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# #EndSARS Protest and the Contestation of Misleading Information

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## **Abstract**

Disinformation is political and targets specific groups. As a result, researchers, activists, media organizations and community-based institutions have studied and employed various interventions to curb disinformation targeting marginalized groups. Some of the most effective interventions identified in the Global North and Global South include debunking, media literacy, credibility labels and accuracy prompts. This work, however, shifts attention from the often-studied production, processing, quantification, motivations and traditional debunking models, and experimental interventions of disinformation often led by external actors, to citizen-led efforts in countering disinformation targeting them, using limited resources and power at their disposal, thereby providing a critical counter-perspective to conventional disinformation studies. Drawing on the framing/counter-framing theory and the debunking intervention concept, this study analyzed 200 comments under the Nigerian army's post on X, which denied their presence at the Lekki Toll Gate shooting and labeled reports of the event as fake news, thereby undermining the movement's legitimacy. This paper employs qualitative content analysis, thematic and discourse analysis to examine protesters' self-initiated, bottom-up resistance and debunking of government-led disinformation. Findings (so far) have revealed that protesters employed mostly visual evidence, humor and satire, cultural and historical knowledge, and international solidarity to challenge the government's deliberate denial. The implication of this work is that documenting effective strategies used by protesters can advance conversation and inform researchers, social movements, and community-based organizations on disinformation interventions and programs, equipping them with tools and strategies to counter harmful and misleading narratives against marginalized communities.

**Keywords:** Disinformation; social movement; social media; Nigeria; debunk