

## Puzzle of Media and Citizens Over Democracy in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Successive Nigerian governments have frequently resorted to blame games to evade accountability. This paper examines public view of Tinubu's administration and advocates citizens' participation in governance. The study used the survey method and reviewed 429 questionnaires using descriptive statistics to evaluate public view of Tinubu's administration. It found that the Nigerian government and its citizens have separate views on ways in which the federal government could solve the problem of insecurity, economy and corruption in the country. The paper recommends that the federal government may need to listen more to the good advice of its citizens and media conversation and narratives on governance to improve on its commitment to serve the citizens more efficiently.

### Introduction

The role of the media in society is to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to its citizens. A body of literature acknowledges that the desire of citizens to access public information agrees with the traditional objective of government to promote participatory democracy (Cavaliere, 2024). The purpose of the media is similar to the aim of a country's foreign policy which neither has permanent friends, nor permanent enemies. A country's foreign policy is intended to advance its national interests, which are those things that promote the peace and development of the country concerned (Orend, 2013). Similarly, the interest of the media is to protect the rights and liberties of the public. Across the world, citizens have found that the ideals and values being demonstrated in the media world are at variance with the reality and

practice in authoritarian countries (Arendt, 2024). Researchers need to constantly review the interplay between media, citizens, and government to avoid either party working at cross purposes with each other.

A government that is committed to meeting the needs of its citizens soon learns that people seldom think alike, so governments must pay attention to how public opinion is distributed among the choices that people make on a given issue (Janda, Berry, and Goldman, 2017). The social importance of news hinges on the role media play in fostering connections between politics and citizens, thereby providing foundations for citizens engagement with government (Hallvard and Ytre-Arne 2022). A media organization may commend a government today for doing what is right for its critics and criticize the government the next day if it is found to have ignored the welfare of its citizens.

Though the Nigerian media for example can boast of attempts and initiatives made by journalists to make the government accountable to the people by revealing the misuse of trust, public commentary seems overwhelmingly more on the abuse of public trust which goes unreported and uninvestigated by anti-corruption agencies (Muhammed Musa and Osman Antwi-Boateng, 2023). The media have the right to hold governments accountable for their actions and decisions in line with the UN's document on fundamental human rights. The Nigerian Constitution in Section 22, Sub-Section 1, affirmed that the press, radio, television, and other agencies of mass communication shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives of the constitution and affirm the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999), which implies that the media are more answerable to citizens than to the government. This perhaps is why journalists are unlikely to support any government whose actions and policies disregard public interests and welfare.

The media have the constitutional obligation to use every lawful means to investigate the unrevealed truth behind a piece of legislation made by the parliament, a decision by the government, and to attract public attention to a judicial process that violated the provisions of the constitution of the people concerned. "The processes that the media use to influence governments' policies include direct elections, opinion polls, and the representation of public concern through effective coverage of issues and events in society" (Smith, Hadfield, and Dunne, 2012). International media systems, like Aljazeera, Russia's Today, Chinese Global Television Network, and New Delhi Television, report on events from the perspective of the Global South (Tella, 2021). It is typical of governments though to frown on media organizations that always insist on reporting the true accounts of events. Media organizations

that have independent editorial policy like the BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, ARISE, the African Independent Television, Channel Television, and Times Magazine are relatively more objective in stating the actual narratives of events and issues. The public media organizations are established by governments to disseminate news and information on governments' programs of activities as well as to solicit public support for governments to implement its policy agenda for development. State journalists while agreeing that ownership has implication on the way they report on issues, argued that the guiding principle on what media report about is whether the event or issue is of national interest (Chari, 2022).

It is important to recall that the media played a major role in the decolonization process of the African region. They provided avenues for nationalists to discuss and express their views on the constitutional developments which culminated in the attainment of the political independence of the post-colonial countries in Africa. This perhaps is why some African leaders still expect the media to see themselves as part and parcel of governments, and to avoid criticizing governments for whatever reason. Democracy, unfortunately, does not grow without the media having to suggest better ways by which governments could act more efficiently in providing leadership for their citizens. The group of journalists that insist on telling the government the truth about the issues affecting its citizens is perceived as the enemy of the state, while the media organizations that are less critical of the government's policies are taken as patriots by the government. Meanwhile, the inability of media to provide insight and knowledge for informed citizenship is in itself a deficit of media trust (Jakobsson and Stiernstedt, 2023).

