

Perceived Impact of the Activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) on the Growth and Profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, Businesses in Onitsha Main Market, Anambra State

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Abstract

The activities and attacks of unknown gunmen is arguably a relatively recent phenomenon especially in south-eastern states of Nigeria that had instilled fear in the minds of people as a result of their deadly and destructive activities which has led to recent disruption in business activities especially the sit-at-home order. Thus, this paper attempts to investigate the perceived impact of the activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) on the growth and profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market. The relative deprivation theory formed the theoretical framework of the study and the mixed methods research design was adopted by the researcher. A sample size of 204 participants was drawn Onitsha main market, Anambra state for the collection of quantitative data whereas 4 persons were engaged in In-Depth Interview sessions. The quantitative data collated from the field were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages while thematic analysis was used in analysing the qualitative data. The study found that UGM activities have negative impact on the growth of businesses in Onitsha main market as UGM attacks scare away investors, lead to destruction of business premises/properties and discourages business expansion by existing business owners. The study also found that the activities of UGM lead to decrease in profit of Large, medium, small and micro businesses in Onitsha main market as a result of reduction in business days due to sit-at-home orders. The study recommended among others granting of the sovereign state of the Republic of Biafra by the Nigerian government will contribute greatly in curbing the activities of UGM since it the major agitation of those involved in UGM attacks.

Keywords: Unknown Gun Men (UGM), large businesses, medium businesses, small businesses, micro businesses, growth, profitability and Biafra

Introduction

Insecurity, whether stemming from economic instability, political turmoil, or social unrest, casts a pervasive shadow over businesses globally. The uncertainty resulting from insecurity disrupts investment, supply chains, and consumer confidence, hindering growth

and innovation. From fluctuating markets to physical threats, businesses grapple with myriad challenges, impacting their operations, profitability, and sustainability. Insecurity such as Unknown Gun Men (UGM) activities breeds caution, stifling entrepreneurial spirit and deterring foreign investment. According to United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2022), the ripple effects of such disaster can extend beyond financial losses to erode trust and hamper long-term planning in business activities.

The security challenges impacting Large, Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises in Nigeria have sparked ongoing discussions about their origins and the severe impacts on the country's socio-economic progress. The recent increase in violence and destruction of lives and property further compounds these concerns, making it difficult for SMEs to operate effectively. (Asogwa, Onyekwelu & Azubike, 2022). Yet, each business operates within a dynamic and competitive setting, defined by unpredictable economic, political, technological, and socio-cultural factors. These factors interact inextricably in determining the performance of businesses in achieving their stated objectives/goals because they depend on its environment for their material inputs and the same environment for their output as an open system (Adeyefa & Olayinka 2023). Therefore, the high level of insecurity in southeastern Nigeria orchestrated by the activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) in has negatively affected the operations of Large, Medium, Small and Micro business organizations.

Statement of the Problem

The proliferation of unknown gunmen activities in various regions in southeastern Nigeria has raised concerns not only for public safety but also for economic stability. Unknown gunmen activities encompass a range of criminal acts, including armed robbery, extortion, kidnapping, disruption of business activities and vandalism. These activities often target businesses, posing significant threats to their operations, growth, and profitability. The presence and activities of unknown gunmen poses a significant problem for business enterprises, particularly in regions such as southeastern Nigeria where business activities are prevalent. Firstly, it creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, deterring potential

customers and investors from engaging with the business. This fear can lead to a decline in foot traffic, resulting in decreased sales and revenue.

According to Tenza (2020), the threat of violence disrupts normal business operations, leading to closures, loss of productivity, and damage to property. This not only affects the financial stability of the enterprise but also disrupts flow of goods and services leading to delays in receiving goods and services, and ultimately impacting customer satisfaction. Additionally, businesses may incur additional costs for security measures to protect their premises, employees, and assets, further squeezing profit margins. These expenses can include hiring security personnel, installing security systems, and implementing safety protocols. Furthermore, the negative perception associated with operating in areas prone to unknown gunmen activities can tarnish the reputation of businesses, making it challenging to attract and retain customers and talented employees.

