

# The Effects of the Sit-At-Home Order Enforced by the Indigenous People of Biafra in South-East of Nigeria 2020-2023

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## ABSTRACT

Sit-at-home order as enforced by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has been on for about two (2) years; not even the various responses of the Nigerian government could stop it. This study examined the effects of the order enforced in South-east of Nigeria. The study looked at the implications of IPOB order on the socio-economic activities and the development of the region, as well as its effects on education. The study is qualitative; it adopted Documentary research design, while Systems Theory served as the theoretical guide. The study established that Sit-at-home order has severe economic consequences on indicators of socio-economic activities in the South-east, Nigeria. Based on this, the researchers recommended the need for a dialogue among the Igbo traditional rulers, governors of the South-east and the acclaimed leaders of IPOB across states of the region. There should be introduction of online classes and writing of examinations for students on Sit-at-home days. There should be equal power rotation of presidential seat across all the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Sit-at-home, IPOB, Socio-economic, South-East

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the struggle of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) can be traced to the 1960s when Nigerian political system as a newly independent entity encountered serious economic and political instability coupled with ethnic crises. As observed in Home Office (2022), a number of violent clashes occurred which include the killings of about 30,000 Igbos in Northern Nigeria in September 1966 while mechanisms put in place to resolve the tensions proved abortive. Subsequently, as evident in Home Office (2022), in May 1967, the Eastern-Nigeria (the Igbo 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 were killed. As a result of the war, the then Biafran Leader (Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu) fled to Coted'ivoire while the remaining Biafran soldiers surrendered to the Nigerian government on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 1970; subsequently, the Biafra struggle for independence totally collapsed and this brought a total end to the first historical struggle towards the attainment of independent Biafran Nation (Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam, 2022).

In order to cushion the effect of the Civil war, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon (rtd) made a pronouncement of no victor, no vanquished and subsequently launched the policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs). However, Osita & Anoke (2022) noted that mismanagement of the policy was reportedly the main reasons for the resurgence of Biafra uprisings in Nigeria's current democratic dispensation. It is in the same view that Francis A. Ikenga and Benjamin E. Agah (2020) argue that insecurity and the state of the Nigerian nation is a product leadership. In arriving this position, they examined the economy, public accountability, and human rights. The scholars pointed out that Nigerian government has failed to guarantee the security of a large section of the population, which ultimately necessitated militancy and insurrection which are major bane of effective governance since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

Nevertheless, the inability of the Nigerian State to acknowledge the marginalization of 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 by Ekpo & Agorye, (2019), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerged as a derivation of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) led 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 Igbo dominated area of Southeast-region. The proscription of IPOB and the Nigerian army invasion of the home of Nnamdi Kanu in Umuahia resulted in significant social upheavals, with numerous IPOB members losing their lives (Adonu, 2018). This military intervention forced Kanu to seek safety in Britain. However, his recent arrest and extradition from Kenya on June 29, 2021, have escalated insecurity in the South East region. In an attempt to draw the government's attention to their demands, IPOB implemented a weekly Monday sit-at-home order as a protest against their leader's detention, causing severe economic repercussions in the region (Ekechukwu V. I, Nwogu J.N, Ugwukwu V.O, Emerho G. E, 2022).

It is on this basis that Emma Powerful (IPOB spokesperson) declared every Monday, from 9th of August, 2021 as sit-at-home.

The weekly declaration of Sit-at-home on Mondays and some other days have presumable effects on the socio-economic and commercial activities in the major business areas in the South-East region; such as the inflow of traders to the region from other parts of the country, market operations, financial institutions in the major cities such as Aba, Onitsha, Awka, Enugu, Nnewi, Abakaliki and Ihiala among others. It has equally affected adversely the socio-political and cultural lives of the people in the five states of the South-East, namely Abia, Anambra, Ebony, Enugu and Imo State as all political gatherings, burial and marriage ceremonies and other festivals no longer hold in most communities in the south east especially in those areas where the militia arm of IPOB called Eastern Security Network (ESN) have their camps.

