

# BIAFRA SEPARATIST AGITATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA, 2017-2022

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**Abstract:** The study examined Biafra separatist agitation and economic development in South East, Nigeria between 2017 and 2022. The study undertook a critical review of literature on the violent activities perpetrated by IPOB and poverty rate in South East Nigeria using incessant punctuation of business activities in the region. The objectives of the study were to determine if violent activities perpetrated by IPOB worsened the growth of business in South Eastern Nigeria and to ascertain whether incessant declaration of sit-at-home by Biafra separatist agitators adversely impacted on the ease of doing business in South East Nigeria. Data were collected using a mixed method which included survey and documentary methods and analyzed using content analysis. The study also relied on the basic propositions emanating from the violence theory propounded by Adam Smith in 1975. Findings show that the violent activities of IPOB such as the incessant and brutal killing of innocent citizens of the South East and giving of the obnoxious sit-at-home order have negatively affected businesses in the South East. This has caused people to fear for their lives leading to the closure of businesses, people relocating to other peaceful states to reside and purchase their goods and a reduction in investors investing in the South East. These have led to a reduction in the GDP and FDI in the region. The study therefore concluded that resultant effect of the activities in the region as a result of the Biafran secessionist agitators has made the federal government deploy military men to suppress the agitation thereby making the military and the police engage in extrajudicial killings of able-bodied men. The resultant effect is that a reasonable number of the able-bodied men who were supposed to be the energetic backbone of the region and take up jobs and other responsibilities have been tactically eliminated. This has made the region to lose future manpower in carrying out the crucial task which has also adversely affected the economic development of the region. Among others, the study recommends that the government should take more proactive measure to instill order in the South East region to avoid unlawful restrictions inimical to economic activities.

**Keywords:** Biafra Separatist Agitators, Businesses, Economic Development, IPOB, South East.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The economy of South East, Nigeria as been characterized by a mixture of agricultural activities as well as small scale industries. The region comprises of five states which are: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo and these states are well known for entrepreneurial spirit and vibrant business community (Aku, 2023). Agriculture has significantly played a major role in the region's economy. The fertile lands of South East, Nigeria supports the cultivation of crops such as yam, cassava, rice, maize, palm produce and vegetables (Obasi, 2021). The region is also well known for palm oil production and has a good number of palm oil processing mills. More so, poultry farming, livestock rearing and fishery are important economic activities in the region.

Small scale industries in the South East are also renowned. Manufacturing activities are concentrated in areas such as Nnewi in Anambra state, where automobile spare parts, metal works and plastics are produced. The region is also known for textile manufacturing, leather works, food processing as well as soap making (Anyone, 2022). These industries provide employment opportunities and also contribute to the economic growth of the region (Opara, 2020).

Trade and other businesses also thrive in the South East with numerous markets and commercial centers that are widely recognised across the region. Such major cities in the South East such as Onitsha, Owerri and Aba are known for the bustling markets where a wide range of goods are traded (Ukpong, 2021). These busy and clustered markets serve as the distribution centers for goods from other parts of the country and neighboring states (Uzoma, 2021). The entrepreneurial nature of the people has facilitated trade and commerce, both within the region and beyond.

Just as many other regions in Nigeria, South East also faces certain challenges that impact its economy such as the Biafra separatist agitation. This has led to the destruction of government infrastructure particularly in the undeveloped areas which hampers agricultural productivity and the growth of industries. The shutting down of banks and the fear of opening businesses have led to limited access to credit for small businesses and high interest rates which has also taken a major toll on the economic development of the region. Additionally, security concerns and the occasional disruptions due to numerous killings and sit-at-home order have also affected business activities.

The service sector including hospitality, telecommunications, banking, and transportation have experienced significant decline in recent years. Financial institutions such as banks, and other microfinance institutions have reduced their relevance in the region leading to a decline in providing access to capital for businesses. The telecommunications sector has also witnessed a decline due to the increased violent activities of the Biafra separatist agitation and numerous orders to close down businesses in a bid to exhibit their grievances against the federal government so as to achieve their desired goal (Okoara, 2021).

As a result of these challenges, the economy of the South East, Nigeria seems to be suffering and lacking adequate potential growth because there has been a serious threat to the entrepreneurial spirit, agricultural resources and skilled workforce in the region which contribute to its economic vibrancy. Efforts to address infrastructure gaps, improve access to finance and enhance the business environment can further stimulate economic development in South East, Nigeria. Insecurity and sit-at-home protests in the South East have led to massive economic losses which is estimated at almost 4 trillion in 2022 (Ekeh, 2022). According to Israel (2023), the losses can be attributed to specific factors which includes violence and insecurity uncertainties. About 254 people were killed in 63 incidents recorded in the first five months of 2021. Anambra state recorded 37 losses, Abia had 33 deaths while Enugu recorded 22 deaths. These incidents and wanton killings of unsuspecting innocent civilians have caused people to flee their businesses.

