



## OIL AND MILITANCY IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA.

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is faced with prevalent cases of insecurity as a result of marginalization. The region is facing several health challenges orchestrated by oil exploration, and there is no meaningful compensation to commensurate with these devastating situation. This study was conducted to examine the cause of militancy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Militancy in the Niger Delta has reached a seemingly high level, which has contributed to the crumbling economy of Nigeria and insecurity in the region as there are series of attacks on oil facilities which have reduced the barrel production of crude oil per day in the region. This has posed an imminent threat with the ongoing recession in the country. This study however adopts survey method and through empirical means tries to find out the cause of militancy in the region. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the purpose of clarity and specifically in the study. Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents that were selected using multiple sampling techniques; these include purposive, snowball and random sampling techniques. Secondary data were extracted from journals, textbooks, newspapers, and internet materials. Primary data were collected through structured and unstructured interviews. The study recommends that due compensation should be paid to the host region. Development projects should be assigned to the region to reduce environmental hazards.*

**KEYWORDS:** Oil, Militancy, Insecurity, Government, Region.



## INTRODUCTION

The cause of militancy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is as a result of continuous deprivation and environmental degradation in the oil rich region without meaningful compensation from the oil proceeds. The maltreatment of the people of this region has forced the youths of the region to engage in militancy making it an unsafe region in the country, as the resurgence of militancy by the allegedly tactical and formidable Niger Delta Avengers has once again promoted insecurity and uncertainty as to what the future holds as regards the economy and security of the region and the country as a whole. It has also brought about a major fall in the oil production process in the region due to the incessant attacks on oil facilities and kidnapping of foreign and indigenous oil workers in the region.

According to Asuquo and Ekanem (2023), violence is a common decimal in every society or state. This occurs as certain group of people perceived injustice, unfairness and inequality. This is the case in Niger Delta. As posited by (Ekanem, Asuquo; Ogar & Ofuka, 2023). Violence during elections and violence against women and youths is a barrier that cannot be overemphasized. As observed by (Esara, Mfon, & Walter; 2024), some youths engage in moral ruin, murder, terrorism, kidnapping, sexual harassment, rape, armed robbery, and generally debased practices across Niger Delta and Nigeria in general.

The issue of security, peace and development remain at the centre of focus on national and international research and topical discourse. As security remain a lost entity in which developing countries are always seeking out. There have been cases of economic, political and socio economic crisis, which have always had their way in turning into issues of national security. On national security, Esara Umoh, 2023 believes that it is the achievement of psychological and physical safety of the citizenry, which is the responsibility of the government at all levels to ensure the prevention of physical threats to the survival of the existing norms, beliefs, values and culture of the citizenry and the country in general. (Esara, Mfon, & Walter; 2024), observed that the Nigeria Police Force has been under intense public criticisms in the last four decades over corruption, brutality and its inability to effectively prevent and control crime.

Asuquo and Ekanem (2023) argued that when education is compromised, it becomes challenging to produce a workforce that can contribute meaningfully to various sectors, hindering economic growth and diversification. This is as a result of corruption and it has given rise to militancy in Niger Delta.

As noted by Udonwa, Effiong, Asuquo and Samuel (2022), the emergence of oil wealth has widened the income gap in Nigeria as those who have access to political power have the link to engage in oil business. The oil business is often used as a means of political settlement in Nigeria.

Oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region antagonize the government and the oil majors because it is their belief that the interests of the region is not protected; hence, the Niger Delta Crisis from its inception has always been a result of the fatal consequences of oil extraction on the environment and also the inadequacy in the appropriation of the proceeds from the huge revenue generated from oil extracted from the region. In view of this, the issue of militancy in the Niger Delta region, and especially insecurity, would remain a recurring one till a lasting and sustainable solution can be proffered to the causes for agitations in the region. It is now a battle field between the military and militants. Since the federal government use



force on the people instead of negotiation, the people resort to self-help by carrying weapons as an option. The Niger Delta Avengers are believed to be energetic, sophisticated and calculative in their attacks as they have killed military personnel in their numbers. There are several militant groups such as MEND, NDA and NDYDF amongst others. Oil production was reduced from 1.4 million barrels per day to 800,000 barrels per day, due to a series of attacks on the country's oil facilities in the Niger Delta region by militants (Olusola, 2013).

