

Impact of End-SARS on Academic Performance of Students of Political Science Education in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The End-SARS protest, which erupted across Nigeria in October 2020, marked a significant moment in the country's contemporary civic and political history. Sparked by public outrage against police brutality—particularly by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)—the movement rapidly expanded into a national call for systemic reform. This study investigates the impact of the End-SARS protest on academic performance, youth engagement, and economic stability, with a focus on students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. Adopting a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 200 students selected through a multistage sampling technique across five faculties. A structured questionnaire was used to gather responses, which were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages. Findings reveal that the protest significantly disrupted students' academic activities, reduced study time, and contributed to delays in the academic calendar. Many students reported cognitive and emotional distress linked to the unrest. Beyond academics, the protest influenced youth engagement by fostering a stronger sense of political awareness and collective identity. Economically, students observed substantial losses among small and medium enterprises, reduced consumer spending, and business closures, especially in protest-affected areas. The study concludes that while the End-SARS protest served as a powerful expression of youth frustration and demand for justice, it also had unintended consequences for students' academic progression and economic well-being. The research highlights the need for institutions and policymakers to develop crisis-responsive strategies that safeguard educational continuity and support youth resilience during periods of social upheaval.

Keywords: End-SARS Protest, Academic Performance, Youth Engagement, Economic Stability, Nigerian University Students, Civic Activism, Social Disruption



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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has a long history of civic unrest and public resistance, particularly when citizens perceive a failure of governance. Over the decades, protests have served as a means of expressing collective dissatisfaction with various aspects of state policy—from colonial oppression and military dictatorship to fuel subsidy removal and electoral irregularities (Oyebode, 2022). However, none has captured the attention of both national and international observers in recent times quite

like the End-SARS protest of October 2020. What began as an online campaign against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)—a controversial unit of the Nigerian Police Force accused of harassment, extortion, and extrajudicial killings—soon evolved into a massive, youth-led civil movement that called for broader reforms in governance, justice, and accountability (Omeni, 2022). Across major cities, thousands of young Nigerians, including university students, took to the

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streets, demanding not only the disbandment of SARS but also an end to decades of systemic injustice and state-sanctioned violence. The protest, while initially peaceful, was eventually disrupted by external elements, including armed thugs and overzealous security operatives. The aftermath was grim: loss of lives, destruction of public and private property, widespread fear, and an unprecedented disruption of public order (Agbo, 2023). Educational institutions, which had just begun to recover from the lockdown imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, were once again forced to halt activities. Students—many of whom were directly involved in the protests—faced academic delays, psychological distress, and increased uncertainty about their academic futures.

Beyond the disruptions to learning, the End-SARS protest revealed a deeper socio-economic vulnerability, particularly among the youth. Nigeria's youth, who constitute more than 60% of the population (Henrietta, 2021), are frequently unemployed, underrepresented in policy-making, and disproportionately affected by economic shocks. During the protest, the closure of businesses, blocking of major roads, and looting of shops dealt a heavy blow to the nation's already fragile economy. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—many run by or catering to students—were particularly affected. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2020 estimated that the country lost over ₦700 billion in economic value due to the protest and its fallout. While several journalistic and institutional reports have captured the events of End-SARS, there remains a paucity of empirical research that documents how this protest affected students in tertiary institutions, particularly about their academic performance, patterns of civic engagement, and socio-economic wellbeing. Existing studies on protest culture in Nigeria have largely focused on labour union movements, student unionism, or macro-political events (Houeland, 2022; Oyeboode, 2022; Onivehu, 2021; Ogunbodede et al.,

2020), but the End-SARS protest represents a newer, decentralised form of resistance—mobilised largely through digital platforms and fueled by a generation often dismissed as apathetic.

