

**GOVERNMENT NEGLECT AND MILITANCY IN BAYELSA  
STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
(2011-2021)**

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**ABSTRACT:** This research is on Government Neglect and Militancy in Bayelsa State: Implications for Sustainable Development. The specific objectives are to: investigate the extent corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State; examine how environmental neglect has resulted in kidnapping in Bayelsa State; examine the extent unemployment has resulted in hostage taking in Bayelsa State and investigate the extent poor infrastructural development has caused bunkering in Bayelsa State. Research hypotheses: there is a significant relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State; there is a significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State; there is a significant relationship between unemployment and hostage-taking in Bayelsa State and there is a significant relationship between poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study centres on government neglect and militancy in Bayelsa State with the implications on sustainable development in Bayelsa State. The study covers the entire eight (8) local government areas of Bayelsa State. The sample size for the study is eight hundred (800). The study found that: corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State; environmental neglect has resulted in kidnapping in Bayelsa State; unemployment has resulted in hostage taking in Bayelsa State and poor infrastructural development has increased bunkering in Bayelsa State. Based on the findings the following recommendations were made: the existing laws on corruption in Bayelsa State should include a life sentence for corrupt government officials and individuals found wanting in corruption; the multi-national oil prospecting companies must ensure that they rehabilitate and ameliorate the hazards from oil and mining exploration during and after their activities as a result of health and environmental effects in the course of their operations; government should foster job creation and organize training schemes to train youth in the region and Bayelsa State in different vocations to enable them to be industrious and self-employed; and the government and existing multinational oil companies (MNOCS) in Bayelsa State should embark on robust infrastructural development that will have direct positive socio-economic impact on the people of the state.

**Key words:** Government Neglect, Militancy, Sustainable Development, Bayelsa State.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Crude oil discovery in Oloibiri present day Bayelsa state in 1956 was greeted with great expectation, aspiration and hope of galvanizing development both for the nation and oil-bearing communities. Unfortunately, these dreams and expectation of using nature's endowment to improve the living conditions of the local people has literally turned into a curse. Niger Delta

region oil and gas proceeds accounts for 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 80 percent of government revenue (Babatunde, Norafidah & Tapiwa, 2016 in Iwedibia, 2018).

The question to ask is this "why is Niger Delta region and Bayelsa State in particular experiencing high underdevelopment and poverty which has resulted in militancy in the region? The answer is not far-fetched. Unarguably Niger Delta region can be described as a victim of depraved attitude of the Nigerian State and Political elites especially the governing elites from the region (Iyabobola, 2015). Government neglect both at Federal and State levels play destructive role in breeding anger and frustration among the people especially the youths who use militancy to drive home their demands to government and oil companies operating in their domain.

Some factors have been adjudged as responsible for militancy in Bayelsa State. These are not unrelated to oil production, the underdevelopment of the area, and negligence of the area. But some scholars hinge the blame on federalism and politics of revenue sharing in Nigeria (Dialoke & Edeja, 2017), environmental injustices and human rights violation, the failure of corporate social responsibility on the part of multinational oil companies and accountability (Chukwuemeka & Aghara, 2010) and transparency failure in government (Ibaba, 2008). It is this prevailing reality in Bayelsa State that has given birth to an environment of perpetual agitation, youth restiveness, insurgency and general insecurity.

The upsurge of militancy in Bayelsa State might be attributed to government corruption, environmental neglect, unemployment and poor infrastructural development. The original aim of the struggle for the liberation of the people in the Niger Delta has been thwarted by the entrance of criminality (including robbery, piracy and kidnapping) cult and gang violence, election violence among others (Niger Delta Partnership Initiative, 2017) who claim to be pursuing the interest of the people but their mode of operations does not give credence to the assertion. For instance, on May 11 2016, Shell (African Petroleum) closed down their Bonny Oil facility and evacuated their workers as militant killed three soldiers guarding the oil facility (Uguru & Faul, 2016). Also, the Niger Delta Avengers (new militant group formed in 2016) claimed responsibility of bombing Chevron's Escravos oil and gas facility leading to its shut down and the cost of all these attack is cause of the reduction of Nigeria's oil production from 2.2 million barrels a day to 1.68 million barrels a day (Uguru & Faul, 2016). Militant groups in the Niger Delta region were also involved in kidnapping and piracy. In 2019, Nigeria ranked as the highest country for reported incidents of seafarers taken hostage on board or kidnapped for ransom with 21 attacks out of 77 reports globally (IMB 2019 in Nwalozie, 2020). This has portrayed Nigeria in bad light among the comity of nations and has negatively impacted on the willingness of foreign investors and oil companies to conduct business in Nigeria.

