



Impact of Socioeconomic Background of the Niger Delta Militants on Environmental Degradation

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Abstract. Niger delta region is one of the most environmental impacted region in Nigeria. This is due to the activities of oil pipeline vitalization activities by the Niger delta militants in the region. To a great level, environmental degradation caused by the militant youths in the region constitutes a serious problem. It is against this background that researcher tries to find out the relationship between the educational levels of the militants, their environmental awareness and it effects on oil pipeline vandalism in the region. The study employed descriptive statistics to analyze to the data collected from 300 responded. The study found that, majority of the militants are young men; significant number of them are educated; majority number of the militants are aware of the negative environmental impact of vandalism. The study recommended the need for federal government amnesty program to be more inclusive and the need for government to promote employment opportunities among the youth in the region. Equally, to enforce environmental laws to protect the environment.

Keywords: Socioeconomic, Militancy, and Environmental Degradation.

1. Introduction

One of the major areas that is receiving global attention today is the environment. The Niger delta region of Nigeria is one of such areas that is not new to environmental degradation since oil was discovered and exploited for commercial purposes in 1958. A leading source pollutants in the region apart from oil exploitation is pipeline vandalism. This study is looking at the relationship between the environment and socioeconomic background of the militants in the region. Studies have shown that there exist to a certain levels environmental awareness among the respondents yet for years the region continued to suffer from environmental degradation

as a result of pollution from oil spillage as a result of pipeline vandalism.

Although in many different parts of the world where petroleum products are produced or transported, oil spillage is a major concern and all efforts were put in place to protect the environment (Schmidt-Etkin 2011). Evidence has shown that, oil pipeline vandalism is much less common in all parts of with the exception of the Niger delta region (ITOPF 2014). These areas include the Middle East, Europe, America, Asia and of course Africa and much has been achieved over the years. However, much still needs to be done in the Niger delta because the problem seems to be different from the rest of the world. This study therefore seeks to find out the relationship between the socioeconomic background of the Niger delta militants and environmental degradation in the region.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Literature Review

Number of attempts have been made by theories to provide a link between crime and deviant behavior. It is also argued that, causes of deviants' behavior must be sought in deviant factors and situations that determined such behavior. The relation between education and crime has also been generally treated within this framework (Ehrlich1975). On the other hand, a study by Harlow (2003) shows a strong relationship between education and crime. The results from his study of inmates in the United States of America revealed that, 75% of state and 59% of federal prison inmates in 1997 don't have a diploma.

Evidences from other studies also revealed that, higher educational attainment have significant impact on education and crime (Lochner 2020). It also promotes savings and reduce poverty levels among the youth and reduction in property crime (Lochner and Moretti 2004). In addition, educational policies

designed to promote schooling in crime-prone areas or groups are likely to yield the highest benefits from crime reduction (Deming 2011). Furthermore, an improved educational attainment and enhanced wages and jobs opportunity can bring reduction in crime in men. However, this is not the case for women. Also Hjalmarsson and Lochner (2012) pointed out that, there's a growing evidence that, policies designed to increase educational attainment and improve school quality can significantly reduce the rates of crimes. Also see (Lochner 2012).

On the other hand, the rate of crime is found to be positively correlated with inequality in between regions, but negatively correlated with the level of education. Furthermore, it is also observed that crime rate is positively and significantly related with the level of unemployment and inflationary rates; unemployment rate, as well as inequality in consumption and employment between the rural and urban sectors. The results lend strong support to Merton's theory and Marxian theory. However, the rational choice theory is not supported (Tsun and Wu 2014).

While studies by Anifowose, Lawlar, Horst and Chapman (2012) suggest the existence of a strong

evidence of negative correlation between pipeline interdiction and poverty which suggests that poverty tends to reduce as interdiction increases. Surprisingly more affluent regions witness more interdiction.

3. Research Methodology

The objectives of the study are to find out if there is a relationship between environment and the socioeconomic background of Niger delta militants. The study used descriptive statistics to analyze the primary data collected from the respondents who were selected through convenience sampling technique.

4. Results and Discussions

The results were obtained from data collected from the respondents in the Niger delta region for this analysis. Results from the descriptive statistics where the respondents were asked set of questions relating to environmental issues and their awareness about the significance of environment through a structured five (5) Likert-scale options 1-5: Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Disagree=3; Agree=4 and Strongly Agree=5, respectively. See table 1.1

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics Results: Background of the Respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age			30.486	9.366	18	65
18 – 30 years	191	63.7				
31 – 40 years	66	22.0				
41 – 50 years	27	9.0				
51 and above	16	5.3				
Education of the respondents			3.81	1.233	1	5
No formal Education	14	4.7				
Primary school	42	14				
Secondary school	52	17.3				
Diploma/NCE	72	24				
University	120	40				
Income Groups			₦122,790	₦124,408	₦5,000	₦700,000
₦5,000 – ₦100,000	188	62.7				
₦101,000 – ₦200,000	67	22.3				
₦201,000 – ₦300,000	16	5.3				
₦301,000 – ₦400,000	14	4.7				
₦401,000 – ₦500,000	11	3.7				
₦501,000 – ₦600,000	2	.7				
₦601,000 – ₦700,000	2	.7				
Environmental awareness			3.8587	.52771	1	4
not important	5	1.9				
not very important	6	2.2				
rather important	11	4.1				
very important	247	91.8				
Benefitted from amnesty			.47	.686	0	4
not benefitted	184	61.30				
Benefitted	116	38.70				
Benefitted from amnesty			.42	.848	0	4

