
Mandatory Sit-at-home Order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Economic Activities in South East, Nigeria

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Abstract

In reaction to the Federal Government of Nigeria's prolonged arrest and detention of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) leader, the group in the Southeast issued a Monday sit-at-home order, effectively grounding the region economically. This study examined the effect of mandatory closure of markets on Mondays by IPOB and its economic implications in Southeast, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study, with a population of 250 which doubled as a sample size due to the limited number. A questionnaire was the only instrument of data collection used. Collected data were analyzed with the regression technique at a 5% level of significance. The study uncovered that the sit-at-home order has a huge hostile effect on the economic activities in the southeast, Nigeria. The study recommended that the regional government (South-eastern), religious bodies, traditional rulers, and other key stakeholders, should diplomatically and politically engage the central government of Nigeria for the release of the IPOB leader; the Federal government should adopt all-inclusive governance as this will return full economic activities to the zone.

Keywords: IPOB, Sit-at-home order, Economic Activities, and South-east.

1. Introduction

It is no longer news that economic activities both in public and private sectors are grounded especially on Mondays in the South-eastern part of Nigeria. It is also a fact that the fears of the unknown hovers around the air in the region as people no longer trust their next-door neighbors. Public offices, private businesses, schools, and markets are shut down every Monday completely in compliance with the order and directives of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This 'dangerous proclamation' is setting the entire Southeastern part of Nigeria ablaze economically.

The Indigenous People of Biafra have issued a sit-at-home directive (IPOB). Henceforth, Indigenous People of Biafra shall be used as 'IPOB'.

It all started when the leader of the group, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu was arrested in Kenya on June 29, 2021, by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The IPOB is an offshoot of Raph Uwazuruike's Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The latter group had the same objective as the IPOB but was very diplomatic in approach when juxtaposed its activities with that of IPOB in recent times (Ekpo and Agorye, 2019). The sole aim of the group is to secede from Nigeria and achieve the Republic of Biafra through a peaceful process. It is worthy of note that the agitation for the achievement of the Sovereign State of Biafra started in the 1960s, following the coup d'état and civil unrest that accompanied it which led to the death of many Igbo residents in the north; and millions of people returned to the east only with their heads. (Madiebo,1980). The unrest and the killing of Igbo people in the north prompted the secession of Biafra in 1967 led by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The brutal civil war that ended 52 years ago claimed the lives of approximately 3 million people of Igbo descent, leaving an indelible mark on the Igbo people's minds (Achebe, 2012). The civil war was triggered by the secession of the state of Biafra from Nigeria, which was widely considered an unhappy episode best forgotten, but for the Igbo people who fought in the war and their descendants, it was nothing short of a life-defining event.

Biafra surrendered to Nigeria's brutal military force on the 15th of January 1970, and the war ended officially. The then government, led by General Yakubu Gowon came up with a policy of "no victor, no vanquished" and (3Rs) policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation, adopted by the military government to conceal the effects of the war. This approach may have resulted in a lack of official reflection, but Nigerians of oriental descent grew up hearing war memories from their fathers and mothers (Vanguard News, 2021). The preponderance of evidence in the literature appears to suggest that the mismanagement of General Yakubu Gowon's Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation (3Rs) policy, which the military government put in place to wipe out the cicatrix of the war, was the obvious and fundamental reason for the resurgence of Biafra uprisings in Nigeria's current democratic dispensation. The inability of the Nigerian government to acknowledge the marginalization of people in south-eastern Nigeria was also the catalyst for the formation of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). So, the rebirth of Biafra agitation by IPOB was triggered following the nature of Nigeria's political imbalance cum political appointments that are perceived to be disadvantageous to the Igbo people. Perceived evidence of marginalization and the activities of herdsmen in the Southeast region of Nigeria could also not be overlooked. The purported marginalization which was made manifest by Buhari's administration has been captured by scholars and the preponderance of the evidence in the literature includes political alienation, uneven resource distribution, maiming and killing of civilians by the cohesive agents of the government, covert and overt activities of Fulani herdsmen and among similar other factors (Owoeye, Ezeanya, and Obiegbunam, 2022). Allison (2017) in consonance with the above statement also avers that: some nefarious activities carried out by the government of Nigeria and

their cohorts resulted in the formation of the IPOB by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu; in the year 2012, with the express goal of regaining Biafra's independence.

