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AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE IPOB SIT-AT-HOME ORDER ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN NSUKKA, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined the socio-economic impacts of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) sit-at-home order on Nsukka, Enugu State. The primary objectives are to assess the economic effects on businesses and markets, examine the impact on social activities such as education and transport services, evaluate residents' perceptions, and provide recommendations to mitigate negative consequences. A structured questionnaire based on a Likert 4-point scale was used to collect primary data from 245 respondents out of 250 distributed questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data. The study is framed within Conflict Theory, which explores the causes and consequences of social conflict, focusing on power disparities and resource allocation issues. Findings indicate significant economic disruptions, with reduced business revenue, market activity interruptions, and business closures. Social activities, particularly education and transport services, have also been adversely affected, leading to frequent school closures and academic performance declines. While many residents view the sit-at-home order as a necessary protest, there is substantial acknowledgment of its negative impacts and a preference for its discontinuation due to daily life disruptions. Recommendations include enhancing dialogue between IPOB and the government, implementing community awareness programs to promote non-violent protests, and improving security measures. Economic support for affected businesses, community resilience initiatives, and educational infrastructure improvements are also suggested to mitigate the adverse impacts.
Keywords: IPOB Sit-at-Home Order, Political Protest, Socio-Economic Impact, Social Activities, Resident Perceptions.

Introduction

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerged in the early 2000s as a movement advocating for the secession of southeastern Nigeria, historically known as Biafra. This group gained prominence under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu, using various forms of protest to draw attention to their cause, including radio broadcasts, demonstrations, and, notably, the sit-at-home orders. The sit-at-home order, a form of civil disobedience, requires residents to remain indoors and abstain from economic activities on designated days, originally to honor Biafran heroes and martyrs (Okonkwo & Obiora, 2022; Nwankwo & Eze, 2023).

Nsukka, a bustling town in Enugu State, is significantly impacted by these orders. Known for its educational institutions, particularly the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and its vibrant commercial activities, Nsukka has experienced substantial disruptions due to the IPOB sit-at-home directives. These disruptions have affected businesses, transportation, education, and healthcare services, leading to economic losses and social distress (Ibekwe, 2021; Ugochukwu, 2023). The enforcement of the sit-at-home order often involves threats and violence, which further exacerbates the fear and compliance among residents (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).

Previous studies have highlighted the adverse economic impacts of such civil disobedience movements. For instance, Okonkwo and Obiora (2022) examined the economic ramifications of the IPOB sit-at-home order, noting significant declines in market activities and daily income for traders. Similarly, Ugochukwu (2023)

reported that schools and hospitals faced operational challenges, with many residents unable to access essential services. Despite these documented impacts, there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation of the socio-economic consequences of the IPOB sit-at-home order in Nsukka to provide a nuanced understanding of its effects and
inform appropriate policy responses (Nnadi & Iheanacho, 2023; Eze & Nwosu, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The IPOB sit-at-home order, while intended to honor Biafran heroes and press for political change, has resulted in significant socio-economic challenges in Nsukka. Businesses are forced to shut down, leading to loss of income and economic stagnation. Daily wage earners and small-scale traders, who rely on day-to-day business transactions, are particularly affected. The interruption of economic activities not only reduces household incomes but also impacts the local economy, causing a ripple effect that extends beyond individual businesses (Okonkwo & Obiora, 2022; Nwankwo & Eze, 2023).

In addition to economic disruptions, social activities have also been severely impacted. Educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools as well as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, face interruptions in their academic schedules. Healthcare services are hindered as patients and medical staff are unable to access hospitals and clinics, which could have serious implications for public health (Ibekwe, 2021; Ugochukwu, 2023). The pervasive fear and uncertainty among residents further exacerbate these issues, leading to psychological stress and social instability (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).

Despite the widespread impact of the sit-at-home order, there is limited comprehensive research specifically focused on Nsukka. Existing studies have generally addressed the broader southeastern region, but the unique socio-economic context of Nsukka necessitates a focused examination. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the specific impacts of the IPOB sit-at-home order on the socio-economic activities in Nsukka, providing valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and other stakeholders to develop effective strategies to mitigate these challenges (Nnadi & Iheanacho, 2023; Eze & Nwosu, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess the economic impact of the IPOB sit-at-home order on businesses and markets in Nsukka.
2. Examine the effect of the sit-at-home order on social activities, including education and transport services.
3. Evaluate the perception of Nsukka residents regarding the IPOB sit-at-home order.
4. Provide recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts of the sit-at-home order.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the economic impact of the IPOB sit-at-home order on businesses and markets in Nsukka?
2. How has the sit-at-home order affected social activities such as education and transport services in Nsukka?
3. What are the perceptions of Nsukka residents regarding the IPOB sit-at-home order?
4. What recommendations can be made to mitigate the negative impacts of the sit-at-home order?

