

# A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PLACARD MESSAGES ON THE #ENDBADGOVERNANCE PROTEST OF 2024

Isma'ila Salisu,  
Ibrahim Almu Gafai  
&  
Aliyu Kabir Gadanga

## Abstract

This study examined the 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest in Nigeria through the lens of Fairclough's (2010) Critical Discourse Analysis model, aiming to uncover the language used on placards at three levels: text, discursive practice, and at social practice. As a case study, the research investigated a real-life phenomenon by employing a purposive data collection technique to gather relevant data from placards obtained from the BusinessDay, the Premium Times online newspapers, the Almy website, and online Channels Television. In addition, a critical case sampling strategy - an adapted form of purposive data collection was implemented by selecting placards that provided significant insights into the research topic. The analysis utilised a blend of qualitative description and analytical interpretation methods. To protect the privacy of individuals depicted in the photographs, faces were blurred. The findings indicated, among others, that the protesters made distinctive lexical choices that conveyed powerful social meanings. Their deliberate use of text font, colour, and bullets contributed to the clarity and impact of

their messages by ensuring they correspond with their audience at text level.

**Key Words:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Placards, #EndBadGovernance Protest

## Introduction

Humans naturally protest unfavourable conditions using various methods ranging from verbal expressions to physical confrontations and even wars. Over time, especially with the rise of civilisation and democracy, protests have been transformed through non-violent means to peaceful marches and demonstrations. With social media, Nigerians have gained additional platforms to express discontent with government policies (Adisa, 2021). In Nigeria, protests have a long history, occurring before and after independence, during military regimes, and continuing into the current civilian era. There have been a series of protests since when Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, the populace reflected their grievances and demand for better governance, social justice, and economic reforms (Oyediran, 2024).

Some Nigerians had a protest they termed #EndBadGovernance, which began on 1st August 2024 by taking to the streets in the country to demand reforms in economics, and politics and to also reverse some of the government policies (Falola 2024). To express their grievances, protesters utilised multiple communication methods, such as speeches, chants, body language, posters, banners, and placards. Concerning this, several kinds of research were geared towards investigating the language used in the protest. For instance, and to mention a few, Emmanuel et al (2024) investigated the protest from a sociology and criminology perspective, Tomere and Ajakaye (2024) viewed the protest from a multi-modal angle, while Abuh (2024) viewed the protest from a Pragmatic Acts perspective. Considering this, it is viewed that there is a dearth of research that focus on critical discourse analysis (CDA) regarding the 2024 #endbadgovernance protest, more

specifically research that focuses on the CDA of #EndBadGovernance placards. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a critical discourse analysis of some selected placards employed during the protest. By critically analysing the discourse embedded in #EndBadGovernance placards, this study seeks to uncover the ideological structures, rhetorical strategies, and socio-political influences that define the language use in the protest using the Fairclough (2010) model of CDA. The research specifically intends **to identify and analyse the** specific language used to portray messages in #EndBadGovernance placards at the text-level; to examine the context surrounding the creation and use of the placards at the discursive practice-level; and to investigate the broader social, political, and cultural context in which the placards exist at social practice-level.

The study seeks to answer the following questions: what is the specific language used to portray messages in #EndBadGovernance protest placards at the text-level? What is the context surrounding the creation and use of the placards at the discursive level? What is the broader social, political, and cultural context in which the placards exist at the social practice-level?

The scope of this research focuses on the analysis of texts used in the protest, this comprises inscriptions, images, or a mixture of all the three forms of communication by examining the language, symbolism, and themes presented in the placards to understand how they reflect public sentiment and contribute to the discourse surrounding governance issues. The analysis aims to uncover the underlying meanings and implications of these messages in the context of the protest, providing insights into the social and political dynamics.

This research is limited to the interpretation of the language used on the placards, neglecting other forms of protest communication. The study also cannot directly assess the impact of the placards on audiences, and the findings may not apply to other protests.

This research contributes to understanding of how protesters use language to articulate their grievances, challenge existing power structures, and participate in public discourse on governance in Nigeria. By analysing the specific discursive strategies employed in the #EndBadGovernance protest placards, this study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of social movements and the role of language in shaping social change. It sheds light on how citizens use language to voice their concerns and demand change, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of social movements and their impact on public discourse.

