

Awareness of South-East Residents on the Functions of Eastern Security Network Activities

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Abstract

This study evaluated the awareness of South-East residents on the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities. The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population of this study, according to the National Population Commission, 2006 population census of South-Eastern States aged from 18 and above, stood at 10,421,081. The Krejcie and Morgan Table was used to determine the sample size of 384 and the study made use of instrument - questionnaire. The quantitative method of data analysis was presented using statistical tools as tables of weighted mean score (WMS) based on a 4- Point Likert-Scale. Findings from the study revealed that the extent residents of the South-east were aware of the functions of Eastern Security Network were high. The Eastern Security Network activities often revolves around advocating for the secession of the Igbo-dominated South-eastern region from Nigeria. The study indicated high level of awareness among people in the South-east regarding the functions of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), which was in alignment with IPOB's secessionist agenda. Based on the findings, the study recommended that efforts should be made to address the underlying grievances driving support for separatist movements, while ensuring effective communication to counter propaganda and promote national unity.

Keywords: Awareness, South-East Residents, Functions, Eastern Security Network, Activities

Introduction

The IPOB rose to prominence after previous Biafran independence organisations was weakened. The Nigerian government has been cracking down on IPOB members who peacefully protested due to Kanu's arrest and incarceration despite various court rulings for his release. Today, IPOB has metamorphosed from a group to a movement of the Indigenous Biafran population who are fed up with the Nigerian depleting state. Biafrans all over the world have identified with the movement, thereby making IPOB to be a face of Biafra restoration movement. Nnamdi Kanu, who maintains dual (British and Biafran) citizenship created IPOB after he initially gained fame from his broadcasts on Radio Biafra, which was established in 2009. This was a radio station from London that broadcast messages that called for "freedom of Biafrans" and criticised corruption in the government of Nigeria. Radio Biafra catalyzed Kanu's rise to the public scene, as he was previously an unknown figure. Kanu was arrested by Nigerian security forces on 19 October 2015, on charges of "sedition, ethnic incitement and treasonable felony" (Ibeanu et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding, the marginalisation, intimidation and subordination of the Easterners, they have continued in a wide proportion. Hence, it is against this background that Indigenous People of Biafra was formed. The group was founded in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a British Nigerian political activist known for his advocacy of the contemporary Biafran Independence movement. It was deemed as a terrorist organisation by the Nigerian Government in 2017 under the Nigerian Terrorism Act. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has criticised the Nigerian Federal Government for poor investment, political alienation, inequitable resource distribution, ethnic marginalisation and heavy military presence and, extra-judicial killings in the South-East (Obi -Ani & Obi- Ani, 2022).

In recent years, the group gained significant media attention for becoming a frequent target of political crackdowns by the Nigerian government. It also has numerous sites and communication channels serving as the only trusted social apparatus in educating and inculcating first-hand information and news to its members. The Eastern Security Network is the militia arm of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). It was formed in December, 2020 under the leadership of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Andy Nwaokike Kayinayo popularly known as "Ikonso". This was as a reaction to the South-East perception that they were targeted by Muslim Fulani herders, whom they accused of grazing on farmlands and committing crimes, terrorism and extra-judicial killings against local residents (Ezemenaka & Prouza, 2016).

According to Ajayi (2007), the Eastern Security Network is a contemporary of Amotekun in South-West, Hisbah in Kano, Yan Banga in Sokoto, Yan Kansai in Zamfara, Boyes in Borno, among others. Their major duty is to combat terrorism and criminal activities in the zone. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu renewed the separatist agitation of Biafra by reviving the defunct Radio Biafra and making it a platform to educate and sensitise Igbo both at home and in diaspora on the urgency for an independent nation. It also has social media handle platforms, such as Facebook account, Instagram, Twitter-handle, newspaper websites.

The awareness of South-East residents regarding the functions of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) is a crucial aspect of regional security and community engagement. Awareness, in this context, refers to the degree to which individuals are informed about the objectives, operations, and impact of ESN activities. Established to address the growing insecurity in the South-East region of Nigeria, the ESN aims to protect communities from violent crimes, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and herder-farmer conflicts (Ohukwu, 2021). Understanding the level of public awareness about ESN functions is essential, as it

directly influences community support, cooperation with insecurity efforts, and the overall effectiveness of the networks operations.