	218	72.1
not benefitting		
Benefitting	82	27.9

Source: Analysis, 2022

From table 1.1, the respondents age groups are classified in to main categories, the first category is made up of respondents between the age of 18 – 30 years 191 (63.7%). This category made up the group in the four categories, because majority of the militants groups are youths the second category are from the ages of 31 – 40 (66 22%). The third category are from 41 – 50 (27 9%). The last group are from the ages of 51 and above they are made up of (16 5.3%).

The results from the respondents’ educational background shows that a large number of them are educated. This is an indication that most militants in the Niger delta had basic education. The outcome of the results is not surprising because basic education is made compulsory under the universal basic education (UBE) in Nigeria and is free for all. In addition, this study requires people who can read and write to be able to understand the concept of the study and the questionnaire. Equally, 4.7% of the respondents can speak and write in English which they learned through informal education. This is understandable because the region speaks pigin (local English) English predominantly. While 14% had primary education and couldn’t go beyond that level due to some socioeconomic factors that makes it difficult for them to further their education. While 17.3% have secondary school certificate. 24% have Diploma/NCE, while the 40% have university education.

Despite the results from literature showing positive relationship between educational attainment and fall in crime and vandalism related problems, this study shows the reverse. This is because, the militants considered pipeline vandalism as a means of protest against the government and oil companies, equally for economic benefits and to finance their struggle.

While the results from the respondents’ income groups are classified into seven categories: the first group comprises respondents with income from ₦5, 000 – ₦100, 000. The minimum income for a family is ₦5, 000 which was approved as welfare package for less privilege, while the national minimum salary is ₦18, 000. This group made up 62.27 % of the respondents. The second group is made up respondents with income from ₦101, 000 – ₦200, 000 they made up 22.3%. The third group is made up of respondents with income levels ₦201, 000 –

₦300, 000 they made up 5.3%. The forth group is made up of respondents with income group of ₦301, 000 – ₦301, 000 – ₦400, 000 made up 4.7%. The fifth group is made up of respondents with income levels of ₦401, 000 – ₦500, 000 they are 3.7%. The sixth group is respondents with income level of ₦501, 000 – ₦600, 000 with 0.7%. The seventh group are respondents under the income levels of ₦601, 000 – ₦700, 000 with 0.7% of the respondents respectively. Income levels of the respondents is very important in the study as it influences the behaviour of the respondents in environment decision making.

Equally, the results on environmental awareness on the other hand, tried to assess the respondent’s levels of environmental awareness. Considering that it’s among major problems facing the Niger delta region. The respondents were asked about their environmental awareness in relation to, erosion & flood, air pollution, oil spillage, climate change and loss of fauna & flora. The statistical results on table 3 shows rating of 4-1, which indicates environmental issues from; very important, rather important, not very important and not important respectively. 91.8% of the respondents considered environmental issues very important, 4.1% rather important, 2.2% not very important and 1.9% not important respectively. From the statistical analysis, it’s clear that the respondents have adequate awareness about the environment they live in despite carrying out series of on oil pipelines. However, many in the region believes their actions is part of the struggle to emancipate their region from oil exploitation (Omotola 2009; Orogun 2010).

The result also found out that 61.30% family members in the study area have not benefitted from the amnesty programme. While 38.70% family members have benefitted from the amnesty programme. The low number of beneficiaries is one of the shortcomings of the programme. Therefore, from this finding it is expected that there is likelihood for increase in vandalism.

Equally, the number of family members currently benefiting from the programme showed 72.1% are not benefiting, while 27.9% family members are found out to be currently benefiting from the amnesty programme.

The perception analysis is presented to provide an insight into the respondents’ views that their environment which trigger the need for valuation. It

also analyses the respondents' perception about the importance of the environment and the need to save the environment from pollution, degradation and the need to embrace amnesty and peace in the Niger delta region.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that traditional believe among Niger delta militants has it that, female participation in vandalism is not allowed (Oriola 2012). The results from both statistical analysis shows that in both studies young men constitute the majority in carrying out vandalism. It can also be concluded that despite understanding the environmental effects of pipeline vandalism, fighting government against environmental degradation through militancy is acceptable (Oluwaniyi 2010). on the other hand, it has been found that lack of high number of militants benefiting from the amnesty program has significantly promoted vandalism. Equally, militancy is considered a responsibility and cut across ages, education and status among the youth in the region. Most of them believe that violence is the only language, both the government and oil companies understands (Oluwaniyi 2010).

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