

**CONFLICT ANALYSIS OF END-SARS CRISIS: INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*In 2020, apart from covid-19 pandemic, the End-SARS protests and disturbances ranked as probably the most consequential crisis among other crises in Nigeria. The protestation, though well set out, was seemingly infiltrated by hoodlums who turned it into a national pain and debt. The protests epitomised Nigerian youths' resentment and frustration over police (SARS) brutality, extra-judicial killings and other forms of maltreatment against Nigerians, which have persisted for many years in Nigeria. This paper, essentially, reconnoitered the pre/post conflict intricacies of the End-SARS protests/crisis for critical insights and implications on socio-economic development of Nigeria in the face of devastating security, economic and political challenges. It engaged the documentary method of research, relied on Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory and dual tools of conflict analysis for the investigation; and revealed Nigerian youths and Nigeria Police as, characteristically, the primary stakeholders in the conflict. It affirmed that the youths constitute a galactic force with mobility for a reoccurrence of such demonstration if its causal issues are not properly addressed by the government. It recommended measures that include, principally, the need for government to perform a major overhaul (reformation) of the Nigeria Police with effective monitoring of its operations nationwide from recruitment to retirement of officers and men.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict Analysis, End-SARS, Crisis, Socio-Economic Development.

### **Introduction/Background**

The End-SARS crisis started as a peaceful protest by some well-meaning Nigerian youths but after some days, some hoodlums operating in gangs in some areas of Lagos and other cities began to attack shops, business centers, private and public businesses and establishments. They vandalized, destroyed, burnt and looted both individual and government properties and assets, attacked correctional centres and released prisoners; and at that point the protest was turned into serious disturbances and mayhem that culminated into a national crisis.

The End-SARS protests and disturbances took Nigeria and the world at large by surprise and came as a sudden phenomenon particularly because of the present covid-19 pandemic that is ravaging almost every country in the world. Nigerians were further taken aback by the level of organization, magnitude and immediate impacts of the End-SARS protestations by Nigerian youths. Many people wondered how it all started, and consequently snowballed into a well-masterminded youth demonstration in Lagos, before spreading to other cities and states. Alamu (2020) quoted in *The Nation* (2020) highlights on the protests, and states that, “the administration appears to have forgotten that the End-SARS imbroglio stole completely upon it, like a creeping coup to which it has no answers. The protest completely outsmarted the combined forces of the entire security apparatus”. It was an uprising that made many Nigerians to rekindle their belief in the audacity and courage of the youths in Nigeria to stand up to power in the face of devastating challenges.

It was a new generation movement that may never be forgotten in the annals of Nigeria’s twenty-first century narratives, being the first of its kind in which organized mass protests were conceived, planned and executed by youths (males and females) who were roughly between the ages of fifteen and forty years; who conducted themselves in a way and manner that has never been seen before in the country. In Nigerian history, it may be likened to the famous Aba Women riot of 1929 which raised great awareness about the tax issues and concerns of women traders (Echeta, 2018).

Sobowale (2020), in his remarks on the End-SARS protests declares that “#End-SARS has opened a new chapter in Nigerian history and has partly exposed our thinly-covered acclaimed unity”. Although gone, October 2020, will be remembered as the month and year when Nigerian youths showed that they have come of age in terms of social mobilization and activism. *The Nation* (2020) expressly states that, “October 2020 is one month that would maintain a remarkable chapter in the Nigerian history book for long. It was a month when the young ones got tired of the rot in the governance system and flew into a rage nationwide”. For a fragile economy already heavily beaten by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has cost thousands of citizens their livelihoods, forced many to commit suicide, and landed millions in untold hardship, the hijack of the peaceful #End-SARS protests by hoodlums, and the unprecedented anarchy, destruction and wanton killings that reigned supreme across the country, leaves so much to panic about (Agbonkhese, 2020).

The End-SARS protests, basically, aimed at putting an end to all forms of police, and by extension, military institutions’ brutality, harassment, intimidation, extortion, use of force, extra-judicial killings, etc., in Nigeria. It was a great opportunity that Nigerian youths employed to show in clear and practical terms how aggrieved and disenchanted they were with the attitude and treatment of policemen, particularly members of the SARS (Special Anti- Robbery Squad) teams towards many Nigerians over the years. Sobowale (2020) summarized the above scenario with these words, “SARS officers, as well as some regular police officers, have committed grievous crimes against fellow Nigerians”. Some of the actions of these ruthless police officers left many individuals and families bereaved, heart-broken, depressed, disabled, impoverished and full of ugly memories.