The functions of the ESN are multifaceted, encompassing, surveillance, intelligence gathering, and active intervention in security threats. The network operates with the intention of complementing formal law enforcement agencies, thereby enhancing the overall security architecture of the region (Nwosu, 2022). Public enlightenment about these functions is critical as it fosters a collaborative environment where residents are more likely to report suspicious activities, adhere to safety advisories, and support ESN initiatives. Increased awareness can lead to greater trust and legitimacy of the ESN, which are vital for its success and sustainability in maintaining peace and order.

However, despite the significance of ESN activities, there is a notable gap in the level of awareness among South-East residents. Factors such as misinformation, limited outreach, and scepticism towards informal security structures contribute to this gap. Effective communication strategies that clearly articulate the functions and benefits of the ESN are necessary to bridge this divide. By improving public understanding and awareness, the ESN can foster stronger community ties and enhance its operational efficacy. This paper aims to explore the current state of awareness among South-East residents about the ESN, identifying the challenges and opportunities for more effective public enlightenment campaigns.

Statement of the Problem

The level of awareness among South-East residents concerning the functions of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) is significantly deficient, posing critical challenges to regional security and community cohesion. Despite the establishment of the ESN to address pressing security concerns such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal conflicts, many residents remain uninformed or misinformed about the network's objectives and operations. This lack of awareness undermines the effectiveness of the ESN, as community support and cooperation are essential for the successful implementation of its security measures. Without a clear understanding of the ESN's role, residents are less likely to engage with or support its activities, leading to a diminished capacity to address security threats effectively.

Several factors contribute to this awareness gap. Misinformation and scepticism towards informal security structures play significant roles in shaping public perception. The ESN's activities are often shrouded in controversy and politicisation, which detracts from a clear and factual understanding of its functions. Furthermore, inadequate public enlightenment campaigns have failed to reach and educate a broad audience. This lack of targeted communication results in disconnect between the ESN's intentions and the community's perception, fostering an environment of mistrust and apprehension. The absence of comprehensive, transparent information about the ESN's operations exacerbates these issues, making it difficult for residents to discern the network's true purpose and benefits.

The implications of insufficient awareness are profound, impacting both the efficacy of the ESN and the overall security of the South-East region. Without widespread community understanding and support, the ESN struggles to gain the legitimacy and cooperation needed to function optimally. This can lead to increased vulnerability to security threats and reduced effectiveness of crime prevention and intervention efforts. Addressing this problem requires a concerted effort to enhance public awareness through well-designed communication strategies that clearly articulate the ESN's functions and benefits. By improving the community's understanding, the ESN can better achieve its goal of ensuring safety and security in the South-

East region. Hence, this paper sets to evaluate the awareness of South-East residents on the functions of Eastern Security Network Activities.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the awareness of South-East residents on the functions of Eastern Security Network activities. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the extent of South-East resident's awareness of the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities.
2. Ascertain the South-East people's knowledge on the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent are people of the South-East aware of the propaganda of the functions of the Eastern Security Network?
2. What is the South-East people's knowledge on the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Security

The primary duty of government in any given society is the protection of the country, citizens and property against danger and attacks. Security therefore, refers to as the government institution and processes of protection of lives and property in any given time as stipulated in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. It is as a result of this that the people willingly surrender their sovereignty to government which protects lives and property of all. Security is seen as any means deliberately designed to relieve the threats that prevent people from carrying out normal activities.

Buzan (1999) asserts that security is about freedom from threat and ability of states to maintain independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile while its bottom line is survival. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that security is generally agreed to be about a state of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty. Security is a multi-dimensional concept which has over the years been the subject of debates by different scholars. The term security is generally agreed to be about feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty defence, protection and preservation of a core value and threat to those values. From the foregoing, it could be agreed that security involves the process connected with assigning any kind of threat to people and their precious value. Afolabi (2015) submits that, security has to do with freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people.

It is a state of safety and protection which occurs when there is freedom from fear, danger, anxiety, threat and attacks on assets, values and interest of individuals group or the society at large. Abdulrahman and Zuwaira (2016) aver that, security is "stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life, protection from crime, and freedom from psychological harm, safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance of knowing that one is wanted, loved, accepted and protected in one's community"(p.65).

Security Challenges in the South-East Nigeria

The five states in South-East have in varying degrees witnessed total breakdown of law and order as organized criminal networks have undermined the operation of law enforcement

agencies, especially the police. At various points during this period, people of the South-East have resorted to “self-help” measures to stem the rising waves of crime, which gravely undermine their survival.

