



CORRUPTION, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION, NIGERIA, FROM 2009-2019

Ogele Eziho Promise

Department of Political Science, Rivers State University, Nkpolu Orowurukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Tel: +2348036677126

ABSTRACT: *The study examined the effects of corruption in the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region and its adverse effects on national security, from 2009-2019. The Federal Government offered amnesty to the Niger Delta militants' occasion by the contestation over control of the oil resources in the region. The contestation metamorphosed to an intensified conflict in the region between the militants and security agents leading to the destruction of oil installation, kidnapping for ransom, oil theft, among others. The scenario brought down crude oil production from 2.22 million barrels a day to 800 barrels. The Federal Government led by President Musa Umar Yar Adua hurriedly offered amnesty to the militants. Despite the success recorded by the programme, there are several allegations of embezzlements of funds meant for the implementation of the programme. The study adopted the Three Gap analytical model as a theoretical construct. To critically interrogate these effects of corruption, the study adopted a triangulation method of data gathering techniques. The study unraveled that the amnesty programme was bedevilled with corruption, particularly embezzlement of funds set aside for the implementation of the programme. The study recommends amongst others a forensic audit of the amnesty programme since its inception.*

KEYWORDS: Amnesty Programme, Conflict, Corruption, Militancy National Security, Niger Delta, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's economy was sustained by the agricultural sector before the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta region in commercial quantity in 1956 at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State. Subsequently, the oil boom of the 1970s led to the abandonment of the agricultural sector by the federal and state governments. Since then, the Nigerian state has depended on the petrodollar revenue from crude oil for development. The Nigerian government has earned billions of dollars from the sale of crude oil. Sadly, the Niger Delta region is still underdeveloped, the inhabitants living in endemic poverty, ecologically devastated, among others. The anthropogenic activities have increased greenhouse gas emissions in the region. Hutchful (1985, pp. 117 & 115) cited in Ogele and Egobueze (2020) noted that:

It is specifically the peasantry in the oil states which, while deprived of access to the benefits generated by oil surplus, has borne the negative impact of the industry. Oil industry operations have resulted [in] the conditions of deepening underdevelopment for this peasantry. There is an almost total absence of schools, good drinking water, electricity, medical care, and roads in the man of the peasant communities.



The crude oil deposit in the Niger Delta region became a source of pain rather than a blessing. Ayodele (2010, p.107) also noted that "gas flaring, oil and water pollution, bush burning and the emission of carbon monoxide, all a result of oil exploration, have left people dehumanized and subservient to poverty." The scenario led to internal conflicts between the Nigerian State and the Niger Delta inhabitants. Afinotan and Ojakorot (2009, p.1) cited in Enuoh (2015, p.100) noted that "the area has become a hotbed for an insurgency, host-taking, crude oil theft and gang wars. The youths have resorted to the use of arms against the government and the multi-national oil companies which sometimes result in several deaths." In the same vein, Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, p.2) revealed that:

The violence had extensive effects on oil infrastructure, production, and revenues. There was a decline in oil production from 2.3 bpd to 900,000bpd by mid-2009. There were extensive insecurity indicated by kidnapping, bank robberies, criminality, violent conflicts, electoral violence, inter and intra community conflicts, inter and intra youth and militia conflicts, vandalism of oil facilities, oil bunkering and illegal crude oil refineries. These were alongside extensive youth restiveness, aggression, and youth lawlessness.

The intensified conflicts in the region between various key actors adversely impacted on crude oil production. Considering its adverse impact on the economy, late President Musa Umaru Yar'Adua adopted the amnesty programme recommended by the Ledun Mittee led 2007 Technical Committee (Technical Committee Report, 2008, pp.66-67) and offered unconditional amnesty on the Niger Delta militants with the hope that all militants in the Niger Delta will take advantage of this amnesty and come out to join in the quest for the transformation of our dear nation (France24, 2009).

However, the offer was within a stipulated period of 60-days moratorium from August 6th to October 4th. "At the expiration of the 60-day grace period on October 4, 2009, a total of 20,192 Niger Delta ex-agitators had surrendered a large number of arms and ammunition to the Federal Government" (Kuku, 2012). Ikelegbe (2010, p.2) noted that:

[In] 2009, the federal government quite unusual and contrary to its securitization of the conflict embarked on an amnesty programme. The programme entailed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former militants and some promises of a post amnesty programme for the resolution of the conflicts.

Nevertheless, the amnesty programme has been characterized by several allegations of corrupt practices since its inception. General Godwin Abbe led Presidential Advisory Council (PAC) was accused of corruption, which led to its dissolution. Thereafter, every successive Presidential Advisory Council on Amnesty Programme has been dissolved occasioned by corrupt related allegations. On several occasions, the ex-militants have demonstrated for non-payment of the monthly stipends, threatened to return to the creeks, various corrupt practices, among others. Corrupt has become a major threat to the sustainability of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region. Corruption is a cankerworm that has not only eaten deep into the Nigerian society but also soiled the character and personality of Nigerians. It has become the lubricant with which every facet of the system is served.

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, the federal government has put measures to curb the rising wave of corruption in Nigeria. The federal created several anti-corruption agencies



such as public service reform monetization, reform of public procurement; the Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission. Sadly, despite the presence of these agencies, corruption has continued to soar in Nigeria. Ndubisi (1991.p.46) noted that the failure of government policies and programmes are attributed to constant subverted by corrupt practices. The corrupt practices in the amnesty programme have become a threat to national security. Against this background, the study aims at interrogating the extent to which corruption has impeded the amnesty programme's policy thrust and its effects on National Security.

Analytical Model

The paper adopted the Three Gap thesis as its analytical model. The thesis emerged through Jeremy Weinstein, the Project Director of the Center for Global Development 2004. The report outlined the strategies to the US government on how to deal with weak states. The report focused on the three essential responsibilities of government such as ensuring security, maintaining legitimacy, and meeting the basic needs of citizens. When these functions are not met, there are bound to be gaps that endanger the welfare of citizens, the security of neighbours, and stability in the global system. Many states have comprehensively failed in these aspects; hence, the report defines as “losing the battle on all three dimensions, usually resulting in conflict with a significant number of civilian casualties and the loss of government control over substantial segments of territory” (Weinstein, 2004, p.13). The deficient in weak states can produce an “illegitimate government that faces political and military opposition, as well as large-scale smuggling and criminality... international peace and security—and progress toward development—now depend, in part, on the capacity of governments in the developing world to defend their citizens, meet their basic needs, and build legitimacy in their eyes and those of the international community” (Weinstein, 2004,p.14).