Government corruption has been attributed to the manifestation of militancy in Bayelsa State. Corruption is an existential threat to sustainable development because of its tendencies to expropriate and divert public goods for personal interest thereby subjecting the people to further misery and poverty. Funds meant for development purposes are usually diverted to personal and selfish purpose. Corruption is unpleasant in Nigeria that the country is ranked 146 in 2019 on the annual corruption index published by the Transparency International (Nairametrics, 2020). It used index like the degree to which public official embezzle public funds, accepting bribes and taking illicit payment in public funds (Adewale, 2017 in Ozele, 2020). Indeed, massive corruption in government indicated that Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has 13,000 doubtful projects despite receiving 6 trillion allocations in

19 years (*Premium Times*, 2021). Also, a former governor of Bayelsa State – Diepreye Alamieyesegha has been convicted of money laundering involving money stolen from his people (*Premium Times*, 2021). Thus, militant agitation could be attributed to the frustration and economic deprivation in the face of abundance, experienced by Bayelsans especially the youth due to corruption.

Environmental neglect (degradation) has remained a major area of culpability and gross failure by the Nigerian government and oil companies. The Niger Delta region is in pang of turning into an environmental waste bin. Oil operation in Bayelsa State has resulted in oil spills, gas flaring, deforestation, land degradation, water and air pollution which kills aquatic lives and agricultural crops, in addition to reducing soil nutrients (Clark et al 1999 in Ibaba, 2008). Studies have shown the negative impacts of gas flaring on agricultural production. Crops planted about 200 metres from flare site lose 100 percent of their yield those planted about 600 metres of flare site experience 45 percent loss in yield, and 10 percent for crops planted one kilometre away from flare site (Salau, 1993; Adeyemo, 2002 in Ibaba, 2008). Without doubt environmental degradation has dire consequences on sustainable development of Bayelsans. It has resulted in productivity loss, occupational displacement/disorientation, and increased poverty with its attendant manifestations of frustration and youth militancy (UNDP 2006; Anikpo; 1998 in Ibaba, 2008).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in Oloibiri present day Bayelsa State in 1957 was expected to galvanize socio-economic growth and sustainable development to the government and the local communities. However, the stark reality is that oil revenues have been hijacked by political and governing elite from the federal government and Niger Delta region respectively while the oil-producing communities live in abject poverty, misery and abandonment. Despite the fact that Niger Delta regions' oil and gas production accounts for 80 percent of government revenue, 95 percent of export earnings, 90 percent of foreign exchange proceeds (Babatunde, Norafidah and Tapiwa, 2016 in Iwedibia, 2018) and generates over \$600 billion to the country (Etekpe, 2013 in Iwedibia, 2018), there is little or nothing to show in real development for the people of Bayelsa State.

One could adduce that the Niger Delta region is a victim of depraved character of the Nigerian state epitomized in rapacious government neglect and possible collusion with multinational oil companies in the exploitation of the oil-bearing communities. Today, oil exploration has been associated with oil spillage, gas flaring, environmental degradation, pollution and ecological nightmare with devastating consequences on socio-economic disarticulation, poverty and frustration of the local people. To this end, militant activities like attack of oil assets and infrastructure, kidnapping for ransom / hostage taking, attacks on Nigerian security agencies, oil bunkering, among others, are avenues to let out their frustration against the government and oil companies.