### **Placards**

Placards are a form of visual communication designed to convey messages quickly and effectively in public spaces (Dumitrica, 2021). Considering this assertion, it can be deduced that placard messages are written in a sort of language coded for particular purposes and framed in a particular way because they display concise messages that mobilise, support, and express dissent. Since most protests are transient depending on their nature (Petrovskii et al, 2020:78); viewers of placards during protests have less time to pay much attention to them. This makes it necessary for the language in placards to be brief by condensing complex grievances into powerful slogans; this coincides with Snow and Benford (1988) view that placards help to frame issues. Placards become potent symbols of collective identity and shared purpose, reinforcing common goal (Melussi 1995) as this significantly helps to shape public discourse on the issues at hand. They are not merely passive carriers of information; they actively construct narratives, frame issues, and reflect the emotions and ideologies of the protesters; this is synonymous with Bathes (1967), who views placards as not just communicative tools but also shapes meaning and social reality.

## Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was initiated by Norman Fairclough alongside with other scholars in the late 1980s (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001) and since then it revolutionised the theoretical and methodological aspects within the interdisciplinary study (Alasiri 2024). This coincides with the view that CDA is used as a tool in investigating hidden ideologies and power abuses at individual, institutional or social levels (Ulinuha et al. 2013). As a framework, that provides interpretation of how meaning is derived from texts (Iyoha 2018). It is a field of study that sees language as a form of social practice that focuses on explaining how social and political domination are expressed in text and talk (Begum, 2015). Van Dijk (1993) defines dominance as the way powerful groups use their influence to create inequality. CDA goes beyond simply examining the words we use to explore how those words shape our world and reinforce existing power structures, it is particularly interested in the relationship between language and power.

A crucial aspect of CDA is its 'critical' nature. Even though, the foundational idea of CDA is that language is not neutral; it is critical and might imply being judgmental Tenorio (2011:187). However, Jäger and Maier (2009: 36) add that this kind of critique does not claim to be true. This 'critical' stance involves more than just pointing out flaws. It is a systematic approach to uncovering hidden power dynamics. Wodak (Kendall, 2007) explains that being critical involves questioning assumptions, challenging simplistic explanations, and reflecting on our own biases. CDA utilises specific analytical tools and frameworks to examine linguistic features like word choice, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices to reveal underlying ideologies and power relations.

Kristeva's (1986) concept of intertextuality is another cornerstone of CDA. It emphasises that texts are never created in isolation; they are always in dialogue with other texts, ideas, and cultural influences. Pollock (1998, p. 37) explains that, for Kristeva,

meaning exists both within and outside the text, connected to ongoing social processes. Every text embodies a mix of different voices and perspectives. Intertextuality reveals how power is disseminated and reinforced across different texts and discourses. By examining the relationships between texts, CDA can uncover how dominant narratives are constructed and maintained.

In summary, CDA provides tools for critically examining how language operates in the real world. It helps us understand how language can be used to create and uphold inequality, as well as how it can challenge and resist it. By grasping the connections between language, power, and social context, we can work towards a more just and equitable society.

### **Norman Fairclough's Dimensional CDA**

Zang (2013) posits that Fairclough (1989) advanced the notion that it is pertinent for discourse analysts to focus on the interrelationship between texts, the production process, and other social contexts when conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Concerning this, Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional framework of communicative events was developed, which includes, first, the text, referred to by Zang (2013) as speech, writing, images, or a combination of all three forms of communication. Similarly, Ulinuha (2013:263) adds that textual analysis at the level of the text captures both explicit and implicit messages, and in cases where presupposition is absent, it fills in the gaps in interpretation. At the textual analysis level, linguistic and semiotic features are examined. The linguistic analysis at this level, Fairclough (1991) posits, involves examining linguistic features and intertextual elements to understand discourse; likewise, this comprises the analysis of vocabulary choice, grammar, cohesion, and coherence. Conversely, the semiotic analysis deals with visual elements and other textual features that address instances where presupposition is absent and requires the analyst to

consider possible gaps in interpretation. Moreover, Fairclough (1995) draws attention to interdiscursivity at this level, which concerns how multiple discourses are combined within a single text to produce meaning.

