

# Evaluating Public Negative Sentiment and its Impact on Governance Reforms in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This research elucidates the impact of public sentiment during the End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 to 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and its influence on governance reforms. The study evaluated specific governance reforms influenced by the sentiment and assess the effectiveness of these reforms in addressing citizens' concerns. The findings reveal a predominantly negative public sentiment towards governance, driven by widespread dissatisfaction with corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability among government institutions. The protests emerged as a significant platform for citizens to voice their grievances, which subsequently influenced discussions around crucial reforms, including enhanced transparency and accountability measures. However, the effectiveness of these reforms showed mixed results; while some changes were positively received, many respondents remained sceptical about the government's commitment to meaningful reform. The research highlights the necessity for governments to engage seriously with citizen feedback and foster a participatory governance framework that empowers citizens to influence policy decisions. The study concludes that public sentiment is a crucial catalyst for governance reforms, emphasizing the need for transparency, civil society support, and comprehensive anti-corruption measures to address deep-rooted issues. Recommendations include enhancing government transparency, strengthening civil society organizations, implementing robust reforms, encouraging public participation, and establishing a monitoring framework to evaluate governance structures' effectiveness. The implications of this study underscore the importance of responsive governance structures in restoring public trust and ensuring that governance reforms resonate with citizens' needs and expectations

**Keywords:** Sentiment, Governance, Reforms, Public.

## Introduction

Sentiment in the public determine the shaping of governance reforms, particularly in democratic societies where citizen feedback and activism play an important role in policy changes. These protests emerged from widespread dissatisfaction with corruption, economic mismanagement, and governance failures. They saw massive participation across Nigeria's major cities, including Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (Trusttv,2024; Channelstv, 2024; Aljazeera, 2024). Public sentiment, often referred to as public opinion or societal attitudes, plays a critical role in shaping political dynamics and policy changes globally. In democratic and semi-democratic societies, governments are increasingly subject to the influence of public opinion due to greater access to information and enhanced platforms for collective expression (Wlezien& Soroka, 2016). Nigeria, a complex and multi-ethnic society, offers a unique lens to examine the intricate relationship between public sentiment and governance reforms. The #EndBadGovernance protest, a movement that

emerged in parallel with the #EndSARS campaign in 2020, serves as a notable case study in understanding how collective public dissatisfaction can trigger calls for government accountability, policy changes, and reforms.

Public sentiment, driven by some factors like political corruption, economic hardship, social injustice, and political mismanagement, can significantly impact the political landscape and policy decisions. The EndBadGovernance protests highlight the role of collective public opinion in advocating for and achieving governance reforms, reflecting a shift towards greater public engagement in governance processes (Daily trust, 2024; Premium Times, 2024; Punch, 2024). These protests were not only a response to police brutality but also a broad expression of frustration with systemic corruption, poor governance, and the lack of accountability in Nigerian leadership

(Amnesty International, 2020). The events of 2020 demonstrated that public sentiment, particularly when fuelled by social media, can challenge the status quo and demand immediate action from authorities (Ojebode, Adegbola, & Azeez, 2021).

### Literature Review

**End Bad Governance Protests:** A series of demonstrations in Nigeria from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 to 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024 aimed at addressing issues of poor governance, corruption, and economic mismanagement. A review of the literature on public negative sentiment and its impact on governance reforms in Nigeria reveals a strong correlation between public dissatisfaction and the demand for reform in the country. Scholars such as Adekanye (2017) and Ogundiya (2010) have highlighted that the pervasive negative sentiment in Nigeria, driven by corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability within government institutions, has often sparked protests and social unrest. These sentiments are amplified by a growing sense of disenfranchisement among the population, especially in the face of widespread poverty and inequality. Fasoranti (2015) further argues that public dissatisfaction often stems from the government's failure to address basic needs and ensure effective service delivery, leading to diminished trust in public institutions. This dissatisfaction creates pressure on the government to introduce reforms, but the extent to which these reforms are successful is often limited by entrenched political interests and bureaucratic resistance.

