

## ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF IPOB'S SIT-AT-HOME ORDER ON THE ECONOMY OF SOUTH-EAST REGION IN NIGERIA, 2021-2023

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### Abstract

*The Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist group based in the southeast, which is agitating for secession and an independent state of Biafra from the larger Nigerian state. The Nigerian government in January 2017, through a Federal High in Abuja, proscribed the group and profiled it as a terrorist organization. In June 2021, the leader of the group, Nnamdi Kanu, who had fled the country was rearrested in Kenya and subsequently brought back to Nigeria to stand trial much to the chagrin of his supporters and followers. In August 2021, the group announced and began the enforcement of the sit-at-home order on every Monday across the entire southeast region in a bid to pressure the Federal Government to release its detained leader. The group has adopted several strategies to enforce the order in the region including the use of force, arson, killings and kidnappings. Consequently, the southeast region has become overwhelmed by a climate of fear such that people no longer go about their businesses with confidence. Every Monday in the southeast has become an unofficial holiday because business and other social activities usually come to a halt in the region. Thus, the continued observance of the Sit-at-home order has had significant impact on the economy of the southeast region of Nigeria. Since the introduction of the order by IPOB, economic activities in the southeast and by extension other parts of Nigeria have experienced serious hiccups and heightened insecurity. Businesses are rapidly closing down while others are relocating away from the region. The order has equally impacted on social infrastructure as well as foreign direct investment and the region is witnessing massive capital flight. The essence of this study, therefore, is to assess the impact of the sit-at-home order by IPOB on the economy of the southeast from the period it was introduced to date. The study covers the five core southeast states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Data for the study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through administration of questionnaires and key informant interviews with respondents; while the secondary data were generated through journal articles and internet sources. The primary data were analyzed using simple statistical tables and charts while the secondary data were subjected to content analysis. The study relied on the theory of frustration-aggression as its analytical framework. The study found that IPOB's sit-at-home order has significant negative impact on the economy of the southeast; that the order also has negative impact on foreign direct investment in the region. Consequently, the study recommends that government should be more proactive in ensuring security of lives and property in the region; government should dialogue with the leadership of IPOB with a view to granting general amnesty to its members and begin a process of demobilization, reconstruction and rehabilitation of members of IPOB.*

**Keywords:** Sit-at-Home, Independent Peoples of Biafra, Economy, Deprivation, Agitation

### Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that the “every Monday” sit-at-home order imposed by the proscribed Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) on the South-east has had a telling impact on the people and economy of the region. The order was imposed on the South-east by IPOB as a way of pressuring the Nigerian government into releasing its leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who was arrested by the Interpol in

Kenya and extradited to Nigeria to stand trial on treasonable charges. Ayitogo (2021) and Emeruwa (2021) in their separate studies have observed that since the imposition of the order by IPOB, every Monday in the South-east has become an unofficial public holiday. Aside the compulsory sit-at-home every Monday, the order is also imposed any time or day Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is scheduled to appear in court whether on a Monday or any other day of the week.

One of the major features of the sit-at-home is that economic activities are halted in the region essentially because no one is allowed to undertake any form of business activities on such days. Shops and major markets are closed and people are not allowed to move about within the hours of 5am and 6pm. Equally, members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in the region are forbidden from working on that day. As Ugwu (2022) has pointed out, on sit-at-home days, intra and interstate commercial activities as well as transport services within and between states are halted within the region. People found flouting the order are usually attacked or killed and their shops and wares destroyed. Vehicles found on the roads are set ablaze and the drivers burnt with their vehicles. Apart from the South-east, Ayitogo (2021) has also noted that some states in the south-south like Delta and Rivers; and Benue and Kogi in the north-central region are affected by the sit-at-home order.

It will be recalled that the entire southeast and some parts of the south-south and north-central have been delineated by IPOB as Biafra land and to that extent the sit-at-home order is observed and enforced in these areas. Even though the order is observed in the southeast and adjoining states of the south-south and north-central, one could submit that the order has far-reaching effect on the entire Nigerian state primarily because on every sit-at-home day movement into and out of the southeast is strictly restricted from other parts of the country.