Since 2021, the sit-at-home order illegal enforcements in the Igbo 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 10billion Naira on every sit-at-home day. 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 to note that the security threats arising from the enforcement of Sit-at-home order have implications on the socio-economic activities cum conditions of the Southeast-Nigeria. Socio-economically, the unlawful declaration of Sit-at-order has resulted in declined inflow of traders into the Southeast-region of Nigeria on every sit-at-home day; closure of market places, restriction of movements, total shut down of financial institutions across the region, closure of public and private academic institutions 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 regular weekly holiday while others who disobey the unlawful order sometimes face severe consequences. It is on the basis of the foregoing that the researchers examine the extent to which the IPOB's sit-at-home order has affected the socio-economic activities of the South-east region in the specific areas of education, transportation, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in recent years.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the effects of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio-economic activities of the South East of Nigeria, while, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the socio-economic implications of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the performance of SME's in the South East, Nigeria 2020-2022.
2. Investigate the socio-economic implication of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the road transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria 2020-2022.
3. Examine the socio-economic implication of IPOB Sit-at-home order on education in the South East, Nigeria 2020-2022.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### History of Indigenous People of Biafra and Sit-at-home order

The amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 resulted in a heterogeneous political system, necessitating the achievement of national cohesion for development and progress (Henry, Obiora & David, 2020). Efforts towards unity were made through conferences like the national conference of 1945 and the regional conference of 1950. However, since gaining independence, Nigeria has faced numerous challenges, including political crises, ethno-religious killings, military coup d'états, and the civil war triggered by minority secession (Henry, Obiora & David, 2020). Although there were subsequent attempts by the military and civilian governments to achieve national unity, the emergence of pro-secessionist groups like IPOB indicated the failure of these efforts. IPOB, formed in 2012 as a reformation of earlier pro-secessionist groups, seeks the secession of Biafra through a referendum (Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam, 2022). Led by Nnamdi Kanu, who gained popularity through Radio Biafra, the group advocates for Biafra's independence and criticizes the Nigerian government.

The rise of IPOB can be seen as a continuation of the struggle for self-determination by the Igbos, highlighting perceived marginalization since the Biafra civil war (Adonu, 2017). The group's use of Sit-at-home orders as a form of protest further reflects its determination to secure the freedom of its leader (Onwuka, 2021).

### IPOB Sit-at-home Order

Various conceptual reviews have defined IPOB's Sit-at-home order as a struggle towards achieving the independent state of Biafra (Obiora & David, 2020). Formed in 2012 as a reformation of earlier pro-secessionist groups, IPOB calls for the secession of Biafra from Nigeria (Obiora & David, 2020; Adonu, 2017). The Sit-at-home order was announced by IPOB after the arrest of its leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, by the Nigerian government (Onwuka, 2021). This order includes Mondays and other days until Kanu regains freedom, leading to significant economic consequences and disruptions in the Southeast region (Onwuka, 2021; Nigerian Tribune, 2022). Originally an annual event to remember those lost in the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, the Sit-at-home order evolved as a means of drawing attention to Kanu's predicament (Mark, Obi & Chibuzor, 2022). Scholars like Osita, Anoke, and Eze (2022) noted that the order's frequent and destructive consequences were aimed at persuading the Nigerian government to free Kanu, who is on trial for treason and terrorism in the South-east Nigeria.

### Historical Development of Socio-economic Activities in the Southeast-Nigeria

The Southeast region of Nigeria, one of the country's six geopolitical zones, is socially dominated by the Igbo ethnic group and is known for its significant contributions to the Nigerian economy (World Population Review, 2023). With a population of about 22 million people, the region's major commercial cities include Aba, Enugu, Onitsha, Umuahia, Owerri, Nnewi, Awka, and Abakaliki. Apart from its agricultural activities, the Southeast is known for its commercial and trading activities, driven by small and medium indigenous industries producing goods and services (Premium Times, 2022, November). The region is blessed with solid mineral resources, including crude oil, natural gas, iron ore, coal, and more.

In recent times, the region has faced security challenges due to calls for secession and the creation of the State of the Independent People of Biafra (Njoku, 2018). Specifically, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have been using the Sit-at-home order as a means to demand the release of their leader, resulting in disruptions to

socio-economic activities in the region since 2020 (Okoli et al., 2022).