The Nigerian media and citizens have repeatedly expressed their concerns in the manner the federal government responds to the plight of the citizens. Public discontent for the economic

policy of Tinubu's government led to the August 2024 Nationwide Protest by the Nigerian youths who requested the federal government by the protest to End Bad Governance in the country. Part of the elements which triggered the public anger that led to the protest was the economic hardship faced by citizens. Among the demands made by the protesters include that government reduces the cost of governance, restores government's subsidy on petroleum and reverse floatation of foreign currencies which has made life difficult for many Nigerian citizens. The federal government in its response to the protest reassured the citizens of its commitment to revamp the nation's economy. It therefore urged the citizens to make sacrifices and have confidence in the federal government's economic policy which does feel what the citizens think about it. The organizers of the August 2024 Nationwide Protest have described as hollow the response by President Tinubu to the fundamentals of the protest (Akinfefon, et al 2024).

Recent studies have shown that poverty has the potential to hinder public involvement in politics. So, there is the need for governments to address the problem of poverty not to hinder civil and democratic forms of participation of their citizens in governance (Dacombe and Parvin 2021). In addition, there is the problem of inequality in participatory democracy as noted in a study which identifies some of the elements that could hinder effective public participation in governance (Dacombe and Parvin 2021). Conversely, there are scholars who believe that society does not need participatory democracy if it already has democracy. They argued that citizens' participation in democracy is by default (Gouache, 2020) since democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people according to Abraham Lincoln. Therefore, the emphasis on participatory democracy is perhaps to remind society that democracy must be public-oriented in nature. This particular study acknowledges that Nigeria is a democratic country. Yet, it has become necessary

to assess public view of the Federal Government of Nigeria on its commitment towards the interests and welfare of its citizens. The findings of the study will give an insight to the preference Tinubu's administration puts on the advice of its citizens and media narratives on governance toward improving on its commitment to serve the citizens more efficiently.

## Study Objectives

- 1) To assess public view of the federal government's anti-corruption campaign.
- 2) To ascertain public view of the Nigerian government's security architecture.
- 3) To evaluate public views of the impact of the removal of petroleum subsidy in the Nigerian economy.
- 4) To assess public perception of the extent to which citizens have participated in Tinubu's administration.

## Research Questions

- 1) What is the opinion of the Nigerian public on the federal government's anti-corruption campaign?
- 2) What does the public feel about the Nigerian security architecture?
- 3) What is the opinion of Nigerians on the removal of petroleum subsidy?
- 4) Does the Nigerian public feel that Tinubu's administration has encouraged public participation in government?

## Literature

The participation paradigm has been found a more appropriate construct to discuss the importance of citizens' involvement in the Nigerian government. According to Cohen and Manion (1980), a paradigm is a configuration of beliefs, values, and techniques by which normal science

is pursued. Kuhn (1962) sees a paradigm as a pattern or framework which gives organization and direction to a given area of scientific investigation. A major weakness in the approach of any government to public management is the lack of meaningful opportunities for citizens to deliberate on issues of shared concern. Governments often see themselves as isolated individuals and do not provide opportunities for citizens to contribute to governance (Giles Moss and Lee Edwards, 2023). Social scientists had earlier used the Diffusion Paradigm to support the claim that innovative ideas, and practices, including technology, could be transferred from the more established democratic countries to the Global South. Diffusion in this context implies a process by which innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (Rogers, 2003). Social scientists had placed much emphasis on discussing ways in which emerging democratic countries could use the economic models of the Global North to develop the countries located in the Global South until Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, among others, realized that economic models and theories are context sensitive, which implied some of the negative outcomes that have emerged from the recommendations made by global financial institutions for Africa.

Public participation has been a compelling subject, resulting in a clamor of reflexive questions: Is there enough public participation in a government, should institutions be more participatory, are young people too distant from the government, who are listening to citizens' voices, whose voices are going unacknowledged, and what should the government do differently to ensure public participation in government (Livingstone 2013)?

The assumptions above are some of the questions a public-oriented government should ask itself to avoid eliciting public anger over the government's failure to recognize the role of its citizens in governance.

