

## ENFORCEMENT OF IPOB SIT-AT-HOME ORDER AND THE ECONOMY OF SOUTHEAST, NIGERIA (2021-2023): A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

*The paper interrogated the impacts of the enforcement of sit-at-home on the Southeast economy between 2021 and 2023. The paper examined the effects of the Monday sit-at-home order enforced by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) on the economy of the Southeast in the specific areas of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Transport-sub-sector of the Southeast economy, financial and social institutions, investment patronage, among other issues of economic importance. The paper aligns with qualitative orientations; descriptive in typology and gathered data from various secondary sources and documented evidence which includes online media publications (particularly, newspapers), reports and journal articles while Systems Theory of Talcott Parsons and David Easton served as a theoretical guide to the study. Relevant data through various secondary sources were presented in texts and figure and thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that IPOB sit-at-home order has severe negative impacts on the Southeast economy particularly in the areas of SMEs and transportation system. For this reason, the paper recommended among others, the need for the Nigerian government to consider the economic damages arising from the enforcement of the sit-at-home order and free Mazi Nnamdi Kanu from detention.*

**Keywords:** Economy; IPOB; Sit-at-home; SMEs; Southeast-Nigeria

### Introduction

Etymologically, scholars have traced the history of sit-at-home order as weekly observed in the South-East geo-political zone to the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). As observed in Owueye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (2022), the Sit-at-home order usually observed every Monday in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria is rooted in the historical struggle towards achieving an independent state of Biafra by the IPOB members and supporters.

The earliest struggle for Biafra in Nigeria is evident in the action of Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu who declared an independent state of Biafra that resulted in the clashes between Biafrans and the Federal Government of Nigeria. This resulted in the Nigerian Civil War which took place between 1967 and 1970. Consequently, as a result of the Biafran War, about three million lives were reportedly lost while many businesses and properties were destroyed as observed in Campbell (2017). In essence, this marked the first instance where the activities of the secessionist group affected the economic activities in Nigeria. Nevertheless, as subsequently pointed by the scholar, Biafra (now dominated by the Igbos) had formerly existed as an independent multi-ethnic republic, comprising majorly the Igbos; Efik, Ibibio and the Ijaw among few others.

The Indigenous People of Biafra was formed in the year 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu as a movement against the marginalization of South-East Nigeria and the Igbos (Esho, 2022). Since its inception, the

group has adopted various mechanisms/strategies in pursuing and restoring an independent state of Biafra with little or no consideration for its socio-economic consequences on the South-East and Nigeria at large. As pointed out by Ozibo&Okorie (2022), One of the earliest strategies employed by the IPOB in the actualization of the Independence of Biafra and as well as gaining their freedom was the establishment of Radio Biafra which resulted in several media attacks on the federal government of Nigeria by the Indigenous People of Biafra.

As a result of the persistent media attacks by MaziNnamdiKanu and the IPOB members/supporters, he was apprehended on October 19, 2015 by the Nigerian security forces and later charged for treasonable felony, sedition and ethnic incitement as observed in Emeruwa (2021). Subsequently, the arrest of the leader of IPOB (MaziNnamdiKanu) gained the attentions of the Nigerian citizens, particularly the Igbo youths in the South-East and resulted in a large protest, violence and police clashes across the major cities which include Onitsha, Aba, Umuahia, Enugu, among others. As observed in Ugwu (2022), the protest resulted in the clash between the youth in the South-East and the Nigerian security forces and this consequently resulted in the injury and killings of massive number of youths in Southeast-Nigeria. This incessant killings of the Igbo youths resulted in the agitations by the members of the public which later facilitated the release of NnamdiKanu from detention by the federal government.

The IPOB leader (MaziNnamdiKanu) was re - arrested by the Nigerian Government on June 29, 2021, following his continued beenverbal attack on the Federal government of Nigeria under President MohammedBuhari's administration via the media from the United Kingdom, on charges of treasonable felony due to his persistent agitation for Biafra independence (Omole cited in Ozibo&Okorie, 2022). Since the re-arrest of the IPOB leader, Sit-at-home order has been introduced as the major strategy employed by the group to react spontaneously to the arrest of their leader; commemorating important days in the History of BiafranStruggle in showing solidarity with the leader of IPOB and as well, make the federal government of Nigeria free NnamdiKanu from what IPOB supporters perceived as unlawful detention (Owoeye, Ezeanya&Obiegbunam, 2022).

As further observed in (Ugwu, 2023), Sit-at-home order which is observed every Monday (the first business of the week) was introduced by the IPOB spokesperson in August 2021 across the South-East geo-political zone in a bid to free its leader (MaziNnamdiKanu) from the detention of the Federal Government of Nigeria. From the foregoing assertions of scholars, it obvious that the Sit-at-home order was originally introduced as a peaceful means or protest to facilitate the release of the IPOB leader and accelerate the political freedom of the people of Biafra from the Nigerian federation.