Since the introduction and enforcement of the sit-at-home order by IPOB, the South-east has become a “hostage” region with all businesses shut down on every Monday as residents stay at home mainly out of fear of attack by IPOB operatives. These IPOB operatives that have come to be known as “unknown gun men” or operatives of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the militant wing of IPOB, have on several instances attacked traders and commuters across the region who flouts the order. The government has responded by deploying more security forces to rein in the IPOB enforcers but this strategy by government has not yielded the desired results as IPOB operatives have become more brazen and audacious in their enforcement of the sit-at-home order. In the fight for supremacy between IPOB and government, many innocent citizens in the region have been killed and goods worth billions of naira destroyed.

On its part, IPOB has come out to dissociate itself from the sit-at-home order. In a press statement that eventually went viral; the spokesman of the group, Emma Powerful informed the public that IPOB has suspended the sit-at-home order. However, a certain Simon Ekpa who prides himself as a disciple of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu insists the sit-at-home order is still in force threatening that anyone found flouting the order would be summarily dealt with. The purported suspension of the order notwithstanding, loyalists of Simon Ekpa have continued to enforce the order in the southeast.

In this age of social media, we have seen video clips of masked gunmen purportedly released by the IPOB claiming responsibility for the enforcement of the order in the southeast. In one of such video clips from IPOB, masked gunmen could be seen insisting that nothing can stop them from enforcing the order unless Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is released from prison. Consequently, the southeast has become a theatre of war between the IPOB and the federal government. The Nigerian government has blamed the IPOB for the high insecurity in the southeast even though the organization has repeatedly denied the accusation.

The sit-at-home order has severely impacted economic and other activities in the southeast. The essence of this paper, therefore, is to examine the impact of the sit-at-home order on the economy of the southeast region from 2021 to 2023. The paper is divided into six sections. Apart from the introduction,

section two dwelt on review of related literature to the paper. In this section we established a nexus between the sit-at-home order and the economy of the region. Here also we traced the origin of IPOB, its vision, modus operandi and enforcement of the order. Section three examined the theoretical framework, its applicability and methodology adopted for the work. Section four postulated the testable hypothetical assumptions while section five was devoted to discussion; section six summarizes the paper and suggested some recommendations.

#### **a) Understanding IPOB and its Mission**

The IPOB has been described variously by scholars and government or civil society groups. For instance, the International Crisis Group (2015) sees IPOB as a "separatist" group; while Jamestown Foundation (2016) describes IPOB as a "secessionist" organization. The mission of IPOB and its affiliate groups, according to AFP (2016), is to facilitate a "separate homeland for the Igbo people of Nigeria". This agitation for a separate homeland for the Igbo of Nigeria is anchored on the assumption that the Igbo have been "politically, socio-economically and culturally marginalized in the Nigerian project" (Thompson et.al, 2016).

It will be recalled that in 1966, following spates of genocidal pogrom against the Igbo in northern parts of Nigeria, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, then military governor of eastern Nigeria, proclaimed the independent state of Biafra to create a homeland for the Igbo and other parts of the south-south. That declaration by Odumegwu Ojukwu would eventually lead to a civil war which lasted for 30 months. At the end of the war, the Nigerian government proclaimed the policy of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration. However, since the war, it appeared that the Igbos have not been accepted back into the Nigerian state as they have been treated as outsiders (Nwankwo, 2018).

The mission of the IPOB, therefore, is to restore the defunct Biafra on the understanding that the circumstances that birthed Biafra in the first instance have not abated in any way. The method adopted by the group initially was peace protests. IPOB is not the first group that expressed its intention to restore Biafra. It will be recalled that in 1999, Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, an Indian-trained lawyer founded the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) with headquarters in Okwe, Okigwe district of Imo State. In the course of time MASSOB broke into splinter groups on account of disagreements among leaders of the group on the best strategy to adopt in actualizing the state of Biafra. According to Ekpo & Agorye (2019), the 'weakness' in the MASSOB strategy for achieving its goals was what gave rise to the extreme IPOB's fanaticism as an undeniable champion, fronting the Igbo secessionist cause.