The current oil conflict in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s over tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw. Ethnic and political unrest continued throughout the 1990s despite the return to democracy and the election of the Obasanjo government in 1999. Struggle for oil wealth and environmental harm over its impacts has fueled violence between ethnic groups, causing the militarisation of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups, Nigerian military and the police force. The violence has contributed to Nigeria's ongoing energy supply crisis by discouraging foreign investment in new power generation plants in the region. Since 2004, violence also hit the oil industry with piracy and kidnapping. In 2009, a presidential amnesty program accompanied with support and training of ex-militants proved to be a success. Until 2011, victims of crimes were afraid of seeking justice for crimes committed against them because of failure to prosecute those responsible for human right abuse (Watts, 2011).

The Ogoni's response to these perceived wrongs was confined, at least initially, to protests, low-level acts of civil disobedience and minor, occasional acts of sabotage, along with the formation in 1990 of the movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), led by author and environmental activist, Ken Sarowiwa. The oil conflict escalated over the years and in November 1995, Sarowiwa and eight other activists were hanged by the Nigerian government. The hangings radicalized the Niger Delta opposition groups, which began to organize and engage in acts of violence and terrorism directed at oil interests. Over the next decade, there came into the picture a host of loosely formed rebel groups, funded by kidnappings for ransom and bunkering. (Stealing oil from pipelines and selling it locally or taking it to tankers offshore to sell to the larger world market.) The attacks were generally viewed by the oil and service companies as simply part of doing business in the region (Robert, 1994).

Appeasement efforts have fared a bit better. In 2009, the Nigerian government announced an amnesty program, which paid MEND militants millions of dollars and released Henry Okah from jail; in return, MEND declared a ceasefire. Although the ceasefire did not stick immediately, many members put their guns down and for the most part, the group ceased active operations. Buying off the militants with money and amnesty is a possibility, but the Nigerian economy is not in the best shape and history (Nwogwugwu, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the Niger Delta region, people's rights are rarely provided for, and frequently violated. Many of those who live in the region experience very poor living standards. The abundance of natural resource wealth from the region's oil and gas reserves, coupled with weak governance, has produced the 'resource curse,' maintaining this injustice. The combination of natural resource wealth and weak governance enables those in positions of political and other power to benefit



disproportionately from oil money and the oil and gas industry, making them operate below international standards.

As observed by Asuquo, Ekanem, Samuel and Esara (2023), the inadequate provision of infrastructural services and the associated problems have affected most business firms in the Niger Delta, and it has stirred a high level of aggression among the youths of this area.

Many historic oil spills have never been cleaned up, and this contributes to severe local health consequences, as well as for local livelihoods, such as farmland, fishing and water contaminated by oil and, above all, air pollution as a result of gas flaring from oil companies. Upon all these environmental hazards, no meaningful compensation is paid. As a result of the underdevelopment, widespread oil pollution, a lack of livelihood options and unresponsive government prompted militants to destroy oil facilities and kidnap foreign oil workers for ransom. This militancy brought about insecurity within the areas of Niger Delta, making cultism, piracy, corrupt security personnels and destabilizing economic activities rife. This militancy affected oil production to the extent that the price of oil rose above USD\$100 per barrel for the first time in world history.

