



THE 'SIT-AT-HOME' ORDER IN THE SOUTH EAST: IMPLICATIONS ON THE TEACHING/LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY THREE (JSS 3) STUDENTS IN THE OWERRI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF IMO STATE

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Abstract

The South East of Nigeria is the Igbo tribe predominantly inhabited by the Igbos. Her language is Igbo while English is the second and official language. The 'Sit-at-home' order was issued by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a protest against the arrest of her leader in Kenya and subsequent extradition to Nigeria by the federal government with the hope of securing his release. This paper x-rayed the effects of the order on the education at the secondary school level in the Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. Seven schools, each from the public and private schools were selected randomly for the study. The population was 4868 junior secondary school three students while the sample size was 280. Three research questions were formulated to test the three objectives of the study and data analysis by simple percentage. The findings showed that all the schools observed the 'sit-at-home' order, 73% had no makeup classes for the 'sit-at-home' days, 27% had makeup classes while none was neutral. The study recommends that the conflict should be resolved and in its absence that makeup classes should be vigorously employed to bridge the gap created by the 'sit-at-home' order.

Keywords: South East, 'sit-at-home', order, education

Introduction

'Education is a basic part of life.' (Okezie and Best-Njoku 2021). This assertion implies that any disruption in the education of the child is a disruption, an impediment in the child's life. A child is meant to have an uninterrupted three months, maximally fourteen weeks of learning in the secondary school referred to as a term. A break can only be accommodated in form of a midterm break of not more than one week. This guarantees a smooth period of teaching/learning experiences. Unfortunately, there has been a long disruption of the teaching/learning process in the South Eastern States of Nigeria.

An order, in the context of this study, is an authoritative command issued to a group of people united in a formal way by the group's leader. Members of the group usually adhere strictly to the order and ensure its compliance. 'One year on, the weekly sit-at-home brings the South East economy to its knees.' (Ujummadu, V. 2022). Imposed by IPOB on the 9th of August 2021, markets, schools, transportation, banks and government offices are forced



to close on such days. Official working days and businesses are reduced by one day and in some cases more than one day as days Mazi Nnamdi Kanu goes to court have been included. It is a protest against the arrest and detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the Federal Government aimed at securing his release from detention. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu has since been charged with treasonable felony and is standing trial to that effect.

Commercial activities are shut down on sit-at-home days in the South East thus affecting the economy of the region. The IPOB intention of getting the Federal Government to release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu had not been met as he had been remanded in prison for over one year.

The sit-at-home order gave rise to the emergence of the 'unknown gunmen' whose main function had been to enforce the order. Some citizens had been killed or maimed and properties destroyed in the process thus instilling fear in the citizens.

This study aims at investigating its effects/implications on the educational system in the South East. It is a case study of JSS3 students of the public and private secondary schools in Imo State who at the time of carrying out this investigation were writing the Junior Secondary School West African Council Examinations popularly known as Junior WAEC.

The following objectives guided the study:

- to identify schools which do not open on sit-at-home days and reasons for not opening.
- to identify the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning in the Municipal.
- to identify alternative measures put in place by schools to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning and proffer solutions.

Three research questions were formulated for the study.

1. Which schools do not open on sit-at-home days and why is the order complied with in the Owerri Municipal Council?
2. What are the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning in secondary schools?
3. What alternative measures are put in place to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order in teaching/learning?

Citing Governor Soludo of Anambra State and Governor Umahi of Ebonyi State, Ujummadu V. (2022) writes of Soludo 'Everyday there's a sit-at-home the poor masses lose an estimated N19.6 billion in Anambra alone'. '...businesses are relocating outside



Igbo land, with growing unemployment and traders who used to come to shop in Onitsha, Aba and other places, going elsewhere'. He wondered who was at a loss.

