

The precarious security situation in the southeast of Nigeria: The Monday Sit-at-Home Phenomenon

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Abstract

The Monday sit-at-home order has become a normal phenomenon in the southeast of Nigeria. It has assumed a quasi institutionalized mode of existence which has gone beyond the control of the originators; the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The worrisome aspect of this is that the state governments in the region appeared to be overwhelmed by the order and could not stop it. The armed forces seem to be ineffective in curbing the continuing enforcement of the order. This has precipitated untold hardships with very devastating consequences. This paper investigated the factors responsible for the continuing existence of the weekly Monday sit at home order in the southeast of Nigeria. The rational choice theory was used as the theoretical framework while the paper adopted the mixed methods research design. A sample size of four hundred study participants drawn from the southeast of Nigeria using the Yamane's sample size determination formula was used for administration of the questionnaire. Eight (8) opinion leaders were purposively selected from the region. It was found that at the root of the continuing existence of the Monday sit- at- home order was the fear of the unknown. People who dared to defy the order in the past did not leave pleasant memories behind. Many were killed; some of them were maimed for live while properties with enormous worth were destroyed. The paper recommended among others that the government at the state and at the federal levels should work together towards finding a lasting solution to the crisis in the region by dialoguing with the key actors in the crisis.

Key Words: Monday sit-at-home order, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Terrorism, Unknown Gunmen, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESN)

Introduction

It is no longer news in the southeast of Nigeria that movement is impaired on Mondays. It is even a nightmare moving from one state to the other. Only few dared to do so at the risk of the unknown. Sit-at-home orders from the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) used to be issued once in a while. It was often used by the organization to draw attention to past events they hold sacred. They used it to remember those who lost their lives in the Nigeria-Biafra war (Esho, 2022). In recent time, the sit at home orders were issued as a way of protest for the release of their freedom fighter -Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (Ayitogo, 2021). When Nnamdi Kanu was rearrested and extradited from Kenya on Sunday June 27, 2021, IPOB intensified the used of sit at home order in the southeast of Nigeria as a bargaining tool for the release of their leader. Precisely, Emma Powerful the spokesperson of the group declared on the 30th of July, 2021 that every Monday with effect from 9th August, 2021 would be a sit at home in the region pending when Nnamdi Kanu will be released. It has to be stated that sit-at-home orders were not exclusively made for Mondays only. The group made it mandatory for the inhabitants of the region to sit at home each time their leader will appear in court. Ozibo and Okorie (2022) stressed that the intent of the marker of the sit-at-home order was to use it as a means of peaceful protest to bargain for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and secure the political freedom of the people of Biafra. Following the non savoury feelings of the people in the region to the orders, IPOB then issued a counter order that the Monday sit-at-home order should be discontinued. Chika Edoziem, the head of directorate of states for the group announced on Friday night of August 13th, 2021 the suspension of their Monday sit-at-home order. He said that henceforth, they would declare sit at home whenever their leader would be making an appearance in court and not every Monday (Tribune Newspaper, August 14th 2021). Similarly, Osuji (2021) reported that Emma Powerful, the spokesperson of IPOB cancelled the Monday sit-at-home orders in the southeast of Nigeria. According to him, Emma Powerful insisted that they had long suspended the weekly order because of its economic implications on the people. Emma Powerful

maintained that sit at home protest will only hold on to the days Nnamdi Kanu will be appearing in court (Osuji, 2021).

In spite of the several reassurances from the leadership of IPOB on the suspended Monday sit-at-home order in the region since August, 2021, the phenomenon has continued unabatedly to date. It is obvious that IPOB created a monster it could no longer control. IPOB started the Monday sit-at-home but has no control over it any longer. Governments in the region also failed to curb the problem. Ojonugwa (2021) reported that the South-East Governors Forum on Tuesday 5th October, 2021 condemned the Monday sit-at-home order given by the IPOB and growing insecurity in the region. Similarly, Nwosu (2021) stressed that in Abia State, the home state of the leader of the Indigenous people of Biafra, Governor Okezie Ikpeazu asked the people of the state to go about their lawful duties and businesses, adding that security agents were on the ground to arrest those who might want to breach the peace in the state. According to Nwosu (2021), the governor noted that there was no need to engage with IPOB for they were not as bad as the ones in the northeast or northwest who go to schools and seize the whole population of teachers and students or invade the mosques and churches and kidnap all the worshippers and nobody can find them until ransom is paid. Furthermore, the Enugu State government asked its residents to ignore the sit-at-home order stating that the IPOB order had no constituted power backing it. Agbo (2021) stated that the Enugu state government assured its residents of adequate machinery in place to ensure that lives and properties were secured. The government further added that the sit-at-home merely imposed hardship on the citizens. In a related development, Okafor (2021) reported that the Anambra government warned its workers to ensure that they are found at their offices in order to get paid, or else sit-at-home and lose their August salary. The governor also ordered banks; traders, and transporters to commence complete and uninterrupted economic and business activities from Monday; if not, they will face the wrath of his government. In Imo State, the government, through the state commissioner of police, further added that it was going to back its workers with security to resist sit-at-home order. Thus, the government of the south-east states and police commands asked that residents to ignore the IPOB order and go about their legitimate businesses. Several other attempts by the governors to forcefully stop the sit-at-home order were not successful. It became apparent that the sit-at-home syndrome has acquired a quasi institutional identity in the southeast of the country. Even the federal government failed to stop the continuing enforcement of the order. In spite of the obvious military presence and unquantifiable security roadblocks and checkpoints in the region, Monday sit-at-home order has persisted.

