



Effects of IPOB Sit-At-Home on the Economy of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, South-Eastern Nigeria.

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Abstracts. The study examined the effects of IPOB sit-at-home order on the economy of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data with the use of the system theory by Talcott Parsons which states that every system is made up of sub-system that has component parts, and each component has a vital role to play for the overall performance of the system as a whole. Questionnaires were administered to respondents and data gathered were analyzed with the use of in-depth summary and coding as well as Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that IPOB sit-at-home order has negatively affected the economy of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, south-eastern region of Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that there is need for IPOB to suspend its sit-at-home order and embrace dialogue with the Federal Government to press down their demand for the release of their leader because this sit-at-home has not yielded any positive results, rather it has deeply eaten up the economy and affected the livelihood of the people which had led to more crimes and even loss of lives and properties. Also, the distribution of resources among the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria should be done through proper Federal character principle as this will go a long way to reducing what the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) perceived as gross marginalization to the south-eastern regions.

Keywords: Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), National Economy, National Integration

1. Introduction

The Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 ushered in the heterogeneous nature of the country with diverse languages, religions and tribes, etc. an ideology that brought national integration with regards to development and progress of the nation; the concept

that favors the idea of the awareness of a common identity among citizens of a country. Onwuka (2021) observed that despite the various efforts put towards achieving this goal, the country has over the years been faced with numerous challenges that have impeded national integration. The events that unfolded during the postcolonial periods of 1960 to the beginning of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war in 1967 had a devastating effect on the unity of the nation. Fifty-five years down the line, the unity of the nation is yet to be achieved. Campbell (2017) asserts that the civil war which lasted for about three (3) years recorded an estimated 3.5 million deaths due to hunger and starvations during the war with damaging consequences on the economic activities in Nigeria. McKenna (2021) states that the starvation of children led to airlifts of food and medicine from many countries including Gabon, Cote de-Voivre, Tanzania and Zambia to the Biafran agitators and soldiers while France supplied weapons. As a secessionist movement founded in 2012 from south-eastern Nigeria with the aim of restoring the defunct Biafra through peaceful means, the group is said to have originated from a similar group; Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM). Ekpo & Agorye, (2018) acclaimed that it was the inability of MASSOB to achieve its goal that paved way for the emergence of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Jacob, Nwobi & Igboji (2020) described IPOB as a group leading the call for the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. They see the group as a reformation of the weakened pro-secessionist groups of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM) with the aim of creating an independent State for the people of old Eastern region.

Nwaiwu (2016) traced the formation of the group to the historical and cultural origin of the Igbos, so as to

seek the secession of the Biafran Nation from Nigeria. This is seen as the remedy for what the group (IPOB) perceived gross injustice and marginalization of the Igbo nationality by the Federal Government of Nigeria. More so, Okafor (2017) maintained that the group called for a referendum to be conducted in Igbo territories to settle the issue of Biafra in a civilized and democratic manner. In 2012, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) declared their intentions to restore the defunct Biafra by means of secession. For IPOB, it was a quest for self-determination for the Igbos, an advocacy for the rights and freedom of what was left of Biafra. Since its inception, the group has agitated for an independent State for the Eastern region through referendum. The group rose and gained its ideologies in solidarity to the secessionist Biafra that existed in Southeastern region from May 30th 1967 to January 15th 1970. Various reasons constituted the call for secession by Biafra, such as economic depletion, ethnic and religious tensions as well as failure of the government in power. These challenges can be traced back to the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates in 1914, that led to creation of Nigeria Nmezu & Iroanya (2016). The unsolicited amalgamation of the different regions by the colonial administration created a host of problems for the need of national integration. The events leading to the civil war in 1967 and the war itself which was a secession attempt by the Igbos of eastern Nigeria under the name Biafra, further frustrated the nation's attempt towards unity. Hence, this paper seeks to examine the effects of IPOB sit-at-home and how it had impeded on the economy of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, South-Eastern Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Concept of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

The acronym IPOB stands for the Indigenous People of Biafra, a nationalist separatist group that aims to restore the Republic of Biafra, a country that seceded from Nigeria prior to the Civil War (1967-1970) and later rejoined Nigeria after its defeat by the Nigerian military. Allison (2017) holds that the group was founded by Nnamdi Kanu and Uche Mefor in 2012 which was deemed a terrorist organization by the Nigerian Government in 2017 under the Nigerian Terrorism Act. Similarly, Nwanwu (2021) asserts that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has criticized the Federal Government for poor investment, political alienation, inequitable distribution of resources, ethnic marginalization,

heavy military presence, extrajudicial killings in the South-Eastern regions of the country etc. The organization rose to prominence in the mid-2010s and is now the largest Biafran independence organization by membership. Amnesty International (2016) asserts that the Indigenous People of Biafra has gained significant media attention for becoming a frequent target of political crackdowns by the Nigerian government. Amnesty International (2016) further stated that the group has numerous sites and communication channels serving as the only trusted social apparatus educating and inculcating firsthand information and news to its members.