The thesis identified three dysfunctional ties of weak states in terms of three capability gaps namely, (i) legitimacy gap, (ii) capacity gap, and (iii) security gap (Weinstein, 2004). In Weinstein Report (2004,p. 14) security gap noted that “the state's most basic function is ensuring security—by maintaining a monopoly over the use of force, protecting against internal and external danger, and preserving effective sovereignty and order within its territory. When the state cannot fulfil this function, a gap emerges that other states, non-state actors, and simple criminals may seek to fill with violent, hostile, or illicit acts.” The security gap is rampant among “African countries. But recent and continuing instability in Haiti, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan—and acts of terror in Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia—underline the fact that security gaps are not only an African problem” (Weinstein, 2004, p.14).

Another aspect of the gap considered by the Weinstein Report (2004) was the Capacity gap. According to Weinstein Report (2004, p.14), “the state must play a central role in meeting the basic needs of its citizens, both by providing physical infrastructure such as roads, schools, and clinics and by investing in skills and structures that empower citizens and make progress possible.” The thesis reveals that “when governments are unwilling or unable to do this-or when their efforts reach only some of their citizens - a gap in capacity results, creating the conditions for suffering, epidemics, humanitarian crisis, loss of public confidence, and potential political upheaval” (Weinstein, 2004, p.14). Meeting the basic necessity is challenging in these countries, particularly where conditions of security cannot be guaranteed.



Sadly, most states confronted with security gaps cannot provide education and health services.

The last is the Legitimacy gap. According to Weinstein (2004, p.15) “the state must foster legitimacy, maintaining institutions that protect basic rights and freedoms, hold individuals accountable for their actions, enforce laws and contracts equally, and enable broad-based citizen participation in the political process.” Democracy would have been the best option, but the government may lose the confidence of her citizens. The legitimacy gap summits to political restiveness and also engages in anti-people’s corrupt policies that can trigger conflicts if the opportunity provides itself. (Weinstein, 2004, p.15).

Linking this model to the study is based on the amnesty programme implementation. The amnesty offers and subsequent amnesty programme were occasioned by the government’s inability to maintain peace and order in the Niger Delta region. The region was abandoned after years of oil exploration and exploitation. The inhabitants suffer the anthropogenic activities without recourse to its effects on the inhabitants by the federal government and multinational firms who always blamed the government for the underdevelopment in the region. The conflict in the Niger Delta was occasioned by negligence, deprivation, underdevelopment, and other forms of abuses such as ecological degradation are indexes of weak states. The Three Gap manifested in the Niger Delta region before the Amnesty Proclamation by late President Yar’Adua. Even though the implementation of the amnesty programme is bedeviled with endemic corruption, the Three Gaps still manifest in the Niger Delta region. There are still attacks on oil installations, kidnaps for ransom, armed robbery, lack of social amenities, unemployment, oil theft, artisanal refining, corruption in the public and private sector, electoral violence, and violent cultism, among others. Corruption strives in states with weak institutions. The implementation of amnesty programme bedeviled with endemic corruption, which adversely impacted on human security in the Niger Delta region.

Corruption, National Security, and Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta Region

Corruption is a universal phenomenon that affects developed, developing, and underdeveloped societies of the world. Retrospectively, various civilizations have experienced but some surmounted it while others remain and continue to celebrate it. Corruption has both ethical and moral challenges, “which varies from place to place, time to time, culture to culture, and with the level of economic development” (Aluko, 2008).

Corruption is a major challenge in Nigeria’s socio-economic and political development. It is common both in the public and private sectors in Nigeria. Nigerian societies have been perverted by prevalent corruption. Hence, scholars have defined corruption from various perspectives. Ndubisi (1991, p.22) described “corruption in Nigeria as endemic. Corruption flourishes in Nigeria just as weeds flourishes in the bush.” Corruption has become a sub-culture in Nigeria. Bayley (1970) noted that “corruption while being tied particularly to the act of bribery, is a general term covering the misuse of authority as a result of considerations of personal gain, which needs not be monetary.” Similarly, McMullan (1970) declares that “a public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money’s worth for doing something that he is under a duty to do anyway, that he is under a duty not to do or be exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons.” Nye (1970) also defined corruption as a “behaviour which deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of private regarding (family, close private clique), pecuniary or status gains or violates rules against the exercise of certain types



of private regarding influence.” The International Monetary Fund (IMF)(2002) cited in Adewale (2017) defined corruption as “abuse of authority or trust for private benefit, and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations.” Adewale further argued that corruption can be very tragic to nations, which retards the socio-economic and political advancement of countries, particularly those in developing countries of the sub-Sahara Africa countries.

At present, Nigeria is rated as one of the most corrupt countries on the surface of the earth. Despite the anti-corruption crusade by the Present Muhammadu Buhari led administration, Nigeria has dropped from its formal position of 144th corrupt country 2018 to 146 in 2019 on the annual corruption index published by the Transparency International. The report that Nigeria was behind Botswana (34); Rwanda (51); and Mauritius (56) among other African countries (Nairametrics, 2020). “The overall index measures the degree to which public officials and politicians in particular countries are involved in corrupt practices such as accepting bribes, taking illicit payments in public procurement, and embezzling public funds” (Adewale, 2017). ASUU (2005) cited in Oshio (2009, pp.6-7) noted that corruption emanates from defective individual character, and the features of ethnicity, cultural, or religious groups. Oshio (2009, pp.6-7) revealed that corruption has been in existence since 1960. It has been used as an essential instrument in the hands of the ruling elites in Nigeria to further their primitive accumulation, seizure, and maintenance of political power. Corruption has contributed to the inability of the ruling elites to organize a productive economy, and less concerned with sustainable development. The history of Nigeria, both in the military and civilian alike have progressively developed the culture of corruption.

However, despite the extant laws that prohibit corruption both in public and private sectors; corruption has continued to soar in Nigeria. The EFCC Acts cited in Abimbola and Adesote (2012) views corruption as “money laundering, embezzlement, bribery, looting and any form of corrupt practices, illegal arms deals, smuggling, human trafficking, and child labour, illegal oil bunkering, illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractices, including confecting of currency, theft or intelligent property and morally, open market abuse, dumping of toxic, wastes and prohibited goods...” The anti-corruption agencies (the Economic and Financial Crime Commission and Independent Corrupt Practice Commission) that were set up to address the national menace, sadly, these agencies are yet proffering solutions that could impede corrupt practices. There are several allegations that some of the officials have compromised the statutory responsibilities, which have rendered most investigation invalid that some of their evidence in the law cannot stand immediate scrutiny.