Meanwhile, following the re-dentation of IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian Government of Nigeria on June 29, 2021, the Monday sit-at-home order became an alternative. Since then, the sit-at-home order has been the main strategy used by IPOB and their sympathizers across southeastern Nigeria to protest the leader's arrest, as well as to persuade the Nigerian government to unconditionally release their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, from what they believe is illegal detention characterized by inhumane treatment and incarceration on a scale never seen before (Omole, 2021). It is also on record that active youths who are hitherto gainfully and self-employed are struggling to make ends as the economic hardship bites harder due to the effect of the order (Anoke, Osita, Eze & Muogbo, 2021).

However, the mandatory and weekly sit-at-home order and its unlawful enforcement on the inhabitants of the region have prompted numerous disagreements between the group and the government (especially the southeastern state government) of Nigeria with deadly unprecedented economic consequences similar to that of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war on economic activities of the southeast region.

Undoubtedly, Mondays are taken seriously by Igbo business people because, as the first business day of the week, it is calculated that what happens on that day would set the trend of business activity for the rest of the week. Most Igbo business people look forward to doing good business on Mondays, since well-known commercial centers such as Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, Owerri, Abakiliki, and Nnewi, among others, see an inflow of traders from other areas of the country. As a result, the entire Igbo country was shocked when IPOB proclaimed the first Monday sit-in on August 9th, 2021. Before that date, the IPOB propaganda machine was at its most effective, threatening that everyone who ventured to leave his house that day would be held responsible. People, including security personnel, have been threatened with death in this regard. The IPOB order maintained that the weekly sit-ins would continue until the federal government released Nnamdi Kanu unconditionally. Nobody, not even government officials, dared to leave their houses during the sit-in, which turned the entire southeast into a ghost town. The commercial activity was completely halted, and losses suffered as a result of the sit-at-home were estimated to reach 8 billion naira at the end of the day (Nnewi Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), 2022). The Southeast geopolitical zone being a commercial hub of Nigeria after Lagos contributes significantly to the economy of Nigeria (Orugun and Nafiu, 2014). So, with an 8 billion Naira loss per week, the already fragile revenue profile of the zone will deteriorate such that if nothing is done to mitigate this trend, the economy of the zone and by implication, the country will slip into depression. In light of this, the researchers believe that a study on the impact of the IPOB's mandatory sit-at-home order on economic activities in Southeast Nigeria is appropriate. Specifically, this study aims to determine the impact of the IPOB's mandatory Monday market closure on economic activities in Southeast Nigeria.

Who Are the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)?

The IPOB is a separatist group located in southeast Nigeria that has members all over the world where Igbo people live. This group aims to restore the defunct independence of Biafra through

non-violence activities (Ekpo & Agorye, 2019). The leader of the group is Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The group is a spin-off of the Movement for the Actualization of a Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and it shares IPOB's goals and aims. IPOB is a group that is driving the movement for Biafra (the ancient eastern region) to secede from Nigeria. It is a reorganization of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM), two weakening pro-secessionist parties with the same goal of establishing an independent state for the people of the defunct Biafra territory (Jacob, Nwobi, and Igboji, 2020).

According to the group, IPOB was created as a result of marginalization and a "political back seat" given to the southeastern people of Nigeria by the northern Nigeria ruling class. According to the group, the only remedy for the clear perceived great injustice and marginalization of the Igbo nationality by the Federal Government of Nigeria is for Biafran Nation to secede from Nigeria. Furthermore, the overwhelming evidence in the literature implies that the group is advocating for a democratic and peaceful referendum to be held in Igbo lands to resolve the Biafra problem (Nwaiwu, 2016 Okafor, 2017).

The leader of IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu was born in 1967 to a royal, middle-class Igbo family in Abia State, Nigeria. He had his early education in Nigeria before moving to England and receiving a degree in Political Economics from London Metropolitan University. In time, he became a naturalized British citizen. After founding the IPOB in 2012, Kanu has, through various nonviolent means, sought to make people of Igbo extraction aware of the obvious institutional marginalization and exploitation of the Biafrans in the hands of Nigerian governments, piloted by northern oligarchy. He established Radio Biafra through which he reaches millions of IPOB supporters throughout the entire old Eastern region of Nigeria. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu was believed to have garnered enough followership through his radio program that exposes the "evil" meted out on his people.

Upon his return to Nigeria in October 2015, Mr. Kanu was detained by the federal government of Nigeria on charges of treason and belonging to an unlawful group. Kanu was held at an undisclosed location until April 2017, when he was released on bail after being detained for nearly two years. After his release from prison, Kanu's home was raided by Nigerian military officials, thereby forcing his escape from Nigeria to save his life. In that same year, 2017, the federal government of Nigeria led by President Muhammadu Buhari declared the IPOB a terrorist group, arguing that the group was no more civil in its operations. The declaration of IPOB as a terrorist was condemned by well-meaning Nigerians and other international organizations. The United States embassy in Nigeria is one of the international organizations that reiterated that Nigeria's declaration of the IPOB as a terrorist organization was improper and undemocratic in a democratic government. In March 2019, a Nigerian judge, Justice Binta Nyako ordered Kanu to be rearrested over his inability to attend court hearings for months after his release on bail. The inability of the Judge to consider why Mazi Nnamdi Kanu has been absent from his trial was criticized by all and sundry.