At this point, it is pertinent to note that the sit at home order introduced by the IPOB has continued to limit the daily earnings and income of the residents of Southeast-Nigeria and resulted in the dwindling socio-economic condition. Nevertheless, the IPOB has many times condemned the enforcement of the sit-at-home order and reported that it has been hijacked by enemies of Biafra to destroy Igbo land (Oko, 2023). Whichever way and irrespective of its real perpetrators, the effect of the sit at home order is still evident in the weekly shutdown of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), transport sub-sector, schools among others of economic importance in the region.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria has been facing a mirage of economic downturn arising from the weekly Sit-at-home order since the re-arrest of MaziNnamdiKanu (the IPOB leader) in July 2021. For close to two (2) years, the group has been observing weekly sit-at-home order as a tool in facilitating the release of its leader from the detention of the Federal Government of Nigeria and as well, actualizing the independent state of Biafra from the Nigerian federation. Undeniably, the weekly sit at home has cost the residents of Southeast Nigeria a lot in terms of livelihood and properties. Since the

inception of the weekly sit-at-home, many citizens in Southeast Nigeria have lost their lives.

It is pertinent to note that the enforcement of sit at home order has presumed multi-dimensional effects on the economy of Southeast-Nigeria. A report by DevEast/SBM on Punch Newspaper (Online) revealed that there have been huge losses in different sectors of the region's economy. According to the report, there have been decline in commercial transport patronage across major cities in the region which approximately results in 10 billion naira loss on every sit-at-home day (Aligwekwe, 2022). More so, the enforcement of sit-at-home as observed within the researcher's immediate environment has resulted in total shutdown cum closure of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); Commercial banks, Schools, Point of Sales (POS) outlets, main markets among others of economic importance on every first business day of the week (Monday) and other sit-at-home days while non-compliance with sit-at-home order usually results in murder of transporters and passengers, burning of vehicles, shops among others.

It is noteworthy that without the unlawful enforcement of the sit at home order, Southeast Nigeria would have become more developed and attracted more investors into the major cities across the region; but the sit-at-home order has presumably led to low business patronage by investors and business owners as they divert to safer environments to purchase or sell their goods. The sit-at-home order in the Southeast region has defiled all directives and negotiations in some quarters from both the state, regional and federal governments of Nigeria. The collective arrangement of formation of 'Ebubeagu' by South East governors to tackle the menace posed by the attendant insecurity in the region seems not to be working. Hinging on the foregoing statement, the paper seeks to examine how and the extent to which the enforcement of the sit-at-home order has affected the economy of the Southeast region of Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **IPOB Sit-at-home Order in the South East**

In a broad view, sit at home encompasses the totality of movement control, quarantine, isolation or lockdown order from government (and non-governmental) authorities that restricts movement of a population as a mass quarantine strategy for suppressing or mitigating an epidemic or pandemic by ordering residents to stay at home except for essential tasks or businesses (NBC Chicago, 2020). Nevertheless, it is important to clarify what IPOB entails before looking into the definitional attempts of literature on sit-at-home.

Scholars such as Ekpo & Agorye (2019) considered IPOB as a secessionist cum separatist group from Southeast-Nigeria with the chief aim of achieving Independent State of Biafra. As further maintained by the scholar, the group is an offshoot of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) with similar objectives. In the view of these scholars, the major aim of IPOB is to accelerate the rights of the Igbos for self-determination. As observed by Nwaiwu (2016), the origin of IPOB is traced to the historical struggle and cultural origin of the Igbos in a bid to actualize the secession of Biafrans from Nigerian federation.

While emphasizing on the activities of the IPOB, Jacob, Nwobi & Igboji (2020) described the group as a secessionist group agitating for the secession of Biafra from Nigerian federation. As further observed by the scholar, the call for Biafran Republic by the IPOB is considered as the remedy for the gross injustice and the marginalization of the Southeast-Nigeria cum the Igbos. Similarly, the same scholars maintained that 'sit-at-home' order recently introduced by the IPOB is also a strategy towards facilitating the release of Nnamdi Kanu from detention.

Similarly, scholars made attempts to provide meaningful definitional attempts of sit at home through their different theoretical formulations while the term became more popular in Nigeria in 2021 following the re-arrest of IPOB leader. The common element in their conceptual clarifications is that the term connotes a tool adopted by the IPOB in a bid to pressure the Nigerian government to release their leader.

(MaziNnamdiKanu) from the detention.