This study focuses on students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, who, like many others across the country, were directly impacted by the protest's ripple effects. Their experiences offer a localised lens through which to assess how the movement disrupted educational routines, shaped perceptions of civic participation, and affected economic livelihoods. By investigating the impact of the End-SARS protest on academic performance, youth engagement, and economic stability, this study aims to contribute to a growing but still underdeveloped body of scholarship on youth activism and social movements in Nigeria. The findings are expected to inform educational policy, youth development programming, and institutional responses to future civic disruptions.

History of Protest in Nigeria

Protest culture in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon; it is deeply woven into the fabric of the nation's historical and political evolution (Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024). Long before independence, collective resistance served as a tool through which Nigerians expressed dissatisfaction, fought injustice, and pushed back against systems of oppression. Over the decades, the country has witnessed a diverse array of protests—ranging from grassroots uprisings and labour strikes to student-led demonstrations and, more recently, digital mobilisations (Lawal et al., 2025). These movements have not only reflected the frustrations of various segments of society but have also shaped the nation's political trajectory. One of the earliest and most impactful protests in colonial Nigeria was the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, also referred to as the Women's War (Uchendu & Okonkwo, 2021). It was a mass protest led by Igbo women in southeastern Nigeria against British-imposed taxation and administrative policies. Far from being a spontaneous

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outburst, it was a well-organised and coordinated act of civil disobedience that challenged colonial authority (KofarNaisa, 2018). This moment signalled the beginning of formal protest as a tool of political negotiation in Nigeria and highlighted the active role women played in political life even in pre-independence times.

In the mid-20th century, the nationalist struggle against British colonialism gave rise to another form of organised resistance. Political leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony Enahoro, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti utilised protests, publications, and political mobilisation to demand independence and social justice (Friday & Oghenerioborue, 2022). Newspapers like *Iwe Irohin* and *West African Pilot* were not merely media outlets but instruments of protest journalism—serving as platforms for dissent, mobilisation, and public education. Post-independence Nigeria saw a continuation of this protest tradition, albeit in new forms. The “Ali Must Go” student protest of 1978, sparked by the federal government’s plan to increase meal ticket prices in universities, remains one of the most iconic demonstrations in Nigeria’s student activism history. It led to a violent crackdown, the death of some students, and a new consciousness about student power and government accountability (Oyekanmi et al., 2023). Similarly, the June 12 movement of the 1990s, which protested the annulment of the 1993 presidential election, mobilised civil society groups, labour unions, and pro-democracy activists against military rule.

In the democratic era, protests have continued to serve as vital instruments of civic engagement. The Occupy Nigeria protest of January 2012, organised in response to the sudden removal of fuel subsidies, drew thousands into the streets. It united a cross-section of Nigerians—students, professionals, traders, and the unemployed—who demanded economic justice and transparent governance (Young, 2021). Digital technology, particularly social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, began to play a central

role in organising and amplifying these movements. What distinguishes the End-SARS protest of 2020 from previous protests is not only its scale and intensity, but also its digital infrastructure and decentralised leadership. Youths across the country, many of them university students or recent graduates, organised rallies, provided mutual aid, and documented human rights abuses—all in real time using smartphones and hashtags. The EndSARS movement was not just a call to end police brutality; it became a broader cry against systemic injustice, youth unemployment, bad governance, and economic exclusion (Akanle & Uzিয়েy, 2023).

Another unique feature of the End-SARS protest is its emotional and psychological depth. Unlike past protests driven primarily by economic hardship or political demands, this movement was sparked by years of lived trauma—police harassment, unlawful arrests, and the fear of being profiled based on appearance or possession of modern gadgets like smartphones and laptops (Olanrewaju, 2025). This made the protest deeply personal, especially for students and young professionals. Within this historical arc, the End-SARS movement stands as both a continuation and a transformation of Nigeria's protest tradition. It reflects a lineage of public resistance that dates back to the colonial period, while simultaneously signalling a new era of youth-led, tech-enabled activism. Understanding this lineage is essential to appreciating the significance of End-SARS—not as an isolated incident, but as part of a broader, evolving culture of civic resistance in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In October 2020, Nigeria witnessed one of the most significant youth-led social movements in its recent history—the End-SARS protest. Initially sparked by public outrage over the brutality of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force, the protest rapidly evolved into a nationwide demand for systemic reform, particularly in how young people are treated by state institutions. While the protest began