The second dimension is the processing analysis, also known as discourse practice. This dimension focuses on the processes involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of the text. It examines how texts are created and interpreted within institutional, historical, and cultural contexts. Analysts consider factors such as the intended audience, the circumstances of production, and how different audiences might decode the text based on their backgrounds and knowledge. Alasiri (2024) rightly points out the focus on the context of production and consumption and how audiences decode the text within that context. Intertextuality is central at this stage, as Fairclough (1992) explains that texts draw on prior discourses and genres, and analysts must trace how these discourses shape meaning. This stage bridges the gap between the text as an object and its role within broader communicative and institutional practices.

The third dimension is the social practice, which connects the dimensions, and it is the overall order of discourse that is concerned with exploring power relations through sociocultural practices. At this level, the analyst explores how discourse contributes to the production and reproduction of social structures, ideologies, and relations of dominance. Fairclough (2001) underscores that CDA is centrally concerned with ideology and hegemony, as discourse often naturalises power relations and legitimises worldviews. This dimension involves situating discourse within broader social and political processes and examining its role in sustaining or challenging existing power dynamics.

Furthermore, the three dimensions are not to be viewed in isolation, as Fairclough (1992:64) emphasises the dialectical relationship among them. That is, text, discourse practice, and social practice influence one another recursively. Each communicative event

reflects and reinforces discourses, which are shaped by and, in turn, shape the social context. As Wodak and Meyer (2009) support, Fairclough's model enables a multi-layered approach to discourse analysis, providing insights into how language functions ideologically and institutionally.

### **Empirical review**

Abimbola et al. (2024) examined the effectiveness of clicktivism as a tool for political engagement in Nigeria's #EndBadGovernance movement, utilising Habermas' public sphere theory and Castells' network society theory. The researchers employed a survey design, gathering data from social media users in Ado-Odo/Ota, Ogun State, using purposive sampling and structured questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. Their findings indicated that while clicktivism increases political awareness and engagement, its impact on sustained civic participation and political change remains limited. The study concluded that clicktivism is most effective when complemented by traditional forms of activism.

While this study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations. Firstly, it focuses primarily on the effects of clicktivism in a specific geographic location (Ado-Odo/Ota), whereas the current research expands the scope by analysing the protest through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which allows for a deeper understanding of ideologies, power dynamics, and discourse. Additionally, Abimbola et al (2024) used questionnaires, whereas the current study sources data from a variety of media, including newspaper websites and social media handles. These methodological differences highlight a gap in the literature, making it essential to revisit the topic with a more subtle approach, such as CDA, to fully capture the complexity of the #EndBadGovernance protest.

Akpati et al. (2024) employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically utilising critical stylistics, functionalism, and

systemic functional grammar to examine online comments on Nairaland regarding the 2023 Nigerian fuel subsidy removal. Their study focused on 20 selected comments, revealing how language was used to express support or dissent, highlighting the role of media in national discourse. While Akpati et al.'s (2024) research provides valuable insights into online discussions of a significant social issue, the current study takes a different direction by focusing on public expression in the form of protest placards from the #EndBadGovernance movement. This study applies Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA, which offers a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between text, discourse practice, and social context—crucial for analysing the diverse communication in protest placards. In contrast to Akpati et al.'s (2024) focus on textual online comments, this research examines the unique intersection of visual and textual elements in protest placards, a mode of communication that has not yet been thoroughly explored in the context of Nigerian protests. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of how protesters convey political messages and emotions, which are often more immediate and impactful than online discussions.

Goteng (2023) examined the Twitter discourse of Nigerian youths during the #EndSARS protests in 2020, focusing on its implications for the 2023 general elections. Using van Dijk's ideological discourse analysis, the study analysed 15 purposively selected posts out of 1,460, uncovering diverse discursive strategies such as negative lexicalization, hyperbole, and compassion that reflect protestor sentiment. The study revealed how participants used language to construct ideologies and influence their audience, showcasing a pattern of positive self-presentation and negative portrayal of opponents.

However, Goteng's research is limited in scope, focusing only on Twitter discourse. This narrow lens overlooks other critical forms of youth expression, such as offline activism or artistic expression. The

new research, by concentrating on placard messages from the 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest, offers a more focused approach that allows for a deeper analysis of both the textual and visual elements of these messages. Placards, by nature, are designed for immediate impact and often combine text and imagery in powerful ways, which can provide insights into protest sentiment that Twitter discourse alone may not capture.

