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PUBLIC PROTEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: PERSPECTIVES OF SECURITY CONSULTANTS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

Epigha Clark[1] & Flint Sigah[2]
[1&2]Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic Ekowe, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
Corresponding author: clarkepigha@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the management of public protest in Nigeria using Bayelsa State as a case study. The rise of public protests driven by economic hardship, unemployment, perceived unfairness and governance challenges poses serious threats to public order, democratic governance and national security. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The study population was professional security consultants in Bayelsa State. A sample of 100 purposive respondents was selected from the population. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire known as Strategy for Public Protest Management Questionnaire (SPPMQ). The instrument was validated by expert judgment in the field of Public Administration and Security Studies and its reliability was determined by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.896. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which included frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the major causes of public protest in Bayelsa State are unemployment, poor governance, corruption, economic hardship and poor communication. The study also revealed that intelligence gathering, stakeholder dialogue, community policing and inter-agency collaboration are good strategies to deal with public protests. The study concludes that proactive government engagement, effective security coordination and timely resolution of citizens' grievances are still important for sustainable management of public protests. It recommends improved intelligence collection, continuous capacity building of security personnel, enhanced stakeholder engagement and responsive governance as effective measures to reduce the incidence and escalation of public protests.

Keywords: Public protest; Security administration; Community policing; Stakeholder engagement; Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Public protests have been the most visible expression of citizen dissatisfaction with government policies, economic hardship, corruption, insecurity, unemployment and perceived social injustice. Democratic rights to peaceful protest are protected in national and international laws. Nevertheless, demonstrations that are poorly organised may result in violence, loss of lives, destruction of property, disruption of economic activities and threats to national security (United Nations, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2021). Recent large scale protests in Nigeria such as #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance have brought to the fore the need for effective strategies for managing public protests that balance the rights of citizens to protest and the need for maintaining public order.

Good management of public protest is not only about deploying security personnel at demonstrations. Effective protest management has been observed to entail intelligence gathering, stakeholder engagement, community policing, inter-agency cooperation, dialogue, conflict prevention and respect for human rights (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024; CLEEN Foundation, 2025). Similarly, Amnesty International (2023) stresses that public protests should be managed in a manner that safeguards fundamental human rights while maintaining public order and public safety. Proactive, participatory governments are better at preventing peaceful protest from escalating into violent confrontation than coercive security responses. This position is consistent with the African Union (2023), which emphasizes that accountable governance, dialogue, and institutional cooperation are central to conflict prevention and sustainable peace across African states.

The ethnic diversity, socio-economic inequalities, governance challenges and recurring security threats in Nigeria also fuel the frequency of public protests. Security agencies have constitutional responsibility for law and order. However, the success of the protest management has been hampered by challenges of inadequate funding, shortage of manpower, weak institutional coordination and delayed response from the government. Many of these institutional challenges were identified as far back as Umanah (1996), and many of them remain unresolved despite subsequent reforms. So, efficient administration of security and responsive governance that tackles the root causes of the complaints of citizens are required to better manage public protests.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the country is experiencing an increase in public protests occasioned by intractable socio-economic and governance challenges like unemployment, poverty, corruption, insecurity, poor service delivery and perceived injustice. Peaceful protest is a constitutionally guaranteed democratic right but mismanagement of public demonstrations has in many cases led to violence, destruction of public and private property, disruption of economic activities, injuries and loss of lives. The recent protests, such as #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance, further highlight the challenges that government and security agencies face in balancing the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and the maintenance of public order.

Successive governments have adopted a range of security measures to respond to public protests, but the evidence available suggests that these have been largely reactive rather than preventive. The effective management of protests is still hampered by problems like poor intelligence gathering, poor engagement of stakeholders, poor coordination among agencies, slow government response to grievances of citizens, poor training of security forces and poor communication between government agencies and the public. As a result, non-violent protests

tend to turn into needless clashes that could have been avoided with forward planning and responsive governance.

In addition, the existing literature on public protests in Nigeria has been largely geared towards identifying the causes and consequences of protests with little focus on developing practical and integrated strategies towards improving protest management, especially in the case of Bayelsa State. Considering the unique socio-economic and political realities of the state, there is a need for empirical evidence that can inform policy and operational practices for peaceful protest management while protecting the constitutional rights of citizens.