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peacefully, it was later marred by violent clashes, looting, curfews, and large-scale disruption of public and private life (Ekup-Nse, 2024). Among the sectors most affected by this unrest was the educational system. The protest coincided with the tail end of COVID-19 lockdowns, during which students had already experienced prolonged academic delays. As demonstrations intensified, many universities—already grappling with infrastructural and operational challenges—were forced to suspend academic activities, delay exams, and re-adjust academic calendars. Students not only lost valuable instructional time but were also exposed to emotional, financial, and environmental instability. However, despite widespread media coverage and political commentary, there remains a significant gap in empirical studies that document and analyse the actual academic and developmental impacts of the protest on students in tertiary institutions. Moreover, while the End-SARS movement was rooted in calls for justice, it also unveiled a deeper crisis: youth disillusionment with governance, law enforcement, and economic opportunity. The Nigerian youth, who make up over 60% of the country's population, are often unemployed or underemployed, underrepresented in decision-making, and over-policed in both real and digital spaces (Virk et al., 2023). The protest became a symbol of generational frustration, civic awakening, and a call for respect, visibility, and opportunity. Yet, how this civic engagement experience has shaped students' worldviews, psychological safety, and academic orientation remains underexplored in the academic literature. In addition to the socio-academic consequences, the economic implications of the protest were also profound. Despite these clear impacts, there is a lack of integrated studies that analyse the intersection of protest, education, youth engagement, and economic stability.

Furthermore, existing studies on student activism in Nigeria have largely focused on union-led protests or strikes related to institutional grievances (Taofeeq, 2023). The

End-SARS protest represents a new form of decentralised, socially driven mobilisation that calls for broader interrogation. Understanding how students in a public university like Adekunle Ajasin University experienced and interpreted these events is essential, not only for academic discourse but also for designing effective education, security, and youth policies. This study is therefore necessary to fill the identified gaps. It seeks to examine how the End-SARS protest affected students' academic performance, shaped youth engagement patterns, and impacted economic conditions—particularly through the lens of students who lived through the experience. It is expected that the findings will provide useful insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and youth development practitioners concerned with building more resilient and responsive systems.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is the investigate the impact of End-SARS on students' academic performance in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. These are:

1. To investigate the impact of the End-SARS protest on academic performance of students in political science/civic education.
2. To determine the effect of End-SARS protest among youth in tertiary institutions.
3. To find out the causes of End-SARS protest in Nigeria as a nation.
4. To investigate how End-SARS protest affected the Nigerian economy.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does the impact of the End-SARS protest affect academic performance of students in political science?
2. What are the effects of End-SARS protest among youth in tertiary institutions?
3. What are the consequences of End-SARS protests in Nigeria?
4. How did the End-SARS protest affect the Nigerian economy?

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METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for collecting and analysing data related to the perceptions, experiences, and observed impacts of social phenomena design was chosen to enable the researchers to gather first-hand, empirical data on how the protest influenced students’ academic performance, youth engagement, and economic stability, using structured instruments administered within a natural setting. The population comprised all undergraduate students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. These students were considered appropriate for the study as they experienced the End-SARS protest during their academic calendar, thus providing valuable insights into its multidimensional effects. A total of 200 students were selected through a multistage sampling technique. Initially, five faculties were randomly selected from the university. Within each selected faculty, simple random sampling was used to choose 40 students across various departments, ensuring diversity in academic backgrounds and exposure to protest-related events. This approach enhanced the representativeness of the sample and minimised selection bias. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “End-SARS Impact Assessment Inventory (ESIAI)”, developed by the researchers in line with the study’s objectives and research questions. Each section included Likert-scale items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to capture quantitative responses. To ensure content and face validity, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and one in Sociology of Education, all from Adekunle Ajasin

