

## AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON HOW IPOB AGITATIONS AFFECT POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

In this study, an effort was made to empirically investigate the effects of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitations for self-determination on Nigerian political stability. Some factors as the methods used in agitations and the actions of the government with regards to the group agitations have been identified as what can result in political instability in the country. Group theory is adopted in this study to analyze the IPOB group in their agitations for self-determination. Survey research design is used in this study. The instruments applied in this study are qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) in nature to obtain relevant data from the IPOB group, and some members of the society. The areas of study are selected locations from six states in Nigeria with the addition of The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. In Diaspora, four locations were covered to capture the existence of IPOB groups and their activities. They are South Africa, United States of America, London and Malaysia. It was concluded that IPOB agitations greatly affect Nigeria's political stability. The result showed that the increase in the rate of agitations results in a decrease in the level of political stability. It is then recommended that Nigeria's federal government should set up a team that will carry out a study on the countries where achievement of self-determination by groups have occurred and countries where it has not succeeded in order to weigh the pros and cons in order to ensure that Nigeria preserves or enhances its political stability.

**Keywords:** Agitations; Indigenous People of Biafra; Political Instability; Separatist Movements; Nigeria

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Different studies have shown that agitations of people do have an effect on the political stability of their society (Adamu & Ocheni 2016; Adangor 2017; Chinwendu 2017; Okpukri 2012). Agitators do have their reasons to agitate and they also adopt different styles in their agitations depending on the level of discontent that exists among a group of people. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a pro-Biafran and a separatist group formed in 2009 by Nnamdi Kanu, a dual citizen of Nigeria and the United Kingdom. The group agitates for self-determination from the Nigerian State for the independence of the Republic of Biafra.

The group may have used different strategies in their agitations, such as; sit-at-homes, street marches, and the use of different channels of communication as Radio and Television to let the world to know about their plight. In this paper, we focus on empirically investigating how IPOB agitations affect political stability in Nigeria. This paper is structured as follows: a brief introduction into what the paper is all about, a brief review of the literature and theoretical framework which forms the background of the paper. The methodology adopted in the empirical investigation coupled with data presentation and analysis is shown. The discussion of findings of the study is then followed by conclusion with a recommendation on way forward.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The political stability of any society can be maintained through the various political and sociocultural activities that take place within society. In the opinion of Paldam (2016), he maintained that political stability can be seen in four different ways which are a stable government, stable political system, internal law and external stability. In any country, political stability could be assured when there is a democratic system having within its justice, honesty, accountability, and transparency. This level of stability can be achieved through coordinated enlightenment that involves the people. Akanji (2012) maintains that one simple interpretation of the concept of self-determination is that it refers to a people's right to have their own state, self-government, self-management or home rule. It is worthy to note that if agitations for self-determination by the Indigenous People of Biafra had met with government's positive response, it might have calmed nerves and gone a long way in ensuring political stability in Nigeria. As observed by Obasi (2017) the use of force by President Muhammadu Buhari in responding to the IPOB's agitations has not been productive as it inflames passion and increases peoples' sentiments on separation that may eventually lead to political instability.

This study adopts group theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. One of the major assumptions of group theory which was from Truman (1951) is that when individuals come together and having same attitudes and interests with which they make claims and demands from the government and different existing groups in the society with major aims of putting in place maintenance or caring for the values of their choice (cited in Onah, 2010). Another major assumption of group theory is that stability in the society is maintained by the balance of group pressures and the adjustment of government operations (Varma, 1975). In the assumptions of the theory, the group IPOB and the government are captured as both players in the political system.

Justification for the adoption of group theory is in order as IPOB is a group that has emerged through a collection of individuals that believe in the struggle and achievement of self-determination of their people. As a group, IPOB shares the attitude and interests in their objectives. In Nigeria, the role of government in the maintenance of group pressure to ensure political stability can never be overemphasized. Previous studies have applied group theory in their analysis and it is shown in their work (Duruji, 2012; Ofoeze, 2010).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study is a survey research design. Specifically, it is a cross-sectional research design which helped in determining the relationship between IPOB and political stability. This research design is found suitable because data were collected at about the same time, without any intention of manipulation (Ojo, 2005). The sample of the study was taken from IPOB members in selected six locations of six states including Abuja and four countries representing IPOB in Diaspora. The areas are: Mbaise Independent Unit (Imo State), Owuwanwu Unit Fegge, Onitsha (Anambra State), Ogoni Mobilization Unit (Rivers State), Ikot Ekiriba Unit, Akpabuyo (Cross Rivers State), Favour Unit Igbanke (Edo State), Apapa Unit 1 (Lagos), Gariki (Abuja), South Africa, United States of America, United Kingdom, and Malaysia. These locations were selected based on an assessment of the intensity of the agitation drawn from media reports. The population of the members in the selected locations is at 2,411 (Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Eleven). The selected locations were chosen due to the high activities of IPOB group.

