

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Sit-At-Home Order and Socio-Economic Activities in South-East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Sit-at-home order has been prevalent in the South-east region of Nigeria since 2021 that not even the responses of the Federal Government of Nigeria could stop the unlawful order which has become a security threat. Imperatively, the study examined the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio-economic activities of the South-east, Nigeria between 2020 and 2022. Specifically, the study interrogated the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio-economic activities of the South-east, Nigeria in the specific areas of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), transport sub-sector and educational system of the South-east which serve as indicators of socio-economic activities. This study is qualitative and adopted documentary research design while it made use of data gathered through documented evidence/secondary sources which majorly include media publications/reports as Systems theory of David Easton served its theoretical guide. The study established that IPOB Sit-at-home order has severe consequences on all the aforementioned indicators of socio-economic activities in the South-east, Nigeria. Based on this, the study recommended the need for an internal dialogue among the Igbo traditional rulers, the governors in the South-east, Nigeria and the claimed leaders of IPOB across states in the region. More so, there should be introduction of online classes for students every Monday for the meantime while writing of examinations on Sit-at-home enforcement days should be an exception until the Sit-at-home is over. In addition, the Nigerian government should free the acclaimed leader of the group from detention and then dialogue with the group with regards to their claims and demands.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The historical struggle of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is traced to the 1960s when Nigerian political system as a newly independent entity encountered serious economic, political instability and ethnic crises. As reported by Home Office (2022), a number of violent clashes occurred which include the killings of about 30,000 Igbos in the Northern Nigeria in September 1966 while mechanisms put in place to resolve the tensions proved abortive.

Consequently, as evident in Home Office (2022), in May 1967, the Eastern-Nigeria (the Igbos' dominated region) declared its independence from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra which consequently resulted in a civil war in which about 3 million people died. Subsequently, between 1969 and 1970, the Biafrans continued in a series of engagements/struggle with Nigerian government which resulted in civil war. As a result of the Biafran war, the then Biafran Leader (Odumegwu Ojukwu) fled to Coted' evoire while the remaining Biafran soldiers surrendered to the Nigerian government on the 15th of January, 1970; subsequently, the Biafra struggle for independence totally collapsed and this consequently brought a total end to the first historical struggle towards the attainment of independence of Biafran Nation (Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbonam, 2022).

In order to cushion the effect of the civil war, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon implemented the policy of no victor, no vanquished and Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) However, Osita & Anoke (2022) that mismanagement of the policy was reportedly the main reason for the resurgence of Biafra uprisings in Nigeria's current democratic dispensation.

Nevertheless, the inability of the Nigeria to acknowledge the marginalization of the Igbos/people in the Southeast Nigeria was also reported as the catalyst for formation of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the IPOB. As observed in Ekpo & Agorye, (2019). Consequently, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerged as a derivation of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) formed by Raph. Uwazuruike; although, with the same objective as MASSOB. Thus, it is imperative to note that the rebirth of Biafran agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra was triggered by the nature of political imbalance and marginalization in Nigeria's political systems which are at the disadvantage of the Igbos' dominated area cum the Southeast-region.

As a separatist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra formally introduced Sit-at-home order in June 2021 as a tool in achieving their aims when the leader of the group was arrested by the Nigerian government in Kenya and brought back to Nigeria. It is on this basis that Emma Powerful (IPOB) spokesperson declared every Monday, from 9th of August, 2021 as sit-at-home. Nevertheless, Sit-at-home was first introduced as annual event to remember those who died in Nigeria Biafra war. The annual sit at home later transformed into a tool for achieving other goals including awareness of other Biafra related issues (Mark, Obi & Chibuzor, 2022). Thus, the sit-at-home order, usually observed on Mondays and other notable days by the group has become an alternative towards achieving Independent State of Biafra and as well as facilitating the release of their leader. Nevertheless, weekly days, particularly Mondays (first business day of the week) are valuable by the Igbos and residents of the South-East region because what happens on that day would determine their business performance and activities for the week. Consequently, it is imperative to note that the weekly declaration of Sit at home on Mondays and some other days have presumable effects on the socio-economic/commercial activities in the major business areas/cities in the South-East region; such as the inflow of traders in the region from other part of the country, market operations, financial institutions in the major cities such as Aba, Onitsha, Awka, Enugu, Nnewi, Abakaliki among others. It is against this backdrop that the study interrogates the extent to which the IPOB's sit-at-home order has shaped the socio-economic development of the South-East region in recent years.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The IPOB's sit-at-home order, usually observed on the first business day of the week (Monday) and other notable days by the members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East, Nigeria (the Igbos dominated geo-political zone) has become a threat to the social and economic condition of the region. Since 2021, the sit-at-home order illegal enforcements in the Igbos dominated region have resulted into dispute between the IPOB and the Federal government of Nigeria as it has not only become a threat to the economic activities in the Southeast-Nigeria but a threat to the security and sovereignty of Nigeria at large. Consequently, as reported by Okutu (2021), the South-East region which is the commercial hub of Nigeria after Lagos has continued to lose about 10 billion Naira in every sit-at-home. These huge amount lost to sit-at-home order could have been utilized to further boost the social and economic condition of the South-East region of Nigeria.