University. Their feedback led to the refinement of ambiguous and contextually irrelevant items. Reliability was established through the test-retest method using a pilot sample of 30 students (not included in the final study). The responses were subjected to Cronbach’s Alpha reliability analysis, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Questionnaires were personally administered by the researchers with the assistance of trained research assistants, following ethical guidelines for voluntary participation and anonymity. The process took place over two weeks in various lecture theatres, hostels, and campus facilities. Data collected were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores were used to answer the research questions. Where appropriate, cross-tabulations were used to explore relationships between demographic variables and responses. such as the End-SARS protest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: To what extent does the impact of the End-SARS protest affect academic performance of students in political science?

Table I. Impact of the End-SARS Protest on Academic Performance of Political Science Students (N = 200)

Item	A	A	D	SD	Total
1. I had enough time to study during the End-SARS protest	16 (8%)	14 (7%)	56 (28%)	114 (57%)	200
2. The End-SARS protest affected my cognitive behaviour	18 (9%)	28 (14%)	90 (45%)	64 (32%)	200

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Item	A	A	D	SD	Total
3. The End-SARS protest did not affect my academic performance	10 (5%)	22 (11%)	64 (32%)	104 (52%)	200
4. I did not have time to study during the End-SARS protest	12 (6%)	26 (13%)	70 (35%)	92 (46%)	200
5. I support the youth protest against police brutality and impunity	12 (6%)	28 (14%)	84 (42%)	76 (38%)	200

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree. Percentages are in parentheses.

Table 1 presents students' responses on how the End-SARS protest affected their academic performance, particularly among Political Science students at Adekunle Ajasin University. A significant majority of the respondents (85%) disagreed with the statement that they had enough time to study during the protest. This suggests that the upheaval caused by the protest substantially disrupted students' study routines and academic focus. Furthermore, 77% of the respondents disagreed that the protest directly affected their cognitive behaviour, indicating that while the protest interfered with practical aspects like study time, it may not have severely impacted their mental processing or engagement on a psychological level. Interestingly, 84% disagreed with the idea that the protest did not affect their academic performance—implying that the majority believed their performance was indeed affected in one way or another, despite not always explicitly linking it to psychological

strain. In terms of time management, 81% also disagreed with the claim that they had time to study during the protest period, reinforcing the earlier point about academic disruption. Finally, responses to the item regarding support for youth protests against police brutality showed a mixed stance: 58% disagreed, while 20% agreed. This suggests that although students may have been sympathetic to the cause, they might have been conflicted about the disruptive consequences of the protest. Overall, these findings point to a clear disruption in students' academic lives during the End-SARS protest, especially in terms of study time and academic performance. However, the psychological effects appear less severe, and students held varying opinions on the legitimacy or impact of the protest itself.

Research Question Two: To determine the effect of End-SARS protest among youth in tertiary institutions.

Table II. Effects of the End-SARS Protest Among Youth in Tertiary Institutions (N = 200)

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
6. The protest disrupted academic activities in schools	94 (47%)	68 (34%)	16 (8%)	22 (11%)	200
7. The protest contributed to increased cybercrime among youth	112 (56%)	44 (22%)	22 (11%)	22 (11%)	200
8. Public infrastructural facilities were destroyed during the protest	82 (41%)	82 (41%)	28 (14%)	8 (4%)	200
9. The protest led to school drop-out	66 (33%)	58 (29%)	42 (21%)	34 (17%)	200

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Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
among some students					
10. Youths experienced assaults, harassment, and extortion during the protest	88 (44%)	88 (44%)	16 (8%)	8 (4%)	200

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree. Percentages are shown in parentheses.