A key challenge of the current research is ensuring the representativeness of the placards selected for analysis. To address this, a stratified sampling method will be employed to ensure a diverse representation of protest locations and demographics. Furthermore, Goteng's analysis lacks depth in explaining how discursive strategies shape ideological beliefs. While Goteng identifies strategies such as hyperbole and negative lexicalisation, this research will employ Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework to examine how these strategies construct meaning, reinforce or challenge social hierarchies, and contribute to the persuasive force of protest communication.

Additionally, Goteng (2023) fails to draw a clear connection between the #EndSARS protests and the 2023 elections. The current study, by analysing placards from the #EndBadGovernance protest in 2024, will ground the research in a specific socio-political context, allowing for a clearer understanding of the grievances and motivations behind the protest. Methodologically, Goteng's study lacks transparency in data collection and sampling, making it difficult to assess the validity of its findings. The current study will address this by clearly defining selection criteria for the placards, ensuring objectivity and minimizing bias.

Finally, Goteng's focus on the protestors' discourse overlooks the importance of counter-discourse. The current study will contextualize protest placard messages within the broader public discourse, considering how they engage with or challenge dominant

narratives about governance and attempt to shape public opinion in a contested discursive space.

Abuh (2024) investigated pragmatic acts in selected placards from Nigeria's 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest, sourcing data from social media platforms such as Facebook and through Google searches. The researcher analysed 50 placards using Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory and found that the placards performed various pragmatic functions, including demanding, appealing, advising, informing, questioning, directing, and inciting. These acts conveyed a strong message to the global audience about the struggles faced by Nigerians.

This study is relevant to the current research as it also focuses on protest placards. However, while Abuh applies the Pragmatic Acts Theory, the present study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to explore the same context. This distinction allows the current research to go beyond linguistic functions and investigate the power dynamics, ideologies, and structures of domination embedded in the #EndBadGovernance protest discourse.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a useful tool for examining the hidden relationships between language, power, and social change. In this research, CDA is specifically chosen to analyse the placard messages used during the #EndBadGovernance protest of 2024. This approach will help explain how protesters use language on their placards to challenge the government and advocate for systemic reform. The research offers valuable insights into the impact of dissent and how language can drive social transformation by exploring the textual features, discourse practices, and socio-political context surrounding these placards.

The primary focus of language in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) goes beyond mere communication; it encompasses social

practices related to power structures. Language is not limited to reinforcement but also challenges power dynamics. This concept is particularly significant in the study of protest movements, where language serves to rally support, articulate concerns, and advocate for change. The #EndBadGovernance protest highlights the importance of government accountability and transparency, and these theoretical frameworks provide valuable tools for examining social injustice.

The analytical framework of CDA typically operates across three interconnected dimensions. First, textual analysis involves a close examination of the linguistic features of the placards themselves. This includes scrutinising vocabulary choices, grammatical structures, metaphors, rhetorical devices, and other stylistic elements. For instance, the use of emotionally charged language, such as ‘corruption’ or ‘injustice,’ can effectively convey the protesters’ anger and frustration. Similarly, the strategic use of rhetorical questions, like ‘How long will we tolerate this?’ can engage the audience and encourage reflection. Analysing these textual choices reveals how protesters construct meaning and frame the issue of bad governance.

Beyond the text itself, discourse practice examines the production, distribution, and consumption of the placard messages within the broader context of the protest. This includes considering who created the placards, how they were disseminated (e.g., through social media, during marches), and how they were interpreted by different audiences, including fellow protesters, authorities, and the media. Understanding the circulation of these messages and their interaction with other forms of communication within the protest movement is crucial for grasping their overall impact. For example, a placard message that goes viral on social media can amplify the protest’s message and reach a wider audience, potentially influencing public opinion and putting pressure on those in power.

Finally, the social context within which the #EndBadGovernance protest occurs is paramount. This involves

analysing the specific instances of bad governance that triggered the protest, the historical and political backdrop, and the broader societal inequalities that protesters are challenging. Understanding the socio-political context allows us to interpret the placard messages not as isolated statements but as responses to specific grievances and manifestations of broader social discontent. For instance, if the protest is triggered by a specific corruption scandal, the placards are likely to directly reference the details of that scandal, thereby contextualising the broader critique of bad governance.