It is important note that the security threats arising from the Sit-at-home order have presumed consequences on the socio-economic activities cum condition of the Southeast-Nigeria. Socio-economically, the unlawful declaration of Sit-at-order must have resulted in decline in inflow of traders into the Southeast-region of Nigeria on every sit-at-home day; closure/shutting down of market places/operations, restriction of movements, total shut down of financial institutions across the region, closure of public and private academic institutions while in-adherence to the unlawful order has socio-economic consequences such as; burning of commercial vehicles, shops among others that are germane to economic development of the region. Notwithstanding, the efforts or the extent in which the Nigerian

government and the South-East state Governors have responded to this security threats is in doubt as the activities of the IPOB via sit-at-home are still effective and continued to create fear and panic in the mind of the people while the residents in the Southeast region have perceived Monday sit-at-home order as a regularly weekly holiday while others who disobey the unlawful order sometimes face severe consequences. It is on the basis of the foregoing that the researcher made the bold attempt to examine the extent to which the IPOB's sit-at-home order have affected the socio-economic activities of the South-east region in the specific areas of education, transportation, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the recent years.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How has the IPOB Sit-at-home order affected the performance of SMEs in the South East, Nigeria?
2. How has the IPOB's Sit-at-home order affected the road transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria?
3. How has the IPOB's Sit-at-home order affected educational activities in the South East, Nigeria?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to interrogate the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the on the socio-economic activities of the South East of Nigeria in recent years. Meanwhile, the specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Examine the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the performance of SMEs in the South East, Nigeria.
2. Investigate the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the road transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria.
3. Ascertain the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on education in the South East, Nigeria

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is both academically and empirically (practical) significant. Academically, the study tends to provide useful and quality information to scholars of Political Science, Public Administration, Criminology and Security Studies, Economics among related disciplines on implications/consequences of IPOB's Sit-at-home order on the social and economic development of the South East, Nigeria in the areas of SME's, educational activities and the road transport sub-sector. On the other hand, the study will equally serve as a compelling and useful ground upon which the IPOB activities via sit-at-home order which has become a serious security threats in the Southeast-Nigeria can be adequately tackled based on some certain policies that will be recommended. These two grounds underline the significance of the study.

1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

1.6.1 Scope of the Study

The study is on the ongoing IPOB Sit-at-home order in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria and its effects on the socio-economic activities of the region. Thus, the content scope of the study covers the effect of IPOB's sit-at-home order on the socio-economic development of the Southeast region of Nigeria. Geographically, the scope of the study covered the entire Southeast region as a sub-national entity of Nigeria's administrative system while the time scope covered between 2021 and 2022.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Study

The researcher encountered a few difficulties in the course fetching primary data. It is difficult to have one on one interaction with the leader of IPOB (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu) and its members who are the enforcers

of IPOB's sit-at-home orders because they are faceless and have no identifiable organizational structure cum offices. Even, if they are asked, chances of getting the absolute truth from them are very minimal and difficult. In essence, this limits the validity strength cum claims of the study. Notwithstanding, the researcher largely relied on information and reports from media publications and other existing documented evidence from secondary sources.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 IPOB/Sit-at-home Order

Scholars, based on their intellectual capacities and distinct views have written on the IPOB Sit-at-home order but the major elements in their definition is that it is a struggle towards achieving the independence state of Biafra. IPOB is an acronym for Indigenous People of Biafra. IPOB has been considered by scholars to mean separatist oriented group that calls for secession of Biafra from Nigeria. In view of Obiora & David (2020), the group was formed in 2012 as a reformation weakened pro-secessionist group; MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and BZM (Biafra Zonist Movement). According to the scholar, IPOB was formed with aim of creating an independent state of Biafra. Similarly, Adonu (2017) described IPOB an attempt to reawaken the struggle for secession and self-determination by the Igbos which has historically led to civil war that claimed the lives of millions.

The Indigenous People of Biafra sit-at-home order was reportedly announced by the group following the arrest of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (leader of the group) by the Nigerian President. Subsequently, the group declared that there would be sit-at-home in the Southeast region on Mondays and other until Mazi Nnamdi Kanu regains his freedom from detention (Onwuka, 2021) While commenting on the declaration of sit-at-home order, Nigerian Tribune (2022) reported that aside Mondays, IPOB also declares any day Mazi Nnamdi Kanu appears in court a sit-at-home day and anytime it deems fit. The report also noted that residents in the Southeast region obey the sit-at-home order in solidarity with the cause. The report later maintained that the sit at home order have resulted in pains and deprivation with sheer economic cost on businesses, livelihoods of individuals and households.

The Indigenous People of Biafra sit-at-home order was announced by group following the arrest of its leader. A report by Onwuka (2021) asserted that the group claimed there would be a sit-at-home in the Southeast-Nigeria every Monday until its leader; Mazi Nnamdi Kanu regains his freedom. As observed in Mark, Obi & Chibuzor (2022), IPOB sit-at-home order started as an annual event to remember lost their lives in Nigeria-Biafra and later transpired to become a tool of attention to the dilemma of Nnamdi Kanu. As reported by the scholars, the sit-at-home order has become so frequent with destructive and deadly consequences. In the same line of thought, Osita, Anoke and Eze (2022) maintained that IPOB's sit-at-home order was initiated as a means of persuading the Nigerian government to free Mazi Nnamdi Kanu who is on trial for treason and terrorism in the South-east Nigeria. The scholar further maintained that occupants of the Southeast region were ordered to shut down businesses, social activities among others and stay home on Mondays and other sit-at-home observing days.

1.7.2 Socio-Economic Development

The concept Socio-economic development has been variously used by social scholars but the major similarities in their definitions is that it connotes the process of social and economic development in a society with the purpose of maintaining the social and material well-being of a nation and achieving highest possible level of human development. Nevertheless, it is imperative to first take a look at what social development and economic development entails.

Fritz cited in Litwinski (2017) described social development as a phenomenon that is associated with qualitative changes in social structure. Accordingly, the scholar maintained that the changes in social structure encompass among others, social trust and integrity; which changes opportunities of individuals whose goal is geared towards achieving higher social status in the society. On the other hand, Kubizek

(2014) considered economic development as a complex process that connotes both qualitative and quantitative changes such as new method of managing resources, transformation of production structure. The scholar equally maintained that economic development increases opportunities of economic growth.

It is on the basis of the above definitions of social and economic development that Litwinski (2017: p. 451) considered socio-economic development as “a process of quantitative and qualitative structural changes that are a result of actions of subjects taken within social (economic) practice”. According to the scholar, the changes encompass increase in life conditions, material condition, economic structure and entrepreneurship, easy access to public goods and services; particularly changes in educational system and relations within the social system such as security, integration and trusts.