Some African leaders often look elsewhere for solutions to national economic problems instead of relying on themselves and their citizens to solve their problems. In many instances, African governments have ignored the conditionalities attached to the assistance they got from foreign interest groups. Sadly so, it is the effects of the conditionalities on the foreign loans and assistance received by the past and present governments in Africa that have partly impoverished the capacity of the governments in the region to provide basic social services for their citizens. It was therefore, surprising when the Nigerian government requested its citizens to make more sacrifices to sustain the economic policies which were designed deliberately to enable the federal government to meet its obligation and commitment to foreign interest groups and lenders. "The current global economic crisis has made some African countries to experience foreign payments difficulties, so critical that the countries concerned have been unable to pursue the development efforts initiated for their citizens" (Mawakani, 1986). "One would have wished that African governments looked inward for a solution to whatever problems existed instead of them having to give away their rights to foreign investors for economic purposes" (Oboh and Hudson, 2022, p.14). Self-reliance refers to the ability of a government to provide for its citizens, while public participation describes a planning process that requires citizens' involvement in government (Jacobson, 1985). Much of the assistance the Nigerian government received from foreign nations has not reflected significantly on the living conditions of its citizens. Majeed (2019) noted that the House of Representatives in Nigeria mandated its committee on public account to investigate the mismanagement of an intervention fund due to the manner the money was spent by the government.

Democracy refers to a government that is owned by the people and exists for the good of the people. "Under an open government, citizens

have to be motivated by government to contribute their knowledge, share their ideas, and state their preferences as determinant variables which should ideally constitute the elements of a government's policy framework for development" (Schmidhuber, et al (2019). There should be nothing about a government's action or decision that comes to its citizens as a surprise since the government and citizens must have agreed on whatever the government did in the interest of its citizens. It was commendable of Tinubu's presidency to have removed petroleum subsidies in line with global best practice. Still, the removal of petroleum subsidies was rather unplanned for and too hasty was the manner in which it was implemented by the federal government. Logically, it is the duty of the Nigerian government to put measures in place to mitigate the negative impact of the removal of petroleum subsidies. The participation model discussed in this paper stresses the need for a government to involve its citizens in governance. The media have a role to play in participatory democracy. A study of the perceptions of journalists on public trust in media reports indicates that journalists believed that the public has confidence in media reports (Oboh, 2024, p.18). Therefore, the Nigerian government, media and citizens should work together for the interest of the country notwithstanding that the new media have altered public knowledge of communication process. Audience as an element of communication now serves as both a source as well as recipient of social media communications (Oboh, 2022, p.36). Unarguably, citizens are always happy giving the opportunity by a government to contribute to national development. Nyerere (1979) once observed that one essential element of democracy is that "everyone must be allowed to speak."

### **Tinubu's Presidency in Nigeria**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on assumption of office in May 2023 promised to revamp the

Nigerian economy and provide a solution to the problem of insecurity in the country. On his first day in office, he removed petroleum subsidies from the Nigerian economy. The government however inherited an economy that was on the verge of collapse, following the burden of foreign debts thrust on it by the previous administrations. Since the removal of petroleum subsidies from the Nigerian economy, the majority of the citizens now find it difficult to cope and to meet their basic needs. The government had asked its citizens to be patient and support its economic blueprint for development. For the record, former President Olusegun Obasanjo pioneered the Nigerian Fourth Republic from May 1999 to May 2007. The government attracted foreign investors and enjoyed waivers and debt cancellations on some of the foreign loans received by the previous administrations before then. Again, Nigeria is going through avoidable moments of trying circumstances as the two political parties that have provided leadership for Nigeria since 1999 to the present day-the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All-Progressive Congress (APC) - are busy trading blames and pointing accusing fingers on each other as being responsible for the ill-health of the nation's economy.