Applying CDA framework to the #EndBadGovernance protest allows us to address several key research questions. How do the placard messages construct and represent the issue of bad governance? What linguistic strategies are employed to express protest sentiments and mobilise support? How do these messages challenge existing power structures and dominant ideologies? And what are the potential impacts of these messages on public discourse and the prospects for social change? By meticulously analysing the language used on the placards, we can gain valuable insights into the protesters' perspectives, their motivations, and their strategies for challenging the status quo.

In conclusion, CDA provides a robust methodological framework for understanding the role of language in social protests. By examining the textual features, discourse practices, and social context surrounding placard messages at the #EndBadGovernance protest, we can deconstruct how language is used to articulate dissent, mobilise collective action, and ultimately, strive for a more just and accountable governance system. This approach not only sheds light on the specific dynamics of this protest but also contributes to a broader understanding of the power of language as a tool for social change.

### **Research Methodology**

Being that #EndBadGovernance is a vast protest that covers many parts of Nigeria, it is difficult to investigate all aspects of the

protest. Based on this, the research is made to be a case study, being that it investigates a real-life phenomenon. A purposive data collection technique is employed to gather in-depth information from placards obtained from the *Businessday*, the *Premiumtimes* online newspapers, the Almy website, and Channels TV an online television. This is done deliberately to enable the researchers to access data that are relevant to the objective of the research with ease. Similarly, the sources of the placard and the dates obtained are published under each picture used for the work to establish their authenticity. Additionally, a critical case sampling strategy, which is a variant of purposive data collection, is applied by critically selecting placards that provide essential insights into the research topic. This approach simplifies the selection process, helping the research achieve its objectives by identifying the impact of language in establishing or opposing power dynamics.

Presentation and analysis of data for a CDA of placards requires a creative approach, and this involves a combination of qualitative description and analytical interpretation. Furthermore, clear photographs of placards displayed during the protest are presented for analysis to enable the readers to see the visual and textual elements discussed. Transcriptions of the texts accompany the picture and explain other embedded visual features such as the layout of the placards, font size, colour, handwriting, and other intrinsic effects purposefully to aid in providing a comprehensible analysis at the text, discourse practice, and social practice levels of Fairclough's three-dimensional levels of the CDA.

The privacy of individuals depicted in the photographs will be blurred to conceal the identities of people there in, and identifying information will not be published during this research. Similarly, photographs gathered are authentic and not fabricated; and in interpretation personal biases are acknowledged.

## Data Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

### Image 1:



Source: [https://businessday.ng/news/article/hunger-protest-anambra-markets-others-open-with-normal-business-activities/#google\\_vignette](https://businessday.ng/news/article/hunger-protest-anambra-markets-others-open-with-normal-business-activities/#google_vignette)

The image above shows a group of protesters holding a large placard with a white background. In the top left corner of the placard, there is a small logo depicting a lady with a raised fist, enclosed within a circle and superimposed on a map of Nigeria, which is painted in the colours of the Nigerian flag—green, white, and green. This logo serves as a bullet point for various subheadings written in royal blue and sky-blue stripes. Prominently displayed on the white background of the placard with the powerful message: ‘#ENDBADGOVERNANCE.’ Among the royal blue and sky-blue stripes, the following messages are highlighted:

1. ‘ENOUGH IS ENOUGH—NO MORE HUNGER AND HARDSHIP.’
2. ‘REVERSE ALL ANTI-POOR POLICIES.’
3. ‘JAIL ALL CORRUPT POLITICIANS.’
4. ‘RETURN ALL STOLEN WEALTH.’
5. ‘#SYSTEMCHANGENOW.’

At the text level, the language employed on the placard is direct and impactful. ‘#ENDBADGOVERNANCE’ immediately identifies the core issue of dissatisfaction with the way Nigeria is being governed.

'Bad Governance' is a broad term that shows the negative consequences of corruption, mismanagement, and lack of accountability on Nigerians. The use of a hashtag signifies the message's intention above the physical context of the protest and is passed widely to the world through all media to amplify its reach and to pass a sense of collective action. To buttress the use of hashtags, Goswami (2018) asserts that hashtags are used to achieve widespread media attention and the participation of large numbers of netizens on issues of human rights abuses, justice for victims and more. Therefore, the use of hashtags in the protest has a basis and is a clever way of reaching a large audience and a means of seeking support for the protest.