In the view of Aligweke(2022), the introduction of sit-at-home order is sequel to NnamdiKanu's extradition from Kenya. According to the scholar, the IPOB has continued to order a sit at home on every first business day of the week (Monday) since the arrest of its leader in 2021. From the assertion of this scholar, the enforcement of sit-at home is geared towards facilitating the release of MaziNnamdiKanu from detention. He reiterated that the enforcement of sit-at-home in the Southeast region has heavy impacts on its economy and also on the Southeast itself as a trading hub of Nigeria as traders cum business owners are compelled to stay at home especially on Mondays.

Njokwu, Nzeagwu, Godwin, Udejah, Ogugbuajah&Akenzua (2017) described the sit-at-home order as a directive issued by agitators in honour of their colleagues murdered in the struggle for the realization of the Republic of Biafra. As further observed by the scholars, there have been total compliance to sit at home order and this has ultimately showed the increasing popularity for the quest for Biafra that began over fifty years ago. In the views made by these scholars, enforcement of the sit-at-home order is a demonstration to the world that the IPOB cum Biafrans need the freedom and must go back in the quest for the independence of Biafra.

As observed in The Nigerian Tribune (2022, June 1), Sit-at-home order was popularly introduced by the IPOB in August 2021 as a means of putting pressure on the Federal Government of Nigeria to release its leader (MaziNnamdiKanu) who is standing trial for alleged treasonable felony and terrorism. As observed on the Online Newspaper, Mondays have become sit-at-home day cum public holiday in the entire Southeast Nigeria while sit-at-home could also be declared any day MaziNnamdiKanu appears in court or any other day that deems fit by the group.

In his view, Omole (2021), explained that the sit at home order by the IPOB, has been a successful strategy in commemorating the important days in the history of Biafra struggle. As observed by the scholar, sit-at-home was introduced to show solidarity with the leader of the IPOB during the period of his unlawful detention by the Federal government of Nigeria. However, the same scholar opined that the self-determination struggle will be portrayed as disorderly with the enforcement of sit-at-home by the IPOB if the people they claimed to be fighting for (the Igbos) do not have their freedom to carry out their daily activities such as going to work, shops, school, banks among others.

While commenting on the enforcements and activities of sit-at-home order in the Southeast, John (2023) asserted that the sit-at-home was introduced by the IPOB to compel Nigerian government to free its leader MaziNnamdiKanu who was arrested by the Federal government of Nigeria in Kenya and extradited to Nigeria for alleged treasonable felony and terrorism. As further observed by the same scholar, social and commercial activities in the Southeast region of Nigeria have been disrupted and disallowed by the enforcers of sit-at-home order.

### **Sit-at-home Order and the Southeast Economy: Empirical Review**

A study carried out by Owoeye, Ezeanya&Obiegbunam (2022) titled 'Separatists' strategy: appraising the effects of IPOB Monday sit-at-home order on political economy (socio-political and economic activities) of the South-East Region of Nigeria' aimed at examining the effect of sit at home order on the socio-political and economic activities in the Southeast region of Nigeria. The study is qualitative; employed Descriptive Research Design; gathered data through various secondary sources and adopted systems theory as a theoretical guide. Findings from the study revealed that the Sit-at-home order as enforced by the IPOB has posed serious threats to the political and economic activities in the Southeast region and the effects cannot be easily measured on market operations, commercial banks and transport system among others. The paper suggested an urgent need for the Nigerian Government to curb the problem of marginalization in Nigeria's political society in a bid to ensure a fair and equitable

distribution of resources among the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria via proper federal character system.

Ozibo&Okorie (2022) conducted a study on 'Sit-at-home order and economic growth of Southeastern Nigeria. The study aimed at interrogating how the sit-at-home order imposed by the IPOB has affected about twenty-two million residents of Southeast-Nigeria economically. It is quantitative; descriptive in typology and made use of data gathered through survey with a sample of one thousand respondents. Chi-square techniques was employed as tool of analysis in examining the effects of IPOB sit-at-home order on economic growth of the Southeast. Having employed descriptive statistics, the test of hypothesis revealed that the Southeast economic growth is significantly cum negatively affected by the enforcement of IPOB sit at home order as it has restricted people in the region from carrying out their business operations on Mondays and on other sit-at-homedays. The study recommended urgently, the need for the Nigerian government to come to terms of agreement with the leaders of IPOB in a bid to restore safe business environment for expected level of investment inflow in the Southeast region of Nigeria.