3. Empirical Review

3.1 Historical Background of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

The birth of IPOB movement can be traced to a secessionist movement which started in the 1960s, led by Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the movement posited itself as representing the interests of the South Eastern region who felt marginalized by the Nigerian government dominated mainly by leaders from the Northern part of the country. Due to this, they sought to break from the shackles of the Nigerian government and form the Republic of Biafra. The failure of the leaders to de-escalate this conflict resulted in a Civil War which lasted from 1967 and 1970. Okoli et al (2021) holds that despite losing the war, the overarching theme of separatism remained, bubbling underground. In a broader sense, the lasting relevance of this idea is proof of the failures of the state to reintegrate the South Eastern region successfully. The group which was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a British Nigerian political activist known for his advocacy of the contemporary Biafran independence movement, was deemed a terrorist organization by the Nigerian government in 2017 under the Nigerian Terrorism Act. On May 2022, the United Kingdom denied asylum to members of IPOB who engaged in human rights abuses, even though the United Kingdom government clarified that IPOB had not been designated a terrorist organization. IPOB has criticize the Nigerian Government for poor investment, political alienation, inequitable distribution of resources, ethnic marginalization, heavy military presence, and extrajudicial killings in the South-Eastern regions of the country. The organization rose to prominence in the mid-2010s and is now the largest Biafran independence organization by membership. In recent years, it has gained significant media attention for becoming a frequent target of political crackdowns by the Nigerian government, and also has numerous

sites and communication channels serving as the trusted social apparatus educating and inculcating first-hand information and news to its members (Nmezu & Iroanya 2016).

The tensions between Biafra and the Federal Government resulted in the civil war that lasted for three years with an estimated 3.5 million deaths caused by starvation and hunger, and in 1970, the Biafran forces surrendered through the armistice brokered by the defunct OAU. Anayo (2016) asserts that the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra who is a British and Nigerian citizen created IPOB after gaining fame from his broadcasts on Radio Biafra established in 2009. A radio station from London that broadcast messages called for freedom of Biafrans and criticized corruption in the Nigerian Government. Radio Biafra catalyzed Kanu's rise to the public scene, as he was previously an unknown figure and was arrested by the Nigerian security forces on 19 October 2015, on charges of "sedition, ethnic incitement and treasonable felony. The activities of IPOB have also been condemned by the international community- the United States and United Kingdom have both called on the Nigerian government to respect the rights of IPOB members. The future of IPOB is uncertain, as the group has been weakened by the arrest of its leaders and the military crackdown on its activities. However, the underlying grievances that led to the formation of IPOB remain, and it is possible that the group will continue to operate underground and its activities will flare up again in the nearest future. BBC news (2021) report that young people who belong to secessionist groups such as IPOB are mainly ethnic Igbos who feel they have been discriminated against by those in power. In a similar way, the International Crisis Group asserts that the activities of Biafran separatist groups including IPOB are an attempt to attract attention and spending from the Nigerian Government, based on a cocktail of longstanding and recent economic and political grievances.

Also, Thompson, Ojukwu & Nwaoegu, (2021) stated that IPOB's grievances are that they have been politically, socio-economically, and culturally marginalized by the Nigerian Government. These evidence of marginalization have been pin-pointed by Allison (2017) to include political alienation, inequitable resource distribution, extra-judicial killings, heavy military presence among other factors. Since inception, Nigeria has been plagued with crises bothering on religious, ethno-cultural, political and territorial, and these have proved challenging to the several efforts towards National integration. The major highlight of these crises remains the Nigerian-

Biafran war of the 1960s, that characterized the Igbos fight to secede from Nigeria was as a result of the incessant killings of their ethnic members who were residing in the Northern part of the country. Despite the no victor no vanquished system instituted by the then Military Head of State; General Yakubu Gowon salvaged what was left of the Igbo ethnic group and reabsorbed them into Nigeria. Duruji (2019) asserts that they were reabsorbed as conquered people and sheds light that some policies were designed to deliberately limit and demobilize the Igbos from making productive moves. However, the extradition of Nnamdi Kanu from Kenya, and a sit-at-home protest has since become a major pain in the South East, as residents in the region and the Igbos in the diaspora rest on the government and curiously watching what the exercise would ultimately achieve. Undoubtedly, the sit-at-home has cost the residents of the South East a lot in terms of life and property. Since it started, several innocent citizens (both average and prominent) have lost their lives in the most gruesome manner, depriving families of their loved ones who were breadwinners, and truncating the destinies of those left behind while leaving scars that may never heal (Njoku et al, 2021).