The crisis generated mixed feelings and reactions among many Nigerians. However, most of the reports on newspapers and other media indicated that a majority of Nigerians felt good with the development, even

though as it lingered, some Nigerians began to lose interest and wished it ended. The occurrence of some cases of police maltreatment while the protests were ongoing encouraged its widespread across many states, particularly the southern states of Edo, Rivers, Imo, Osun, Anambra, Bayelsa, etc. (Sunday Vanguard, 2020). As a conflict, the End-SARS protests/crisis can be better studied and investigated using the tools of conflict analysis, which offers a robust and critical observation, identification and descriptive inquiry into any conflict in the society. In this paper, Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory and two tools of conflict analysis were employed for the investigation. Every protest is a potential conflict or as a result of existing conflict and needs to be well understood, properly managed and resolved to avoid a recurrence, and to learn more about its origin and characteristics. This paper, therefore, investigated the causes, structure and effects of the End-SARS protests/crisis in order to gain critical insights, as well as examine its implications on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Literally, the paper is a documentary research that employed secondary data and materials from newspapers, journal publications, texts, internet, etc. In effect, the paper approached these questions:

- (1) What were the issues that prompted the 2020 #End-SARS protests in Nigeria?
- (2) To what extent was the End-SARS protests effective and successful as a movement in Nigeria ?
- (3) How relevant is the conflict analysis inputs in gaining insights about the End-SARS protests/crisis in Nigeria?
- (4) What are the insights and socio-economic implications of the End-SARS protests/crisis and what measures can be employed to avert such crisis for national stability and development?

### **Conceptual Expositions : Conflict, Conflict Analysis and Socio-Economic Development**

**Conflict:** As a word, conflict is derived from the Latin word, "Confligere", which means to "strike together". Webster Dictionary (1971) defines conflict lexically as "to strike, to dasy. A fight, struggle or battle, clash, contention, confrontation, a controversy or quarrel, active opposition, strife or incompatibility, to meet in opposition or hostility, to contend, to be contrary or to be at variance". In general and broad perspective, conflict connotes contradiction arising from differences in interests, ideas, opinions, attitudes, perceptions, preferences, ideologies, tendencies, and orientations.

Conflict arises or occurs because of opposition or disagreement among social entities or groups directed against one another. Advanced English Dictionary (2020) defines conflict as "an open clash between two opposing groups (or individuals), with its hyponyms as, "rebellion, revolt, strife, uprising, pacification, etc." On a simple note, Kriesberg (1973) cited in Mitchell (1988) defines conflict as, "... a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals".

It is important to note that conflict is a natural attribute of human society but destructive conflict which has negative impacts is to be feared and avoided. Laue (1990) quoted in Otite and Albert(1999), in his definition of conflict identified this difference between conflict and destructive conflict and stated that, "conflict is not deviant, pathological, or sick behaviour per-se. It is not the opposite of order. There is orderliness in conflict. And it can be a very helpful and useful part of society". There are a litany of definitions, concepts, views and school of thoughts of conflict that show its wide meanings in different contexts and applications.

### **Conflict Analysis**

From the literary point of view, conflict analysis implies the act or system of studying and examining conflicts in order to comprehend its features, dimensions and scope. It is the analysis of issues of conflict. Conflict Analysis can be defined as a critical process involving review, interpretation and explanation of what is observed and recorded about the conflict situation (Azar 1990; Burton 1990). In real application, Conflict Analysis involves the phenomenon or process by which the root causes, dynamics, issues, effects and other critical aspects/details of conflict are examined (scrutinized), reviewed and uncovered through the use of various mechanisms and tools for proper and better understanding of the conflict from several perspectives (Mitchell, 1988; Otite and Albert, 1999).

Conflict Analysis helps to provide information and data that empowers conflict management and conflict resolution for a better and progressive society. In essence, Conflict Analysis provides a framework for the collection of relevant and critical information and data that enable intervention experts, conflict managers and peace mediators to bring together disputing and aggrieved parties for settlement and resolution of conflict. It has tools that make it possible to develop a dependable, reliable and effective direction on the choice of strategies and action to be adopted for a successful intervention, termination and peaceful resolution of conflict.

**Socio-Economic Development:** Society is an economic entity that is constantly evolving and transforming over time. And so there is continuous dynamics of social and economic issues and challenges. One of such issues or challenges is development, and a major dimension of development is socio-economic development. Okoroafor (2010) states that, “socio-economic development is all about development that impacts on the life of a people in terms of their living standards, social relationships, economic activities and economic growth”. Social and economic development has multiplier effects on all other aspects of human and societal development, because it is potentially the core of all forms of development in society. However, a society or nation like Nigeria is said to be developing socio-economically when its members jointly increase their capacity to deal with their environment. This capacity for dealing with their environment is dependent on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized (Rodney, 1996). In a nutshell, socio-economic development is a holistic form of development that encompasses all dimensions of the social life and economic activities of a people; and the capability to harness their human and environmental potentials and resources towards better living standards for themselves.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Ralf Dahrendorf’s Conflict theory is considered apt and applicable as the theoretical guide of this paper. Ritzer (2008) states that, “this theory is little more than a series of contentions that are the direct opposites of functionalist positions. This antithesis is best exemplified by the work of Ralf Dahrendorf (1958; 1959), in which the tenets of conflict and functional theory are juxtaposed”. In the view of Dahrendorf and most conflict theorists, every society at every point is subject to processes of change. Conflict theorists see dissension and conflict at every point in the social system and therefore its exponents see many societal elements contributing to disintegration and change.