Ekechukwu, Nwogwu, Ugwukwu&Emerho (2022) carried out a study titled 'Socio-economic implications of IPOB's sit-at-home order in the South-East, Nigeria: A preliminary Qualitative investigation'. The study broadly examined the socio-economic implications of the IPOB sit at home order in the Southeast. The study is qualitative in orientation and descriptive in typology while purposive sampling technique was adopted with a sample of thirty-six (36) interviewees (thirty (30) in-depth interviews and six (6) key informants selected from market leaders, school principals and religious leaders. The qualitative data gathered through interview method were content-analyzed with the aid of Nvivo software while it built on Social contract theory as a theoretical guide. Findings from the study revealed that IPOB's sit-at-home order has serious negative socio-economic implications on the residents of the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria in area of decline in inflow of investments due to high rate of insecurity, decrease in standard of education, standard of living and employment opportunities. Based on findings, the study recommended as a matter of urgency; the need for dialogue that will gear towards securing the release of the IPOB leader (MaziNnamdiKanu) from detention, so as to curb future socio-economic consequences of the sit-at-home order in the Southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Anele & Eke (2023) conducted a study on 'Owerri residents' perception on IPOB Facebook handle on a sensitization of the regular sit-at-home order imposed in Southeastern state. The study aimed at ascertaining the exact perception of Owerri municipal residents to the IPOB, as well as the impacts of the sit-at-home order on them. The study is both qualitative and quantitative with use of Survey and In-depth interview design. It adopted theory of Social solidarity and perception as a theoretical guide. The study made use of 983,000 population and a sample size of 384. Findings from the study showed that 53.1% of residents in Owerri are moderately exposed to IPOB Facebook sensitization on the sit-at-home. The study equally revealed that the enforcement of sit-at-home order by the IPOB has resulted in several losses of lives, properties, insecurity, hunger and economic hardships in the Southeast. The study recommended the need for the Nigerian government to release MaziNnamdiKanu in a bid to end the enforcement of sit-at-home and as well, revive Nigerian's economy to a certain degree.

A study carried out by Osita, Aneke&Eze (2022) titled 'Mandatory sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra and economic activities in South East, Nigeria'. The study specifically aimed at examining the effect of mandatory closure of markets on Mondays by IPOB sit-at-home enforcers and its implications on the economy of the Southeast-Nigeria. It is a quantitative study and made use of primary data gathered with the aid of questionnaire instrument through Survey Research Design with a population of 250 which doubled as a sample size due to limited number. Data gathered were analyzed using regression technique at a 5% level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that the



enforcement of sit at home order has a significant negative effect on the economic activities in the Southeast. Based on findings, the study recommended urgently, the need for the regional government of the Southeast, religious bodies, traditional rulers and other stakeholders to diplomatically and politically engage the Federal Government of Nigeria for the release of MaziNnamdiKanu. More so, the study recommended the need for the Nigerian government to adopt an all-inclusive governance in a bid to return full economic activities to the Southeast region.

A study conducted by Morgen (2021) titled 'Perception and impact of IPOB ordered Sit-at-home protests. The study specifically aimed at examining the impact of the enforcement of sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra on the socio-economic activities of the South East. It is a quantitative study; employed Survey Research design and gathered primary data using questionnaire instrument. Findings from the study revealed that the enforcement of IPOB sit at home has resulted in weekly disruption of commercial activities, which includes banking operations and other business enterprises among other commercial activities within the Southeast.

Similarly, Frank (2021) carried out a study titled 'IPOB agitation and its socio-economic implications of South East development'. The study primarily aimed at examining the impact of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitation on the socio-economic activities in the Southeast. It is a quantitative study and adopted Survey Research Design; it made use of primary data gathered with the aid of questionnaire instrument and built on Group theory. Findings from the study revealed that the activities of IPOB in the clamour for Independent State of Biafra have serious negative implications for socio-economic activities of the South East, ranging from free movement to restriction of vehicles. The study recommended a sincere dialogue between the Indigenous People of Biafra and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

#### Summary of the Empirical Review

S/N	Author(s)	Year	Area of Study	Title	Methodology	Major Finding(s)
1	Anele & Eke	2023	Owerri (Southeast-Nigeria)	Owerri residents' perception on IPOB Facebook handle sensitization on the regular sit-at-home order imposed in Southeastern states	Mix-method (Qualitative and Quantitative); Survey and In-depth Interview	Enforcement of sit-at-home order by the IPOB has resulted in several losses of lives, property, insecurity, hunger and economic hardship in the Southeast-Nigeria  53.1% of residents in Owerri are moderately exposed to IPOB Facebook sensitization on the sit at home
2	Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam	2022	Southeast, Nigeria	Separatists' strategy: appraising the effects of IPOB Monday sit-at-home order political economy (socio-political and economic activities) of the South-East Region of Nigeria	Qualitative and Descriptive Research Design	Sit-at-home order as enforced by the IPOB has posed serious threats to the political and economic activities in the Southeast region and the effects cannot be easily measured on market operations, commercial banks, transport system among others

