

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE SIT-AT-HOME ORDER IN ENUGU STATE, 2012-2014

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Abstract

Civil disobedience has been used globally to challenge established authorities and express grievances. Sit-at-home orders are intended as means of peaceful and legitimate protests, but when enforced with coercion, threat or violence, they become exercises of tyranny and lawlessness. The sit-at-home order in South-East Nigeria is a mix of voluntary compliance and coercive enforcement, which has resulted in socio-economic disorder with adverse consequences on the socio-economic life of the people. This paper examines the socio-economic implications of the sit-at-home order in Enugu State, with a focus on its early manifestations and effects on people's lives. The paper adopts a qualitative research approach and relies on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through interviews with traders, teachers, transport operators, community leaders, students, and public officials in Enugu State, while secondary data was obtained from academic and policy materials. The paper is anchored on the Frustration-Aggression Theory originally articulated by Dollard John, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears, later refined by Leonard Berkowitz. It posits that aggression is a natural consequence of frustration, which arises when individuals or groups perceive that extraneous forces block their legitimate goals. Findings reveal that the sit-at-home order in Enugu State led to economic breakdown, educational stagnation, and threats to social gatherings. The paper situates the sit-at-home strategy within the broader discourse of civil disobedience and resistance in post-colonial Nigeria. It concludes that a policy response that balances national integration with regional equity is a prerequisite for addressing the sit-at-home order.

Keywords: IPOB, sit-at-home order, self-determination, political exclusion, marginalisation, Enugu state.

Introduction

Sit-at-home orders, also known as stay-at-home directives or shutdown protests, are forms of organised civil resistance in which individuals collectively withdraw from public spaces, work, or economic activities as a means of expressing political dissatisfaction or demanding political

change. Globally, such forms of passive protest have been used to resist state repression, challenge discriminatory policies, and express collective solidarity. Classic examples include the Indian National Congress's stay-at-home protests during the anti-colonial struggle as well as various civil rights boycotts in the United States, where withdrawing from public life functioned as a symbolic form of nonviolent pressure.¹ During the anti-colonial struggle in India, the Indian National Congress employed stay-at-home protests and economic boycotts as nonviolent tools to resist British rule. These actions, closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of *satyagraha*, which means, "holding onto truth," a philosophy and practice of civil disobedience, using truth-force as a refusal to cooperate with unjust systems without violence or coercion, encouraged Indians to withdraw cooperation from colonial institutions, shut down businesses, and boycott British goods, thereby undermining imperial authority without armed confrontation.² Similarly, in the United States, civil rights boycotts, most notably the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956, used collective withdrawal from public services to challenge racial segregation and economic exploitation.³ These movements demonstrate how organised non-participation can function as a powerful instrument of political pressure by transforming everyday economic behaviour into moral resistance.⁴

Across Africa, sit-at-home actions have been widely adopted by groups challenging authoritarian regimes and state-led economic hardship. In East Africa, opposition coalitions in Uganda and Kenya have used similar shutdown strategies to protest electoral irregularities and police brutality. In Uganda, opposition-led shutdowns followed disputed elections and state

¹ T. Gurr. *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: University Press, 1970), p.41.

² J. Brown. *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Yale: University Press, 1989), p.11.

³ M. King. *Strides Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Harper & Row, 1958), p.45.

⁴ J. Rawls. *A theory of Justice* (London: University Press, 1971), p.118

repression under the Yoweri Museveni regime, aiming to delegitimise electoral outcomes through mass withdrawal.⁵ In Kenya, post-election protests and stay-aways have been used to contest vote manipulation and excessive police force, particularly after the 2007 and 2017 elections.⁶ These actions typically emerge where groups perceive institutional exclusion or state violence, aligning with Leonard Berkowitz's view that "collective withdrawal reflects frustration-driven political resistance".⁷ The tactics became increasingly popular as a response to bad governance, corruption, and electoral malpractice. In Cameroon, for instance, Anglophone separatist movements adopted "ghost town" orders beginning in 2016, which were characterised by shutting down markets, schools, and transportation systems to resist Francophone domination and express regional autonomy demands.⁸ Similar patterns appeared in Togo and Guinea, where opposition groups used coordinated shutdowns to challenge entrenched political networks and human rights abuses.⁹