Overall, the impact of unknown gunmen activities on business enterprises is profound, affecting financial stability, operations, reputation, and growth potential of business enterprises. While the direct consequences of such incidents, such as property damage and financial losses, are evident, their broader impact on business growth and sustainability requires deeper examination. In Onitsha main market and Southeastern Nigeria, the sit-at-home order by Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria is enforced by Unknown Gun Men and this has led to high compliance by business owners and residents of the area as well. Thus, shops are locked up every Monday and other days stated out with no business activity going on in the main market. However, a past governors of the state and other government officials has given orders and also tried to interact with the market leaders to start opening their businesses on Monday but fear of molestation by UGM would not allow them comply. Thus, the present study examine the perceived impact of the activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) on the growth and profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market.

Research Objectives

The following research questions were asked to guide this study

1. What is the rate of UGM attack in Onitsha main market, Anambra State?

2. How does UGM attacks impact on the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market?
3. How does UGM attacks impact on the profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market?
4. How can the impacts of UGM activities on businesses be curbed in Onitsha main market, Anambra State?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the perceived impact of the activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) on the growth and profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market. Specifically, the study aims to;

1. Find out the rate of UGM attacks in Onitsha main market, Anambra State.
2. Examine the perceived impacts UGM attacks have on the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market.
3. To ascertain the perceived impacts UGM attacks have on the profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market.
4. To profer feasible solutions that will help curb the impacts of UGM activities on businesses in Onitsha main market, Anambra State.

Literature Review

Concept of Unknown Gun Men (UGM)

It is imperative to disentangle the term 'unknown gunmen' which has recently become a popular catchphrase in Nigeria's insecurity imbroglio. According to Nwangwu (2022), unknown gunmen might refer to individuals who carry out violent actions, such as assassinations or acts of terrorism, for political or ideological motives. Their identities and affiliations may be unknown to the public or difficult to ascertain, making them "unknown" in the context of their motives. Unknown gunmen could also represent enigmatic or anonymous individuals who carry out actions with unclear motives or purposes. They might engage in activities that generate speculation or intrigue, with their identities remaining undisclosed or shrouded in mystery (Akinyetun, Ebonine & Ambrose, 2023).

The term UGM in recent times has been used to refer to criminal elements from a particular part of Nigeria, thus giving the incidence of insecurity in Nigeria a religious and ethnic colouration (Nda-Isaiah, 2021) 'Attacks by unknown gunmen' is a phrase often used to describe sectional violence taking place in the south-east of the country. However, in his statement in 2022, the Governor of Anambra State Prof. Charles Soludo explained that:

the so-called 'unknown gunmen' were not unknown as they claimed to be but were yet to be exposed because they were being pampered by landlords and other stakeholders...Criminals kidnapping people for ransom, killings and destruction are not agitating but engaging in lucrative criminality. We know where these criminals are... It is not agitation, but a criminal activity. (Sahara Reporters, 2022, p. 1).

From the explanation made by the governor, it can be seen that the activities of the UGM include killing, kidnapping and destruction of lives including business properties and activities.

History of UGM in Southeastern Nigeria

In recent times, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), spearheaded by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, has emerged as a significant force in southeastern Nigeria. Established in 2012, IPOB initially operated as a nonviolent organization until the creation of its militant wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), in December 2020. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu attributed the formation of the ESN to the failure of Southeast governors to protect Igbo lives and property. However, the ESN's activities soon escalated, allegedly involving deadly operations that claimed numerous lives, including those of security personnel (Ikezie, 2023).

The situation intensified following Kanu's re-arrest after being extradited from Kenya, prompting IPOB to issue "sit at home" orders, despite subsequent reassurances to the contrary. These directives effectively shut down economic activities in the region, with markets, banks, and transportation services ceasing operations on Mondays. This disruption stemmed from the fear of reprisals for non-compliance with IPOB directives, contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity.