The obvious question begging for answer is who is behind the continuing existence of the order? IPOB said it is no longer enforcing the order. Who is then responsible for enforcing the weekly order? This is the gap this paper intends to bridge. Why has the Monday sit-at-home order continued? Why is it difficult for the security agencies and governments at the state and federal level to stem the phenomenon? These questions formed the base for this paper.

Review of Relevant Literature

Origin of sit-at-home in the Southeast of Nigeria

The first ever sit-at-home order was observed on 30th May, 2017. According to Njoku, Nzeagwu, Godwin, Udejah, Ogugbuajah and Akenzua (2017), Pro-Biafra groups, including the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) ordered the sit-at-home in honour of Igbo people who were killed in the cause of Biafra as well as to mark the 50th anniversary of the struggle. Following the success of the sit-at-home order, the media and publicity secretary of IPOB, Emma Powerful, said that Biafrans had shown to the entire world that they needed freedom and must not go back in the quest for the independence of Biafra. There was also total compliance by those in diaspora who marched on the streets of Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA, Russia, Ukraine, Angola, Congo among others in solidarity (Njoku et al., 2017).

Origin of Monday sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria

The Monday sit-at-home started on 9th August 2021. Nnamdi Kanu was rearrested and extradited to Nigeria from Kenya on Sunday June 27, 2021. When Nnamdi Kanu was rearrested, IPOB intensified

the used of sit-at-home order in the southeast of Nigeria as a bargaining tool for the release of their leader. Ozibo and Okorie (2022) stressed that the intent of the marker of the sit-at-home order was to use it as a means of peaceful protest to bargain for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and secure the political freedom of the people of Biafra.

Enforcement of the Monday sit-at-home order in the southeast of Nigeria

It is probable that the unknown gunmen were responsible for the enforcement of the Monday sit-at-home order in the region. People who dared to disobey the order were mercilessly dealt with. Properties were destroyed; vehicles set ablaze and some even died in the process. The ferocity with which the order was enforced could be responsible for almost total compliance at the early stages of the phenomenon. This was further heightened by the destructive capacity of the unknown gunmen who were responsible for killing security personnel in several locations in the region.

Cancellation of the Monday sit-at-home order in the southeast of Nigeria

Following public outcry on the implications of the order, IPOB rescinded its earlier pronouncement on observing Monday sit-at-home and stated that sit-at-home would only take place on the days Nnamdi Kalu would appear in court. Osuji (2021) maintained that Emma Powerful, the spokesperson of IPOB cancelled the Monday sit-at-home orders in the southeast of Nigeria. According to him, Emma Powerful insisted that they had long suspended the weekly order because of its economic implications on the people. Emma Powerful further stated that sit-at-home protest will only hold on the days Nnamdi Kanu will be appearing in court (Osuji, 2021).

Efforts made to stop the Monday sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria

In spite of the reassurances from IPOB that Monday sit-at-home order has been discontinued, people still stay at home on Mondays. IPOB even promised to release members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) against the enforcers of the order in the region. Several state governments in the region tried on multiple occasions to force civil servants to go to work on Mondays; people were still not sure of their safety and stayed away from their offices. Even the huge military presence in the region could not stop the order. It appears people do not have confidence in what the government is saying about their safety.

Factors responsible for the commencement of sit-at-home orders in the southeast of Nigeria

Several factors could be said to be responsible for the commencement of sit at home order in the southeast of Nigeria. Ezewudo, Ukwuoma and Uroko (2022) maintained that sit-at-home indicates a peaceful but firm protest for the release of the Indigenous People of Biafra leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, and for the sovereignty of Biafra. According to them, during this period, everybody is advised to stay indoors in total compliance. All markets, schools, motor parks, airports, and public places in Biafra land were expected to be shut down from morning to evening. Largely, the sit-at-home takes place every Monday; on the day IPOB marks 'heroes' remembrance day, which also extended to the very day Nnamdi Kanu was presented in court for trial (Ezewudo, Ukwuoma and Uroko, 2022). According to Ndukwe, Abah, and Offiah Goodness (2022:5),

Concerned people have attributed the high level of compliance to insecurity and failure of government to protect lives/properties; while others contend that 'Ndi Igbo' are tired of marginalization, so they demonstrate their solidarity by sitting-at-home to demand for the "Republic of Biafra".