In Nigeria, stay-at-home orders have historically been associated with organised labour, civil society, and pro-democracy movements. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has repeatedly deployed nationwide stay-at-home strikes since the 1980s to protest fuel price increases, unpopular structural adjustment policies, and political transition crises.¹⁰ These actions established a template of mass civil withdrawal as an instrument of national resistance, symbolising both solidarity and dissent. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) adopted and intensified this tactic beginning in

⁵ A. Tripp. *Museveni's Uganda: Paradox of Power in a Hybrid Regime* (Lynne Rienner, 2010), p.214.

⁶ G. Lynch. *Performance of Injustice: The Politics of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Kenya* (Cambridge: University Press, 2018), p.88.

⁷ L. Berkowitz. *Aggression: Its causes, Consequences, and Control* (McGraw-Hill, 1993), p.29.

⁸ F. Onuoha. "Contending Nationalisms: Biafra and the Resurgence of Secessionist Agitation in Nigeria" (African Security Review, vol. 22, no. 3, 2013), p.66.

⁹ C. Nwoke. "The Political Economy of Biafran Nationalism: Revisiting the Post-War Igbo Question" (Nigerian Journal of Political Science, vol. 12, no. 1, 2013), p.103.

¹⁰ A. Okoli. "Insurgency and Socioeconomic Disruption in Nigeria: The Case of IPOB" (Journal of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015), p.55

2012 as part of their broader campaign for self-determination and resistance against perceived Igbo marginalisation in the Nigerian federation.¹¹ IPOB's sit-at-home directives were initially symbolic, tied to commemorations of the Biafran war and protests against the arrest of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu.¹² However, they gradually evolved into region-wide shutdowns enforced through social pressure and, at times, intimidation by splinter groups. In 2015, following the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu by the Department of State Services, the action acquired both protest and performative dimensions, also becoming a contested tool that generated new internal tensions within the South-East.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the socio-economic implications of the sit-at-home order by the IPOB between 2012 and 2014 in Enugu state, which is geographically located in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. Socio-economic implications are the combined social and economic consequences of political actions on the general livelihood of people in a given society. The paper employs a qualitative research methodology, with a focus on the interpretation of experiences, narratives, and socio-political meanings associated with the sit-at-home order. The choice of this approach is informed by the need to ensure the paper reflects the depth of human experience, especially in situations where compliance and survival intertwine in complex ways. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The interviews involved participants, including market traders, school teachers, transport operators, and local administrators. Secondary data were drawn from academic books, journal articles, newspaper reports, and government documents. The paper adopts the Frustration-Aggression Theory,

¹¹ P. Ugor. "Youth, Media, and Digital Activism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic" (African Media Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, 2016), p.72.

¹² F. Onuoha. "Contending Nationalisms: Biafra and the Resurgence of Secessionist Agitation in Nigeria" (African Security Review, vol. 22, no. 3, 2013), p.74.

originally articulated in 1939 by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears, and later refined by Leonard Berkowitz. The theory posits that aggression is a natural consequence of frustration, which arises when individuals or groups perceive that external forces block their legitimate goals.¹³ Frustration serves as the motivational force that generates the impulse for aggressive or protest behaviour, while aggression represents a cathartic response to perceived injustice or obstruction.¹⁴ This theory is suitable for analysing the emergence and internal contradictions of the sit-at-home order in Enugu state. The sit-at-home order reflects the frustration-aggression dynamics of a population that perceives its socio-political aspirations being continually blocked by the Nigerian state.