Dahrendorf (1958; 1959) is the major exponent of the position that society has two faces (conflict and consensus) and that sociological theory therefore should be divided into two parts: conflict theory and consensus theory. Consensus theorists should examine value integration in society, and conflict theorists should examine conflicts of interest and the coercion that holds society together in the face of these stresses. Dahrendorf recognised that society could not exist without both conflict and consensus, which are prerequisites for each other. Thus, we cannot have conflict unless there is some prior consensus. Dahrendorf argued that society is held together by “enforced constraint” and that is the reason some positions in society are delegated power and authority over others; and this fact of social life influenced Dahrendorf to his central thesis that the differential distribution of authority invariably becomes the determining factor of systematic conflict in society (Ritzer,2008).

This theory clearly supports the idea that the EndSARS protests and disturbances is a process of dissension and conflict capable of causing social disintegration and change in the Nigerian society. It is understandable that the End-SARS crisis was typically a conflict of interests and values and Dahrendorf’s theory of conflict examines conflicts of interest and coercion together with an appeal for a consensus theory of society to examine value integration for a progressive society. The End-SARS demonstrations reflects the fragile nature of the Nigerian society and its propensity towards conflicts that require consensus in order to be resolved, including institutional reforms and other measures for stability and harmonious integration, as the way forward for a better and united Nigerian society.

### **Features of End-SARS Protests/ Disturbances As Major Conflict in Nigeria**

There are five main types of conflict that human beings and societies encounter over time, they include: Intra-personal conflicts, Interpersonal conflicts, Intra-group conflicts, intergroup conflicts, National conflicts, International conflicts. The nomenclature of the types of conflict gives a good idea of the meaning and scope of each of them. Based on that premise, the End-SARS protestation qualifies as inter-group conflict, national conflict and to an extent, international conflict.

Inter-group conflicts are conflicts between groups such as clubs, associations, organizations, institutions; between class versus class, family versus family or community versus community, etc. National conflicts include conflicts within a nation, involving groups within the nation. This could be interethnic, inter-religious or between segments of a nation's population. International conflicts are conflicts between different nations. This could be for ideological, etc., (Drukman,1993; Ball and Dunn, 1996; Folger, 1997). The End-SARS protests and disturbances have the features of these three types of conflict. It was an inter-group conflict between the Nigerian youths and the law-enforcement agencies, particularly the police (SARS), and was also a national conflict because it took place in major cities and parts of Nigeria (Lagos, Abuja, Port-Harcourt, Benin, Jos, Kaduna, etc.) and had national implications. However, it had some level of international outlook because of the outcry and show of concern from the international community, particularly Amnesty International, Human Rights Organizations and some national embassies; whose interest in the matter was mainly driven by ideological reasons.

From the perspective of the causes of conflict, which include, conflict over resources, conflict over psychological needs, conflict involving values and conflicts over inadequate information, (Azar, 1990; Folger, 1997); the End-SARS protestation was both a conflict involving values and a conflict over psychological needs. It was borne out of lack of respect for fundamental human rights of many Nigerians (particularly youths) by the Nigeria police over the years. Respect for human rights is a common principle of any true democracy and therefore its violation erodes the value system and can lead to conflict in the society. It was a conflict over psychological needs because Nigerian youths' psyche was negatively affected by the brutalization and fear for their lives; and also it affected their individual and group respect and they needed some sort of group self-actualization and empowerment in a nation with rising unemployment and poverty. The End-SARS protest was a movement, a "near-revolution" and characteristically, a major conflict by all ramifications.

### **End-SARS Protests/Crisis in Nigeria: A back/forward look**

The End-SARS protest which later turned violent and metamorphosed into disturbances and total chaos are series of events with too many memories and questions to be answered. The End-SARS issue affected Nigeria and Nigerians in a terrifying way judging from the impacts it had on individuals, families, institutions and the government. It came in form of a revolution, though it was abruptly interrupted by the Lekki shooting that left tens of people dead and many injured. Some persons have described the End-SARS protest as a movement because of its spirited direction and youth involvement that gave it the posture of a protest in the minds of the young generation ready for activism. Anele (2020) calls it a movement and states that "it is now time to analyze the End-SARS movement (or ESM from now onwards) as an attempted revolution triggered by the demand from Nigerian youths for complete overhaul of law enforcement agencies which later metamorphosed into a movement against bad governance and suffering in the country generally".

The idea of the End-SARS protests (movement) can be traced back to 2017 when a section of Nigerian youths used the hashtag to share their unpalatable experiences regarding unwanted human rights violations, particularly violence and brutality committed by the now defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The matter died down soon afterwards but was revived on October 3, 2020 when a message that went viral on social media indicated that SARS officers shot dead a young man, snatched his car and sped off with it without any trace of their whereabouts. This is recorded to have been the immediate action of SARS officers

that pulled the trigger, especially when a recorded video of the incident went viral. From that day, as the video circulated widely, the hashtag End-SARS gathered momentum and angry crowd mostly youths flooded some major streets of Lagos and a few cities across the country. They set out demanding that SARS unit of the Nigeria Police should be disbanded immediately.