IPOB is principally responsible for the commencement of sit at home order in the southeast. Njoku, Nzeagwu, and Godwin et al. (2017) stressed that sit-at-home directive issued by IPOB is in honour of their colleagues killed in the struggle for the realisation of the Republic of Biafra. The sit-at-home order was issued mainly to commemorate the people killed in the struggle for actualization of Biafra, the people killed during and after the war and to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of the people of the southeast region of Nigeria. One other reason for commencement of sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria was in remembrance of the declaration made by Lt Colonel Ojukwu on May 30, 1967. According to director of information, MASSOB, Samuel Edeson, "May 30 is very dear to Biafrans because it is the date our hero, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared our resistance to the genocidal attacks by Nigerian soldiers, which culminated in the 30-month civil war

from 1967 to 1970". He continued that "we shall always remember all those who died in the course of the war and our march to freedom". This date coincidentally coincided with the death of Bruce Mayrock. Mayrock, a 20 year old Columbia University student of Westbury, New York who on May 29, 1969, set himself on fire in front of the United Nations Building in New York City to protest the genocide in Biafra. He died the next day, May 30th, 1969. IPOB and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) were in agreement in declaring May 30, 2021 as a sit at home day to mark the anniversary of Biafra (Njoku and Ogugbuaja, 2021). In addition to this, Uzoaru (2023) stated that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has declared May 30 a sit-at-home to celebrate fallen heroes from the southeast who were maimed or killed in their course for serving their fatherland. Spokesperson of the group Emma Powerful in a statement to that effect has described the day as 'Biafra Heroes Day'. According to him "We under the command and leadership of our great prophet and indefatigable liberator Mazi Nnamdi Okwuchukwu Kanu wish to announce to all Biafrans, friends of Biafra and lovers of Biafra freedom across the world that May 30, 2023, is Biafra heroes' day. May 30th every year is seen as a sacred day for members of IPOB and MASSOB. This was the first day that marked the commencement of the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast. It has persisted and further transformed into other days due to the unfolding circumstances in the region and country.

Factors responsible for the commencement of Monday sit-at-home in the Southeast of Nigeria

Sit-at-home orders were initially issued by the IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu to celebrate the Biafran fallen heroes. This changed drastically when Kanu was rearrested in Kenya and repatriated to Nigeria. The IPOB family in solidarity with its detained leader declared an indefinite weekly Monday sit at home until their leader is released. Though they have since rescinded the decision, the Monday sit-at-home has continued to stay. According to Ayitogo (2021), the Southeastern part of Nigeria has observed several sit-at-home orders as a way of protest for the release of their freedom fighter -Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Prior to July 30, 2021, nobody knew anything about the Monday sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria. People were free to go about their normal business in the region. This changed when the federal government of Nigeria rearrested the IPOB leader on Sunday, June 27, 2021 in Kenya and extradited him to Nigeria. Subsequently, his followers decided to protest his continuing detention by declaring that every Monday with effect from August 9, 2021, would be sit-at-home. This was made public by the spokesperson of the group, Emma Powerful. He stressed that the order would continue until their leader is released. However, as a result of the outrage and resultant displeasure from the residents in the region, the leadership of IPOB rescinded the decision on observing the weekly Monday sit-at-home phenomenon on August 13, 2021 via a broadcast from Chika Edoziem, the head of directorate of states for the group. According to him, sit-at-home would only be declared whenever Nnamdi Kanu would be making court appearance. This was similarly echoed by Emma Powerful who stated that the cancellation of the weekly sit-at-home was due to its economic implications on the people in the region. In spite of these assurances from the leadership of IPOB, the weekly sit-at-home has persisted. One begins to wonder whether IPOB was saying one thing and doing the other. However, on several occasions, IPOB tried to dissociate itself from the ongoing Monday sit-at-home in the region. The group even threatened to deal with anybody seen enforcing the rescinded order. It appears that certain interests in some quarters are really interested in maintaining the sit-at-home phenomenon in the region. The general agreement among people is that the sit-at-home in the region will stop whenever the detained IPOB leader is released. It appears that the federal government is very unwilling to do that.

Why has the weekly Monday sit at home persisted in the southeast of Nigeria?