Despite the rising public demand for better governance, the literature suggests that negative public sentiment has had mixed outcomes in terms of reform success in Nigeria. On one hand, Osaghae (2014) and Bello (2016) argue that protests and public outcry have occasionally forced the government to implement certain reforms, such as anti-corruption measures and electoral reforms. On the other hand, Ibrahim (2018) contends that the government's response to public dissatisfaction has often been superficial, with reforms not fully addressing systemic issues, such as the deep-rooted patronage networks and institutional corruption. As Aremu (2020) points out, while public protests may result in temporary policy changes, the lack of sustained political will and effective implementation of reforms has meant that the long-term impact on governance has been minimal. Therefore, while public

sentiment plays a crucial role in initiating reforms, its overall impact is often diluted by the broader political and institutional challenges that hinder meaningful change.

**Public Sentiment:** The collective opinions and emotions of the public regarding political and social issues, often expressed through protests and other forms of activism. Scholars such as Burstein (2016) define public sentiment as the sum of individual opinions, which are shaped by a wide range of factors, including socio-political contexts, media influence, and historical experiences. In the context of governance, public sentiment can reflect the populace's approval or discontent with governmental policies, leadership, and overall national direction (Mutz, 2018).

**Governance Reforms:** Changes and improvements in government policies and practices aimed at addressing systemic issues and improving public administration. Governance reforms refer to changes in political, administrative, and institutional processes aimed at improving transparency, accountability, and efficiency in governance (Mehbubuh Haq 2018.) In Nigeria, governance reforms have often been driven by internal demands for better service delivery and external pressures from international bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Akindele et al., 2017). These reforms have taken various forms, from anti-corruption initiatives to electoral reforms and public sector restructuring (Mehbubuh Haq 2018). The scope of governance reforms is broad, encompassing changes in legal frameworks, institutional restructuring, and policy adjustments. In Nigeria, governance reforms have often been piecemeal, with some successes in areas like anti-corruption, but persistent challenges in public sector efficiency and accountability (Achebe, 2018).

**Policy Changes:** Modifications or new implementations in government policies as a response to public demands and protests (Thomas Piketty 2020)

### The Role of Public Sentiment on Governance Reform

Public sentiment can significantly influence policy changes, particularly when it is widespread and sustained over time. Scholars argue that public opinion acts as a feedback mechanism for

governments, informing them about the public's approval or disapproval of their actions (Wlezien& Soroka, 2016). In democratic settings, ignoring public sentiment can have electoral consequences, as governments rely on public support to maintain legitimacy. In Nigeria, public sentiment has historically influenced governance reforms, albeit inconsistently. During the military era, public protests often led to government crackdowns, but in the democratic period, public opinion has gained more influence, particularly with the advent of social media, which amplifies collective voices (Ojebode et al., 2021). The #EndBadGovernance protest is a prime example of how public sentiment can influence governance reforms, as the Nigerian government was forced to make concessions, including the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and promises of broader reforms (Amnesty International, 2020).

However, the impact of public sentiment on governance reform is not always straightforward. As Ojelade and Olusegun (2021) entrenched political interests and weak institutions, it can dilute the effect of public opinion, leading to superficial reforms rather than deep, systemic changes. Thus, while public sentiment is a powerful force for initiating reform, its long-term impact depends on various factors, including political will, institutional capacity, and sustained public engagement. However, the impact of public sentiment on policy changes is not always straightforward.

## **Historical Overview of Governance Reforms in Nigeria**

### **Pre-Colonial and Colonial Governance Structures**

Nigeria's governance structures have evolved through various historical stages, beginning with pre-colonial political systems that were largely decentralized and varied across ethnic groups. Pre-colonial governance was characterized by indigenous systems of authority and social organization, deeply rooted in traditional values, customs, and practices. The Hausa-Fulani in the North practiced a centralized emirate system, which was hierarchical and theocratic, with Traditional Rulers at the helm of governance (Falola & Heaton, 2017). In contrast, the Yoruba in the Southwest followed a more decentralized system, with governance centered around kingdoms, each headed by a monarch known as the Oba, who ruled alongside a council of chiefs.

The Igbo people in the Southeast practiced an even more decentralized and democratic form of governance, organized around village assemblies where decisions were made collectively (Isichei, 2016).