### Socio-economic Development

The concept of socio-economic development involves positive changes in social and economic activities of a society or nation, aiming to improve the well-being and quality of life (Litwinski, 2017; Kubizek, 2014; Chojnicki, 2010). It encompasses quantitative and qualitative structural changes, including improvements in life conditions, material condition, economic structure, and entrepreneurship, as well as increased access to public goods and services (Litwinski, 2017). Socio-economic development is an interplay between social and economic activities, with the goal of achieving the highest level of human development (Wikipedia, 2022; Tarver, 2022).

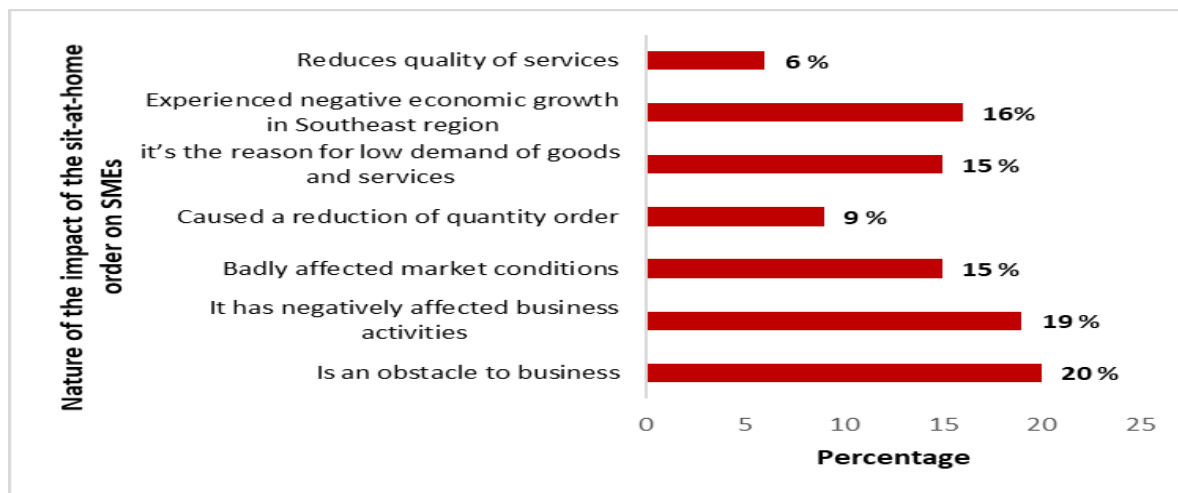
### Empirical Case Studies of Researchers Conducted to Demonstrate the Negative Impact of the Enforcement of Sit-At-Home Order on The Economy of South-East Region of Nigeria.

#### Enforcement of Sit-at-home order by IPOB and conditions of SMEs in South East, Nigeria.

Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi (2016) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study on Biafra Separatism, finding that pro-Biafra demonstrations and security disruptions negatively affect economic activities in the Southeast region, discouraging investments. Their study recommended the establishment of a high-level Peace and Reconciliation Commission to address IPOB's grievances. Morgen (2021) examined the impact of IPOB-ordered Sit-at-home protests on social and economic activities in the South East, using a Survey Research design. The study revealed that the sit-at-home orders led to the suspension of commercial activities, including banking operations and other businesses, affecting productivity and the economy in the region.

Ikeh (2021) focused on the impact of sectional agitation on national development, specifically studying IPOB and MASSOB in South-Eastern Nigeria. The study found that 62.8 percent of respondents ranked disruption of economic activities through IPOB's Sit-at-home as the most serious effect on the region. The study urged the government to address the group's grievances with humane measures. Mark, Obi & Chibuzor (2022) analyzed the impact of IPOB's Sit-at-home orders on the economy of the South-East Geo-political zone using the Relative Deprivation theory. They concluded that the disruptions caused by IPOB negatively affect the economy, especially business activities and SMEs. The paper recommended dialogue between IPOB and the Nigerian government to resolve the issue effectively.