Evolution of the Sit-at-Home Order

Following independence in 1960, Nigeria retained a quasi-federal system, but the balance of power quickly shifted toward central dominance. The First Republic of 1960-1966 saw the federal government monopolise key sectors such as defence, finance, and external relations, leaving regional administrations financially dependent.¹⁵ This situation made it cumbersome for the federating units to thrive, and according to Osaghae Eghosa, what evolved was federalism in name but unitary in substance. This contradiction sowed the seeds for future conflicts.¹⁶ The creation of new States further complicated Nigeria's federal structure. In 1967, General Yakubu Gowon restructured the country into 12 states, ostensibly to prevent the Eastern region, led by

¹³ J. Dollard, M. Neal, D. Leonard, M. Orval, and S. Robert. *Frustration and Aggression* (Yale: University Press, 1939), p.4.

¹⁴ L. Berkowitz. *Aggression: Its causes, Consequences, and Control* (McGraw-Hill, 1993), p.28.

¹⁵ A. Okoli. "Insurgency and Socioeconomic Disruption in Nigeria: The Case of IPOB" (Journal of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015), p.59.

¹⁶ A. Okoli..., p.31.

Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, from seceding as the Republic of Biafra.¹⁷ The move fragmented the Old Eastern region into three states – East-Central, Rivers, and South-Eastern - thereby diluting Igbo political cohesion.¹⁸ Subsequent military regimes expanded the number of states, from 12 in 1967 to 36 by 1996, creating what scholars describe as centrifugal federalism, in which regions depend heavily on federal allocations rather than on internal productivity.¹⁹ This pattern entrenched fiscal dependency and reduced the bargaining power of the South-East, which, after successive restructurings, was left with only five states, the fewest of any geopolitical zone in the federation.²⁰ The political arithmetic has had enduring implications for resource allocation, political appointments, and representation. Under Nigeria’s federal character principle, which distributes offices and resources across states and zones, the South-East’s numerical disadvantage translates directly into reduced influence at the federal level.²¹

The demand for Biafran secession cannot be understood outside the chain of political crises that engulfed Nigeria between 1966 and 1970. Ethno-regional mistrust, uneven power distribution, and military incursion into politics climaxed first in the January 15, 1966 coup, led primarily by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and a group of young military officers who framed the putsch as a response to corruption, electoral violence, and political instability in the First Republic.²² Although the coup plotters insisted that their mission was nationalist, its execution patterns created the widespread perception that it was an ‘Igbo coup’ because most casualties were Northern and

¹⁷ C. Achebe. *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (Penguin, 2012), p.211.

¹⁸ A. Adiele. *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southern Nigeria 1891-1929* (Longman, 1972), p.89.

¹⁹ H. Okeke. “Economic Losses from Political Shutdowns in South-East Nigeria” (Nigeria Economic Review, vol. 7, no. 4, 2014), p.47.

²⁰ A. Okoli..., p.62.

²¹ O. Ibeanu. “Civil Society and Conflict Management in the Niger Delta” (Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, vol. 4, No. 2, 2008), p.84.

²² C. Achebe..., p.60.

Western political elites, including Ahmadu Bello and Samuel Akintola.²³ The takeover brought General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, of Igbo stock, to power. His Decree No. 34, which abolished federalism in favour of a unitary government, intensified Northern suspicion of Igbo hegemonic intentions.²⁴ The backlash culminated in the July 29, 1966, counter-coup, executed by mostly Northern officers in a revenge operation that led to the assassination of Ironsi and hundreds of Igbo soldiers.²⁵ The counter-coup fractured the military along ethnic lines and laid the foundation for mass anti-Igbo violence.

Between May and September 1966, waves of organised massacres, often described as pogroms, spread across Northern Nigeria. Igbo civilians were targeted in Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Maiduguri, and Sokoto, with killings, public mutilations, and displacement occurring on a massive scale.²⁶ Contemporary estimates indicate that over 30,000 Igbo were killed, while more than one million fled back to Eastern Nigeria as refugees.²⁷ The violence convinced Eastern regional governor Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu that the Nigerian state could no longer guarantee Igbo safety or political equity.²⁸ In an attempt to salvage the federation, military leaders met in Aburi, Ghana, in January 1967, where they signed the Aburi Accord, a peace agreement that endorsed autonomy.²⁹ However, disagreements over interpretation, particularly the federal government's later revisions of the accord, collapsed the agreement and deepened Eastern secessionist sentiments.³⁰ When the federal government created 12 new states in May 1967,

²³ E. Osaghae. *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence* (Indiana: University Press, 1998), p.75.