According to Nwodu et al (2021), the South-East region is known for its peaceful nature, bolstering business environment, and hospitality. Recently the region has been enmeshed in rising security challenges that have almost pitched the people against the federal government and the security agencies. The security challenges in the South-East range from killing of farmers and raping of women by armed Fulani herders, farmer-herder clashes, kidnapping for ransom, cultism and cult rivalry, armed robbery, separatist agitation by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to the clash and face-off between Eastern Security Network (ESN) and the combined force of the military and the police.

Thus, these indicate the number of incidents and fatalities per state in South-East Nigeria (4) states in 2020. From the (2020) ACLED report, Abia state recorded 8 battles, 9 riots, 14 violence against civilians and total incidents of 31 while the state recorded the total fatalities of 23. In Anambra state, 8 battles were recorded, 12, 22 violence against civilians as recorded by ACLED, a total incident of 42 and 26 recorded as fatalities. From the report, Imo state recorded 6 battles, with 9 riots, 16 as violence against civilians, total incidents of 38 and 18 as total fatalities. Ebonyi state recorded 10 battles, 5 riots, 14 as violence against civilians, a total incidents and 37 total of fatalities.

Radio Biafra Broadcasting and IPOB Renewed Agitation

In 2013, the Nigerian government was greeted with the re-opening of Radio Biafra which was last heard during the civil war (1967-1970). According to the director Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the new Radio Biafra had been “broadcasting from London, on short wave frequency” since 2009 (DailySun, 2013). Kanu revealed that Radio Biafra broadcast was brought home to intensify the struggle for Biafra restoration by creating awareness and mobilizing the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and other Pro-Biafran groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) towards achieving the goal. At first, the station was not entirely critical and seemed to pose no threat to the then government of former President Goodluck Jonathan but became a major concern to the Buhari administration as station employed different frames, slants and languages in criticizing the government thereby raising the tension for succession and disintegration of the various federation units the Nigerian state (Osamwonyi & Amenaghawon, 2017).

This resulted in arrest and detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu whose rhetoric on the radio station was viewed as treasonable and effrontery to sovereignty of the Nigerian government. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) in charge of broadcasting in Nigeria took drastic steps to shut down the station which they described as a pirate radio station. The Commission subsequently announced that the station had been shut down and cautioned Nigerians to totally “ignore all propaganda designed to sow seeds of discord among them to promote a separatist agenda against national unity, solidarity and progress” (Premium Times, 2015). This effort failed because the operating license of the new Radio Biafra was obtained in London and it utilizes digital facilities like satellite and the internet in broadcasts on 102.1 FM and 15.6 AM at different wavelengths.

Emergence of Eastern Security Network in the South-East Nigeria

The Eastern Security Network (ESN) is a non-state regional force and the paramilitary wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a movement whose aim is to restore the independence of Biafra which has been defunct since the end of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). The goal of Eastern Security Network is to combat Fulani raiders in the area of the former Eastern

Region of Nigeria (Allison, 2017). Over time, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has long stated through their means, medium and channels of communication to the people of South-East, that their movement has no intention of bearing arms, but many of the movement's followers have long disagreed with that, hence believing that the frequent crackdown of the group by the Nigerian Army and the Police justifies the reason for the arms in order to defend themselves (Obi-Ani, 2016). However, this was after the clampdown during the "Operation Python dance" I & II, when an attack the home of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in Afara Nkanu-Ibeku in Umuahia, Abia State Nigeria which resulted to death of some members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

The leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu formed Eastern Security Network in December, 2020. He stated the aims were to act as a regional security force to protect people against Fulani raiders. The formation of Eastern Security Network as a reaction to the Igbo's perception that they targeted by Muslim Fulani herders, whom they accuse of grazing on farmlands and community crimes against local residents.(Nzeagwu, 16th ,Dec,2020, the guardian newspaper).

Eastern Security Network (ESN) was modelled after Amotekun (Leopard) in the West and Miyelti Allah vigilante group in the North to protect the South-South and South-East from bandits and terrorists (Opejobi,13th Dec, 2020, Vanguard Newspaper). The security outfit is to ensure that safety of homes, forests and farmlands which terrorists have converted into slaughter grounds and raping fields.The Eastern Security Network (ESN), publicity secretary, Mr. Emma Powerful in a press statement pointed out that, the security outfit is not Biafra Army neither is it for forceful declaration of Biafran Republic, but rather to guard the whole of South-East against the menace of killer herdsmen and other criminal groups. He submitted that, the main aim and objective of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) is to halt criminal activities and terrorists attack in Biafra land, hence the below statement;

We the global family of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), under the command and leadership of our great leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu wish to announce with delight, that IPOB has floated a special security network to guard and protect the whole of Biafra land from the rampaging killer herdsmen terrorists activities and other criminal groups in our land (p.6).