The arrival of European colonial powers in the late 19th century disrupted these indigenous governance structures. The British colonizers, after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, established indirect rule in Nigeria, which integrated traditional authorities into the colonial administration. Under this system, local rulers were used as intermediaries to implement colonial policies, effectively weakening indigenous systems and introducing a more centralized governance structure (Lugard, 1922). This system of indirect rule, though efficient for the British, created tensions as traditional authorities were often placed in positions of power without regard for local legitimacy, thereby eroding public trust and leading to significant governance challenges (Afigbo, 1972).

The colonial governance structure also introduced new administrative units, legal systems, and economic policies that were geared towards resource extraction for the benefit of the colonial powers. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 laid the foundation for modern Nigeria but created a deeply divided political structure that would later prove challenging for post-independence governance. The imposition of colonial rule fostered a sense of alienation among Nigerians, contributing to the rise of nationalist movements and the eventual demand for independence (Coleman, 1958).

### **Post-Independence Governance Reforms**

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country inherited the centralized administrative structure established by the British but faced numerous challenges in governance, which necessitated various reforms over the years. The First Republic (1960-1966) was marred by ethnic tensions, political instability, and widespread corruption, leading to the first military coup in 1966. The military government that followed initiated some reforms aimed at consolidating power and addressing issues of political instability, but these reforms were often authoritarian and did little to address underlying governance challenges (Osaghae, 1998).

During the military era (1966-1999), several

governance reforms were introduced, within a centralized, authoritarian framework. The 1979 Constitution, which ushered in the Second Republic, was a major reform effort aimed at addressing the ethnic and regional divisions that plagued the First Republic. This constitution established a federal system of government with a strong presidency, modeled after the United States system. However, the Second Republic collapsed in 1983 due to widespread corruption, mismanagement, and electoral malpractices (Ihonvbere, 1994).

The Babangida administration (1985-1993) introduced significant reforms under its Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which was designed to liberalize the economy, reduce government spending, and encourage private sector participation. While these reforms were intended to stabilize the economy, they led to widespread social discontent, as austerity measures resulted in higher unemployment, inflation, and poverty (Olukoshi, 1993). The annulment of the 1993 presidential election, which was widely regarded as free and fair, sparked massive public protests and further eroded public trust in governance.

The transition to democracy in 1999, after years of military rule, marked a turning point in Nigeria's governance. The Fourth Republic was characterized by the introduction of democratic reforms, including electoral reforms, anti-corruption initiatives, and efforts to strengthen institutions. Notable among these reforms was the creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to combat corruption, which had become endemic in Nigerian governance (Ojo, 2008).

### **Key Governance Reform Initiatives in Nigeria**

Since 1999, successive Nigerian governments have embarked on several governance reform initiatives, driven by both internal demands and external pressures from international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). One of the most significant reform efforts was the Public Service Reform program, aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the public sector. This program, launched under President Olusegun Obasanjo, sought to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, improve service delivery, and promote good governance through the introduction of performance management

systems (Akinola, 2017).

Electoral reforms have also been a key focus of governance reform in Nigeria. The 2010 Electoral Act, which introduced new procedures for voter registration, accreditation, and voting, was aimed at curbing electoral fraud and ensuring free and fair elections. The establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the introduction of electronic voting systems were part of broader efforts to strengthen Nigeria's democratic processes (Durotoye, 2014). However, despite these reforms, electoral malpractice, voter intimidation, and violence have continued to plague Nigerian elections, undermining public trust in the electoral process.

Anti-corruption reforms have also been central to Nigeria's governance reform agenda. The EFCC and ICPC have made some strides in prosecuting corrupt officials, but their effectiveness has been limited by political interference and weak judicial processes (Ribadu, 2011). More recent initiatives, such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) introduced in 2015, have aimed to consolidate government revenues and reduce leakages in public finances. However, the success of these reforms has been mixed, with corruption remaining a significant challenge to governance in Nigeria (Adesoji, 2019).

### **Impact of Public Opinion on Previous Nigerian Reforms**

Public opinion has been a driving force behind several key reforms in Nigeria, though its influence has varied depending on the political context. During the military era, public opinion was often ignored or suppressed, but in the democratic period, governments have been more responsive to public demands. The transition to democracy in 1999, for example, was largely a result of sustained public pressure and international advocacy for political reform (Osaghae, 1998). One of the most significant examples of public opinion influencing governance reforms was the #EndSARS movement in 2020. This movement, which began as a protest police brutality, quickly expanded to include demands for broader governance reforms, including an end to corruption, improved service delivery, and greater accountability from political leaders (Ojebode, Adegbola, & Azeez, 2021). The Nigerian government responded by disbanding the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and promising to address the protesters' demands, though the long-term impact of these reforms

remains to be seen.

