

**Research Article****END BAD GOVERNANCE AND END HUNGER IN NIGERIA PROTESTS: CHANNELING THROUGH AUGUSTECOMTE'S EVOLUTION PARTITION****<sup>1,\*</sup> Udousoro, Tahirih Emmanuel, <sup>2</sup> Daniel, Udom Sunday and <sup>3</sup> Iton, Enobong Etim**<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria<sup>2</sup>Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Topfaith University, Mkpatak, Akwa Ibom State, NigeriaReceived 11<sup>th</sup> August 2024; Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> September 2024; Published online 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024

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**Abstract**

The paper examines the connectivity between August Comte's stages of evolution and the application of the proposition in the instance of the growing consciousness and involvement of the Nigerian youth on issues that have prevented them from being heard upon their vibrancy and global recognition. The realization of the need for their contributions on national matters that bother them their future and the #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protests is evidence of the Nigerian youth advancement in the August Comte's evolution partition. The protest has set a pace for social, economic and political turn around for the Nigerian youth to jointly run the affairs of their country with the elderly. The major causes of youth involvement in the protest are the mass unemployment, insecurity and lack of representation and engagement in the national decision-making parliament. Auguste Comte stages of evolution was adopted to understand the growing consciousness of the young Nigerians. It serves as the theoretical framework for a clearer understanding of the position of the Nigerian youth expressing the need for them to be engaged in matters that concern the management and governance of Nigeria of which they are integral part. Problem-solving ideas are proffered to prevent reoccurrence of public unrest. Measures to mitigate the current hunger situation in the country are suggested.

**Keywords:** Unemployment, Insecurity, Lack of Representation and Engagement.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, the nation has witnessed a series of protests which is a reflection of the state of the nation resulting from unemployment, corruption, oppression, inequality, insecurity, stigmatization, inflation, economic lag and the populace persistent demand for a better governance, social justice and economic reforms and recovery for the good of all (Willie, Mboho, Udom, 2023). These protests that range from anti-fuel hike, subsidy removal demonstrations to the globally recognized #ENDSARS TO #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protests, have played a significant role in shaping in future the nation's economic, political and social structure. It is important to note further that issues of protest first occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1929 (Aba Women's Riot) and subsequently on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1949, the Abeokuta Women Revolt as well as the Ali Must Go on April 17, 1978 to the SAP Riot of 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1987. There has been series of other protests that have improved some aspects of the nation political narratives, the political structure and landscape of Nigeria. Notably among the quasi-improved political structure is the appointment of a few Nigerian youths in their late 30s and early 40s years of age into the parliaments as senators and members of the House of Assembly. However, between 1999 till now, series of other protests have occurred in Nigeria ranging from the Sharia law protests to anti-fuel hike demonstrations, the Occupy Nigeria early protest against corruption and poor governance in 2005, as well as the electoral protest of 2007, #BringBackOurGirls to #End SARS and the recent August 1, 2024 #End Bad Governance and #End hunger protests. Noteworthy, is the fact that each wave of protests underscores the citizens resilience and determination

to hold their leaders accountable and thus address the structural and policies challenges in the society (Udo and Udousoro, 2024; Udo, Daniel, Willie, 2024). Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is passing through a phase of an imbalance socio-economic transition which has posed a series of challenges to the nation development ranging from insecurity and hunger which is as a result of unemployment and high cost of living. This web of challenges which has resulted in an unfavourable living condition for the citizens; from economic hardship to insecurity, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation is considered the instigator of the August 1, 2024 #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protests; and a response by Nigerian youth demanding urgent action by the government to address these pressing issues. In his view about the protest, and in his response that sociologists should use scientific methods to uncover the laws that govern the operation of the society. Comte noted that the application of the concept of social static, will describe the study of the social structure which can promote or mar development and the social dynamics that involves the evolutionary progress which the sequence of change (protests) makes possible (Enug, 2001; Offong 2004). This paper links the background characteristic of social protest in Nigeria and the manifestation of August Comte's three stages of evolution. Drawing from the view of August Comte, the Nigerian youth are fundamentally concerned with intellectual, moral and political reorganization of the social order in response to the scientific, political and industrial revolution in the country. Heavily influenced by the growing intellectual and social advancement of young people in developed countries and the involvement of youth in other countries in the day to days running of affairs that bothers them (Willie, Daniel, Udousoro, 2024). The Nigerian youth are not given significant opportunity and are rather not carried along on national issues and decision making of their country and their desire for inclusion and a balance government have

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\*Corresponding Author: *Udousoro, Tahirih Emmanuel*,  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Akwa Ibom State University,  
Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria.

triggered their action (Udo and Udousoro 2024; Daniel, Udousoro and Effiong 2024), thus having been well equipped and acquired the potentials needed for social engagement or inclusion to participate or contribute to national development as well as the socio-economic and political atmosphere not accommodating them for their self-actualization and empowerment, and having been strained, they then results in looking for differential opportunity to achieve their goals thus the protests.