Against this backdrop, this study investigates strategies for effective public protest management in Bayelsa State by examining the causes of public protests, analysing existing management strategies, and recommending a practical framework that can aid government, security agencies and other stakeholders in preventing the escalation of public protests and promoting sustainable peace and democratic governance.

A large body of research has examined the causes and consequences of public protests in Nigeria, including studies on #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance (International Crisis Group, 2021; Afrobarometer, 2025; Omoyeni et al., 2024). These studies have been valuable in documenting the socio-economic and governance drivers of unrest, but they are overwhelmingly framed around the experiences of protesters, government officials or national-level policy actors. Comparatively little empirical work has examined how the strategies for managing protests are perceived and applied by the security professionals directly responsible for planning and executing protest management operations on the ground.

This gap is even more pronounced at the sub-national level. Existing studies with a state-specific focus, such as Omoyeni et al. (2024) on Lagos State, do not extend to Bayelsa State, whose peculiar riverine terrain, oil-related grievances and security architecture shape protest dynamics differently from other parts of the country. Consequently, there is no known empirical study that captures how professional security consultants operating in Bayelsa State perceive the causes of public protests or evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies currently used to manage them.

It is this specific gap in the literature, the absence of a security-consultant perspective on protest management strategies within Bayelsa State, that the present study seeks to address.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine strategies for effective public protest management in Nigeria using Bayelsa State as a case study. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the major causes of public protests in Bayelsa State.
2. Assess the current strategies adopted by security agencies in managing public protests in Bayelsa State.
3. Develop a practical framework for improving public protest management in Bayelsa State.

Research Hypotheses

In the study, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the identified causes of public protests and effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between security administration and effective management of public protests in Bayelsa state.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between protest management strategies and effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

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Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Public protest is the most important way by which citizens express their dissatisfaction with the policies, socio-economic conditions, perceived injustice and failures of governance of the government. Protests are locations of political participation in democratic societies. Citizens demand policy change and accountability. Thus, peaceful public demonstrations are often seen as legitimate ways of expressing democratic rights and participating in public life. However, demonstrations can turn violent leading to loss of lives, destruction of property, disruption of economic activities and threats to public order, if grievances are not addressed or if protests are poorly managed (United Nations, 2020; CLEEN Foundation, 2025).

Public protest is a common phenomenon in many developing countries and this has created academic interest in understanding the causes and management of such protests. The literature identifies several interrelated factors as causes of public protests. These are unemployment, poverty, corruption, bad governance, social inequality, insecurity, environmental degradation and loss of confidence in government institutions. Recent protests in Nigeria, including the #EndSARS movement and the #EndBadGovernance protests, illustrate the capacity of socio-economic issues and perceived institutional deficiencies to motivate collective action by citizens (International Crisis Group, 2021; Afrobarometer, 2025).

Effective protest management is not merely a matter of deploying security forces to disperse demonstrations and control dissent. Today, scholars regard protest management as a multidimensional process involving intelligence gathering, stakeholder engagement, dialogue, conflict prevention, negotiations, community participation, and basic human rights protections. Governments that preemptively manage protests are less prone to have peaceful protests turn violent than governments that predominantly employ coercive security responses. According to Sharma (2004), effective security management requires preventive planning, coordination, continuous risk assessment, and timely institutional responses rather than reactive interventions alone. Therefore, effective protest management requires the cooperation of government institutions, security agencies, civil society organisations, traditional institutions and community leaders to address immediate security concerns and underlying causes of public discontent (UNDP, 2024; Omoyeni et al., 2024).

The effective management of public protests includes security administration. Security administration is the institutional infrastructure that governments use to coordinate security personnel, allocate resources, operational policies and maintain public order. Good security management is policing that is intelligence led, adequately funded, professionally trained, co-operates with other agencies and enjoys public confidence. Well-coordinated security institutions, operating within the framework of legality, accountability and respect for human rights, significantly reduce the risk of violent confrontations during public protests. On the other hand, lack of institutional coordination, indiscriminate use of force and poor communication tend to erode public trust and exacerbate civil disturbances (Onuoha & Ogbonnaya, 2020; CLEEN Foundation, 2025). Oshita, Alumona, and Onuoha (2019) also observed that effective internal security management depends on strong institutional coordination, intelligence sharing, and collaboration among security agencies and relevant stakeholders.