To Wikipedia (2022), economic and social development connotes the process of improving the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation or society according to the targeted goals and objectives while Tarver (2022) considered the concept as interplay between social and economic activities in a society. From these two assertions, it is evident that socio-economic development revolves around positive changes in social and economic activities of a society or country, Chojnicki (2010: p. 9) considered socio-economic development as encompassing changes that take place in the social sphere, mostly of an economic nature. The scholar later considered the concept of socio-economic development as “a series of changes involves stating what characteristics those changes and what determines them”. From the assertion of the scholar, socio-economic development revolves around positive changes that take place in the social and economic activities of a society or nation.

1.7.3 Empirical Review

IPOB activities/Sit-at-home order and SMEs in the South East, Nigeria.

Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi (2016) conducted a study on Biafra Separatism: causes, consequences and remedies. The study is both qualitative and quantitative; it made use of data collected from documentary sources, opinion survey using questionnaire, interviews and reports in media publications. Among other findings, the study established that frequent demonstrations by the pro-Biafra agitations and the security agencies often disrupt economic activities in the Southeast region and thus discourages investments; such as SMEs in the region. The study recommended among others, establishment of high level Peace and Reconciliation Commission as an approach to the resolution of IPOB’s agitation.

Morgen (2021) carried out a study on perception and impact of IPOB-ordered Sit-at-home protests. The study aimed at examining the impact of IPOB sit-at-home on social and economic activities of the South East, Nigeria. The study employed Survey Research design and gathered data through with aid of questionnaire. The study established that IPOB sit at home has resulted to suspension of commercial activities, which include banking operations and other business enterprises among other productivity and economic activities within the South East zone.

Ikeh (2021) carried out a study on the impact of sectional agitation for self-determination on national development: a study of IPOB and MASSOB of South-Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the effect of IPOB/MASSOB on the socio-economic development of the southeast-Nigeria. The study employed Survey method and made use of questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Among others, the study revealed that 62.8 percent of the respondent ranked disruption of economic activities by the IPOB via Sit-at-home as the most serious consequential effect on the region. The study urged Nigerian government to consider the grievances of the group and apply humane measures in dealing with them.

Mark, Obi and Chibuzor (2022) carried out a study on the ills of IPOB sit at home and its implication on the economy of the South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria. The paper is qualitative; contently analyzed the data gathered through secondary sources and built on Relative Deprivation theory. The paper established that IPOB has continued shooting the south-east zone on the leg with disruptive consequences on the economy of the Southeast region in the area of business activities which include SME’s. The paper

recommended dialogue between IPOB and the Federal government of Nigeria as a veritable tool in ending the menace.

IPOB activities/Sit-at-home order and educational activities in the South East, Nigeria.

Owoeye, Ezeanya and Obiegbunam (2022) carried out a study on separatists' strategy: appraising the effects of IPOB Monday sit-at-home order political economy (socio-political and economic activities) of the South-East Region of Nigeria. The study is descriptive; qualitative and built on Systems theory. The paper established that the IPOB Sit-at-home order has negatively affected the educational system, transport system and market operations. The paper suggested an urgent need for the Nigerian Government to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources among the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria via proper federal character system.

Chukwudi, Gberebie, Abasilim and Imhonopi (2022) carried out a study on empirical investigation on how IPOB agitations affect political stability in Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the effects of IPOB activities on socio-political activities in the areas of education, investments and participation in election. The study adopted Survey research design and made use of both qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) data. Among others, the study revealed that the rate of the IPOB agitation via sit-at-home results in socio-political instability of the South East region and Nigeria at large

Gbenemene (2022) conducted a study on separatist movements, conflicts and insecurity in the South East Nigeria. The study aimed at examining how the IPOB occasioned conflicts and security challenges in the South East, Nigeria. It adopted qualitative research; gathered data from various documented evidence and built on Social identity theory. Among other findings, the study established that IPOB agitation/strategy have caused serious security challenges; particularly on movement, education and government facilities in the South East zone of Nigeria.

IPOB activities/Sit-at-home order and road transport sub-sector of the South East, Nigeria.

Osita, Anoke & Eze (2022) conducted a study on mandatory Sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Economic Activities in the South East, Nigeria. The study adopted Survey research design analyzed data gathered through questionnaire with regression technique. The study revealed that the Sit-at-home order has huge negative effects on the socio-economic activities of the Southeast, Nigeria which include business operations; transport system, among others. The study recommended diplomatic engagement between the Southeast government; other stakeholders and Federal Government for the release of IPOB leader (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu).

Nwakaegho (2021) carried out a study on IPOB/ESN: the rise of mayhem, economic wastage in the South East. Having adopted Survey research and made use of data gathered through media publications and reports. The study revealed that the IPOB activities via Sit-at-home have been disrupting the economy of the South East region of Nigeria and allegedly as a result of the directive from the leader of the group (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu), shopping malls, fuel station were not open for business while vehicular movement (transportation) were restricted among others.

Frank (2021) conducted a study on the IPOB agitation and its socio-economic implications of South East development. The study aimed at investigating the IPOB agitation and its impact on socio-economic activities in the South East, Nigeria. The study made use of Survey research design; used questionnaire as instrument of data collection and build on group theory. The study established that IPOB agitation for Biafra has serious negative implications for socio-economic activities of the South East, Nigeria, ranging from free movement to restriction of vehicles.

1.8 Gap in Empirical Literature

Only a few empirical studies were carried out to address specifically; the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on socio-economic development of the South East, Nigeria. More so, no known studies have

adequately established the links between IPOB Sit-at-home order and the socio-economic development of the South East, Nigeria; using combination of variables such as transportation, education and SMEs in the exact years covered by this study; 2020 and 2022.