In a matter of days, the protest spread across the southern states, Edo, Osun, Rivers, Anambra, Imo etc. Before the law enforcement agencies, particularly the police could fathom what was going on, they had become victims as a result of the infiltration of hoodlums into the peaceful and well organized protest by well-meaning Nigerian youths. The protests, further, gained momentum and publicity with the active participation of many well-known celebrities who decried the situation and personally recounted odious stories and experiences of harassment, intimidation, extortion, brutality and fatalities by the police. The End-SARS crisis lasted for about 15 days, leaving the country distraught, embarrassed and devastated. It created very many bad memories, especially because of the wanton killings, destruction and panic that erupted due to the activities of nefarious hoodlums that began to attack government institutions like police stations, correctional centres and other establishments.

In a context, the End-SARS protest can be seen as an incomplete or somewhat a failed revolution. It lacked the features of a successful revolution given how it ended. A successful revolution can be equated to the successful delivery of a new baby. The sufferings of pregnancy experienced by the potential mother during labour are analogous to the stress and pain that often accompanies revolutions. Unfortunately, just like a pregnancy can be aborted or terminated in a painful stillbirth, a revolution can be terminated or truncated for many reasons. The End-SARS protest seems to clearly fit into the above illustrations because of its characteristics and the way and manner in which it was truncated by the activities of hoodlums and the impact of the episode called the “Lekki Massacre”. Anele (2020) in his “Anatomy of End-SARS protests as an incomplete revolution (2)”, claims that mental stamina or toughness, resilience, huge personal sacrifices and, above all unwavering passion, commitment, creativity and timing for maximum impact are desiderata for successful revolutionary, praxis-revolutions are not for the faint-hearted. The fact remains that the End-SARS protests/crisis happened, and left heartfelt and indelible marks on Nigerians and Nigeria as a nation.

### **Application of Conflict Analysis on End-SARS Protests/Crisis for Critical Insights**

Conflict Analysis is a comprehensive set of tools that enables peace studies and conflict resolution students, conflict Management practitioners, social psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, etc., to gain insight into the hidden issues in conflict. It is truism that conflict exists in all human society and occurs at all levels of human interaction and coexistence ranging from interpersonal, intra-group, intergroup to communal, national and international levels or strata. The prevalence of conflicts in society makes it imperative that conflicts are properly examined and analyzed for useful details about them to be derived (Marks, 2012).

Conflict Analysis possesses the relevant and instructive tools for unraveling hidden and somewhat abstract contents of issues in conflict. These issues of conflict include causes, stages or phases of conflict, the stakeholders (groups or parties in conflict), and other conflict analytical techniques and mechanisms that are used for sound understanding of the origin and features of conflict in view of proffering sustainable solution or panacea to the conflict. Accompanying conflict analysis are conflict mapping and conflict tracking, both of which are tools that aid in the extensive appreciation of conflict details in terms of what is happening, what is at stake and what could be done to manage the challenges of conflict (Burton, 1990).

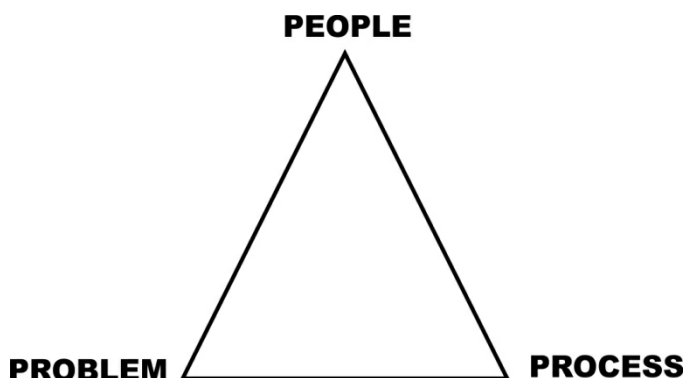
In this paper, all the existing tools of conflict analysis will not be employed in the effort to gain critical insights on the End-SARS protests/crisis in Nigeria. The two conflict analytical tools that will be applied include the Structural Analysis of Stakeholders and the PPP Model of Conflict Analysis. Firstly, Structural Analysis of Stakeholders: A stakeholder in a conflict is defined as those men and women, groups or parties who are directly involved in the conflict because of their pursuit of respective and opposing goals and interests (Mitchell, 1988). They are the real investors in the conflict. The table below indicates the various categories of stakeholders in the context of the End-SARS protests/ crisis in Nigeria:

| S/N | Categories of Stakeholders | Features of Stakeholders  | End-SARS Protests/Crisis Context  |
|-----|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Primary Stakeholders       | Individuals or groups whose goals are, or are perceived by them to be incompatible and who interact directly in pursuit of their respective goals/interest. They constitute direct investors in the conflict. | Nigerian youths<br>Nigeria police   |
| 2.  | Secondary Stakeholders     | These are groups affected directly by the outcome of the conflict but do not feel themselves to be directly involved. But with progression of the conflict, they may become primary stakeholders.             | Nigerian children, women, the elderly and the generality of Nigerians, Nigerian military institutions |
| 3.  | Interested Stakeholders    | These are groups that have interests in the conflict and they stand to benefit from outcomes of the conflict whether it turns out peaceful or conflictual.  | Hoodlums, some politicians, some media establishments, and unscrupulous/unpatriotic Nigerians.        |