Simultaneously, a new trend emerged with the rise of "unknown gunmen," who conducted violent acts under the guise of anonymity. These developments compounded existing challenges in the region, creating an environment marred by extrajudicial killings, organized crime, and widespread fear. Consequently, southeastern Nigeria became increasingly hazardous, impeding normalcy and economic prosperity.

Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses

Generally, large scale businesses are businesses that have massive infrastructure capabilities, employ a significant number of workers (usually 250 and more) and produce a large amount of output (Bhattacharjee, 2022). Bhattacharjee also opined that large scale industries are capital-intensive and have a major impact on the economy as they generate a substantial amount of revenue. Large scale businesses also have huge requirement of raw material for business and allied service; and as such generate employment for many across urban and rural sectors. Simply put, large scale enterprises are typically characterized by extensive resources, large market share, and a significant workforce.

Various countries have what define medium scale businesses however, on a general note, medium scale industries are industries that are smaller than large corporations but still have a considerable market presence and resources. World Bank, puts number of employees of medium scale businesses at above 50 but below 300 and total asset above \$3.0 million but less than \$15 million (N6.45 billion), and average annual sales turnover at above \$3.0 million but less than \$15 million (N6.45 billion). Thus, medium scale businesses have relatively smaller work force, capital base and market impact, compared to large scale businesses (Adamu & Ibrahim, 2011).

Small scale businesses on the other hand In Nigeria according to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) include entities with asset base of N5 million and not more than N500 million excluding land and buildings with employees between 11 and 200 (Aneto, 2022). Liberto (2023) further stated that small scale businesses are often independently owned and operated, with fewer employees and lower revenue compared to medium-sized or large businesses.

According to Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), micro enterprises are enterprises with less than 10 employees and asset base (excluding land and building) of less than N5million. It placed employee number for small enterprises category at between 10 and 49 with asset base (excluding land and building) at between N5million and N50million. The Medium enterprises category is defined by employee number of between 50 and 199, while asset base (excluding land and building) is put at between N50 million and N500 million. The smallest scale of business, often run by a single individual or a handful of employees, with very limited resources.

Impact of UGM activities on growth and profitability of businesses

Unknown Gun Men (UGM) attacks can have devastating effects on the growth and profitability of businesses, particularly in regions where such incidents occur frequently. Firstly, these attacks create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, leading to a decline in consumer confidence and a reluctance to engage in economic activities. This can result in reduced foot traffic for businesses, lower sales, and ultimately, decreased profitability (Akinyetun, Ebonine & Ambrose, 2023).

Moreover, UGM attacks often disrupt supply chains and transportation routes, causing delays in the delivery of goods and services. This can lead to increased operational costs for businesses, as they may need to find alternative, more expensive means of transportation or secure their supply chains against further attacks. Furthermore, the uncertainty surrounding UGM attacks can deter both domestic and foreign investment in the affected areas. Investors may view such regions as high-risk environments, opting to allocate their resources elsewhere. This lack of investment stifles economic growth and innovation, further hampering the long-term viability of businesses operating in these areas (Chibizor, Otohinoyi & Weinoh, 2024).

In conclusion, the impact of UGM attacks on businesses goes beyond immediate physical damage, extending to long-term economic repercussions that hinder growth and profitability. Effective security measures, community engagement, and government intervention are essential to mitigate these effects and create a safer environment for business development.

Theoretical Framework

Social Conflict Theory

The theory underpinning this study is Relative Deprivation Theory. Relative Deprivation was coined by a sociologist known as Samuel Stouffer in 1949. The theory suggests that people assess their well-being not only based on their absolute conditions but also by comparing themselves to others and their social group. This comparison can lead to feelings of relative deprivation if individuals perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged compared to others. The theory further maintained that individuals and groups who lack some goods, services and comfort are more likely to organize themselves collectively to improve and defend their conditions (Ikezue, 2023).