Table 2 explores how students perceived the broader effects of the End-SARS protest among youth in tertiary institutions. One of the most striking findings is that 81% of respondents agreed that the protest significantly disrupted academic activities in schools. This underscores a key impact of the movement—students were not just emotionally involved but also faced institutional shutdowns and interrupted learning schedules. A high percentage (78%) also believed that the protest was linked to a rise in cybercrime among youth. This could suggest that the social unrest and temporary loss of structured academic environments may have contributed to some young people turning to digital forms of crime, possibly as a form of protest, rebellion, or economic survival. When asked about the destruction of public infrastructure, an overwhelming 82% of students agreed that such damage occurred. This highlights the tangible, visible aftermath of the protest, which extended beyond voices on the street to physical damage in cities and campuses alike. Responses to school drop-out rates were more divided, though 62% still agreed that some students may have been pushed out of school due to the consequences of the protest, whether from trauma, economic hardship, or academic setbacks. Lastly, 88% of respondents agreed that the protest resulted in assaults, harassment, and extortion, further showing that the safety and security of

youths—especially students—were compromised during the unrest. In summary, students widely perceived the End-SARS protest as having deep ripple effects in the educational sector, not only halting learning but also exposing youth to new risks—both social and psychological. While the protest was initiated as a peaceful outcry against police brutality, its broader consequences were felt across academic, infrastructural, and personal dimensions.

Research Question Three: What are the consequences of End-SARS protest in Nigeria?

Table III. Perceived Consequences of the End-SARS Protest in Nigeria (N = 200)

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
11. Public infrastructural facilities were destroyed	106 (53%)	60 (30%)	18 (9%)	16 (8%)	200
12. Protesters were subjected to extra-judicial killings	70 (35%)	92 (46%)	28 (14%)	10 (5%)	200
13. The protest led to the destruction of lives and property	108 (54%)	66 (33%)	8 (4%)	18 (9%)	200
14. Government and corporate websites were hacked	94 (47%)	82 (41%)	14 (7%)	10 (5%)	200
15. The protest disrupted academic activities in schools	74 (37%)	80 (40%)	30 (15%)	16 (8%)	200

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree. Percentages are shown in parentheses.

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Table 3 provides insights into students' views on the national consequences of the End-SARS protest beyond just its academic or campus-level impacts. A significant majority of the respondents (83%) agreed that the protest led to the destruction of public infrastructural facilities. This reflects a shared recognition among students that while the protest began with peaceful intentions, it eventually led to damage of government and communal assets—such as buildings, roads, and public offices—especially after it was hijacked by non-peaceful elements. Equally notable is that 81% of students agreed that the protest resulted in extra-judicial killings, pointing to a grim reality in which citizens—many of them young people—lost their lives. This emphasises the tragic turn of events during the protest, which was originally intended to address police brutality but ended up further exposing citizens to violence. An even larger number, 87%, acknowledged the destruction of lives and property, highlighting the scale and severity of the protest's impact across various Nigerian cities. This aligns with widespread media reports and eyewitness accounts about attacks on both private and public properties. Interestingly, 88% of the respondents also agreed that there were instances of hacking into websites of public ministries, departments, and corporate organisations, suggesting that the digital space was also used as a tool for protest. This dimension reveals how the movement extended beyond the streets into cyber-activism and digital resistance, possibly carried out by sympathisers of the cause. Finally, 77% agreed that the protest led to the disruption of academic activities, reaffirming earlier data from Table 2 that education was one of the major sectors affected. Overall, Table 3 paints a comprehensive picture of how

students perceive the End-SARS protest—not only as a social movement but also as an event with far-reaching consequences: loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, digital disruptions, and educational instability. It reflects a collective student consciousness that recognises both the necessity of resistance and the painful cost that came with it.

Research Question Four: How did the End-SARS protest affect the Nigerian economy?