### **3.1 Samples**

The sample has a total of 477 respondents, 332 men (69.6%) and 145 female (30.4%). The respondents between ages of 30-45 years were 161 (33.8%), 46-60 years were 189 (39.6%), 61-75 years were 98 (20.5%), 76 years and above were 29 (6.1%). On the marital status of the respondents, 91 (19.1%) were single, 338 (70.9%) were married, others who may stand for divorce or never married were 48 (10.1%). On the academic status of the respondents, 46 (9.64%) have WASSCE, 326 (68.34%) have Bachelor's degree, 89 (18.66%) have postgraduate degrees (MSc/MBA/Med), other status not captured in the items were 16 (3.35%). On the nature of employment of the respondents, 70 (14.68%) are employed, 201 (42.14%) are unemployed, 206 (43.19%) are self-employed, 116 (24.32%) are jobless, 54 (11.32%) are students, 31

(6.5%) are retiree, 44 (9.22%) are paid employee, 18 (3.77%) are unpaid, 8 (1.68%) unprotected paid employee, 73 (15.30%) are traders, 60 (12.57%) are artisans, 44 (9.22%) are farmers, 10 (2.1%) are religious and others not found within traders, farmers and religious are 19 (3.98%).

### 3.2 Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was administered to obtain firsthand information. The questionnaire used the Five Point Likert's Scale (SA, A, UN, D, SD). This was adopted to register the degree of agreement or disagreement to a statement. A Survey Monkey (an online questionnaire) were used to obtain information from Diaspora. An In-depth Interview was used to obtain information from the leaders of IPOB both local and in Diaspora. The Former National leader of IPOB Mazi Igbokwe. is chosen for his ability to provide information on IPOB. A member of IPOB Directorate of States, the highest policy-making body of IPOB, Mrs Amaka Ekwo is chosen from Diaspora as she is well informed on the activities of IPOB both locally and in Diaspora. Security Operatives as Police were also interviewed as they have information on the encounter between the IPOB group in their agitations

Community leaders from three of the areas of research (Mbaise in Imo state, Ikot Ekriba in Cross-Rivers state and Ogoni in Rivers State) were as well interviewed. Others were Chief Anthony Ugochukwu from Mbaise and Chief Okon Asuquo from Ikot Ekriba and His Royal Majesty Eze Omeneo Ogwunka representing Ogoni. The three men were chosen as they were able to provide information on the effects of IPOB activities in their areas. Two or three government representatives were interviewed in other to balance the information from the agitating group (IPOB) and political stability in Nigeria. The former speaker of Imo State House of Assembly, Honourable Ike, C. Ibe and a security chieftain with the Imo State government, Chief Innocent Okpokoro was also interviewed. The two men were selected mainly due to their exposure to information, security and how these have affected political stability in Nigeria. The IPOB Lawyer, Barrister Aloy Ejimakor who has been a counsel for the group and the Leader was also interviewed as he has enough information on court proceedings or the legal battle between the IPOB group and the federal government.

Ten key informants including former Biafran soldiers, Biafra supporters, academics, lawyers, security agents, and media practitioners were interviewed using a predetermined interview schedule. The views and perspectives garnered from these interviews facilitated the refinement of the study's assumptions and provided evidence to interrogate these assumptions.

The interviewees were purposively selected based on their level of experience and the information available to them. This helped to obtain reliable information on the subject of study.