Based on the aforementioned cum identified lacuna, the study tended to provide an empirical evidence of the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home on the socio-economic development of the South East, Nigeria. By this, the identified gaps would have been filled by this study.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this study built on systems theory of Talcott Parsons (a functionalist sociologist) and David Easton (a Political Scientist). The theory was developed by Talcott Parsons in 1950s as a tool of analyzing our social system and later adopted by David Easton in 1960s as a tool of analyzing political system. The leading exponents of the theory include Morton Kaplan, David Singer, Karl Deutsch among others (Akinboye & Ottoh, 2005).

The central argument of the theory rests on that fact that a political system environment comprises various interest groups such as in Nigeria; IPOB, Arewa, ASUU, Odua People's Congress, NUT, NLC among others exerting their various demands/pressures into the system that needed attention. According to Talcott Parson, Socio-political system is not so unique as claimed by David Easton and can be sometimes disastrous because it is not free from revolutions, violent protests, agitations, terrorism, insecurities, excessive demands cum pressures among others, thus; the system must always adjust, adapt or respond to changes that take place within the system's environment to avoid overloading, or otherwise total disintegration, collapse or failure of the system.

The fitness of the theory to this study is due to its ability to enrich our understanding on how IPOB via Sit at home order is affecting the social and economic stability in the Southeast region of Nigeria. The inability of Nigeria's political system to adequately respond to the demands/pressures from its environment (IPOB and the Igbos) over the claim of marginalization and arrest of their leader, the group has developed a strategy (Sit-at-home order) to continue pressurizing the political system as a whole thereby affecting other parts of the system such as education, commercial activities, transportations, security among others and will continue to extent to other parts (region) of the system if not adequately responded to. Thus, the Nigerian government needs to take the demands of the IPOB into consideration or respond to it appropriately in order to maintain its system equilibrium or stability, or otherwise will gradually lead total failure of all sectors or disintegration of the system as a composite whole.

1.10 Research Hypotheses

1. The IPOB Sit-at-home has serious negative effects on the performance of SMEs in the South East, Nigeria.
2. IPOB's Sit-at-home order has posed serious negative effects on the road transport sub-sector of the South East, Nigeria.
3. IPOB's Sit-at-home order has negatively affected educational activities in the South East, Nigeria.

1.11 Research Methodology

Research Design

Every research is expected to have a pattern adopted in the course of investigation. For this reason, research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher. It enables researchers to hinge on research methods that are suitable for the subject matter. In view of work of Boru (2018), research design is considered the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems with empirical research. This study is qualitative in orientations and adopted Documentary research design. In

this regards, various documented evidence; particularly media publications; such as Newspapers were employed. Unlike other research designs such as survey and interview, the documents analyzed in this study were originally cum officially published without the intent of this study thereby added to the validity of the study. In essence, this enabled the researcher to examine the attributes and actions of the IPOB Sit-at-order on the socio-economic development in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study relied on data gathered from secondary sources of data. These data include documented evidence from media publications such as the Newspapers, reports, few journal articles and textbooks from the researcher immediate environment (Nnamdi Azikiwe University's Library).

Methods of Data Presentation and Analysis

Data gathered were presented in textual, tabular and pictorial forms; analyzed thematically through logical reasoning and invariably hinged on the three (3) research questions.

1.12 Operationalization of Key Concepts

IPOB: This is an acronym for Indigenous People of Biafra; it is a secessionist cum separatist group grew from the Southeast-Nigeria with the claim or being marginalized, thereby agitating for secession from the perceived oppressive political system of Nigeria.

Secession: This is used in the study to mean an act of withdrawing from membership of a federation or body, especially a political state.

Sit-at-home Order: This is a tool recently employed by IPOB group to unlawfully create fear and panic in the people of the Southeast region to stay away from the public, particularly on Monday and other notable days.

Socio-economic activities: This depicts the activities that are concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.

The Southeast-Nigeria: The South east is one of the six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria; the area is largely dominated by the Igbos and consist 5 states of the Nigerian federation which include Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT/EVOLUTION

2.1 History of Indigenous People of Biafra/Sit-at-home order

The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 created a heterogeneous political system with diversities in terms of religion, language, tribe, regions among others. Thus, from the amalgamation of Nigeria, the achievement of national cohesion became very essential for all forms of development and progress of the nation. Hence, the coming together of the North and South in the amalgamation of 1914 have so far demanded for a more critical review due to the inability of the various groups to fuse properly together. As observed in Henry, Obiora & David (2020), many attempts have been made since amalgamation; to arrive at a certain agreement on how the nation and its populace will move forward together. One of the front-liners of these attempts is the national conference of 1945, followed by the regional conference of 1950.

Subsequently, Nigeria, since her independence, has been encountering series of challenges, ranging from political crises to ethno-religious killings, military coup d'états, and finally the civil war which was as a result of minority secession. All these have presumably shaped the growth and development of the country in general, and the integration of the various ethnic nationalities in particular. The end of the war however,

initiated a new effort towards achieving national unity. The military and civilian governments that have risen from that time till now have made certain moves in pursuit of national unity, but the failure of these move is clearly seen in the rise cum reemergence of some pro-secessionist groups like the Oduduwa People's Congress, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta, as well as Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and the Biafran Zionist Movement, both of which laid the foundation for the rise of the Indigenous People of Biafra (Henry, Obiora & David, 2020).

Indigenous People of Biafra is a group leading the call for the secession of Biafra from the Nigerian federation. In the view of Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbonam (2022), IPOB is founded in 2012 as a reformation of the already weakened pro-secessionist groups of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM). The group, under the leadership of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his deputy Uche Okafor-Mefor, aims at creating an independent state for the people of old Eastern Region through referendum. IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu had gained popularity in 2009 from his broadcasts on Radio Biafra. This radio is stationed in London, and from there, he calls out for the freedom of Biafra people as well as criticising the practices of the Nigerian government

Nevertheless, the call for a sovereign state for the Igbo ethnic nationality is not a new phenomenon. As observed in Adonu (2017), the rise of IPOB is considered an attempt to resurrect the struggle for self-determination waged by the Igbos that led to gruesome thirty months' civil war that claimed the lives of over a million people and displaced several others; and also the perceived inefficiency of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafran. The cry became glaringly clear that the Igbos have been at the receiving end of calculated policies of marginalization since the collapse of Biafra.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) employed the Sit-at-home order following the arrest of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian Government. A report by Onwuka (2021) asserted that the group claimed there would be a sit-at-home in the Southeast-Nigeria every Monday until its leader, regains his freedom. Subsequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria had announced that Nnamdi Kanu was arrested in 2021 in Kenya and brought back to Nigeria. Consequently, the IPOB has continued to declare and observe sit-at-home order on the first business day weekly (Monday) and other days as declared by the group in respect to the arrest of its leader.