**Secondly, Application of Five (5) Elements for Structural Analysis of End-SARS Protests/Crisis**

| S/N | Elements     | Features  | End-SARS Protests/Crisis Context  |
|-----|--------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Relationship | What is the interaction between the stakeholders?   | It was a case of the civilians suffering forms of maltreatment such as harassment, intimidation, extortion, brutality, extra-judicial killings, etc., in hands of the police. |
| 2.  | Agenda/Power | What are the intentions/targets of key stakeholders for the conflict and for attaining peace?                   | The Nigerian Youths came out enmasse to demonstrate and protest for an end to police brutality, and for peaceful co-existence between the police and citizens.                |
| 3.  | Needs        | What are the needs/aspirations of the different stakeholders, and which needs are in variance and overlappings? | The youths need freedom from maltreatment and the Nigeria Police needs to be reformed   |
| 4.  | Action       | What actions are the different stakeholders engaging to promote peace or conflict                               | Except for the hoodlums, if the needs of the primary stakeholders are met considerably through government reforms   |

Thirdly, the PPP Model of Conflicts Analysis can be quite informative and illustrative in producing hidden details about conflict. The diagram and tables below exemplifies this analytical tool:



In terms of the people in a conflict, the following questions arise:

- Who are the individuals and groups directly involved?
- Who will be affected by or can influence the outcome?
- What leadership and structure does each group have?
- How does each view the situation?
- What particular feelings, issues, etc., characterize each?
- What are the main discrepancies in perception?
- What communication, connections links does each have with the others?

In terms of the process in a conflict, the following questions are pertinent:

- What have been the sparking issues?
- Is there a historic pattern to their interaction?
- What is the process each would want to follow?
- As the conflict developed, what additional problems or issues emerged?
- What degree of polarization is there between each party?
- What activities of each party have and are intensifying the conflict?
- What role do more moderate individuals and groups have?

In terms of the problem in a conflict, the following questions emanate:

- What are the interests, needs and values of each party?
- What do they propose or pursue to meet them?
- What shared basic needs underlie the conflict? (Security, welfare, human rights, etc.)
- What are the minimal essential outcomes each party might be satisfied with?
- What are the basic areas of agreement (if any) and disagreement?
- What resources are there for dealing with the conflict? (within the parties? Others).
- What stage has the conflict reached – is it ripe for resolution/transformation?

Sources: “Understanding Conflict and War” PCR 271.

The PPP Model is a tool used for analyzing conflict by proffering answers to the several questions put forward above. The provision of unbiased and objective answers to these questions, can be very useful for knowing and understanding the causes or origin and stage of conflict, the parties involved, their positions, needs and aspirations, perceptions, values and differences. This helps to provide information for the amicable resolution of conflict and the realization of sustainable peace to previously conflicting parties and society in general. Below are concise and simple responses to the End-SARS issue according to PPP Model:

#### **Responses to Questions about People:**

In the context of End-SARS protests, the people involved directly, that is the primary stakeholders were the Nigerian youths and the military institution, particularly the Nigeria Police (SARS); the entire nation was affected by the outcome of the protest and the government had the capacity, at least to a considerable extent, to influence the outcomes. The Nigerian youths who carried out the protests had no leadership structure while the law enforcement agencies involved were all taking orders from their superior officers, marking a difference in the structure of organization between the two conflicting groups; the protest resulted to a clear confrontation between the youths and police in which each party was suspicious of each other’s motives and intentions. It was a huge loss on both sides with the death of many youths, police officers, army officers and wanton destruction of properties. There were mutual feelings of suspicion, antagonism and desperation. The main discrepancies in perception arose from lack of trust in government institutions and government officials and the social media played significant roles in the mobilization of Nigerian youths during the protests; and directly affected the propensity and magnitude as well as the organization and popularity of the protests/crisis. Also, other media influenced in different ways how the protest/crisis eventually turned out.



**Responses to Questions about Process:**

The sparking issues of the End-SARS protests were mainly police brutality and maltreatment of Nigerians, the failure of government to reform the police despite several promises to do that in the past and the high level of unemployment, hunger and deprivation (poverty), insecurity and the crunch of the covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. There have been reports of police brutality and extra-judicial killings for over a decade and the operations of the SARS men and some police officers made the public see them as “enemies on uniform”, that cannot be trusted or relied upon for the security of life and property. This scenario created and inspired the youths to protest. Most Nigerians condemned the nefarious activities of these police officers and called for government’s sincerity and police reforms.