3	Osita, Aneke&Eze	2022	Southeast-Nigeria	Mandatory sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra and economic activities in South East, Nigeria	Quantitative; Survey Research Design	Enforcement of sit at home order has a significant negative effect on the economic activities in the Southeast-Nigeria
4	Ekechukwu, Nwogwu, Ugwukwu & Emerho	2022	Southeast-Nigeria	Socio-economic implications of IPOB's sit-at-home order in the South-East, Nigeria: A preliminary Qualitative investigation	Qualitative; Descriptive Research Design and Purposive Sampling Technique	IPOB's sit at home order has serious negative socio-economic implications on the residents of the Southeast of Nigeria in area of decline in inflow of investments due to high rate insecurity, decrease in standard of education, standard of living and employment opportunities
5	Ozibo&Okorie	2022	Southeast, Nigeria	Sit-at-home order and economic growth of Southeastern Nigeria	Quantitative; Descriptive Research Design and Survey method	Southeast economic growth is significantly cum negatively affected by the enforcement of IPOB sit at home order as it has restricted people in the region from carrying out their business operations on Mondays and other sit at home days
6	Morgen	2021	Southeast, Nigeria	Perception and impact of IPOB ordered Sit-at-home protests	Quantitative; Survey Research Design	Enforcement of IPOB sit at home has resulted in weekly disruption of commercial activities, which include banking operations and other business enterprises among other commercial activities within the Southeast-Nigeria
7	Frank	2021	Southeast-Nigeria	IPOB agitation and its socio-economic implications of South East development	Quantitative; Survey method	The activities of IPOB in the clamour for Independent State of Biafra has serious negative implications for socio-economic activities of the South East, Nigeria, ranging from free movement to restriction of vehicles

### Methodology

The paper aligns with qualitative orientation and adopted Descriptive Research Design. Descriptive Research Design as adopted in the paper enabled the researcher to examine the impacts of IPOB Sit-at-home order on the economy of the Southeast-Nigeria. The study relied on data gathered from various secondary sources/documentated evidence, particularly from media publications, reports, Journal articles and textbook. Data gathered from various secondary sources were presented thematically using textual, pictorial and tabular tools.

### Theoretical Framework

The paper built on Systems theory of Talcott Parsons and David Easton in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. Systems theory was brought into the world of Social Science by Talcott Parsons through his

analysis of Social system where he described the society as “an interlocking network of acting system” (Akinboye&Otto, 2005: P. 68) and then, came up with four (4) prerequisite functions that must be performed by every social system. Accordingly, they include; **pattern maintenance**; that is, the capacity of the system to maintain itself against a hostile environment, which could be sometimes disastrous); **adaptation**; that is, ability of the system to maintain a stable equilibrium irrespective of the disturbances (such as insecurity, pressures from interest or regional groups among others) from the system's environment; **goal attainment**; this means the ability of the system to satisfy the needs of its member and equally achieve whatsoever goals it has self for itself irrespective of disturbances while the fourth, which is **integration** means there must be continuous interaction between the components cum subsystems for better performance of the system as a disparate whole. Aside Talcott Parsons (a Functionalist Sociologist) and David Easton (a foremost Political Scientist who built on the work of Talcott Parsons and brought system theory into Political Science through his analysis of political system), other leading exponents and proponents of Systems theory include Morton Kaplan, David Singer, Karl Deutsch among few others.

The fitness of Systems theory in this paper is based on the fact that Nigeria's system environment comprises various interest groups which includes but not limited to Indigenous People of Biafra, Arewa group, Academic Staff Union of Universities, Odua People's Congress, Nigerian Union of Teachers, Nigeria Labour Congress, all exerting their various demands/pressures that need attention into the political system. In the view of Parson, human social and political system is not so unique as portrayed by David Easton and can be sometimes disastrous because it is not free from separatist and secessionist movements, revolutions, violent protests, agitations, terrorism, insecurities, excessive demands and pressures. Hence, every political system must always adjust, adapt or respond to changes that take place within the system's environment to avoid total failure of the system or disintegration within the system.

Similarly, the manifestation of the IPOB's sit-at-home order which has become a threat to the economy of the subsystem (Southeast) of Nigeria's political system is a result of the failure of the Nigerian government to consider or respond adequately to the demand of the IPOB in freeing their leader (MaziNanmdiKanu) from detention. Consequently, as a result of the inability of Nigeria's political system to adequately respond to the demands/pressures from its environment (IPOB and the Igbos) over the claim of marginalization and arrest of their leader, the group has developed sit-at-home order as a tool to pressurize the political system as a whole thereby affecting other parts of the system such as economy, health, government institutions, financial institutions, commercial activities, transportations among others. Thus, the problem within the Southeast with enforcement of the sit-at-home order has in recent times resulted in disintegration within the Nigeria's political system as investors from other regions have diverted to safer environment while those who would like to visit in the region have decided to cancel their trips due to fear of insecurities. More so, this has also ignited the clamour for secessionist movement by the group. For this reason, the Nigerian government needs to take into consideration, the demands of the Indigenous People of Biafra or respond to it appropriately in order to maintain its system equilibrium or stability, or otherwise it will gradually lead to total failure of all sectors or disintegration of the system as a composite whole.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section of the paper presents and analyzes the effects of the weekly sit-at-home enforcement by the Indigenous People of Biafra on the economy of the Southeast which specifically covers all commercial and economic activities which includes but not limited to investment patronage, transport system, market operations and financial institutions.



