

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF IPOB SIT-AT-HOME IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The IPOB sit-at-home was aimed at protesting the re-arrest of the IPOB leader and also, agitate for the sovereign state of Biafra. The strategy which was meant to be non-violent appears to have worsened the plight of the south easterners by heightening the state of insecurity in the region. Therefore, this study examined the socio-economic implications of the IPOB sit-at-home order in the south eastern zone of Nigeria. The study anchored on the theory of relative deprivation and the frustration aggression theory. The study adopted on the survey research design. A probability sampling technique was adopted and Anambra state was selected to represent the entire states in south east. Nnewi and Onitsha were deliberately selected using a purposive sampling technique. The sample population of 385 was derived using a sample calculator. Observation and questionnaire were used to gather data for this study. Data were presented in a table and analysed using frequency and percentage distribution table. Findings revealed that, the sit-at-home order has increased insecurity in the south east and has made commercial and social activities unsafe and un-conducive in the zone. Therefore, it was recommended that the Nigerian government dialogue with members of the IPOB group, listen to their grievances and settle them amicably.

Key Words: Agitation, IPOB, Sit-At-Home, South East

Introduction

IPOB sit-at-home is a non-violent change strategy that was adopted by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) group to protest the arrest of the leader of the IPOB group; Nnamdi Okwu Kanu; a British and Nigeria citizen, who was re-arrested in

Kenya in 2021 to face charges on terrorism, treason, defamation of the Nigerian authorities after being said to have jumped bail in 2017. This strategy ensures that members of the public in the five south-eastern states do not leave their houses or engage in social or economic activities on

Mondays and on the days which Nnamdi Kanu appears in court. Thus, this declaration means that, on these days, movement and socio-economic activities are restricted and will not take place in these states.

Owoeye, et al. (2022) added that, in addition to this being a protest for the detention of the IPOB leader who was incarcerated, the sit-at-home strategy was also employed to mark the remembrance of Biafrans who lost their lives in 1967-1970 Nigeria-Biafra war and the struggle for the actualization of Biafra. Therefore, they assert that even though the order was aimed at freeing the IPOB leader from the detention of the Federal Government of Nigeria, it was also aimed at actualizing the sovereign state of Biafra.

In affirmation to this, Omole (2021) stated that the sit-at-home order commensurate important days in the history of Biafra struggle and shows solidarity with the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu over his plight in the detention and the agitation for the independent state of Biafra. In line with this, a Thisday correspondent (2021) opined that, though the sit-at-home order is considered illegal by various governments, it is a mechanism used by the IPOB group to draw attention to the plight of Kanu and

possibly, influencing the outcome of the court proceedings to his favour. Ogonnaya et al. (2021) further added that this strategy is used by the IPOB group to seek the unconditional release of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu and further draw the attention of the world towards the plight of the south-eastern zone of Nigeria.

This plight which has led to the incessant agitation for the restoration of the independent state of Biafra is more likely linked to the perceived marginalization of the south-east geopolitical zone especially as it has to do with resource and power allocation. This marginalization seem to have been made evident in the distribution of power by the Buhari's government in 2015, the disparity in the cut-off mark for entrance to federal unity schools and the disparity in the numbers of states and local government in the six geopolitical zones.

Relevant studies like Owoeye, et al. (2022), Kingsley, et al. (2022), Chukwudi, et. al. (2019), has investigated the impact of the sit-at-home order on political stability, education and political economy in the south-east. But, this study focused on the impact of the IPOB order on the socio-economic development of the south-eastern states.

Statement of the problem

Several governments and some members of the IPOB group has over time told the public to disregard the IPOB sit-at-home order however, nothing seem to have been done to tackle the incessant loss of lives and properties of members of the public who disregard the IPOB sit-at-home order and carry out their socio-economic activities. In cases where these individuals are not maimed or killed, they are embarrassed and threatened thereby, instilling fear in them.

While the fear of losing their life and property may be the sole reason people compile with the IPOB sit-at-home order, those who suffer the most seem to be the masses especially, the daily income earners as they are not able to engage in any form of socio-economic activity or earn an income during the “sit-at-home” days.

Despite the fact that the loss of lives and properties have dealt a strong blow on the south-east socio-economically especially, with the concomitant insecurity that tends to discourage investors from investing in the zone, the social and economic inactivity of the south-eastern zone has become more worrisome in recent times. Therefore, it is important to investigate the socio-economic implications of the sit-at-home order on south east, Nigeria.

Research question

This study answered the following research question. They are;

1. What are the socio-economic effects of the IPOB sit-at-home in the south east?
2. What are the causes of IPOB sit-at-home in the south east?
3. How can the IPOB sit-at-home be curbed and socio-economic development be ensured in the south eastern zone of Nigeria?