Recent studies have stressed, in particular, that security measures alone are not enough to manage sustainable protest. Security operations also need to be integrated with responsive governance, inclusive policy making, transparent communication and timely resolution of the citizen grievances. To avert future protests and to make democracy more resilient, it is important

to address the structural causes of popular discontent such as unemployment, poverty, corruption etc. This view implies that effective protest management should not be considered a law enforcement issue, but rather a holistic governance approach, combining security management and socio-economic and political reforms (OECD, 2021; United Nations, 2020).

The rising occurrence of public protests in the country has drawn more attention from the academic community due to its implications for governance, national security and socio-economic development. The existing literature always refers to a mixture of economic, political, institutional and social factors to explain the rise of public protests. They are not usually spontaneous but are viewed as the expression of accumulated public dissatisfaction resulting from poor governance, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, increasing inequality and poor public services delivery. There is increasing empirical evidence from developing democracies that citizens increasingly resort to peaceful demonstrations when institutional mechanisms for grievance redressal appear ineffective or unattainable (International Crisis Group, 2021; Afrobarometer, 2025).

Today, academics argue that protest management has moved from a security paradigm of reaction to one of preventive governance. Before it was about dispersing crowds, putting security forces on the ground and maintaining public order. But new research finds that an overdependence on coercive policing often exacerbates, not improves, public disturbance. Authorities have therefore embraced intelligence-led policing, stakeholder consultation, mediation, community engagement and early-warning systems as complementary modalities in the management of public protests (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024; CLEEN Foundation, 2025).

There is also a lot of academic work on quality of governance and public protest. There is evidence that transparent, accountable, responsive and effective governments in the delivery of public goods and services are less likely to experience violent demonstrations than governments that are perceived to be unresponsive to the needs of citizens. Thus good governance reduces socio-economic frustrations that often lead to civil unrest. However, given the persistent governance failure, protests are a legitimate way for citizens to force government attention and policy change (OECD, 2021; Afrobarometer, 2025).

Another issue that is always a concern in the literature is the role of security institutions in democratic societies. According to the assignment by the constitution, law and order is the responsibility of the security agencies. But recent scholarship increasingly shows that the effectiveness of security agencies is not only a matter of operational capacity, but also of public legitimacy. The effective management of protest events is underpinned by intelligence gathering, professionalism, respect for human rights, inter-agency cooperation and effective communication. Security agencies with strong community ties are often better able to prevent protests from turning violent than those that rely largely on force-based methods (CLEEN Foundation, 2025; Omoyeni et al., 2024). Yakubu (2020) similarly notes that contemporary security management extends beyond the use of force to include intelligence gathering, collaboration, strategic planning, and public confidence in security institutions.

Although the literature on causes and consequences of public protests in Nigeria is growing, very little attention has been given to the formulation of context-specific strategies for effective protest management, particularly from the perspective of security professionals who are usually directly involved in planning and executing protest management operations. Most of the research so far has concentrated on the experience of protesters, governmental institutions or political actors. The operational knowledge of the security consultants responsible for

maintaining public order at demonstrations has received little empirical attention. There is a huge gap in literature especially in Bayelsa State which has a peculiar socio-economic and political environment that impacts on the character and management of public protests. The study is designed to fill this gap.

Theoretical Framework

The Conflict Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Theory form the basis of the present study. The theories comprehensively account for the underlying causes of public protests, and the strategies that are required to effectively manage them.

According to Conflict Theory, conflict is a basic feature of society because people and groups are always competing for limited economic, political, and social resources. Collins (2020) further argues that social conflict emerges through interactions among competing groups and institutions and that effective institutional responses are necessary to prevent conflict escalation. The theory was originally developed by Karl Marx (1867) and later extended by Coser (1956). The theory argues that tensions between the ruling class and the ruled are the outcome of unequal distribution of resources, social injustice, political exclusion and economic deprivation. When these grievances are not addressed, citizens resort to protests, strikes, demonstrations and other forms of collective action to demand social justice and institutional reforms. Conflict Theory shows us the structural inequalities of society. The frequent protests in Nigeria are linked to problems like unemployment, corruption, insecurity, removal of fuel subsidy, environmental damage and bad governance. The theory thus argues that the sustainable management of protest depends on governments dealing with the fundamental socio-economic causes of popular discontent, and not merely on security interventions.