### **Enforcement of sit-at-home order and SMES in the Southeast Region**

As observed in Aligwekwe (2022), the enforcement of the weekly sit-at-home has a negative significant economic impact on the Southeast region, with many businesses closing down and disruption of transportation services. Similarly, the total shut down of business activities on the first business day of the week (Monday) in the region have continued to drive away investors and business owners to a safer environment who may have perceived the Southeast region as insecure and unstable for investments (Anele & Eke, 2022).

A report on the Nigerian Tribune (2021, June 1) claimed that economic activities were grounded across the five (5) states in the Southeast, Nigeria due to enforcement of IPOB sit-at-home order in the region. A part of the report reads;

...there were deserted streets, locked shops and offices, shut markets, malls, plazas and filling stations in Awka, Umuahia, Aba, Enugu, Abakiliki, Nsukka, Owerri, among other cities in the five states of the region (Southeast). Enugu in Enugu major markets, including Mayor, Garki, Ogige, Ogbete and New Market, were all shut, just as banks, other financial institutions, shops, malls and newspaper distribution axis did not open for business. Typically busy roads in Enugu like Holy Ghost, New Haven, AbakpaAgbani, Obiagu were also deserted. The order (sit at home) also affected health institutions shutting down their door in compliance while some residents were seen sitting in front of their houses observing the situation. (Nigerian Tribune, Online, 2021, June 1)

As evident in the report, there was a total shut down of commercial activities across Southeast region as people were denied the freedom to carry out their business operations due to IPOB sit-at-home order. By implication, this wreaked havoc on Small and Medium Enterprises such as financial institutions, retail outlets and shopping malls all which are essential to the development of the Southeast economy.

A report by Owuamanam, Eleweke, Willie, Charles, Umo & Labaran (2022) revealed that the Sit-at-home order enforced by the IPOB has devastating effect on the economy of the Southeast. As observed in the report, business operators are forced to close down their shops; schools are not permitted to open during sit-at-home observance while hospitality industries, particularly hotels often discourage lodgers cum customers from stepping in or coming out of their hotels on every sit-at-home day. As observed in the same report, a statement by Mrs. Grace Onyewuchi (a market woman/trader who sells foodstuff at the Relief Market, in Owerri) reads "...as sellers of perishables (goods), if you don't finish selling your goods before the sit-at-home days, you will incur lots of losses because they will become bad before the next market day". Also, in the same report, a tailor in Eke Awka, Anambra state while commenting on the economic hardship brought by the enforcement of the sit-at-home order by the IPOB reads "Though, I am a supporter of the IPOB and agitation, we cannot destroy our economy for any reason. People are suffering because of the sit-at-home order". From the assertion of these two business owners as evident in the report, it has become difficult for businesses to pick or operate due to sit-at-home order.

A financial expert as observed in Azeez (2022) claimed that both the Southeast and the Nigerian economy losses about \$1 billion weekly due to sit-at-home order. As further affirmed by the same report, the incumbent Governor of Anambra State, Prof. Charles Chukwuma Soludo, has equally lamented that his state (Anambra) losses about 20 billion Naira to the sit-at-home being observed every Monday, a statement by the governor as observed in the report reads;

Every day there is sit-at-home; these poor masses lose an estimated N19.6 billion in Anambra alone. Due to the protracted breakdown of law and order, businesses are relocating out of Igbo land with growing unemployment and traders who used to come to shop in Onitsha, Aba etcetera are going elsewhere (Azeez, 2022, April 18).