Figure 1: Nature of the impact of the sit-at-home order on the SMEs



Source: (Mark K. C, Nweke C.C Igweike O.J, Eze, K. K 2023)

From the figures above as presented by Mark. C, Nweke, C.C, and Eze, K.K (2023), we will understand that the impact of the Sit-At-Home order has badly affected the SMEs in the South-East part of the country. According to Ezewudo, Ukwuoma, and Uroko (2022), Okwesilieze Nwodo, the former chairman of the

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), expressed that the sit-at-home measure is not beneficial for the Igbo community. Dr. Emmanuel Chukwuma, the Archbishop of Enugu Ecclesiastical Province, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, also pointed out that the sit-at-home practice negatively affects the region's economy and leads to the impoverishment of the Igbo people. Reports indicate that the losses incurred by chambers of commerce, business owners, and traders due to these sit-at-home actions amount to around 8 billion naira. Additionally, Chief Moses Ezekwo, the first vice president of Nnewi Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NCCIMA), stated that the South-East zone has suffered losses exceeding 50 billion naira, with the private sector alone witnessing a decline of over 60 percent. Furthermore, the transport sector experiences losses of at least 6 billion naira on any day when there is a lockdown in the region.

### **Sit-at-home Order and Educational Activities in the South-East Region of Nigeria**

Owoeye, Ezeanya, and Obiegbunam (2022) conducted a descriptive qualitative study based on Systems theory, which revealed that the IPOB Sit-at-home order had negative effects on the region's educational system, transport system, and market operations. They also recommended that the Nigerian Government should ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources among the country's geo-political zones through a proper federal character system. Chukwudi, Gberebie, Abasilim, and Imhonopi (2022) carried out an empirical investigation on how IPOB agitations influenced political stability in Nigeria. Their survey-based research, which employed both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires, found that the rate of IPOB agitation through sit-at-home orders contributed to socio-political instability in the South East region and Nigeria as a whole, particularly education, investments, and participation in elections.

Gbenemene (2022) focused on separatist movements, conflicts, and insecurity in the South East Nigeria. Their qualitative research, grounded in Social identity theory and based on various documented evidence, highlighted that IPOB's agitation and strategy led to significant security challenges, particularly affecting movement, education, and government facilities in the South East zone of Nigeria.

### **Sit-at-home order and road transport sub-sector of the South-East of Nigeria.**

Osita, Anoke, and Eze (2022) conducted a survey-based study using regression analysis and questionnaires. They found that the sit-at-home orders had significant negative effects on various socio-economic activities in the Southeast, including business operations and the transport system. The study recommended diplomatic engagement between the Southeast government, stakeholders, and the Federal Government to address the situation and secure the release of IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Nwakaegho (2021) utilized survey research and data from media publications and reports to explore the disruptive impact of IPOB activities, particularly sit-at-home orders, on the economy of the South East region. The study revealed instances of closed shopping malls, fuel stations, and restricted vehicular movement due to the directives from IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Frank (2021) investigated the socio-economic implications of IPOB's agitation for Biafra in the South East, Nigeria, using a survey research design and questionnaires based on group theory. The study concluded that the agitation had serious negative implications for various socio-economic activities in the region, including hindrances to free movement and restrictions on vehicular traffic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is built on Systems theory of Talcott Parsons (a functionalist sociologist) and David Easton (a Political Scientist). Systems 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 the 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 on the system that needed attention. According to Parsons (1951), 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, political

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 of 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 extend 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 to total failure of all sectors or disintegration of the system as a composite whole.

## DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Socio-economic effects of Sit-at-home Order on SMEs Performance in South-east Nigeria** Data on internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of various state governments in Nigeria for Q1 2021 indicated that the Southeast region generated approximately N53 billion in the following order: Abia (N7.550b), Anambra (N12.773b), Enugu (N14.140b), Ebonyi (N7.753b), and Imo (N9.991b). This data was collected a few days before the start of the Monday sit-at-home in the region. Further analysis revealed that none of the states in the zone met their revenue targets in the previous year. Dataphyte, a media, research, and data analytics organization, reported that during Q1 2023, aside Anambra state achieving 27% of its projected revenue, other states in the region, including Imo, Enugu, Abia, and Ebonyi, generated less than 15% of their projected internal revenue.

The Governor of Anambra state, Prof Charles Soludo, emphasized that each day of the sit-at-home resulted in an estimated loss of N19.6 billion for the poor masses of the state. He listed various categories of people affected, including artisans, Keke drivers, vulcanizers, hairdressers, petty traders, bricklayers, and others whose daily livelihoods were impacted. Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu state also recognized the adverse effects of the sit-at-home order, which resulted in a loss of N10 billion every Monday. He banned the sit-at-home in his state, aiming to transition from a public service to a private sector-driven economy, (Guardian Newspapers, July 2023).