The South East which is home to many micro, small and medium scale enterprises and indigenous manufacturing, fabrication and agro-allied industries has lost its business activities as a result of insecurity created by the Biafra separatist group, IPOB. According to Alumona, Uzoma and Uloh (2022), businesses loose every Monday of the week to sit-at-home protest and extra day each time Nnamdi Kanu goes to court which means that the sit-at-home has led to the loss of about four to five working days per month. In addition, customers outside the region are forced to find other alternatives as the South East has trade relations with neighboring towns. These neighboring traders find their alternative markets in other regions such as Lagos (Awofeso, 2022). The violence and protests in the region have also increased the cost of service delivery for businesses. Businesses trying to keep up with customers outside the region have to increase their cost of deliver as a strategy for keeping their business afloat. Businesses find it difficult to meet up with sales volumes, they are faced with no option than to retrench some of their employees (Okere, 2023).

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the time the Indigenous People of Biafra introduced the weekly sit-at-home exercise in August 2021, the South-East states of Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, and Ebonyi have been under siege in the hands of gunmen parading themselves as enforcers of the illegal directive (Anayo, 2021). The development has fueled insecurity in the region. To this end, the sit-at-home exercise has literally grounded human, economic, and commercial activities in the region (Emeneke, 2022). It is about two years since IPOB introduced sit-at-home in the South-East region to protest the continued detention of its leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. To this end, while other regions of the country observe its normal commercial and economic activities every week unhindered, the same cannot be said of the South-East. The sit-at-home has led to the closure of banks, markets,

schools, and offices on a weekly basis. Several roads are often deserted as residents observe the exercise in fear. Revenues running into trillions of naira have reportedly been lost since the exercise began. The trade and commerce sector seems to be the worst hit, and for a region, which largely depends on trade and commerce for its revenue, the situation has left little to be desired (Oforma, 2021).

The South-East happens to be the hub of many micro, small and medium-scale enterprises as well as indigenous manufacturing and agro-allied industries. Besides the effects on economic and commercial activities as well as infrastructure, human lives have been lost to the exercise. Both the state governments and residents of the region are feeling the pinch. Across the states of Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi, the situation is the same. According to Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, the Anambra state Governor, an estimated N19.6bn has been lost in Anambra as a result of the Monday sit-at-home. Undoubtedly, the sit at home has cost the residents of South East Nigeria a whole lot in terms of property and loss of lives (Udeagu, 2020). Since the inception of Biafra separatist agitation, several innocent citizens have lost their lives in the most gruesome manner, thereby depriving families of their loved ones who are sometimes the chief providers in their homes and therefore threatening the prospects of the dependents that are left behind while leaving scars that may never heal (Uneke, 2022).

The families of such victims end up in the street while many others engage in other nefarious activities such as drug trafficking and kidnapping (Umih, 2021). One of the most tragic events was the gruesome murder of Dr Chike Akunyili whose face was blown off by bullets (Sebastine, 2022). Many others have lost their lives in the hands of unknown gunmen who seek to enforce the sit-at-home order (Michael, 2021). This protest has heavily impacted on the South East's economy and the broader Nigerian economy as a whole (Adeleke, 2021). The burning down of businesses in a bid to enforce the sit at home order in the South East has led to a decline in productivity (Azizogi, 2021). The destruction of markets has led to a disintegration of businesses and reduction in the GDP of the region (Amanze, 2022).

The growth of the economy of South Eastern Nigeria largely depends on the accelerating and stimulating strength of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Odili, 2020). The influx of FDI to any region has similar economic outcome such as a boost in transfer of technology, domestic production, financial capital development, job creation and economic growth among others (Bitar, Hamadeh, and Khoueiri, 2019). Despite the relevance of FDI to the economy of South East, the sit-at-home order has to a large extent impeded the flow FDI to the region. As emphasized by the US Department of State (2020), the problem of insecurity threatens investors' resolve to make investment decisions in Nigeria. The restriction of movement on Mondays has added to the list of security challenges bedeviling South East, Nigeria; anyone who flouts the order may eventually lose his/her life and properties. Unscrupulous elements utilize sit-at-home days to perpetrate evils such as kidnapping for ransom, violent conducts of different magnitudes and terrorism attacks on anyone who fall prey.