The media and citizens seem to have some puzzles over how Tinubu's government responds to public opinions on governance. Although President Tinubu did not serve in the Buhari's civilian administration, he played a major role in ensuring that Buhari became the President of Nigeria in 2015. The citizens therefore would have expected the Tinubu's government to ask the previous administrations, including the Buhari's civilian government, to explain what went wrong with the nation's economy after the Obasanjo's civilian administration in 2007. "Those who are just only in cases where their profession requires it, who pretend to be equitable in others' affairs when they are incorruptible in what interests them directly, who have not put equity into the

smallest events of their lives; run the risk of soon losing that very justice which they dispense" (Carrithers and Steward, 2020). Consequently, if the public cannot see justice in the actions and decisions of the federal government, then it will be illogical for the government to ask its citizens to make sacrifices when some of those who impoverished the Nigeria's economy are yet serving in the government and parliaments. "Justice is the principle upon which a state is founded and the platform whereupon contributions are made toward the excellence of the state" (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2011). President Tinubu was among those who made personal sacrifices to ensure the emergence of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in May 1999. One then would have expected his government to hold public officials to account for the poor state of the nation's economy. "A lack of political trust by citizens signals discontent with democracy. Public trust in government is one of the most important objective and performance indicator of good governments at all levels" (Holum, 2022). Democracy assumes that elected representatives in governments and parliaments are voted into office by citizens who understand what those running for the office stand for (Goodin & Saward 2005 cited in Dan & Arendt, 2024). The request by the Nigerian government for the citizens to make more sacrifices to sustain its economic policies implied an indirect incentive for the government's refusal to recover the public funds that were misappropriated by a few individuals who served in the governments. Gagrcin and Moe (2024) opine that contemporary democratic theory focuses on remedies to safeguard democracy, so the Nigerian government should defend its democracy from the corrosive tendencies and influences of capitalist logic which has continually undermined the integrity of democracy across the world including the countries located in the Global North.

Moreover, Tinubu has promised to fight corruption by focusing more attention on preventive mechanisms and enhancing effective wealth redistribution techniques in Nigeria (Sanni, 2022), which implies that one's desire to commit a crime is partly predicated upon one's predicament to legitimately earn a living. This model is simple, but it does not have an answer to why some political elites who have enough money for themselves and their families still steal public money. Corruption is a case of gross misconduct, which the citizens expect government to prosecute without compromise. Authorities have confirmed that more than \$3 billions dollars have been lost to crude oil theft in the country when Nigeria was unable to meet its production quota (Orjinmo, 2022). The living conditions of the majority of the Nigerian citizens are deteriorating consequent upon the steady increase in the cost of food items and other household materials following the floating exchange rate adopted by the federal government. For clarity, a floating exchange rate is an unmanaged process by which a government neither establishes an official rate for its currency, nor intervenes to affect the value of its currency, and instead allows market forces and private investors to influence the rate of exchange for currencies between countries (Kegley and Blanton, 2011-2012). Nigeria has a growing economy alongside its large-scale youth's unemployment, so the interest of the citizens should take precedence over any measure adopted by the government to revamp the nation's economy.

## The Nigerian Army, Security and Media

Also, it is the primary responsibility of the Nigerian government to protect the lives and property of its citizens. It has become necessary for the federal government to have a reformed military-media partnership following the upsurge in the activities of criminal elements in the country. Police and civil authorities need to provide security

for the lives and property of citizens. Yet, there is a relationship between the attention that governments give to the education of their citizens and the ability of the citizens to contribute to the growth and development of the countries concerned. The irony regarding the need for a good education by governments is that the rich nations of the world that have good and functional educational systems are investing more money into education when compared to the investment in education by the less-developed nations of the world. Part of the consequences of the poor attention some African countries give to the education of their citizens is the restiveness being witnessed in the region.

The control of banditry in Nigeria for example has exceeded the capacity of normal policing. This perhaps was why the state had to deploy the armed forces to tackle the social conflicts in the country. "Although not all nomads are armed bandits, most of the people behind banditry are Fulani, an ethnic group spread across West Africa. The Fulani tribe is known for being nomadic pastoralists, while the communities being attacked are mostly Hausa farming communities" according to (Amaza, 2020 cited in Ejiofor, 2021). Nevertheless, for one to accept the notion of the "Islamization" of banditry would imply that bandits lacked the capacity and intelligence to make themselves obscure to the members of the Nigerian Law Enforcement Agencies by dressing in the attire of the Fulani Muslim. In framing the connectivity of banditry to the Fulani tribe, the media were used to create wider publicity against the Fulani community (Ojewole, 2023). Otherwise, it is unscientific for one to assume that the Fulani tribe alone is responsible for banditry in Nigeria, particularly when there is no sufficient evidence to show that the "Nigerian Fulani" is behind all the bandit attacks in the country. The occupation of communities by bandits in Nigeria signals the erosion of territoriality. The annexation of aspects of Nigeria's territory by violent non-state actors, among other things, means that the state in that

