THE EFFECT OF ENDSARS PROTEST ON SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES (SMSE) A CASE STUDY OF ILORIN METROPOLIS

BY

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KWCOED/IL/21/1317

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, KWARA STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ILORIN.

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (NCE).

AUGUST, 2024

CERTIFICATION

This research work has been read and approved as meeting the requirement for the award of Nigeria Certificate in Education in the Department of Political Science. School of Arts and Social Sciences, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this research work to God Almighty who has made it possible for us to undergo this programme that people think it is impossible, from the beginning to the end.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our immeasurable gratitude goes to the Lord Almighty for his protection and guidance over us from the beginning to the end of this programme of study. To him alone be the glory and adoration.

Our special appreciation goes to our project supervisor Mr. Sakariyau Lawal Yittametufor his patient, guidance, encouragement and useful critiques of this research work. We thank you for the opportunity given to us been a student in the department.

We also acknowledge our amiable HOD, Mr. Hameed T.F (Mr.Babs). and other lecturers' in political science department Dr. Ambali, Mrs. Wonchinko, and other lecturers. May Almighty Allah be with you all (amen).

Our special appreciation goes to our parents for their moral and financial supports throughout the period of our study. We also appreciate our family and friends for their assistance, prayers and support.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the Effect of the EndSars Protest on the Nigerian economy; with specific set objectives to find out the causes of the EndSars protest in Nigeria; ascertain the effect of the EndSars protest in Nigeria and proffer possible solutions to the causes of the EndSars protest in Nigeria. The study adopted the structural-functionalist theory and used the survey research method given the work coverage. Thus, the method of study was qualitative. Data were generated from secondary sources which included journal articles, news papers and other online sources. Literature review however shows that, SARS is notorious for its brutality and human rights abuses and the lack of accountability for their actions while the Nigerian economy suffered huge losses of billions of naira resulting from the protest. The Police Act, which was adopted in 1943, has broad discretionary powers in the hands of police officers,making the abuse of power possible. The study concludes that, EndSars protest has left memories not just on the Nigerian people and her economy but on the global community on issues of police brutality in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that, state governments, in collaboration with security agencies and other stakeholders (Civil Society Organizations and traditional/religious institutions)should create avenues for interaction with the general populace and listen to the millions of voices calling for police reform; there should be great transformations in relationships between the police and communities and the Federal and State Governments should invest in youth employment to create sustainable economic opportunities foryoung people in the country thereby, growing the economy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

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 on3rdOctober 2020 on social

media. This sparked a nationwide movement and a global phenomenon. Thus, by 7th 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 anddemand for good and accountable governance in the country (Okon, 2020). The World Bank's classification by region and income sec. 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 tofoster sustainable rapid economic growth that will cater for the needs of its large populationandthe imperative for proper integration of its domestic economy into the world economy inthe 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 values 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 precautionarymeasures 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 regulatorypolicies 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 acrossall sectors of the economy. For most businesses, recovery has been sluggish; for businesses thatsourced their raw materials or products from abroad, the border closure policy and the restrictionon foreign exchange made their recovery tougher.The economic cost of the looting spree that engulfed Nigeria in the last week of Octoberas a result of negative consequences of EndSars protest compounded these problems. Food costs, already higher than normal due to governmentpolicies, were worsened by the destruction of storage houses and

warehouses. Inaddition to these warehouses, commercial properties such as bank ATMs and restaurants werevandalized (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, 22nd 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 theNigerian economy.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's economy is characterized by declining capacity utilization of major infrastructuralfacilities, large budget deficit, high level of unemployment and inflation. In addition,it is dependent on a singlecommodity, which is oil, with weak industrial base, low level of agriculturalproduction 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 17th 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 17th 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 20th 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 20thOctober 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 effectof the EndSars protest is felt across states in Nigeria in all sectors of the economy. With the news that SARS had beendisbanded, Nigerians took the news with agrain of salt and carried on with pressingtheir demands for total disengagement ofthe unit and for wide-ranging reform of

theforce. 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 toreplace SARS, the hashtag for the protestsquickly changed to EndSWAT onTwitter Police intimidation,oppression and brutality on business men and women are a hindrance to smooth economic operations. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the effect of EndSars protest on the Nigerian economy.

Aims 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 effects 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?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for this study:

***H01*:** The EndSARS protest does not have any negative effect on Small and Medium Enterprises.

***H02*:** The EndSARS protest has negative effect on Small and Medium Enterprises.

Significance of the Study

This study will be of benefit to the general public, business owners and government to realize the menace of the EndSARS protest has caused to Small and Medium Enterprises and the economy. It will also bring to the notice of the government and policy makers the need to hearken to the plea of the protesters and put things right in the country. This study will also

serve as a benchmark to researchers and students who may desire to carry out further research on this or related topic.

Scope of the Study

This study focus mainly on the effect of EndSARS protest on Small and Medium Enterprises in Kwara State. In view of this, the study limited only to Ilorin metropolis, which comprises of Ilorin West, Ilorin East and Ilorin South Local Government Area, Kwara state. The population for the study will involve all small and medium business enterprises within in Ilorin metropolis, 50tradesman/merchandiser randomly selected in Ilorin metropolis, through simple random sampling techniques. Structured questionnaire and interview will be used to elicit data from the respondents. Frequency and percentage will be use to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents and simple percentage methods will be used to answer the research questions raised for the study.

Definition of Terms

Protest: A statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

SARS: Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a unit of Nigerian police force established to deal with crimes associated with robbery, motor vehicle theft, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and firearms.

EndSARS: A social movement and series of mass protests calling on the disbanding of the SARS and against police brutality in Nigeria.

SMEs: Small and Medium Enterprises are businesses that maintain revenues, assets or a number of employees below a certain limit.

Effect: A change which is a result or consequence of an action or other cause.

Disruption: Disturbance or problems which interrupt an event, activity or process.

Destruction: The action or process of causing so much damage to something.

Looting: The act of stealing goods from a place typically during a war or riot.

Vandalize: To deliberately destroy or damage public or private property.