4. Implications for National Integration

The Indigenous People of Biafra in a bid to drive home their grievances, have in recent times taken actions that have directly challenged the sovereign integrity of the Nation. Many of these actions are seen as self-destructive not only to the affected states but to the country at large and has in the long run hindered the process of national integration. On the 18th of September, 2017, IPOB was proscribed and declared a terrorist group by a ruling of the Federal High court in Abuja and since then they have been recognized as that under the Nigeria's Terrorism Act. The IPOB supporters utilize the application of civil disobedience in pressing home its demand for the freedom of Biafrans (Duruji, 2019). Some extreme measures that have been employed by the IPOB members includes, bombing of police stations and killing of security personnel. In many cases the military have been saddled with the responsibility of restoring law and order. Njoku et al (2021) asserts that one of the most severely criticized acts of IPOB is the illegal imposition of the sit at home order which is observed every Monday in all south-eastern states. As a result, businesses, schools, banks, transportation companies, markets and other essential services are forced to remain closed. Omole (2021) asserts that on such days, the atmosphere can be likened to that of a war zone, in which people are terrified to come out of their homes out of fear of

what punishment that might be meted on them. So much of human resource and productivity in areas of business, education, commerce, trade and transportation has been affected by the sit-at-home order. Omole (2021) further reported that the group placed a ban on the Nigeria National anthem in schools across the south-eastern region, but has not been very effective as certain Eastern governors have fought to maintain law and order in their states by not making the movement a war against the Federal Government. Also, schools have been mishandled as students are lagging behind in the general curriculum obtainable in other states, as a result of not being able to go to school on Mondays. The decline in market trade and transportation is another worrisome aspect of this imposed order. The main market of Enugu, is considered to be one of the largest markets in West Africa, traders and commuters from all over the world flock in on a daily basis to carry out their businesses. Nwauwu (2021) states that with the sit-at-home, markets are not to open until Tuesday, and this is estimated to average losses of 25 billion naira and about the same sum in other eastern regions.

5. IPOB's Impact on the Nigerian Economy

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has had a significant negative impact on the Nigerian economy. The group's activities, including its sit-at-home orders and its violent attacks on security forces and civilians, have led to a decline in economic activity in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Morgen (2021) found that the South-eastern region of Nigeria loses over N10 billion each time it observes the sit-at-home order directed by IPOB. The report also found that the region's economy has been shrinking since 2017, when IPOB's activities began to intensify. In addition to the economic impact, IPOB's activities have also had a negative impact on the security situation in Nigeria. The group's attacks on security forces have led to an increase in violence in the southeastern region, and have also made it more difficult for the government to provide security and basic services to the region's residents. A report published by Sahara Reporters state that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Monday sit-at-home strategy has created fear and lack of security confidence in the mind of students in the Southeast region, the statement which reads: commercial activities are gradually resuming on Monday in some parts of the South-east region but most schoolchildren still prefer to stay at home despite the cancellation of the sit-at-home order (Sahara Reporters, 2021).

Okoye (2021) holds that the prevailing situation of the shutdown of the South-East every Monday has

continued to inflict collateral damage on the economy of the South-East States. The street hawkers, who earn their daily livelihoods by hawking sachet beverages, vegetables, fruits and others-bear the brunt of the weekly shutdown of the South-East. Hence, it is evident that IPOB Monday sit-at-home order has continued to disrupt the commercial activities across the South-East States of Nigeria. The same report also maintained that since the commencement of the observation of the sit-at-home order on Mondays, a majority of Igbo people, whose survival depends on their daily earnings, had gone to bed on empty stomachs because they had no money with which to buy food. The implication of this is that; IPOB. Monday sit-at-home order has continued to inflict suffering, hunger and poverty in the South-east region, as many people could no longer engage on their daily activities on sit at home days. In essence, economic activities are being questioned due to the IPOB Monday sit-at-home strategy. Ogbonnaya, Nwosu & Ogbodo (2021) maintained that the business owners and traders incur losses of every Monday sit-at-home at about #8 billion. The development which they said has robbed the zone of over #50 billion so far; adding that the loss in the private sector amounted to over 60 percent. Of this amount, the transport sector losses at least #3 billion any day there is a lockdown in the region. An average of one million people moves around, in and out of South East each day, at #3,000 per traveler, and that action has dug a big hole in the economy of the five states of the Southeast region.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1 Systems Theory