The south-eastern part of Nigeria was a region that sought independence from Nigeria in the 1960s which led to millions of civilians and women being massacred during the Nigerian-Biafra

Civil War. This is a civil war that many international human rights labeled genocide; meted out against ethnic and religious minorities of eastern Nigerian extraction. The main objective of IPOB according to the group was the independence of Biafra (the old eastern region) through referendum and not through the barrel of a gun.

Essence of the Mandatory Monday Sit-at-home Order According to IPOB

The Indigenous People of Biafra initiated the sit-at-home order as a means of persuading and financially suffocating the Nigerian government to free their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who is on trial for treason and terrorism. Residents of south-eastern Nigeria were forced to shut down their businesses, social activities, and stay at home every Monday and on the days the leader would be going to court. According to the President, International Solidarity for Peace and Human Rights Initiative, Osmond Ugwu who was interviewed in the Punch newspaper (2021) says that "the desertion of the streets and markets in southeast Nigeria is a show manifestation of honour and voluntary loyalty to the leader of IPOB; that full compliance with the order is not based on coercion, as the government and anti-IPOB elements have falsely claimed." Compliance is an outward demonstration of people's commitment to what they believe in. It is all about what Mazi Nnamdi Kanu stands for, which is total freedom and Political liberation of his people (Owoeye, Ezeanya, Obiegbonam, 2022). As a result, people's adherence to the sit-at-home order demonstrates complete solidarity with IPOB's leader. That is why, despite the government's threats and intimidation, people continued to obey, although it had negative consequences for the region's socio-economic activity. According to a November 15, 2021 internet article by Sahara Reporters, the IPOB Monday sit-at-home tactic has resulted in economic uncertainty, security breaches, and instability in the Southeast. "Despite the cancellation of the sit-at-home order, economic activities are progressively returning on Mondays in nearly all sections of the South-east region," according to the statement, "most parents want their children/wards to stay at home" (Sahara Reporters, 2021). In light of this statement, the IPOB's Monday sit-at-home plan has unmistakably impacted the region's economic and educational activity.

The IPOB Mandatory Mondays Sit-at-home Order and Economic Activities in South East, Nigeria

Abia State Governor, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu as quoted in the Vanguard newspaper, (2022), "That if south easterners have adversaries wherever I believe there is a way to confront them,". If we respond by refusing to go to the market or school because someone is waging war on us, they will do everything it takes to guarantee that we continue to behave in this manner. As a result, detaining Mazi Nnamdi Kanu will be counterproductive, as detaining him will have an economic impact and will make us uneducated. The Indigenous People of Biafra's sit-at-home order is, without doubt, weakening the economy of Eastern Nigeria, thereby making people the group claimed to protect to be impoverished, and this has posed an economic threat to the daily income earners in the region. Enforcing the sit-at-home order through the instrument of fear and intimidation, IPOB had become the enemy of many residents of well-meaning Orientals. A community leader in Enugwu-Ukwu, Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State, Mrs. Nwaude, was reportedly quoted in the Vanguard newspaper (2022) that, "it was unfortunate that

a group that claimed to be involved in the emancipation of the people would take actions that would cause pain on their people. Another interviewee, Mr. Clement Aniago, a vulcanizer, described his situation as pathetic, saying it posed an economic threat to daily income earners like them. He described his situation as "pathetic and shameful", saying that, his vulcanizing machine and tools were destroyed by the people enforcing the sit-at-home order. The IPOB had claimed its directive was in solidarity with its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, who is facing terrorism among other charges. The IPOB has caused panic and hardship to entire inhabitants of south-easterners through how they enforce the Monday-sit-at-home. Since the pronouncement of the Monday sit-at-home order, the situation of a majority of south-easterners, whose livelihood is dependent on their daily activities had gone from bad to worse because they had no money for their upkeep. Without equivocation, this indicates that the IPOB's Monday sit-at-home order has continued to "fuel" the Igbo people's misery by preventing them from engaging in their usual economic and social activities on Mondays.