'By forcing our children-the future of Igbo land- to stay at home instead of being in school while even the critically sick people (including pregnant women) cannot go to the hospital, will harm our future' – Soludo lamented. Though he announced that after due consultations with stakeholders that normal activities would begin on Monday April 4th, 2022 thus bringing an end to the sit-at-home order schools, offices, markets, banks and filling stations remained closed. Citizens stay indoors for fear of the unknown.

Governor Umahi decried the sit-at-home order stating that '...we lose over N10 billion in our economy' each time the order is strictly observed.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Kurtus, Ron (2022) Theory of Security which stipulates that the types of possible attacks be known, awareness of the motivations for attacks be made and one's relationships to those motives be made. Security is the protection of a person's property. The theory identifies stages of dealing with insecurity. Insecurity can be defined as the absence of peace and security. It connotes violence, kidnapping, maiming, killing and wanton destruction of properties. It is made worse when there is a tribal or religious sentiment attached to it. Other sentiments more powerful probably can be supremacy tussle and desire for dominance, control of human, material and natural resources such as mineral deposits. It leads to hatred which in turn fuels provocative speeches and actions thus leading to violence or wars.

Security is the protection of a person, property or organization from attack. Kurtus poses these questions as a guide to ensuring security.

- What type of possible attacks require security?
- What should you do about these threats?
- What type of defenses can you have?

Possible attacks can be on individuals, properties or organizations, in this case study; it is on schools, students, teachers and school property by criminally minded people. It is important that one determines the possible reasons for the attack. The motivation for an attack could be for financial gain, personal revenge or to promote a cause. In the case of school bullies it could be to enforce/instil fear in the junior ones for extortion. However, in this case study, the motivation is to enforce a cause. The sit-at-home order is aimed at getting the attention of the Federal Government to release the IPOB leader. Violators of the order are vulnerable to attacks.



Differentiating safety from security, Kings and Barnhams observe that, ‘safety and security are often used interchangeably, but they actually have quite different meanings. Safety is the state of being protected against harm or danger, while security is the actions taken (by an individual, a group, an organization or a government) to make people or places safe.’

Methods

The three research objectives designed for this study were tested by the research questions formulated for the purpose. The study was carried out in September, 2022 in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 4,868 JSS3 students from seven public schools and seven private schools in the municipality. The participants were both males and females sitting for the Junior WAEC as at the time of the study. The sample size is 280, 20 respondents from each of the fourteen schools that made up the population selected randomly for the avoidance of bias.

The survey instrument of 15 items was designed by the researchers and structured after the five-point likert scale. Each research question had five questions on the questionnaire testing the objectives of the study. Data collection was done by the researchers themselves. The items on the questionnaire solicited information on the schools that do not open on the sit-at-home days, the reasons for the compliance with the order and effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council and the alternative measures to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning. It also elicited solutions that could be effective in bringing the sit-at-home order to an end. The participants ticked right (✓) the columns that represented their opinions. The response options were assigned five (5) for strongly agreed (SA), four (4) for agree (A), three (3) for no option (N), two (2) for disagree (D) and one (1) for strongly disagree (SD).



Results

Research Question 1: Which schools do not open on sit-at-home days and why do they not open?

Table 1: This table presents information elicited from the respondents on research question 1.

S/N	Items	No of Respondents	Strongly Agreed (SA)		Agreed (A)		No Opinion		Disagree (D)		Strongly Disagree (SD)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Sit at home days are on Mondays and when Nnamdi Kanu goes to court and all schools open for studies.	280	280	100	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
2	There is transportation for movement in town and we come secretly to school and learn.	280	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	100
3	Earlier when the order was first issued we came to school and were thoroughly beaten by enforcers of the order.	280	196	70	59	21	00	00	08	03	17	06
4	Enforcers of the orders and unknown gunmen come into the school to disrupt classes and examinations.	280	280	100	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
5	Anxiety, fear of maiming, killing, destruction of school property keep me from school	280	280	100	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00

A cluster of five items were designed for information elicitation on research question 1. Item 1 sought to find out if Mondays and the days Nnamdi Kanu went to court were sit-at-home days in the Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. All the respondents, a 100% representation of the entire sample population overwhelmingly strongly agreed that Mondays and Nnamdi Kanu’s court appearance days were sit-sit-home days in the Owerri Municipal Council.