### Statement of the problem

Youth in Nigeria are faced with numerous challenges that have negative influence on their development, future prospects and well-being. The negative influence of the environment created by political leaders and their policies are clear manifestations in the aspect of unemployment, poor representation and engagement, mental health stigma and insecurity. In response to the scientific, political and the industrial revolutions of Nigeria as protested by the youth, Comte urge for the adoption of a scientific approach as the appropriate means to bring about national development. (Rinehart, 1995; Ering, 2011; Ottong, 2004; Charles, 2010). Nigeria is currently facing job scarcity challenge due to poor polices, limited job attractions, insecurity, corruption and unpatriotic stance of political leaders in addressing the development challenges of the country. There is an increasing challenge of youth over dependence on the family members and friends as a result of unemployment. Unemployment or being underemployed, corruption, insecurity occasioned by human policies has pushed the youth to the streets to commit all forms of criminal activities. Felonious and misdemeanor activities amass, as well as nationwide prison congestion. Currently in the country, it is difficult to see a smile on the face of an average Nigerian youth and majority of the skilled Nigerian youth who have the opportunity to leave the country have cross minds. They take away their skills and talents, leaving the rest of Nigerians in perpetual suffering and the country in the bondage of underdevelopment. They could have willingly contributed to the development of their country but hopes are dashed due to insecurity, persistent frustration, anger, police brutality, unemployment, and lack of representation and engagement in decision making table of their country. These and more have ignited agitation that took Nigerians and especially the youth to the street in August, 2024. The study thus hopes to appraise the relevance of Comte evolutionary stages on the #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protest in Nigeria.

### List of protests in Nigeria

This is a list of protests in Nigeria, from the colonial to present day:

DATE	NAME	PEOPLE	SUMMARY OF THE PROTEST
6 December, 1929	Aba Women's Riot	South Eastern Women	The women protested against tax levies imposed by the colonial government. It led to the death of many of the women.
27/11/1947	Abeokuta Women's Revolt	Abeokuta Women's Union	The Women protested against an unfair tax regime which led to the abdication of the then Alake of Egbaland, Oba Sir Ladapo Ademola II and the abolition of the tax regime by the colonial government.
17 <sup>th</sup> April, 1978	Ali Must Go	Segun Okeowo Ahmadu Ali	A 50 kobo increase in student's fees sparked the protest.
24 <sup>th</sup> May – June, 1989	Anti-SAP riots	National Union of Nigerian Students	The protests occurred as a result of the effects of the international monetary Fund (IMF) imposed structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) introduced by Ibrahim Babangida led government.
June 12 1993		Nigerians in South West Nigeria	The protests occurred as an aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, presidential elections by Ibrahim Babangida.
2-14 Jan. 2012	Occupy Nigeria	Nigerians including the Diaspora	Nigerians protested against the removal of fuel subsidies and eventual price hikes by the Good luck Jonathan government. It led to the reinstatement of the subsidy and a review of the Federal Government spending.
2020	End SARs	Mostly the Nigerian youth.	The protest was against police brutality meted out by a now-defunct specialized police unit known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). A memorial protest was held on 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2021 to mark the first anniversary of the October, 2020 Lekki tollgate shooting.
1-10 August, 2024	End Bad Governance in Nigeria	The Nigerians, mostly the youth	Nationwide protest over the rising cost of living since the beginning of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration in May 2023. The protests were mainly over fuel subsidy removal, hike in electricity tariffs and customs duties, hunger and insecurity among others.

Source: Retrieved from the Internet

### Objectives of the study

Principally, the study will assess the implications of Auguste Comte's evolution stages on #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protest in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study shall:

- Assess the causes of social protest in Nigeria, with emphasize on the #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger protests.
- Assess whether the application of Comte's 3 stages can enhance socio-economic development of the society.
- Assess whether youth inclusion in policy making can build a stable development oriented structures and reduce their engagement in protest.

### LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Social protests in Nigeria: An overview

According to Genzallo (2024) Nigeria has the history of civil unrest and protestback to 1929, where citizens take to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction with government policies and practices. Social protest movements have been various the actions expressing dissatisfaction by people against government. It is an organized efforts by significant numbers of people to promote social change (Willie, Daniel, and Udousoro, 2024; Crossley, 2002). Protests are occasion where people shout, chant and carry signs to show their compliant, disagreement or opposition to something. Protest is a form of political participation. With protest, an opportunity is made available for citizens of a country to demonstrate their need for political change or venting anger on certain political issues. Agitations, demonstrations, protests and confrontations have always held in the Nigeria socio-political space. Prior to independence in 1960, colonial and pre-colonial Nigeria have witnessed such activities either to ask for a change or to oppose the status quo. The precolonial Nigeria witnessed uprisings or protest: for example, the old Oyo empire at the time of the Alafin of Oyo which was in charge of the then old southwestern region also had a protest. It is noteworthy to mention that by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, protest and demonstrations took another dimension; mostly the masses who were disgruntled over certain government policies manifested as demonstrations in the streets, marketplaces, or even government houses or institutions building.

The background characteristics of social protest in Nigeria and the manifestation of the three stages of evolution of August Comte have been quite significant in the study of End Bad Government and End Hunger protests led by the Nigerian youth on August 1, 2024. The Nigerian youth are ever talented, hardworking, visioned and educated people. Among them are high personalities whose many years in the universities were well spent and who enthusiastically envisaged better living on graduating from the University. The same set of vibrant human resources of Nigeria now face persistent marginalization by top Nigerians through unemployment, brutality, insecurity and mental health stigma. The cultural and social pressure on the youth due to role conflict and their inability to meet their dreams and aspirations sprung the nurturing and execution of the August 1, 2024 #End Bad Government and #End Hunger protests.

Drawing from the view of August Comte, a French positivist and founder of sociology, the Nigerian Youth are fundamentally concerned with intellectual, moral and political reorganization of the social order in response to the scientific, political and industrial revolution in the country. Heavily influenced by the growing intellectual and social advancement of young people in developed countries and the involvement of youths in other countries in the day to day running of affairs that bother them, they do not have the like opportunity, are not carried along on national issues and decision making of their country and desire for inclusion in the decision making of their country, are left with the option of mass movement to protest and seek for transition to a phase that will enable their well-being. August Comte argued that sociologists could use scientific methods to uncover the laws that govern the operation of society. He applied the word social static to describe the study of the social structures of the groups and the irremutable interrelationship, and social dynamic to refer to the study of the evolutionary progress which this sequence of change and development make possible (Ering, 2001; Ottong, 2004). To Comte, the End Bad Government and End Hunger protests widely known by the hashtag #End Bad Government and #End Hunger in Nigeria evolved through a series of decentralized mass protests in Nigeria without the plight being correspondingly addressed by the government. It moves from a point of complaint against policies, rising cost of living, unemployment, status quo maintenance and non-inclusion of the young people in leadership, then the resultant protests.

To further link the End Bad Government to Comte's process of evolution, it has been noted that the protests stemmed from Nigeria's growing economic hardship and hunger which have been described as the worst economic crises in a generation, as it evolved through

- Record inflation (especially on food prices and transportation)
- Execution of economic reforms (particularly the removal of fuel subsidies)
- The devaluation of Naira following the removal of its peg to the US dollar.

These three processes are the partition through which the country has been considered destabilized and the bad government and hunger evolved through which the protest was set in motion.

## #End Bad Government and #End Hunger Protests: The role of Nigerian Youth

The current protests have been triggered by a combination of immediate economic policies and subsequent hardships generating from unemployment, insecurity and long-standing governance issues of not involving the Nigerian youth in the decision making parliament. Ganzallo attributed the immediate causes of the #End Bad Government and #End Hunger in Nigeria Protests to economic transition phase conditioned by government policies that have generated the inflation faced by Nigerians. The inflation rates have soared, with headline inflation at 34.19% and food inflation exceeding 40%. The removal of fuel and electricity subsidies have significantly increased transportation and production costs, exacerbating the financial burden on the populace. These policies, implemented by President Bola Tinubu, have been criticized for worsening the economic situation rather than alleviating it (Ganzallo (2024) in Business day NG 2024).