FDI is attracted in business environments devoid of low confidence and alarming rate of uncertainties, hence the sit-at-home order is not a promoter of FDI in the eastern region of the country (Vaskov, Pienknagura, and Ricci, 2021). By implication, the sit-at-home order stifles FDI, causes stigma to businesses and tourism. Infrastructure is an agent of socio-economic development. The African Infrastructure Country Diagnostic (2011) estimated that Nigeria needs 12% of her GDP or USD14.2 billion to address infrastructural gaps over next decades. The above estimate may not be enough to address infrastructural gaps owing to the increasing social unrests prevalent in South East region of the country. According to Ugwu (2022), social infrastructure requires huge financial investment in terms of both maintenance and construction, however nefarious activities of unscrupulous elements under the guise of IPOB and several other criminal elements across the South East has made this almost impossible by continuously attacking social infrastructure, hence cascading negative effects on economic growth and development of the region. Renn, Jovanovich and Schroter (2019) submitted in their work that social unrest of whatever magnitude cause damages to social utilities. Similar to the IPOB sit-at-home orders, activities of Boko-Haram, Herdsmen, Niger-Delta Militants, Kidnappers, religious and ethnic conflicts among others have caused destabilization to critical social infrastructures that took many years to build (Dajo and Akor, 2022).

Given the fact there is a high level of insecurity in the South Eastern states of Nigeria as a result of IPOB violent activities, given that there is a remarkable decline in the productivity and economic growth in the region, and given the fact that so many scholars such as Oyewo (2019), Ugwu (2022), Uba (2021), Albertson (2021), Amanze (2022), Michael (2021) have done elaborate studies on sit-at-home and its effects on the residents of South East, federal government's reaction of mobilization of Nigerian army and other security agencies to ameliorate the insecurity in the South Eastern, Nigeria, this study therefore intends to investigate Biafra separatist agitation and its impact on the economic development of the South East.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several economic activities are disrupted on days the sit-at-home orders are observed in the Eastern part of Nigeria owing to the fact that productive assets and resources are placed on hold (Okeoma, 2021). This is accompanied by loss of lives and properties especially those who share contrary opinions with the IPOB hierarchy. Vaskov, Pienknagura, and Ricci (2021) revealed in their study that restrictions of people's movement cripple economic activities especially countries with low economic growth. Okafor (2022) submitted that social unrest in Nigeria has resulted to cumulative decline in GDP from 2011 to 2015. Odili (2021) remarked that the sit-at-home order has caused the economy of the South East a massive decline in GDP relative to other geopolitical zones in the country. Also, Azeez (2022) quoted Simon Ekpa that the sit-at-home order has made Nigeria governments lose estimated revenue worth more than \$1 billion on weekly basis.

Adu (2021) noted that generally, social unrest is inimical to economic growth in any economy of the world. In Nigeria for example, the recent IPOB demonstration caused series of economic downturn in major states of Nigeria most especially the South East. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) (2020) highlighted that the EndSARs demonstration which lasted for twelve days resulted to the loss of N700 billion in revenue to the Nigerian government. In the same vein, the Lekki toll gate closure during the days of the EndSARs forced the government of Lagos State lose N234 million in revenue (Emenike, 2020). SB Morgan surveyed 180 business owners after the EndSARs demonstration, 91% of business owners accepted that their businesses were grossly affected, 98% agreed that they lost both customers and revenue, 43% of respondents agreed to be looted to the tune of more than N1 million worth of resources and 26% agreed to lose between N500,000 to N1,000,000 during the protest (Odotola, 2021).

The report concludes that business owners were subjected to inability of settling debts, destruction and looting of resources, and the fear of business activities picking due to business slowdown. Onime (2018) submitted that social unrest in Nigeria such as the activities of Boko Haram, IPOB, Niger-Delta Militants, Herdsmen and Kidnapping have at various times crumbled the economy of Nigeria. He further noted that, violent agitation of these groups for both human and non-human resource control have resulted to loss of lives, oil theft and bunkering, pipe vandalism, displacement of people from their ancestral homes and nation-wide hunger among others. The sit-at-home order as one of the many social unrests in Nigeria from economic point of view is not healthy for the economy of South-Eastern Nigeria and beyond.

Nnamdi (2016) posited that, the security situation in the south East holds significant ramifications for the condition of the public economy in Nigeria. The shortfall of relative harmony, the rule of law and general feeling of healthy degree of confidence can impact human efficiency and financial exercises adversely. Given the difficulties of uncertainty in the South East district Onojah (2018) noted that individuals of this region face various deterrents that sabotage their endeavors towards expanded financial exercises that can cause high efficiency. First and foremost, the issue of the sit-at-home request stands apart as one significant issue making such a lot of dread and uneasiness that influences individuals' mind, mental security and general demeanor as well as manners towards free commitment and economic development starting with one spot then onto the next for business and business exercises. Individuals in the locale are progressively terrified of moving about as they used to do previously.