According to Ozibo and Okorie (2022), the intent of the makers of the sit-at-home order was to use it as a means of peaceful protest for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and secure the political freedom of the people of Biafra. It started as a form of protest that would continue till Nnamdi Kanu is released from the custody of the Department of State Security. This may partly account for why it has continued. Ugwu (2022) stressed that the desertion of the streets and markets in southeast Nigeria is a manifestation of honour and voluntary loyalty to the leader of IPOB. He continued that full compliance with the order is not based on coercion, as the government and anti-IPOB elements have falsely claimed. According to him, compliance is an outward demonstration of people's commitment to what they believe in. It is all about what Mazi Nnamdi Kanu stands for, which is total freedom and political liberation of his

people (Owoeye, Ezeanya and Obiegbonam, 2022). As a result, people's adherence to the sit-at-home order demonstrates complete solidarity with IPOB's leader. That is why, despite the government's threats and intimidation, people continued to sit-at-home on Mondays even when it has negative consequences for the region's socio-economic activity (Osita, Anoke and Eze, 2022).

Two reasons seem to explain why the sit-at-home order has persisted. First, the people are afraid of being attacked by hoodlums and miscreants, masquerading as IPOB members. Two, most people have some sympathy for IPOB's cause (Ndukwe, Abah, and Offiah Goodness, 2022). Further, with the government's failure to act amidst the killings and burning of properties, the people have lost hope in the government of the day, and so fear does not allow the people to come out and risk their lives and investments (Ndukwe, Abah, and Offiah Goodness, 2022).

The federal government promised not to interfere with the functions of the judiciary when a group under the aegis of the Highly Respected Igbo Greats (HRIG), led by a first republic parliamentarian and former minister of aviation, Chief Mbazulike Amaechi, visited President Mohammad Buhari at the State House, Abuja, calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu (Ezewudo, Ukwuoma and Uroko, 2022). The response of Mr President to this plea according to Adenekan (2021:1) was;

You have made an extremely difficult demand on me as leader of this country. The implication of your request is very serious. In the last six years, since I became President, nobody would say I have confronted or interfered in the work of the Judiciary. At this age, God has spared you, and given you a clear head with a very sharp memory. A lot of people half your age are confused already. But the demand you made is heavy. I will consider it."

Igbo people were looking forward to the release of Nnamdi Kanu, which they believed would end the sit-at-home in the region. Unfortunately, despite the plea of this notable Nigerian and others, force was adopted as a measure by the Federal Government to handle the socio-political and security challenges in the southeast region, a measure which inflated the situation (Ezewudo, Ukwuoma and Uroko, 2022). It is possible that until Nnamdi Kanu is release, the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast will continue unabatedly. This explains why the incumbent governor of Anambra state Professor Soludo has severally requested for the release of Nnamdi Kanu. He even requested that Kanu be released to him and that he is willing to produce him anytime he is needed. Kanu was earlier discharged by the Appeal Court sitting in Abuja on Thursday, October 13, 2022. The court also declared illegal and unlawful, the abduction of Kanu from Kenya to Nigeria and quashed the terrorism charges brought against him by the federal government (Punch Newspaper, 13th October, 2022). The continued detention of Kanu may continue to exacerbate the security situation in the region.

Theoretical Thrust

The rational choice theory was adopted as the theoretical thrust for this paper. The rational choice theory was formulated by philosopher and economist Adam Smith (1723-1790). The rational choice theory adopts a utilitarian belief that man is a reasoning actor who weighs means and ends, cost and benefits, and makes a rational choice. He stated that people are rational thinkers who weigh the disadvantages and benefits of their decisions, and will most often make the choices that maximize their benefits and minimize their disadvantages. Rational choice theory in criminology makes a similar assertion. While many criminologists believe that the commission of crime is influenced by external factors such as culture and environment, rational choice theory centres on the individual as the primary driving force in criminal activity.

The rational choice theory is based on the following assumptions; that people are motivated by their own personal desires and goals and prioritize them in their choices; that people compare and contrast the potential outcomes of different choices; that people ultimately make the choice that gives them the most benefit. This all means that criminal behaviour is the result of calculated decision-making. When people make the choice to commit crime, it is because they see a greater possible reward for it compared with the rewards for abiding by the law. Additionally, people who resort to crime see the costs of committing crime to be lower than those accrued by legal activities. The people who enforce the sit at

home order in the southeast of Nigeria believe that it is needed for them to achieve their desired objective. They are willing to maim, kill and destroy at slightest provocation. The initial goal was to achieve the independence of Biafra. However, it appears that several objectives were introduced to scuttle the initial plan. The enforcers of the order are believed to be the unknown gunmen. These people according to governor Soludo of Anambra state as cited in Ikezue (2023) are just people engaged in pure criminal enterprise with nothing to do with separatist agitation. According to the theory, the people enforcing the sit at home order have weighed the cost and benefit of their actions and are willing to continue enforcing the order. The common people due to fear or their support for Nnamdi Kanu would readily stay at home so as not to incur the wrath of the enforcers of the order. People who stayed at home on Mondays took a rational choice of staying away from harms; while the enforcers of the order relied on their ability to make people to stay at home to bargain for their own interest.