IPOB's argument is that the Igbo have no future in Nigeria and that its agitation is a response to the failure of the Nigerian government to create a sustainable transitional justice system that would confer on the Igbo the status of equal stakeholders in the Nigerian project in such a way that the Igbo would not be treated as second-class citizens. It is for this reason that IPOB has arrogated to itself the monumental duty of advocating "for the right and fundamental freedom of the remnants of the Biafrans who are scattered in all parts of the world as refugees and people in self-exile" (Ekpo & Agorye, 2018); and also facilitating the actualization of the independent state of Biafra.

The issue of Igbo marginalization in Nigeria, especially after the civil war, has been hotly debated. There are those who believe that Igbo are not marginalized while others believe in the marginalization narrative of the Igbo. While it is beyond the purview of this paper to dabble into such debates, it is sufficient to say that issues like lack of infrastructural development in the southeast, lack of equalization of states and Local Government areas, (of all the geo-political zones in the country, only the southeast has five states while others have six and seven; also the southeast has the least number of local governments despite their population) exclusion and alienation from power points in the country etc lend credence to

the marginalization narrative.

Ekpo & Agorye (2019), have equally highlighted the above indicators to stress the point that Igbos feel relatively deprived at the economic, political, social and cultural levels. Thus Igbos have seen themselves as victims of the Nigerian state and it is the inability of the Nigerian state to deal with such feelings of inequality and marginalization by the Igbo that has given currency to the agitation of groups like IPOB in the southeast.

### **b) The Rise of IPOB Radicalism**

It could be argued that until 2015, the activities of IPOB was, at best, subdued. However, with the ascension to power of President Muhammadu Buhari, IPOB became more audacious, brazen and daring in its activities. This, according to Nwankwo (2018) could be explained from diverse angles. The first is the Igbo perception of the person of President Buhari as a “hater of the Igbo”. This perception of Buhari by the Igbo is anchored on what many Igbo described as his “partial” treatment of the Igbo when he was the military head of state in relation to the distribution of developmental projects when compared with other regions in the country. This feeling of “hate against the Igbo” was the major reason Buhari lost woefully in the southeast in the 2015 general election.

The President made the matter worse when he declared on national media that he was going to give “97percent” attention to those regions that voted for him and “5percent” attention to the regions that did not vote for him, invariably referring to the Igbo. The third factor was the brazenness, arrogance and audacity with which the Fulani herdsmen began to conduct themselves fueling fears and anxiety of hidden agenda of Fulanization or Islamization of the country. All these developments provided IPOB with stunts to escalate damaging propaganda against the government in such a way that hundreds of thousands of the Igbo became persuaded by the IPOB narrative.

The inability of the government to rein in the marauding Fulani herdsmen and the speed with which issues concerning IPOB were quelled by security forces gave an impression of culpability on the side of government. IPOB's propaganda machinery created anxiety about security of Igbo territory and IPOB went ahead to assume that on an independent state of Biafra would guarantee Igbo security. Whether these fears and concern are true or not, Ekpo & Agorye (2019), argued that they constituted a sense of *Buhariphobia*; a kind of fear of Buhari's administration by the mainstream Igbo about a hidden agenda by the government.

On his return to Nigeria in October 2015, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, was arrested and detained by the State Security Service (SSS); and was subsequently arraigned in court on an 11-count charge bordering on terrorism, treasonable felony, managing an unlawful society, publication of defamatory matter, illegal possession of firearms and improper importation of goods, among others. Despite the fact that the arrest of the IPOB leader was deemed to be unwise (Nwankwo, 2018), it nonetheless served as an indication of the conflict's intensification and the hostility between IPOB and the Buhari administration. Members of IPOB protested repeatedly for the release of their leader, and security personnel responded to these protests by using rough force. According to estimates from Ekpo & Agorye (2018), hundreds of individuals perished in such conflicts between IPOB and security personnel in 2016 alone.

Given the tension that followed the arrest and detention of Kanu, several highly placed Igbo people brokered his release from detention on April 2017 for medical reason. His release came with jubilation, especially amongst his supporters. However, Ekpo & Agorye (2019) have remarked that the excitement that greeted Kanu's release from prison may have given him a false sense of victory and he felt that this utopian victory should be sustained through constant rallies. The aim of these rallies was to demonstrate to the Nigerian state and the international community that the agitation for Biafra is widely accepted

among the people. However, these IPOB rallies only succeeded in heating up the polity and added more currency to the strident calls for the restructuring of the country. The high point of these rallies was the commissioning of the Biafra Security Service (BSS) as well as the launching of the Eastern Security Network (ESN).