They take part in different other useful endeavors that are basically adding to the public economy. It is expressed that they are the most voyaged Nigerians and are found in every one of the inside networks and towns in Nigeria doing a wide range of business and human pursuits (Agbodike, 2000). A district that has individuals with these traits endures when the locale is risky and threatened. The Pioneer (2022) catches with these words of the South East instability situation "terror poses a potential threat around us and we can't deny it. Psychological militants are hiding in our brambles, woods, every way imaginable, killing and grabbing, without being captured not to mention being arraigned". Voyaging locally is presently a test not with terrible street but rather the chance of being killed or kidnapped. Once more, uncertainty in the South East takes various aspects, going from assaults on workers, explorers, dealers and organizations to consuming of business sectors, homes, vehicles, private and public structures and offices, and so forth. It has taken a risky standpoint and significant impacts that are clearly subverting South East economy essentially (Udeh, 2018).

Notwithstanding the avalanche of scholarly discourse on the causal explanations of how the activities IPOB promoted poverty in the South East Nigeria and how the incessant punctuation of business activities by Biafra separatist agitators impact on the ease of doing business in the South East Nigeria, available studies are yet to account for how the persistence of state repression and Biafran separatist agitation has continued to affect the economic development of the south east

especially in the areas interrogating how violent activities perpetrated by IPOB promote poverty in south east and how the incessant punctuation of business activities by Biafra separatist agitators impact on the ease of doing business in South East Nigeria within the time frame of study. From the plethora of literature that have been reviewed, there is so far no scholarly work that adequately and succinctly captured the Biafra separatist agitation and its implication on the economic development of the South East Nigeria using IPOB as a case study, and this is the gap the present study filled.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is Adam Smith's theory of violence propounded in (1975). According to the theory, violence is a principal impediment to economic growth in Smith's approach. Moreover, violence arises in multiple ways; it can occur within a society as different lords, factions, religions, or regions fight one another; from hostile neighbors; or it can occur when the government plunders its citizenry. Smith's answer to the puzzle of the "slow progress of opulence" or the lack of economic development involves violence, especially in the form of government plunder. The causes of slow progress of opulence may be considered under these two heads, first, natural impediments such as geography, and secondly, the oppression of civil government (Okoro, 2016).

Adam Smith understood violence to be a first order problem hindering development; any solution to the development problem, therefore, had to involve limiting violence. Smith studies several types of violence, including predation by the government, plunder by neighbors, and invasions by distant foes. The sources of violence reduce the incentives for industry, saving, investment, and specialization. To develop, a society must therefore mitigate these sources of violence. Adam Smith's violence theory has the following key assumptions:

1. In the face of episodic violence, individuals have little incentives to be industrious, to save or to invest.
2. Economic development requires three mutually reinforcing elements which are liberty, commerce and security.
3. The wealth of a nation is created through productive labor and self-interest motivates the people to put their resources to the best use.
4. The result of everyone pursuing their own interests will be the maximization of the interest of the society.
5. Violence is the principal impediment to both economic growth and the escape of poverty.
6. Violent activities by the citizenry promote poverty in a nation
7. During violent activities, there is always a follow up of economic meltdown as businesses fail resulting in a decline of GDP.

According to the theory, the assumptions clearly explain the study. The Biafra agitation for a separatist government by IPOB group has moved from a peaceful movement to a violent one in order to achieve their demands from the federal government. In a bid to achieve this, giving the detention of the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu and the refusal of the federal government to obey the court order by granting his release has led to a violent movement by IPOB seeking a separatist government independent of the federal government. In order to achieve their demands and to be heard, IPOB has perpetrated a lot of nefarious and violent activities in the south east such as burning down of public and private properties, burning of houses, INEC offices and police stations, killing and massacre of innocent civilians, burning down of markets and business areas and as well as instituting a compulsory sit-at-home order on Mondays in order to mark respect for the detained IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu. This has adversely affected the economic development of the south east region as revenues running into billions of naira are lost every Mondays as a result of the compulsory sit-at-home order which mandated the closure of markets, businesses, offices and banks within the region. A lot of income levels have dropped drastically which has taken a drastic negative toll on businesses and workers which has affected the economic development of the region.

More so, the liberty of the people doing businesses in South East Nigeria has been hampered by the violent activities of Biafra separatist agitators, this has caused a lack of security, a reduction in productive labor which causes a decline in the economic growth of the South East.

#### **VIOLENT ACTIVITIES PERPETRATED BY IPOB AND GROWTH OF BUSINESS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA**

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has been ranked recently as the 10th deadliest terror group in the world by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), an independent and non-profit think tank (headquartered in Sydney (Australia) with

offices in six countries) in its 2023 global terrorism index (GTI) ranking (IEP, 2023). The institute noted that IPOB was responsible for 57 deaths, 40 attacks and 16 injuries, to be placed 10th on the list. Violence used to enforce sit-at-home Defaulters of the protest are often threatened with violence, destruction and loss of property, among other repercussions. Most people (62%) said they had family members or friends that were physically impacted by the violence. Imo, Enugu, Rivers, Ebonyi and Delta reported a greater proportion of respondents with family and friends who were physically impacted by the violence. Most people in Abia (71%) and Anambra (75%) did not have close associates who were physically impacted by the violence in the State (Dev East, 2021).