Literature review

Socio-economic implications of the IPOB sit-at-home

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist group that was formed in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu; a United Kingdom and Nigeria citizen. The group agitates for the independence of Biafra using different strategies like, sit-at-homes, street marches and different channels of communication as Radio and Television (Chukwudi et al., 2019). Allison (2017) stated that this agitation is as a result of the supposed marginalization, political alienation, inequitable resource distribution, extra-judicial killings and heavy military presence in the south east among similar other factors.

The sit-at-home however became prominent when Nnamdi Kanu was

rearrested in 2021 as IPOB members cum supporters responded spontaneously, to protest what they perceive to be the illegal detention of the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu. Owoeye, et al., (2022) stated that the sit-at-home order has affected political activities in the zone. According to them, the sit-at-home order has resulted to the violations of civic and socio-political rights of Nigerians by denying them the freedom of movement, right to life and causing them panic when registering to vote or coming out to vote during elections. They added that this has caused the extra-deployment of security personnel to the south East region at the expense of other regions' security and have caused many government workers to be absent from work on Mondays thereby, leading to deadly and destructive consequences. Also, the closure of market places and banks and the burning of commercial vehicles and shops among similar others are indicators of the adverse effects of the IPOB sit-at-home strategy on south east economy and the Nigeria economy at large(Owoeye, et al., 2022).

They added that this has caused the masses to live in regular fear especially as they cannot confidently travel from one state to another within the Southeast geopolitical zone. A Sahara report (2021) also affirmed

that the sit-at-home order has instilled fear in the heart of people as they tend to obey the order even when such order has been cancelled.

Okoye (2021) stated that, the sit-at-home has continued to inflict collateral damage on the economy of south eastern states by disrupting commercial activities in the States. He stated that, the sit-at-home has inflicted suffering, hunger and poverty in the South-east region, as many people especially those who depend on daily earnings are being deprived from their earnings by the sit-at-home order. Ogbonnaya, et al. (2021) reported that the losses from the chamber of Commerce, business owners and traders every Monday amounts to be ₦8 billion and this has robbed the south east of over N50 billion; with the private sector having 60% of this loss.

They stated that two reasons gave impetus to this order. The first they stated is the fear of being attacked by hoodlums and the second, they described as the sympathy most people have for the cause IPOB is pursuing. In collaboration, Onwuka (2021) reported that 'fear' is the primary reason people obey the sit-at-home order. He added that some people who tried to

disobey the order were attacked to serve as deterrent to others.

Njoku, et al. (2021) opined that the regular sit-at-home order shows that IPOB group is insensitive to the plight of the affected masses especially students who write their National Examination Council (NECO), West Africa Senior Certificate Examination (WASCE) and Joint Admission Matriculation Board Examination (JAMB). Okoye (2021) added that despite its implications on education, enforces of the sit-at-home order have inadvertently discouraged investments, investors and investees in south-east zone.

From the literature reviewed, it is evident that the IPOB order affects all categories of people; traders, students, investors etc. adversely. This has also made the masses to question the sincerity of the cause being fought for especially as it tends to inflict more hardship on the south easterners. Though, it has been argued that the enforcement of the IPOB sit-at-home is just as it shows solidarity to the cause being fought for this remains open to academic debate.

Theoretical Framework

This study anchored on the theory of relative deprivation by Samuel Stouffer and the frustration-aggression theory by

psychologists Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower and Sears. This is because relative deprivation effectively explains the cause of the sit-at-home order while the frustration-aggression theory explains the security threats that have accompanied the sit-at-home order.

The relative deprivation theory asserts that, people form social movement groups when they believe they have been deprived of something they believe they are entitled to (Iain & Heather, 2001). According to Kurt (1999) this discontent is felt when people compare their positions to others and realize that they have less of what they believe they are entitled to when compared to those around them.

Base on this theory, the IPOB group as well as the IPOB sit-at-home came into being because, it is believed that the south-eastern zone of Nigeria face a lot of marginalization in Nigeria. This marginalization varies from political alienation, inequitable resource distribution, extra-judicial killings and heavy military presence of military in the south east. The appointment made by Buhari in 2015 has also been argued to be a marginalization strategy against the south east.

In a bid to protest this believed marginalization, IPOB was formed by Nnamdi Kanu. The group tried to cause a change by increasing the level of awareness on the supposed marginalization of the south-eastern region and called for the independence of the south east (self-determination) through its radio station "Radio Biafra".

This call for self-determination amongst other things infuriated the Nigerian authorities and led them to arrest him in 2015 before re-arresting him in 2021. This act by the Nigerian government angered the IPOB group and thus, led to the declaration of "sit-at-home" in protest of their leader; Nnamdi Kanu.

