of the #Occupy Nigeria protests in three major newspapers: *The Nigerian Tribune*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch* alongside social media platforms like Facebook, *Nairaland*, and Twitter. The study found that newspapers were more effective than social media in framing the motivations, diagnosis, and prognosis of the protest, offering a more heterogeneous narrative. However, this overlooks the interactive, real-time dynamics of social media, which may provide a more direct reflection of public sentiment. Similarly, Targema *et al.* (2024) focused on Nigerian press coverage of the #EndSARS protest in *Daily Trust* and *Punch*. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS), the study highlighted the significant influence of political and ethno-regional factors on media framing. *Daily Trust* reflected northern Nigeria's pro-Buhari sympathies, emphasising violence and downplaying the youth's agency, while *Punch* focused more on state repression and youth resistance. This dichotomy exemplifies how media outlets can reflect regional biases, affecting the framing of protest events.

Also, James, Muhammad and Josiah (2023) conducted a critical evaluation of the framing of the #EndSARS protests across four newspapers: *Daily Trust*, *Leadership*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Thisday*. Their findings revealed a dominance of motivational frames, with a critical tone prevailing in the coverage. This suggests that Nigerian newspapers tend to scrutinise protests more harshly than they offer support, which may indicate a tendency toward negative portrayals of social movements. Corroborating, Oso and Ajayi (2023) examined how government agencies ideologically represent #EndSARS protesters in selected Nigerian newspapers. They found that protesters were often framed as 'terrorists', 'economic saboteurs', and 'purveyors of fake news', demonstrating the media's role in shaping public perception through ideological representation.

In a similar vein, Alfred et al. (2024b) investigated Nigerian newspapers' adherence to the protest paradigm in their coverage of the #EndSARS protest. They discovered that spontaneous news events generated more reports, with the "riot" frame being most prevalent, reinforcing the negative portrayal of the protests. Osisanwo and Iyoha (2020) focused on the ideological inclinations and discourse strategies in the media's coverage of the 2015–2016 Biafra protests. They identified three main representational strategies: framing protesters as freedom fighters, economic saboteurs, and law-abiding citizens. This highlights the varied and often polarised portrayals of protest movements in Nigerian media. In a related development, Shadrach and Tsokwa (2024) examined the coverage of the #EndBadGovernance protest in four Nigerian newspapers: The Punch, Daily Trust, Premium Times, and Vanguard. Their study revealed that media coverage largely adhered to the Protest Paradigm theory, framing the protests through a lens of violence, property destruction, and public disorder, which diminishes the perceived legitimacy of such movements. This aligns with Ajetunmobi (2023) study on media framing of socio-political issues in Nigeria, which established that the Nigerian newspapers often align with war and ethnic journalism, rather than focusing on peace or solutions.

Prior studies reveal a mixed portrayal of protests and social movements in Nigerian newspapers. However, a significant number of studies indicate that Nigerian media often perpetuate negative stereotypes of protesters. Few studies (e.g Targema *et al.* 2024) argued that media framing of protests in Nigeria is influenced by political, ethnic, and regional factors. Despite these findings, there is a notable lack of comparative studies that thoroughly examine the claims of ethnic influence in the framing and coverage of social issues in Nigeria. Most existing research has focused on the #EndSARS protests of 2020, while studies on the coverage of the #EndBadGovernance protests remain scarce. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research comparing the two protests, particularly within the context of the differing political dynamics of the periods in which they occurred. The #EndSARS protest took place during the administration of a northern president, whereas the #EndBadGovernance protest occurred under a southern president. Given the ethnically influenced media landscape in Nigeria, it becomes imperative to examine the role of the media in framing these two protests. This gap in the literature underscores the need for the present study.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Framing Theory, which originates from the disciplines of sociology and communication, particularly from the foundational work of Erving Goffman and subsequent contributions from mass communication scholars. Framing Theory posits that the way information is presented to an audience (referred to as “the frame”) influences how individuals perceive and process that information (Goffman, 1974). Frames are conceptual structures that organise and give meaning to messages. According to the theory, media highlight certain events and situate them within a specific context or "field of meaning." This framing shapes how events and issues are interpreted by audiences (Entman, 1991). Baran and Davis (2009) elaborate that Framing Theory explores how individuals rely on expectations to interpret and make sense of daily experiences. The way media frames an issue can influence audience beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours by attaching a particular interpretation or perspective to the issue. This study adopts Framing Theory as a framework to explore how Nigerian newspapers might frame stories about protests, such as

the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests, potentially reflecting ethnic, regional, and political dynamics in their coverage.