Talcott Parsons is the proponent of the theory, and the fundamental proposition of the systems theory rests on the assumptions of Talcott Parsons and the input encompasses the totality of demands and pressures placed on a system by the environment that needs attentions (Akinboye & Ottoh, 2005). The theory states that every system is made up of sub-system that has component parts, and each component has a vital role to play for the better performance of the system as a whole. In essence, each subsystem; no matter how less important it seems to be; must not be left out because each part has its own unique role to play. Talcott Parsons argued that every social system must have the capacity to maintain itself against a hostile environment, which could be sometimes disastrous. In his view, socio-economic environment is not as unique or stable as other system theorists. Thus, every system is characterized by conflict of interests,

ethnic crises, agitations and all forms of demands from the environment which place pressures on the system. Nevertheless, Parsons later maintained that every system must possess the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium irrespective of the disturbances from the environment. In view of this, the system's environment is not static neither stable based on varieties of problems such as insurgency, conflict; etc.

Based on this, irrespective of the challenges and changing situations that take place in the systems environment, it is expected of the system to always maintain itself by adjusting; adapting and also responding to these changing situations and problems in the system's environment, otherwise it will lead to total disintegration, collapse or systems' failure. In relation to this study, it is evident in its capability to enrich and update our knowledge on how IPOB sit-at-home strategies has affected the economy of the southeast regions of Nigeria. Since the theory serves as the best tool in analyzing or determine when a system is moving towards disintegration or failure. The inability of Nigeria's government to ultimately respond to the pressures and demands of IPOB has made the organization to employ different strategies towards actualizing its goals; the most recent among the strategies is the IPOB sit-at-home order which has become a quagmire that has continued posing serious security threats to the economic activities of the Southeastern Nigeria. The IPOB sit-at-home strategy has posed series of problems on the Southeast as a subsystem of Nigeria because the demands, and pressure from the organization could not be considered by the Nigerian Government and the inability of the system to handle this crisis has made

it escalated beyond the Southeastern regions and if not properly tackled or considered, it will spread to other parts and consequently, lead to disintegration of the Southeast Region from other geo-political regions of Nigeria as a system. Therefore, the inability of Nigeria's government to respond to the pressure placed on it by the IPOB has not only affected her security; but economic activities.

7. Research Methodology

Ezeagu is one of the Local Government Areas in Enugu State with its headquarters in the town of Aguobu Owa and a landmark of 633km (244 sq/mls). The population of Ezeagu Local Government Area is estimated at 170,603 with the males' population of 84,466 and the females' population of 86,137 respectively (NPC, 2006) with a population projection of 244,900 (NPC, 2022). Ezeagu is located twenty kilometers south west of Enugu, bounded on the north by Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Anambra State and on the east and south by parts of Udi Local Government Area, and the west by Awka-North Local Government Area. The people are known for all types of businesses and agriculture. In this study, the sampled population was 870, with this population and the margin of error of 0.05 confidence level of 95% and with the recommended sample size of the study based on the total population of Ezeagu was 246 using the Research Advisors (2006). 246 questionnaires were administered to respondents in the study area, and were filled and returned. Chi square (X^2) statistical tool was used for the analysis at 0.05 level of significance as well as in-depth summary and code methods used for the analysis.

8. Analysis and Discussions

Respondent Responses on the Effects of IPOB sit-at-home on the Economy of Ezeagu L G A of Enugu State.