Specifically, government corruption has been attributed to militancy in Bayelsa State. There is the assumption that funds meant for redressing the development deficits in the state were misappropriated by government officials both at the state and local government levels. Bayelsa State is the only state in the Niger Delta where two former governors (Diepreye Alamieyeseigha and Timipre Sylva) have been convicted of corruption to the tune of N710.45 billion (\$6.46 billion) since the last 10 years (Odiegwu, 2012 in Ibekwe, 2014). In Bayelsa

State it has been observed that oil-bearing communities that show no support or sponsorship to the government in power were denied representation in federal and state government special agencies. Appointments gotten through corrupt practices means that these beneficiaries will first recoup the monies spent to get the appointments and equally divert huge percentage of public funds to settle the political godfathers that sustain them in office. It is this greed of corrupt entrepreneurs that fuels militancy in Bayelsa state as the oppressed group will want a share of the oil revenue. This will have serious implication for sustainable development in the state.

Furthermore, the environment of Bayelsa in particular has been greatly degraded owing to disregard by oil companies to follow best practices. Indeed, consequences of oil operations are damaging the local peoples' basic life – support system. The government was in vantage position to ensure that oil companies used technologies that guarantee environmental preservation and sustenance in the course of their operations but due to corruption, negligence and inept leadership, the environment is gradually turning into a wasteland. Issues of gas flaring, oil spillage, construction of waste pits/dumpsite among others have destroyed the local peoples' aquatic and terrestrial lives. In the face of flagrant neglect by government to preserve the oil bearing communities environment despite their contributions to national development, militant groups have emerged to seek redress using any means necessary. It is therefore pertinent to note that sustainable development may be difficult to achieve when oil companies flare gas or even by the activities of militants that break oil pipelines to cause spillage and/or engaged in illegal bunkering.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to investigate how the emergence of militancy as a product of government neglect impacted on sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

The specific objectives were to:

1. investigate the extent corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State.
2. examine how environmental neglect has resulted in kidnapping in Bayelsa State.
3. examine the extent unemployment has resulted in hostage taking in Bayelsa.
4. investigate the extent poor infrastructural development has caused bunkering in Bayelsa State.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is a significant relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State.
2. There is a significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State.
3. There is a significant relationship between unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa State
4. There is a significant relationship between poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State?

## **DATA, METHODOLOGY AND THE STUDY AREA**

The study is located in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Bayelsa State is the area of focus. A survey research design is adopted for this study which is a procedure in quantitative research. This design has the advantage of measuring current attitudes or practices. All the sampled twenty-four (24) communities in Bayelsa state were listed and numbers were assigned to them. However, all the persons from 18 years and above were properly listed. Through a simple random procedure Eight Hundred (800) respondents were selected for the data collection for this study. This study employed two methods of data collection primary and secondary. The primary encompasses questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGDs) guides while the secondary included: Textbooks, internet materials, magazines, seminar papers, journals etc. The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis. In this analysis, percentages (%) and other statistical methods, including graphic illustrations were employed.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Government Neglect and Militancy: Origin and Development**

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria captured the fundamental duties of government as one that promotes good governance and welfare of all citizens in the country, on the principles of freedom, equality and justice (Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). It is therefore imperative that a responsible and proactive government at all tiers pursue their ethos or ideals for the socio-economic development of the country and citizens. However, noble and lofty were these expectations, the Nigerian State has not lived up to the bidding of providing good governance, better living standard, employment, development of infrastructure such as good roads, hospital, electricity, schools and so on.

Nigeria is stupendously blessed with adequate human and natural resources, which is enough to take care of her population but her resources and collective patrimony are mismanaged due to poor governance (Nzeagwu, 2021). Governments at the three tiers (Federal, State and Local) have all been found culpable of gross neglect of the people they swore to cater for. The term government neglect connotes the deliberate withholding or failure of political leaders and elite entrusted with responsibilities of providing and promoting socio-economic goods to the people. Oil-bearing communities have condemned the negligence of the Federal government for not providing the much needed development in the region and also extended the blame to the governors of the nine states of Niger Delta (Amaize, 2020). Similarly, Muhammad (2017) blamed hostilities in the Niger Delta on government neglect.