This theory therefore, effectively explains the reason behind the IPOB sit-at-home however; it failed to explain the socio-economic consequences of this declaration on the masses, and society at large. This lapses is however, effectively taken care of by the frustration-aggression theory. This theory opined that aggression is often a result of frustration. Thus, the arrest of the IPOB group and the believed deprivation and marginalization of the south eastern zone has led to the frustration of the IPOB group. This frustration is manifested through aggressive behaviours like the

destruction of lives and properties which does not augur well for social and economic activities.

Research methodology

The study focused on the social and economic effect of the IPOB sit-at-home order on the south-eastern zone. The study will focus on areas where this order is actively being enforced in the region. The study adopted on the survey research design due to the quantitative nature of the data collection instrument.

A probability sampling technique was adopted in deriving the south-eastern state that represented the entire states in south east. Thus, the five states in the south east region; Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Anambra were written on a sheet of paper, folded, put in a can and shuffled. Anambra state was selected afterwards. Nnewi and Onitsha were deliberately selected for this study using a purposive sampling technique because; the IPOB sit-at-home is enforced more, in these parts of Anambra state. Also, using a purposive sampling technique Nnewi town and environs and upper Iwaka and environs were selected for this study.

World Population Review (2022) estimated that the population of Nnewi at a population growth rate of 5.66% as at 2022 is 1,176,550. They further estimated that, at a

population growth rate of 4.70%, Onitsha had a population estimate of 1,552,630. Thus, both areas has a sample population of 2, 729180.

Using a sample calculator of 95% confidence level, margin of error of 5, population proportion of 50 and a population size of 2, 729180 a sample population of 385 were derived for this study. The sample calculator was used because, it enabled the researchers to compute the minimum number of necessary samples to meet the statistical constraints of the study like; underrepresentation of the research population. Therefore, the sample population of 385 was divided between the two research areas. Nnewi had a sample population of 192 while Onitsha had a sample population of 193 Onitsha is more populated than Nnewi. Respondents were

randomly selected using a simple random sampling technique so as to give every individual equal chances of being represented. The researcher guided the respondents in filling the questionnaire and waited behind while respondents fill the questionnaire so that none will be lost or wrongly filled. Therefore, the sample size used for this study was 385.

The data used for this study was collected through observation, questionnaire and secondary sources of data collection technique like journals, textbooks and internet materials. The 18 items questionnaire had close-ended responses. This was aimed at guiding the respondents towards the core of the subject matter. Data were however, presented in a table and analysed using frequency and percentage distribution table.

Result from Questionnaire

S/N	Questions	Yes	No	Total
1.	The sit at home order has made the south eastern zone unconducive to do business	330 85.7%	55 14.3%	385 100%
2.	Sit-at-home order has increased the insecurity threats in the south east	344 89.4%	41 10.6%	385 100%
3.	People are relocating to states outside the south eastern zone because of the sit-at-home	284 73.8%	101 26.2%	385 100%
4.	A lot of people have died because of sit-at-home	348 90.4%	37 9.6%	385 100%
5.	Properties have been lost because of the sit at home	356 92.5%	29 7.5%	385 100%
6.	The sit-at-home has discouraged investors from investing in the south eastern zone.	213 55.3%	172 44.7%	385 100%
7.	The poor (daily income earners) are more affected by the IPOB sit-at-home	262	123	385

		68.1%	31.9%	100%
8.	People do not engage in social activities on sit-at-home days in the south east	267 69.4%	118 30.6%	385 100%
9.	School activities are not carried out on days declared to be sit at home	364 94.5%	21 5.5%	385 100%
10.	Economic activities are not carried out on days declared to be sit at home	374 97.1%	11 2.9%	385 100%
11.	There is usually no movement on the days declared as sit-at-home day.	372 96.6%	13 3.4%	385 100%
12.	People are being killed, maim, embarrassed and threatened for violating the sit-at-home order	352 91.4%	33 8.6%	385 100%
13.	Can sit-at-home hasten the actualization of Biafra	184 47.8%	201 52.2%	385 100%
14.	Can sit-at-home influence the release of the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu	190 49.4%	195 50.6%	385 100%
15.	Has the sit-at-home attracted foreign organizations to the plight of the south eastern zone	161 41.8%	224 58.2%	385 100%
16.	The sit-at-home order is a protest against the re-arrest of the leader of the IPOB; Nnamdi Kanu	266 69%	119 30.9%	385 100%
17.	The sit-at-home order is to protest the marginalization of the south eastern zone	309 80.3%	76 19.7%	385 100%
18.	The sit-at-home order is part of the agitation for the restoration of the independent state of Biafra	274 71.2%	111 28.8%	385 100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that the Sit-at-home order has increased the insecurity threats in the south east and has led to the loss of lives and properties in the zone. It shows that this has made the zone un-conducive for social and economic activities and has driven investors and entrepreneurs out of the zone to do their business elsewhere. It was revealed that daily income earners are the most affected by this order and that, the sit-at-home order is incapable of hastening the release of the IPOB leader or ensuring the actualization of Biafra.