**Responses to Questions about Problem:**

In the context of the problem with regards to End-SARS crisis, the interest and need of each party was for a peaceful society to prevail. Fundamentally, the shared basic needs that underlie the protest is security of life and property of Nigerians because at some point, it appeared as if the SARS men can do anything and get away with it; they became lawless with so much impunity. Going forward, the parties and all Nigerians need to peacefully co-exist in a free, safe and united Nigeria, considering the present steps and measures that governments have put in place to counter the outcomes and effects of protest/crisis. The setting up of Judicial Panels of Inquiry into the activities of some SARS and police officers, the reconciliation and compensation of victims of police brutality and some other measures towards police reforms are signs of hope for a better relationship between Nigerians, particularly Nigerian youths and the Nigeria Police. At this stage, the protest can be seen to have made its own significant level of impact in the positive transformation of the Nigerian state.

**Implications of End-SARS Protests/Crisis on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

The End-SARS protests and disturbances have no doubt taken its immediate toll on Nigerians and Nigeria as a nation. However, the entire episode had tremendous impact on the Nigerian society that transcends across all spheres of life. Even though the primary stakeholders (the Nigerian youths and Nigeria Police) were more affected and devastated, the entire country felt and suffered its remote impacts with the long term implications to live with into the future. Both the immediate and long term effects have cultural, political, psychological and critical socio-economic implications that have far-reaching and historical undertones (Adeyanju,2020) quoted in Sunday Vanguard (2020).

Like other similar actions, including revolutions, and in this case strong widespread youth dominated protest hijacked by some hoodlums and miscreants, there is bound to be some social and economic issues and challenges that will emanate both during its execution and afterwards. Therefore, there will be socio-economic costs and effects with diverse implications for the development of Nigeria. Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezue (2013) see socio-economic development as, “a popular concept that is entirely about development that impacts on the life of people in terms of their social status, welfare and relationships as well as their economic processes, activities and dynamics”. Because of the nexus between socio-economic activities and human phenomena, cultural, psychological and political issues and activities in society, socio-economic development has multiplier effects on these other aspects of human development and therefore critical to human and societal advancement (Esomonu, 2013).

In considering the implications of the End-SARS crisis on the socio-economic development of Nigeria, the paper focused on its impacts, challenges and prospects in terms of the wealth and welfare of individuals and families, economy of families, institutions, organizations and national development in entirety. Firstly, the basic idea of the protest was generated and motivated by the infringement of the rights of many Nigerians from all walks of life; to say that there was violations of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians, both the Nigerian youths, Police officers and many other citizens is a clear understatement. Many Nigerians suffered untold rights violations and acts of dehumanization that is not healthy for any nation, let alone a developing nation with a nascent democracy facing the challenges of nation building. One of the major

factors that undermine human and societal development is lack of freedom, peace and respect for human rights, which are ethos of a purposeful nation. Kumolu (2020) avers that from the legal point of view that the group of soldiers and those who authorized them to shoot at innocent unarmed protesters at Lekki Toll Gate violated the rights of the protesters. The violation of human rights before and during the End-SARS protests/crisis was quite extensive as it had all forms of human debasement; from harassment, abuse, intimidation, extortion to severe brutality and outright extra-judicial killings. Various newspaper reports had captions such as, “#EndSARS: How clergyman lost fiancée, tooth to police brutality”, “Brutal Police Officers” in 12 states named, Lagos, Abuja top list”, “Man seeks justice over alleged brutalization by soldiers”, “Torture: Atiku calls for a review of SARS activities”, “Two arrested for allegedly eating roasted Police Officers’ flesh”, “Lekki shooting: Soldiers carried live and blank bullets -General”. These headlines and the stories they carried depict the level of violence, violation of human rights, cannibalism and human degradation that pre-existed and accompanied the End-SARS crisis. A report in The Nation (2020) claims that, “an Inspector, a Sergeant, and a corporal were not only accused of extra-judicial killings, they were also said to have refused to release the corpses of their victims to their families for burial”. Perhaps, one of the major gains of the protests is that it has helped to expose the level of rot in some of the law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police and exposed the level of human right violations as well as the poor relationship between the police and Nigerians. In observation of all these issues, the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu tells the police that Nigerians are now more conscious of their rights. Individuals, families and communities suffered some irredeemable losses with longtime memories of the impact of the End-SARS protests/crisis.

Economic wise, the fallout of the End-SARS crisis was simply overwhelming and outrageous. It was unprecedented and unimaginable considering how it all started. It was a protest that started on a clear cause and course because the Nigerian youths expressed their motives and exhibited an unexpected level of decorum and high sense of organization that shocked the older generation who had expected that in such circumstances the youths will most likely be confrontational, rascally and possibly violent. However, this was not the case until some miscreants and hoodlum infiltrated the well-organized protest and began to destroy government and personal structures, massive looting, discretion of Oba of Lagos Palace, burning of Lagos Mass Transit buses and other forms of mayhem across parts of the country. In fact, Nigeria was in sorry state with rising chaos and lawlessness in many state capitals and some major cities across the country (The Guardian, 2020).