Though the IEP said its report “provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over the last decade,” and that “the calculation of the GTI score considers not only deaths but also incidents, hostages and injuries from terrorism, weighted over a five-year period,” data independently gathered by Daily Trust from news reports in Nigerian newspapers showed that IPOB had much more killings to its name (Ndugwu, 2022). A total of 148 deaths and 111 attacks were recorded in the year under review, as the Daily Trust tally showed. The casualties of IPOB attacks included 43 policemen, 20 soldiers, 71 civilians, as well as two officials each of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Correctional Service (Prisons), and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency. There were also six attacks on the Independent National Electoral Commission offices (INEC), three attacks on courts of law, 19 attacks on police stations and nine attacks on police checkpoints. The number could as well be higher as some incidents go unreported. Interestingly, the report by IEP is coming at about the same time the Abuja Division of the Court of Appeal fixed October 16, 2023, to hear IPOB’s appeal challenging its proscription and labeling as a terrorist organization by the federal government (Ifediche, 2023). It would be recalled that the Abuja branch of the Federal High Court had on September 20, 2017, granted an order proscribing IPOB as a terrorist organization following an application by the federal government on violence. Already, many say what IPOB is fighting for is not what the South East needs. Today, because of IPOB’s violent activities, many parts of the South East have been militarized, with the ubiquitous presence of troops.

**Table 1: Incidences of kidnap in Imo State, 2017-2023**

Incidence	Location	Date
Abduction of Ugorji, a popular business man	Ikenegbu layout in Owerri	2nd July, 2023
Abduction of 792 persons	Okigwe roundabout	14th March, 2023
Kidnap of Celestine Ngoburu, a member of Imo state House of Assembly	Amakohia/ Akwakuma road	14th July, 2023
Kidnap of Spanish citizen	Lagos road, Imo state	May 2017

Source: Chisomaga (2023).

The table above explained the nature of kidnap in Imo state as well as their incidences which ranges from the abduction of Ugorji, a popular business man to the abduction of a Spanish citizen.

**Table 2: Incidences of killing in Abia State, 2022-2023**

Incident	Location	Date
Killing of 15 persons by gunmen	Ummuneochi in Abia state	2 <sup>nd</sup> December, 2022
2 people killed during electoral violence	Ndi Agwu community of Abam, Arochukwu L.G.A if Abia state	25 <sup>th</sup> February, 2023
Hoodlums kill woman in Aba Hotel	Hotel in Ubani street Ogbor hill in Abia state	16 <sup>th</sup> February, 2022
Beheading if a policeman and 3 vigilantes by criminal gang	Etiti, Ohazu, Obohia area of Ngwa road	15 <sup>th</sup> April, 2022
8 killed in Aba market by gunmen	Omumauzor in Ukwa West	4 <sup>th</sup> May, 2023
Killing of 8 traders in Aba market by gunmen	New cattle market in Omuma-Uzo in Ukwa West, Abia state	16 <sup>th</sup> February, 2022

Source: Chisomaga (2023).

The table above shows the nature of killings perpetrated by IPOB in Abia state. This has created an unsafe environment for business men in the South East who have in turn abandoned their businesses. The idea of self-determination is not new, but for now, Nigerian laws do not have space for a referendum (Ifeadigi, 2022). To have that will mean to amend the

constitution, which interested parties can do through their representatives at the National Assembly. A lot can be achieved through the democratic space. If IPOB, which is now reportedly engaged in a supremacy battle between Nnamdi Kanu and Simon Ekpa, is about the development of the South East region, members can join politics, win elections and serve their people. First, they must denounce violence in unmistakable terms. There are lessons to learn from the Scottish National Party, founded in 1934, with the express aim of achieving an independent Scotland through “civic nationalism” rather than violent insurgency which is now the dominant political force in Scotland. It now controls 45 out of the 59 Scottish seats in the House of Commons at Westminster, and forms the regional Scottish government at Holyrood, a feat it would never have achieved with the use of violence.