Corruption retards national development in Nigeria. Corruption in the public sector has led to many policy failures leading to national security threats such as rising rate of unemployment, youth restiveness, terrorism and insurgence, rising rate illiteracy, health challenges, among others. The Niger Delta states recorded the highest number of unemployed young people in Nigeria. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2017, p.30) revealed that “in 2017 Q3, Rivers state reported the highest unemployment rate (41.82%), followed by Akwa-Ibom (36.58%), Bayelsa state (30.36%), Imo state (29.47%) ...” The import of the NBS 2017 report indicates the threats to human security are inevitable in the Niger Delta region.

The 21st national security includes both conventional and unconventional. There has been a paradigm shift from the national security centred on external aggression and military



hardware to human security, which emphasis on people-centred security. Imobighe (1990,p.224) cited in Ogele (2020,p. 1758) argued that national security from the perspective of non-conventional approach as the "condition, in which citizens of a country enjoy a free, peaceful, and safe environment, and have access to resources which will enable them to enjoy the necessities of life or as freedom from danger, or from threats to a nation's ability to protect and defend itself." The corruption in the amnesty programme has resulted in various national security challenges such as rising number of youth restiveness, emergence of a new militant group called Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the kidnapping of expatriates and citizen, attacks on oil and gas installations, oil theft, artisanal refining of siphoned crude oil, the rising wave of cultism, among others in the Niger Delta region. Corruption hinders progress in a country, particularly where weak institutions exist. The Niger Delta inhabitants enjoyed relative calmness during the training exercise at Obubra Camp, thereafter; there have been continual allegations of corruption on how that programme was implemented leading to suspension and subsequent investigations by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission.

The Study Area

The Niger Delta Region is located in the central part of Southern Nigeria. According to the Willinks commission Report (1957,p.9), the Niger Delta lies within the Ibo plateau and the cross-river valley. It is "a geopolitical entity that covers the present Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers State. With a landmass of about 70,000 square kilometres, (with nearly three quarters covered with water) the area is inhabited by over 7 million Nigerians; with over 20 ethnic groups and 800 communities" (Okoko and Ibaba, 1997, p.57). The literature on the Niger Delta indicates that the communities have settled in the area for many millennia with the Ijaws being the oldest group; having lived there for over 7,000 years. Alagoa (1999, p.8) revealed that:

The communities have been settled in the area over several millennia, especially the Ijaws who are the oldest group in the Delta. From studies of the languages, it appears they have been in the Delta for close to between 7-10,000 years, and other groups who have been about 1,000 years.

It is significant to note that the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta include the Itsekiri, Isoko, Ogoni, Urhobo, Ikwerre, Ika Ukwani, Abua, Ibibio, Efik, Anange, among others. Perhaps more significant is the fact the Niger Delta people are identified under various linguistic groups. This probably explains why the categories of the Niger Delta states have widened to include, Cross Rivers and Edo states. Thus, in its present form, the Niger Delta covers the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. It is however probable that with the creation of states, and subsequent boundary adjustments, some Delta communities may now be located within other States, outside the widely accepted 6 Niger Delta States.

The primary occupations of the people consist of fishing and farming. Production is primarily, but not exclusively geared towards subsistence. However, subsistence agriculture dominates rural land use while fishing takes place inland waters, near shore, and offshore. As widely known, the Niger Delta is the heart of Nigeria's oil industry (with over 90 percent share of production). The ecology of the include the following:

1. Sandy coastal ridge barriers, brackish or saline mangrove
2. Freshwater, permanent and seasonal swamp forests;
3. Dryland rain forests (Okoko and Ibaba, 1997, p.57).



The Niger Delta is characterized by the Rainy season, which lasts from April to October, dry season, and Harmattan, which intervenes in the other period. Nearly three-quarters of the area is covered by water made of lagoons, creeks, rivers, and lakes. The remainder is largely made of swampy land which is usually flooded for about months in the year, due to the overflowing waters of the Lower Niger.

It is difficult terrain. Despite this, however, the region is endowed with enormous and rich natural resources. In addition to the oil and gas resources, the Delta blessed with both renewable and non-renewable resources, including constructional materials, wildlife, and abundance of non-timber resources as sources of food, spices, condiments, and medical herbs, alongside great potentials for agricultural development. Indeed, {part of a world bank report following visits of its mission to the Niger Delta in 1952 and 1953 declared that its potentials can feed the whole of West Africa and have sufficient commodities for export” (Environment Watch, 1998, p.6). Despite the tremendous natural resource base, the region remains largely underdeveloped, which the major source of conflict in the region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the triangulation method of data gathering techniques. Three research instruments were used. They include questionnaires, social activists (ex-militant) questionnaires, and key informant interviews. The questionnaire and interview were conducted in the core two Niger State - Bayelsa and Rivers States. Rivers State is the most populated and the largest biggest commercial hub in the Niger Delta region. The Presidential Amnesty Programme office is situated in Port Harcourt the capital of Rivers State, while some of the repented militants reside in Port Harcourt City, while Bayelsa state is the home of many repented militants. The questionnaire and interview are focused on obtaining the perceptions and opinions of different people such as ordinary youths, women, local elites, community activists, ex-militants, among others about the corruption, amnesty programme successes and failures, and national security since its inception. In the study, a total of 250 questionnaires were administered among the respondents, out of which 180 were retrieved and used as analysis. Ninety-three percent of the total questionnaires represent the reliability of the study. The questionnaire’s graphic method of data presentation as shown below:

Table1: Questionnaire Distribution

Bayelsa and Rivers States	Issued Questionnaire	Returned Questionnaire	Percentage
Port Harcourt City	120	110	59 %
Yenagoa	80	75	41 %
Total	200	185	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Profile of the Respondents

Based on this, the demographic data were presented and analysed. The details of the academic qualifications of the respondents were shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distribution

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Six	30	16
WAEC/SSCE/ Equiv.	106	57
NCE/OND/Equiv	24	13
BSc/BA/HND	20	11
MSc/MA/Equiv	5	3
PhD	-	-
Others	-	-
Total	185	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Similarly, thirty persons comprised of elders, youths, and women were interviewed. They include five elders and eighteen youths, and seven women were part of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region. Though, some of the interviewed pleaded to be anonymous. All the interviewees were selected through random sampling.