In 2009, approximately 26,000 militants agreed to a ceasefire, and the government led an amnesty process that made payments and offered opportunities to ex-militants, intended to prevent a return to militancy. To this day, the presidential amnesty programme is still operating and there is relative stability but this is fragile as the original conditions giving rise to militancy have not been fully addressed. The demanded compensation is the handing over of the pipelines to militant leaders to protect them and get paid by the federal government. Militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a problem that affects government, private organizations and individuals.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to examine the cause of militancy in Niger Delta. The specific objectives of this study include the following:

- i. To examine the effects of militancy in the Niger Delta region and of national security.
- ii. To investigate the roles played by successive governments of the federation in reducing militancy in Niger Delta.
- iii. To suggest policy recommendations that would end militancy and bring about lasting peace in Niger Delta.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the causes of militancy in the Niger Delta region and of national security?
- ii. What are the roles played by successive governments of the federation in reducing militancy in Niger Delta?
- iii. What are the policy recommendations that would end militancy and bring about lasting peace in Niger Delta?



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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Niger Delta is widely known for its reputation as one of the largest wetlands in the country and also the oil base region. The Niger Delta region makes up over 7.5% of the total land mass of Nigeria. This includes Bayelsa, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers State, Ondo State, Delta, Abia and Imo States.

Even though the region houses the oil reservoir that generates a huge sum of Nigerian revenue, there are no development indicators, such as infrastructural development and social amenities, evident in the region. The region is faced with several environmental problems, such as air pollution and water pollution, and these affect farming and fishing, contributing to local health problems as well as local livelihood; upon all these, there has been no meaningful compensation. Jungle justice and insecurity is the order of the day as the military and militants are killing people at the slightest provocation. They are doing these to serve as a deterrent to cultists, kidnappers, oil thieves and armed robbers (Esara, Asuquo, Ekanem & Samuel, 2023). The power to give meaning to what may be nothing more than general principles gives bureaucrats a range of directions as they decide how to fulfill their duties (Ekanem & Asuquo, 2023).

According to Akpan, Ekoriko, Ekanem and Ottong (2024), harassment is one of the commonest forms of violence encountered by girls and youths in their everyday lives in the Niger Delta region. As posited by Essien and Ekoriko (2020), the core task of management is to get work done given available resources, be it material or human or a combination of both. It can be adduced that traditional land settlements were mainly founded within the fringe of palaces of traditional rulers for efficient communal interaction. The development and control of the total environment was the joint administrative responsibility of the entire community. The tradition settlements were structured according to the local customs and practice: the traditional land tenure system, the agrarian nature of the economy, and the existing mode of transportation in most developing countries. Communal lands were also vested in traditional rulers or community leaders in these environments and there were some form of family lands which were vested in the hands of various family heads whose legal status were likened to that of a trustee (beneficiary) and can allocate, re-allocate and supervise land use (Esara, Asuquo & Udoh, 2024).

Esara, Asuquo and Samuel (2023) observed that communal conflicts have become a common phenomenon in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria in general. These conflicts are mostly ethnic and some are as a result of the struggle for lands and other natural resources like oil, as in the case of Niger Delta region.

Several administrations in the country have turned blind eyes or played minimum roles in developing the region; so also the oil majors have neglected corporate social responsibilities expected of them in ensuring a future for the residents and sustainability of the region. This can be an absolute basis for the decision of residents, especially the youths, to make the region inhabitable and also the country ungovernable for subsequent administrations. Continued inadvertency of the government and expropriation of the Niger Delta contributes to the resurgence of militancy, which has led to a free fall of the oil production and revenue generated within the region. It has also threatened the national security of Nigeria in general (Idowu, 2012).