The placard further elaborates on this central theme with a series of numbered points, each highlighting a specific grievance. Phrases like 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH TO HUNGER AND HARDSHIP' and 'REVERSE ALL ANTI-POOR POLICIES' speak to the economic struggles faced by many Nigerians, reflecting a growing frustration with the government's perceived failure to address poverty and inequality. The demands for 'Jail all corrupt politicians' and 'RETURN ALL STOLEN WEALTH' underscore the deep-seated anger over corruption, a pervasive issue that has sabotaged public trust in institutions and hindered national development. The hashtag "#SYSTEMCHANGENOW" reveals a desire for more than just insincere reforms because it calls for a fundamental restructuring of the system, suggesting that many Nigerians believe the current structures are faulty. Semiotically, the placard reinforces its message.

Moving to the discourse practice level of interpretation, the context surrounding the placard's creation and use is crucial to understanding its significance. The placard was produced by individuals or groups actively participating in a protest, suggesting a level of civic engagement and a desire to hold the government accountable. The use of social media hashtags points to a strategic effort to mobilise support and amplify the message beyond the immediate

protest location. The blending of on-ground protest with online platforms via hashtags shows an understanding of modern protest dynamics, which Castells (2012) terms “networked movements.” The intended audience is likely twofold: fellow Nigerians who share similar concerns and the government itself, which is being directly challenged to address the issues raised. The placard also serves as a form of communication with the broader international community, raising awareness about the challenges facing Nigeria and potentially prompting external pressure for reform.

At the social practice level, the placard's message intersects with broader discourses about governance, corruption, and social justice in Nigeria. It challenges the dominant narratives that often restrain the severity of these problems or attribute them to individual failings rather than systemic issues. The placard reflects a growing awareness of citizens' rights and a demand for greater transparency and accountability from those in power. It speaks to a yearning for a more just and equitable society, where the benefits of economic growth are shared more widely and where corruption is no longer tolerated. The placard's demands echo broader social movements advocating for good governance and social change across the African continent and globally.

Image 2.



**Source:** <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/544967-nigerian-workers-kick-off-nationwide-protest-over-prolonged-closure-of-universities.html?tztc=1>

This image depicts a group of protesters gathered at a protest location. The most striking element of the picture is a man carrying placards with a white background. At the top of the placard is the logo of the Nigeria Labour Congress. Below the logo are two phrases: the first is written in plain black letters and capital letters, with each phrase ending with an exclamation mark. The phrases read:

1. "STOP THE LOOTING!"
2. "TAX THE RICH AND SUBSIDIZE THE POOR!"

When the placard is analysed at the text level, the placard immediately establishes a power dynamic amplified within an assembly of protesters. The white background of the placard serves to highlight the message they write on the placard by making it visually prominent. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) logo is crucial. It signifies authority, legitimacy, and collective action. It links the specific demands to a larger community beyond the crowd, the assembly is an established organisation representing workers' rights.

When the linguistic choices are carefully observed, the phrase 'STOP THE LOOTING!' conveys strong, emotive language. The word 'looting' carries connotations of illegality, greed, and exploitation. It frames the actions of those being protested against as criminal, not just financially irresponsible. The exclamation mark adds emphasis, conveying urgency and anger.

When the second phrase 'TAX THE RICH AND SUBSIDIZE THE POOR!' is considered, the slogan presents a clear and concise solution to the perceived problem of 'looting.' It directly targets the wealthy and advocates for the redistribution of wealth. The parallel structure ('Tax...and subsidise...') reinforces the message's simplicity

and directness. Then, the exclamation mark amplifies the demand. Using all capital letters for the phrases emphasises their importance and creates a sense of urgency. It mimics the style of protest signs and reinforces the message's forceful nature. The slogans draw on existing discourses of social justice, economic inequality, and the role of government. They amplify the broader struggles against wealth disparity and are synonymous with existing protest rhetoric.