Amnesty Programme did not Achieve its Policy Thrust

The pie chart below shows the response generated from the sixth question on the questionnaire that sought to ascertain if the amnesty programme achieved its policy thrust in the Niger Delta region. The responses are as follows: 60 % was affirmative that the amnesty programme achieved its policy thrust, 35% disagreed, while 05 % no response. Based on the responses, the amnesty programme did achieve greater percentage of its policy thrust.

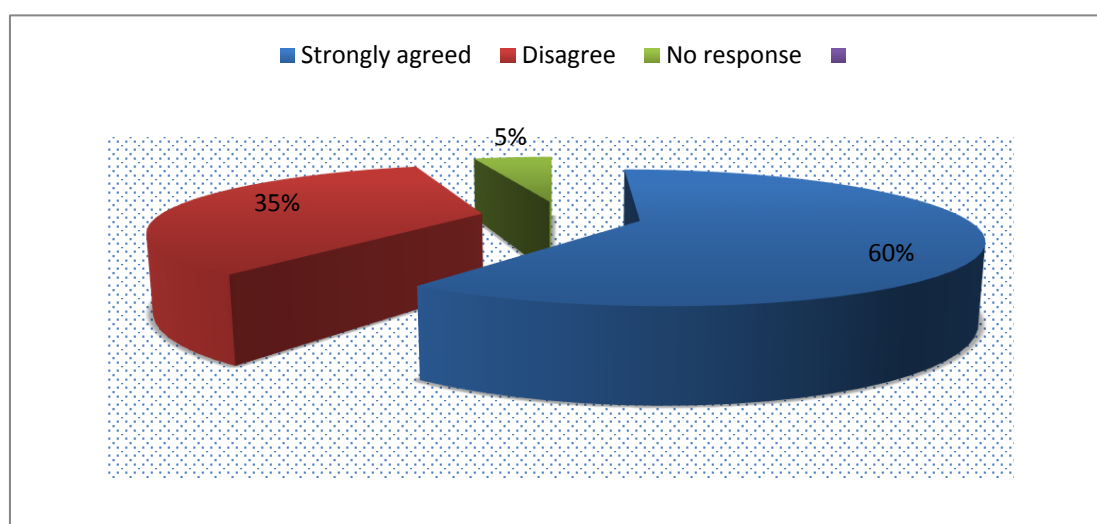


Fig. 1: Showing the achievements of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region.

Source: Constructed by the author



One of the respondents was asked in an interview if the amnesty programme organized by the federal government recorded success? The respondent argued that:

The underdevelopment and environmental degradation, which was considered as the main reason for insecurity was ignored and no effort has been made by the federal government and oil companies to restore the damaged eco-system. After so much money has been expended in the amnesty programme, another group has emerged (Avengers), the group has been destroyed oil installations and causing more havoc for their selfish interest. They quarrel every day over government monthly stipends paid to ex-militants. The question is what of those Niger Delta youths who are calm. Does it mean that they cannot benefit from the government?

While the other respondents lauded the amnesty programme as they recount the situation they met before the presidential Proclamation of Amnesty in the Niger Delta. According to one of the respondents interviewed:

I call still recall before the Presidential Proclamation and subsequent amnesty programme; you cannot move freely. These boys were attacking people and stealing phones and handbags. They carry guns about and threaten people. Some stay in the creek and we read all manners of stories. But worst was, oil companies started leaving the region and our brothers were retrenched or asked to go back home because the degree of kidnap for ransom was on the increase. If the company is not there, where will you work?

Another respondent who claimed anonymous during the interview because he was an ex-militant declared that "I am very glad that the Federal Government granted amnesty to us and we accepted, if not, maybe, life would have been hell for us or I would have died by now. I thank late President Yar Adua and Jonathan."

Corruption Affected the Implementation of the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta Region.

The column chart below explains the response generated from the seventh question on the questionnaire, which sought to ascertain if corruption affected the implementation of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region. The responses are as follows: 70 % was in affirmative, 25 % disagreed, while 5% no response. Based on responses, the greater percentage overwhelmingly agreed that corruption affected the implementation of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region.

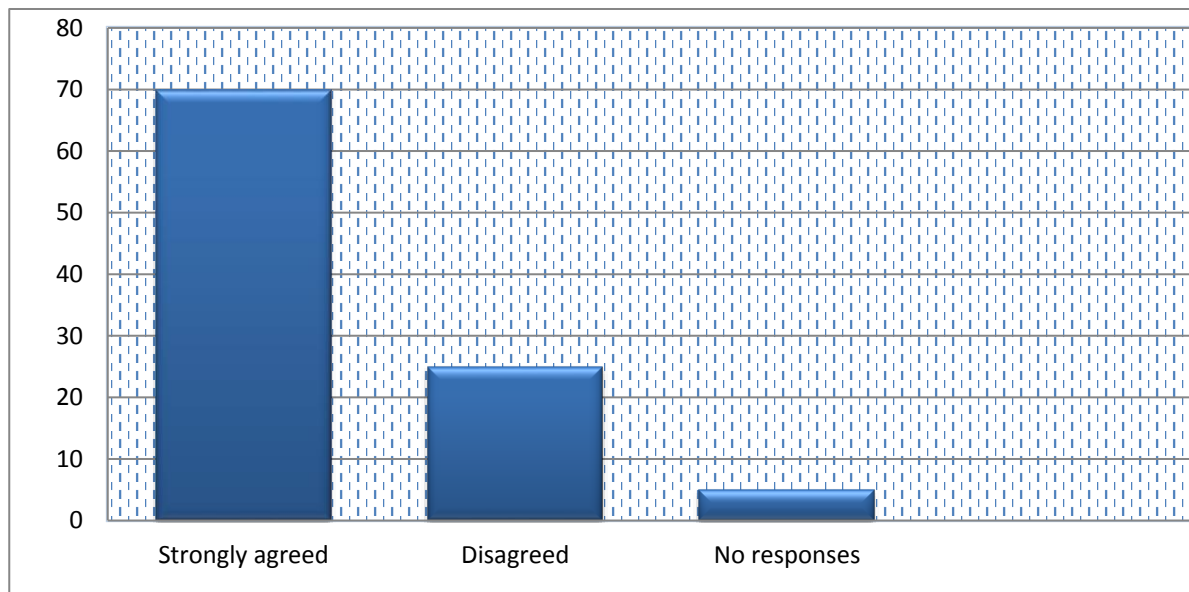


Fig. 2: Indicates the Effects of Corruption on the Implementation of the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta region.