Responses	Christians	Islam	ATR	Total
Males	100	85	3	188
Females	30	20	8	58
Total	130	105	11	246

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Contingency Table

Cells	O	E	O - E	$\Sigma(O - E)^2$	$(O - E^2)/E$
1	100	99.3	0.7	0.49	0.00
2	85	80.2	4.8	23.04	0.29
3	3	8.4	-5.4	29.23	3.48
4	30	30.7	-0.7	0.49	0.02
5	20	24.8	-4.8	22.04	0.93
6	8	2.6	5.4	29.23	11.24
Total	215				$\Sigma 15.96$

Based on the statistical analysis, finding indicates that IPOB sit-at-home has significant effects on the economy of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. This was seen from the calculated Chi-Square (X^2) value of 15.96 greater than the table or critical value of 5.991 at a degree of freedom of 2 and significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and alternate hypothesis (H_1) accepted. This was also seen from previous studies that the social and commercial activities in the South East and beyond have continued to bear the brunt of the enforcement of the sit-at-home order declared by the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to protest the trial of its leader by the Federal Government. Several attempts to cancel the order and deployment of security operatives have not deterred criminals from enforcing it. The Nigeria government has taken a number of steps to address the threat posed by IPOB, including banning the group and arresting its leaders. Onu (2021) asserts that these measures taken by the government has proved abortive and unsuccessful in stopping IPOB group's sit-at-home order. The continued sit-at-home order had posed a serious threat to the Nigerian economy and security. Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State is not exceptional as the IPOB's order is duly adhered to as people are unable to go about their normal daily activities due to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) declaration of sit-at-home until their leader is released from prison. This declaration which took effect from August 9th 2021, south-eastern regions has been on lockdown every Monday from 6:00am to 6:00pm. However, institutions- both public and private have been shut down every Monday and the people remain indoors to register their concern over the fate of their leader and other agitators who languish in various security detentions. Okoye (2021) holds that the prevailing situation of the shutdown of the South-East every Monday has continued to inflict collateral damage on the economy of the South-East States. Similarly, Morgen (2021) found that the South-eastern region of Nigeria loses over N10 billion each time it observes the sit-at-home order. The report also found that the region's economy has been shrinking since 2017, when IPOB's sit-at-home order began to intensify.

In addition to the economic impact, IPOB's sit-at-home order have also had a negative impact on the security situation in Nigeria, as the group's attacks on security forces have led to an increase in violence in the south eastern region, and have made it more difficult for the government to provide security and basic services to the region's residents. Interview conducted with a business woman and a mother five children said 'some of us cannot eat without coming

to the market'. This business woman who trade on provisions/foodstuff in the market said goods stays longer in her stores unsold because the sit-at-home order has forced them into doing business for five days a week, and lamented that she loses about 30 thousand naira in every sit at home day. A market leader at Iwolo Oghe Market, in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, said he usually takes bank loans to run his electronics business, but the last time he took a loan, he did not record enough sales to repay back. He added that businesses have collapsed as a result of the sit-at-home order, and that those whose businesses have collapsed may pick up arms one day to fend for themselves, as insecurity and crime rate will double, he predicted. In an interview with a businessman who deals in home appliances, electronics and gadgets devices and has stores in several parts of Enugu State, laments on how the sit-at-home order has plunged him and many other business people into a state of utter confusion and frustration. He stated that sales have drastically reduced as some of his customers have now turned to other vendors in other part of the states to transact business. The implications of this is that patronage has dropped, customers now move to safer zones in other regions to purchase goods for businesses. Not only that businesses are collapsing but more people both young and old have lost their lives to the crisis since the emergence of IPOB and statistics shows that more people are going to die considering the inhuman approach of the present administration to agitations.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a group in Nigeria aimed to restore the Republic of Biafra, a country which seceded from Nigeria prior to Civil War (1967-1970) and later rejoined after its defeat through the civil war. Biafra had existed as an Independent multi-ethnic group consisting of the Igbo, Ijaw, Efik and Ibibio peoples etc. which the Government fought hard to preserve the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and since 2021, IPOB and other separatist groups have been fighting a low-level guerilla conflict in southeastern Nigeria against the Nigerian government. However, it is evident from the findings that the IPOB sit-at-home order has posed a negative effect on the economy of the south-eastern zones particularly in areas of commercial activities, education, transportations, closure of Government and private institutions every Monday. In order to resolve crisis and prevent further damage to the country's economy and security, the Nigerian government should address those grievances that led to the formation of IPOB. Therefore, the study

recommends that IPOB should suspend the sit-at-home order and embrace peaceful dialogue with the Federal Government to press down their demand for the release of their leader because this sit-at-home has not yielded any positive results, rather it has deeply eaten up the economy and affected the livelihood of the people which might lead to more crimes or even more loss of lives and properties. Also, the distribution of resources among the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria should be done through proper Federal Character principle as this will go a long way in reducing what the IPOB perceived as gross marginalization to the south-eastern regions.

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