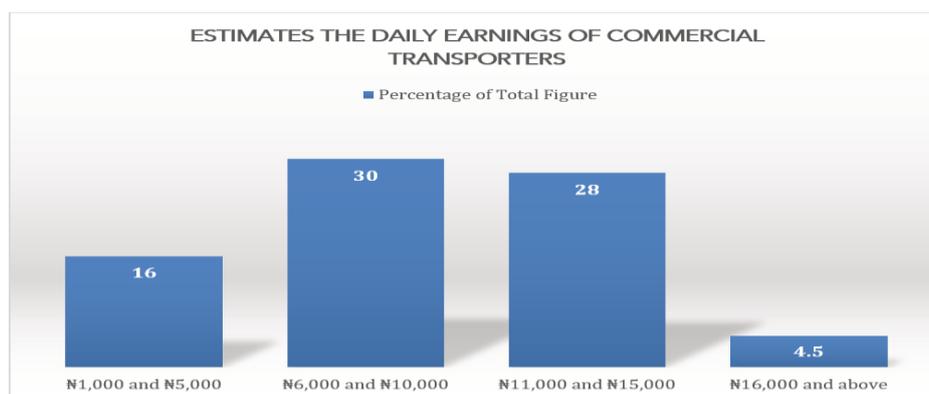
IPOB and its members can learn from that. For its part, the Nigerian government must review its strategies towards addressing this issue. It must also pursue policies that give all citizens a sense of belonging and being part of the system with the same legal rights, not just in the South East but all across the country. Most of the agitations in the country may be the result of feelings of exclusion. People must see a country in which they have equal rights, and where they can achieve their highest possible potential (Okafor, 2022). The growth of the economy of South Eastern Nigeria largely depends on the accelerating and stimulating strength of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Odili, 2020). The influx of FDI to any region has similar economic outcome such as a boost in transfer of technology, domestic production, financial capital development, job creation and economic growth among others (Bitar, Hamadeh, and Khoueiri, 2019). Despite the relevance of FDI to the economy of South East, the sit-at-home order has to a large extent impeded the flow FDI to the region. If insecurity worsens and businesses cannot thrive, then states like Anambra will lose their opportunity to receive foreign direct investment, which stood at 10 million dollars in the previous year. Anambra received foreign direct investments worth \$10.02 million in 2020, despite Covid-19, making it the 6<sup>th</sup> highest capital importation destination in Nigeria that year (Dev East, 2021).

As emphasized by the US Department of State (2020), the problem of insecurity threatens investors’ resolve to make investment decisions in Nigeria. The restriction of movement on Mondays has added to the list of security challenges bedeviling Nigeria; anyone who flouts the order may eventually lose his/her life and properties. Unscrupulous elements utilize sit-at-home days to perpetrate evils such as kidnapping for ransom, violent conducts of different magnitudes and terrorism attacks on anyone who fall prey. FDI is attracted in business environments devoid of low confidence and alarming rate of uncertainties, hence the sit-at-home order is not a promoter of FDI in the eastern region of the country (Vaskov, Pienknagura, and Ricci, 2021).

By implication, the sit-at-home order stifles FDI, causes stigma to businesses and tourism. The effect of the violence on all stakeholders has a compounding impact on business people, traders, community leaders and similar groups. Violence and inability of constituted authorities to handle the security situation in the Region have further dwindled public trust in the political and community leaders. There is a noticeable decline in trust between residents and economic Losses. On working days, businesses lose every Monday of the week to the sit-at-home protest and an extra day when Nnamdi Kanu goes to court, which means the sit-at-home approach has led to the loss of about 4-5 working days in a month (Dev East, 2021).

Reduced Working Hours has led to job losses and the protest affects not only a whole day but has a spillover effect on the other days of the week. Residents of the South East lose side jobs and secondary businesses as the reduced working hours and time makes it hard to keep a business or job. Customers outside the Region are forced to find alternatives as the South East has trade relations with neighboring towns (Ndukwe, 2022). Apart from traders who used to travel to nearby markets to sell their wares, those who had their customers coming into the Region said their customers have reduced and are finding alternatives even in other places like Lagos. Businesses trying to keep up with customers outside the Region have to include logistics and bear the risk, but only big businesses can afford this.

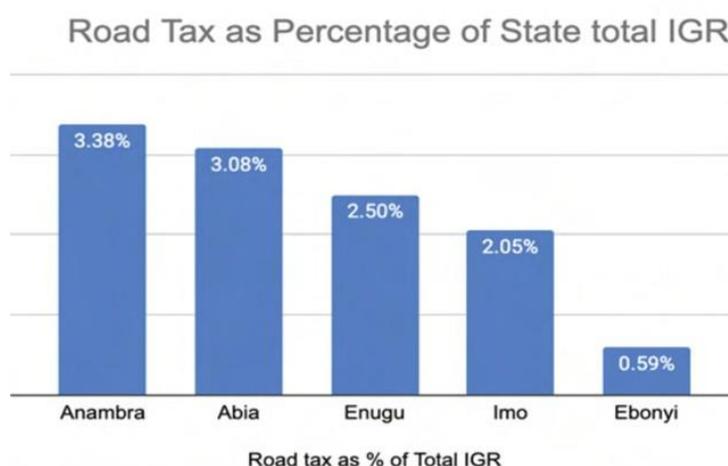
As a strategy of keeping their customers, some companies have to add delivery services as businesses cannot meet up with sales volumes due to obvious constraints; they are faced with no option other than to retrench some of their employees. A good number of workers who work with SMEs said they had experienced reductions in salaries, compensation or bonuses. Another coping method reported by small businesses is that they have opted to pay their employees daily rather than monthly salaries. The businesses are also committed to saving a fixed amount of money every day. They are unable to save on Mondays and struggle to keep to their commitments.