The Eastern Security Network is the paramilitary organization of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a pro- Biafra separatist movement. According to Cable (2021) reviews that; the Nigerian government saw the ESN as a threat to its authority and deployed the army to locate and destroy the SouthEast Nigeria Security Network bases. In January 2021, intense fighting broke out in the town of Orlu, in Imo State. The military confrontation lasted for seven days, until South-East Security Network declared a unilateral ceasefire and both sides withdrew from the city. Shortly after the Orlu Crisis, IPOB gave all the governors of South-East Nigeria 14 days to ban open grazing, threatening to deploy the South-East Security Network to enforce a ban if the authorities did not do so. However, Uzodinma (2021) state that; the South-East Security Network did not wait for 14 days; a few days later, South-East Security Network operatives attacked a Fulani camp in Isuikwuato, Abia State, killing their livestock and burning down their houses.

Following the raid, some governors responded by heeding the South-East Security Networks call and banning. The Nigerian government saw the South-East Security Network as a threat to its members suspected of attacking security personnel. The Ector ate asserting that they have finally brought the war upon the Biafran people. In response to the deaths of 20

security personnel in the region in early 2021 by Unknown Gunmen, including the destruction of three police stations, Nigerian forces raided an South-East Security Network camp in Aba, Abia State on the night of 23rd March, 2021. The Nigerian force, numbering hundreds, captured the camp and claimed to have killed 16 South-East Security Network fighters. On 29th March, the Nigerian police reported arresting 16 South-East Security Network members suspected of attacking security personnel (Official 2021). On April 5, 2021, at around 2am, a prison in Owerri, Imo State, was attacked by gunmen who used explosives to open the administrative buildings, and then opened the inmates' cells. The prison security fled, and 1844 inmates escaped. The Nigerian police blamed the attack on the Eastern Security Network (Guardian 2021).

Theoretical Review

Frustration-Aggression Theory

This theory was developed by Dollard, Miller and Mower in 1939, and later expanded by some scholars such as Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962). The basic assumptions of the theory are that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the occurrence of frustration; antagonistic perceptions arise when a group of people are denied access to opportunities that help them to satisfy their needs, especially basic needs. The theory also presupposes that the failure to address the demands or complaint of specific groups within a state whether religious, ethnic or even political could give rise to frustration which could in turn lead to aggression. The theory suggests that frustration can lead to aggression. In the context of studying Southeast people's awareness of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) propaganda and Eastern Security Network (ESN) activities, this theory is relevant, if the individuals in the region feel frustrated due to perceived injustices or grievances, it could potentially contribute to heightened awareness and support for movements like IPOB and their associated activities like ESN, Exploring these connections may provide insights motivations in the region.

Empirical Review

Nwafor and Omoevah (2017) conducted a study on "Analysis of Radio Biafra Effectiveness on the Renewed Agitation for the Restoration of Biafra Republic among Listeners in Onitsha Metropolis". The objectives of the study were to examine the respondents frequency of exposure to Radio Biafra and to determine the dominant frames used in Radio Biafra broadcast, (hate speech, propaganda frame, secession frame etc. The study adopted Framing and Agenda theory as the theoretical frame work. The methodology adopted by the study was survey. The study revealed that, exposure to Radio Biafra broadcasts influenced the respondents to participate in the various Pro- Biafra agitations across the country and beyond and also indicated they could recall slogans such as 'Biafra or death', Nigeria is a Zoo, the Zoo must fall etc.

The study concluded that, the Radio Biafra of the Nigerian Civil War era was used in promoting the secessionist dream of Ojukwu in the Civil War between 1967-1970. The study recommended that, the management of Radio Biafra should use it to promote history and cultural integration in Igbo land and Nigeria in general rather than using it as an instrument of secession and disintegration. The reviewed study and the current study are related as both studies focus on Biafra agitation for restoration of Biafra Republic and South-East people. However whereas the reviewed study focused on Analysis of Radio Biafra Effectiveness on the Renewed Agitation for the Restoration of Biafra Republic among Listeners in Onitsha Metropolis, the current study focuses on evaluation of South-East People's Awareness of

Indigenous People of Biafra Propaganda (IPOB) and the Functions of Eastern Security Network. The reviewed study focused on radio Biafra analysis on effectiveness among listeners of Onitsha and failed to research on the awareness and propaganda of indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) in South East. The reviewed study centered on radio Biafra, the current study cover various mediums used by indigenous people of Biafra in disseminating their messages to the South East people of Nigeria. It will also research on the functions of Eastern security network and their functions in the South East.