The truth is that nobody knows for sure if IPOB is truly the one enforcing the sit-at-home order in southeast, Nigeria or other criminal elements fulfilling an unknown mission in the region. This is because, as a group striving to liberate its people from tyranny by its adversaries, they cannot let their imagined enemies inflict greater harm on the region that the Nigerian government claims to have neglected. Furthermore, IPOB's Media and Publicity Secretary, Emma Powerful, stated that "the sit-at-home order would henceforth take place only on the days Kanu would appear in court, and that the suspension of the Monday sit-at-home order by the IPOB Head of Directorate was as a result of an order from the leader of this great movement, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu." So, no sane man will destroy his home to prove a point to his enemies. A statement credited to Senator Chimaroke Nnamani, the former Governor of Enugu state, a report in BBC News, Pidgin (2021) maintained that: "There is no evidence that the IPOB's sit-at-home order has got the organization or its supporters any closer to achieving the goal for which it was established." Instead, the zone's economic, social, and political well-being has suffered." Hours, not to talk of days, without financial services, as well as the closure of commercial and government buildings, have resulted in massive economic losses as well as a significant impact on people's lives in the zone. The group's weekly sit-at-home edict in the Southeast region has blocked nearly all sectors of the economy, not only commercial and social activity.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Durkheim's theory of social solidarity (1893). The theory is based on individuals in a society's inter connect, which allows them to believe they can improve the lives of others. This theory is based on the fact that diverse groups in our society have similar values and beliefs. Solidarity is a human connection or association with one another that leads to an unusual bond that binds persons or groups together. Solidarity is motivated by a variety of factors: affection shared values and ideas, and self-interest for some (Douwes, Stuttaford, and London, 2018). The social solidarity theory is of two types: Mechanical and Organic Solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is the social organization of individuals in society who have one belief system. This single belief system sparks up individual members to cause them to work cooperatively and harmoniously. Organic solidarity is a social organization that manifests due to one's need for one another. The theory was used to find individual acts and extrapolate what

could happen collectively. So, in terms of how this theory relates to the study, IPOB declared a mandatory Monday sit-at-home order, which every southeasterner and sympathizer of the group complied with in solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's prompt and unconditional release. Individualistic action snowballs into a group action working together to achieve a central goal, in this case, the unconditional release of the IPOB leader by the Nigerian federal government.

Empirical Evidence

Owoeye, Ezeanya, and Obiegbunam (2022) examined the impact of IPOB's Monday sit-at-home order on Nigeria's political economy (socio-political and economic activity). The paper is a qualitative descriptive survey. The data was analyzed thematically with logical reasoning, with Tacoltt Parsons and David Easton's systems theory analysis serving as a theoretical guide. The study's findings revealed that IPOB's Monday sit-at-home has hurt Southeastern Nigeria's economic operations. In light of the foregoing, the study recommended, among other things, that the issue of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, be resolved as soon as possible, since the Monday sit-at-home order was a strategy to persuade the Federal Government to release IPOB's leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, from detention.

A study carried out by Chukwudi, Gberevbie, Abasilim, and Imhonopi (2019) on IPOB's demand for self-determination and Nigeria's response: Implications for political stability. The study investigates IPOB agitation techniques and the Nigerian government's response to IPOB agitators, as well as the implications for political stability. The study used a survey research approach, with a sample size of 385 members of the IPOB taken from a sample size determination table. One of the methods used to obtain data from the respondents was an in-depth interview. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze the data collected. The investigations revealed that the government has been using unwarranted force through its cohesive agents. It was recommended among others that government should employ the carrot approach instead of the stick approach in dealing with IPOB members.

The Biafran State and the Rise of IPOB: A Crack in Nigeria's National Integration was investigated by Jacob, Nwobi, and Igboji (2020). The study looked into the rise of IPOB with a single goal in mind: to figure out why the federal government's policies and programs failed to answer the country's Biafran agitators' concerns. The study analyzed how government errors aided IPOB's emergence and its challenges to national unity.

Mark, Obi, and Oham (2022) investigated the effects of the IPOB sit-at-home order on the economy of Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone. As a framework of analysis, they used content analysis and the Relative Deprivation Theory. Secondary sources, such as internet materials, periodicals, newspaper publications, and journal articles, were used to gather data. IPOB is currently undermining the economy of its people, the easterners, according to the study. The study concluded that a conversation between the government and IPOB, rather than a sit-at-home order, would go a long way toward resolving whatever issues they may have.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design and was conducted in five states in south-eastern Nigeria (Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo). . This is because southeast, Nigeria is the