The Frustration-Aggression Theory was first formulated by Dollard et al. (1939) and later refined by Berkowitz (1989). The theory postulates that aggression is often an outcome of the long-term frustration of legitimate expectations or failure to satisfy important needs of individuals or groups. The theory suggests that prolonged frustration arising from unemployment, poverty, inflation, bad governance, insecurity, corruption and declining living standards increases the chances of aggressive behaviour like public protests and civil disturbances. #EndSARS protests, #EndBadGovernance and many other mass protests across Nigeria show how frustrations can be channelled into collective action against a government that has been declared to have failed.

Adopting the theories provides a suitable framework to explain the occurrence and management of public protests. Conflict Theory explains the structural and institutional conditions that lead to public dissatisfaction, while the Frustration–Aggression Theory explains how these conditions affect the behavioural responses of the citizens. In unison, the theories advocate for management of effective public protest to integrate robust security management with responsive governance, stakeholder engagement, institutional reforms and socio-economic policies that address the underlying causes of public discontent. Therefore, the theoretical framework is a useful tool in studying strategies of handling public protest in Bayelsa State.

These two theories are particularly relevant to the perspective of security consultants, the respondents of this study, because they operate on opposite ends of the same phenomenon that consultants are trained to manage. Conflict Theory equips security consultants to recognise protests as symptoms of deeper structural grievances that cannot be resolved through security deployment alone, which explains their strong endorsement in this study of stakeholder dialogue and community policing as management strategies rather than purely coercive measures. The Frustration-Aggression Theory, on the other hand, speaks directly to the operational judgement

security consultants must exercise in the field, namely, anticipating the point at which the frustration of a crowd is likely to tip into aggression and intervening with intelligence-led, de-escalatory tactics before that point is reached. Taken together, the theories justify why this study's respondents, professionals whose daily work sits at the intersection of structural causes and behavioural outcomes, are well placed to evaluate both the root causes of protests and the strategies used to manage them.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies of public protest have focused on causes of the rise in protest demonstrations, the effectiveness of government responses, and the impact of protest on governance and national security. Research in both developed and developing countries has shown that public protests are strongly associated with socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, corruption, poor governance, political exclusion and declining confidence among the public in government institutions. These factors have left their mark on many African countries, where ongoing economic challenges and governance deficits remain a drain on perceptions of state legitimacy of the citizenry (International Crisis Group, 2021; Afrobarometer, 2025).

Again, research has indicated that perennial public protests in Nigeria are essentially a consequence of profound socio-economic and governance challenges. Unemployment, insecurity, corruption, and weak institutional capacity have been the key drivers of civil unrest in various parts of the country (Onuoha & Ogbonnaya, 2020). Similarly, Omoyeni et al. (2024) found that delayed responses from the government, ineffective communication, and the excessive use of force were responsible for the escalation of otherwise peaceful protests during the #EndSARS and #EndHunger protests. They find that governments should use dialogue-based approaches, supported by intelligence gathering and stakeholder engagement, to better manage protests.

There has been a growing emphasis in recent years on intelligence-led policing, community engagement and multi-agency working as key elements in the successful management of protests. Security agencies that have good relations with communities through constant engagement, sharing of intelligence and respect for human rights are often more successful in preventing protests from escalating into violence (CLEEN Foundation, 2025). Likewise, the United Nations Development Programme (2024) has contended that governments need to concentrate on preventive measures such as early warning systems, mediation and public consultation and institutional responsiveness rather than depend heavily on coercive policing strategies.

Besides security interventions, some scholars have also viewed good governance as a way to reduce the number of public protests. OECD (2021) suggests that governments that are transparent and accountable, provide effective public services and engage citizens in decision-making are likely to experience relatively lower levels of civil unrest than governments that are seen as unresponsive to the demands of the public. This suggests that sustainable management of protests requires effective security management and deliberate efforts to address the socio-economic conditions that give rise to public dissatisfaction.