In relation to the present study, the theory explains why there are frequent problems associated with ethnic groups, regions or provinces that are fighting to address their relatively deprived situation especially in federations where resources and revenue are not well distributed (Ikezue, 2023). It could be argued that UGM activities and attacks results from the conflict in society; a conflict resulting from perceived marginalization and deprivation of Igbos in Southeastern Nigeria. Thus, the presence of this conflict has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty for businesses as it has led to decreased consumer confidence and reduced economic activity. Thus, businesses suffer as consumers stay indoors or avoid certain areas perceived to be unsafe, impacting growth and profitability. It is a known fact that businesses in conflict-affected regions may face higher security costs, such as hiring guards or implementing security measures, diverting resources away from investment and expansion efforts; all these hinders business growth. Additionally, the perception of instability caused by UGM activities may deter potential investors and businesses from entering or expanding operations in affected areas, stifling economic growth in the long term.

Overall, Relative Deprivation Theory explain how the activities of UGM which as a result of social conflict, marginalization and fight for resources can negatively impact businesses by fostering an environment of instability, fear, and economic uncertainty.

Method

This study adopted a mixed methods research design. Thus, it made use of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative instrument used in this study was questionnaire schedule while the qualitative data was In-Depth Interview. Multistage sampling technique which includes cluster and simple random sampling technique was used to select the study participants. First, Onitsha main market was clustered into five based on major items sold in the market after which simple random sampling technique without replacement was used to select four sections in the market based on what was sold. Further, systematic sampling technique was used to select shop in the selected sections from which 204 persons were selected (I.e, 101 each from each section of the market). The sample size for the study was estimated using Taro Yamane statistical formula. On the other hand, 4 persons were purposively selected from the four selected sections of the market to participate in the in-depth Interview sessions. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (simple frequency tables) while the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. 204 questionnaires were shared during the course of this study, however, only 191 were correctly filled and returned. The analysis of this study was based on the 191 correctly filled and returned questionnaires.

Data presentation and analysis

The quantitative data collected from the field were presented in tables in line with the reserach questions and was also complimented with the data collected from the interview sessions.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 124 | 64.9 |
| Female | 67 | 35.1 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |
| Age | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 18-27 | 21 | 11.0 |
| 28-37 | 33 | 17.3 |
| 38-47 | 67 | 35.1 |
| 48-57 | 51 | 26.7 |
| 58 years and above | 19 | 9.9 |
| Total | 191 | 200 |
| Religious affiliation | | |
| Christianity | 127 | 66.4 |
| Islam | 13 | 6.0 |
| ATR | 33 | 17.2 |
| Others | 18 | 9.4 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 27 | 14.2 |
| Married | 121 | 63.4 |
| Separated | 11 | 5.6 |
| Divorced | 12 | 6.3 |
| Widowed | 20 | 10.5 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |
| Level of Education | | |
| First School Leaving Certificate | 67 | 35.1 |
| SSCE/GCE | 70 | 36.6 |
| B.Sc./HND/DIP/NCE | 39 | 20.4 |
| M.Sc. | 11 | 5.8 |
| Ph.D. | 4 | 2.1 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |
| Level of Income (monthly) | | |
| 0-5,000 Naira | - | - |
| 5,001-50,000 Naira | 53 | 27.7 |
| 50,001-100,000 Naira | 34 | 17.8 |

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| 100,001-1,000,000 Naira | 56 | 29.3 |
| 1,000,001 Naira and above | 48 | 25.1 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 1 shows the representation of the demographic data of the study participants. Data presented in the table shows that majority of the respondents (64.9%) are male. The table also shows that majority of the respondents (35.1%) are within the age bracket of 38-47. The table again, shows that majority of the study respondents (66.4%) are Christians. It was further shown in the table that majority of the respondents (63.4%) are married. Furthermore, data presented in table 1 shows that majority of the respondents are O' Level holders. Data presented in the table also shows that majority of the respondents (29.3%) earns 100,001-1,000,000 Naira monthly.

Research Question 1: What is the rate of UGM attack in Onitsha main market, Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents' views on whether they have experienced UGM attack Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 143 | 74.9 |
| No | 48 | 25.1 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the responses given by respondents when asked whether they have experienced UGM attack Onitsha main market and the result shows that 74.9% of the respondents indicated yes while 25.1% indicated no. This result shows that majority of the respondents have experienced UGM attack in Onitsha main market.

