

**TITLE PAGE**

**EFFECT OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST ON THE NIGERIAN  
ECONOMY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, it has been established that major disruptive events such as group protest, civil conflict and politically motivated violence have been widely shown to disrupt economic growth(Bleaney and Nishiyama, 2002).Since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the historic eight-day general strike, mass rallies and street protests in Nigeria became the first national protest that

brought the Nation to a standstill economically. From Monday January 9 to Monday January 16, 2012, the country was brought to a halt with both public and private businesses locked down to protest the increase in pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) with scores of protesters cut across all age bracket passing nights on major streets across the country demanding for a reversal to the old pump price of PMS (Lakemfa, 2012).

In 2017, EndSARS started when Segun Awosanya and other activists on Twitter began to demand that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) be scrapped. A report by Amnesty International(2016), indicted SARS as being responsible for human rights abuse, cruelty, degrading treatment of Nigerians in their custody and other widespread torture. Also, Amnesty International (2020)documented about 82 cases of abuses and extrajudicial killings by SARS. This figure is probably conservative at best. The objective of the campaign was to catalyze mass action against the Special Anti -Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigeria Police

Force (NPF) set up to respond to armed robberies and violent crime. The campaign, which adopted a mix of online and offline strategies, was popularly known on social media as #EndSARS. Over ten thousand Nigerians signed a petition and submitted it to the National Assembly calling for the unit's disbandment, citing various abuses against Nigerian youths. Although efforts were made by the National Assembly, the National Human Rights Commission, the Police Chief, and even the Vice President, not much changed. Coupled with this, the Police Act, which was adopted in 1943, leaves broad discretionary powers in the hands of police officers (Ujene; Orji and Obianger, 2018).

Footage of alleged SARS officers shooting a young Nigerian and driving off in his car emerged on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 on social media. This, sparked a nationwide movement and a global phenomenon. Thus, by 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020, nationwide protests led by young Nigerians had started in several cities. The protests were peaceful but the Nigerian Police Force began throwing teargas and shooting at

unarmed protesters. The outcome was serious injuries and death of some protesters in several cities across the country (Oshinnaike, 2020). The major demand of the protest was the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) due to continued extrajudicial executions and extortion by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) with a long record of abuses and demand for good and accountable governance in the country (Okon, 2020).

The World Bank's classification by region and income, sees the Nigerian economy as a typical developing country in the lower-middle income category. The productive base of Nigerian economy remains relatively weak, narrow and externally-oriented with primary production activities of agriculture, mining and quarrying (including crude oil and gas) accounting for about 65 percent of the real gross output and over 80 percent of government revenue (World Bank, 2018). Like any developing nation, Nigeria faces some challenges in its development stride and efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens. The critical economic issues concern the need to foster sustainable rapid economic

growth that will cater for the needs of its large population and the imperative for proper integration of its domestic economy into the world economy in the face of increasing globalization (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001).

The EndSARS protest had a devastating impact on the fragile Nigerian economy. With an oil economy trying to pick up from the ruins of the Covid-19 pandemic, a recession was already looming and unavoidable. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI, 2020) disclosed that Nigeria lost more than N700 billion in economic value since the EndSARS protests started. Fagbo, (2020) asserts that, while the protest went on, the short-term economic consequences for the people began to mount. A drop in consumer spending on non-essential goods was one of the most visible signs of its impact. The protest shut down major activities of Nigeria's busiest airport with major roads blocked and economic activities brought to a halt.

Nonetheless, most businesses, from Multinational Corporations to informal

businesses in Nigeria and across the globe faced a lot of dwindling economic fortunes in 2020. Notable among such economic crises was the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent precautionary measures of government on trade due to closure of both local and international borders and most recently the EndSARS protests which halted smooth operations of major economic activities across the Nation(Oshinnaike, 2020). However, it should be noted that while our concern in this paper is to point out the effect of the EndSARS protest on the Nigerian economy, it is equally important to note some of the effects of Covid-19 pandemic and other regulatory policies on Nigerian businesses because they are interconnected.

Lock-downs due to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted production activities, supply chains, reduced demand for non-essential goods, posed security challenges and reduced revenue across all sectors of the economy. For most businesses, recovery has been sluggish; for businesses that source their raw materials or products from abroad, the border closure policy and the

restriction on foreign exchange made their recovery tougher. The economic cost of the looting spree that engulfed Nigeria in the last week of October as a result of negative consequences of EndSars protest compounded these problems. Food costs, already higher than normal due to government policies, were worsened by the destruction of storage houses and warehouses. In addition to these warehouses, commercial properties such as bank ATMs and restaurants were vandalized (Oshinnaike, 2020).