²⁴ A. Anigbo. *Foundations of Biafran Nationalism* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press), p.82.

²⁵ A. Okoli..., p.58.

²⁶ C. Nwoke..., p.99.

²⁷ E. Osaghae..., p.79.

²⁸ C. Achebe..., p.69.

²⁹ E. Osaghae..., p.83.

³⁰ A. Anigbo..., p.90.

splitting the Eastern Region to weaken its political cohesion, Ojukwu saw the move as economic strangulation and political containment.³¹

On 30 May 1967, Ojukwu declared the Independent Republic of Biafra, anchoring the proclamation on self-defence, ethnicity-based persecution, and the right to self-determination.³² The declaration triggered the Nigerian Civil War that occurred from 1967-1970, a 30-month conflict marked by humanitarian catastrophe, blockade-induced famine, and mass civilian deaths, many from starvation in Biafra.³³ International observers reported that starvation became a weapon of war, leading to over one million civilian deaths, most of them children.³⁴ Biafra surrendered in January 1970, and the federal government adopted the policy of “No Victor, No Vanquished,” followed by the Three Rs: Reconciliation, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation.³⁵ However, implementation was uneven as policies such as the 20-pound flat refund on all pre-war bank accounts, loss of property through ‘abandoned property’ laws, and exclusion from priority federal reconstruction funding created long-term economic disenfranchisement in the East.³⁶ Scholars have since argued that while the war ended militarily, it never ended politically or psychologically.³⁷

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, new Biafran movements emerged, reflecting unresolved post-war grievances. The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), founded in 1999, adopted a nonviolent civil-disobedience model rooted in self-

³¹ A. Adiele..., p.102.

³² C. Achebe..., p.80.

³³ O. Ibeanu..., p.91.

³⁴ C. Nwoke..., p.104.

³⁵ A. Afigbo..., p.110.

³⁶ P. Obi-Ani. *Post-War Igbo Identity and Biafra Memory* (Nsukka: University Press, 2019), p.120.

³⁷ E. Osaghae..., p.92.

determination rhetoric.³⁸ MASSOB rejected armed struggle, emphasising economic withdrawal and symbolic resistance, though it frequently clashed with state security forces.³⁹ Parallel to MASSOB was the Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), which pursued a more radical ideology framing, invoking spiritual nationalism and occasional symbolic “declarations” of Biafran independence.⁴⁰ The decline of MASSOB and the Biafran Zionist Movement, particularly over leadership and strategy, gave rise to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).⁴¹ Founded by Nnamdi Kanu in 2012, IPOB drew on the memory of the 1967-1970 civil war and widespread perceptions of political and economic exclusion among the Igbo of the South-East.⁴² Seeing that IPOB believes in the restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra, the preservation of the values, culture and identity of the people, and the protection of their lives and property through non-violence, it was left with the choice of adopting new and unconventional strategies and approaches in the pursuit. The organisation adopted a grassroots mobilisation strategy, organising youths, women and communities to engage in public and peaceful protests and rallies condemning the protracted marginalisation of the Igbo and demanding their independence as a separate state. It is through this approach that IPOB was able to build grassroots support and movement for the realisation of Biafran independence. It further adopted a media and propaganda strategy to gain widespread support for the mission. In this practice, IPOB raised and used Radio Biafra, social, print and online media to disseminate pro-Biafran messages and news.⁴³ The organisation’s most visible strategy,

³⁸ F. Onuoha..., p.73.

³⁹ A. Okoli..., p.63.

⁴⁰ P. Ugor..., p.75.