Item 2 sought information on the availability of transportation for movement in town for the teachers and students to secretly go to school for teaching and learning. The entire sample population of 280 represented by 100% strongly disagreed.

Item 3 sought to know whether teaching and learning went on the sit-at-home days at the early stage and whether there was molestation of teachers and students of any sort. 70%



representing 196 respondents and 21% representing 59 respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, none had no opinion while 3% and 6% respectively representing 8 and 17 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Item 4 asked whether teaching and learning activities were disrupted on sit-at-home days. The response was overwhelming. 280 respondents represented by 100% strongly agreed. Item 5 sought to know whether anxiety, fear of maiming, killing, destruction of school property kept the respondents from school. The response was an overwhelming strong agreement indicated by the entire sample size of 280 and represented by 100%.

Research Question 11: To identify the effects of the sit-at-home on teaching/learning in the secondary schools in the Owerri Municipal Council.

Table 2: The information elicited from the respondents is presented here.

S/N	Items	No of Respondents	Strongly Agreed (SA)		Agreed (A)		No Opinion		Disagree (D)		Strongly Disagree (SD)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	I watch movies and play computer games on sit-at-home days.	280	137	49	14	05	31	11	28	10	70	25
2	I wash my school uniform, eat, rest and all day on sit-at-home days	280	109	39	31	11	03	01	64	23	73	26
3	The syllabus on the subjects slated on the timetable on sit-at-home days are not covered before examinations.	280	112	40	14	05	06	02	106	38	42	15
4	Students perform poorly in examinations in English, Mathematics and some core subjects which ought to be taught on sit-at-home days.	280	112	40	56	20	00	00	28	10	84	30
5	I study the core subjects privately on sit-at-home days.	280	70	25	28	10	31	11	36	13	115	41

*What do you do on sit-at-home days?

Study, house chores, compound gardening, play, watch movies, play computer games, chat with friends on social media and rest were responses from the respondents in an oral interactive session on what they do on sit-at-home days.



Five items designed to elicit information on the effect of sit-at-home days on the teaching/learning experiences in the secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council were analyzed.

Item 1 sought the information on whether the respondents watch movies and play computer games on sit-at-home days. 49% and 5% strongly agreed and agreed representing 137 and 14 respondents respectively. 11% representing 31 respondents are without opinions while 10% and 25% representing 28 and 70 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Item 2 elicits information on other things the respondents do on sit-at-home days such as washing of school wears, eating, sleeping and resting all day. 39% and 11% strongly agreed and agreed representing 109 and 31 respondents respectively. None had no opinion while 23% and 26% representing 64 and 73 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Item 3 sought to know whether the contents of the syllabus of every subject were covered before the external examination. 40% and 5% representing 112 and 14 respondents respectively strongly agreed and agreed that the contents were covered. 2% representing 6 respondents had no opinion while 38% representing 106 respondents disagreed and 15% representing 42 respondents strongly disagreed.

Item 4 had 40% and 20% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively representing 112 and 56 students that students performed poorly in examinations in English, Mathematics and some core subjects which ought to be taught on sit-at-home days. None had no opinion while 10% and 30% representing 28 and 84 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Item 5 elicited information on those who read or studied the core subjects privately on sit-at-home days. 25% and 10% respectively representing 70 and 28 respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they study the core subjects privately at home on the sit-at-home days. 11% representing 31 respondents had no opinion while 13% and 41% representing 36 and 115 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed.

The interactive/oral interview sessions revealed that some of the respondents claimed to study 40%, do house chores 10%, compound gardening 8%, play/ watch movies/computer games 22%, chat with friends on social media and make it a day of rest 20%.