At the discourse practice level, the image portrays a power struggle. The protesters are represented by the individual with the placard challenging the perceived power of 'the rich' and those they accuse of 'looting' public treasure. The NLC's involvement signifies organised resistance against those in power. The two slogans above reflect a specific ideology that prioritises social justice, economic equality, and government intervention to protect the vulnerable. They challenge neoliberal ideologies that often prioritize market forces over social welfare. The image represents the voice of the working class and marginalised communities. The placard acts as a vehicle for their grievances and demands. The focus on economic inequality and the call for redistribution suggests a struggle against systemic issues.

At the social practice level of analysis, the image speaks to the broader issue of economic inequality in Nigeria. The slogans highlight the gap between the rich and the poor and demand government action to address this disparity. The phrase 'STOP THE LOOTING!' suggests accusations of corruption and misappropriation of public funds. This points to a broader societal problem of governance and accountability.

Image 3:



Source: <https://www.alamy.com/lagos-state-nigeria-1st-august-2024-end-bad-governance-protest-nigeria-protest-2024-credit-victor-modo-image615701626.html>

The image depicts three men holding a placard with a white background featuring bold inscriptions in capital letters. The subject of the statement on the placard, written in bright red, reads "POLITICIANS." The verb and object, along with the preposition that precedes it, are in bold black ink and say, "MUST ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN." The indirect object, also in bright red, reads, "PUBLIC SCHOOLS." At the bottom of the placard is a slogan preceded by a hashtag, written in capital letters and a smaller font size: '#ENDBADGOVERNANCE.'

When the image is analysed at the text level, the words used in the placard evoke peculiar meanings. For instance, the word 'MUST' conveys a strong sense of obligation and imperative. 'ENROLL' is an active verb, placing the burden of action on the politicians. "PUBLIC SCHOOLS" are associated with a decline in quality in many of the government-owned schools, which are in a state of dilapidation and destruction. The contrast between "POLITICIANS" and "PUBLIC SCHOOLS" highlights the perceived disconnect between those who make decisions and those who experience the consequences.

The stark contrast between the red 'POLITICIANS' and 'PUBLIC SCHOOLS' and the black "MUST ENROLL THEIR

CHILDREN IN" emphasises the divide and reinforces the urgency of the message. Red often symbolises urgency, importance, or even anger, further amplifying the demand. The larger font size of the core message compared to the hashtag emphasises the direct demand over the broader slogan. This prioritises the specific action over the more general concept of bad governance. The simple, declarative sentence structure ('Politicians MUST enrol their children in public schools') reinforces the directness and unambiguous nature of the demand. It leaves little room for interpretation or negotiation.

At the discursive practice level of analysis, there is a significant divide in social strata. This divide implies that the children of wealthy and influential politicians have access to good schools, which provide adequate and comfortable teaching and learning environments. These privileged children receive numerous luxuries in their education. Conversely, children from poorer backgrounds attend underfunded schools characterised by dilapidated structures, lack of teaching and learning materials, and unqualified, underpaid teachers.

At a social practice level, the protesters' ideology aims to convey the importance of public education and critique broader social inequality. It advocates that access to quality education should not depend on wealth or privilege. The protesters are calling for accountability from those in positions of authority regarding the fair distribution of social amenities. They challenge the dominant ideology that justifies the separation between the elite and the general public and aspire to create a more equitable society.

Image 5:



Source: <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/08/02/nigeria-must-investigate-killing-of-13-protesters-amnesty-international/>

This picture features a group of protesters posing with numerous placards that convey different messages. The focus is on the information displayed on the placards.

The protesters hold their placards above their heads, the inscriptions read:

1. 'OUR BOYS AND GIRLS ARE NOT SAFE.'
2. 'AN HANA MU NOMA' (meaning: 'we are stopped from farming').
3. 'REDUCE HIGH COST OF GOVERNANCE.'

The protesters holding their placards across their chests have the following inscriptions:

1. 'WE WANT DEMOCRACY, NOT DICTATORSHIP.'
2. 'MUNA CIKIN TSANANI' (meaning: 'we are in hardship').
3. 'A DAINA CIWO BASHI' (meaning: 'stop taking loans').

Additionally, the biggest placard in the picture has a heading that reads: 'STRUGGLE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN KATSINA STATE.' Below this heading, it states, 'PEACEFUL PROTEST.' Underneath that message, there are bullets listing the following issues:

- INSECURITY
- HARDSHIP
- RESTORE FUEL SUBSIDY.