⁴¹ E. Ucheibe. Impact of Sit-At-Home Order on the Economic Development of Abia State, 2020-2024 (B.A. Project in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, 2025), 43.

⁴² O. Ikeanyibe. “Informal Economy and Governance in South-East Nigeria” (African Journal of Public Administration, vol. 9, no. 3, 2015, pp. 79-92), p.33.

⁴³ N. Festus and J. Anyigor. “Monday Sit-At-Home in Southeastern Nigeria: A Contradiction to the Objectives of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)” (*Ideal International Journal of Igbo Scholars Forum, Nigeria, vol. 18, no. 1, 2025, pp.73-95*), p.83.

the sit-at-home order, was conceived as an act of civil disobedience, intended to draw attention to the continued detention of pro-Biafran activists and to commemorate historical injustices.⁴⁴ The sit-at-home order as practised by IPOB is part of a global and continental history of civil resistance. Yet, it carries unique historical arguments shaped by Nigeria's post-civil war politics, Igbo identity struggles, and the evolving landscape of separatist mobilisation.

Enforcement of the Sit-at-Home Order in Enugu State

The enforcement of the IPOB sit-at-home order in Enugu state unfolded through a complex mixture of voluntary compliance, symbolic loyalty, fear-driven adherence, compliance, and coercive action by both IPOB members and criminal opportunists. While the order originated as a symbolic act of civil disobedience tied to the memory of the Biafran struggle, its implementation in Enugu state between 2012 and 2014 reveals the intricate socio-political dynamics that shaped local obedience, resistance, and contestation. This section draws on qualitative interviews conducted with market traders, transport operators, civil servants, and community leaders across Enugu North, Enugu East, and Enugu South senatorial zones.

A recurring theme in interviews is that during the early phase of the order, compliance was largely voluntary. For many residents, sitting at home was a symbolic affirmation of Igbo identity and a gesture of solidarity with the detained IPOB members. "In the beginning, nobody forced us; it was like honouring our brothers who died in 1966 and during the war. We stayed home because

⁴⁴ C. Nwaneri. "Digital Nationalism and Separatist Communication: The Case of IPOB" (*African Studies Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2019, pp.61-76) p.57.

it felt wrong to do business on such days.”⁴⁵ His statement aligns with the view that collective withdrawal was initially an emotional and cultural duty, rather than a security-driven decision. However, by late 2013 and early 2014, enforcement mechanisms in Enugu grew more coercive. Interviews suggest that IPOB’s core leadership did not always initiate violence; rather, splinter groups, local youth militias, and criminal elements acting in IPOB’s name became primary agents of force. “It started peacefully, but we later became afraid. If you opened your shop, boys will come and warn you, and some of them are not IPOB. Some were just bad boys using the chance and opportunity to control people.”⁴⁶ Her narrative supports Nwoke’s claims that once a popular protest acquires coercive dimensions, it often becomes difficult to distinguish ideological enforcers from opportunistic actors.⁴⁷

Enforcement also relied heavily on information networks and rumour circulation, especially via mass texting, radio chatter, and later social media platforms. Respondents reported that warnings were often disseminated days before the scheduled sit-at-home. These messages typically referenced past incidents of violence or invoked Biafran martyrdom, creating a climate in which fear and emotional attachment worked simultaneously. “Even if IPOB said nothing, once a text message goes out, people close their shops. Nobody wants to be used as a scapegoat.”⁴⁸ This fits into Berkowitz’s observation that sustained fear conditions populations to behave defensively, even in the absence of direct threats.⁴⁹ Transport operators were among the most affected groups in Enugu state. Tricycle riders and bus drivers in New Haven, Abakpa, and Coal Camp cited security concerns as the primary reason for compliance. “You cannot carry passengers on sit-at-

⁴⁵ J. Akachukwu. 43 years, automobile engineer, Uwani, (March 2025).

⁴⁶ U. Nnenna. 26 years, trader, Mayor market, (April 2025).

⁴⁷ C. Nwoke..., p.108.