2.2 Historical development of Socio-economic Activities in the Southeast-Nigeria

Scholars have traced the history of the Southeast socio-economic activities to the existence of the region itself as part of Nigeria's entity. The Southeast is one of the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria, representing geo-political region of the country's inland southeast. The region consists of five (5) states, namely; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. As observed in World Population Review (2023), the region has a population of about 22 million people and about 10percent of the total population of Nigeria while Aba, Enugu, Onitsha, Umuahia, Owerri, Nnewi, Awka and Abakaliki are considered the most populous commercial cities in the region.

The Southeast geo-political zone shares boundary with River Niger, Niger Delta, the flat North Central and the Cross River. Socially, the vast majority of the Southeast zone is dominated by the Igbo and equally, the indigenous homeland of the Igbos. Socio-economically, despite being the smallest among the six (6) geopolitical zones in Nigeria, the Southeast contributes greatly to the Nigerian economy due to oil and natural gas reserves along with a growing industrialized economy (World Population Review, 2023).

Aside agricultural activities, the Southeast region of Nigeria is known for commercial and trading zone with small and medium indigenous industries that are manufacturing goods and services. As observed in Premium Times (2022, November), the Southeast zone is blessed with y solid mineral resources which include crude oil natural gas, iron ore, sand stone, coal, columbite, clay, tin among others.

Subsequently, the Southeast zone has developed to have some of the major/large markets in Nigeria, particularly, in Aba, Onitsha among others with local and foreign investors patronizing the region for business activities. However, the business activities in the zone have recently been plagued by crisis cum security threat arising from the call for secession and the creation of State of the Independent People of Biafra (Njoku, 2018).

More recently, as observed in Okoli, Ujumadu, Agbo, Nwaiwu, Alaribe, Adonu. Alozie, Oko, & Iheaka (2022), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has introduced the Sit-at-home order to press their demand and solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (the leader of the group) that has been arrested and detained by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Consequently, the Sit-at-home order introduced by the group as a tool in demanding for the release of their leader has continued to jeopardize the socio-economic activities in the region since 2020.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION I

3.1 Examining the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in the South East, Nigeria

The problem of separatism cum secession by the Igbos/IPOB has been part of Nigerian history and recently, the South East Nigeria has continued to witness frequent IPOB sit-at-home order since 2021, particularly every Monday, which is the first business day of the week. Thus, this chapter tended to establish how the security threats arising from the IPOB Sit-at-home order has influenced the business performance in the Southeast region of Nigeria, particularly, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Eleweke (2022) claimed that the spokesperson of Igbo Business Forum; Chief Ndubuisi Ehibundu statements with reporters of Daily Trust claimed that over 25billion is lost in Onitsha alone each day there is IPOB Sit-at-home. A statement by the spokesperson as observed, reads “You tell people to sit at home when you have nothing to manage the effect of hunger in the land and for those of us in the business sector, we lose an average of N25billion in Onitsha alone and I believe we also lose the same in sum in Aba, Nnewi; and others and this is not good for our economy” (Eleweke, 2022).

A statistical survey cum report by SBM Intelligence (Lagos-based political risk analysis firm) in the South East, Nigeria as observed in Iyora (2021) stated that out of 876 residents of the South East, Nigeria who observed the Sit-at-home order on August 9 in their different states across the region, 61.4 percent affirmed that their productivity was very affected while about 11percent who are mostly teachers and were on summer holidays claimed the sit at home did not affect their business engagements.

A statement by the First Vice President of Nnewi Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, NCCIMA (Chief Moses Ezukwo) cited in Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (2022) claimed that IPOB sit-at-home order has robbed the South East zone over 50billion in four weeks while the loss in the private business sector amounted to over 60 percent of the loss. From the these assertions, it is evident that Sit-at-home order has continued to disrupt commercial activities/business engagements in the South East region of Nigeria which are paramount and prerequisite to socio-economic development.

The effect of IPOB Sit-at-home order as affecting social and economic activities in the South East, Nigeria is also evident in a special report by Premium Times on May 17, 2022 claimed that traders, transporters and hoteliers lament on the destructive cum disruptive consequences of the IPOB Sit-at-home order on their businesses in the South East, Nigeria. According to the report, Businesses across the South East region of Nigeria are feeling the pain of the Sit-at-hom

Figure 1: Markets, Small and Medium Enterprises shutdown in different locations of the Southeast-Nigeria during enforcement IPOB Sit-at-home order



Source: Adeshina (2021)

The pictures in Figure 1 demonstrate the destructive effects of IPOB Sit at home order on socio-economic activities via the Small and Medium Enterprises across States in the South East, Nigeria. As demonstrated, Market places, shops among others, were under lock due to enforcement of IPOB sit-at-home order. According to Adeshina (2021), customers were stranded as all banks on the road including the banks, shops and offices were closed. This is also evident in Figure 2.

A statement by Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State during a town hall meeting with the market and transport unions’ leader in a bid to resolve the IPOB sit-at-home crisis and other social and economic challenges; reads “the state’s (Anambra state) economy loses about 19.6 billion Naira to Monday Sit-at-home order” while in Ebonyi State, the governor was more conservative, putting the figure at 10billion Naira loses in every IPOB’s Sit-at-home day. More so, the report claimed that market leaders, business owners and transporters were the critical stakeholders of the commercial sector of the state.