Methodology

The paper adopted the mixed methods research design. The multi stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the study participants. A sample size of four hundred study participants was drawn from Anambra and Imo states. The multi stage sampling procedure was used in the paper. Through the application of the simple random sampling method, four local government areas (LGAs) were selected from the states. They are Nnewi North and Onitsha South local government areas from Anambra State; Orlu and Okigwe local government areas from Imo state. By further application of the simple random sampling technique, two towns were selected from each local government area. These are Otolu and Umudim in Nnewi North LGA; Fegge and Upper Iweka from Onitsha South LGA; Ihioma and Eziachi from Orlu LGA and finally, Otanzu and Umulolo from Okigwe LGA. The process continued until 400 study participants were selected from the respective households. This was achieved using the Yamane's sample size determination formula. The questionnaires were administered to them on a face to face basis. The researcher purposively selected eight (8) opinion leaders from the states who participated in the In Depth Interviews (IDI); Two persons from each of the chosen LGAs of the states. Gender balance was maintained in the selection of the opinion leaders. The questionnaires were processed with the 25th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and charts. The interviews were transcribed, and analyzed using the narrative method of qualitative data analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Socio Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Distribution of respondents by sex</i>	<i>Male</i>	202	52.5
	<i>Female</i>	183	47.5
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by age</i>	<i>20 - 29</i>	66	17.1
	<i>30 - 39</i>	91	23.6
	<i>40 - 49</i>	174	45.2
	<i>50 - 59</i>	38	9.9
	<i>60 years and above</i>	16	4.2
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by level of educational attainment</i>	<i>No formal education</i>	7	1.8
	<i>FSLC</i>	72	18.7
	<i>SSCE or equivalent</i>	143	37.1
	<i>OND/NCE or equivalent</i>	104	27.0
	<i>B. Sc./HND/equivalent M. Sc./equivalent</i>	52	13.5
	<i>Ph.D. or equivalent</i>	7	1.8
<i>Total</i>	385	100.0	
<i>Distribution of respondents by marital status</i>	<i>Single</i>	65	16.9
	<i>Married</i>	282	73.2

	<i>Separated</i>	18	4.7
	<i>Divorced</i>	14	3.6
	<i>Widowed</i>	6	1.6
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by religious affiliation</i>	<i>Christianity</i>	369	95.8
	<i>Islam</i>	4	1.0
	<i>African Traditional Religion</i>	12	3.1
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by occupation</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	22	5.7
	<i>Student</i>	30	7.8
	<i>Civil servant</i>	102	26.5
	<i>Self employed</i>	172	44.7
	<i>Private employee</i>	59	15.3
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by place of residence</i>	<i>Urban</i>	196	50.9
	<i>Rural</i>	189	49.1
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0
<i>Distribution of respondents by monthly income</i>	<i>1-100000</i>	56	14.5
	<i>100001-200000</i>	113	29.4
	<i>200001-300000</i>	138	35.8
	<i>300001-400000</i>	66	17.1
	<i>400001-500000</i>	12	3.1
	<i>Total</i>	385	100.0

Field Survey, 2023

Table shows that there were slightly more males than females in the distribution. Age distribution of the respondents has a mean age of 40.56 years, a standard error of mean of .569, a median age of 43 years and a modal age of 43. The distribution has a standard deviation of 11.161, a minimum age of 20 and a maximum age of 69 years. It could be seen from the table that 45.2% of the respondents were 40-49 years old whereas 4.2% of them were 60 years and above. The table also shows that 37.1% of the respondents were SSCE holders while 1.8% of them had PhD and another 1.8% had no formal education. 73.2% of the respondents were married while 1.6% of them were widowed.

It could be seen in table 1 that almost all the respondents were Christians. This could be as a result of the fact that the region is predominantly populated by Christians. The table also shows that 44.7% of the respondents were self employed persons whereas 5.7% of them were unemployed. The population distribution by place of residence is nearly evenly distributed. Income distribution of the respondents shows that 35.8% of them earned 200,001 to 300,000 naira monthly while 3.1% of them earned 400,001 to 500,000 naira monthly.

Table 2: Respondents' views on whether or not they observe sit-at-home in their communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	314	81.6	81.6	81.6
	No	71	18.4	18.4	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

Most of the respondents maintained that they observed sit-at-home in their communities. All the participants in the IDI concurred that they also observed sit-at-home order in their communities.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether they observe the sit-at-home order willingly or unwillingly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	We observe it willingly	208	54.0	54.0	54.0
	We were forced to observe it	177	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

It could be seen that 54% of the respondents observed the sit-at-home order willingly while 46% of them were forced to observe it. Participants in the IDI were divided in their views on whether or not they observed the order willingly. Most of them maintained that they were always willing to observe the order. However, a 58 year old female nurse in Umulolo town stressed that she observed the order unwillingly. She stated that;

I am a nurse and need to be in the hospital to attend to patients. I do not like staying at home doing nothing instead of helping to save lives. I always stay at home on Mondays because I am afraid of going out on that day. I will rather stay at home on Mondays than go out and be killed by unknown gunmen.