⁴⁸ O. Anieke. 53 years, community leader, Gariki, (March 2025).

⁴⁹ L. Berkowitz. *Aggression: Its Causes, Consequences, and Control* (McGraw-Hill, 1993).

home days. If unknown boys catch you, they will beat you and can even burn your bus.”⁵⁰ While some operators believed in the secessionist cause, the majority complied out of perceived personal risk, reflecting Dollard et al. ’s argument that frustration-induced aggression produces ripple effects that influence even those who do not share the originating grievance.⁵¹

The civil servants presented a different perspective. Interviews with government workers at the Enugu State Secretariat reveal that the sit-at-home order created a quiet institutional dilemma. The government publicly condemned the sit-at-home order, yet many offices recorded low turnout. “There were no official threats from IPOB to civil servants, but staff stayed home because roads were empty and buses were not operating. It was not safe to drive alone.”⁵² Thus, state employees complied out of structural paralysis, and not out of ideological support. Educational institutions also faced challenges. University students at the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC) and the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) reported fear of violence, compounded by the hostility of the environment on sit-at-home days. “Hostel leaders told us not to go out. Even if you don’t believe in IPOB, you don’t want to meet the wrong people.”⁵³ Here, the enforcement shifted from explicit threats to an anticipatory fear, a common psychological effect in spaces where authority is contested.

Community leaders and traditional authorities described how fear-based enforcement undermined communal trust and social cohesion. Market unions in places like Afor Awkunanaw and Gariki attempted to negotiate safety guarantees with local groups but were often unsuccessful. “We begged them to allow half-day trading, but they refused. They said the spirit of Biafra

⁵⁰ C. Emeka. 39 years, bus driver, Abakpa, (March 2025).

⁵¹ J. Dollard et al..., p.12.

⁵² C. Edith. Senior staff, Ministry of Information, (March 2025).

⁵³ J. Chiamaka. 24 years, student, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, (April 2025).

demanded it.”⁵⁴ Such statements illustrate how symbolic nationalism was weaponised to suppress dissent. By 2014, the enforcement of the sit-at-home order in Enugu had evolved into a hybrid system, partly ideological, partly coercive, and partly criminal. A blend of legitimate grievances, collective memory, fear of violence, and disruption of transportation networks drove compliance. While IPOB remained the symbolic source of the directive, its enforcement became decentralised, enabling non-state actors to assert informal authority over public behaviour. As interviews consistently reveal, the enforcement of the sit-at-home order in Enugu state produced a complex social environment characterised by anxiety, moral ambivalence, and contested loyalty. Many residents supported the symbolic meaning of the order while simultaneously resenting its coercive dimensions. This duality underscores the tension inherent in civil resistance movements. When protest becomes punitive, the original purpose of the action risks being overshadowed by the fear it generates.

Socio-Economic Implications of the Sit-at-Home Order in Enugu State

Socio-economic implications denote the combined social and economic consequences of policies or collective actions on production, employment, education, and social cohesion. These implications influence everyday survival strategies and can deepen inequality when disruptions disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.⁵⁵ According to Osaghae, it refers to the interconnected effects of political or social actions on economic activities, social relations, and livelihoods within a society. Such actions shape income patterns, access to services, and social

⁵⁴ N. Chijioko. 50 years, market leader, Gariki, (March 2025).

⁵⁵ T. Gurr. *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: University Press, 1970), p.29.

stability, often producing unequal outcomes across groups and regions.⁵⁶ This section examines the social and economic consequences of collective actions, highlighting their effects on livelihood, institutions, and everyday societal functioning. The socio-economic consequences of the sit-at-home order in Enugu state have been far-reaching, affecting commerce, transportation, education, agriculture, and household livelihoods. Although the order was initially framed as a symbolic protest against perceived political injustice, its effects rapidly transformed into a structural disruption of everyday life in the state. The economic losses alone are substantial. According to Okoli, weekly shutdowns in Southeastern urban economies, such as Enugu, led to “direct commercial paralysis,” with cumulative losses running into billions of naira in transportation revenues, market turnover, and industrial operating hours.⁵⁷ “Every Monday represents a dead day for production, banking, haulage, and retail trade. Firms now calculate four-day weeks as normal operating cycles.”⁵⁸ This reduction in productive hours forced small and medium-scale businesses, especially those dependent on daily turnover, to shrink operations or close entirely.