context is either receding or failing in its responsibility to citizens (Okoli, Aina, and Onuoha, 2024). The solution to banditry is for the federal government to first, identify the stakeholders and beneficiaries of banditry. Part of the puzzles of the media and citizens is that the real cause of banditry in Nigeria is still shrouded in mystery. Elsewhere in the world, citizens and media are familiar with the causes of whatever attack was made on citizens. In Nigeria, there have been several hostage-taking, and yet those involved in them and the reasons for which they attacked citizens are unknown. Many innocent persons have been displaced, including herders from their land of nativity (Saminu, bin Yaacob & Shukri (2023). There is a need for the federal government to establish a good context under which military-media trust can strive. For record purposes, the Nigerian Armed Forces consist of an Army, a Navy, an Air Force, and other armed forces of the Federation as recognized and approved by the state. The armed forces are expected to perform the following roles as recognized by the 1999 Nigerian Constitution in Section 217:

- defend the Nigerian State from external aggression;
- maintain its territorial integrity;
- secure its border from violation on land, seas, and air;
- suppress insurrection and support civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- perform such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999).

A careful evaluation of the role of the armed forces with specific reference to the Nigerian Army revealed that they are expected to assist other civil authorities to restore order in situations that could lead to a general breakdown of law and order. From the perspective of the 1999 Nigerian

Constitution, the Nigerian Army has no role in the resolution of matters regarding social conflict in a civil society, except in the instances where such conflicts have grave consequences for the peace and order of society. "The armed bandits in the country have maintained a decentralized structure, with little or no coordination across multiple groups that exist in the country, and the motivation for banditry is multidimensional which makes it difficult for the government to adopt an effective approach to addressing the crises through dialogue" (Ojo, Oyewole and Aina (2023). For the federal government to have decided to involve the armed forces to restore peace in crisis-infested areas in the country gives an insight into the implications of banditry in the country.

Part of the motives behind the irregular attacks on citizens is to create division in the country alongside an impression that banditry is being sponsored by a particular ethnic group. The Nigerian military has deployed thousands of its personnel to join the police and other security agencies in conducting internal security operations, which has resulted in the protection of the lives and property of citizens and minimizing the operation of banditry in the country (Aina, Ojo & Oyewole, 2023). Nevertheless, the Police may need to reassure the public to keep the information provided by citizens on state security. There have been instances previously where some police officers were alleged to have divulged the information they received on state security, and thereby endangered the lives of sources of the information. In 2019, the Department of State Services (DSS) was alleged to have given a copy of intelligence report to the Ondo Police Command. Later, the report was on social media. A top and reliable security source in the DSS confirmed that the report online was accurate and that it was the one given to the police by the DSS (Sahara Reporters, 2019). Such practices may have affected the confidence that the public has in the Nigeria Police Force. Notwithstanding, the perception which the

public has about the armed forces is predicated in the manner in which the media reported on the efforts by the military to stop banditry.

Some governments generally have aversion for the more obtrusive media organizations. Otherwise, the Nigerian army and media have similar attributes in terms of their shared commitment to public trust. In this regard, the army and the media should see themselves as friends and professional colleagues. Elsewhere in the world, it is rare to find members of the armed forces on the streets and in public places. Nigeria's peculiar situation has made it appear as though the armed forces must fight crime in civil society. The Nigerian Army Quarterly Military-Media Chat has opened a new frontier of opportunity for the army and the media to partner and explore new ways of developing more effective peace-resolution packages to solve the problem of insecurity in the country. As Greene (2012) has rightly observed: "If change is forced upon us, we must be careful to resist the temptation to overreact ...Often such creative readjustments lead to a superior path that enables us to escape the ploy of complacency and force us to reassess where we are headed."

## Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the collection of data in the study were structured questionnaires. Each questionnaire has five sections with 27 items on it: Section (1) contains items 1 to 6 which provided information on the Bio-Data of the respondents of the study, section (2) contains items 7 to 11 that assessed public view of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption campaign, section (3) contains items 12 to 16 that assessed public view of the Nigerian government's security architecture, section (4) contains items 17 and 21 that extracted public view on the removal of petroleum subsidy in the Nigerian economy and section (5) contains items 24 and 27 that assessed public view on the extent to which citizens have

participated in Tinubu's administration. The number of items on the substantive issues of the questionnaire is 21 (Items 7 to 27) whereupon the reliability test of the study was derived as presented below:

#### Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary		
	N	%
Valid	21	100.0
Cases Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
Total	21	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.759	21

#### Description of Variables

The different items used in measuring the research variables were described using mean and standard deviation. The mean scores were calculated by assigning 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 to strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree respectively and later divided by the total number of respondents. In interpreting the mean score, it is assumed that the values that are above 3 show that the majority of the respondents "agreed" with the statements, while the values that fall below 3 show that the majority of the respondents "disagreed" with the statements.

#### Study Sample

The study was conducted in Benin-City in Edo State, Nigeria. The unit of analysis of the study was the public view of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption campaign, security blueprint, the impact of the removal of petroleum subsidy and public view of the extent to which

citizens have participated in Tinubu's administration. The paper used the convenient sampling technique and purposively selected academics and non-academics and students of Benson Idahosa University in Nigeria and the members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, in Nigeria to form the elements which constituted the study sample. Benson Idahosa University is among the best private-funded universities in Africa with a population between 10, 000 and 11, 000 and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, has a population of 87 media practitioners. The study randomly distributed questionnaires to respondents using the services of research assistants. The study did not involve peculiar audiences such as children and vulnerable persons. No one was compelled to fill the study questionnaires as there was an informed consent by the respondents to support the study. The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents are preserved in the study.

#### Method

The study adopted the survey method. The researcher distributed 450 questionnaires to respondents, but 429 questionnaires were retrieved having an attrition rate 4.66 %. The paper used Yamene's Sample Size Formula:  $\frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$  of 400 elements for survey as a guide for the number of the elements that formed the study sample. The paper used descriptive statistics to evaluate the data on the public view of the Nigerian government.

#### Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this study was the non-scientific sampling technique used in the study. So, there are likely to be variations between the findings of this paper and the subsequent replications of it by researchers in other contexts consequent

upon the convenient sampling technique used in the study. The findings of this study were predicated upon the opinions of a section of the Nigerian public. A similar study of this nature that used a

more representative sample of the Nigerian public may vary slightly from the findings of this study.

## Data Analysis and Findings

**Table 1**

*Study Objective One: Assessment of public opinion of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption campaign.*

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
7	Corruption is the major problem of the Nigerian economy	321 74.8%	69 16.1%	15 3.5%	5 1.2%	18 4.2%	4.57	.94
8	Government is involved in corrupt practices	251 58.5%	110 25.6%	40 9.3%	12 2.8%	15 3.5%	4.33	2.00
9	The present Nigerian government is committed to fighting corruption	122 28.4%	135 31.5%	56 13.1%	66 15.4%	49 11.4 %	3.50	1.35
10	The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under this administration is not doing enough to curb corruption	121 28.2%	169 39.4%	56 13.1%	56 13.1%	27 6.3%	3.70	1.19
11	The impact of the recovery effort by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission is not visible on the economy	146 34.0%	151 35.2%	47 11.0%	60 14.0%	25 5.8%	3.78	1.22
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.98</b>	<b>1.34</b>

*Source: Fieldwork Study*

## Results

Responses to the statements above revealed a mixed degree of agreement and disagreement. The statement on item 7 has a mean of 4.57 and std deviation 0.94, which denotes a very strong agreement, reflecting a feeling that corruption is the major problem of the Nigerian economy. The statement on item 9 on the other hand, has a mean of 3.50 and std deviation of 1.35, which implies a more neutral position where there is no proper commitment by the government to fighting corruption. The statement on item 10 has a mean of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 1.19, which suggests a slight agreement among the respondents

that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is not doing enough to reduce corruption in Nigeria. The statement on item 8 seems to indicate that corruption is in the government having a mean of 4.33 and std deviation of 2.00. The statement on item 11 implies that the impact of the recovery effort by EFCC is not visible in the economy being evidence in a mean 3.78 and std deviation of 1.22. Generally, the overall mean of 3.98 and std deviation of 1.34 show a general moderate opinion that tended towards an agreement by the respondents that the EFCC needs to do more to recover the public funds which were wrongly appropriated by a few individuals in the past and present administration.