This emboldened other ethnic-based groups, which began clamouring for secession from the Nigerian state especially from the Niger-Delta southwest and Middle-Belt regions. In describing the activities of IPOB and other secessionist groups as irresponsible, President Buhari responded to the threat posed by the group in the most typical way. The Nigerian Army quickly organized a military expedition code-named “*Operation Python Dance*” against IPOB's headquarters in Afara-Ukwu near Umuahia and consequently proscribed the organization in 2017 as a terrorist group. Kanu, who was on administration bail fled the country in September 2017 after the Nigerian military invaded his home in Afara-Ukwu.

On June 27, 2021, Nnamdi Kanu was intercepted and arrested in Kenya and brought back to Nigeria and re-arraigned before the Federal High Court for the continuation of his trial. Since his re-arrest, his supporters have been agitating for his release. One of the strategies adopted by the group to pressure for his release is the “sit-at-home” order, which is currently being enforced by the group in the entire southeast.

### **c) Sit-at-Home and the Economy of the Southeast**

As we have pointed earlier, the imposition of sit-at-home order by the IPOB in the southeast originated from the impression by the organization that such order will arm-twist the federal government into releasing Nnamdi Kanu. The group feels that by inflicting such economic pain on the people, the entire southeast will be galvanized to see IPOB's agitation as Igbo agitation and thus compel the high and mighty in the southeast into joining the clamour for the release of the IPOB leader.

It is true to assume that conflict in its various forms and manifestations remains pervasive in Nigeria. In the southeast of Nigeria, while the incidence of insecurity and conflicts between IPOB and security services were minimal in 2014 (prompting references to the southeast as the safest zone in Nigeria), there has been an upsurge in the incidence and intensity of conflicts especially conflicts associated with IPOB. Overall, all the states in the southeast and adjoining states in the South-south and Middle-Belt regions have been affected by the IPOB sit-at-home order.

There are historical examples that show how the IPOB-type agitations and imposition of sit-at-home order can cause great human misery as well as significant economic and social costs. In the first instance, investment and economic progress can be hindered by sit-at-home order because its enforcement by IPOB and the associated clampdown by the government would naturally lead to loss of lives. It will also lead to destruction of infrastructure, human capital, and institutions, cause political instability, and increased level of uncertainty, making it challenging for such society to record any form of economic growth. The IPOB agitation and the attendant sit-at-home order have also complicated the total budget of the southeast in terms of reducing tax revenue; wiping off a portion of the tax base and increasing security spending. As a result, fiscal deficits and public debt increase, resources are diverted away from social and developmental spending, amplifying the crippling effects of such agitations and sit-at-home orders.

Many scholars are agreed that in any conflict situation, the economy is gravely affected. For instance, since the imposition of the sit-at-home order by IPOB, economic activities have been grossly dislocated in the region basically because on every Monday all productive assets and resources in the region are disrupted. Okeoma (2021), for instance is of the view that the southeast cannot quantify the economist cost of disrupting all the productive assets and resources in terms of lost man-hours.

In addition to the foregoing, IPOB appears impervious to contrary opinions and anyone that

disagrees with the organization is immediately branded number one enemy of the Igbo nation. In enforcing the order, IPOB has wittingly or unwittingly created an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and constant confrontation with the Nigerian security forces leading to many deaths and destruction of properties. In the main, both formal and informal sectors of southeast economy are losing money every Monday on account of the sit-at-home order. Since the introduction of the sit-at-home order, there has been a general disruption of life on every Monday as the order is enforced by IPOB.

Egbejule (2021) in a report on *Al-Jazeera* remarked that the impact of the sit-at-home order is being felt in the entire southeast and that businesses are fast shutting down. According to him, over 90percent of the southeast depends on daily commercial activities to survive; so everyone loses money on every Monday including governments and petty traders and truck pushers. Like Egbejule observed, many residents of the region agree that the lockdowns by IPOB on every Monday are now having severe economic impact on them. A survey carried out in the region by a Lagos-based Geo-Political Advisory firm, *SB-Morgan Intelligence*; found that two-thirds of respondents felt their productivity was extremely affected by the restrictions.