However, despite such contributions, existing empirical studies have several limitations. Most explorations have been around identifying the causes and consequences of public protests while relatively few studies have been done on integrated strategies for effective protest management. Further, the existing literature has been predominantly focused on the experiences of protestors and government officials, or the national level experience, with little attention given

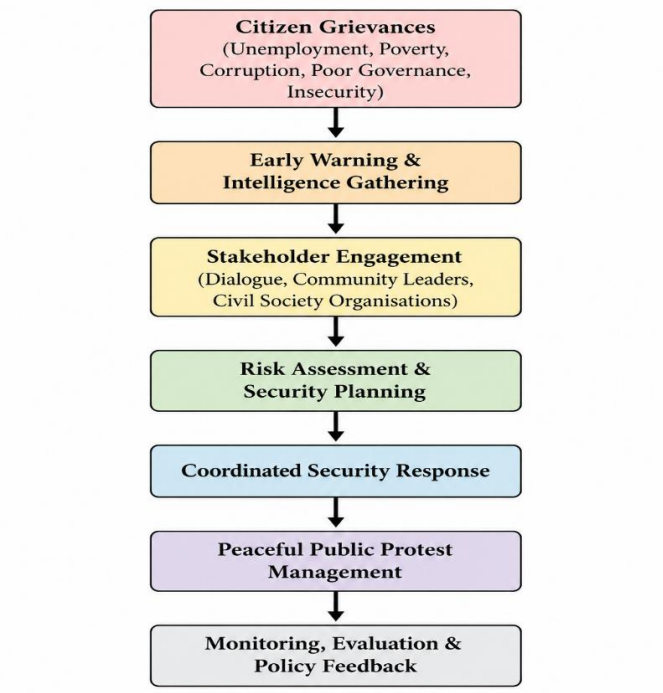
to the experiences of security consultants directly involved in the planning and implementation of protest management operations. Also, the socio-political and security situation of Bayelsa State is peculiar. But there is some empirical evidence that does take note of the state.

The present study seeks to fill these identified gaps by examining the management of public protest from the perspectives of security consultants in Bayelsa State. Unlike previous studies discussing the causes and effects of protests, this study highlights practical management strategies that can improve security operations, promote stakeholder engagement, and lead to peaceful conflict resolution. The findings are expected to be useful for policy formulation and context specific recommendations for effective management of public protests in Nigeria.

Proposed Public Protest Management Framework

Drawing from the reviewed literature, the theoretical foundations of the study, and the identified research gap, this study proposes an integrated framework for effective public protest management in Bayelsa State. The framework recognizes that public protests are often triggered by socio-economic and governance-related grievances such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, insecurity, poor communication, and inadequate public service delivery. Rather than relying solely on reactive security measures, the framework emphasizes proactive strategies involving intelligence gathering, stakeholder engagement, risk assessment, coordinated security planning, peaceful protest management, and post-event evaluation. The framework is intended to guide government agencies, security institutions, and other relevant stakeholders in preventing the escalation of public protests while safeguarding citizens' constitutional rights.

Figure 1: Proposed Public Protest Management Framework



Source: Developed by the Researchers (2026)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the framework begins with the socio-economic and governance-related grievances identified in the literature review, unemployment, poverty, corruption, insecurity, poor communication and inadequate service delivery, as the root triggers of public protest. These

triggers feed into a proactive management stage comprising intelligence gathering and risk assessment, which allow security agencies to anticipate the likely scale and character of a protest before it occurs. This informs the coordinated security planning stage, in which agencies, government and stakeholders jointly determine deployment, communication and engagement strategies. During the protest itself, the framework calls for stakeholder engagement and peaceful protest management practices consistent with the intelligence-led, dialogue-based approach supported by Conflict Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Theory. Finally, a post-event evaluation stage feeds lessons learned back into the intelligence-gathering stage, making the framework cyclical rather than linear, and reflecting the view that protest management is an ongoing institutional capability rather than a one-off response.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate strategies for managing public protest in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The design was deemed appropriate as it allowed for the collection of primary data from respondents with the necessary professional knowledge and experience in the management of public protest and security administration. The study population was professional security consultants operating in Bayelsa State. A purposive sampling technique was used in the study, as it aimed to specifically obtain information from respondents who had practical knowledge and experience in managing protests. A total of one hundred (100) security consultants with relevant professional experience in security administration, intelligence gathering, law enforcement or conflict management were purposively selected to participate in the study.