Onwe et al. (2021) conducted a study on “When Propaganda Imitates Truth: Analysis of the perception of messages from Radio Biafra of the Perception of messages from Radio Biafra by members of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).” The objectives of the study were to analyze the effectiveness of Radio Biafra in influencing the opinion and action of members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The study sought to determine how the members of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) perceive the messages received from the radio channel dedicated to champion the secessionist cause and the extent they believe every message the receive as true.

The study adopted Media Dependency and Hypodermic Needle theory as the theoretical frame work of the study. The study employed survey methodology. The study revealed that members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) are highly exposed to Radio Biafra and they perceive every message received from the station as true. The reviewed study also found out that, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) consider their leader as a deity whose words are creed. The study concluded that, radio Biafra is very effective medium in propagating secession message among the members of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The study therefore recommended among others that, the management of Radio Biafra should change themes of their broadcast to reflect ethnic cohesion rather than hatred, violence and disunity. It also recommended that the management of Radio Biafra should change negative framing of their broadcasts, as it should be use to promote cultural integration in South-East Nigeria.

The reviewed study and the current are related as both centre on propaganda messages by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and adopted same methodological approach, but differ in scope, as the reviewed study limited its scope of the study on three (3) cities (Onitsha, Umuahia and Abakiliki), also differ in theories. The current study is focus on evaluation of South- East people’s awareness of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the functions of Eastern Security Network. The scope of the current study is to cover the five (5) states in the South-East Nigeria and a broader time frame, 2020 to 2022. The reviewed study centered only on perception of messages from radio Biafra of indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB), and how the messages has influenced their opinions and actions, but it failed to research on various mediums used by indigenous people of Biafra as is centered only on radio Biafra in disseminating their messages to the south east people. The study did not research on the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the reason for establishing the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and their functions.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey method. The essence of survey research design to this study was to enable the researcher to elicit information from the South-Easterners, to evaluate the extent of their awareness of the functions of Eastern Security Network. The population for the study comprised the residents of South-Eastern States aged from 18 and above. This age bracket was considered appropriate to meet the research objectives because the age bracket can make decisions and is responsible for the decisions. According to the 2006 National Population Commission, census of South-East states, Abia had 1,837,372; Anambra, 2,692,238; Ebonyi,

1,275,114; Enugu, 2,104,723 and Imo 2,511,634. The total population of the South-East People from 18 and above age stood at 10,421,081. This was projected at 2.8 as growth rate for 17 years (that is from 2006 – 2023 which gave a projection of 10,712,872).

Since the population for the study is 10,712,872 which fall within the infinite population as observed by krejcie and Morgan (1970), the researcher made use of the scholars’ sampling template in order to determine the sample size for the study. According to the sampling template, when the population of any study is in the range of 100,000 and above, then the appropriate sample size would be 384. It is based on this that the researcher arrived at the sample size of 384 adopted for this study. Since the sample size is 384, which represents only 0.0015%. Having established the sample size of this study as 384, the researcher intends to use the multi-stage sampling technique to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The researcher made use of the instrument - questionnaire. The researcher adopted quantitative method to present and analyze the data gathered from the respondents. The quantitative method of data analysis was presented using statistical tools as tables of frequency distribution, simple percentages and weighted mean score (WMS) based on a 4- Point Likert-Scale.

Results and Discussion

Table 4.5: Awareness by Residents of South-East on the Function of Eastern Security Network

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
5.	As an indigene of South-East Nigeria, I am aware of the function of ESN in the South-East	792	555	0	0	1347	3.55	Accepted
6.	I am aware of the statement that Nigeria is a zoo by Indigeous People of Biafra	980	402	0	0	1382	3.65	Accepted
7.	I accept the message of freedom for Biafra by Indigeous People of Biafra	748	576	0	0	1324	3.49	Accepted
8.	I have personal knowledge about the Eastern Security Network in the South-East Nigeria	752	528	10	0	1290	3.40	Accepted
9.	I agree that the function of Eastern Security Network is to protect lives and property of the South-East people	592	495	132	0	1219	3.22	Accepted
10.	The performance of Eastern Security Network is very much acceptable to me	648	519	70	9	1246	3.29	Accepted
						7808	4.12	Accepted

Data in Table 1 reveal that the extent people of the South-east were aware of the functions of Eastern Security Network was high.