Figure 2: Commercial Banks, Retail Outlets cum SMEs closed during the enforcement IPOB Sit-at-home order in various locations in the Southeast-Nigeria



Polaris and Sterling bank in Wetheral Road, Owerri; all closed for business

Source: Olumide (2021).

The figure 2 demonstrated the another scenes of commercial banks, retail cum shops outlets closed due to enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order across the Southeast region of Nigeria. By implication, this has resulted in weekly disruption financial institutions and market activities in the region.

Eze, Chijioke and Amechi (2021) affirmed that every business sector has continued to face the consequences of the IPOB sit-at-home order in the South East region. This is evident in their assertion that “the chambers of commerce, business owners, and traders are still computing their loss though they put the cost of every Monday sit-at-home at about 8billion Naira”

A statement by one of the business men; Mr. Ndu who sells electronic gadgets reads; “We are dying gradually. The Sit-at-home is destroying our business; some of us cannot eat without coming to this market. Goods now stay longer unsold because the sit-at-home has us to do business for only five days a week. I lose about N200,000 every sit-at-home day” (Ugwu, 2022). As reported by Ugwu (2022), another business man who took bank loans to fund his business interviewed by Premium Times also lamented; I used to make 80 percent of the bank loan from sales, but today, I can’t make up to 40percent, we are going down every day. Businesses have collapsed and those whose businesses have collapsed may pick up arms one day to fend for themselves. Insecurity and crime rates will double” (Ugwu, 2022).

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS II AND III

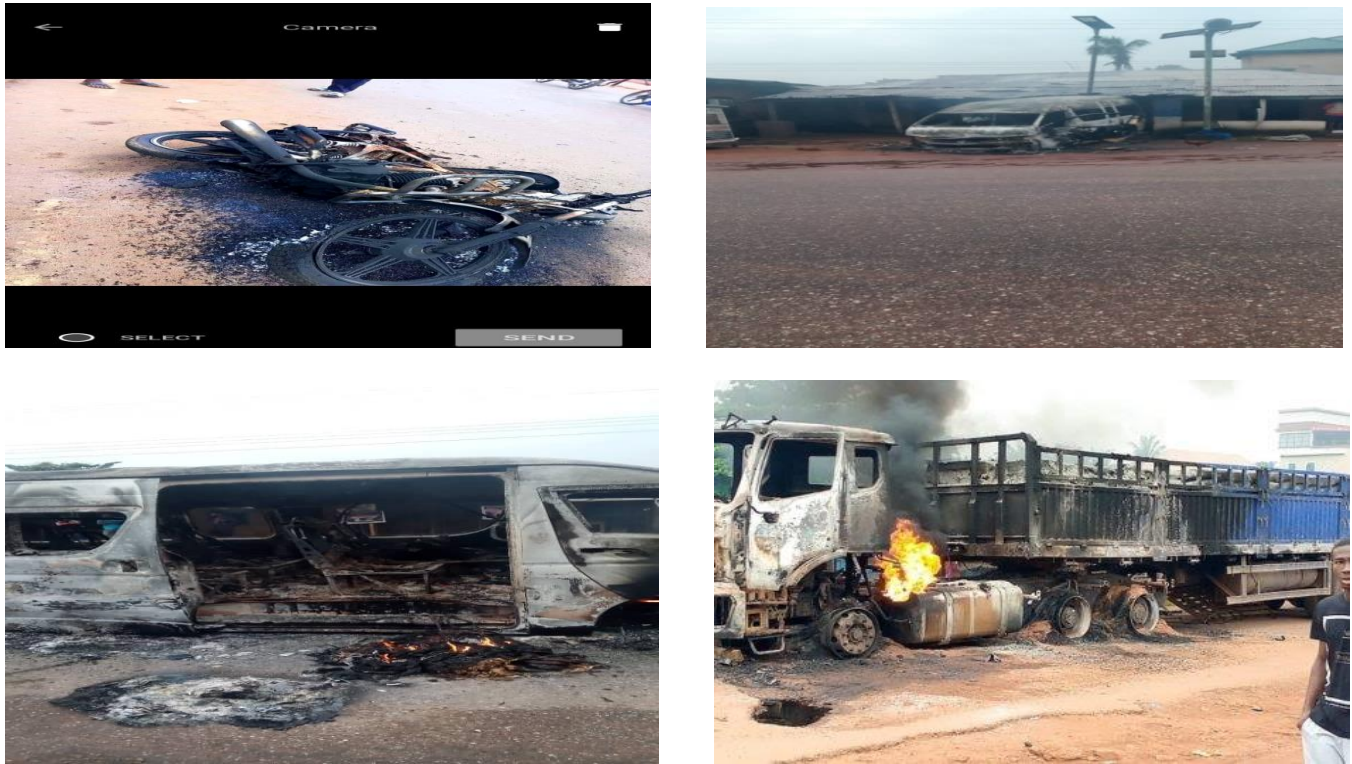
4.1 Examining the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the road transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria

Okoli, Ndujibe and Oko (2021) reported that Odoh, a 42-year-old indigene of Umuhuali community, in the Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, observed that the humanitarian and socio-economic activities of citizens of the state were badly affected in the last sit-at-home order. The statement reads, “The order has its negative impact on our people and myself and family inclusive. Our humanitarian and socio-economic activities were affected as a people and it will continue to be affected if this harder lingers”. The report equally affirmed that weekly sit-at-home order as announced by IPOB took place on Monday and a lot of people couldn’t get means of transporting themselves to their place works. In essence, the Igbo land is known for entrepreneurship and the business activities are being shut down on the first business day of every week.