Source: Constructed by the authors

Most of the militants did not believe that the amnesty programme of the federal government was a reality because such promises were not fulfilled in the past. In our interview with an ex-militant (anonymous) from Buguma in Kalabari kingdom, Rivers State disclosed that:

Initially, I felt that the amnesty programme was a scam. The process of enlistment brought a lot of doubt on the government's commitment to rehabilitation. My doubt manifested when we experienced delays in the payment of monthly stipends while we were still at the camp. This lack of payment of monthly stipends and omission of names contributed to pockets of crisis at Obubra camps. Another one was the rent-seeking attitude among the overlords in the Niger Delta region, who were submitting the end list. They were collaborating with the amnesty programme staff to remove and add names. The pipeline security contract promised to the overlords also frustrated the activities in the camps because some of us were still loyal to our 'general' while in the camp because they were the ones that submitted our names, and our stipends are paid through their account.

The Adverse Impact of Corruption in the Implementation of the Amnesty Programme on National Security.

The bar chart below indicates the response generated from ninth questions on the questionnaire, which sought to ascertain if the corruption in the implementation of the amnesty programme adversely impacted on the National Security. The responses are as follows: 80 % was affirmative, 15% disagreed, while 5% no response.

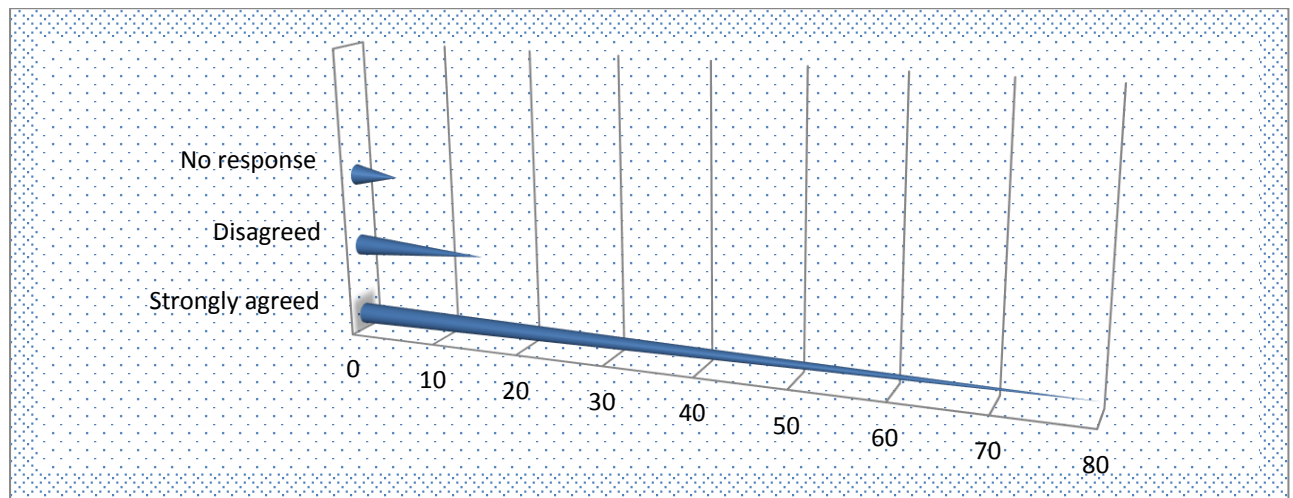


Fig. 3: indicates the adverse impact of corruption in the implementation of the amnesty programme on National Security.

Source: Constructed by the authors

Based on our interview with some of the respondents, it was disclosed that the corruption in the amnesty programme led to engage in some of the criminal enterprises they abandoned for the amnesty offer. One of the respondents claimed that:

The money meant for the ex-militant is directly paid to ex-militants leaders, hence, most times short charged. In our community some groups of boys were excluded from the amnesty benefits, this is painful because slots meant for them were given to non-ex-militants and relatives of big politicians for overseas training. There is no hope after the training. Many of our youths have been trained; they need empowerment to start their businesses. Some of the youths who returned from training abroad up till now have not been empowered or engaged. Some of the boys who did not partake in the struggle are the beneficiaries of the amnesty programme while those who were involved in the fight have not benefited anything. This is because of corruption and greed on the part of the management of the programme.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Amnesty Programme and its Policy Thrust

From the finding, 60 % of the respondents were affirmative that the amnesty programme achieved its policy thrust. Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta was occasioned by the degree of attacks of oil and gas installation, personnel, and restiveness resulting in low crude oil production. The policy goal was to restore normalcy because “before the amnesty policy was formulated and implemented in the Niger Delta region, the crude oil production in the Niger Delta had gone down as low as 800,000 bpd, compared with a targeted 2.2 million bpd for the first quarter of 2009” (Aliabe, 2010). However, this was practically impossible



without engaging the protagonists as part of post-conflict strategic for the sustenance of peace and restoration of crude oil production. According to former President Jonathan, “Nigeria’s crude oil production has increased from one million barrels per day in 2008 to 2.6 million barrels per day due to the improvement in the post-amnesty programme” (Vanguard, February 22nd, 2011). Second, there was disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the repented militants. Over 20,192 repentant militant agitators accepted the Amnesty Offer in the Niger Delta to agree to lay down their arms before the expiration of the October 4 deadline. On May 24th, 2011, “a total of 934 Rifles, 107 Pistols, 1, 424 guns, 11 RPG from Delta, Bayelsa and the Edo States were destroyed, adding that it was expected that the breaking down of the remaining arms from other states (864 Rifles, 557 Guns, 59 RPG, 50 pistols)” (Agbo, 2011). The first and second phase amnesty programmes were impactful. About 15,434 were demobilized and transformed for training from June 2010 – May 2011. In the area of reintegration, about 21,567 repented militants were processed through the acquisition of skill, higher institution, local and foreign training (Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2016, p.41). Udo (2011, p.13) disclosed that:

Thousands of ex-militants have graduated from universities and others acquired vocational skills that qualify them for employments. A good number of ex-militants showed a preference for formal education. Although, many of them that fall into this category dropped out of school at some point during the dark period of militant agitation. The placement of the trainees in skills acquisition/vocational programmes were based on the interests expressed by beneficiaries in areas, including pipeline welding, underwater welding, ocean diving, crane operations, oil drilling, fish farming automobile technology, and entrepreneurship as well as formal education.