Table IV. Perceived Economic Effects of the End-SARS Protest on Nigeria (N = 200)

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
16. Revenue was lost from small and medium-scale industries	106 (53%)	60 (30%)	18 (9%)	16 (8%)	200
17. Consumer spending on non-essential goods dropped noticeably	70 (35%)	92 (46%)	28 (14%)	10 (5%)	200
18. Major airport activities and economic operations were halted due to road blockades	108 (54%)	66 (33%)	8 (4%)	18 (9%)	200
19. The protest led to short-term economic consequences for the people	94 (47%)	82 (41%)	14 (7%)	10 (5%)	200
20. Academic disruption indirectly affected economic output and productivity	74 (37%)	80 (40%)	30 (15%)	16 (8%)	200

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree. Percentages are shown in parentheses.

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Table 4 examines how students perceive the economic impact of the End-SARS protest on Nigeria. The responses show that students are not only aware of the social and academic implications of the protest but also conscious of its economic consequences at both local and national levels. An overwhelming 83% of respondents agreed that the protest resulted in significant revenue losses for small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). This is particularly important because many of these businesses are youth-driven or located in urban areas most affected by the protest and subsequent unrest. Looting, closures, and curfews severely affected these enterprises, many of which serve as livelihood sources for students and their families. Additionally, 81% of students agreed that there was a drop in consumer spending on non-essential goods, a clear indicator of economic uncertainty. When people feel insecure—due to protests, violence, or instability—they tend to cut back on spending, especially on goods they can live without. This can lead to a downturn in local markets and services. Notably, 87% of the respondents affirmed that the protest led to the shutdown of Nigeria's busiest airports and major roads, resulting in halted economic activities. These disruptions affected logistics, travel, and trade across states, compounding the already strained economy, still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, 88% of respondents observed that there were short-term economic consequences for individuals, such as job losses, income cuts, and disrupted livelihoods. This response reflects students' awareness of how even a few days of social unrest can ripple through household incomes and national revenue streams. Lastly, 77% agreed that the academic disruptions caused by the protest had indirect economic implications, such as reduced productivity,

postponed graduations, and delayed workforce entry for students. In other words, when education is paused, future economic contributions from students are also delayed. In summary, Table 4 reveals that students understand the End-SARS protest as not just a moment of political and social resistance, but also as a significant economic event—one that affected businesses, consumer behaviour, national infrastructure, and personal livelihoods. Their responses show a nuanced awareness of how civil unrest can shake a country's financial and developmental trajectory.

Discussion

This study investigated the multifaceted impact of the End-SARS protest on academic performance, youth engagement, and economic stability, using undergraduate students of Adekunle Ajasin University as a focal population. The findings reveal complex and interwoven effects across educational, social, and economic domains, which are discussed about the research questions and existing literature. The first research question sought to explore the extent to which the End-SARS protest affected the academic performance of students in Political Science and Civic Education. The data indicate that a large proportion of students found it difficult to maintain study routines during the protest. Most respondents reported a lack of adequate study time and disruptions in their cognitive engagement, even though some did not directly attribute these disruptions to mental stress. This aligns with the findings of Czerniewicz et al. (2019) and Fasanmi (2024), who emphasised that student protests often lead to academic instability, closure of institutions, and altered learning environments. While the End-SARS protest was not led by students alone, the academic sector bore a significant brunt, as higher