The primary data was obtained through the use of a structured questionnaire Strategy for Public Protest Management Questionnaire (SPPMQ). The questionnaire compromised of two sections. Section A sought to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B contained statements measuring the major variables of the study on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was developed based on the study's objectives and literature reviewed on public protest management, security administration and conflict management. To keep the content validity of the questionnaire, experts in Public Administration, Security Studies and Research Methodology reviewed the questionnaire. Before the final administration of the instrument, their observations and recommendations were taken into account. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.896 (high) which indicated a high level of internal consistency and confirmed the suitability of the instrument for the study. The researcher administered the questionnaires personally with the help of trained research assistants. Participation in the study was voluntary and the respondents were well informed about the purpose of the research before filling out the questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity of all responses were assured, and informed consent was obtained from each respondent prior to data collection. Of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 95 were returned with a response rate of 95.0%. After screening the data, three questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they were incomplete. Thus, the final analysis used 92 valid questionnaires, representing 92.0% of the questionnaires distributed.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, rather than regression, was chosen as the appropriate statistical test because each hypothesis was framed to test the strength and direction of association between two continuous, Likert-derived variables rather than to predict or explain variance in one variable from several others. Regression is better suited to questions of prediction or of isolating the relative effect of multiple independent variables on a single

dependent variable, which was not the aim of this study. Since the study sought only to establish whether, and how strongly, each pair of variables moved together, Pearson correlation was the more appropriate and parsimonious technique.

Data collected from the field survey were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to examine the study variables such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses and to determine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables. The relationships' strength was interpreted using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and statistical significance was considered at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$).

Results and Discussion

Response Rate

A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to registered security consultants in Bayelsa State. Ninety-five (95) questionnaires were retrieved, representing a response rate of 95.0%. Following the screening of the completed questionnaires, three (3) were found to contain incomplete responses and were excluded from the analysis. Consequently, ninety-two (92) questionnaires, representing 92.0% of the questionnaires administered, were found suitable and used for the final analysis. The response rate was considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization of the findings.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	66	71.7
Female	26	28.3
Total	**92**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that 66 (71.7%) of the respondents were male, while 26 (28.3%) were female. This implies that male security consultants constituted the majority of the respondents who participated in the study.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21–30	11	12.0
31–40	30	32.6
41–50	34	37.0
Above 50	17	18.4
Total	**92**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2 shows that respondents between the ages of 41 and 50 years constituted the highest proportion with 34 (37.0%), followed by those aged 31–40 years with 30 (32.6%). Respondents above 50 years accounted for 17 (18.4%), while those aged 21–30 years represented 11 (12.0%). This indicates that most respondents possessed considerable professional maturity and experience relevant to the subject of the study.

Table 3

Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma	13	14.1
Bachelor's Degree	43	46.7
Master's Degree	27	29.3
Doctorate Degree	9	9.9
Total	**92**	**100.0**

***Source**: Field Survey, 2026.*

The findings in Table 3 reveal that 43 (46.7%) of the respondents possessed Bachelor's degrees, while 27 (29.3%) had Master's degrees. Thirteen (14.1%) held Diploma qualifications and nine (9.9%) possessed Doctorate degrees. The educational profile suggests that respondents possessed adequate academic qualifications to provide informed responses on strategies for public protest management.

Table 4

Years of Professional Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	14	15.2
5–10 years	29	31.5
11–15 years	33	35.9
Above 15 years	16	17.4
Total	**92**	**100.0**

***Source**: Field Survey, 2026.*

Table 4 indicates that 33 (35.9%) of the respondents had between 11 and 15 years of professional experience, while 29 (31.5%) had between 5 and 10 years of experience. Respondents with more than 15 years of experience accounted for 16 (17.4%), whereas those with less than five years of experience constituted 14 (15.2%). This demonstrates that the respondents possessed substantial professional experience in security administration and public protest management.

Descriptive Statistics

The responses of participants regarding the study variables were analysed using mean and standard deviation. A decision benchmark of 3.00 was adopted, where a mean score of 3.00 and above indicates agreement with the statement, while a mean score below 3.00 indicates disagreement.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Causes of Public Protest

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Unemployment contributes significantly to public protests in Bayelsa State.	4.41	0.63	Agree
2	Poor governance increases the occurrence of public protests.	4.32	0.69	Agree
3	Corruption is a major cause of public protests.	4.24	0.74	Agree
4	Economic hardship encourages citizens to participate in protests.	4.47	0.58	Agree
5	Poor communication between government and citizens promotes public protests.	4.16	0.81	Agree
	Grand Mean	**4.32**	**0.69**	**Agree**