At the text level of analysis, the language used is direct, emotive, and action oriented. Phrases like 'OUR BOYS AND GIRLS ARE NOT SAFE,' 'WE ARE STOPPED FROM FARMING,' 'WE WANT DEMOCRACY, NOT DICTATORSHIP,' and 'WE ARE IN HARDSHIP' evoke strong emotional responses and clearly convey the protesters' distress and demands. The use of both English and Hausa (An hana mu noma, Muna cikin tsanani, a daina ciwo bashi) broadens the potential audience and reinforces the local context of the protest. The use of "STRUGGLE" in the heading positions the protest as an ongoing effort.

When the data is analysed from grammatical dimension, the messages in the placards are indications of judicious use of simple declarative sentences to emphasise the urgency and clarity of the messages. The bullet points under the "STRUGGLE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE" heading create a brief list of grievances, making them easily understandable and memorable.

At the discursive level of analysis, the message is understood within the specific socio-political context of Katsina State, Nigeria where cases of banditry, kidnapping and indiscriminate killings of innocent citizens are rampant. This is the reason why the protesters mentioned "INSECURITY," "HARDSHIP," and the call to "RESTORE FUEL SUBSIDY" to ease additional suffering imposed on them.

Additionally, the protest itself is an act of challenging existing power structures. The messages on the placards demonstrate a perceived imbalance of power where the protesters feel unheard and marginalised. They are demanding accountability from the government and seeking to influence policy decisions. The use of language like "DICTATORSHIP" suggests a perceived lack of democratic freedoms.

At the social discourse practice level of analysis, the protest reflects a struggle over competing ideologies. The protesters' messages challenge the dominant narratives about the government's performance and its ability to address the issues facing the population. The call for "GOOD GOVERNANCE" implies a critique of the current governance system.

### Discussion of Findings

The data analysed in this paper at text level indicate that the protesters made peculiar choices of diction and other lexical items to enable them to create conspicuous social meaning capable of evoking emotion. Additionally, on the placards, the protesters made captivating use of text font, colour, and bullets deliberately to make their messages clear and well amplified for the consumption of their audience.

At discursive level, the research was able to identify protesters as the core producers of the placards and they predominantly belong to bottom-lower class of Nigerian social strata by considering the expressions they make in their placards such as 'enough to hunger and hardship', 'Reverse anti-poor policies', 'Tax the rich and subsidise the poor', 'politicians must enrol their children in public schools', 'we are stopped from farming', 'Reduce the cost of governance', 'We are in hardship', and 'Restore subsidy'. The expressions above on a normal ground in Nigerian context will hardly be agitated by the rich because there is less humanitarian concern and mercy between the rich and the poor classes. The statements above are indicators of the social dilemma the poor Nigerians find themselves because they are the ones who are hungry, affected by anti-poor policies, the poor are the ones that need subsidy in all ramifications of their means of livelihoods, they are the ones whose children study in dilapidated and underfunded schools, the poor are the ones stopped from farming because they have to go to farm to produce food to eat, they are the ones that suffer from the consequences of high cost of governance. For the above stated reasons,

the poor poured into the streets to protest bad governance using available media at their disposals.

At social practice level, the research was able to find the messages in the placards as dominated by an intersection of discourse about bad governance that encapsulates corruption and social injustice. This made the protesters to advocate for good governance and social change across Nigeria, the African continent and globally. The message in the placards can go a long way to challenge power abuse and social injustice all over the world. When justice is achieved, the world becomes a peaceful place for everyone.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this seemingly simple placard serves as a powerful symbol of the frustrations and aspirations of many Nigerians. By combining impactful language, symbolic visuals, and strategic use of social media, it encapsulates a complex message that challenges the status quo and calls for fundamental change. Analysing these placards through the framework of CDA reveals not only the specific grievances of the protesters but also the broader socio-political context in which these grievances arise. It is a testament to the power of collective action and the enduring hope for a better future in Nigeria.

By analysing the placards using Fairclough three dimensional levels of CDA helps to gain a deeper understanding of its meaning and significance. CDA helps us to see how language and visual elements are used to construct and reinforce particular ideologies, power relations, and social realities. It also helps us understand how such placards contribute to larger public discourses about social and economic justice. The placard is not just a simple statement; they are powerful expressions of social discontent and a call for change.

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