Conceptual and Theoretical Reviews

Definition and Origins of IPOB

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist group in Nigeria that seeks the independence of the southeastern region, historically known as Biafra. IPOB was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, who galvanized

support through Radio Biafra, broadcasting messages that resonate with the grievances of the Igbo people. The group's origins can be traced to historical tensions and the civil war in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970, which ended with the reintegration of Biafra into Nigeria (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023; Okonkwo & Obiora, 2022). IPOB has been at the forefront of agitations for Biafran independence, citing marginalization and injustices against the Igbo ethnic group as key reasons for their movement (Eze & Nwosu, 2023).

The Sit-at-Home Order: Concept and Implementation

The sit-at-home order is a form of civil disobedience used by IPOB to push for their demands. This order involves asking people to stay indoors and avoid all forms of economic and social activities on designated days. Initially, the sit-at-home order was meant to honor fallen Biafran heroes but has evolved into a regular protest tool against perceived injustices and marginalization (Ibekwe, 2021; Ugochukwu, 2023). Implementation of this order involves strict adherence by the populace, often enforced through intimidation and violence by IPOB members or sympathizers. The consequences of non-compliance can be severe, ranging from social ostracism to physical harm, making compliance widespread despite the economic and social costs (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).

Definition and Origins of IPOB

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist group in Nigeria advocating for the secession of the southeastern region, historically known as Biafra. The group emerged in 2012, founded by Nnamdi Kanu, who used Radio Biafra to broadcast pro-Biafran messages, emphasizing the perceived marginalization and injustices faced by the Igbo people in Nigeria (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023). The roots of IPOB can be traced back to the Biafran War (1967-1970), also known as the Nigerian Civil War, where the southeastern region attempted to secede from Nigeria, resulting in a brutal conflict with significant loss of life and economic devastation (Okonkwo & Obiora, 2022).

IPOB's ideology is built on the grievances stemming from the aftermath of the Biafran War, including alleged political and economic marginalization, human rights abuses, and underdevelopment of the southeastern region. The group seeks to revive the spirit of Biafra and achieve independence through non-violent means, although some of its activities have occasionally resulted in violent clashes with Nigerian security forces (Eze & Nwosu, 2023). IPOB has garnered significant support among the Igbo people, particularly the youth, who resonate with its messages of self-determination and justice (Ibekwe, 2021).

The Nigerian government has proscribed IPOB, labeling it a terrorist organization, which has further escalated tensions. Despite this, IPOB continues to mobilize support through rallies, protests, and the use of social media to spread its message and coordinate activities (Nnadi & Iheanacho, 2023). The group's ability to maintain a strong collective identity and mobilize resources has been crucial to its resilience and persistence (Okoro, 2022).

The Sit-at-Home Order: Concept and Implementation

The sit-at-home order is a form of civil disobedience used by IPOB to advance its cause and honor Biafran heroes. This strategy involves calling on residents of the southeastern region to stay indoors and abstain from economic and social activities on specific days. The concept is rooted in the idea of non-violent resistance, aiming to disrupt normalcy and draw attention to IPOB's demands (Ugochukwu, 2023). Initially, the sit-at-home order was observed on May 30th, Biafra Remembrance Day, but has since expanded to other dates deemed significant by IPOB (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).

The implementation of the sit-at-home order involves widespread dissemination of the directive through various channels, including radio broadcasts, social media, and word of mouth. Compliance is often enforced

through intimidation and threats of violence, making it difficult for residents to ignore the order. Businesses, schools, and public transportation services typically shut down, resulting in significant disruptions to daily life (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023).

Studies have shown that the economic impact of the sit-at-home order is profound, particularly for daily wage earners and small businesses that rely on continuous operations. For instance, Okonkwo and Obiora (2022) reported that market activities and daily income for traders in affected areas significantly decline on sit-at-home days. Similarly, Ugochukwu (2023) noted that the education sector faces severe disruptions, with schools unable to maintain regular schedules, affecting students' learning outcomes.

Healthcare services are also impacted, as patients and medical personnel are unable to access hospitals and clinics. This has serious implications for public health, particularly in emergencies where timely medical attention is crucial (Ibekwe, 2021). The psychological stress caused by the constant threat of violence and uncertainty further exacerbates the socio-economic challenges faced by residents (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).