Other examples of public opinion shaping governance reforms include the protests fuel subsidy removal in 2012, which forced the government to reconsider its policy, and the widespread demand for electoral reforms following the 2007 elections, which led to the introduction of new electoral procedures in 2010 (Joseph, 2012). However, public opinion does not always lead to meaningful reform, as entrenched political interests and weak institutions often limit the impact of public pressure.

### **Background and Emergence of the EndBadGovernance Protest**

The #EndBadGovernance movement in Nigeria emerged as a response to widespread dissatisfaction with governance, corruption, and the lack of accountability in political leadership. The movement gained prominence in October 2020, during the #EndSARS protests, which initially focused on police brutality, particularly the actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a controversial unit of the Nigerian Police Force known for extrajudicial killings, harassment, and abuse. However, as the protests gained momentum, they evolved to address broader issues of governance, economic inequality, unemployment, and systemic corruption in the Nigerian government (Ojebode et al., 2021).

The term #EndBadGovernance became a rallying cry for many Nigerians, especially young people, who saw the SARS brutality as a symptom of deeper structural problems in the country's governance. The protesters called for comprehensive reforms in governance to address these issues, advocating for transparency, accountability, and improved service delivery from the government. According to Adegbola and Azeez (2021), the movement tapped into long-standing frustrations with successive governments' failure to address critical issues like poverty, poor infrastructure, and the lack of opportunities for youth, which contributed to the rapid spread and support of the protests across the country.

Historically, governance in Nigeria has been marred by corruption, weak institutions, and a lack of accountability, which created fertile ground for public discontent. The EndSARS protests became a watershed moment as they captured the pent-up frustration of Nigerians who had for

decades endured poor leadership, mismanagement of resources, and a lack of progress in critical sectors like education, healthcare, and security (Omobowale & Olutayo, 2022). The merging of the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests symbolized a broader call for systemic change beyond addressing police misconduct.

### **Causes and Catalysts for the Protest:**

The immediate catalyst for the #EndBadGovernance protests was the long-standing grievances against police brutality in Nigeria, particularly the human rights violations committed by SARS officers. These abuses were widely reported over the years, with incidents of extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion (Amnesty International, 2020). However, the deeper causes of the protests lie in the pervasive issues of bad governance, including corruption, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which have plagued Nigeria for decades.

Economic hardship was a major underlying cause of the protests. Nigeria, despite being one of the largest oil producers in the world, suffers from high levels of poverty, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these conditions, as the economic downturn further limited job opportunities, particularly for the youth, who constitute the majority of the Nigerian population. According to Akinbobola (2021), the pandemic exposed the inefficiencies of the Nigerian government, particularly its failure to provide adequate social welfare and healthcare, leading to increased frustration among the populace.

Another significant catalyst was the frustration with the lack of accountability and the failure of previous reform efforts. Over the years, several anti-corruption measures and governance reforms had been introduced, but they largely failed to produce tangible results. The Nigerian government's perceived indifference to public opinion and the entrenchment of a political elite that appeared to prioritize personal gain over public interest added to the growing sense of disenchantment (Ayoade, 2019). The #EndBadGovernance protests were, therefore, a manifestation of citizens' desire for a more accountable, responsive, and transparent government.

## Short- and Long-Term Effects of Public Sentiment on Governance Reforms

The impact of public sentiment on governance reforms can be analyzed in both the short and long term. In the short term, public sentiment can lead to immediate policy responses, especially when there is significant pressure from protests, media coverage, or electoral considerations. For example, the Nigerian government's decision to disband SARS in response to the #EndSARS protests was a short-term policy response driven by overwhelming public sentiment (Amnesty International, 2020). Similarly, public outcry over corruption scandals has occasionally resulted in the dismissal or prosecution of public officials, as seen in the case of former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, who was removed from office following corruption allegations (The Guardian, 2017).