The level of socio-economic interruptions and economic wastages was just incredibly alarming and unjustifiable. In Lagos State, the nation’s economic nerve centre alone, even though the official value of properties destroyed during the October mayhem has not been detailed, it has been estimated that over N1trillion may be required to rebuild public and private property destroyed during the crisis. Ironically, the state’s entire annual budget is about that same amount (Agbonkhese, 2020). Some landmark properties destroyed in Lagos include, Lagos High Court, Palace of the Oba of Lagos, Oyingbo BRT terminus; Lagos State public works corporation, Lagos City Hall and Circle Hall, Lekki; Ojodu Berger; Vehicle Inspection Office, Ojodu Berger; The Nations Newspaper, Television Intercontinental (TVC) and Shoprite Lekki. About 25 police stations were burnt down by hoodlums and they include; Orile, Amukoko, Layeni, Ilasamaja, Ikotun, Ajah, Igando, Elemoro, Makinde, Onipanu, Ebute Ero, Pen-Cinema, Amuwo-Odofin, Surulere, etc. Some other police stations were not burnt but vandalized and properties looted. The total costs of the destroyed 87 BRT vehicles have been put at about N3.9Billion (Sunday Vanguard, 2020).

Also, there were several destructions of government establishments and attack at police divisions with some burnt down. In states like Cross River, Oyo, Delta, Kwara, Osun, Plateau, Kaduna, Ekiti, Edo, Ogun, Kano, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, there were destructions of private and government assets. In some states, particularly Edo (Benin), a correctional centre was attacked and some prisoners escaped. Private properties and ventures of some prominent Nigerians were damaged and looted. By Day-14 of the protest, the country was estimated by the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (LCCI), to have lost more than

N700billion in economic value (Agbonkhese,2020). The impact reflected even at the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), as the demand for equities drastically reduced on the trading floor with a huge loss of N113billion market capitalization as it went from N14.983 trillion to N14.870trillion. This was owing to the disposition of most investors, who, rather than investing, showed more concern about the safety of their investments (Sunday Vanguard, 2020).

The introduction of curfews in some states as a way of curtailing the activities of the rampaging hoodlums further slowed down economic activities and improvised people that rely on daily job and pay to survive. It was estimated that for every single day that Lagos observed a curfew, the state loses about N54billion. As a state that contributes approximately 30% to Nigeria's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the implications of the totality of curfews observed throughout the crisis on the nation's overall GDP was colossal (Thisday, 2020). The structures and properties destroyed across different states undermined both industrial and economic productivity and growth of the nation; and definitely heightened poverty, inflation and unemployment. According to some experts on economic development, the gross implication of these losses is that the government (both federal and sub-national) will incur extra budgetary expenditure to fix damaged infrastructures and replace looted assets. This might make the governments to go into further borrowing, thereby increasing the nation's debt burden. This has profound micro and macro-economic implications that undermine the nation's economic growth and pose some futuristic challenges on national planning and sustainable development. There will be further rise in the level of poverty and deprivation as well as unemployment and crime. It will also bring about reduction in foreign investments and create more pressure in the foreign exchange market. In summary, the protest was an economic disaster on an economy that is already weakened by the Covid-19 pandemic and the fluctuations in oil value. The most critical economic implication of the above illustrations of the socio- economic woos of the End-SARS crisis is the deeper decline in standard of living, which has multiplier effects on wellbeing and productivity of citizens and consequently national productivity.

Furthermore, the government believes that the social media played a major role in the effective mobilization and organization of the End-SARS protests; and therefore is proposing to regulate the social media. If the government succeeds in carrying out this plan, which is already generating debates and apathy, it will have far-reaching social and economic implications. Even some persons believe that this is the digital age and therefore regulating the social media will not be possible, let alone desirable. The implementation will affect social relationships, social activities and businesses, and may result to innocent people being sent to jail (Kumolu, 2020). It will greatly undermine social and economic activities and impacts adversely on national productivity and economic growth in the country. In consonance with Dahrendorf,s conflict and consensus submissions (theories), the way forward for the Nigerian government is to employ the strategy of strict adherence to democratic principles which are in tandem with peaceful co- existence and national integration.

### **Conclusion**

The End-SARS protests and disturbances can never be forgotten in the history of Nigeria because of its impact as a movement and a crisis. The Conflict Analysis of the End-SARS crisis gives critical insights on its nature, characteristics and post-conflict status. The End-SARS protest was organized and executed by well-meaning Nigerian youths but was cut short by the infiltration of some hoodlum who inflicted huge destruction, vandalization and looting of private and public assets and properties; and the clash between the Nigerian military and protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate.