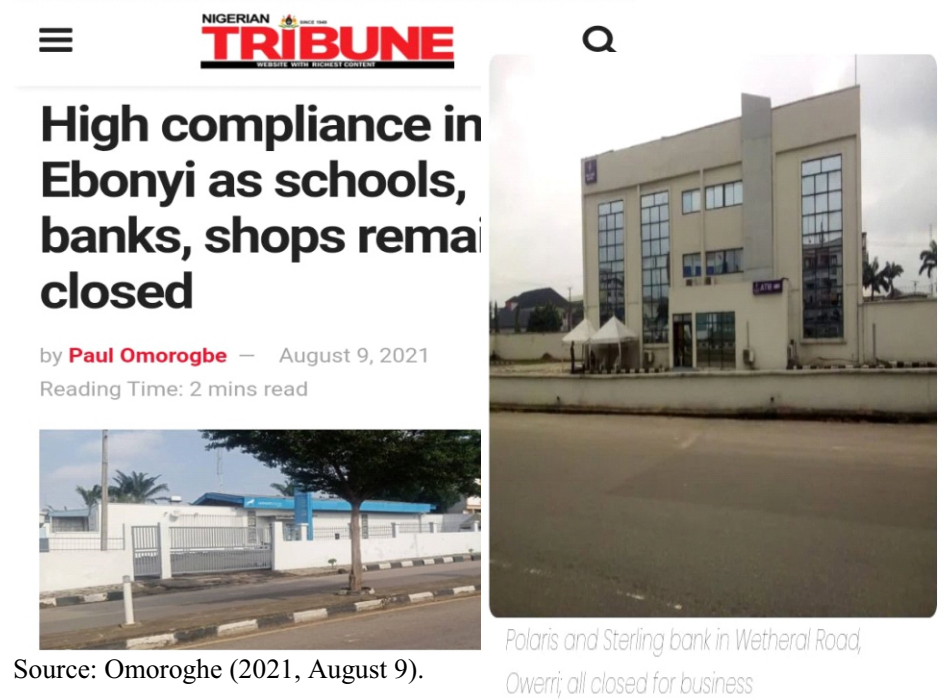
Similarly as observed in the same report, the Ebonyi State Governor had earlier said in September 2021 (about three (3) months into the introduction of the weekly sit-at-home order), that the Southeast

region losses over 10billion Naira each day there is enforcement of sit at home order in the region. From these assertions, it is evident that the enforcement of sit-at-home order by the IPOB has led to continuous loss of money in the region. All these money would have contributed to the development of the Southeast economy.

In the report of Okojie (2023), the continuous sit-at-home order has continued to stifle, nano, small and medium enterprises in the Southeast-region. A report by the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) estimated the annual loss of the sit-at-home order in the region at 4.6trillion Naira using the most recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SEMDAN). A statement by the national president of the Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises quoted in Okojie (2023) claims that the sit-at-home is stifling their business.

As further affirmed in the report, the contribution of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has over the years declined from 50percent in 2017 to 46.3percent in 2021 due to the weekly enforcement of the sit-at-home order in the Southeast region of Nigeria.

**Figure 1: Commercial banks closed at different locations in the Southeast, due to Sit-at-home order.**



The images presented in Figure 1 depicts another devastating effect of IPOB sit-at-home orders on the Southeast economy as commercial banks were closed due to the enforcement of the unlawful order across the Southeast region of Nigeria.

**Figure 2: SMEs shut down in different locations in the South-East, Nigeria due to enforcement of weekly sit-at-home order**



Source: Adapted fromBBC News, Pidgin (2021). Olumide (2021); Owoeye, Ezeanya & Obiegbunam (2021).

The images presented in Figure 2 shows different shops, retail outlets and markets captioned are totally shut down across the region. By implication, these shut down translates into low economic growth and development.

From the report, it is evident that the Southeast region has lost billions to trillions of Naira to sit-at-home order in the recent time. The sit at home order has consistently denied the Southeast residents from carrying out commercial activities on the first business day of the week. By implication, this has reduced the level of money generated across the states in the region with devastating economic effects such as hunger, poverty, low standard of living and untimely death.

#### **Enforcement of Sit-at-home order on Transport-subsector of the Southeast Economy**

It is evident in the reviewed literature that there have been high levels of compliance with the sit-at-home order in the Southeast. Similarly there have been various reports linking sit-at-home order to



transportation system across the Southeast region. Thus, this section will reveal how the enforcement of sit at home has affected the transport sub-sector of the region in recent times.

In the report of Omorogbe (2021), the Southeast region has witnessed a high level of compliance with the sit-at-home order and this has continued to impact negatively on the transportation system in the region. According to the report, when the Nigerian Tribune observed the situation of sit-at-home order in Ebonyi state and visited some popular/busy roads in the state like Ogoja road, EzzaMgbo Market, International Market, Vanco Junction, Presco Junction, among others, it was noticed that there was sparse of movement of vehicles, okada and keke in all these areas due to enforcement of sit-at-home order as IPOB member had reportedly blocked all the roads in the early hours of that day.

Similarly, a report by Ayeni&Adenuga (2021) affirmed that sit-at-home order has a severe negative effect on the transport subsector of the Southeast economy as it has denied them from carrying out their daily businesses while drivers who disobey the unlawful order face deadly consequences. Some statements by some respondent in the report reads;

...Indeed many who flouted the directive faced huge consequences as there were reports of violence unleashed on both sides. In August (2021), at least six people were killed and three (3) buses were set ablaze in Anambra state. In the same month two (2) travellers were burnt to death with shops and vehicles, including buses belonging to Libra and Okeyson transport companies reportedly set ablaze in Imo state.....The loss we experience cannot be quantified, because we are losing. In four-five Mondays in a month we are losing...Since the sit-at-home order, we have lost six routes. For us, we don't go to Aba, Enugu, Awka, Uyo and Owerri on Mondays...That affects the revenue and also gives us extra workload. The people, who are to travel on Tuesday and Monday, end up rushing to travel on Tuesday or Sunday in order to avoid all those things...This has affected us so much that I really wish the government and IPOB would have a dialogue to end the tension (Ayeni&Adenuga, 2021, October 15).