The success recorded by the amnesty programme simplified when Chief Kingsley Kuku, the former Special Adviser to the President Goodluck Jonathan on Niger Delta Matters disclosed that:

At the end of September, a total of 3,482 beneficiaries were enrolled in 77 training centres in the country. The offshore placement quota, as at that date, was as follows: South Africa: 933; Malaysia: 172; Russia: 64; Benin Republic: 42; Israel: 22; Sri Lanka: 34; United States: 56; India: 65 Poland: 21; and the Philippines: 129. However, on 20 November, another 247 trainees were sent off to Malaysia and South Africa for six- month vocational courses (SaferNigeria, 2012).

The amnesty programme is an on-going capacity building under the Presidency. The former Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta and Coordinator, Presidential Amnesty Programme from March 2018 –February 2020, Prof. Charles Dokubo recorded selected achievements:

The completion of the Maritime Vocational Training Centre at Oboama, Rivers State. One hundred beneficiaries of the Programme resumed training at the Oil and Gas Training Centre at Agadagba - Obon...1, 601 beneficiaries have completed training in various skills out of 4, 014 allocated to specialized training vendors, while 1,271 trained beneficiaries had received empowerment packs in their respective trade areas to enable them to start business... (TheGuardian, August 25th, 2019).



The amnesty programme improved human security in the Niger Delta region. Most of the oil companies such as Shell, Chevron-Texaco, Agip, Total, among others returned hitherto abandoned sites. There was increase in crude oil production and the export of oil and gas translated to more revenues and higher growth of Gross Domestic Product. The amnesty has improved the security and stability in the region at the initial stage. Though, a relative decline in attacks on oil and gas installations, the stoppage and kidnapping of oil workers, reduction in youth restiveness, among others.

Corruption and Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta Region

Our findings revealed that most respondents were affirmative that corruption adversely impacted the implementation of the amnesty programme. The reason deduced by the respondents that there was the exclusion of some ex-militants, delay of funds, ghost names, among others that became a clog on the implementation of the programme. From the inception of the programme, a huge fund was earmarked for the amnesty programme implementation in the Niger Delta region. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, pp.40-41) revealed that:

In 2010, N8billion was expended on the programme. This rose to a staggering N102.2 billion in 2011 and N66.8billion in 2013. In 2011, N21.9billion was spent on the monthly stipends of ex-militants. The 2014 proposed budget for the PAP is more than the capital budget for several sectors such as Defence and Water Resources. As of February 2014, it was claimed that the PAP had received about N243,133,917,590,03 since it began. As of February 2014, PAP was said to have gulped N248 billion for monthly stipends and training of ex-militants. Training had gulped N160 billion. About N74b was spent on PAP in 2012, N88b budgeted in 2013, and N63b proposed in the 2014 Appropriations bill. The budgets for Amnesty indicate that in 2013, over 35% was spent on stipends and allowances of 30,000 ex-militants, while over 55% went for the reintegration of ex-militants.

Afterward, more funds have been released annually for the success of the programme. Sadly, almost all the successive Presidential Advisers on the amnesty programme has been suspended occasioned by the allegation of corruption. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016, p.129) disclosed that:

There are allegations of low levels of accountability and transparency, poor management and misuse of funds, inappropriate expenditures, improper monitoring, deficiencies in the training programmes, poor management of stipend payment, and personal aggrandizement. There is very little confidence in the leadership of PAP and there is the general belief that PAP is not being managed in the broad interest of ex-militants. There are conditions on the management of PAP that can lead to conflict occurrence including the fact that the majority of the youths have not benefitted from the programme, the hijack of the programme by the ex-militant commandants, the lack of inclusive benefits even among the ex-militant formation, and poor and corrupt leadership.



The first Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) led by Major General Godwin O. Abbe (rtd) was accused of misappropriation of amnesty programme. Some of the respondents revealed that there were omissions of names at Obubra camp, delay and non-payments of N65 monthly stipends, and poor management of the camps, among others. A few years ago, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) declared the former Special adviser on Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) to President Goodluck Jonathan, Chief Kingsley Kuku wanted on corruption-related offences. Chief Kuku was “wanted for questioning over alleged mismanagement of N6.2billion contract during his tenure in charge of the Presidential Amnesty Programme. The agency accuses Kuku of abuse of office, conspiracy, procurement fraud, misappropriation, stealing of public funds, and money laundering... Kuku as vital to the ongoing probe of the alleged N6.2 billion fraud... the suspect awarded contracts running into billions of Naira even though his approval threshold was only N100million” (Alli, 2017).

In the same vein, Brigade General Paul Tarelah Boroh (rtd) who replaced Chief Kingsley Kuku was involved in a gross financial misappropriation during his tenure as Special Adviser to the President on Presidential Amnesty Programme before his dismissal from the office. At present, Brigadier General Tarelah Paul Boroh (rtd) and Hanafi Musa Moriki are undergoing corruption charges counts on theft and criminal breach of trust to the tune of N974,768,466 and \$1,914,00 and dishonestly converted the sums of N8,601,571; N106,288,445; N12,078,450; N382,800,000; N456,000,000; N9,000,000” (PMNews, October 3, 2019).

The emergence of Professor Charles Dokubo as the Adviser and coordinator to the President on Amnesty programme was ushered with the assumption there will be innovations in the programme. Sadly, Prof. Charles Dokubo was suspended and dismissed on corrupt related offences based on the recommendations of the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) and approved immediately. Although the amount misappropriated was not disclosed to the public. The President directed that the caretaker committee be set up to review the programme and oversee the administration of the programme to achieve policy thrust. President Buhari also directed the incoming Committee’ to ensure adequate allocation of resources and utilization, which is in line with the government policy thrust of alleviating challenges in the Niger Delta region, and eradicating corruption in the Amnesty Programme (Nwachukwu,2020).

Corruption, National Security, and Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta Region.

From the finding, there is an overwhelming feeling that endemic corruption in the implementation of the amnesty programme is a threat to national security in Nigeria. Part of the policy thrust of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta was to restore peace and stability. However, the reason instituting the amnesty programme is relatively defected since every successive Presidential adviser is engrossed in corrupt practices of embezzlement of funds meant for development. Some of the respondents buttressed that the underlined issues in the Niger Delta region that led to the conflict have not been addressed, hence, insecurity can hardly cease in the region. We read and hear about how monies are been embezzled by government officials.