In October 2021, former Governor Willie Obiano of Anambra state announced that schools would remain open on Saturdays to make up for the halt to business-as-usual on Mondays. According to Charles Soludo, the present Governor of Anambra State, state loses an estimated N19.6billion every day of sit-at-home. In Ebonyi, the governor, David Umahi, was more conservative, putting the figure at N10billion in losses during sit-at-homes.

It will be recalled that in August 2021, IPOB claimed to have called off the sit-at-home order. But despite this claim of suspension, shops were forcibly shut down and goods burned or confiscated by the IPOB operatives. Thus, many people comply with the sit-at-home order more out of fear of retribution from the group. One month after IPOB claimed to have suspended the order, a businessman and his apprentices were killed in Ebonyi state. On the same day the killings happened at Ebonyi state, a trailer with motorcycle spare parts was razed just outside the university town of Nsukka in Enugu state. The group went ahead to threaten that the scheduled off-cycle governorship election in Anambra state would not hold.

One indisputable fact is that the economy of the southeast would not improve in an atmosphere of insecurity, uncertainty and restriction of movement. Vascov et.al (2021) sustains the foregoing argument when they noted that when people are restricted in their movement in any social space there will be a sharp decline in the economic growth of that society. This is particularly true of the situation in the southeast primarily because the security situation and unrest in the region has resulted in cumulative decline of the region's gross domestic product, GDP (Owuamanam et.al, 2022; and Okafor, 2022).

According to Hegre & Sambanis (2006), such unrest and restriction of movements as we have in the southeast region of Nigeria pose corresponding challenges because of their potential for spillover effects. The situation in the southeast has had a spillover effect in neighbouring states in the south-south and Middle-Belt regions by depressing economic activity due to uncertainty and trade disruptions. In the southeast, Onitsha and Aba markets account for two-thirds of what has been for decades undisputedly the biggest distribution network for creative arts, textiles and shoes across the West African sub-region and to other places like Equatorial Guinea; but this is no more the case because of the sit-at-home order.

According to the *SB-Morgan Intelligence* (2022), IPOB is increasingly losing support on the back of a self-immolating sit-at-home order ostensibly because the group appears to be ensuring compliance with the stay-at-home order, and residents of the region have come to appreciate the fact that the group is unwittingly inflicting the type of economic damage it has been complaining against the Nigerian state. The contradictory posture of IPOB on the logic, form and content of its agitation has become even more manifest with the confession by one Simon Ekpa (a self-styled disciple of Nnamdi Kanu) that the sit-at-

home order has led to weekly revenue loss of \$1 billion to the region (Azeez, 2022).

A fact in point here is that social unrest of any kind limits economic growth and impoverishes the population. Emenike (2020) has drawn such conclusions from the impact of the recently-ended *#EndSARs* unrest on the economy of Lagos state. This conclusion is also true when we take the survey conducted by SB-Morgan Intelligence, which pointed to the fact that in situations of conflict and restriction of movement, businesses lose both customers and revenue, others lose resources while others yet suffer other kinds of losses (Odutola, 2021). According to Ozibo & Okorie (2022), the sit-at-home order, from economic point of view, is not healthy for the economy of Nigeria at large and for the southeast in particular.

The sit-at-home order has also drastically affected foreign direct investment (FDI) in the southeast. The goal of obtaining a long-term interest in a company located in another economy by an investor from one economy is reflected in the category of international investments known as foreign direct investment (FDI). The concept of lasting interest suggests that there is a long-term relationship between the investor and the business and that the investor has a substantial impact on how the business is run. When a direct investor holds 10 percent or more of the voting power on the board of directors (for an incorporated firm) or the equivalent (for an unincorporated enterprise), such an interest is technically deemed to exist.

FDI can be viewed as an alternate economic strategy used by businesses that invest in order to open a new facility or office or, alternatively, buy already-existing assets from a foreign business. By manufacturing (and frequently selling) goods and services in nations other than the one where the enterprise was first created, these businesses aim to supplement or replace international trade.