Research Question 3: What alternative measures are put in place to cushion the effects of sit-at-home order on teaching/learning?

Table 3: Alternative measures put in place by schools to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning.

S/N	Items	No of Respondents	Strongly Agreed (SA)		Agreed (A)		No Opinion		Disagree (D)		Strongly Disagree (SD)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Schools close at the usual time of 1.45pm every day in the public schools.	280	140	50	00	00	00	00	67	24	73	26
2	My schools close either at 3.3pm or 4pm instead of 2,30pm on Tuesdays to Fridays.	280	112	40	28	10	00	00	20	07	120	43
3	Copious homework and assignments are given in place of lessons missed on sit-at-home days.	280	98	35	45	16	25	09	42	15	70	25
4	My school teaches lessons online on sit-at-home days.	280	87	31	53	19	00	00	42	15	98	35
5	My school runs full classes on Saturdays.	280	42	15	33	12	00	00	98	35	107	38

Alternative measures put in place by some schools to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on the teaching/learning experiences of the Junior Secondary School three, an examination class stand thus:

Item 1 elicited responses on whether or not schools close at the usual time of 1:45pm by public schools. The response was 50% strongly agreed that schools close at 1.45pm, this represents 140 respondents of the sample population. None either agreed or was without opinion while 24% and 26% a representation of 67 and 73, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Item 2 sought to identify schools that extend their closing time of 2:30pm to 3:30pm or 4pm on days other than sit-at-home days. 40% and 10% representing 112 and 28 respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that there is an extension of time on other days. None was without opinion while 7% and 43% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, a representation of 20 and 120 respondents respectively.



Item 3 sought to know whether copious homework and assignments were given to the students in place of the lessons missed on sit-at-home days. 35% and 16% representing 98 and 45 respondents respectively strongly agreed and agreed that copious homework and assignments were given to them. 9% representing 25 respondents had no opinion while 15% and 25% representing 42 and 70 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Item 4 sought to know whether online lessons were given in place of the lessons missed on sit-at-home days. 31% and 19% strongly agreed and agreed representing 87 and 53 respondents respectively. None was without opinion while 15% and 35% disagreed and strongly disagreed representing 42 and 98 respondents respectively.

Item 5 elicited information on schools that either ran full classes on Saturdays or not in place of the lessons not taught on sit-at-home days. 15% and 12% representing 42 and 33 respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that their schools ran full classes on Saturdays to make up for the lessons missed or not taught on sit-at-home days. None was without opinion while 35% and 38% representing 98 and 107 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed with the view.

Discussion

All the research questions were tested with three clusters of questions each with a set of five questions. They sought to:

- 1) Identify secondary schools that do not open on sit-at-home days in the Owerri Municipal Council and reasons for not opening.
- 2) Effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning and
- 3) Alternative measures put in place to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning in the municipal.

Research Question 1 sought to ascertain the secondary schools that open on the sit-at-home days in the Owerri Municipal of Imo State and reasons for not opening on such days. The findings revealed that no secondary schools opened on sit-at-home days which held on Mondays and days Nnamdi Kanu went to court. There was therefore no movement in town as all the citizens were indoors on those days. This could be deduced from the respondents' answers. It also revealed that teachers and students who dared the order were terribly beaten by enforcers of the sit-at-orders. In an oral interview session, the question, 'what other days are declared sit-at-home days in the South East?' The respondents all said there were no specific days other than Mondays and any day Nnamdi Kanu went to court. A second question was asked on the reason for the sit-at-home. Respondents claimed it was aimed at getting the Federal Government to release Nnamdi Kanu. Others said anxiety and fear of



maiming, killing and destruction of school properties kept them from going to school on such days as the enforcers of the order and unknown gun men went into schools to disrupt teaching/learning activities even external examinations. The findings revealed the reasons for compliance to the sit-at-home order as anxiety, fear of killing and destruction of school properties. This agrees with Udabah's (2021:68) assertion that 'Anxiety may be initiated by internal feelings as a response to a perceived threat'. The threat to life and property is a serious one which calls for the attention of the government and education stakeholders. The findings were in agreement with Kurtus, Ron (2022) Theory of Security as the types of possible attacks and awareness of the motives for the attacks on sit-at-home days were made known. The only option left for the teachers and students in the absence of government obligation of security of lives and properties of her citizens was to adhere strictly to the sit-at-home order.