An interview conducted at Ogbete Main Market reveals the lived implications of these structural disruptions. “The sit-at-home has cut our weekly income almost in half. Mondays used to be my strongest sales days, especially for customers coming from Nsukka and Abakaliki. Now, nobody opens shops, and even when we try, fear keeps customers away.”⁵⁹ Another trader stated that transportation logistics had become unpredictable: “We used to receive goods on Monday mornings. It was the first delivery day of the week. Now, suppliers avoid Mondays entirely, so the

⁵⁶ E. Osaghae..., p.41.

⁵⁷ A. Okoli..., p.44.

⁵⁸ E. Ihunanya. Business development officer, Enugu state Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, (April 2025).

⁵⁹ O. Ngozika. 37 years, textile seller, Ogbete main market, (April 2025).

entire week's supply chain shifts, causing scarcity and higher prices."⁶⁰ These interview accounts reflect Gurr's argument that social stability collapses when coercive conditions undermine equitable participation in economic life.⁶¹ In Enugu, enforced inactivity, whether through fear or voluntary compliance, distorts the normative rhythm of market society.

The transport sector endures similar challenges. A respondent at Gariki park described the order as "economic fainting," explaining that most drivers live on daily earnings, and losing one day each week amounts to "losing the money for school fees, food, and house rent."⁶² Transport unions also reported reduced interstate traffic, especially on the Abuja and Lagos routes, as travellers plan their journeys around the Monday sit-at-home. This reduced mobility affects not only drivers but also roadside vendors, food sellers, and artisans who depend on passenger traffic for patronage. "Na Monday I dey sell market well-well because na Monday wey week dey start, so e dey dey busy well-well, but since this sit-at-home start, we no dey come outside on Monday again, and the thing don really spoil my business. Now I no dey fit see the kind money wey I dey see before."⁶³ In agreement with that, another respondent added that: "na true wey she talk. Before-before I know wetin I dey make inside one week, but since sit-at-home start, we no dey comot on Monday again, and na Monday be the highest day wey we dey sell market. After Monday, any other day na management."⁶⁴ These two accounts explain the importance of Mondays on businesses in Enugu State, as they are the most economically active days of the week, and how the sit-at-home on Mondays has affected their overall weekly sales margin.

⁶⁰ E. Emmanuel. 47 years, spare parts dealer, Coal camp, (April 2025).

⁶¹ T. Gurr..., p.118.

⁶² O. Ekene. 34 years, driver, Gariki park, (April 2025).

⁶³ S. Nkechi. 24 years, *Okpa* seller, Gariki park, (April 2025).

⁶⁴ E. Rose. 22 years, bread seller, Gariki park, (April 2025).

The educational sector has also been significantly disrupted. “Mondays are lost lecture days across tertiary, secondary, and primary institutions. The academic calendar is compressed, lecturers rush syllabi, and students’ performances are weakening.”⁶⁵ “The fear of violent enforcement prevents those of us who live off-campus from attending tutorials or accessing the school library on Mondays.”⁶⁶ From a frustration-aggression theoretical perspective, the broader structural frustration stemming from political grievances has produced secondary frustrations, such as economic deprivation and academic stagnation, for residents not directly involved in the agitation.⁶⁷ The aggressive outcomes, represented by forced closures and threats of violence, have translated into multi-layered social costs for the local population.