**Table1: The Responses of the Respondents on how the agitation for self-determination by IPOB affected the political stability in Nigeria**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	SD
1	Non-support of election in Nigeria	287 (60.2%)	160 (33.5%)	27 (5.7%)	3 (0.6%)	477 (100%)	3.532	.6330
2	Promoting non-participation in Nigerian politics	279 (58.5%)	160 (33.5%)	29 (6.1%)	9 (1.9%)	477 (100%)	3.486	.6968
3	Attracting Internal and external condemnation on Nigerian government	241 (50.5%)	199 (41.7%)	29 (6.1%)	8 (1.7%)	477 (100%)	3.410	.6821
4	Discouragement of external investors	176 (36.9%)	195 (40.9%)	64 (13.4%)	42 (8.8%)	477 (100%)	3.058	.9239
5	Peaceful co-existence of IPOB public	268 (56.2%)	159 (33.3%)	41 (8.6%)	9 (1.9%)	477 (100%)	3.438	.7296

**Source: Field Survey (2018)**

**Table: 1** showed the responses of the IPOB members on how the agitation has affected Nigeria political stability. The outcome of the responses showed that majority of the IPOB members strongly agreed items as

non-support of election in Nigeria (60%), promoting non-participation in Nigerian politics (58.5%), attracting internal and external condemnation on Nigerian government (50.5%), discouragement of external investors (36.9%), peaceful co-existence of IPOB public (56.2%).

A minimal number strongly disagreed with such items as non-support of the election in Nigeria (0.6%), Promoting non-participation in Nigerian politics 1.9%, attracting internal and external condemnation on Nigerian government (1.7%), discouragement of external investors (8.8%), and peaceful co-existence of IPOB public (1.9%). This implies that agitations of IPOB members in Nigeria have affected political stability with all the items they strongly opined to especially the non-support for election and non-participation in Nigerian politics which has the highest percentage.

**Table: 2 How agitations for self-determination by IPOB has affected political stability in Nigeria**

S/N	Items	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	IPOB	Total
		# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8	# 9	# 10	# 11	
Agitation for self-determination by IPOB and Political stability in Nigeria													
1	Non-support of election in Nigeria	3.80	3.83	4.00	3.77	3.41	3.28	3.68	3.73	3.86	3.41	3.18	3.63
2	Promoting non-participation in Nigerian politics	3.80	3.61	4.00	3.83	3.38	3.23	3.63	3.47	3.77	3.37	3.29	3.58
3	Attracting Internal and external condemnation on Nigerian government	3.80	3.44	3.71	3.66	3.30	3.46	3.53	3.21	3.63	3.51	3.29	3.50
4	Discouragement of external investors	2.20	3.22	3.14	3.33	3.04	3.38	3.03	2.69	2.90	3.20	3.25	3.03
5	Peaceful co-existence of IPOB public	3.50	3.50	3.71	3.55	3.32	3.00	3.48	3.69	3.68	3.58	3.66	3.51
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.64</b>

Source: Field Survey (2018)

**Table: 2** revealed the effects of agitations for self-determination by IPOB and its effects on Political Stability in Nigeria. All the respondents affirmed and strongly agreed with all the items. Specifically, respondents across the selected locations claimed that non-support of election; promotion of non-participation in Nigerian politics; peaceful co-existence of IPOB public; and attraction of Internal and external condemnation on Nigerian government and (having the highest value of 3.63, 3.58, 3.51. and 3.50 respectively) have been the major approach employed for political stability to reign. The least approach employed by the members in showing their grievances is the discouragement of external investors (with an average mean value of 3.03). A total average mean score of 3.64 implies acceptance that agitations of IPOB members has strong effects on Nigerian political stability.

#### 4. TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

**H1: The agitations for self-determination by IPOB have not affected the political stability in Nigeria significantly.**

The regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis because the data combined ordinal and nominal data. The results of this analysis revealed how much political stability in Nigeria can be explained by agitations for self-determination by IPOB. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. The results are as shown below:

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.281a	.079	.077	.70107	
Predictors: Agitations for self-determination by IPOB					
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.963	1	19.963	40.617	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	233.462	475	.491		
Total	253.426	476			
Coefficients					
Parameters	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. (P-value)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.295	.182	.281	12.600	.000
Agitations for self-determination by IPOB	-.324	-.051		6.373	.000
Dependent: Political stability in Nigeria					

Source: Field Survey (2018)

### Interpretation of Results

The results from the model summary table 3 above disclosed the extent to which the variance in the dependent variable (political stability) is explained by the independent variable (agitations for self-determination by IPOB). In this case, the R-squared is .073, which expressed as a percentage equals 7.9%. This connotes that 7.9% of the variance in political stability can be predicted from the agitations for self-determination by IPOB. The adjusted R-squared which identifies the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables shows .077 (that is 7.7%) variability of the independent variable agitations for self-determination by IPOB) while the standard error of the estimate indicates .70107 which signifies error term. The Durbin Watson result at 1.943 is within the recommended range (1.5-2.5).