**Fig 1: Road Tax For South East States in 2021**

Source: Dev South East (2021).

From the above bar chart, Anambra, with a sum of more than four hundred and thirty-two million naira (N432,676,875.00), had the highest revenue from road tax when compared to other South East states. Ebonyi generated the least from roads-- forty-six million naira (N46, 147,737.10).



**Fig 2: Road Tax as Percentage of State IGR in 2021**

Source: Dev South East, (2021).

**Table 3: Minimum and Maximum Daily Earnings of Transporters in 2020**

Total estimated number of commercial transporters in the South East region	Derived Percentages from field research and their earning brackets (Percentages)	Minimum earnings of commercial transporters by percentages	Maximum earnings of commercial transporters by percentages	Number of transporters by earning brackets	Minimum daily earnings for transporters in the Region (₦)	Maximum daily earnings for transporters in the Region (₦)
1,083,000	16	₦1,000	₦5,000	173,280	₦173,280,000	₦866,400,000
1,083,000	28	₦11,000	₦15,000	303,240	₦3,335,640,000	₦4,548,600,000
1,083,000	26	₦16,000	₦16,000	281,580	₦4,505,280,000	₦4,505,280,000
1,083,000	30	₦6,000	₦10,000	324,900	₦1,949,400,000	₦3,249,000,000
					₦9,963,600,000	₦13,169,280,000

Source: Dev South East (2021).

The figure above shows that businesses in the South East generated between 5.4 billion (₦5, 461,519,488) to 31 billion naira (₦31, 385,900,929) daily. They lost approximately five days in a month from October 2020 (24months), about 120 days have been lost, which takes the number of lost earnings on only sit-at-home days to between approximately six hundred and fifty-five billion naira (₦655,382,338,560) and three trillion point eight trillion naira (₦3,766,308,111,480) losses so far (Dev East, 2021).

The South East may be heading towards insolvency if they cannot raise enough internal revenue to service their debts and meet other obligations as a result of the violent activities perpetrated by Biafra separatist agitators. According to National Bureau of Statistics data, domestic debt in the South East for 2020 stood at N44.2 billion for Ebonyi, N59.9 billion for Anambra, N68 billion (Enugu), N89.2 billion (Abia), and N150.2 billion (Imo). And a dwindling economic profile will also mean a weakened capacity to repay the local debts.



**Fig 3: Domestic Debts of South East States in 2021**

Source: Domestic Debts of South East States, (2021).

From the above figure, Imo owes a debt of N150.2bn, Abia owes 89.2bn, Enugu owes 68bn, Anambra owes 59.9bn and Ebonyi 44.2bn in 2021. From the estimates of losses on sit-at home days and the estimates of losses on other days, it can be seen that not only do the individual businesses in the South East lose a lot of money, but the government also loses the opportunity for internally generated revenue. This is a major loss for the economy. If this continues, the governments will be in a precarious situation given that the revenue coming from oil at the federal level is also dwindling due to the global economic situation and the domestic political situation that inhibit Nigeria's ability to fulfill its quota of oil extraction and export.

According to Odili (2021), no investor would be proud to invest in business environments where confidence of investment protection is low. A careful examination of several outcomes and tensions associated with the sit-at-home orders, foreign investors would undoubtedly be afraid to invest in such volatile business environment. Onyebuchi (2018) concord to the above sentiment when he submitted that due to social unrests in Nigeria, greater number of foreign investors have left Nigeria for other nations with stable business environment. UNCTAD report cited in Onyebuchi (2018) established that from 2007-2009, Nigeria is among the 40 most viable and attractive economies for FDI, albeit series of social unrests in the country has changed the trajectory. The 2018 UNCTAD report revealed that Nigeria's FDI inflow declined by 21% while capital flight trended up by 8% (Dajo and Akor, 2022). The decline in FDI is attributable to series of social unrests in Nigeria where sit-at-home order has added to existing long list (Esho, 2022).

According to Ugwu (2022), social infrastructure requires very high financial maintenance in terms of both maintenance and construction, however nefarious activities of unscrupulous elements under the guise of IPOB and several other criminal elements across the South-eastern Nigeria have continuously attacked social infrastructure, hence cascading negative effects on economic growth and development of the region. Renn, Jovanovich and Schroter (2011) noted in their work that social unrest of whatever magnitude cause damages to social utilities. Similar to the IPOB sit-at-home orders, activities of Boko-Haram, Herdsmen, Niger-Delta Militants, Kidnappers, religious and ethnic conflicts among others have caused destabilization to critical social infrastructures that took many years to build (Dajo and Akor, 2022).