However, short-term responses to public sentiment do not always lead to meaningful reforms. In many cases, governments may implement superficial changes or make promises of reform without following through on substantive policy changes. For instance, despite the Nigerian government's promises to reform the police following the #EndSARS protests, reports of police brutality and lack of accountability persist, indicating that the reforms were largely cosmetic (Adejumobi, 2021). This suggests that while public sentiment can prompt immediate action, the effectiveness of such actions in producing lasting change depends on the strength of the institutions responsible for implementing reforms.

In the long term, sustained public sentiment can lead to more significant and enduring governance reforms. Long-term effects often depend on the ability of civil society to maintain pressure on the government and the political will to address the underlying issues driving public discontent. One example of long-term governance reform influenced by public sentiment is the gradual institutionalization of anti-corruption measures in Nigeria. While corruption remains a major problem, public demand for accountability has led to the creation of agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), which have made some progress in tackling corruption (Ribadu, 2011).

Furthermore, long-term governance reforms influenced by public sentiment may involve changes in the political culture. In Nigeria, public

frustration with the inefficiency and corruption of government institutions has contributed to a growing demand for greater transparency and accountability. Over time, this has led to the adoption of measures such as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which aims to enhance government transparency by providing citizens with the right to access public records (Falana, 2019). While implementation of the FOIA has been uneven, it represents a shift towards greater openness in governance that was driven by public pressure.

Despite these examples, the long-term impact of public sentiment on governance reforms in Nigeria has been uneven. Structural challenges such as weak institutions, entrenched political elites, and a lack of political will have often limited the effectiveness of public demands for reform. As noted by Ayoade (2019), even when reforms are enacted in response to public sentiment, their success depends on the capacity of institutions to implement and enforce them effectively. Therefore, while public sentiment can be a powerful driver of governance reforms, its long-term impact is contingent on the broader political and institutional context.

### Challenges in Governance Public Reform:

One of the most significant challenges in leveraging public sentiment for governance reforms in Nigeria is the deep-seated political elitism that characterizes the country's political landscape. Political elites, who control significant resources and wield considerable influence over state institutions, often maintain a disconnect from the needs and demands of the general populace. This disconnect is largely due to the oligarchic nature of Nigeria's political system, where power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or families, often leading to governance decisions that are out of step with the aspirations of the broader public (Albert, 2018).

Political elitism in Nigeria creates a barrier to governance reforms because the elites often benefit from the status quo. Many political elites are resistant to reforms that might threaten their economic and political interests. For example, efforts to reform the oil and gas sector in Nigeria have been hampered by elite resistance, as many influential figures benefit from the lack of transparency and the rents derived from oil production (Nwankwo, 2021). This kind of elite entrenchment undermines the capacity of public sentiment to drive meaningful policy changes, as

political elites are often able to ignore or suppress public opinion through their control over state apparatus and resources.

Furthermore, the disconnect between political elites and the public is exacerbated by the lack of effective channels for political participation. While elections are held regularly in Nigeria, they are often marred by allegations of fraud, vote-buying, and voter intimidation, which diminish their role as a mechanism for expressing public sentiment. Even when reforms are demanded by the public, such as in the case of police brutality during the #EndSARS protests, political elites may offer superficial concessions to appease protesters without implementing meaningful changes (Ojebode et al., 2021).

Another manifestation of political elitism is the marginalization of youth and women in governance. Although young people constitute a significant portion of Nigeria's population and have been at the forefront of movements like #EndSARS, they are often excluded from formal political processes due to age barriers, lack of resources, and entrenched patronage systems (Fagbohunge et al., 2021). This exclusion limits the potential of public sentiment to translate into governance reforms, as key segments of the population are sidelined from decision-making processes.

## Theoretical Framework

### Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) was developed primarily by Gary Becker in 1976, building on earlier contributions from economists and sociologists such as Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham (Becker, 1976). The theory assumes that individuals, when making decisions, act in their rational self-interest, aiming to maximize personal benefits while minimizing costs (Scott, 2000). The rational actor weighs the potential outcomes and selects the course of action that offers the greatest utility. The foundation of this theory is deeply rooted in economic thought but has since been adapted to various social and political contexts, including public participation in governance reforms (Elster, 1989).