Table 4: Respondents' views on what led to the commencement of sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To remember Biafran people killed during the civil war	223	57.9	57.9	57.9
	To agitate for the republic of Biafra	71	18.4	18.4	76.4
	To agitate against the marginalization of the southeast	91	23.6	23.6	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

A majority of the respondents maintained that the sit-at-home phenomenon commenced to mark the remembrance of Biafran people killed during the civil war while 18.4% of them stressed it was due to the agitation for separate state of Biafra. Most of the participants in the qualitative study agreed that sit-at-home started as a day of remembrance. To remember the Biafran heroes who died in the Biafran civil war. However, a 61 year old male trader from Fegge stated that the sit-at-home started as a tool for agitation for the actualization of Biafra.

Table 5: Respondents' views on why sit-at-home holds on Mondays in the southeast of Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To demand for the release of Nnamdi Kanu	267	69.4	69.4	69.4
	To get the republic of Biafra	80	20.8	20.8	90.1
	To destabilize the economy of the region	38	9.9	9.9	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

A majority of the respondents 69.4% maintained that sit-at-home holds on Mondays in the southeast to demand for the release of Nnamdi Kanu while 9.9% of them stressed that it is destabilizing the region. Almost all the IDI participants stressed that the Monday sit-at-home is meant to be a bargaining tool to demand for the release of Nnamdi Kanu. A divergent view was held by a 57 year old male trader from Nnewi who averred that;

Monday sit-at-home is not just for the release of Nnamdi Kanu but also for the restoration of the state of Biafra. The Igbos are using the sit-at-home to demand for their own country where they will be free from oppression and marginalization.

Table 6: Respondents' views on whether or not Monday sit-at-home order is achieving its objective

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	161	41.8	41.8	41.8
	No	224	58.2	58.2	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

It could be seen in table 6 that 58.2% of the respondents believed the Monday sit-at-home phenomenon has not achieved the desired objective whereas 41.8% of them opined it has done so. Some of the IDI participants agreed that Monday sit-at-home is achieving its objectives while the others maintained it has failed to achieve its objective.

Table 7: Respondents' views on why the Monday sit-at-home has persisted in the southeast

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Because people are afraid of moving about on that day	238	61.8	61.8	61.8
	People have tacit support for the Biafran agitation	52	13.5	13.5	75.3
	Government has failed to secure life and property	44	11.4	11.4	86.8
	Because Nnamdi Kanu is still in detention	51	13.2	13.2	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

A majority of the respondents 61.8% believed that fear of the unknown is responsible for the persistence of the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast while 11.4% of them were of the opinion that government's inability to secure life and property could be responsible for the persistence of the phenomenon. Participants in the IDI agreed that fear is one of the reasons for the persistence of the Monday sit-at-home phenomenon in the region. They also stressed that the phenomenon has persisted because of the detention of Nnamdi Kanu and the marginalization of the southeast region. This was stated emphatically by a 54 year old male farmer from Ihioma who argued that;

Sit-at-home in the southeast will continue until government is able to address several issues in the region. These include the marginalization of the region, the unlawful detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the deplorable state of roads in the region and inability of the government to maintain law and order in the region,

Similarly, a 46 year old female civil servant from Eziachi strongly maintained that;

Until Nnamdi Kanu is released, sit-at-home on Mondays will continue in perpetuity in the southeast. Sit-at-home will cease immediately they release Nnamdi Kanu. The government is aware of this. That explains why governor Soludo of Anambra state and his Enugu state counterparts are requesting for the release of Kanu. Kanu is the reason sit-at-home is still holding on Mondays in the southeast of Nigeria.

Table 8: Respondents' views on the persons enforcing the weekly Monday sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Government	18	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Unknown gunmen	320	83.1	83.1	87.8
	Strangers	16	4.2	4.2	91.9
	IPOB	31	8.1	8.1	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

A majority of the respondents in Table 8 (83.1%) maintained that unknown gunmen were responsible for enforcing the weekly Monday sit-at-home in the southeast of Nigeria while 4.2% of them averred that strangers were the ones enforcing the order. Most of the IDI participants stated that unknown gunmen were responsible for the enforcement of the weekly sit-at-home order in the southeast. An IDI participant, 55 year old male driver from Otanzu stated that;

There are several conspiracy theories as to who is interested in the continuation of the Monday sit-at-home thing in the region. It appears that some people within and outside the region want the situation to continue. People who do not mean well for the region want this to continue. They claim to be unknown gunmen in some instance or even members of IPOB. It is a complicated and ugly scenario.