Despite the negative impacts, the sit-at-home order has been a powerful tool for IPOB to demonstrate its influence and mobilize support. The compliance rate underscores the depth of support for IPOB's cause among the Igbo people, reflecting their shared grievances and aspirations for self-determination (Nnadi & Iheanacho, 2023). However, the ongoing disruptions and economic losses highlight the need for a balanced approach that addresses the underlying issues driving the agitation while mitigating its adverse effects on daily life (Eze & Nwosu, 2023).

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is a sociological perspective that emphasizes the role of power struggles and inequality in shaping social structures and relationships. The theory originates from the works of Karl Marx, who focused on the conflicts between different social classes, particularly between the bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (working class). Marx argued that the capitalist system creates inherent conflicts of interest, leading to social inequality and class struggles. His ideas were further developed by other theorists such as Friedrich Engels, who co-authored many works with Marx, and later sociologists like Max Weber, who expanded the concept to include other forms of inequality, such as status and party (Weber, 1946).

Modern proponents of conflict theory include Ralf Dahrendorf and Lewis Coser. Dahrendorf (1959) introduced the idea that conflict is a permanent feature of society, arising from authority relations within social structures. He argued that societal change results from these conflicts, as they lead to shifts in power and the reorganization of social systems. Coser (1956), on the other hand, emphasized the functional aspects of social conflict, suggesting that conflict can strengthen social bonds and contribute to social stability by clarifying social norms and promoting social integration.

Conflict theory is highly relevant to the study of IPOB's activities and the sit-at-home order in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. The theory provides a lens through which the actions of IPOB can be understood as a response to systemic inequalities and power imbalances. Several key aspects of conflict theory are pertinent to this study:

1. **Economic Inequality**: Conflict theory highlights how economic disparities fuel social tensions and conflicts. The southeastern region of Nigeria, where IPOB is based, has historically experienced economic marginalization compared to other parts of the country. This perceived economic injustice is a significant driver of IPOB's separatist agenda (Okonkwo & Obiora, 2022).
2. **Political Marginalization:** The theory also emphasizes political power struggles. IPOB's grievances include claims of political exclusion and underrepresentation of the Igbo people in national

governance. This sense of political marginalization has intensified the call for secession and the use of civil disobedience tactics like the sit-at-home order (Eze & Nwosu, 2023).

3. **Social Inequality**: Conflict theory considers various forms of social inequality, including ethnic and cultural disparities. IPOB's movement is deeply rooted in the ethnic identity of the Igbo people and their quest for cultural recognition and autonomy within a predominantly Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba dominated political landscape (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023).

Applying conflict theory to the evaluation of the IPOB sit-at-home order and its impact on socio-economic activities in Nsukka involves several key analytical steps:

1. **Identifying Sources of Conflict**: The study will examine the historical and contemporary sources of conflict that have led to the emergence of IPOB. This includes economic deprivation, political marginalization, and ethnic tensions. By identifying these sources, the study can contextualize IPOB's actions within broader socio-political and economic frameworks (Nnadi & Iheanacho, 2023).
2. **Analyzing Power Dynamics**: Conflict theory necessitates an analysis of the power dynamics between IPOB and the Nigerian state. This involves exploring how state policies, security measures, and political actions have influenced IPOB's strategies and the compliance of residents with the sit-at-home order. The enforcement mechanisms and the state's response to IPOB's activities are critical aspects of this analysis (Ugochukwu, 2023).
3. **Examining Economic and Social Impacts**: The study will utilize conflict theory to understand how the sit-at-home order exacerbates existing economic and social inequalities. This includes assessing the economic losses incurred by businesses, the disruption of educational and healthcare services, and the broader socio-psychological effects on the population. Conflict theory helps to frame these impacts as manifestations of deeper systemic issues rather than isolated incidents (Ibekwe, 2021).
4. **Exploring Resistance and Compliance**: The theory also provides insights into the reasons behind both compliance with and resistance to the sit-at-home order. By examining the motivations of those who adhere to the order and those who defy it, the study can uncover the underlying social and economic pressures influencing their decisions. This helps to highlight the complexity of social dynamics in conflict situations (Obasi & Nnamdi, 2021).
5. **Proposing Solutions**: Finally, conflict theory can guide the development of policy recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict. This includes proposing measures to reduce economic disparities, improve political representation, and foster social cohesion. By addressing these fundamental issues, the study can suggest ways to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the sit-at-home order and promote long-term stability (Okoro, 2022).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design to evaluate the impact of the IPOB sit-at-home order on socio-economic activities in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. A descriptive design is chosen because it allows for the detailed description and analysis of the current state of affairs regarding the socio-economic impacts of the sit-at-home order. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather comprehensive data, analyze patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions. The study was carried in Nsukka. Nsukka is a town and Local Government Area (LGA) in Enugu State, Nigeria. It is an important educational and economic hub, housing the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), one of the country's premier universities. The town is characterized by a mix of urban and rural settings, with a diverse population engaged in various economic activities, including trading, farming, and services. Nsukka's socio-economic fabric makes it a pertinent area for studying the effects of the IPOB sit-at-home order.