**Table 2**

Study Objective Two: Ascertaining public opinion on the Nigerian government's security architecture.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
12	Bandits are being sponsored by politicians	203 47.3%	116 27.0%	57 13.3%	33 7.7%	20 4.7%	4.05	1.16
13	Bandits are being sponsored by religious groups	152 35.4%	108 25.2%	74 17.2%	59 13.8%	35 8.2%	3.66	1.31
14	Government knows the causes of banditry in Nigeria	181 42.2%	111 25.9%	61 14.2%	57 13.3%	19 4.4%	3.88	1.22
15	The Federal government can stop banditry in Nigeria	168 39.2%	112 26.1%	73 17.0%	46 10.7%	30 7.0%	3.80	1.26
16	Government does not know what to do to stop banditry	141 32.9%	88 20.5%	66 15.4%	61 14.2%	71 16.6%	3.39	1.46
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.76</b>	<b>1.28</b>

Source: Fieldwork Study

## Results

The responses to the statements on table 2 above had a range of agreement to disagreement. The statement on item 12 had a mean of 4.05 and std deviation of 1.16, which shows that politicians have knowledge of banditry. The statement on item 14 with a mean of 3.88 and std deviation of 1.22, implies that the government knows the causes of banditry in Nigeria. The statement on item 16 has a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.46, which refuted the claim that the Nigerian government knows what to do to stop banditry in

the country. The statement on item 13 has a mean of 3.66 and std deviation of 1.31 that indicated a neutral stance on whether bandits are being sponsored by religious groups. The statement on item 15 has a mean of 3.80 and std deviation of 1.26, showing a slight agreement that the federal government can stop banditry in Nigeria. Generally, the overall mean of 3.76 with a standard deviation of 1.28 shows a moderate opinion, which tended towards an agreement that the Nigerian government needs to find solution to the problem of insecurity in the country.

**Table 3**

Study Objective Three: Evaluation of public opinion on the impact of the removal of petroleum subsidies in the Nigerian economy

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
17	The removal of petroleum subsidy has not solved any problem	209 48.7%	97 22.6%	5 12.1%	44 10.3%	27 6.3%	3.97	1.26
18	The removal of petroleum subsidy is good for the economy	163 38.0%	96 22.4%	69 16.1%	57 13.3%	43 10.0%	3.65	1.36

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
19	Past governments created the problem of the Nigerian economy	166 38.7%	121 28.2%	68 15.9%	48 11.2%	26 6.1%	3.82	1.23
20	The present government has created more problems for the economy than the past governments through the removal of oil subsidy	165 38.5%	124 28.9%	66 15.4%	42 9.8%	32 7.5%	3.81	1.25
21	The approach to the removal of oil subsidy was unplanned and too hasty	167 38.9%	119 27.7%	59 13.8%	58 13.5%	25 5.8%	3.81	1.25
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.81</b>	<b>1.27</b>

Source: Fieldwork Study

## Results

The responses to the statements on table 3 above show some form of agreements and disagreement. The statement on item 17 has a mean of 3.97 and std deviation of 1.26 to indicate a strong agreement among the respondents that the removal of petroleum subsidy has not solved the problem of the Nigerian economy. The statements on 19 and 20 have means of 3.82 and a standard deviation of 1.23 and a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.25, respectively. The findings suggest that there is an agreement among the

respondents that the past governments are to be blamed for the problem of the Nigerian economy. The statement on item 21 has a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.25 which show that there is a consensus among the respondents that the approach being employed by the federal government on the removal of petroleum subsidy was ill-planned. With a grand mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.27, it can be deduced that the action taken by the Nigerian government to remove petroleum subsidies has been deemed unsuccessful by the majority of the Nigerian citizens.