Table 2: South-East Residents’ Knowledge of the Functions of the Eastern Security Network Activities

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
16.	ESN is a symbol of resistance against perceived marginalisation and injustice, embodying aspirations for self-determination and autonomy	628	588	48	2	1266	3.34	Accepted
17.	ESN is to protect local communities from external threats and maintain peace and security	912	465	0	0	1377	3.63	Accepted
18.	ESN is a response to perceived neglect by traditional security agencies and a means to address local security challenges	828	516	0	0	1344	3.55	Accepted
19.	ESN engages in activities such as patrols, intelligence gathering and community policing to safeguard the region	732	588	0	0	1320	3.48	Accepted
21.	ESN’s activities are legitimate and effective	616	444	108	23	1191	3.14	Accepted
						6498	3.43	Accepted

Data in Table 2 reveal that the South-East people’s knowledge of the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities was a symbol of resistance against perceived marginalisation and injustice, embodying aspirations for self-determination and autonomy, to protect local communities from external threats and maintain peace and security, response to perceived neglect by traditional security agencies and a means to address local security challenges, engaged in activities such as patrols, intelligence gathering and community policing to safeguard the region and were legitimate and effective.

Discussion of Findings

Rsearch question 1: To what extent are residents of the South-East aware of the functions of the Eastern Security Network?

Findings showed that the extent to which the people of the South-East were aware of the functions of Eastern Security Network was high as the weighted mean score was 3.43. The interview report showed that IPOB’s propaganda often revolved around advocating for the secession of the Igbo-dominated South-Eastern region from Nigeria. The group presents its vision of an independent Biafran state, emphasising historical grievances and the desire for self-determination. IPOB frequently references the Nigerian Civil War, portraying it as a period of injustice and marginalisation against the Igbo. Also, it was revealed that ESN is a

community-based security initiative aimed at protecting the people of the South-East region. It seeks to address concerns related to crime, communal clashes and external threats to ensure the safety of local residents. ESN has been active in responding to conflicts between herders and farmers, a source of tension in various parts of Nigeria.

Findings of this study uphold the study of Nwafor and Omoevah (2017) which found that, exposure to Radio Biafra broadcasts influenced the respondents to participate in the various Pro-Biafran agitations across the country and beyond and also indicated they could recall slogans such as ‘Biafra or death’, Nigeria is a Zoo and the Zoo must fall.

The two theories that this study is anchored on give backings to this finding. The frustration-aggression theory gives understanding of how feelings of dissatisfaction can fuel support for movements like Eastern Security Network (ESN). The theory suggests that when individuals experience frustration or perceived injustice, they may resort to aggressive actions as a means of expressing their discontent. In the context of the findings, the high level of awareness regarding the propaganda and functions of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in the South-East could be interpreted as a manifestation of frustration with the state of affairs, such as perceived marginalisation or a lack of political representation.

Research Question 2: What is the South-East residents’ knowledge on the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities?

The result showed that the South-East people’s knowledge on the functions of the Eastern Security Network activities was a symbol of resistance against perceived marginalisation and injustice, embodying aspirations for self-determination and autonomy. This was to protect local communities from external threats and maintain peace and security, response to perceived neglect by traditional security agencies and a means to address local security challenges. They engaged in activities such as patrols, intelligence gathering and community policing to safeguard the region and were legitimate and effective. This was accepted as the weighted mean score was 3.22.

The finding is in tandem with the study of Onwe et al’s (2021) that, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) consider their leader as a deity whose words are a creed. The findings are in line with the frustration-aggression theory that was adopted in this study, suggesting that when individuals feel marginalised or oppressed, their frustration can manifest as aggressive actions aimed at challenging the perceived injustices and asserting their rights or identity.

Conclusion

This study indicates high level of awareness among people in the South-East regarding the functions of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), aligned with IPOB’s secessionist agenda. The study underscores the deep-rooted understanding among individuals in the South-East on the objectives and operations of the Eastern Security Network, illustrating the widespread influence of IPOB’s secessionist propaganda within the region.

This study establishes the role of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in the South-East, serving not only as a symbol of resistance against perceived marginalisation and injustice but also embodying aspirations for self-determination, local autonomy and community protection in the face of external threats and security challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Efforts should be made to address the underlying grievances driving support for separatist movements, while ensuring effective communication to counter propaganda and promote national unity.
2. It is advisable to engage the aspirations and concerns of the residents in the South-East region and redress issues of marginalisation and injustice to foster a sense of inclusivity and unity.

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