From the findings, there have been serials of allegations of embezzlement funds meant for rehabilitation, and much of the funds set aside for the programme are taken more by consultants, contractors, and administrative fees rather than actual rehabilitation and subsequent empowerment of militants. On several occasions, the repented militants



threatened to go back to the creek. Some of the respondents who participated in the amnesty programme at Obubra revealed that “they were shortchanged through nonpayment of allowances, non-maintenance of camps, poor feeding and living conditions.” The corruption in the amnesty programme led to leadership squabble among the ex-militant leaders, particularly on how to share the national cake (surveillance contracts). For instance, John Togo who was the leader of the Niger Delta Liberation Force was fed up with the amnesty programme and decided to back out because of alleged corruption and favouritism (compensation pipeline surveillance to some ex-militant leaders). Some of the ex-militants blamed Timi Alaibe for this discriminatory treatment hence bombed his country home. Togo was dissatisfied with programme threatened to cripple the economy by blowing up the multi-billion-naira Escravos – Kaduna oil pipeline operated by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation in Delta State (Amaize, 2010). The implication of this attack was grave on national security.

There were several cases of nonpayment of stipends or deliberate omission of names as disclosed by one of the respondents. This explained the reason behind the barricading of the east-west road on the 6th of September, 2011, preventing travelers from moving into Bayelsa and Delta states. Some of the placards carried by the protesters read: Amnesty is granted to all repentant militants, why paying some and leaving the rest? President Jonathan must take immediate action... We should not be neglected after accepting the amnesty offer.

However, periodically new groups emerged to threaten the federal government. While the amnesty programme was still on-going, there emerged a new wave of attacks on oil installation at the defeat of President Jonathan and suspension and investigation of surveillance contract awarded to Chief Government Ekpumopolo by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). There was a plan by the federal government to end the amnesty programme in December 2015, however, it was later extended to December 2017 by President Muhammadu Buhari. The threat to suspend the amnesty programme and investigation of Chief Government Ekpumopolo’s surveillance contracts cumulated into several attacks on oil installations after early warnings by the NDA. Just to mention but few, on the 10th February, 2016, the Bonny Soku Gas Line was blown up; the Trans Forcados Pipeline (TFP), which is a source of transportation of oil, associated gas and water from fields in the western Delta region to the 400,000 bpd Forcados oil terminal was attacked. On May 4th 2016, the Chevron Well D25 in Abiteye and gas line that sustains Warri and Kaduna refineries were attacked (Onuoha, 2016,p.5).

From our findings, at present, the ex-militant engages in oil theft and artisanal refining of crude oil. Artisanal refining and oil theft activities threaten the national economy resulting in a constant oil spill in the Niger Delta region. The amnesty programme is corrupt of nepotism and favouritism. The amnesty programme was conducted in such a manner that only those who are connected to people at the helm of affairs are those who are selected for the training. This was the case of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region. Our finding revealed that most of those who continued with artisanal refining were those who were omitted from the amnesty programme list at the onset. While those that acquired the skills and have no money to open workshop.



CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The amnesty programme policy was a bold, realistic, and pragmatic action that could have a profound effect on the conflicts in the region. It represented an analysis of the earlier efforts at resolving the crisis and a decision to chart a novel and broad path to resolving the crisis permanently. It objectively and frankly came to grips with the grievances, discontent, and anger in the region and accepted that some militancy as driven by grievances that have been genuine because of the nature of governance and scanty benefits to the region.

From the analysis, this study has argued that the implementation of the amnesty programme policy of the federal government was aimed at putting an end to the Niger Delta crisis, however, is bedeviled with endemic corruption. Hence, insecurity of citizens, attacks on oil and gas installations, oil theft, artisanal refining, among others, which was abated during the first stage of the amnesty programme have continued to soar in the Niger Delta region. Even though the amnesty programme does not have any practicability of anatomizing the crisis in the region in a way that veritable and lasting peace will be ensured in the region, but the relative peace it brought about by the seeming compliance of the militants in 2009 is unquantifiable. The reason being that the root cause of the crisis is the capabilities failure and its provision has always been the aspiration of the people of Niger Delta for years but policy focused solely on disarming, rehabilitating, and reintegrating the militants who are more of symptoms of the capabilities failure.

To address corruption as a major challenge that confronted the implementation of the amnesty programme requires a holistic approach since corruption is endemic in Nigeria's public and private sectors. There is a need for the federal government to call for an amnesty conference in the Niger Delta region where some of these issues such as how names are collected, capacity building, among others will be discussed, decisions reached and enforced without delay. Other recommendations include

1. The Federal government should conduct a forensic audit on the amnesty programme since its inception.
2. The amnesty programme should stop the collection of the list of trainees from the ex-militant leaders. The government should direct the oil-bearing communities to submit names of unemployed youths; this will assist in addressing oil theft.
3. The PAC should stop paying the stipends through the ex-militants leaders and pay direct to the beneficiaries' accounts.
4. The Ledium Metee Committee report also contains several important recommendations, notably an immediate increase in the percentage of oil revenue given back to states by the federal government from 13 percent to 25 percent and later 50 percent within several years. The technical committee report has made several specific recommendations to tackle illegal oil bunkering, which the Nigerian government should implement without delay. These include clamping down on the illegal supply of small arms and light weapons to the Niger Delta, which both fuels insecurity and gives those involved in illegal oil business formidable armouries with which to fight their opponents.



5. The government needs to broaden the space to ensure that those who had been excluded are accommodated within the framework of the amnesty programme. It should be extended to other youths. However, the government has been focusing attention on those youths who carry arms. After all, not all those involved in militancy would want to be so identified publicly. Therefore, holistic framework needs to be adopted to make sure that young men who do not have jobs are accommodated in the reposition of what is happening;