Agitations by some ex-militants, new militant groups and concerned residents in recent times have only served as a pointer to the fact that there is a dire need for the demands of the people to be met, rather than settlement of the militant groups for temporary peace. According to Adeosun (2016), the inability of the government to unhold the ceasefire agreement put in place by the immediate past administration through the amnesty programme and benefits accrued to it is one of the reasons for militancy in Niger Delta region. Insecurity in Niger Delta cannot be underestimated. In addition to this, Aminu (2013) said there are pieces of evidence in existing literature that connect the violence in Niger Delta to the different unattended age-long challenges faced by the residents of the region and the negligence of the government and oil majors in both psychological and environmental development. Insecurity in the Niger Delta region can be said to be as a result of economic and environmental grievances which pose a lot of threats not only to the region but Nigeria as a whole, as the importance of the Niger Delta region to Nigeria cannot be overemphasized (Eze, 2014).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts systems theory in explaining the relationship between oil and militancy in the Niger Delta. Systems theory was propounded by David Easton in 1953. David Easton's systems theory holds the idea that relevance and interaction of different components of a system should not be underestimated; he suggests that interaction is a product of the behavior of every member or part of the system, when they play their roles as expected. The political system is open to influences from its environment and the environment is in turn by the actions of the political system. Thus, if we have a region riddled with continuous insecurity and unrest from militancy, the national security of the country is threatened.

Niger Delta region is believed to hold a gigantic percentage of Nigeria's wealth; militancy and other means of attack pose serious threats to the national security of the country because of deprivation in the region. Systems theory focuses more on the relevance of parts of a whole system. In this study, however, the Niger Delta region remains indispensable and highly important to the whole, which is Nigeria, and any disruption in the region causes a dysfunction to the whole (Nigeria). This analogy sheds more light on the nexus between the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole.

This theory is suitable for this research work as it sheds more light on the causal factor of militancy in the region, which revolves around the activities of the government and oil majors in the Niger Delta region. This elicits the roles played by government, oil majors and the residents as parts of a bigger system. Finally, failure of the government to ensure high standards of environmental security regulations as regards the operations of the oil majors has posed serious threats to the Niger Delta region. Thus, the failure on the part of the government extends the threat to the national security of Nigeria.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts survey method in carrying out this research. Primary data were collected through structured and unstructured interviews. Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of questionnaire were administered, collected and analyzed for the purpose of this study. Secondary data were extracted from extensive literature works.



## RESULT

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussions of Findings

**Table 1: Socio-Demographical Data of the Participants**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age:</b>		
30-35	40	37.8
35-40	60	12.8
40-45	80	43.8
45-50	7	5.6
<b>Sex:</b>		
Male	200	67.2
Female	50	32.8
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Married	50	12.8
Divorced	35	5.6
Widow/Widower	85	43.8
Single	80	37.8
<b>Educational Qualification:</b>		
No. formal Education	80	35.6
Primary Education	20	6.4
Secondary Education	50	16.3
Tertiary Education	100	41.7
<b>Employment Status:</b>		
Unemployed	100	28.6
Self-employed	120	48.3
Civil Servants	30	23.1
<b>Years of Residence in The study area:</b>		
20-29	120	78.6
30-39	80	13.3
40 and above	50	8.1
	250	100

**Source:** *Field Work (2024).*

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic data of the participants. Age status of the participants shows that age 30-35 were 40 (5.6%) participants, age 35-40 were 60 (12.8%), while age 40-45 were 80 (43.8%) and age 45-50 were 70 (37.8%). Sex status of participants showed that 200 (67.2%) were males and 50 (32.8%) were females. Marital status of participants showed that the married were 50 (12.8%), while the divorced were 35 (5.6%), the widows/widowers were 85 (43.8%) the singles were 80 (37.8%). Educational status of participants showed that those with no formal education were 80 (35.6%), those with primary education were 20 (6.4%), secondary education were 50 (16.3%), and tertiary education were 100 (41.7%). Employment status of participants showed that the unemployed were 100 (28.6%), while the self-employed were 120 (48.3%), and the civil servants were 30 (23.1%). Participants' years of residence in the study area showed that year 20-29 were 120 participants (78.6%), while year 30-39 were 80 (13.3%), and then year 40 and above were 50 (8.1%).