It is however important to note that the South-Eastern states were trying to catch up with other regions of the souths in terms of internally generated revenue before the surge in insecurity took over the region for instance Anambra recorded a foreign investment inflow of \$10.02 million, making it the 6th highest capital importation destination in Nigeria as of the end of 2020. In a year that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the global economy with severe health challenges, the figure is significant bearing in mind the state's efforts to attract foreign investment.

The state also has the second-lowest domestic debt in the South East (N59.9 billion) after Ebonyi (N44.2 billion) as of 2020. Others are Imo (N150.2 billion), Abia (N89.2 billion) and Enugu (N68 billion). A further glimpse into the statistics bureau's data revealed that Anambra grew its internally generated revenue (IGR) by 61.3 percent within five years covering 2016 to 2020. According to National Bureau of Statistics data (NBS), the state's IGR of N17.3 billion in 2016 rose to N23.6 billion in 2017, but dropped to N19.3 billion in 2020, apparently due to the recession as a result IPOB activities as of 2016/2017. The IGR recorded an over N7 billion jump to hit N26.3 billion in 2019 before peaking at N28 billion in 2020. Anambra also ranks among the 10 top revenue-generating states and the FCT in 2020. The feat was achieved through its unique Grassroots Tax Awareness Campaign (GTAC) initiative of 2018. It was in response to the dwindling FAAC proceeds which compelled states to pursue alternative revenue channels or expand existing ones. The initiative is driven by the Taxpayer Education and Enlightenment Team (TEET) under the Anambra Internal Revenue Service (AIRS) aimed to address the low tax compliance level in the state.

These were some of the techniques put in place by some of the states in the South-East before insecurity made these states experience a decline in the internally generated revenue of the region. However, it is worthy to say that foreign direct investment declined extremely and there is no hope that the Federal Government could remedy the investment gap by intentionally, investing in economic infrastructure in the South East (Ejiogu, 2023). For developing countries, FDI is a stimulant of economic growth (Ada, et. al., 2020). As such, FDI should increase economic output and labor employment in the zone and in the country at large. Socially, it will foster community peace because the default internal emigration of economically active people from the South East zone is creating colonies in other zones that in the long-term will create disharmony by raising fear of dominance and exclusion. People from the zone can also be more intentional in their investment behavior by limiting their investment outside the zone.

This is important, not only for the safety of the investment portfolio but also to attract economic infrastructure and foreign investments (Amedu, 2022). Aligning with Amedu, Stanley (2021) however noted that an Investor, Henry Chibuzo, observed that lack of political will, security threats carried out by IPOB and poor infrastructure had continued to discourage investment in the South East region. He stated that ease of doing business in the zone had remained cumbersome, stressing that, even when an investor decided to live with it, low patronage from governments could cause an exit. "I have also noticed that many states in the South East have Investment Promotion agencies but these agencies are not properly funded.

There is no cohesion among them in terms of driving the South East investment program; everybody is pursuing investment at an individual level. There ought to be strategic collaboration. The governors ought to come together. There is no strategic effort that can trickle down to investment attraction in the zone." He added that security threats had threatened investment in agriculture, especially since the rise in the issue of IPOB violent activities in the zone, stressing that certain investors that came into the zone and invested in agriculture in the Uzouwani area of Enugu State had their crops destroyed.

Moving through the South East, there are several checkpoints, and the policemen on the road care less about who is coming. They are only there to exploit the people. Any investor, who probably was in the southwest, southsouth, and on coming into the South East to discover this level of security checkpoints, will certainly not want to have any business to do here" (Umeh, 2023).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study has been able to establish negative impacts and relationships amongst sit-at-home order, economic growth, foreign direct investment and social infrastructure. The study revealed that the sit-at-home order impact FDI and social infrastructure to have negative moderating effect on economic growth in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Conclusively, the resultant effect of the activities in the region as a result of the Biafran secessionist agitators has made the federal government deploy military men to suppress the agitation thereby making the military and the police engage in extrajudicial killings of able-bodied men, the resultant effect is that a reasonable number of the able-bodied men who were supposed to be the energetic backbone of the region and take up jobs and other responsibilities to improve the economy of the South East have been tactically eliminated and thereby making the region to lose future manpower in carrying out the crucial task.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, the study recommends the following:

1. The government should take more proactive measure to instill order in the South East region to avoid unlawful restrictions inimical to economic activities.
2. The federal government should incorporate South Easterners in political appointments and administration so as to give them a sense of belonging as well as restore sound business environment and to curtail the violent activities carried out in the region to improve the economy of the South East and for accelerated level of FDI inflow in the South East region.

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