Methodology

The researchers utilized a quantitative content analysis design, which is appropriate for examining media content on the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests to identify the dominant frames used by selected newspapers and determine whether these frames align with ethnic or sectional cleavages. The researchers sampled four newspapers, two from the northern region (*Daily Trust* and *Leadership newspaper*) and two from the southern region (*The Punch* and *the Tribune*). These papers were selected based on their popularity regionally and nationally. They were also involved in the coverage of the two protests. The study period was divided into two distinct phases: The first two weeks of #EndSARS (Thursday, October 8th to Wednesday, October 21st, 2020) and the first two weeks of #EndBadGovernance (Monday, July 1, to Sunday, July 14th, 2024). The time frame chosen allowed for a comparative analysis based on the newspapers framing of each of the protests.. To select relevant stories, the researchers employed the motif sampling technique. Motif sampling was used to retrieve protest-related articles from the online archives of the selected newspapers. Motif sampling strategy is the use of key words to retrieve data from the websites of media outfits (Gever, 2017). The researchers made use of key words like “#EndSARS” and #EndBadGovernance” “protest” and “social movement”. After the search results were generated, the researchers screened and selected only news articles and features that were related to the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests within the said period. Inter-coder reliability was established using Cohen’s Kappa and Krippendorff’s Alpha (McHugh, 2012). The reliability coefficient obtained (Cohen’s Kappa = 0.80) indicated a high level of agreement among the three trained coders. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency counts and percentages, to identify framing patterns across regions.

Measurements used

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers measured the following:

s/n	Frames	Description of Measurement
1.	Motivational	Does the media in the north or south emphasise grievances related to governance, security, or economic issues, and how does it frame the underlying motivations for the protests?
2.	Diagnostic	Does the media from the northern or southern region highlight specific issues, such as government corruption, police brutality, or economic mismanagement, as the central problem?
3.	Prognostic	How do the two regional media outlets suggest possible solutions? Do they advocate for reform, political change, or continued protest, and does this vary by region?
4.	Responsibility	Do northern and southern newspapers put the blame for the protests directed at the government?
5.	Ethnic/Regional Identity	Do northern and southern newspapers link the protests to ethnic or regional identity? How do regional concerns such as the political administration or critique of national governance manifest in the framing?
6.	Legitimacy	How does the media portray the legitimacy of the protests? Are they framed as a legitimate form of political expression, or are they framed as illegitimate actions by lawbreakers?
7.	Violence and Repression Frame	How do newspapers from the north and south frame violence during the protests? Is violence emphasised as a key characteristic of the protests, and how is state repression or the use of force framed?
8.	Political Bias	Do the northern and southern media outlets show political bias by supporting or opposing the government’s response to the protests?

Data Presentation

Table I: Showing number of stories retrieved from the select Newspapers

Newspaper		Protest		Total
		#EndSARS	#EndBadGovernance	
Daily Trust	Count	12	29	41
	% of total	6%	14.6	20.7
Leadership	Count	21	18	39
	% of total	10.6	9.1	19.7
Punch	Count	48	22	70
	% of total	24.2	11.1	35.3
Tribune	Count	28	20	48
	% of total	14.1	10.1	24.2
Total	Count	109	89	198
	% of total	55.1%	44.9%	100%

Table I presents the distribution of stories retrieved from the websites of the four selected newspapers regarding #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests. The data reveal that the Punch newspaper covered the highest number of stories, with a total of 70 (24.2% for #EndSARS and 11.1% for #EndBadGovernance), constituting 35.3% of the total articles across the four newspapers. The Daily Trust reported 41 stories, with 6% dedicated to #EndSARS and 14.6% to #EndBadGovernance, representing 20.7% of the total. Tribune covered 48 stories (14.1% for #EndSARS and 10.1% for #EndBadGovernance), contributing 24.2% of the total, while Leadership published 39 stories, with 10.6% for #EndSARS and 9.1% for #EndBadGovernance, accounting for 19.7% of the total. Overall, #EndSARS stories dominated the coverage, comprising 55.1% of the total, while #EndBadGovernance made up 44.9%. The prominence of the #EndSARS protest in media reporting indicates that it garnered more attention from the selected newspapers compared to #EndBadGovernance. This could reflect the higher intensity and broader public participation in #EndSARS, which captured national and international attention due to its direct impact on police brutality and youth mobilization.