Table 3: Respondents' views on how often they experience UGM attack in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Very often | 10 | 5.2 |
| Often | 17 | 8.9 |
| Not often | 109 | 57.1 |
| Rarely | 55 | 28.8 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the responses given by respondents on how often they experience UGM attacks in Onitsha main market and data presented in the table shows that majority of the respondents 57.1% indicated not often. By implication, traders in Onitsha main market does not experience UGM attacks often in Onitsha main market. This result support the response of an IDI respondent who explained that;

Unknown Gun Men attacks is a thing that gets everyone on their toes currently in southeastern Nigeria and they don't warn when they attack. I have heard of their attack and experienced it once here in Onitsha main market. But it is not something we experience here all the time **(Male, 39 years old, Businessman, Sokoto line)**.

Another respondent also explained that

In as much as UGM attacks is a thing that scares everyone, their activities is very low in Onitsha main market compare to other places especially in rural areas and semi-urban areas. Here in main market, we hardly experience their activities in as sometimes we run based on the rumour they are in the market or close by **(Male, 53 years old, Trader, Lagos line)**.

Research Question 3: How does UGM attacks impact on the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market?

Table 4: Respondents' perception on the impact of UGM attacks on the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Positive | 9 | 4.7 |
| Negative | 182 | 95.3 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that a very high percentage (95.3%) of the respondents perceived the impact of UGM attacks on Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market to be negative. This result supports the responses of various IDI respondents who opined that;

*Since the intensity of the activities of UGM, business activities have suffered a lot and this have affected their growth in the whole of southeastern Nigeria. Many businesses have been affected and many closed***(Female, 48 years old, Trader, 1st UAC line)**

Another respondent opined that;

It is very clear that the impact of UGM activities is hurting businesses in Anambra State. The rate at which people carry out their business activities is high affected by the activities of these people and their activities have also hindered a lot of business that would have sprung up **(Male, 53 years old, Trader, Lagos line)**

Table 5: Respondents' views on how UGM attacks negatively impact the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Scare away investors | 52 | 27.2 |
| Lead to destruction of business premises/properties | 19 | 9.9 |
| Discourages business expansion by existing business owners | 24 | 12.6 |

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| All of the above | 96 | 50.3 |
| None of the above | - | - |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 5 shows the responses given by respondents when asked the impact of UGM attacks on the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market and result shows that majority of the respondents (50.3%) agreed that UGM attacks scare away investors, lead to destruction of business premises/properties and also discourages business expansion by existing business owners thus, hindering the growth of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market. In a similar opinion to the above result, an IDI respondent opined that;

The activities of Unknown Gun Men have led to the decline in business and the flow of businesses in Onitsha main market. The rate at which investor troop into the market has greatly reduced compared to when things were normal and there was nothing such as sit-at-home and Unknown Gun Men. Many people have also lost interest in expanding their businesses in the region as a result of losses in days of businesses to unnecessary sit-at-home **(Female, 30 years old, Entrepreneurs, Main market)**

Another respondent also stated that;

Sit-at-home and destruction in businesses as a result of running to rumors of UGM and even the attacks of UGM have really reduced the level of business transactions and establishment going on in Southeastern Nigeria. Everyone wants where their business is safe and secure and the activities of UGM has made Southeast unsecure for businesses **(Male, 39 years old, Businessman, Sokoto line).**

Research Question 3: How does UGM attacks impact on the profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market?

Table 6: Respondents' perception on the impact of UGM attacks has on the profit of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Increase in profit | 4 | 2.1 |
| Decrease in profit | 187 | 97.9 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents (97.9%) of the respondents agreed that UGM attacks leads to decrease in profit of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market.