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institutions had to suspend academic calendars in response to nationwide unrest. Interestingly, although cognitive effects were not unanimously reported as severe, the indirect consequences—such as inability to concentrate, emotional unrest, and reduced access to learning facilities—contributed to a broader academic disruption. This reflects the notion that even peaceful protests, when prolonged or hijacked by violence, can generate systemic interruptions in the learning process. Findings related to the second research question reveal that youth in tertiary institutions were affected not just academically, but also socially and psychologically. Students overwhelmingly agreed that the protest disrupted normal campus activities, exposed them to increased cybercrime awareness or involvement, led to school dropouts and experiences of harassment. The prevalence of cybercrime as a perceived outcome is particularly telling, possibly reflecting a shift in how some youths, already battling unemployment and institutional mistrust, sought alternative (albeit illicit) means of expression or survival. This echoes Omilusi's (2025) argument that the End-SARS movement represented not just resistance against police brutality, but a broader youth rebellion against structural marginalisation. The overlap between academic disruption and youth vulnerability underscores the protest's broader social effect: it magnified the existing fractures in Nigeria's education system and exposed the precariousness of youth development in a tense political climate. The third research question addressed the wider national consequences of the protest. Most respondents acknowledged that the protest escalated into the destruction of lives and property, hacking of government institutions, and increased

state-led violence, including extra-judicial killings. These findings resonate with those of Omoyeni et al. (2024), who chronicled how the End-SARS movement, though rooted in a genuine call for reform, degenerated into a nationwide crisis due to poor management, lack of structured dialogue, and state repression. The hacking of government platforms further suggests a shift in the tools of resistance among Nigerian youth, pointing toward a generation fluent in digital activism. The student responses highlight a critical understanding of these events—not merely as spectators, but as affected individuals navigating the dual realities of social consciousness and personal safety. The protest exposed not only the depth of public distrust in law enforcement but also the fragility of peace in a democracy where communication between government and citizens is often reactive rather than proactive. Finally, the study examined how students perceived the economic impact of the protest. Responses suggest widespread awareness of how the protest affected small businesses, interrupted market activity, and contributed to consumer hesitation. This finding is in line with Dajo and Akor (2022), who estimated losses exceeding ₦700 billion during the unrest. Significantly, students recognised both direct and indirect economic effects, including halted airport operations, delayed services, and drops in consumer confidence. Even educational disruption was viewed through an economic lens: with delayed graduation and uncertainty around school schedules, many students acknowledged the protest's influence on future workforce readiness and national productivity. This connection between education and the economy reinforces the notion that civil unrest affects more than political outcomes—it touches every sector of

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society. It also validates calls for more strategic engagement between government bodies and youth leaders to mitigate future economic fallout from protests.

CONCLUSION

The End-SARS protest of October 2020 marked a defining moment in Nigeria's recent socio-political history. What began as a collective outcry against police brutality, particularly by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), quickly escalated into a broader movement that exposed the frustrations, fears, and resilience of Nigerian youth. This study set out to investigate how that protest affected students at Adekunle Ajasin University, with a specific focus on academic performance, patterns of youth engagement, and perceptions of economic stability. Findings from the study reveal that the protest significantly disrupted academic routines. Students experienced loss of study time, cognitive distractions, and delays in academic calendars. While some students attempted to remain focused, the uncertainty and emotional toll of the protest environment made academic stability difficult to maintain. Beyond academics, the protest also served as a powerful reminder of the growing role of youth in political and civic engagement. Students reported feelings of empowerment, solidarity, and a sense of agency, even in the face of intimidation and violence. Economically, the protest impacted both individuals and communities. The shutdown of businesses, roadblocks, and curfews caused significant revenue losses, particularly for small and medium-scale enterprises. Students with entrepreneurial interests were not spared, as many reported direct or indirect financial setbacks. These experiences reinforce the interconnectedness of youth agency, economic participation, and national stability.

It is important to acknowledge that this study, while insightful, is limited in its scope. Data was drawn from a single institution, which may not fully capture the experiences of students in other parts of Nigeria. Nevertheless, the findings offer valuable evidence for understanding how protest movements—especially those driven by youth—can influence academic life and national development in profound ways. Moving forward, educational institutions, government agencies, and youth-focused organisations must recognise the complex realities students face during periods of national unrest. There is an urgent need for policies that support academic recovery, promote peaceful civic engagement, and protect economic interests during times of crisis. Ultimately, the End-SARS movement has revealed not only the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's systems but also the strength and voice of its youth.

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