Despite the ban, compliance remained an issue, leading to threats of license revocation for businesses that failed to open on sit-at-home days. The Acting Director General of the Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (ECCIMA) confirmed significant losses, with selected hotels in the region reporting over 80% loss in bookings on sit-at-home days. The consequences of the sit-at-home in the Southeast included a decline in foreign and local investments, business relocation to neighboring states, increased unemployment, and a rise in crime rates. Various stakeholders, including the Onitsha Chamber of Commerce and a Public Affairs Analyst, expressed concern over the economic and security implications and called for collective efforts to address the situation, (Guardian Newspapers, July 2023).

Senator Ifeanyi Ubah also took steps to end the sit-at-home by empowering Vigilante operatives in Nnewi to protect businesses and enable free movement on Mondays. Overcoming the insecurity and socio-economic impacts of the sit-at-home requires the concerted efforts of all stakeholders in the region.

The South-east region has observed weekly sit-at-home exercises for 730 days, initiated by supporters of the separatist state of Biafra to demand the release of IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The Monday sit-at-home action since August 9, 2021, have caused significant disruptions to the region's economic activities, resulting in an estimated loss of approximately N7.6 trillion in productivity, potential investments, and life and property. During this period, out of 520 working days, 105 Mondays have been lost to the sit-at-home orders, leaving only 415 days for productive work. Additionally, public holidays declared by the government further reduce the available productivity period in the region (Lawrence Njoku, 2023).

The consequences of the prolonged sit-at-home include declining productivity, job threats, reduced investor confidence, increased insecurity, and a near collapse of the region's infrastructure with a rise in social vices. A sponsored investigation revealed a loss of N5.375 trillion by businesses between August 9, 2021, and December 19, 2022 (Lawrence Njoku, 2023). Economic and financial expert, Dr. Chiwuike Uba, stated that the southeast had lost approximately N7.646 trillion between August 2021 and July 2023, with around 101 days lost during this period. The southeast region's revenue profile is also adversely affected, ranking as the region with the least internally generated revenue according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics for the first quarter of 2021 (Lawrence Njoku, 2023)

The Biafra agitation has been part of Nigerian history and recently, the South East Nigeria has continued to witness frequent enforcement of IPOB sit-at-home order notably since 2021 and particularly on every Monday, the first business day of the week.

Eleweke (2022) claimed that the spokesperson of Igbo Business Forum; Chief Ndubuisi Ehibundu;s statements with reporters of Daily Trust claimed that over N25billion 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 report by SBM Intelligence (Lagos-based political risk analysis firm) in the South East, Nigeria as observed in Iyorah (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 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 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.

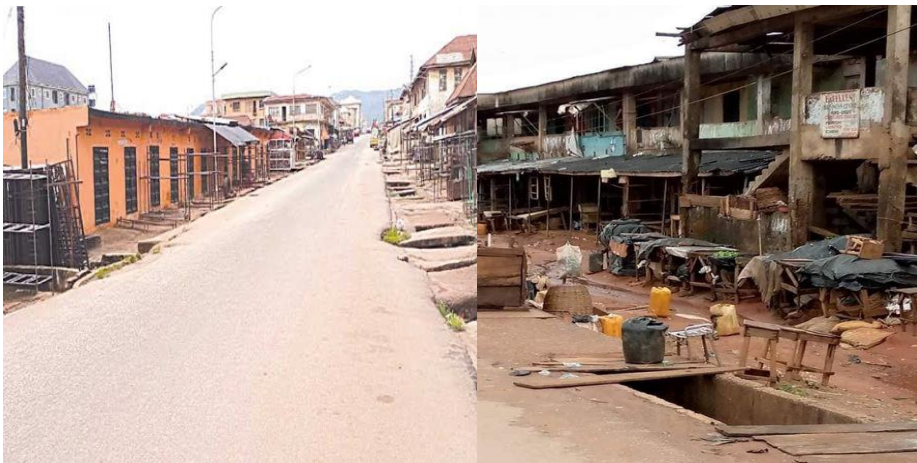
Figure 1: The Number of Mondays Lost to Sit-At-Home order from August 9<sup>th</sup> 2021- July 31<sup>st</sup> 2023