### Issues and End Bad Government variables

**Unemployment:** There are many young Nigerians loitering in the streets of Nigeria and searching for greener pastures. There is high level of unemployed and underemployed of young Nigerians in the street of the country who could neither secure job and if engaged, are underpaid due to unskilled services. Unemployment is endemic to the progress of the Nigerian society and in particular the wellbeing of the youth. The national unemployment rate is about 33% with youth unemployment being higher than every category of active Nigerians.

Udo and Udousoro (2024) observed that unemployment till date has been the main cause of riots, violent demonstration and vandalization in Nigeria. Viewing that an educated individual who is unemployed and idle could be exposed to violence prone activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, suicide and prostitution. The increase crime rate and the involvement of young Nigerians especially in cybercrime related activities is basically the consequences of lack of government concern for the masses, employment or under employment, insecurity and lack of representation and engagement in the decision making parliament of the nation.

According to (Udo and Udousoro, 2014; Damachi, 2001) another factor that has elicited overtime is the demise of the small scale industries which operate both in the formal and informal sectors. Following the removal of fuel subsidy in May, 2023, many of the teething small scale industries have collapsed thus young people have lost their jobs. The contentious issue of fuel subsidy removal in one fiscal year has caused more harm than good in the Nigerian social system. The fuel price has increased thereby affecting transportation, food and other commodities supplies in the open market. It has exacerbated insecurity which has given rise to social unrest that spark the August 1, 2024 protest across Nigeria.

The economic policies have led to the exit of several multinational companies, resulting in increased unemployment rates. This situation is particularly dire in the northern regions of Nigeria, where poverty rates are already high.

Reports indicate that 86 million people in the North live in multidimensional poverty, with widespread food insecurity and high rates of child malnutrition (Ganzallo (2024): Business day NG, 2024). The initiative of the young people of Nigeria that has caused the eruption of activities and travels of low income Nigerians is historic in its origin. It is historic in the capacity of the Nigerians who have arisen to become the Nigerians of themselves due to increasing pressure on the scarce socioeconomic facilities in the country.

**Insecurity:** There is rising insecurity of kidnapping and violence resulting from incessant corruption of public officers. Nigeria's governance issues are deeply rooted in its history of inability to tackle insecurity as it has been considered the available option for employment. The persistent lack of transparency, accountability, and efficient governance has created a culture of distrust and disillusionment among citizens. These issues have been compounded by systemic corruption, where public resources are mismanaged and political leaders prioritize personal gain over public welfare. Social inequities, particularly on access to resources and opportunities, have been a longstanding issue in Nigeria. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened, with the political class enjoying substantial privileges while the majority of the population struggle to meet basic needs. This disparity has fueled frustration and a sense of injustice, driving people to the streets to demand better governance and equitable resource distribution (Ganzallo, 2024 in Punch Newspapers 2024). The ongoing security challenges in Nigeria is one of the factors that have ignited the #End Bad Governance and #End Hunger Protests. In the northern region, banditry, kidnappings, and insurgent activities have disrupted agricultural activities thus worsening poverty condition of the average Nigerians and exacerbating food insecurity. The inability of the government to effectively address these security issues has further undermined youth confidence in the capacity of the state to ensure safety and economic stability.

**Lack of Representation and Engagement:** There is a significant disconnect between the present day government with the youth of Nigeria and their needs. National policies do not address the concern and challenges faced by young people. The absence of young people voices has stifled innovation and creative problems-solving ideas. The lack of youth representation and engagement in decision making of the governments reinforces age-based stereotype and discrimination between the political leaders and the youth. Social inequities, particularly in access to resources and opportunities, have been a longstanding issue. The gap between the affluent political leaders and the struggling for survival by young Nigerians has widened, with the political class enjoying substantial privileges while the majority of the youth population struggle to meet basic needs. This disparity has fueled frustration and a sense of injustice, driving people to the streets to demand better governance and equitable resource distribution (Punch Newspapers, 2024).

### Theoretical Framework

The examination of the evolvement of the Nigerian youth and the need to protest for the betterment of the Nigerian society is linked with the Law of evolution of August Comte. The law states that human thought has undergone three separate stages in its evolution and development. That is human thought as well as social progress passes through three important stages.