Table 9: Respondents' views on why it is difficult for security agencies and government to stop the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast of Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Because the common people do not trust them	92	23.9	23.9	23.9
Because the security agencies are inefficient	58	15.1	15.1	39.0
Because some people have sympathy for the Biafran agitation	199	51.7	51.7	90.6
Government lack the political will to do so	36	9.4	9.4	100.0
Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

In table 9, 51.7% of the respondents agreed that the security agencies and government could not stop the weekly Monday sit-at-home because some people in the region have sympathy for the Biafran agitation, however, 9.4% of the respondents stressed that government lacked the political will to do so. Most of the IDI respondents argued that it is difficult for the security agencies and government to end the sit-at-home in the southeast because they failed to address what actually started the phenomenon. A 49 year old female civil servant from Umudim stated that;

The weekly sit-at-home on Mondays started after the unlawful arrest of Nnamdi Kanu in Kenya. It can only stop when government and the security agencies have done the right thing by releasing Nnamdi Kanu, any other things they do will never stop the weekly sit at home in the southeast.

Another participant in the interview, a 58 year old female nurse from Umulolo stated that;

The federal government seriously polarized the nation and caused very serious division among the different ethnic groups. People no longer have confidence in the government because it has failed in its basic function of protecting lives and properties. People are now engaging in self help. The government is not fair in its activities. Herdsmen invade communities any where any time and the security agencies will often times look the other way as if nothing is happening. People no longer trust the government to protect them. It is very unfortunate that this is happening in our time.

Table 10: Respondents' views on how to end the Monday sit-at-home order in the southeast

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Addressing the perceived marginalization in the region	100	26.0	26.0	26.0
Release of the IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu	200	51.9	51.9	77.9
Dialogue with IPOB leadership on how to end the phenomenon	76	19.7	19.7	97.7
Military operations like python dance	9	2.3	2.3	100.0
Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, 2023

A majority of the respondents in table 10 (51.9%) stressed that the release of Nnamdi Kanu will end the Monday sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast while 2.3% of them maintained the involvement of military operations like the python dance will end it. Participants in the IDI were unanimous in their views that Monday sit-at-home in the southeast will stop when the federal government decides to release Nnamdi Kanu from detention. They also stressed that marginalization of the region should be addressed to stem separatist agitations in the region.

Discussion of Findings

It was found that most people in the southeast of Nigeria observed the weekly Monday sit-at-home. This finding is consistent with the sordid reality on Mondays in the southeast. Vehicular movement is seriously impeded by the weekly Monday sit-at-home phenomenon. Major markets in Onitsha, Nnewi, Aba and many other places do not open for business on Mondays. The financial institutions (banks) do not operate on that day and they hardly load the Automated Teller Machines (ATM) with money. The situation is really disturbing. If government is interested in the wellbeing of the people, the needful would have been done to address the issue. Government should listen to the demands of the people and attend to them with a view of gaining the support of the people.

The paper found that most of the respondents observed the weekly sit-at-home willingly. This is a pointer that something is wrong somewhere. Why would a people be willing to stay at home instead of going to their respective businesses on Mondays? It is indicative that all is not well in the region. A discerning government would have been proactive in getting to the root of the problem, unfortunately, the reverse is the case. It has to be stated however, that not everybody is willing to stay at home on Mondays. It is practically impossible for medical personnel and other like professionals to stay away from their duties on Mondays. This can be catastrophic. It is therefore necessary that everything humanly possible should be done for normalcy to return in the region.

It was also found that sit-at-home started in the southeast as a gesture for remembrance of Biafran people killed during the Nigerian civil war. It was also found that it was used as a tool for agitation against marginalization of the people in the southeast region. This agrees with Esho (2022) who had earlier stated that sit-at-home was used to remember those people who lost their lives in the Nigeria-Biafra war. Initially, sit-at-home orders were used rarely, only on very important days like 30th May of every year by MASSOB and IPOB. This however changed when Nnamdi Kanu was rearrested in Kenya in June, 2021. Since then, it has become a weekly affair every Monday.

The paper found that sit-at-home holds weekly on Mondays in the southeast of Nigeria principally to demand for the release of Nnamdi Kanu. It is also used as a tool for agitating for the Republic of Biafra. This is in congruence with Ayitogo (2021) who had earlier stressed that the sit-at-home orders were issued as a way of protest for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. It also agrees with Ozibo and Okorie (2022) who stressed that the intent of the marker of the sit-at-home order was to use it as a means of peaceful protest for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and to secure the political freedom of the people of Biafra.

It was found that the sit-at-home phenomenon has not achieved its objective. It was started in August 2021 as a tool for demanding for the release of Nnamdi Kanu. Almost two years after it was started, Nnamdi Kanu is still in detention in the facility of the department of the State Security Service (DSS). It appears the order has not succeeded in persuading the federal government to release the IPOB leader. It is also necessary to state that the sit-at-home order which has persisted in the region is responsible for making state governments in the region to become involved in demanding for the release of the IPOB leader. So it cannot be said to have totally failed in its objective.