Table 7: Respondents' views on how UGM attacks impact the profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Lead to decline in customers | 11 | 5.8 |
| Lead to reduction in days of business as a result of sit-at-home orders | 86 | 45.0 |
| Result in delay of goods arrival | 12 | 6.3 |
| Lead to reduction in the volume of goods bought | 32 | 16.8 |
| All of the above | 50 | 26.2 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 7 shows that majority of the respondents (45.0%) indicated that reduction in days of business as a result of sit-at-home orders is the way UGM attacks impact the profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market. This result aligns with the response of an IDI respondent who opined that;

The countless sit-at-homes and weekly Monday sit at homes with heavy threats around it has contributed to great losses in business in Onitsha main market. Lossing a whole

day in one of the biggest markets in Africa is a big deal and the loss traders incur as a result of these sit-at-homes and fear of UGM have really affected the overall income of the market **(Female, 48 years old, Trader, 1st UAC line)**

Another respondent also explained that;

From my own experience of being a trader, one thing I have come to realise is that a day lost in the life of a trader is profit lost. Many times, shops are closed for fear of the unknown especially when warnings are given for people to observe sit-at-home. These days, the market is empty and closed because nobody would want to risk their lives as UGM can attack anytime. This closure of market has really affected the profit made by we business persons **(Female, 30 years old, Entrepreneurs, Main market)**

Research Question 4: How can the impacts of UGM activities on businesses be curbed in Onitsha main market, Anambra State?

Table 8: Respondents' views on how UGM attacks can be curb in Onitsha main market

| Responses | Frequency | Percentages |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Tightening of security in Onitsha main market | 10 | 5.2 |
| Strict punishment for those involving in UGM activities | 6 | 3.1 |
| Tracking down sponsors of UGM in Southeastern Nigeria | 15 | 7.9 |
| Releasing the leader of IPOB (Mazi Nnamdi Kalu) | 13 | 6.8 |
| Granting of the sovereign state of the Republic of Biafra | 147 | 77.0 |
| Total | 191 | 100 |

Field survey, 2024

Table 8 shows the responses given by respondents when asked how UGM attacks can be curbed in Onitsha main market and the result shows that majority of the respondents agreed that granting of the sovereign state of the Republic of Biafra will curb the attack of

UGM in Onitsha main market. The result in table 8 support the response of an IDI respondent who opined that:

In my own opinion, the agitation and fight for Biafra is the major reason why the activities of the UGM increased in the first place. I believe that if the Igbos are allowed to be a sovereign state, the activities will reduce. The major agitation of the UGM is Biafra and I think it will be the ultimate solution in tackling the problem **(Male, 39 years old, Businessman, Sokoto line)**.

Another respondent had a similar opinion and explained that;

UGM activities especially attacks on people will reduce drastically if Nnamdi Kalu is released from jail. The activities of these men became more intense as Nnamdi Kalu was arrested. In fact, that was the peak of the activities of the UGM. In my own opinion, there is a greater possibility of the activities of UGM reducing with the release of Nnamdi Kalu **(Male, 53 years old, Trader, Lagos line)**

Summary of Findings

In investigating the perceived impact of the activities of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) on the growth and profitability of Large, Medium, Small and Micro, businesses in Onitsha main market, the study found that a lot of traders have experienced UGM attacks in Onitsha main market although they don't experience it often. The study also found that UGM activities have negative impact on the growth of businesses in Onitsha main market as UGM attacks scare away investors, lead to destruction of business premises/properties and discourages business expansion by existing business owners. The study further found that the activities of UGM lead to decrease in profit of Large, medium, small and micro businesses in Onitsha main market as a result of reduction in business days due to sit-at-home orders. Furthermore, the study found that granting of the sovereign state of the Republic of Biafra is the way the activities of UGM and its impact on businesses in Onitsha main market can be curbed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Security in Onitsha main market should be tightened by government and other security agencies as this will help reduce the activities of UGM in the market.
2. There should be strict punishment for those caught involving in UGM activities as this will serve as deterrence to those who wish to engage in such activities.
3. Sponsors of UGM in Southeastern Nigeria and also outside southeastern Nigeria should be tracked down by special intelligence forces and make to face the law as this will help reduce the sponsorship and activities of UGM.
4. Granting of the sovereign state of the Republic of Biafra by the Nigerian government will contribute greatly in curbing the activities of UGM since it the major agitation of those involve in UGM attacks.

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