***Source**: Field Survey (2026).*

The findings in Table 6 reveal that all the statements recorded mean scores above the benchmark value of 3.00. The highest mean score (4.47) was obtained for the statement that economic hardship encourages citizens to participate in public protests, while the lowest mean score (4.16) related to poor communication between government and citizens. The grand mean of 4.32 indicates strong agreement among respondents that unemployment, poor governance, corruption, economic hardship, and ineffective communication are major factors responsible for public protests in Bayelsa State.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Protest Management Strategies

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Intelligence gathering improves protest management.	4.39	0.66	Agree
2	Dialogue with stakeholders reduces violent protests.	4.51	0.59	Agree
3	Community policing enhances peaceful protest management.	4.28	0.71	Agree
4	Professional training improves security response during protests.	4.36	0.67	Agree
5	Inter-agency collaboration strengthens protest management.	4.44	0.61	Agree
	Grand Mean	**4.40**	**0.65**	**Agree**

***Source**: Field Survey (2026).*

The results presented in Table 7 indicate that respondents strongly agreed with all the identified strategies for effective public protest management. Dialogue with stakeholders recorded the highest mean score (4.51), while community policing recorded the lowest (4.28). The overall grand mean of 4.40 demonstrates a high level of agreement that intelligence-led policing, dialogue, community participation, professional training, and inter-agency collaboration are effective strategies for managing public protests.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Security Administration

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Adequate funding improves security agencies' ability to manage public protests.	4.46	0.61	Agree
2	Security personnel are adequately trained to manage public protests.	3.82	0.88	Agree
3	Intelligence sharing among security agencies enhances protest management.	4.37	0.65	Agree
4	Professionalism among security personnel reduces violent confrontations.	4.42	0.63	Agree
5	Government support improves the effectiveness of security agencies during public protests.	4.31	0.72	Agree
	Grand Mean	**4.28**	**0.70**	**Agree**

Source: Field Survey (2026).

The results in Table 8 indicate that respondents generally agreed that effective security administration plays a significant role in public protest management. Adequate funding of security agencies recorded the highest mean score (4.46), while the adequacy of training for security personnel recorded the lowest mean score (3.82). The grand mean of 4.28 suggests that respondents perceived security administration as a major determinant of effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that the null hypothesis would be rejected where the probability value (p-value) was less than 0.05 and accepted where the probability value exceeded 0.05.

Table 9

Pearson Correlation Matrix for the Study Variables

Variables	Causes of Public Protest	Security Administration	Protest Management Strategies	Effective Public Protest Management
Causes of Public Protest	1			
Pearson Correlation	1.000			
Sig. (2-tailed)	—			
N	92			
Security Administration				
Pearson Correlation	0.584**	1.000		
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	—		
N	92	92		
Protest Management Strategies				
Pearson Correlation	0.611**	0.693**	1.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	—	
N	92	92	92	
Effective Public Protest Management				
Pearson Correlation	0.714**	0.683**	0.761**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	—
N	92	92	92	92

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Version 29 Output (2026).

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis presented in Table 9 indicates significant positive relationships among the major variables of the study. Specifically, the identified causes of public protests exhibited a strong positive relationship with effective public protest management ($r = 0.714$, $p < 0.05$). Security administration also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with effective public protest management ($r = 0.683$, $p < 0.05$), while protest management strategies recorded the strongest positive relationship with effective public protest management ($r = 0.761$, $p < 0.05$). Since all probability values were less than the 0.05 level of significance, the three null hypotheses were rejected.

Decision on Hypothesis One (H_{01}): Rejected. There is a significant positive relationship between the identified causes of public protests and effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

Decision on Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): Rejected. There is a significant positive relationship between security administration and effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

Decision on Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): Rejected. There is a significant positive relationship between protest management strategies and effective public protest management in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the study showed that the causes of public protest significantly influence the effectiveness of protest management in Bayelsa State. The respondents identified unemployment, poor governance, corruption, economic hardship and ineffective communication between government and citizens as the major factors responsible for public protests. These findings are consistent with the studies of Onuoha and Ogbonnaya (2020), International Crisis Group (2021) and Afrobarometer (2025) which reported that socio-economic inequalities, governance deficits and declining public confidence in government institutions are major drivers of public demonstrations across Nigeria. The findings also add to the support for the Conflict Theory propositions that public unrest is caused by structural inequalities and perceived injustice in society.