The Monday sit-at-home phenomenon was found to have persisted because people in the region were afraid of moving about on that day. It was found that it persisted because people still show tacit support for the Biafran agitation and also because Nnamdi Kanu is still in detention. This is consistent with

Ndukwe, Abah, and Offiah Goodness (2022) who had earlier stated that concerned people have attributed the high level of compliance of people to the sit-at-home orders to insecurity and failure of government to protect lives and properties; while others contend that 'Ndi Igbo' are tired of marginalization, so they demonstrate their solidarity by sitting-at-home to demand for the "Republic of Biafra". This is also in agreement with Ozibo and Okorie (2022) who had earlier said that the intent of the makers of the sit at home order was to use it as a means of peaceful protest for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and secure the political freedom of the people of Biafra. It also agrees with Owoeye, Ezeanya, Obiegbunam (2022) who stressed that compliance to the sit at home order is an outward demonstration of people's commitment to what they believe in. It is all about what Mazi Nnamdi Kanu stands for, which is total freedom and political liberation of his people. It is also supported by Osita, Anoke and Eze (2022) who argued that despite the government's threats and intimidation, people continued to obey the sit-at-home order even when it has negative consequences for the region's socio-economic activity.

The paper found that the people enforcing the Monday weekly sit-at-home in the southeast are the unknown gunmen. Who then are the unknown gunmen? Ikezue (2023) vividly stated the identity of the unknown gunmen in the southeast of Nigeria. According to him, the unknown gunmen were seen as criminals by the people. Some other people described them as terrorists while a few persons considered them as freedom fighters that were fighting to keep the Igbo people safe; quite a few persons argued that the unknown gunmen activities were hijacked by other miscreants who pursue their selfish criminal interest. Ikezue (2023) further stated that most of the persons termed as unknown gunmen were between the ages of 21-30 years. A good number of them were between 31-40 years old. These are people whose youthful energy could be harnessed into useful and productive ventures. It could be stated emphatically that getting these segment of the population meaningfully engaged will go a long way to reducing the criminality in the region. Most of the persons termed as unknown gunmen were primary school leavers and people who barely finished their secondary education (Ikezue, 2023). This tends to limit their chances of progressing effectively in the twenty first century where most nations of the world are embracing scientific and technological advances.

It was found that the difficulty experienced by the security agencies and government in stopping the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast of Nigeria was due to the support people in the area have for the Biafran agitation, people's lack of trust on the government and the inefficiency of the security agencies. This could easily be handled by addressing the issues of perceived or real marginalization in the region. Issues of marginalization could be better handled with the implementation of true federalism in the country. It still boils down to resource control debate which has dominated the political landscape of the country.

Lastly but not the least, the paper found that Monday sit-at-home order in the region could be stopped by releasing Nnamdi Kanu and addressing the perceived marginalization of the region. This finding is supported by Ayitogo (2021); Ozibo and Okorie (2022) who had earlier stated that Monday sit-at-home order started because of the detention of the IPOB leader, it will also stop whenever he is released. Efforts should then be geared towards releasing Nnamdi Kanu for peace to reign in the southeast of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Sit-at-home phenomenon has assumed a quasi institutional identity and has persisted in spite of the several efforts made towards stopping it. It used to be issued occasionally until in August 2021 when it became a weekly affair in the southeast of Nigeria. It appears that it has assumed a life of its own entirely different from the motive behind its conception. Even IPOB appears unable to stop the order. People resident in the region are already used to it that it appears nobody seems to be bothered anymore. It started with the demand for the release of the IPOB leader. It has continued ever since then and it is believed that the release of Nnamdi Kanu will at least stop the weekly sit at home in the region. It is also used for drawing the attention of government to the deplorable state of things in the region. Sit-at-

home phenomenon in the southeast has been interpreted severally and will still continue as a problem probably in the southeast until when Nnamdi Kanu will be released.

Recommendations

The different levels of government in the country have roles to play to stop the sit-at-home phenomenon in the southeast of Nigeria. Having observed that the Monday sit-at-home started as a result of the detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the paper recommended that the federal, state and local government areas in the region should work together for the release of Nnamdi Kanu. It is also recommended that the different tiers of government should work together to put in place necessary infrastructure to replace the deplorable ones. The issue of marginalization of the region should be taken into cognizance with a view to accommodating every section of the country in the political equation. Divisive policies, tendencies and programmes which tend to pitch one ethnic group against the other in the country should be discontinued. Finally, efforts should be put in place by all and sundry towards assisting the less privileged ones in the society. This could be by human capital development programmes, job creations and capacity utilization exercises.

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