Danjuma (2021) has observed in an evaluation study that Nigeria continues to have severe concerns about the impact of political risk on FDI inflows. Nigeria's economy and market size are enticing, but the nation struggles to draw the FDI inflows necessary for economic growth. This may not be unrelated to the fact that there is a high risk of investing and low investor confidence as a result of the nation's ongoing turmoil and security issues, one of which is the IPOB challenge in the southeast region. Owuamanam et.al (2022) contends that FDI is very critical to the growth of the southeast economy because such influx of FDI results in increased transfer of technology, domestic production, financial capital development and job creation (Bitar et.al, 2019).

A statement by the US Department of Trade in 2020 stated unequivocally that the southeast of Nigeria, in particular, is one of the many places of Nigeria where investors' confidence is threatened by insecurity. Foreign investors are wary of making investments in the Southeast due to the nature and IPOB's execution of the sit-at-home order, as criminals have used it to further a variety of violent and social crimes like kidnapping and organ harvesting. By implication, the sit-at-home rule discourages foreign direct investment (FDI), harms enterprises, and harms tourism because no investor would be willing to invest in industries where they are uncertain that their money will be protected.

The growth of the social infrastructure in the southeast has also been impacted by this imposition of sit-at-home order. According to Okeoma (2021), the Nigerian government alleged that the paramilitary component of IPOB known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN) had destroyed 18 INEC offices and 136 security installations in the country's southeast. These ideas demonstrate how social discontent of all kinds harms social infrastructure and retards economic development.

### **Theoretical Framework and its Significance**

The analytical framework adopted for this paper is the frustration-aggression theory. This theory was developed by John Dollard and his colleagues at Yale University and further refined by Berkowitz and Aubrey in the early 1960s. The theory assumes that the psychology of aggressive behaviour by individuals or group of individuals can be explained from the prism of perceiving their goals being

frustrated by others. This explains the conviction of Dajo & Akor (2022) that people feel frustrated when there is interference in the course of pursuing a goal.

The response to that interference can, therefore, lead to aggressive tendencies from the group or individual that has been frustrated. In other words, aggression is the outcome of people feeling frustrated in the course of pursuing a particular goal; and when the person or group is incapable of dealing with the source of their frustration, they misdirect their frustration and aggression to targets that have no role in their frustration. This is what we call “misplaced aggression”.

The frustration-aggression theory, according to Mentovich & Jost (2017), can be utilized to illuminate the processes of stereotyping, prejudice, and out-group hostility in intergroup interactions. The scapegoating theory, a controversial variation of the frustration-aggression paradigm, contends that after aggressiveness has been sparked by frustration, it doesn't really matter who bears the brunt of the violence. In some instances, hostility naturally manifests as retribution against the cause of the original annoyance. Other times, a person may not be able to respond to the actual cause of their annoyance due to the circumstances (for example, if the aggressor was a very strong individual or group).

It is given that the duty of government is to provide conditions that would ensure the good life for citizens of a particular country. Governments are expected to formulate and implement policies that would create employment opportunities, give citizens the leverage to access life opportunities in whatever they do; and enthrone a regime of responsiveness, accountability and transparency in the process of governance. When a government creates such enabling environment, there would be little tension in society.

However, it is a different ball game when, as we have in Nigeria, where we have a bulging youth population that have no access to employment, when virtually every issue in Nigeria is subjected to ethnic, religious or tribal sentiments, when ethnic groups feel marginalized and alienated from the governance process, people feel a sense of frustration and would, at the slightest instigation, vent their frustration on the society. This explains the intensity and venom unleashed on the Nigerian society during the #EndSARs crisis.

In the case of IPOB, hundreds of thousands of Igbo youths are convinced that the Igbo have had a raw deal in Nigeria and that the only reprieve for the Igbo is to create a separate homeland where the Igbo can be in-charge of her own destiny. This is the basis behind the spirit of self-determination as propagated by the group. However, the Nigerian state is impeding that goal and this has created a feeling of frustration among the IPOB. They have been compelled by this feeling of frustration to become aggressive and the wrong people are now at the receiving end of their aggression.

In other words, IPOB perceives the Nigerian state as the major clog to the realization of an independent state of Biafra despite their complaints that the Igbo have been deprived their opportunities in the country. The group sees the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu as a further frustration from the Nigerian state for the actualization of the state of Biafra. In response to this frustration, the group introduced sit-at-home, which is now killing the economy of the southeast. Herein lay the significance of the theory to the paper.