The study also revealed that security management influences effective management of public protests. Adequate funding, intelligence sharing, professionalism, continuous training and government support were agreed to improve the capacity of the security agencies to manage public demonstrations peacefully. This finding is in agreement with the CLEEN Foundation (2025) and the United Nations Development Programme (2024) that intelligence-led policing, institutional collaboration and respect for human rights enhance the effectiveness of security operations during public protests. The result also shows that security administration is not simply the deployment of personnel, but institutional capacity, operational planning and coordination among relevant agencies.

Also, the findings revealed that public protest management strategies such as stakeholder dialogue, community policing, intelligence gathering, inter-agency collaboration and professional capacity building have significant impact on public protest management in Bayelsa State. The respondents strongly agreed that proactive engagement with community leaders and protestors contributes to the peaceful resolution of public demonstrations. This finding is consistent with Omoyeni et al. (2024) who found that dialogue-based approaches and engagement with stakeholders reduce the likelihood of violent confrontations during protests. Consequently, the findings support the recommendations of the OECD (2021) that responsive governance and citizen participation are significant contributors to social stability and effective conflict management.

The findings generally show that the management of public protests requires an integrated approach involving sound security administration, responsive governance, intelligence policing, stakeholder engagement and ongoing institutional reforms. It is imperative to address the root causes of the public dissatisfaction and equally strengthen the operational capacity of security agencies to enable peaceful public demonstrations and sustain democratic governance in Bayelsa State.

It is worth noting one point of contrast with prior research. Whereas Omoyeni et al. (2024) found that excessive use of force was a leading driver of escalation during the #EndSARS and #EndHunger protests in Lagos State, the security consultants in the present study rated adequacy of training and professionalism, rather than force itself, as the more decisive factor, with the lowest mean score in Table 8 (3.82) attaching specifically to the perceived adequacy of security-personnel training. This difference may reflect the more consultative, lower-density protest environment of Bayelsa State compared with the large-scale urban demonstrations examined in Lagos-based studies, where the scale of crowds may make coercive tactics more likely regardless of training quality. This suggests that the relationship between security response

and escalation may be moderated by the scale and setting of the protest, an issue that future comparative research across states could usefully examine.

Conclusion

The study centred on public protest management strategies in Bayelsa State with particular focus to public protest causes, security administration and effective protest management strategies. The findings revealed that unemployment, poor governance, corruption, economic hardship and ineffective communication are some of the major factors contributing to the increasing occurrence of public protests. The study also found that a well-organised security administration with adequate funding, intelligence collection, professionalism and cooperation among agencies greatly enhances the management of public demonstrations. Restating this against the study's specific objectives, the first objective, to determine the major causes of public protests in Bayelsa State, was achieved: unemployment, poor governance, corruption, economic hardship and poor communication were identified as the leading causes (Table 6). The second objective, to assess the current strategies adopted by security agencies in managing public protests, was also achieved: the findings confirmed that intelligence gathering, stakeholder dialogue, community policing and inter-agency collaboration are the strategies most strongly associated with effective management (Table 7, Table 9). The third objective, to develop a practical framework for improving public protest management in Bayelsa State, was met through the integrated framework presented in Figure 1, which links causes, proactive intelligence and planning, stakeholder engagement, and post-event evaluation into a single operational model. All three objectives of the study were therefore satisfactorily achieved. The study concludes that sustainable public protest management cannot be achieved by the deployment of security personnel alone. Instead, governments must take holistic approaches that combine security operations with responsive governance, stakeholder engagement, conflict prevention, institutional accountability and socio-economic development. This approach is essential to reducing public grievances, strengthening democratic participation and promoting lasting peace and security in Bayelsa State.

Recommendations

In view of the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should address the root socio-economic conditions such as unemployment, poverty, corruption and poor service delivery that often lead to public protests.
2. Security agencies should strengthen intelligence collection, inter-agency collaboration and information sharing to improve preparedness and effective response during public demonstrations.
3. Conduct continuous professional training for security personnel in crowd management, conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and human rights protection.
4. Government should institutionalise regular dialogue and stakeholder engagement with youth groups, civil society organisations, traditional rulers and community leaders to resolve grievances before they degenerate into public protests.
5. Security agencies should be provided with resources such as sufficient funding, modern equipment and operational logistics so that they can be more effective in handling public protests while respecting citizens' constitutional rights.
6. Government should promote transparency, accountability and effective communication with citizens to strengthen public confidence in governance and to reduce the frequency of recurring public protests.

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