Table II: Showing the Framing of #EndSARS Protest by the select Newspapers

Newspaper	Frames								Total
	Motivational	Diagnostic	Prognostic	Responsibility	Ethnic/Regional Identity	Legitimacy	Violence	Political Bias	
Daily Trust	2 (1.8%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	2 (1.8)	3 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	3(2.8%)	0 (0%)	12 (11%)
Leadership	3 (2.8%)	3 (2.8%)	4 (3.7%)	2 (1.8)	2(1.8)	3 (2.6%)	3(2.8%)	1 (0.9%)	21(19.3%)
The Punch	9 (8.3%)	7 (6.4%)	5 (4.6%)	5 (4.6%)	1 (0.9%)	11 (10.1%)	6 (5.5%)	4 (3.7%)	48 (44%)
Tribune	3 (2.8%)	4(3.7%)	4(3.7%)	4(3.7%)	5(4.6%)	3(2.7%)	3(2.6%)	2(1.8)	28 (25.7%)
Total	17 (15.6%)	15 (13.8%)	14 (12.8%)	13 (11.9%)	11 (10.1%)	17 (15.6%)	15 (13.8%)	7 (6.4%)	109 (100%)

Table II reveals the diverse framing of the #EndSARS protest across four selected newspapers, showcasing how various frames were used to interpret and communicate the protest. *The Punch* newspaper led in total framing (44%), with a notably high emphasis on legitimacy (10.1%) and political bias (3.7%), suggesting a strong editorial focus on the political aspects of the protest and its perceived legitimacy. *Leadership* followed with 19.3% of total frames, with a relatively balanced distribution across diagnostic (2.8%) and prognostic (3.7%) frames, highlighting its focus on identifying the causes and solutions to the issues raised by the protest. *Daily Trust*, contributing 11%, framed the protest primarily in terms of violence (2.8%) and ethnic/regional identity (2.8%), potentially reflecting a more localized or issue-specific perspective. *Tribune's* framing (25.7%) included a significant focus on ethnic/regional identity (4.6%) and responsibility (3.7%), which may indicate an attempt to contextualize the protest within broader societal or regional tensions. Overall, the data shows that while there is a shared emphasis on themes of violence, legitimacy,

and responsibility, each newspaper uniquely framed the protest, reflecting editorial priorities and potentially shaping public perceptions of the protest's causes, goals, and legitimacy.

Table III: Showing the Framing of #EndBadGovernance Protest by the select Newspapers

Newspaper	Frames								Total
	Motivational	Diagnostic	Prognostic	Responsibility	Ethnic/Regional Identity	Legitimacy	Violence	Political Bias	
Daily Trust	5 (5.6%)	3 (3.4%)	3 (3.4%)	6 (6.7)	5 (5.6%)	4 (4.5%)	2(2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	29 (32.6%)
Leadership	2 (2.2%)	3 (3.3%)	2(2.2%)	5 (5.6)	0(0)	2(2.4%)	4(4.5%)	0 (0%)	18 (20.2%)
The Punch	2 (2.2%)	4 (4.5%)	3 (3.3%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.5%)	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.6%)	1 (1.1%)	22 (24.7%)
Tribune	1(2.8%)	2(3.7%)	3(3.7%)	2(3.7%)	5(4.6%)	2(2.7%)	3(2.6%)	2(1.8)	20 (25.7%)
Total	10(1.1%)	12 (13.8%)	11 (13.5%)	14 (15.7%)	14 (10.1%)	10 (11.2%)	14(15.7%)	4 (4.5%)	89 (100%)

Table III highlights the framing of the #EndBadGovernance protest by four selected newspapers, *Daily Trust* provided the highest coverage (32.6%), framing the protest predominantly through responsibility (6.7%) and ethnic/regional identity (5.6%), indicating a focus on accountability and regional implications of the protest. *Leadership*, contributing 20.2% of the frames, emphasised violence (4.5%) and responsibility (5.6%), which may reflect a concern with the protest's disruptive aspects and calls for accountability. *The Punch* accounted for 24.7% of the total framing, with notable attention to violence (5.6%) and ethnic/regional identity (4.5%), suggesting an editorial interest in the societal tensions surrounding the protest. *Tribune*, with 25.7% of the frames, balanced its focus across prognostic (3.7%) and responsibility (3.7%) frames, possibly reflecting a forward-looking stance on solutions to governance issues. Overall, responsibility, violence (15.7%), and ethnic/regional identity (10.1%) emerged as dominant frames, underscoring themes of accountability, conflict, and regional concerns in the protest's portrayal. However, the relatively low emphasis on motivational frames (1.1%) suggests a limited focus on the protest's underlying causes or rallying factors.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, we investigated the assumption that newspaper reportage of social movements in Nigeria is significantly influenced by ethnic considerations. The sample composition included newspapers from both the northern and southern regions of the country. The study applied framing theory, focusing on specific frames such as motivation, diagnostic, prognostic, ethnic/regional identity, legitimacy, violence, and political bias. The analysis was divided into two periods: the #EndSARS protest and the #EndBadGovernance protest.