S/N	Year	Months	No. of Mondays Lost	Total in Days
1	2021	5 Months	21 Mondays	21 Days
2	2022	12 Months	52 Mondays	52 Days
3	2023	7 Months	31 Mondays	31 Days
<b>SUM</b>	<b>3 Years</b>	<b>24 Months</b>	<b>104 Mondays</b>	<b>104 days</b>

Note: A Total Of 21+52+31= 104 Mondays has been lost to Sit-At-Home Order Since August 9<sup>th</sup> 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and still counting in the South-East Nigeria.

The effects 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 which 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-home

Figure 2: 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 2 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 as well as shops and offices were closed.

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 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 3: Commercial Banks, Retail Outlets cum SMEs closed during the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order in various locations in the South-east Nigeria



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

Source: Olumide (2021).

The figure 3 demonstrated another scene 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 of financial institutions and market activities in the region.

Eze, Chijioke & 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 allow 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).

### Socio-economic Impact of IPOB Sit-at-home order on Road Transport in 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 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 of 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 Iyorah (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), said that the 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 & 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, he 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/travelers 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 center”

Figure 4: Vehicles burnt by IPOB Sit-at-home order enforcers in different location in South East, Nigeria.





Source: The Whistler, (2022),

The Figure 4 captioned numerous vehicles set ablaze by the IPOB Sit-at-home order enforcers due to non-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, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (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 have affected the transport sub-sector in the South East, Nigeria. Equally, there is evidence in the report of Ogbonnaya, Nwosu & Ogbodo-Iwuagwu (2021) that reads “a tricycle operator on popular Arthur Eze road in Awka was stopped, matched 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 transportation are usually left frustrated and out of jobs on each 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.

### **The socio-economic implication 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 students 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 adversely 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 education. Thus, formal education seems to be one of the basic factors that aid socio-economic development of a nation.

A statement by Amaka, a 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) for students 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 that IPOB is fighting injustice and dictatorship with another injustice and dictatorship due to the ripple effects 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.

## Major Findings

The study was able to examine the socio-economic implication of the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the Southeast region of Nigeria. The researcher embarked on the study based on proposed thoughts and observations from researcher's immediate residential environment (Awka, Anambra state), the Southeast region of Nigeria. Thus, the study aimed at revealing the implication of the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the socio economic activities and the development of Southeast-Nigeria.

In the course of the investigation; the researcher found out that data analyzed established that the enforcement of 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 ₦19.6billion and ₦10 billion of economic loss respectively on every Sit-at-home among others.

This research analysis has established 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 as shown in the course of the research. Nigeria loses not less than ₦3billion any day there sit- at-home as the enforcement often resulted in burning of commercial vehicles, killings of their drivers and passengers.

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 that the IPOB Sit-at-home order often interrupted educational activities which include absence from school by both lecturers and students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State University, Igboariam among others as well as failure of WAEC and NECO candidates to meet up with examinations and total absence from school on Sit-at-Home days by students at basic education level.

## CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this study is to examine the socio-economic implications of the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order on South East, Nigeria. From the analysis and findings; it is evident that the weekly enforcement of Sit-at-home order by IPOB has negative socio-economic consequences on the socio-economic activities of the South-east-Nigeria. For this reason, the enforcement of IPOB Sit-at-home order has not only become a security threat with disruptive socio-economic implication cum consequences but equally a signal to potential foreign investors that the region is unsafe for investment of any kind. Based on this, an urgent solution is ultimately needed in order to avert total collapse of the system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. 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 of 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.
2. 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 on-line classes for students every Monday and other Sit-at-home days in the region.
3. Since IPOB is rooted in historical struggle for Biafra's independence due to perceived continuous marginalization of the South-east region. Freeing the leader of the group would not end the problem all alone, therefore, there must be equal power rotation of presidential seat across all the six-geo-political zone of Nigeria rather than North/South presidency. This will make the group to have a sense of

belonging in government. This will put an end to burning of vehicles, killings of passengers on government roads among others.

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