**Table 4**

*Study Objective Four: Assessing public view on the extent of public participation in the Nigerian government.*

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
24	The present government encourages public participation in government	143 33.3%	80 18.6%	59 13.8%	65 15.2%	82 19.1%	3.32	1.53
25	The past government encouraged more public participation in government	106 24.7%	94 21.9%	48 11.2%	77 17.9%	104 24.2%	3.04	1.54
26	The present Nigerian government takes the good advice of citizens on governance	72 16.8%	68 15.9%	54 12.6%	92 21.4%	143 33.3%	2.61	1.49

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
27	The present Nigerian government takes the advice of the media on governance	67 15.6%	55 12.8%	48 11.2%	92 21.4%	167 38.9%	2.45	1.49
	<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.86</b>	<b>1.51</b>

Source: Fieldwork Study

## Results

The responses to the statements on table 4 above give an overview of a lack of public participation in the Nigerian government. The statement on item 24 has a mean of 3.32 and std deviation of 1.53, which refuted the claim that the Tinubu's government encouraged public participation in governance. The statement on item 25 has a mean of 3.04 and std deviation of 1.54 that also refuted the claim that the past governments encouraged public participation in governance. The statements on items 26 and 27 slightly agreed that the federal government takes the advice of media and citizens in governance with a mean of 2.61 and std deviation of 1.49, and a mean of 2.45 and std of 1.49 respectively. Generally, the overall mean of 2.86 with a standard deviation of 1.51 suggests a low level of agreement on the part of the respondents that the Nigerian government listens to the advice of its citizens in governance.

## Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The study reviewed public view of the Nigerian government on its commitment towards the interests and welfare of its citizens. The citizens identified that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission needs to do more to recover the public funds wrongly appropriated by former and serving public officials. The National Assembly may need to review the immunity clause in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution that protects public officials against public prosecution while in office

to create the room for anti-corruption agencies to be more effective in the prosecution of economic and financial crimes in Nigeria. The study therefore urged Tinubu's administration to defend Nigerian democracy from the corrosive tendencies and influences of capitalist logic as noted earlier (Gagrcin and Moe (2024).

The paper further observed that the federal government's security blueprint needs to be reviewed based public opinions to create the pathway for government to identify and prosecute the stakeholders and beneficiaries of banditry in Nigeria who are the primary sources of insecurity in the country. Many innocent Nigerians have been displaced, including herders (Saminu, bin Yaacob & Shukri (2023) whom society believes that are the bandits in Nigeria. The study noted with dismay that the removal of petroleum subsidy has not solved the economic problem of Nigeria based on public view. There is the need for the federal government to take steps to ameliorate the plights of its citizens due to the impact of subsidies removal by the government.

In addition, Tinubu's administration needs to create platforms to relate more closely with the members of the public. There appears to be a gap between the view of the federal government and those of its citizens on ways in which the problems of Nigeria can be solved. Otherwise, the essence of democracy will be defeated if the government consistently ignores the advice of its citizens in governance as noted earlier in the paper (Goodin & Saward 2005 cited in Dan & Arendt, 2024).

## Recommendations

1) The study recommends that the Nigerian government needs to listen more to the good advice and suggestions of its citizens, and use media conversation and narratives on governance to improve on its commitment to serve its citizens more efficiently.

2) The Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation in Nigeria should explore ways and means of involving citizens in the discussions on government's proposed policy agenda for development to enable the citizens to contribute to the public debate on government's policies and decisions being the essence of democracy.

3) The paper recommends that the Federal Government of Nigeria should avoid intimidating or harassing media and citizens over the free speeches they made as fair comments to assist the government to align its policies and programs toward meeting public needs and expectations.

4) The study recommends that the Immunity Clause in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution that protects governments against public prosecution while in office should be reviewed by the National Assembly, to allow the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to prosecute both former and serving members of governments and parliaments who may have compromised their oaths of office and defrauded the public.

5) The study suggests that the Nigerian government need to identify and prosecute the beneficiaries and sponsors of banditry in the country being the most effective way to tackling the problem of state security.

6) The paper advises the Nigerian Army and media to work together to develop more effective peace-resolution packages from the Quarterly Military-Media Chats being an innovation on Military-Civil Partnership in Nigeria.

7) The paper recommends that the Nigerian government takes measures to mitigate the impact

of the removal of petroleum subsidy and floatation of exchange rate as they have negative impact on the capacity of citizens to legitimately earn a living.

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