The findings reveal regional influences in the reportage of the selected newspapers, reflecting potential alignment with regional interests and political contexts. During the #EndSARS protest, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*, representing northern perspectives, focused minimally on motivational and legitimacy frames. Instead, their coverage emphasised violence and ethnic/regional identity, possibly reflecting northern scepticism towards the protest, which was perceived by some as southern-centric and critical of the northern-led presidency. However, during the #EndBadGovernance protest, *Daily Trust* particularly emphasised responsibility and ethnic/regional identity, suggesting a narrative that linked governance issues to regional dynamics and accountability. In contrast, *The Punch* and *Tribune*, representing southern perspectives, dominated the coverage of the #EndSARS protest, heavily framing it in terms of legitimacy and motivational factors. This suggests a stronger alignment with the protest's goals and a likely sympathetic editorial stance,

reflective of the southern region's active involvement in the movement. These newspapers paid less attention to violence and ethnic/regional identity, highlighting their focus on broader systemic and governance issues raised by the protest. However, during the *#EndBadGovernance* protest, the southern-based newspapers demonstrated more diverse framing but contributed slightly less to the overall coverage. Their focus was distributed across motivational, diagnostic, and violence frames, alongside a moderate emphasis on ethnic/regional identity. This suggests a balanced yet less critical portrayal of the protest, likely reflecting alignment with the protest's dissatisfaction with governance issues within the southern region.

The findings of this study build on and extend prior research (Targema *et al.*, 2024; Shadrach & Tsokwa, 2024) on newspaper coverage of social movements and protests in Nigeria. These studies underscored the considerable influence of political and ethno-regional factors on media framing of political and social issues. Specifically, Targema *et al.* (2024) observed that pro-northern newspapers, such as *Daily Trust*, often delegitimised the *#EndSARS* protest. Their framing shaped perceptions in the northern region, presenting the protest as anti-President Buhari and, by extension, anti-northern. This narrative likely contributed to the low participation and limited support for the protest in most of the states in the northern region (IFRA-Nigeria, 2021; Onu & Ani, 2024). In contrast, southern newspapers, according to Targema *et al.*, legitimised the protest, which northern influencers perceived as a deliberate attempt to undermine the administration of a northern-led government.

Shadrach and Tsokwa (2024) provided further insights into the framing of the *#EndBadGovernance* protest, highlighting a general adherence to the protest paradigm. Protesters were often depicted as rioters, and their actions were framed as destructive. Interestingly, their study revealed that southern-based newspapers, particularly *The Punch* and *Vanguard*, played a leading role in employing these frames. This aligns with the perception of these newspapers' pro-southern stance, possibly influenced by the presidency of Bola Tinubu, who hails from the region. This framing could have contributed to the lower turnout for the *#EndBadGovernance* protest compared to the *#EndSARS* protest in the region. Within the framework of framing theory, this study confirms that newspapers significantly influence public perceptions of social movements over time. Frames such as motivation, prognosis, and diagnosis were found to be critical in shaping stakeholder responses. Employing these frames constructively could foster greater support and facilitate constructive engagement from various stakeholders, highlighting the strategic role of media in influencing societal actions and perceptions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that the media in Nigeria particularly the select national dailies did not provide sufficient objective reportage of the *#EndSARS* and *#EndBadGovernance* protests. The northern newspapers showed more significant engagement with the *#EndBadGovernance* protest than the *#EndSARS* protest, while southern newspapers exhibited stronger support for the *#EndSARS* protests compared to the *#EndBadGovernance* protest. These contrasting approaches highlight the regional and political alignments of the newspapers, with northern outlets appearing more defensive of northern leadership during *#EndSARS* and southern outlets slightly more protective of southern leadership during *#EndBadGovernance*. This

regionalised framing reinforces the politicisation of social movements in Nigeria, where media coverage is shaped by regional, ethnic, and political considerations, influencing public narratives and perceptions.

Recommendations

Drawing from the results of this study and its conclusions, the following recommendations and suggestions for further research are proposed:

1. Editors and journalists should frame protests and social movements in ways that emphasise shared national concerns, such as governance and systemic issues, rather than exacerbating regional or ethnic divides.
2. Training workshops and seminars should be organised to educate journalists on ethical practices in framing social movements. Emphasis should be placed on the effective use of motivational, diagnostic, and prognostic frames without reinforcing stereotypes or biases.
3. Media regulatory bodies and independent organisations should monitor and evaluate the framing of social movements by newspapers. This will help ensure accountability, transparency, and adherence to ethical standards in reportage.
4. Nigerian newspaper organisations should engage in collaborative reporting initiatives to present more balanced and comprehensive perspectives on social movements. This can help mitigate regional biases and promote national cohesion.
5. Further studies are needed with larger samples of media outlets, including print, broadcast, and digital platforms. Such research will provide more extensive data, enabling better generalisations about media framing of social issues in Nigeria.

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