The Niger Delta region covers a very dense rain forest in the Southern part of Nigeria. The predominant occupation of the people in this region are fishing and farming which they made available for trade and consumption all year round. Formerly described as oil Rivers because of its palm producing potential, the rain forest in this region opens up into the Atlantic Ocean and makes the Niger Delta one of the most important Wetlands with a rich, complex, but fragile ecosystem (Cyril, 2010). Internationally known as the region with the richest petroleum reservoir, the Niger Delta is also a terrain conducive to conflicts, with the more prominent ones being the 1966 revolt, the 1990 peaceful protest and the recent widespread militancy attacks (Adunbi, 2015). It is also home to several popular social movements and groups, including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Chikolo Movement



(FNDIC), that have all been fighting for indigenes rights over their natural resources in this region. Likewise, it has been a region of international controversy over pollution, corruption and human rights violations based on oil and gas operations ongoing for the last fifty years (Ibeanu, 2015). Neglected by successive Nigerian governments and the oil companies operating within the region, the Niger Delta region has become a poor region with widespread poverty, under development and environmental degradation (Cyril, 2010).

The history of this federated state demonstrates that, even before the discovery of oil, the indigenes of the region had been in struggle with external domination over their environmental resources. The abundance of hydrocarbons in the Niger Delta region, offers an obvious example of resource paradox, portraying the region as one of the classic patterns of a rich resource country where people are experiencing abject poverty. The non-involvement of the local people in the management of their resources and their marginalization from a fair sharing of the oil revenue have given rise to a generalized social frustration and an aversion against the oil companies and the state authorities (Adunbi, 2015).

Agitation against environmental degradation and poor infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, particularly by the Ijaw youth, has been a recurring issue particularly from the 1990s. The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in the area was ordered to cease operations and leave the area by December 31, 1998, but a new wave of agitation began in its Kaiama declaration on December 11, 1998. However, the emergence of the new wave of agitation started in its Kaiama declaration in December, 11<sup>th</sup> 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in the region to suspend operations and to leave the Niger Delta region by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1998. The basic complaint by the IYC as contained in the declaration, is that the oil exploration by oil companies in the region is causing severe land and food shortages and serious environmental pollution (Ezeudo, 2013). The oil exploration in the region is dominated by the multi-national corporations such as Chevron, Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, Agip, Shell and Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Their other complaint is that there is no serious and systematic effort at meaningful human and infrastructural development in the region both by the government and the multi-national oil companies.

The Niger Delta region is the hub of oil and gas production in Nigeria that accounts for 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings, 95 percent of the national budget, 80 percent of government revenue and over 80 percent of national wealth (Akeem, 2010). Given this, the people of the region believe that their communities are carrying the burden of development in other parts of Nigeria whilst their own human and material development needs are not being addressed. Indeed, several studies on the Niger Delta and Militancy such as Onduku, (2011), and Ikelegbe (2016), have corroborated the above claims by the people through their findings that the environmental pollution associated with the oil exploration and the lack of meaningful development in the region have been the source or the aggravating factors for the past agitations and the contemporary militancy in the region. Ugwuanyi, Obaje, Ohaeri, Ugwu and Ohagwu (2014) argued that water and land pollution to oil spillage, gas flaring and total neglect of the region by the past and present governments have led to militancy in the region.

Following the ultimatum given to the oil companies by the youths of Niger Delta to leave the region and the resolve to fight for improved ecological protection, increase provision of social and economic infrastructures and control of the regional petroleum resources led to the emergence of armed youth organizations in the region thus marking the birth of armed militant groups in the region. The most potent of such militant groups include the Movement for the

Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah, the Niger Delta peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante led by Ateke Tom. There are also other smaller armed militia groups such as the Tombolo Boys (TTB), Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), Matyrs Brigade (MB) and Icelanders Coalition for Military Action (ICMA) (Ogege, 2011). These armed groups engaged in various forms of violent and criminal activities like oil pipeline vandalization, kidnapping of the workers of the oil companies and sea piracy.

The initial response to the violent activities of the militants by the Nigerian Federal Government was military repression that involved forceful control of the militant activities through the Joint Military Task Force Operations. This approach resulted in monumental loss of human lives with both the militants and the Nigerian security forces claiming to have inflicted heavy casualties on one another. However, from 2005, it was becoming clear that the military approach to the control of the violent militant activities in the region was not being effective given its increasing intensity (Kalu, 2014).