A report by Iyora (2021) claimed that Sit-at-home order has continued to affect the drivers and motorists in the South East, Nigeria. Accordingly, the report claimed that a driver, named Favour Chizoba who works at Onitsha International market (a renowned commercial hub in the bustling Southeastern city), says that Sit-at-home order has crippled his earning capacity for several months. A statement by the victim reads “This week we have Sit-at-home two times; Monday and Friday, losing the opportunity to earn, takes care of my family and transfer (pay installments of 20,000 Naira weekly) for this shuttle on hire purchase “. This is also evident in Eze, Chijioke and Amechi (2021) who claimed statistically that the transport sector in the South East, Nigeria loses at least a sum of 3billion Naira any day there is IPOB Sit-at-home in the region. Accordingly, the maintained that an average of 1million people travel around in and out of the South East daily at average of 3000 Naira per traveler. Thus, any day Sit-at-home order is being observed, they transport sector lose hugely.

Njoku, Ogugbuaja, Osuji, Udejaja, Akpa and Akhaine (2021) while reporting on the effects of IPOB’s Sit-at-home order on the road transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria; claimed that the transport sector has suffered a serious setback in all the 27 local councils of Imo State as residents/travellers remained indoors on every Sit-at-home day. Accordingly, the same report equally claimed “the roads were deserted; markets were closed and transport services were withdrawn by operators...It was the same story of empty streets, closed shops and deserted roads in Umaiha, Abia’s capital city and Aba, the state commercial nerve centre”

Figure 3: Vehicles burnt by IPOB Sit-at-home order enforcers in different location in the South East, Nigeria.



Source: The Whistler, (2022),

The Figure 3 captioned numerous vehicles set ablaze by the IPOB Sit-at-home order enforcers due to in adherence to unlawful Sit-at-home order. The trailer belongs to the BUA Group at the Beach Junction, Nsukka, Enugu State (The Whistle Blower). As reported by Iwuoha, Onuegbu, Nweze & Egwuagha (2021), two passengers in the inter-state in the mass transit demonstrated in Figure 3 were killed, three vehicles were set ablaze by people enforcing sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra at Nkwogwu, Mbaise in Imo State on Monday morning while the motorcycle was equally razed along Echara road in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State.

Owoeye, Ezeanyaand Obiegbonam (2022; p. 105) affirmed that there have been series of violence and attacks reported in the South East zone of Nigeria due to IPOB Sit-at-home order. The scholars equally asserted". during the week, there was an incident where some hoodlums in Enugu attacked a bus distributing breads around the Old Orié Emena Market.the bus fully loaded with loaves of bread was looted and the bus set ablaze by the hoodlums (Sit-at-home enforcers). Similarly, two tricycles were also torched in the area before security operatives arrived at the scene to restore peace and order". Instances of IPOB Sit-at-home order as pit affects transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria is equally evident in the report of Ogbonnaya, Nwosu and Ogbodo-Iwuagwu (2021) that reads a tricycle operator on popular Arthur Eze road in Awka was stopped, matcheted and his tricycle burnt into ashes. Last two weeks, a trailer carrying spare parts worth N30million was set ablaze in Nsukka, Enugu State". By implication, the South East residents who earn a living through the means of transportation are usually left frustrated and out of jobs on every Sit- at-home day.

A report by Daily Times Nigeria (2021) claimed that IPOB's weekly Sit-at-home order continued to pose serious threats to the transport sector across all the states in the South East region of Nigeria thereby making transporter across the region demanding palliatives from the enforcers of the spit-at-home to cushion the effects of the illicit order. A report by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) having interrogated the transporters across the South East region reads; They complained that the transport system was the

worst hit by the directive as their vehicles were usually attacked or vandalized while passengers on the other hand, hardly come out of their homes for fear of attacks”.

In the same report of Daily Times (2021), a statement by the Chairman of Abia State Drivers’ Welfare; Henry Okezie affirmed that IPOB Sit-at-home order has dealt a deadly blow on the transport sector in the South East, Nigeria. A part of the statement reads, “This frequent Sit-at-home is really affecting us because we can’t operate if we don’t see passengers. Most of our members have their vehicles on a hire purchase, which means that we must work every day to meet the target. We are appealing to the enforcers of this exercise to give us some palliatives to cushion the effects”. The statement further reads, “We have over 200 members at Isigate Park in Umuaiha - Ikwuano and Umuaiha - Ubakala routes. Each of us makes a minimum of N10,000 daily. So, any day we don’t work, we lose over N2million. We would continue to comply with the directive because some of our vehicles got damaged while some passengers were injured the time we flouted it”. From the foregoing assertions, it is evident that the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order has continued to interrupt the transport-sub-sector of the South East region of Nigeria with deadly consequences on the passengers and drivers who flouted the unlawful order.

4.2 Examining the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on education in the South East, Nigeria

There have been series of disruption of educational activities in the Southeast Nigeria due to unlawful enforcement of the IPOB Sit-at-home order in the region. The documented evidence in various reports and media were analyzed in untangling this assumption.

A report by Okafor & Ede (2021) claimed that a lecturer at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (Dr. Henry Duru) shared his own narratives on the effect of IPOB Sit-at-home order on education in the South East region. A statement by the lecturer published on Punch News Nigeria, reads; “The sit at home order affected the university where I work. Between Sunday evening and early Monday morning, I received phone calls from a number of my students asking whether classes would hold or not. I simply told them that the school authorities did not declare any lecture-free day but when I got school on Monday, I discovered that the campus was almost a ghost town” From this assertion, it is much evident that the enforcement of the Sit-at-home order has created fear in the mind of student and lecturers in the Southeast-Nigeria from performing their academic duties.

While emphasizing on the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on social cum educational activities in the Southeast-Nigeria, Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (2022) claimed that enforcement of the order has in advertently disrupted education in the South East region of Nigeria. As claimed by the scholars, large numbers of examination candidates missed taking their examinations because the enforcers of the Sit-at-home order thwarted their efforts to reach the venue of their examinations. Thus, many could not get to the venue on time while others stayed back at home due to fear of IPOB enforcers. The same scholars equally maintained that there was invasion and violent dispersal of examination candidates by gun men on the days of their examination coincided with shutdown of the South East by Sit-at-home order. From the assertion, it is evident that IPOB’s Sit-at-home order has continued to wreak havoc on the education. Thus, formal education seems to be one of the basic factors that aid socio-economic development of a nation.