The ENDSARS protest therefore resulted in drop in government revenue and consumer confidence on the financial markets and the already worsening economy (BusinessDay, October, 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020). Overcoming the challenges of poverty, fighting corruption, meeting the basic needs of the people in the face of inadequate and inefficient infrastructure are critical social challenges that government is determined to address. However, protests and increased disenchantment of citizens across different sectors have continued to have negative effects on the economy of the Nation. It is against this backdrop that

this paper is out to examine the effect of the EndSars protest on the Nigerian economy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria's economy is characterized by declining capacity utilization of major infrastructural facilities, large budget deficit, high level of unemployment and inflation. In addition, it is dependent on a single commodity, which is oil, with weak industrial base, low level of agricultural production and inefficient public utilities in health and social security. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy by gross domestic products (GDP) and the continent's most populous nation, saw its commercial and economic capital, Lagos, slowed, disrupted and then shut over a stretch of two weeks due to the activities of EndSars protesters, creating a cloud of uncertainty around its economy with an attendant erosion of confidence surrounding her economic development. No doubt, there were losses of revenues, means of livelihood, properties, and ultimately lives occasioned by activities of EndSars protesters. On the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, the EndSars protest

took a different turn as thugs began to attack peaceful protesters in cities and towns across Nigeria. In the country's capital, Abuja for instance, on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, thugs launched an attack on protesters at Kubwa in the outskirts of the city. Two days earlier in Lagos, thugs had attacked protesters at the Lagos Government House, Alausa. On the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, things snowballed into something larger, the looting and destruction of public buildings and private businesses, inspired by the looting of Covid-19 palliatives kept in some warehouses across the Nation brought the Nation to a standstill with police stations and other Para military security vehicles destroyed across the Nation (Nkasi, 2020).

At the backdrop of the destruction of public and private properties and businesses in the wake of the EndSARS protests after the Lekki massacre of EndSars protesters, businesses have been counting their losses while economic experts have listed the immediate challenges the crises threw-up against Nigeria's struggling economy. For instance, in Lagos State which was the epic

centre of the protest, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry put the estimated economic loss at N700 billion in 12 days, meaning a loss of N58 billion daily. Similarly, toll revenue loss is also estimated at about N234 million in 13 days, showing that N18 million was lost daily to the protest activities ((Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2020).

These losses were also accompanied by several lootings and vandalism at several shopping malls in Lagos, including Lekki ShopRite Mall, Circle Mall, Montaigne Mall, Lagos City Mall, the razing of the Lekki Toll Gate, state-owned buildings and facilities, the setting ablaze of several police stations, local government councils, invading traditional institutions, public and private transport and other facilities by some hoodlums who are said to have hijacked the peaceful protests to create chaos and a state of anarchy across the federation. Economic analysts lamented the impact

of the aftermath of the protest, which has ravaged the nation's economy as well as raised insurance premium estimated in billions (Olubiyi, 2020, Nkasi, 2020).

On social media, a lot of young Nigerians recounted gory stories of their encounters with the squad, with some reporting cases of brutality, abduction, extortion, extrajudicial killings and false imprisonment. These stories corroborate a 2020 Amnesty International (AI) report detailing patterns of human rights violations committed by SARS. SARS in their operations are known to wear plain clothes and carrying assault weapons. On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020, in Jos, Plateau State, while the protest was on-going, thugs hauled the Jos city biggest market, Terminus, where they burned cars, hauled shops and attacked unarmed EndSARS protesters.

The effect of the EndSars protest is felt across states in Nigeria in all sectors of the economy. With the news that SARS had been disbanded, Nigerians

took the news with a grain of salt and carried on with pressing their demands for total disengagement of the unit and for wide-ranging reform of the force. The hashtag on social media changed from #EndSARS to #SARSMustEnd (Olisah, 2020). With the announcement of a new unit Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) by the Nigerian Police to replace SARS, the hashtag for the protests quickly changed to #EndSWAT on Twitter. Police intimidation, oppression and brutality on business men and women is a hindrance to smooth economic operations. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the effect of EndSars protest on the Nigerian economy.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the EndsSars protest and the extent to which it affects the growing Nigerian economy. However, the specific objectives of this study are:

- i. Identify the causes of the EndSars protest in Nigeria
- ii. Ascertain the effect of the EndSars protest on the Nigeria Economy
- iii. Prescribe possible ways of solving the problem for peaceful co-existence of the police and people in the country

## **Research Questions**

In order to resolve the major quest of this study, the determination of the following questions becomes necessary:

- i. What are the causes of the EndSars protest in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the effect of the EndSars protest on the Nigerian economy?
- iii. In what ways can the peaceful co-existence of the police and people be achieved to avoid another protest?

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## **END SARS PROJECT TOPICS**

- Assessment Of Police Brutality And Human Right Abuses In Nigeria. A Study Of Endsars Protest
- Psychological Effect Of Endsars Protest On Officers Of The Nigeria Police Force

- The Role Of Twitter As A Tool For Political Education A Study Of Endsars
- The Role Of Mass Media In The Fight Against Police Brutality
- Newspapers Coverage Of Endsars Protest In Nigeria. A Study Of Selected Newspaper
- The Socio-Economic Effect Of Endsars Protest In Nigeria Economy
- The Effect Of Endsars Protest On Small And Medium Scale Scale Enterprise In Nigeria
- The Impact Of Hashtag Activism In Nigeria: A Study Of #Endsars Campaign
- Socio-Economic Status And Its Impact On Protest Participation In Nigeria. A Study Of Endsars