### **Hypothetical Assumptions**

For the purposes of this paper, the following hypothetical assumptions are postulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between the economic growth in the southeast and the sit-at-home order imposed by IPOB
2. Foreign direct investment in the southeast is not significantly affected by the sit-at-home order by IPOB



**Methodology**

This study was conducted in the five southeast states of Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo basically because these are the core states where the sit-at-home order is enforced by IPOB. The major respondents targeted for this study were members of market associations in the five states who are compelled to sit-at-home every Monday. Going by the figures from the National Population Commission, the southeast has a population of 22million people. This is quite a large population for the study.

We have therefore adopted the methodology espoused by Ronan Conroy (2018) and Alreck & Settle (1985), which advised that when the research population is high, then sampling 1000 people will normally give a fairly accurate result because sampling more than 1000 people will not add much to the accuracy of the result given the extra time and logistics cost. Based on this, we have sampled only 1000 respondents from the five states spreading them 200 per state. The questionnaires, which were structured on a weighted Lijkert scale of “strongly agree”, “agree”, “strongly disagree”, “disagree” and “uncertain”, were distributed through the leadership of the market associations. We used statistical tools of percentage, mean and standard deviation for analysis while chi-square was adopted in testing the hypotheses.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

We sent out 1000 questionnaires to the respondents. Of this number, 780 were duly completed and returned giving a response rate of 78percent.

**Table 1: Return Rate of Questionnaires**

No. of Questionnaires administered	No. of Questionnaires Returned	Percentage
1000	780	78

Source: Researchers’ Field Report, 2023

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The purpose here is to present the frequency distribution of the respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics.

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	475	61
Female	305	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researchers’ Field Report, 2023

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
31-40 years	120	15
41-50years	153	20
51-60years	308	39
61years and above	199	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher’s Field Report, 2023

**Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

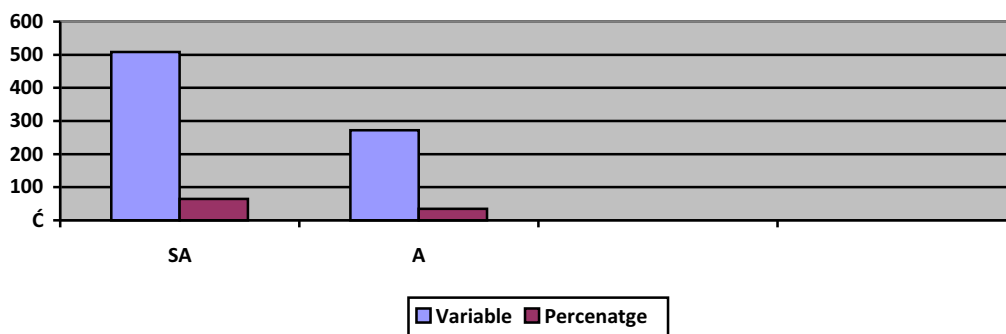
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	184	24
Secondary	382	49
Tertiary	214	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher’s Field Report, 2023

**Analysis of impact of sit-at-home on the economy of the Southeast**

**Table 5: On whether the sit-at-home order negatively affects productive assets in the southeast**

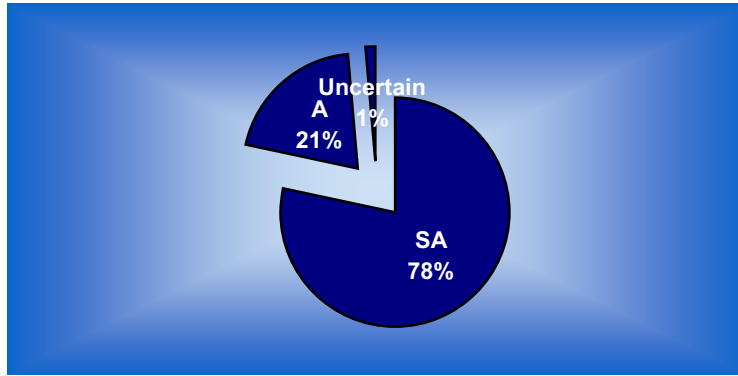
Variables	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	508	65
Agree	272	35
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Disagree	Nil	Nil
Uncertain	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>