Table 3 above assesses the statistical significance of the measures of agitations for self-determination by IPOB on political stability. This analysis tests the null hypothesis that multiple R in the population equals 0. The rule is that a model reaches statistical significance when Sig. = .000; this in other word means that  $p < .0005$ .

Therefore, from table 3, Agitations for self-determination by IPOB significantly affect political stability, where Sig. = .000 {F (1, 475) = 40.617}.

(A) Decision Rule: Reject the Null hypothesis, when the significance value is below 0.05. Do not reject the hypothesis, when significance value is greater than 0.05.

(B) Interpretation of Result: The ANOVA table 4.5.2 shows that the F value is 40.617at .000b Significance level. The implication is that Agitations for self-determination by IPOB significantly affect political stability.

(a) Decision: Reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant effect of agitations for self-determination by IPOB on political stability.

The coefficient table 3 above shows the simple model that expresses the extent to which agitation for self-determination by IPOB has an effect on political stability; therefore, beta values are used for the comparison. The model revealed that agitations for self-determination by IPOB have inverse significance in predicting political stability (beta = .281, with a Tval higher than 1.96, Sig. .000  $p < .05$ ). This by interpretation means that for every unit increase in agitations for self-determination by IPOB, there will be a decrease in political stability by 32.4%. This implies that government needs to intensify efforts in resolving issues that facilitate political stability in the country. Thus, the null hypothesis (H01) was rejected; while the alternative hypothesis (Ha1) which says that agitation for self-determination by IPOB has a significant effect on political stability in Nigeria.

In many families, opinions increasingly vary along generational lines on the most effective way of tackling the Igbo predicament. While many in the older generation would prefer to address the Igbo predicament through a non-confrontational approach, a lot of young people are inclined to the radical approach. Above all, many parents and older relatives are losing the capacity to direct the younger ones on the "right approach" in dealing with the Igbo predicament." It is possible that this pattern of inter-generational relations could

escalate into a breakdown of social cohesion in the near future. Finally, the recurring agitation for Biafra has serious implications for political stability and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

## **5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section discusses the various ways that the agitations of IPOB have affected Nigeria's political stability. Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016, p. 29) have submitted that "as separatist agitation becomes greater, it is likely that separatist groups would increase in number. The combined activities of these groups could raise the risk of inter-ethnic disaffection, destabilise Nigeria's fledgeling democracy and further deepen the crisis of confidence among government and ethnic groups across the country." In support of the above assertion, "the emergence of ethnic militias such as Oodua's Peoples Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Areas People's Forum (APF) have created a new kind of ethnic conflict in the country" (Olurode & Anifowose, 2004, p. 162). This is evidence that there is continuous sprouting of agitating groups which do not do any good to the stability of Nigeria.

The results of hypotheses 1 tested which is in the model summary table 3 disclosed the extent to which the variance in the dependent variable (political stability) is explained by the independent variable (agitations for self-determination by IPOB). In this case, the R-squared is .073, which expressed as a percentage equals 7.9%. This connotes that 7.9% of the variance in political stability can be predicted from the agitations for self-determination by IPOB. The adjusted R-squared which identifies the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables shows .077 (that is 7.7%) variability of the independent variable agitations for self-determination by IPOB) while the standard error of the estimate indicates .70107 which signifies error term. The Durbin Watson result at 1.943 is within the recommended range (1.5-2.5).

The model revealed that agitations for self-determination by IPOB have inverse significance in predicting political stability (beta = .281, with a Tval higher than 1.96, Sig. .000  $p < .05$ ). This by interpretation means that for every unit increase in agitations for self-determination by IPOB, there will be a decrease in political stability by 32.4%. This implies that government needs to intensify efforts in resolving issues that facilitate political stability in the country. Thus, the null hypothesis (H01) was rejected; while the alternative hypothesis (Ha1) which says that agitation Ugo, Ukpere & Ashiwobel, 2012 for self-determination by IPOB has a significant effect on political stability in Nigeria.