RCT operates on several core assumptions: first, that individuals have preferences which are consistent and stable over time (Scott, 2000). Second, individuals possess the cognitive ability to rank these preferences and make choices based on

the optimal satisfaction of these preferences (Clarke & Primo, 2012). Lastly, individuals are assumed to have access to relevant information that enables them to make these rational decisions (Coleman, 1994). This approach has been applied to explain voter behavior, political participation, and even collective actions like protests and social movements.

The application of Rational Choice Theory to the #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria is significant because it helps explain how individuals, particularly the youth, made decisions to participate based on a rational calculation of the costs and benefits. Protests were organized in reaction to a pervasive system of governance that, in their view, failed to deliver public goods such as security, employment, and justice (Akinyele, 2020). The potential benefit of achieving long-term governance reforms outweighed the risks associated with participating in protests, such as police brutality or arrest. Rational Choice Theory also underscores the importance of collective action in political participation. Olson (1965) highlighted that individuals are more likely to engage in collective action when the expected gains (such as police reforms or better governance) are perceived as outweighing individual risks or costs. This can explain why, despite heavy police presence and the potential for violence, thousands of Nigerian youths still participated in the protests (Ojedokun & Balogun, 2021).

Recent scholarly work has expanded the theory's application beyond individual decision-making to consider structural factors that may limit or enhance rational choice. For instance, Druckman (2015) posits that social and institutional structures shape how individuals assess their options, particularly in non-Western contexts where democratic institutions may be weaker or less accessible. In the Nigerian case, where corruption and poor governance have historically stifled public voice, the decision to protest can also be seen as a response to a constrained political environment, where traditional methods of holding leaders accountable are ineffective (Kazeem, 2020).

Furthermore, contemporary studies (2015-2024) argue that while RCT can explain participation in collective action, it must also take into account the emotional and psychological dimensions of decision-making (Gore & Maveus, 2017). For example, the frustration of Nigerian youths over

decades of governance failures may not only be viewed through a rational calculation but also through a collective expression of anger and disillusionment with the status quo (Oyeleye, 2021). Rational Choice Theory, therefore, provides a lens to understand the motivations behind the #EndBadGovernance protests, particularly the calculated risks taken by participants in seeking to influence governance reforms.

### **Institutional Barriers to Reform in Nigerian**

Nigeria's federal structure presents additional challenges to governance reform. While federalism is intended to provide for decentralized governance and local accountability, it often results in fragmented policymaking and weak coordination between the federal, state, and local governments. This lack of coordination makes it difficult to implement nationwide governance reforms, as different levels of government may have competing interests or lack the capacity to enforce reforms (Akinola, 2020).

The bureaucratic inertia within Nigerian institutions also poses a challenge to governance reform. Public institutions in Nigeria are often characterized by inefficiency, a lack of innovation, and resistance to change. Bureaucratic inertia can prevent the implementation of reforms even when there is political will to do so, as entrenched interests within the bureaucracy may resist efforts to increase transparency, improve service delivery, or reduce corruption (Ibrahim, 2021). Institutional barriers present another significant obstacle to harnessing public sentiment for governance reforms in Nigeria. Despite periodic efforts to reform key governance institutions, the Nigerian state remains characterized by weak and inefficient institutions that are often incapable of implementing and enforcing reforms (Ayoade, 2019). This institutional weakness undermines the ability of public sentiment to drive meaningful change, as even when reforms are demanded and enacted, they are often poorly implemented.

### **Empirical Review**

A study by Mensah (2016) examined the role of public sentiment in driving governance reforms in Ghana, specifically focusing on electoral reforms after the 2012 elections. The study aimed to analyze how public dissatisfaction with the electoral process led to changes in voting procedures. Conducted in Accra, the study used a sample size of 700 participants, including voters,

electoral officers, and political party representatives. The findings indicated that public sentiment significantly influenced the introduction of biometric voting systems to curb electoral fraud. The

study concluded that public opinion is a vital force in governance reforms, especially in emerging democracies. The study recommended continuous public involvement in reform processes to enhance democratic legitimacy.

A study by Ncube (2018) explored public sentiment and its impact on governance reforms in Zimbabwe, with a focus on land reforms. The objective was to assess how public opinion shaped government policies on land redistribution. Using a sample size of 500 participants from Harare and Bulawayo, the study found that public sentiment, driven by economic hardship and historical grievances, played a role in the controversial land reforms of the early 2000s. However, the study concluded that while public opinion can influence policy, the Zimbabwean case showed that political elites often co-opt public sentiment to pursue their agendas. The study recommended more transparent and participatory processes in future governance reforms.