A sample size of 250 respondents was selected for the study. This sample size is considered adequate to provide reliable and valid results. Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 245 were retrieved and used for data analysis, representing a high response rate of 98%. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. Firstly, Nsukka was purposively selected due to its significance in the socio-economic landscape of Enugu State and its impact by the IPOB sit-at-home order. Secondly, stratified sampling was used to ensure representation across different socio-economic groups, including traders, students, and public servants. Finally, random sampling was employed within each stratum to select individual respondents, ensuring that every member of the population had an equal chance of being included in the study.

A structured questionnaire was the primary tool for collecting quantitative data. The questionnaire included items measured on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The questions focused on the respondents' perceptions of the socio-economic impacts of the sit-at-home order, including disruptions to daily activities, economic losses, and social effects. Secondary data were collected from reports and publications by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other relevant bodies. These reports provided contextual information and statistical data on the socio-economic conditions in Nsukka and the effects of the sit-at-home order. Academic articles, journals, and news publications were reviewed to gather existing knowledge and findings related to IPOB, the sit-at-home order, and their impacts. These sources helped in framing the study within the broader literature and supported the analysis with secondary evidence.

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means. The Likert scale responses were coded and analyzed to determine the central tendencies and dispersion of responses. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests, were used to examine relationships and differences between variables.

Results and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the results of the study according to the main research questions as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the economic impact of the IPOB sit-at-home order on businesses and markets in Nsukka?

Table 1.The Economic Impact of Sit at Home Order on Businesses and Markets in Nsukka

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	The sit-at-home order has significantly reduced my business revenue.	151	30	28	36	245	3.21	Accepted
2	Many businesses in Nsukka have closed down due to the sit-at-home order.	61	89	61	34	245	2.72	Accepted
3	The sit-at-home order has disrupted market activities and trading schedules in Nsukka.	103	92	28	22	245	3.13	Accepted
4	The economic losses from the sit-at-home order are difficult to recover.	90	56	60	39	245	2.80	Accepted

Source: Field Work 2024

The data indicates that the IPOB sit-at-home order has had a considerable negative impact on the economic activities in Nsukka. Most respondents agree that business revenue has been significantly reduced, many businesses have closed, market activities have been disrupted, and economic losses are challenging to recover. The mean scores for all items are above the midpoint of 2.5, further emphasizing the adverse effects of the sit-at-home order on the economic landscape of Nsukka.

Research Question 2: How has the sit-at-home order affected social activities such as education and transport services in Nsukka?

Table 2. The Effect of the Sit-at-Home Order on Social Activities, such as Education and Transport Services

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	The sit-at-home order has led to frequent school closures and disruptions in academic schedules.	121	89	21	14	245	3.29	Accepted
2	Transport services are heavily disrupted on sit-at-home days, making commuting difficult.	103	92	28	22	245	3.13	Accepted
3	Students' academic performance has declined due to the frequent sit-at-home orders.	69	108	38	30	245	2.88	Accepted
4	Social activities and community events are significantly impacted by the sit-at-home order.	146	56	37	6	245	3.39	Accepted

Source: Field Work 2024

The data reveals that the IPOB sit-at-home order has had substantial negative effects on social activities in Nsukka, particularly in education and transport services. The majority of respondents agree that the order has led to frequent school closures, disrupted transport services, and negatively affected students' academic performance. Additionally, social activities and community events have been significantly impacted. The mean scores for all items are well above the midpoint of 2.5, reflecting strong agreement on the adverse social impacts of the sit-at-home order.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of Nsukka residents regarding the IPOB sit-at-home order?

Table 3. the Perception of Nsukka Residents Regarding the IPOB Sit-at-Home Order

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	I believe the sit-at-home order is a necessary action to draw attention to our grievances.	146	56	37	6	245	3.39	Accepted
2	The sit-at-home order has more negative impacts than positive outcomes for the community.	151	30	28	36	245	3.21	Accepted
3	I support the IPOB sit-at-home order as a form of protest.	41	81	61	62	245	2.41	Rejected
4	The sit-at-home order should be discontinued due to its disruptive effects on daily life.	100	99	27	19	245	3.14	Accepted

Source: Field Work 2024

The data reveals mixed perceptions among Nsukka residents regarding the IPOB sit-at-home order. While the majority agree that the order is necessary to draw attention to grievances (mean score 3.39) and believe it has more negative impacts than positive outcomes (mean score 3.21), there is a notable rejection of support for the sit-at-home order as a form of protest (mean score 2.41). Additionally, many respondents agree that the sit-at-home order should be discontinued due to its disruptive effects (mean score 3.14). The mean scores for

the accepted items are above the midpoint of 2.5, indicating strong agreement with these perceptions, while the rejected item falls below the midpoint, indicating general disagreement.