**Table 2: The Cause of Militancy in Niger Delta Region**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
i.	Deprivation	80	26.7
ii.	Oil Theft	100	28.6
iii.	Cultism	50	22.8
iv.	Ethnicity	20	21.9

**Source:** *Field Work (2024)*

The result in Table 2 shows that deprivation was 80 (26.7%), then oil theft was 100 (28.6%), while cultism was 50 (22.8%), while ethnicity was 20 (21.9%), showing the cause of militancy in the Niger Delta region.

**Table 3: To Examine the Effects of Militancy in Niger Delta Region**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
i.	Insecurity	80	19.4
ii.	Destruction of Oil Facilities	100	63.9
iii.	Kidnapping	50	11.1
iv.	Underdevelopment	20	5.6

**Source:** *Field Work (2024)*

The result in Table 3 shows the effects of militancy in the Niger Delta region: Insecurity was 80 (19.4%), then destruction of oil facilities was 100 (63.9%), while kidnapping was (11.1%), and underdevelopment was 20 (5.6%), as the effects of militancy.

**Table 4: The Roles Played by Government in Reducing Militancy**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
i.	Compensation	30	15.71
ii.	Amnesty Programme	100	37.14
iii.	Employment Opportunities	50	22.86
iv.	Corporate Social Responsibility	70	24.29

**Source:** *Field Work (2024)*

The result in the table shows the roles played by the government in reducing militancy in the Niger Delta region. Compensation was 30 (15.71%), then amnesty programme was 100 (37.14%), while employment opportunity was 50 (22.86%) and corporate social responsibility was 70 (24.29%).





## DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings in this study show that militancy in the Niger Delta region is caused by the following factors: deprivation, oil theft, cultism and ethnicity. Leaders of various militant groups engage in oil theft where they make money to fund their group, as shown in Figure 1, 2 and 3. The findings further show that the Niger Delta region is the source of the country's revenue which cannot be disputed, as stated by Eze (2014). The findings also show the effects of militancy in the Niger Delta region to include insecurity, destruction of oil facilities, kidnapping and underdevelopment, as shown in Figures 4, 5 and 6.

The study further shows the roles played by the government in reducing militancy in the Niger Delta region to include compensation, amnesty programme, employment opportunity and corporate social responsibility in order to reduce poverty in the region and also improve the socio-economic well-being of the people. The findings show that there is a need for the government to uphold the ceasefire agreement, as stated by Adeosun (2016); this is shown in Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10. The findings show that there is a need for government to address the issue of air pollution and water pollution as these have affected the livelihood of the people, such as farming and fishing, which forced them to engage in oil theft and militancy, as earlier stated by Idowu (2012) and shown in Figures 11, 12 and 13 showing militants dressed in military camouflage attacking and destroying oil facilities in the Niger Delta region. This attack reduced oil production from 1.4 million barrels per day to 800,000 barrels per day, due to a series of militant attacks.

## CONCLUSION

Militancy in Niger Delta is driven by economic and environmental scores and will not end until these challenges are attended to; else, they will continue their series of sabotage on oil resources facilities. This however is a major threat to the national security of Nigeria. The inability of successive administrations to uphold the ceasefire agreement put in place by the immediate past administration through the amnesty programme and benefits accrued to it is one of the reasons for militancy in the Niger Delta region, as a result of economic and environmental grievances which pose a lot of threat not only to the region, but to Nigeria as a whole.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Government and oil majors should pay commensurate compensation to the residents of the Niger Delta region in order to end militancy there.
- ii. Government should dialogue and implement the ceasefire agreement with the militant groups in order to bring about lasting peace in the region.
- iii. Government should put in place more measures to ensure regular cleanup of the Niger Delta region, especially the oil companies and ensure swift response concerning environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region.



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## APPENDIX I





### Militancy and Destruction of Oil Facilities in Niger Delta Region

#### APPENDIX II





## Oil, Militancy and Insecurity in Niger Delta Region