These three stages are the universal law of human progress. They are common in case of the development of human knowledge as well as social evolution. Human has a staunch behavior during childhood, then become a critical metaphysician in adolescences and a natural philosopher during adulthood. A similar case of development takes place in cases of human society. "Laws of three stages not only talks about the progressive transformation of society but also explain the transformation in the mind of the people (Umoh, 2005). The level of growth and development in society ranges from the theological or fictitious stage, Metaphysical or abstract stage and Positive or scientific stage. Comte stated that each succeeding stage is superior to the earlier stage. The Nigerian youth is growing to its fullest with the consciousness to arise for the betterment of the Nigerian society. They are not subjected to mere objects to be used for political interest and get dumped after political rally and victory at polls but have gained consciousness through time to demand for their needs. Comte was looking at progress and order in society which will come through a proper application of the processes of succession. This new science is to employ the positivist method of observation, comparison and experimentation in order to understand social order and promote progress. Comte also maintained that experimentation in social sciences is only partially applicable through interference with natural phenomena. He was convinced that following the experiences of social and political upheaval that characterized the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, Africa and Nigeria in particular have come to the reign of solidarity, the society of abstract morality have been transformed to possess the necessities for the maintenance and advancement of social harmony.

According to (Ering, 2001; Ottong, 2004; Charles, 2010; Umoh, 2012) in his subject matter of Sociology, Comte maintained that society has two main components: (i) Social statics – it is concerned with the study of the social structures of a whole society– conditions of the existence of the society and the study of the constituent parts of the different forms of social order and their mutual interrelationship. (ii) Social dynamics which is the study of the evolutionary progress which the sequences of change and development make possible. For Comte, understanding of social statics following assumptions must hold sway: (i) the whole must be grasped if the society hope to see the functions of the parts. The study of social dynamics is also based on the assumption that progress occurs simultaneously in all social institution. Simply have to look for any advanced society and through its history, our present society could approximate (Ering, 2001). There is a growing consciousness among the youth as observed in the civilized communities that what the Nigerian youth are hungry for is their country. There is need for social change as against the static status quo which has persisted and has caused inequality.

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the documentary method of data collection. A documentary method is an approach of data collection that uses personal and official documents as a source material. The documents may include such things as newspapers, diaries, directories and already published works. The essence of adopting the documentary strategy in the study is to help in assessing a set of documents for historical and social value as well as to create a larger narrative through the study of multiple documents surrounding the End Bad Governance and End Hunger in Nigeria protests.

## FINDINGS

1. Like in the case of #End SARS movement of October, 2020, the #End Bad Government and #End Hunger in Nigeria protests of August, 2024 have raised a national concern about some critical issues that were at first unknown to the masses as the causes of social protest in Nigeria; such factors as lack of accountability by the government; abuse of human right by the security personnel and economic hardship.
2. The protests have fostered the spirit of togetherness and collective action among citizen especially the youth, proving that the growing consciousness of Nigerian youth on their collective need of inclusion in the management of the matters of Nigeria is capable of enhancing socio-economic development of the Nigerian society.
3. As a wakeup notice for an urgent social, economic and political reforms, the End Bad Governance and End Hunger in Nigeria protests is envisaged to generate a long term change and build a stable development oriented structures for the Nigerian people.

## Conclusion

Protest in Nigeria could be avoided where government policies have human relationships, corruptions are tackled and unemployment addressed. The prioritization of youth involvement in policy discussions and ensure their voices are listen to and heard appears to be crucial to bring about peaceful coexistence between the youth and the Nigerian government. It is thus clear that the three stages of evolution of August Comte has a significant relation with the growing maturity taking effect in the history of the Nigerian Youth. It is aimed at taking rightful place in the decision making in the National interest and to correct the imbalance in the social setting as it relaxes to policies and programmes of governments.

## Recommendations

1. Transparency and accountability of the leaders, where the citizens are aware about government decision and plans, build a strong inclusive leadership ideology and foster a culture of universal participation starting from the local communities. Such will gradually give birth to proportional representation implementation system that will engage and represent the views of the youths.
2. Address disparities and promote growth in all regions to reduce rural urban migration, and increase infrastructural development that would foster innovation, and agricultural expansion for job creation and skill acquisition, and the government should endeavour to establish and strictly implement the law of vagrancy.
3. On the political front, security matters should be isolated from partisan politics; the government should adopt a "carrot and stick" approach whereby the security officers are made to show readiness to combat insurgents ensuring the security of lives and property. Thus, security agencies should pay more attention to early warning signs and prioritize as well as share well urgent reports.

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