Consequently, a report by Ogbonnaya, Nwosuand Ogbodo-Iwuagu (2021) claimed that IPOB Sit-at-home order has serious egative consequences on the educational sector citing a number of instances. Evidently, the report reads; The student of a Comprehensive High School located remote Njaba community in Imo state were their English Language paper pin the external examination moderated by West African Examination Council (WAEC) when the gun men known as the IPOB struck”. The same report equally affirmed that IPOB Sit-at-home has not only affected educational sector but every sector of the economy in the South East, Nigeria.

A statement by Amaka, 300 level student of Anambra State University, Igbariam while lamenting on the effects of IPOB’s sit-at-home order on her studies reads, “our exams are coming up first week of October

so we have to cover a lot of things but with the sit-at-home on Mondays, we have no choice but to rush more". The student also lamented" the order was detrimental to the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) student in senior classes as it is only the South-east and South-south that are affected by it and these students are made to miss out on crucial classes needed for their exams". A part of an interview by Campus Reporters with an academic staff; Mrs Isi reads".it has negative impact on me in the sense that the lectures I have to deliver on Mondays are truncated. Students being frustrated and even those in school are afraid. Actually, I went to school but I didn't leave early to get information who had already gone to school, the peace of mind wasn't there seeing videos of killings in Imo and other places"

Olowolagba (2022) claimed that Nigerians have raised concerns about the deadly and destructive impact of the continued IPOB sit-at-home order by residents of the South East, Nigeria on the education of children in the region. The report claimed that major businesses, including banks, filling stations, motor parks, schools and roadside shops were shut due to the Sit-at-home order. A statement by Awolowo in the report, reads, "So,kids in Southeastern Nigeria miss school every Monday? Are we thinking about the long-term impact of this" while another statement claimed that IPOB sit-at-home order is like replacing a problem with another problem and emphasized the fact IPOB is fighting injustice and dictatorship with another injustice and dictatorship due to the cripple effect of its sit-at-home order on education in the South East, Nigeria.

A report by Igba (2021) claimed that the Sit-at-home order by the IPOB has overwhelming impact on the educational system in the South East, Nigeria. Accordingly, the report maintained that some inhabitants in the South East region, including students stayed indoors while some flouted the others. Nevertheless, those who flouted the unlawful sit-at-home order were reportedly met with death as there were shootings in some parts of the region by the IPOB sit-at-home enforcers, shops and commercial buses were set ablaze with people inside.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarized the findings of the study, presented the conclusion and recommendations based on the three (3) research questions.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study was able to look into the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on socio-economic activities of the Southeast region of Nigeria. The researcher embarked on the study based on proposed thoughts and observations from researcher's immediate environment, the Southeast region. Thus, the study aimed at revealing the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio economic activities of the Southeast-Nigeria.

In the course of the investigation; the researcher found out that data analyzed on hypothesis I established that IPOB Sit-home order has resulted in disruption of Small and Medium Enterprises in the South East, Nigeria. Statistically as evident in the study, 60percent of 50billion loss within 4 weeks was from SMEs; more than 60 percent of 876 residents across the South East states claimed that their productivity were seriously affected while Anambra state and Ebonyi Governments usually record N19.6billion and N10billion of economy loss respectively Naira on every Sit-at-home among others. It is on this basis that the researcher validates/accepts the hypothesis One.

More so, all the data analyzed claimed that IPOB Sit-home-order has disruptive effect on transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria negatively. This claim is evident in pictures and statistical reports which claimed that transport sector in the South East, Nigeria loses not less than N3billion any day there sit- at-home while flouting of the illicit Sit-at-home order has often resulted to burning of commercial vehicles, killings of their drivers and passengers. For these reasons the validated/accepts the hypothesis Two.

In addition, all the data presented and analyzed such as Okafor & Ede (2021), Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (2022), Ogbonnaya, Nwosu & Ogbodo-Iwuagu (2021), Olowolagba (2022) & Udofia (2018) among others

affirmed IPOB Sit-at-home order has often interrupted educational activities which include absent from school by both lecturers and student at UNIZIK, AMSU among others; failure of WAEC/NECO candidates to meet up with exams/total absence from school by those in basic education. On this basis, the researcher validates the hypothesis Three.

5.2 Conclusion

The main thrust of this study is to examine the effect of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio-economic development of the South East, Nigeria. From the analysis and findings; it is evident that IPOB Sit-at-home order has posed serious negative effects on the socio-economic activities of the Southeast-Nigeria. For this reason, the security threats, it has continued become a signal to potential investors that the region is unsafe for investments. Based on this, an urgent solution is ultimately needed. Therefore, IPOB Sit-at-home order is a serious threat to socio-economic activities of the Southeast, Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the researcher made the following recommendations;

- ❖ Since the South East is Igbo dominated area and the Igbos are well known for businesses as the major occupation and IPOB Sit-at-home order has serious negative effects on the performance and operations of SMEs in the region; there is urgent need for an internal dialogue among the Igbo traditional rulers, the incumbent governors the South East, Nigeria and the claimed leaders of IPOB across states in the region. This will enable them to reach a consensus on how to achieve their aims rather than destroying their businesses.
- ❖ Since IPOB sit-at-home usually enforced Sit-at-home on Mondays with disruptive effect on education, there is urgent need for schools and government across the South East, Nigeria to introduce online classes for students every Monday and other Sit-at-home days in the region.
- ❖ There is urgent need for the Nigerian government to free the acclaimed leader of the group (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu) from detention and then dialogue with the group (IPOB) with regards to their claims and demands rather than strong military approach. This will make the group have a sense of belonging once they are able to express themselves. This will put an end to burning of vehicles, killings of passengers on government roads among others.

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