epicenter of IPOB's activities, and the region, the group said she is trying to "liberate" from shackles of bad governance, marginalization and political slavery and the northern hegemony in Nigeria. The questionnaire was used to collect data, and its validity was validated using the face and content technique, while its reliability was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability test, which had an alpha score of.873. The data was gathered from the most important markets in each of the five states in the region. The markets studied are Onitsha Main Market, Onitsha, Anambra state; Ariaria International Market, Aba, Abia state; Margret Umahi International Market, Abakiliki, Ebonyi state; Eke Onu-Uwa Douglas market, Owerri, Imo state, and Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, Enugu state. All these markets are situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria. These markets deal in goods ranging from clothing materials, building materials, food items, Motor spares, etc. The study investigated five (5) executive members of each of the market's unions and forty-five traders of different kinds of goods from each of the markets. So, 50 persons were issued questionnaire from each of the markets thereby making the population of study 250. The reason for choosing the executive members of the market unions was because they mediate between the government and the traders in their various markets while the sampled traders represent those that directly bear the burden of the order. The government of various states of the region has mandated the executive of the various unions to open their shops on Mondays for commercial activities, while the cohesive organ of IPOB was telling them not to oblige in order not to pay with their lives and that of their children. Each market understudy had a stringent random selection of 45 traders of various products and 5 market union executive members. Because of their small numbers, the entire population was investigated. A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were delivered to the interviewees, with 246 copies being retrieved and analyzed. The data were analyzed using mean for descriptive statistics and regression analysis for inferential statistics, with the hypothesis being evaluated at a significance level of 5%.

This study adopted Jacob, Nwobi, and Igboji (2020) model with little modification.

The model is stated as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where y = dependent variable,

α = intercept,

β is the coefficient and x is the independent variable.

Then, the model above is stated as:

$$EA = \alpha + \beta ISAHO + \mu \dots\dots \text{equation 2}$$

Where:

EA = Economic Activities (Business expansion, sales volume, increase in customers)

β = Coefficient

α = Intercept

μ = Error terms

SAHO = Sit- at-home order (relocation, and labour turnover)

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BS	246	1.00	5.00	3.1191	1.66428
ENE	246	1.00	5.00	3.5212	1.19820
Valid N (listwise)	246				

Source SPSS version 27.00

Table 1 indicates the average and standard deviation, minimum and maximum levels of the variables, as determined by descriptive statistics. The average worth of economic activities (EA) is 3.11 and the sit-at-home order (SAHO) is 3.52. Table 1 also established the standard deviation of the variables

Table 2 Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.789 ^a	.691	.689	.31101

a. Predictors: (Constant), ENE

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.173	2	45.086	4111.114	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.811	243	.091		
	Total	113.984	245			

a. Dependent Variable: EA

b. Predictors: (Constant), SAHO

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.745	.056		48.926	.000
	SAHO	.510	.045	.315	5.174	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EA

Source: econometric output, 2022

Decision rule: Is at a 5% level of significance.

The regression result implies that the model is appropriate for the research because the f-statistics are significant at the 5% level of significance. The statistics also indicate that IPOB's sit-at-home edict has a significant influence on economic activity in Southeast Nigeria. Because the P-values are less than 5%, this is the case. According to the findings, IPOB's sit-at-home edict has a significant impact on economic activity in southeast Nigerian markets.

The $R^2 = 0.69$ indicates that only 69 % of the disparity in sit-at-home order can be utilized to explain economic activities in Nigeria's southeast marketplaces; the remaining 31% is referred to as the error term.

Discussion of Result

The study found that IPOB's (SAHO) sit-at-home order has a significant impact on south-eastern Nigeria's economic activity (EA). This is in line with the findings of Owoeye, Ezeanya, and Obiegbunam (2022), Jacob, Nwobi, and Igboji (2020), who found that the IPOB Monday sit-at-home has harmed Southeastern Nigeria's economic operations. The findings of the study agree with those of Owoeye, Ezeanya, and Obiegbunam (2022), who stated that the IPOB Monday sit-at-home order has had a negative multi-dimensional impact on the zone's socio-political and economic activities, particularly in the areas of commercial activities, education, transportation, and the closure of government and private institutions every Monday and other sit-at-home days.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The effect of mandatory closure of markets on Mondays by IPOB and its economic implications in Southeast, Nigeria was examined. It was exposed that the order with total compliance in the region has a negative economic implication on not only the region but the country at large. The study concludes that the sit-at-home order on Mondays by IPOB in the South-eastern parts of the country has brought economic hardship to the region and recommended that the regional government (South-eastern), religious bodies, traditional rulers, and other key stakeholders, should diplomatically and politically engage the central government of Nigeria for the release of IPOB leader while the federal government of Nigeria should adopt all-inclusive governance as these will return full economic activities to the zone.

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