Furthermore, household livelihoods are under severe strain. “We buy foodstuffs on Sundays because Mondays are risky, but foodstuffs spoil quickly. When we cannot cook or sell on Monday, we throw some things away. We are losing money every week.”⁶⁸ The psychological impact is equally pronounced as families live through uncertainty. Osaghae argues that persistent insecurity transforms ordinary survival into a political experience, producing chronic fear and adaptive economic behaviours.⁶⁹ In Enugu state, households planned shopping, movement, and economic activities around a coercive schedule that undermines freedom. “I used to come to the mall on Mondays to get groceries for the week, but that no longer happens. Now I come on Tuesdays because of the sit-at-home on Mondays. This mall used to be very busy on Mondays, but since this

⁶⁵ A. Jude. Lecturer, Department of Haematology and Immunology, College of Medicine, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, (March 2025).

⁶⁶ K. Ogechi. 21 years, student, Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, (March 2025).

⁶⁷ J. Dollard. et al..., p.41.

⁶⁸ O. Ntachi. 40 years, restaurant owner, New haven, (April 2025).

⁶⁹ E. Osaghae..., p.203.

thing started, even the rest of the weekdays are scanty because it has killed the morale of people over time.”⁷⁰

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to discuss the sit-at-home order in Enugu State, exposing a localised manifestation of a regional resistance with consequences that extend beyond its political intentions. Even though the sit-at-home order was initially conceived as a peaceful act of civil disobedience to express grievances rooted in historical political exclusion, its enforcement in Enugu State has resulted in socio-economic disruptions that affect ordinary residents. Interviews with traders, transport operators, civil servants, students, teachers, and community leaders show that compliance with the sit-at-home order in Enugu State has shifted from an initial ideological commitment to one driven by threat, fear, uncertainty, and the collapse of public mobility. Economically, Enugu State’s position as a commercial and administrative hub in the South-East has amplified the impact of repeated shutdowns. The loss of a full business day every week has weakened small and medium-sized enterprises, distorted supply chains, and reduced household incomes, particularly among informal workers whose survival depends on daily earnings.

These outcomes reveal that when civil withdrawal is sustained by coercive enforcement, secondary forms of deprivation tend to deepen rather than alleviate frustration. Educational disruptions, reduced transport activity, and declining investor confidence further demonstrate how the sit-at-home order has constrained the trajectory of Enugu State’s development. From a

⁷⁰ K. Idika. 35 years, FOREX trader, Polo park mall, (April 2025).

theoretical standpoint, the sit-at-home order in Enugu State illustrates the dual dynamics of frustration and aggression within civil resistance movements. Initial frustration directed at the Nigerian state was externalised through symbolic economic withdrawals. However, as the sit-at-home order became a coercively enforced routine, frustration was redirected inward, producing social tension, disgruntlement, and disengagement among the very population it claimed to represent. The internalised aggression has weakened communal trust and discouraged local support, thereby blurring the legitimacy of the order, especially as criminal elements exploited the opportunity for violence and extortion.

Ultimately, the paper concludes that the Enugu State experience of the sit-at-home order underscores the limits of prolonged protests as a sustainable tool of political resistance. While the sit-at-home order succeeded in drawing attention to unresolved grievances and reinforcing symbolic memories, its socio-economic costs have eroded public support and intensified everyday hardship. Overall, the socio-economic implications in Enugu State reveal how a political protest mechanism has evolved into a significant source of structural underdevelopment. Reduced productivity, disrupted education, shrinking household incomes, supply-chain distortions, and pervasive insecurity collectively weaken the state's economic foundation. More importantly, they illustrate how the burden of political agitation often falls disproportionately on vulnerable populations whose livelihoods cannot absorb repeated weekly losses. The interviews demonstrate that while the motivations for the sit-at-home order are rooted in historical frustration, its consequences extend beyond political expression into deep socio-economic strain for ordinary residents. This suggests that without a transition from coercive disruption to structured political engagement, the sit-at-home order risks reproducing the same patterns of political exclusion that originally motivated the agitation in Enugu state. Meaningful resolution lies upon dialogue-driven

advocacy, economic reintegration, and governance reforms that balance national integration with regional equity, capable of addressing historical political exclusion without undermining social survival.

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