From the report, it is evident that sit-at-home order of the IPOB has negative impacts that cannot be easily quantified on both the transporters and passengers in the region.

A report by Ogbonnaya, Nwosu and Ogbodo-Iwuagwu (2021) equally confirmed an incident where some hoodlums claiming to be sit-at-home enforcers in Enugu attacked a vehicle distributing bread at the Old OriEmene Market. As observed in the report, the bus driver escaped by whiskers but the bus fully loaded with loaves of bread was looted and set ablaze while many tricycles were also destroyed in the area. The same report further maintained that a tricycle operator on Arthur Eze Road in Awka was stopped, matcheted and his tricycle was burnt beyond recognition while a trailer carrying spare parts worth 30million Naira was set ablaze in Nsukka. By implication, with such huge destruction of lives and properties, most residents of the Southeast have decided to continue staying at home every Monday to avoid risking their lives and investments.

Statistically, another report by Azeez (2022, December 2) claimed that transporters across the Southeast lose about 10billion Naira-13billion Naira every sit at home day. As evidently observed in the report, “transporters plying inter and intra highways and other roads in the five states of the south-east lose between 10billion Naira and 13billion Naira every day of the sit-at-home protest” According to the report, an estimated of 1,083,000 commercial vehicles (excluding motorcycles and tricycles) operates in the Southeast which covers Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. This number, according to report was derived from percentage estimates of total commercial vehicles in the second quarter of 2021. Similarly, Njoku, Ogugbuaja, Osuji, Udejaja, Akpa and Akhaine (2021) reported that the economic activities suffered a serious setback as everyone remained indoors across the Southeast.

**Figure 3: Commercial vehicles set ablaze by IPOB sit-at-home enforcers across Southeast**

Source: Adapted from The Cable (2021, August 9); Tribune Nigeria (2021, October 1); My Nigeria (2022, January 10).

The images presented in Figure 3 depict the deadly and destructive effect of IPOB sit-at-home enforcers on the transporters and passengers who flaunted the order in the region. As captioned in Figure 2, various commercial vehicles were set ablaze by the sit-at-home enforcers who claimed to be IPOB members in different locations across the region. As reported in The Cable (2021, August 9) three buses belonging to transportation companies were set ablaze by the IPOB sit at home enforcers in Nkwogwu, AbohMbaire Local Government Area of Imo State in a single sit-at-home day.

### Discussion of Findings

Based on the foregoing analysis on the impact of sit-at-home on the Southeast economy, it is evident in the data presented and analyzed that IPOB sit-at-home order has resulted in huge economic loss across states in the Southeast region with devastating effects on lives and properties. Billions to trillions of Naira have been lost to the sit-at-home order as people were denied their business engagements most especially in the operations of Small and Medium Enterprises; financial institutions, transport sector, private school owners among others who could have boosted the economy of the region while those who flout the order



as revealed in paper faces deadly and destructive consequences.

### Conclusion

The researcher embarked on the research based on the menace of the Monday and special days of sit-at-home order currently observed in the researcher's immediate environment. Thus, the paper is geared towards examining the effect of the sit-at-home order on the economy of the Southeast in recent years. From the data previously presented and analyzed, it is evident that the weekly enforcement of sit-at-home has become a quagmire and threat to the economy of the Southeast in the areas of SMEs, transportation system, financial and social institutions among others of economic importance; while the consequences have been huge losses in internally generated revenue, loss of lives and properties, low investment patronage among others of economic value. For these reasons, an urgent solution is needed towards ending the sit-at-home order in the Southeast region which has become a serious threat to its economy.

### Recommendations

Based on findings from data presented and analyzed; the following recommendations are made;

- Since the sit-at-home order is a tool adopted by IPOB for the release of its leader from detention, there is an urgent need for the Nigerian government to consider the economic damages arising from the enforcement of the order and free Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.
- There is need for an internal dialogue between the Governors of the five (5) states in the Southeast region and the stakeholders of IPOB that bothers on the safety of lives and properties, as well as economic growth of the region pending the time Mazi Nnamdi Kanu will be released.
- Since sit-at-home has a devastating effect on the economy of the Southeast region, there is need for the Governors of the region, business tycoons and other stakeholders to adopt an all-inclusive strategic plan towards curbing the sit-at-home rather than diverting their investments to other regions.

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