REFERENCE

- Adesote, S.A. and Abimbola, J.O.(2012). Corruption and National Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Historical Discourse. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. Vol.14 No.7. Retrieved from: <http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Vol14N7-Winter2012A/PDF/Corruption>
- Adewale,O.(2017). How pre-agencies can manage the negative perception of government in a dwindling economy. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/@Kvng_adewale/how-pr-agencies-can-manage-negative-perception-of-government-in-a-dwindling-economy-b8e0367530c
- Agbo, D. (2011). Arms recovered from ex-Niger Delta militants destroyed. Retrieved from:[http:// www.legaloil.com](http://www.legaloil.com)
- Alagoa,E.J. (1999) cited by Survival, organ of the Chikoko Movement, No. 1, August.
- Alaibe, T.(2010). Nigeria: Presidential Amnesty Programme - One Year After. *AllAfrica* online, October 13th. Retrieved from: <https://allafrica.com/stories/201011150956.html>
- Alli,Y.(2017). Alleged N6.2bn fraud: EFCC writes AGF, seeks Kuku's extradition. *TheNations Newspaper*, May 6th. Retrieved on 2019/10/07 from: <https://thenationonlineng.net/alleged-n6-2bn-fraud-efcc-writes-agf-seeks-kukus-extradition/>
- Aluko, S.A (2008) Corruption and National Development: A Lecture delivered at the Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training, Zaria as part of the Activities of Professor Bala Usman Annual Memorial Lecture, on Saturday 31st May
- Amaize, E.(2010). Return of violence in N-Delta: What do John Togo; other rebelling ex-militants want? *The Vanguard*, November 21st. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/11/return-of-violence-in-n-delta-what-do-john-togo-other-rebelling-ex-militants-want/>
- Ayodele,B.(2010). Silence on climate change and the natural resources conflict in Nigeria: The Niger Delta region experience. In Donald Anthony Mwiturubani and Jo-Ansie van Wyk,(ed) *Climate change and natural resources conflicts in Africa*. A monograph presented at the International Conference, 14–15 May 2009, Entebbe, Uganda, organized by the Environment Security Programme (ESP) of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Nairobi Office.
- Bayley, D. H. (1970). The effects of corruption in a Developing Nation. In Arnold J. Heidenheim (ed), *Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Press.
- Enuoh,R.O. (2015,p.100). Corporate Social Responsibility and Insecurity in the Host Communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Journal of Management and Sustainability*; Vol. 5, No. 4. Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jms/article/view/54762>



- Environment Watch (1998). vol. 1, No.1. April
- France24 (2009). President offers amnesty to Niger Delta militants. France24 June 25th. Retrieved from: <https://www.france24.com/en/20090625-president-offers-amnesty-niger-delta-militants->
- Ikelegbe, A. (2010). The Amnesty: Declaration, Management and Challenges. In Augustine Ikelegbe (Ed) Oil, Resource Conflicts and the Post Conflict Transition in the Niger Delta Region: Beyond the Amnesty. CPED Monograph Series No3. Benin City, Nigeria. Ambik Press
- Ikelegbe, A. and Umukoro, N. (2016). The Amnesty Programme and the Resolution of the Niger Delta Crisis: Progress, Challenges and Prognosis. Benin, Nigeria. Centre for Population and Environmental Development Pub.
- Kuku, K. (2012). Nigeria enlists 30,000 ex-militants in Presidential Amnesty Programme. The Premium Times, December 24th. Retrieved from: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/112493-nigeria-enlists-30000-ex-militants-in-presidential-amnesty-programme-says-kuku.html>
- McMullan, N. (1970). Corruption in the Public Services of British Colonies and Ex-Colonies in West Africa. In Arnold J. Heidenheim (ed), Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Press.
- Nairametrics (2020). Nigeria ranks 146 on Global Corruption Index in 2019. Nairametrics, January 23rd. Retrieved from: <https://nairametrics.com/2020/01/23/breaking-nigeria-ranks-146-on-global-corruption-index-in-2019/>
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2017). Labor Force Statistics Vol. 1: Unemployment and Underemployment Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- Ndubusi, A. (1991). Nigeria What Hope? Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Egonmwan, J. (1992). Public Policy Analysis: Concepts and Applications, Benin City: SMO Aka and Brokers Press.
- Nwachukwu, J.O. (2020). Buhari suspends Charles Dokubo as Chairman Amnesty Programme. The Daily Post February 29. Retrieved from: <https://dailypost.ng/2020/02/29/buhari-suspends-charles-dokubo-as-chairman-amnesty-programme/>
- Nye, J. S. (1970) Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis. In Arnold J. Heidenheim (ed), Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Press.
- Ogele, E. P. (2020). Climate Change and Human Security in Rivers State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*. 6(2), 1757-1769. www.ijariie.com/FormDetails.aspx?MenuScriptId=180682
- Ogele, E.P. and Egobueze, A. (2020). The Artisanal Refining and Socioeconomic Development in Rivers State, Nigeria, 2007-2017. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* vol.4 issue 4, pp.16-25. Retrieved from: <https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-4-issue-4/16-25.pdf>
- Okoko, K. and Ibaba S.I. (1997). Oil spillages and community disturbance: The SPDC and the Niger Delta Experience. In *Nigerian Journal of Oil and Politics (OPJON)*, vol. 1, No.1 September.
- Onuoha, F.C. (2016). The Resurgence of Militancy in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta and the Dangers of Militarisation. Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. Retrieved from: https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/46334777/AL_JAZEERA_-_Resurgence_of_Militancy.pdf?response-content-



- Oshio, E. (2009). The Challenge of National Security and Development. Being a paper delivered at the Delta State Christian Professional League Seminar on Crisis Management and Nation Building at Grand Hotel, Asaba on Thursday, 19th November. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/48864435/CHALLENGE-OF-NATL-AND-DEV-IN-NIG>
- PMNews (2019). Gen. Boroh docked for theft of Amnesty's money. October 3rd. Retrieved on 2019/10/07 from: <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2019/10/03/gen-boroh-docked-for-theft-of-amnestys-money/>
- SafeNigeria (2012). Kingsley Kuku is safer Africa man of the year (Nigeria) 2011. Retrieved from: saferafricagroup.wordpress.com › 2012/01/02 › kings
- TheGuardian (2019). Amnesty Programme: Dokubo's magic wand. The Guardian, August 25th. Retrieved from: <https://guardian.ng/opinion/amnesty-programme-dokubos-magic-wand/>
- TheVanguard (2011). Nigeria's crude oil production rises to 2.6m barrels daily. TheVanguard, February 22nd. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/02/nigeria%E2%80%99s-crude-oil-production-rises-to-2-6m-barrels-daily-fg/>
- Udo, B (2011). Kingsley Kuku praises Niger Delta amnesty programme. The Nation, Monday June, 27th.
- Weinstein, J. (2004). On the Brink: Weak States and US National Security. Center for Global Development. Retrieved from: <https://www.cgdev.org/event/brink-weak-states-and-us-national-security>
- Willinks Commission Report (1957). Report of the commission appointed to Enquire into the fears of the minorities and the means of Allaying them, Her Majesty stationery Office, London.