The entire crisis brought about huge losses that ran into a few trillions and further weakened the nation's economy. Its implications, socio-economically, can only be estimated but it has no doubt resulted to a poorer economy with lower GDP, thereby increasing the level of unemployment and poverty, inflation, reduction in foreign investment, etc. The indelible marks of violations of human rights in form of brutalization, extra-judicial killings and other forms of maltreatment by SARS and some police officers remain a nightmare that should never be allowed to reoccur in Nigeria. The End-SARS protests should yield the end of citizens'

brutality, violations of human rights and governments' intolerance for peaceful demonstrations, as well as governments' insensitivity towards issues capable of causing protests, uprisings, insurrections, agitations for ethnic secession and national insecurity. Government should employ political will to take drastic actions in order to ensure stability and progress in the country.

### **Recommendations**

In order to forestall the reoccurrence of suchlike crisis and ensure constructive efforts towards socio-economic recovery and development of the country, the following measures were advocated:

The main issue that led to the End-SARS protests and disturbances was the total disregard and violation of many Nigerians fundamental human rights by the law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police. Therefore, the government and all of its security apparatus and agencies should ensure that they get totally committed to observing and respecting the fundamental human rights of all citizens; and never to engage in policies or actions that restrain Nigerians from moving about freely and exercising their legitimate personal, group or inter-group and organizational businesses. Nigerians should not be restrained from externalizing their disagreements, grievances, worries, sufferings, fears and injustices. As a developing democracy, Nigeria should endeavour to strengthen its democratic principles, particularly freedom of expression and association, and peaceful demonstration.

The government should urgently execute radical and substantial reforms of the security and law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigeria police. There is no doubt the Nigeria Police is inept, poorly equipped, lacks modern training and development and has some overzealous and sadistic officers who need to be psychologically examined and reformed to function according to the rules of engagement and the laws of Nigeria. The damage to the law enforcement and national security system as a result of the End-SARS crisis was horrendous, and years of poor leadership and infrastructural decay have eroded the integrity of the law enforcement agencies. Consequently, the Nigeria police is sapped of its strength, morale and reputation, and therefore it is time for a complete and radical reform of the Nigeria Police. This is the view of most Nigerians, as was reaffirmed by Adegboyega (2020), which states that "we cannot afford another End-SARS protest, as President Muhammadu Buhari himself observed. But it is beyond rhetoric. Part of where to begin is in the budgetary allocation to the police force. As a matter of fact, that is the appropriate starting point for an authentic police reform".

The government should intensify efforts towards concrete socio-economic development by investing in sectors and infrastructures that will create jobs, encourage small and medium scale enterprises, widen business opportunities and generally empower Nigerians to be more successful both at getting jobs and at creating employment for themselves. This will help to engage many jobless and restive youths and avert any recurrence of protests while calming tensions in various parts of the country.

The government should realize that ours is a struggling economy, which needs to exploit the overwhelming potentials of the youths towards its economic diversification agenda by pursuing a wealth creating economy that will be youth-based. There is need to increase investment in the young people through increased budgetary allocation to education, incentives for effective young entrepreneurs, programmes for massive skill acquisition among youths by providing functioning skill acquisition centres in all the 36 states, as well as supporting SMEs, run by youths with start-up funds. The Bank of Industry (BOI) should develop a special scheme to provide soft loans for the youths. The government should go beyond the Policy of "Ease of Doing Business", and do more to provide the enabling business incentives and environment that can adequately encourage creativity and innovation among the teeming young population in the country. What Nigeria does with her youths today will go a long way to determine the future of the nation.

The End-SARS crisis negatively affected many businesses, including the vandalization and looting suffered by foreign businesses, which can influence some foreign investors to keep away from Nigeria. The contributions of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the nation's GDP is quite significant and should be

fostered by the government putting ample efforts to rebuild the confidence of foreign investors and the international community to continue to invest in the country.

The government should rethink its plan to regulate the social media, which it believes was responsible for the level of mobilization, organization and popularity of the End-SARS movement. For an economy seeking for ways to diversify, to regulate social media will adversely affect the growth of businesses and undermine industrial productivity and economic growth through the limitation of communication between people and organizations. Its focus should be to take full advantage of the social media to relate and engage citizens positively and rebuild trust between government and citizens. This will help to bring down tensions among Nigerians and some level of consensus over discordant views, opinions, ideologies and ethnic parochial interests, as well as propagate national integration and nation building.

The Judicial Panels of Inquiry set up by some state governments to look into the activities of SARS officers (Nigeria Police) and some other law enforcement agencies is quite commendable but it is a post-conflict measure that will be unnecessary if adequate proactive steps were taken to forestall bad police service in the country. The compensations for victims are good but for the dead, disabled, depressed and brutalized citizens, it is all about sufferings and losses that could have been avoided; with the effective implementation of these recommendations, it is expected that a reoccurrence of this youth uprising will be averted and pre-existing unrest and social tensions will minimize while creating a more conducive environment for dealing with the socio-economic implications of the crisis and improving national productivity and economic development in Nigeria.

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