The table further revealed that the sit-at-home was aimed at protesting the re-arrest of the leader of the IPOB; Nnamdi Kanu, the marginalization of the south eastern zone and agitate for the restoration of the independent state of Biafra but so far, this has not attracted any foreign sympathy to the plight of the south eastern zone.

Findings from the Observation

It was observed that a lot of south easterners do not violate the sit-at-home order. They do not engage in any form of social and economic activity on "sit-at-home" days.

While some members of the IPOB seem not to be in support of the “sit-at-home and have cancelled the order, some group of persons have continued to enforce the order. This group of persons destroy lives and properties thereby, making the inhabitants of the south eastern region to live in fear.

This security threat seems to have grown beyond the control of Nigeria security. This assumption is based on the not too recent report of the former governor of Anambra state; Willie Obiano which states that Saturdays should replace Mondays because of the sit-at-home that is experienced in Anambra state on Mondays. This is coupled with what may seem like the inability of Nigeria security agencies to curb the security threats in the south east by arresting those who enforce the sit-at-home order and bring them to book.

Discussion of Research Finding

Findings revealed that the sit-at-home order has increased the insecurity threats in the south east and has led to the loss of lives and properties in the zone. This has made the environment un-conducive for commercial and social activities. This has discouraged entrepreneurs and investors from investing in the zone thereby, affecting the level of revenue received from

the state through taxation. It was revealed that social, economic and educational activities are not carried out on “sit-at-home” days because of the declaration of “no-movement” but the most affected of this order are those who rely on their daily income for sustenance.

Violators of the “sit-at-home” are being killed, maim, embarrassed and threatened for violating the sit-at-home order but it was revealed that the sit-at-home order cannot hasten the actualization of Biafra or influence the release of the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu. It was also revealed that it has failed to attract the attention of foreign organizations towards the plight of the south eastern zone.

Despite this, the sit-at-home order continues to strive strongly in an attempt to actualise its objectives; ensure the release of the leader of the IPOB; Nnamdi Kanu, protest the marginalization of the south eastern zone and agitate for the restoration of the independent state of Biafra.

Conclusion

The IPOB sit-at-home order was adopted as a non-violent change strategy to protest the re-arrest of the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Okwu Kanu and also, agitate for the independent state of Biafra. This protest which started non-violently has taken a negative turn as it

has been clouded with various forms of violence and threats of violence. While the incessant loss of life and property is worrisome, more worrisome is the socio-economic inactivity of the south east and the fact that citizens in the zone live in constant fear especially, on Mondays.

This order has created a niche for breeding other security problem that has made it unhealthy to do business in the south east. Thus, the south eastern region is not just faced with the losses they incur on the days declared as "sit-at-home" but by extension, other days that are not "sit-at-home" due to the growing insecurity in the region. The state of insecurity has given room to not just socio-economic problems but medical problem. There is no gainsaying that government and private workers and businessmen have had their share of the grave consequences of the sit-at-home order but the consequences on daily income earners are more severe. This is because, these daily income earner depend on their daily earnings for survival.

Severally, the IPOB group has insinuated that the agitation for Biafra is a fight for justice and the IPOB sit-at-home is tolled towards that direction. However, the recent happenings pertaining the IPOB sit-at-home seem to have done great injustice to

the south eastern zone of Nigeria and the fight for Biafra. Yet, the IPOB sit-at-home has not been able to influence the release of the IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu or attracted the sympathy or attention of foreign bodies to the plight of the south eastern zone of Nigeria. Therefore, there is need for all hands to be on deck to curb the IPOB sit-at-home and security threats in the south east and work towards the socio-economic development of south east and Nigeria at large.

Recommendation

Based on the research finding, the following recommendations were made. They are;

1. The Nigeria state should ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources in the country so as to curb the perceived marginalization of the south eastern zone and the agitation for the independent state of Biafra. There is also a need for the Nigerian government to strengthen the security apparatus in south eastern zone so as to tackle the security threats in the zone.
2. There is need for the Nigerian government to have a dialogue with members of the IPOB group, listen to their grievance and settle it

amicably with them. The IPOB leader; Nnamdi Kanu should also, be given quick but fair trial and possibly, granted unconditional release to curb the sit-at-home in the south east, Nigeria.

3. There is need for every zone to have control of their own resources so as to reduce the perceived marginalization of the various regions.

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