In South Africa, a study by Mathebula and Sibanda (2019) examined the influence of public sentiment on anti-corruption reforms during the presidency of Jacob Zuma. The objective was to explore how public outcry over corruption scandals affected government policy. The study conducted in Johannesburg with a sample size of 800 participants revealed that public sentiment was a significant factor in the formation of anti-corruption bodies like the Zondo Commission. The study concluded that sustained public pressure is necessary for meaningful reforms but highlighted the need for independent institutions to implement these reforms. The study recommended strengthening South Africa's judiciary to ensure the enforcement of anti-corruption measures.

A study by Amadou (2020) investigated the role of public sentiment in governance reforms in Senegal, focusing on youth unemployment. The objective was to assess how public dissatisfaction with high unemployment rates influenced labor market reforms. The study, conducted in Dakar, surveyed 600 young people. The findings indicated that public sentiment, expressed through protests and social media campaigns, led to government initiatives aimed at job creation. However, the

study concluded that while public sentiment can initiate reforms, the long-term success of such policies depends on government capacity and political will. The study recommended that inclusive policy-making processes involve the youth in decision-making.

In Kenya, a study by Kamau and Mwangi (2021) examined public sentiment and its impact on police reforms following the 2017 elections. The objective was to assess how public dissatisfaction with police brutality influenced governance reforms in law enforcement. Conducted in Nairobi, the study surveyed 700 respondents, including police officers, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens. The findings showed that public sentiment was crucial in pushing for police accountability measures, but the reforms were slow due to institutional resistance. The study concluded that public sentiment can drive reforms, but sustained efforts are needed to ensure implementation. The study therefore recommended that regular reviews of police reforms ensure compliance with human rights standards.

In the United Kingdom, a study by Johnson and Evans (2018) explored the role of public sentiment in Brexit-related governance reforms. The objective was to examine how public opinion on immigration and sovereignty influenced the government's decision to leave the European Union. The study, conducted across multiple cities with a sample size of 1,200 participants, found that public sentiment, particularly among older voters, was a major factor in the Brexit referendum. The study concluded that public opinion can have profound impacts on governance, but the long-term effects of such decisions are often unpredictable. Johnson and Evans recommended more inclusive public consultations in future governance decisions to avoid divisive outcomes.

A study by Muller (2019) examined public sentiment and its impact on pension reforms in Germany. The objective was to assess how public dissatisfaction with pension schemes influenced government policy. The study, conducted in Berlin and Munich, surveyed 800 participants, including pensioners, workers, and government officials. Findings indicated that public sentiment led to the introduction of more flexible retirement options, but the reforms were limited due to budgetary constraints. The study concluded that while public sentiment is important in initiating reforms, financial limitations often impede the full

realization of policy changes. Muller recommended better financial planning in future pension reforms.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that public sentiment during the EndBadGovernance protests played a crucial role in shaping governance discourse in Nigeria. The protests served as a significant platform for citizens to express their frustrations and demands for reform, thereby influencing policy discussions and reforms at various levels of government. This indicated that the public's perception of governance issues was largely negative, driven by a sense of betrayal and disillusionment with the political elite.

Despite some positive reforms emerging from the protests, the overall effectiveness of these changes remains questionable. Many respondents expressed skepticism regarding the government's commitment to enacting meaningful reforms, suggesting that superficial changes may not adequately address the deep-rooted issues of governance. This disconnect between public expectations and governmental action underscores the need for a more engaged and accountable political leadership. Ultimately, the research highlights the importance of public sentiment as a catalyst for governance reforms, suggesting that governments must take citizen feedback seriously and incorporate it into policy-making processes.

### Recommendation

- The study recommended Support for civil society organizations that advocate for governance reforms should be prioritized, as they play a critical role in mobilizing public sentiment and fostering dialogue between citizens and the government.
- The government should be committed to implementing comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of public dissatisfaction, including anti-corruption measures and increased public sector efficiency.
- Government institutions should adopt transparency measures, including regular public reporting and open forums for citizen engagement, to rebuild trust and ensure accountability.

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