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

According to Mensah (2019), sustainable development is a popular catchphrase in contemporary development discourse that has garnered massive popularity over the years. Despite this, the concept still seems unclear and people continue to ask questions about what it entails. To effectively elucidate the nature of sustainable development, it is worthy to explain the concept development and sustainability before the juxtaposition. Development is defined as 'an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change, and striving purposefully and creatively to attain new goals. Development is as a social condition within a country, in which the needs of the people are satisfied through the use of natural resources and systems. Development is a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes, and institutions, as well as economic growth, reduction of inequality, and eradication of absolute poverty.

For sustainability, Stoddart, Schneeberger, Shaw, Bottero, Cornforth and White, (2011) explain it as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra-generationally and inter-generationally with the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of a finite ecosystem. For Ben-Eli (2015) sustainability is a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. Furthermore, Thomas, (2015) added that sustainability involves human activities and the ability to satisfy human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resources at their disposal.

Therefore, sustainable development scenario describes a situation whereby the policies formulated allow for an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental goals that will bring major institutional changes, with the objective of establishing development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations. Sustainable development could also be regarded as efficient management of resources of human survival taking into consideration both the present and the future generations (Adunbi, 2015). Bakker (2010) stated that the major objective of sustainable development is to build

equity, narrow the gaps between rich and poor within countries, and end social exclusion and marginalization while promoting social justice. Niger Delta region appears to fall short of what sustainable development entails. Despite the contribution of its oil to the national economy, the Niger Delta area especially Bayelsa State is neglected in terms of provision of social amenities. Apart from this, the people of the region are poor as a result of the destruction of the ecosystem and their means of livelihood.

There is, therefore, the need for sustainable development in the region so as to cushion the people's frustration, oppression and marginalization. The concept of sustainable development, according to Aluko (2014) emanated from 1987 report entitled, "The Common Development (WCED)". The report also known as Brundtland Report noted that most countries especially developing nations are making large numbers of people poor and vulnerable, while simultaneously degrading the environment. The report; therefore, emphasized the need for a new path of development to sustain human capacity development globally for several years. As a result of this report, there has been more emphasis towards issues like population, energy, industry, human settlement and quality of life.

For there to be sustainable development in the region, the issue of revenue allocation must be re-examined. The formula for allocating revenue in the country must be such that will recognize the importance of the region to the development of the nation. In other words, the principle of derivation should be encouraged.

Apart from this, there must be a conscious effort to provide the region with adequate, social infrastructure such as water, schools, good road networks, electricity etc. this is to enhance the quality of the lives of the Niger Deltans. It is noted that the federal government is highly favoured in all the revenue allocation systems so far and fiscal federalism is tilted more in favour of the federal government. This, in a way, affecting the economic survival of the sub-national governments (Ibeanu, 2015).

### **Corruption, Militancy and Sustainable Development**

Corruption is a word that has been synonymous to Nigeria both in national and international discourse. The Former Prime Minister of Britain – David Cameron once described Nigeria in a leaked audio as "fantastically corrupt (BBC News, 2016). The term corruption could be defined as a situation in which public office is used for personal or private gains (World Bank, 2013; Transparency International, 2012). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2002 quoted by 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 by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations". The definition provided above by the IMF is quite encompassing as it considered corruption from a broader spectrum. Some public officials and those in position of trust or authority use these positions as avenue for personal aggrandizement. Instances of corrupt practices are captured with this chilling expression:

*Some public office holders see their position as an opportunity to provide jobs for members of their families and friends in apparent disregard for due process. Some public leaders totally privatize public affairs using the proceeds to buy favour from potential competitors*



*while the public suffers. Viewed from any angle, corrupt behaviours generally serve personal interests of those involved (Ibekwe, 2014).*

Corruption can be classified under two broad categories – Political corruption and bureaucratic corruption.

### **Political Corruption:**

Political corruption according to Ibekwe (2014) involves behaviours of elected officials and occurs when a power holder who is charged with doing a certain thing ... is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby damage the group or organization to which the functionary belong (Carl, 1972 in Ibekwe, 2014). Political corruption can manifest at the highest level of states institutions, including the three arms of government – the executive, judiciary, and legislature (Morris, 2011).