Source: Researcher’s Field Report, 2023

**Table 6: On whether the sit-at-home order reduces households’ income level in the region**

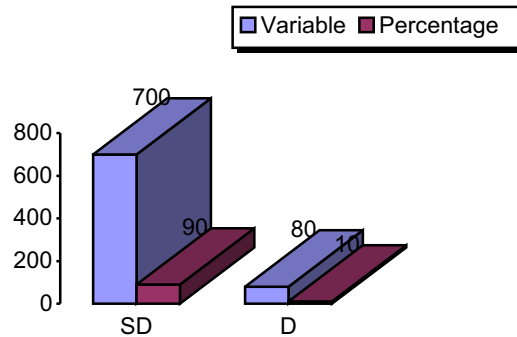
Variables	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	610	78
Agree	160	21
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Disagree	Nil	Nil
Uncertain	10	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>



Source: Researcher’s Field Report, 2023

**Table 7: Would you subscribe to the view that sit-at-home has no significant relationship to economic growth in the southeast?**

Variables	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	Nil	Nil
Agree	Nil	Nil
Strongly Disagree	700	90
Disagree	80	10
Uncertain	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>



**Table 8: Would you say that sit-at-home has negatively affected FDI in the southeast?**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Strongly Agree	629	81
Agree	125	16
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Disagree	Nil	Nil
Uncertain	26	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondents unanimously agreed that the sit-at-home order in the southeast has negatively affected productive assets in the region. The responses from the respondents collaborates what many told us during key informant interview sessions. For instance, in Abakaliki, the chairman of the Traders' Association told us that though the state government has made serious efforts to stop the order but the fear of the unknown does not allow people to come out and do business on Mondays. Mr. Aloysius Ogene, a trader in the market confessed that the sit-at-home is affecting the people seriously and that they are losing customers.

There also unanimous agreement among the respondents on the assumption that the sit-at-home reduces household income in the region. Messrs Wilfred Anozie, James Orji, Nathaniel Nwosu, Mrs. Ifunanya Nwankwo, Lady Euphemia Ude and Ngozi Eze - Traders in Onitsha, Owerri, Aba, Enugu - all confirmed that since the introduction and enforcement of the order by IPOB, their incomes have drastically reduced and sustaining the family has become a huge responsibility. For instance, some of them confirmed that they still obey the order out of fear. The chairman of Onitsha Main Market told us that despite his efforts to mobilize his colleagues back to the market, his efforts have not yielded any result because some unknown persons have been sending threat messages if the traders come back to market.

The respondents totally disagreed with the assumption that the sit-at-home order has no significant impact of foreign direct investment in the region. For example, Jude Nnorom and his brother Kingsley lamented that patronage has dropped drastically on account of the sit-at-home order; and that those who usually patronize them are now moving out to other areas outside the southeast to do business. Humphrey, the chairman of the Southeast Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (SECCIMA), said the situation has forced many buyers and investors into neighbouring regions. "The customers that are coming to South-east (to do business) are moving to other regions. And at the end of this sit-at-home, they may not return to the South-east," he said. In view of the foregoing, we accept our hypotheses as valid.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this paper, we have examined the impact of the IPOB-imposed sit-at-home order on the economy of the southeast. Anchored on the frustration-aggression theory the paper found that the sit-at-home order impacts negatively on the economy of the entire southeast; and that it also negatively impacts FDI in the region. Consequently, we make the following recommendations:

**a) Government should be more responsive and proactive in security matters in the region:** Government has not been as proactive as it should be and has, by this deficit, created what one may call ungoverned spaces, which has been taken over by miscreants in the name of IPOB members enforcing sit-at-home order. Thus government should be proactive in its intelligence-gathering and motivating the security forces to respond timeously to any security breach.

**b) Granting Amnesty to IPOB Members:** Government is urged to consider the option of granting amnesty to IPOB members starting with its leader Nnamdi Kanu. In doing this, the government should develop a timeline for demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of the group. This will put a stop to the sit-at-home order and restore the confidence of investors so that the region can again begin to attract FDI.

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