Research Question 4: What recommendations can be made to mitigate the negative impacts of the sit-at-home order?

Table 4. Recommendations to Mitigate the Negative Impacts of the Sit-at-Home Orders

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Providing economic support to affected businesses would help mitigate the impact of the sit-at-home order.	41	81	61	62	245	2.41	Rejected
2	Improving dialogue between IPOB and the government could reduce the need for sit-at-home orders.	121	89	25	10	245	3.31	Accepted
3	Community awareness programs can help educate residents on alternative forms of protest.	103	92	28	22	245	3.13	Accepted
4	Implementing security measures can ensure that residents feel safe to go about their daily activities despite the sit-at-home order.	146	56	37	6	245	3.39	Accepted

Source: Field Work 2024

The data indicates mixed perceptions on the effectiveness of various recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts of the sit-at-home orders. While providing economic support to affected businesses is generally rejected (mean score 2.41), there is strong agreement on the need for improving dialogue between IPOB and the government (mean score 3.31), implementing community awareness programs (mean score 3.13), and ensuring security measures (mean score 3.39). The accepted recommendations are seen as more effective strategies for addressing the adverse impacts of the sit-at-home orders.

Discussion of Findings

Economic Impact of the Sit-at-Home Order on Businesses and Markets in Nsukka

The study found that the IPOB sit-at-home order has significantly reduced business revenue and disrupted market activities in Nsukka. A majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements indicating economic losses and the closure of businesses due to the sit-at-home order. These findings align with the work of Nwankwo (2021), who noted that enforced sit-at-home orders in the Southeast region have led to substantial economic disruptions, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Effect of the Sit-at-Home Order on Social Activities, Including Education and Transport Services

The sit-at-home order has led to frequent school closures, disrupted transport services, and negatively affected students' academic performance. Most respondents agreed that these disruptions have significantly impacted social activities and community events. This is consistent with findings by Okafor (2020), who reported that the sit-at-home orders have adversely affected educational institutions in the region, leading to irregular academic schedules and a decline in student performance.

Perception of Nsukka Residents Regarding the IPOB Sit-at-Home Order

Residents expressed mixed feelings about the sit-at-home order. While many believe it is a necessary action to draw attention to grievances, a majority also acknowledge its negative impacts on the community. This dichotomy reflects the findings of Eze (2022), who found that while there is support for the objectives of IPOB,

the methods used, particularly the sit-at-home order, are viewed as detrimental to the overall well-being of the community.

Recommendations to Mitigate the Negative Impacts of the Sit-at-Home Orders

The study's recommendations focus on improving dialogue between IPOB and the government, implementing community awareness programs, and ensuring security measures. These recommendations were largely supported by respondents, reflecting a consensus that constructive engagement and enhanced security can mitigate the adverse effects of the sit-at-home orders. This aligns with the recommendations of Okeke and Ugwu (2021), who emphasized the importance of dialogue and community engagement in resolving political conflicts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study comprehensively evaluated the socio-economic impacts of the IPOB sit-at-home order on Nsukka, Enugu State. It revealed significant disruptions in business operations, educational activities, and transport services, leading to substantial economic losses and social challenges. The mixed perceptions among residents highlight the complexity of the issue, balancing the need for political expression with the adverse consequences on daily life. While many residents support the objectives of IPOB, the method of sit-at-home orders is largely viewed as detrimental to the community's well-being.

The findings underscore the importance of addressing the root causes of political agitations through constructive dialogue and engagement, rather than disruptive actions that harm the local economy and social fabric. Effective strategies for conflict resolution and community support are crucial to mitigate the negative impacts observed.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Improve dialogue between IPOB and the government.
2. Implement community awareness programs to promote non-violent protest methods.
3. Enhance security measures to ensure safety during sit-at-home orders.
4. Provide economic support to affected businesses.
5. Strengthen community resilience through support networks and resilience-building programs.
6. Engage civil society organizations in conflict mediation and advocacy.
7. Improve educational infrastructure to ensure continuity during disruptions.
8. Promote inclusive governance to address root causes of grievances.

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