Different studies have also shown that agitations of different groups in countries of the world do have effects on the political stability of the countries (Adam & Ocheni, 2016; Adangor, 2017; Antam & Anam, 2014; Chawdhury, 2016; Chinwendu, 2017; Chinwendu, 2017; Nwobashi, 2016; Okpukri, 2012; Shehu, Othman & Osman, 2017). The report below has shown the implications of IPOB agitations:

The instruction given by IPOB, for all the residents of South-East states to sit-at-home the previous day as part of the protest against last year's invasion of the home of its leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, and the killing of IPOB agitators including the women in detention in Owerri, Imo state. As a result of that incarceration, violence broke out in Rivers state as 15 trucks were set ablaze while four drivers were abducted by IPOB members. The police have however reported that 19 members of the group have been arrested even as the sit-at-home order witnessed partial success (Vanguard, 2018, Sept. 15)

The outcome of IPOB activities undoubtedly has a level of instability in it as shown in the crisis that erupted in Rivers state. The effects agitation has on stability can be social, cultural, political or economic (Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji, & Abasilim, 2018; Imhonopi, Urim, George, & Egharevha, 2013; Okafor, Imhonopi, & Urim, 2011). Tunis, Lin, Sharahili and Salvarathinam (2008) did a study of selected Asian countries within the duration of 1990 and 2005 and held a convincing opinion that political stability and economic growth are closely related. In the Nigerian case, the agitations of IPOB and the effects it has on political stability cannot be dissociated from the economic growth of Nigeria. A lot of differences have been identified in what surrounds the seeking of self-determination:

There is no easy way to end the difficult situations posed by self-determination movements in the world presently. Clearly, in the face of the growing number of such movements, there is a need to introduce a manageable and effective definition of the right to self-determination, though such a definition will not be easily arrived at and even then, it will be most likely be inconclusive and equivocal. The desire to look for self-determination has numerous origins including the denial of minority rights and other forms of government repression, territorial disputes, national aspirations and perceptions of economic and political viability among others. It develops gradually until violence and secession come into play as a last resort (Carley, 1996).

The above assertion is supported by Ozden and Golay, (2010, p.24) when they said that "the right to self-determination of Indigenous People and that of the states within which they inhabit are products of crisis especially if there is no proper care of the different interest of the groups involved and limited respect of human right and principles of democracy." Global Non-violent Action Base (2001) described the situation in Aceh in the time of crisis, "during this time, almost 7,000 non-Achinese residents of Aceh fled the province in anticipation of violent upheaval from Indonesia's military. On December 4, Indonesian Soldiers shot and wounded at least 12 demonstrators waving rebel flags in Aceh." This is where the effort of the state comes in by the total management and control of the affairs of the state and its people using democratic principles. On the contrary, it cannot be disputed that the government opinion is divergent when it comes to the issue of secession of any part coupled with a lot of interests it protects.

It has been expressed that the negative responses of the Nigerian government towards IPOB surely have delimitating implications:

The implications are already there, you can see what is happening between the militants, Boko Haram and the Nigerian government. When the Boko Haram started, it was the demand for Sharia and other things. The Nigerian government marched on them, killed their leaders and this negative step increased the level of that crisis. The government has continued to use force and repression. What has the government achieved through that? They have achieved nothing. They are working towards the IPOB agitating group getting to that (Ekwo, 2018).

Asuquo (2018) in his response to a question during an interview on the ways IPOB have threatened the Nigerian political stability said that "it is the treatment from the security forces that threaten political stability. When they come to arrest, shoot and kill, people will run helter-skelter. People now live in fear because they have seen what happened previously. People do not even think of participating in the election." In the same direction, Ejimakor (2018) supported the above assertion when he said that the military operation and its aftermaths adversely affected the stability of the government of the day, both domestically and in the eyes of the international community.

In reality, the group has remained disenchanted with the activities of the Nigerian government. This is seen in their responses in the questionnaire administered. A larger number of the group in their response to the questionnaire strongly agreed that they do not support election in Nigeria. Out of 477 respondents 287 (60.2%) strongly agreed while 160 (33.5%) agreed. This is also part of their non-participation approach in Nigerian politics which does not in any way promote democracy or political stability of the country. The larger number of IPOB members responded to strongly agree that their activities have attracted internal and external condemnation on the Nigerian government, discouraged local and foreign investment while their members enjoy peaceful coexistence with the IPOB sympathetic public.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

According to findings in this research, the more agitations for self-determination, the more political instability that will exist. In other words, the IPOB group in Nigeria through their agitations for self-determination has brought about political instability in Nigeria. This study, therefore, recommends that Nigerian federal government should set up a team that will carry out a study on the countries where achievement of self-determination by groups have occurred and countries where it has not succeeded in order to weigh the pros and cons and entrench political stability in Nigeria for the good of all its constituent units.

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