Research Question 2 identified the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning in the secondary schools in the Owerri Municipal Council. The findings revealed that the respondents watched movies, played computer games, washed their school wears, ate, slept and generally regarded such days as days of rest and recreation at home. The contents of the syllabus of every subject taught on such days were not covered except for some private schools. Students of private schools and literate homes made effective use of such days as they engaged in private studies at home. Some learned domestic activities such as house chores, cooking, baking and sewing though the percentage was not quite encouraging, 40% and 10% in some cases.

Research Question 3 identified alternative measures put in place by schools to cushion the effects of the sit-at-home order on teaching/learning. The 24% and 26% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed erroneously as the question was for public schools closing time only. Private schools in Owerri Municipal usually closed later than 1.45pm. The study revealed that most public schools had no alternative measures in place. While most private schools extended their dismissal times to at least one hour on the other school days of the week, some converted Saturdays to school days but close at 12pm. 27% of the respondents were in agreement with the option that suggested that schools ran full school sessions on Saturdays to make up for the lost classes while 73% disagreed. The study showed that not all private schools ran full school sessions on Saturdays. The extension took care of the subjects not taught on sit-at-home days. Online classes are organized by few private schools with copious exercises thus effectively engaging the students at home. However, the oral interview session revealed that not all students had access to the vital facilities while some used their parents' android phones. The government, school proprietors, parents, guardians and other stake holders failed in Kurtus, Ron's (2022) Theory in this



regards as adequate measures were not put in place to check the possible attacks identified even when the awareness was overwhelming.

Conclusion

This study investigated the implications of the sit-at-home order in education in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Its objectives among others included identifying the effects of the order on teaching/learning, reasons for compliance and the alternative measures to cushion the effects. Chief among the effects was anxiety and fear of maiming, killing and destruction of school properties by the enforcers of the order, poor performance in external examinations and a lot more. Alternative measures were only chiefly found in private secondary schools which extended their closing times, gave copious assignments and exercises as well as online teaching/learning.

Dsimen, Aniga and Bateye (2015) define peace-building as ‘putting structures in place for removing the roots of conflicts.’ The researchers here in the interest of the children and youths of the South Eastern region of Nigeria, conclude in the words of Akinterinwa (2003) that ‘Peace-building is essentially non-coercive and comprises all efforts necessary to make the environment conducive for peace to reign’, and therefore call on the federal and state governments to come to the rescue of education in the region to save it from total collapse. Writing on tourism development Aruna (2022) observed that as a tool for local development tourism is an economic sector that is able to offer a significant contribution to the economic growth of an area and create occupation opportunities directly or indirectly through the supply of goods and services for tourist activities. Can this assertion be real in an environment devoid of peace and security? Students learn about tourism and their environment in school through excursions and are expected to put in practice their knowledge for a better all round development. As the governors and stake holders bemoan the economic loss in the region the loss in the academics of the future generation expected to drive the economy in the future calls for consideration.

It is pertinent to note the improvement so far. As at time of publication of this paper, the Monday sit-at-home day has been relaxed as schools now open on Mondays in Owerri Municipal Council.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. Appropriate security measures be put in place to guarantee safety of students, teachers and school properties.



2. It also appealingly recommends the release of Nnamdi Kanu as directed by the United Nations to restore peace, sanity and confidence not only in the educational system and its operation but in all facets of the region.

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