In Nigeria political corruption has been singled out as a major factor that adversely impact on the implementation of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta. The first Presidential Amnesty programme (PAP) led by Major General Godwin O. Abbe (rtd) was accused of misappropriation of amnesty programme (Ogele, 2020).

Similarly, a special adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, Chief Kingsley Kuku was indicted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for alleged mismanagement of N6.2 billion contract during his tenure at PAP. Alli captured his massive corruption thus:

*The agency (EFCC) 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 N100 million (Alli, 2017 in Ogele, 2020).*

Political Corruption as we can deduce is not only antithetical to legal and moral norms but it equally vitiates the capacity of government to adequately cater for the citizens. In the midst of massive loot of public funds through corruption, there are widespread anger and frustration leading to militancy in the Niger Delta and Bayelsa State in particular. In Bayelsa, government – militia conflicts include confrontations over resource control, autonomy, dominance, and private financial benefit for major actors (Kaldor, 2003; Obi, 2005; Omeje, 2005; Osaro, 2010 in Ibekwe, 2014).

Two indigenes of Bayelsa State (Mr. Timi Alaibe and Mr. Atel Beredigo) were exposed as major political actors that received private financial benefits from the mayhem. Osaro (2010) in Ibekwe (2014) put the total amount the two illegally got from oil revenue funded projects at N1.5 billion or \$9.3 million.

The negative impact of corruption – induced conflict cannot be glossed over in Bayelsa State. The inability of government to promote development due to wastage associated with political corruption is one solid cause of its inability to tackle militancy in Bayelsa State.

### **Environmental (Neglect) Degradation, Militancy and Sustainable Development**

The exploration of oil and gas products in the Niger Delta region has come with great cost on the environment and ecosystem of the local people. It is a well-known fact that there is a closely interwoven link between development and environment. It was this underlying link that necessitated the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) to recognize that unlimited growth was neither feasible nor desirable, that basic needs for all should be the highest priority of development and that only protected and carefully nurtured environment could sustain human aspiration (UN, 1987 in Haque, 1991).

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria particularly Bayelsa State has been the hub of oil exploration and exploitation activities by multinational oil companies, and have equally been the theatre of conflict and militancy (Amugo, 2018). The author further maintained that environmental pollution and degradation occasioned by the activities of oil companies underlie the conflict situation and crises in the Niger Delta region.

Environmental degradation has been defined as the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources which includes all the biotic and a biotic element that form our surrounding that is air, water, soil, plant, animals and all other living and non-living element of the planet of earth (Bourque et al; 2005; Malcolm and Pitelka, 2000 in Maurya, Ali, Ahmad, Zhou Castro, Khan & Ali, 2020). Similarly, environmental degradation is viewed in the context of high rate of oil exploration and other human activities in the oil rich Niger Delta without regard to the health and welfare of the inhabitants, including colossal damage to the flora and fauna (Ugboma, 2015).

### **Unemployment, Militancy and Sustainable Development**

Individual enhanced standard of living (or happiness) depends on many things, including income, labour, market status, job characteristics, health, leisure, family, social relationships, security, liberty, moral values and many others. Among the working age population, one of the most damaging individual experiences is unemployment.

Unemployment has become a serious challenge at engendering sustainable development of Nigeria. Bayelsa state is a civil service state and based on its current reality of near absence of private sector, the state has not been able to provide formal wage employments for its citizens (Baghebo & Ebipuanere 2020). The authors went on to note that the above challenge has been responsible for the distortion of development objectives and plan of the state.

In Bayelsa State, the youths represent a preponderant percentage of the population and economic labour force. According to Baghebo & Ebipuanere (2020) the public sector has not been helpful in terms of employment generation due largely to dwindling public sector revenue and various reform measures that have led to downsizing and placing embargo on employment. The 2020 unemployment rate of Bayelsa State is at an all-time high of 36.68% (Verrella, 2021).

The high unemployment rate in the state has devastating consequences on the state but most especially the youth. Bahebo & Ebipuanere (2020) have contended that most of these unemployed youths have resorted to criminality and other forms of deviant behaviour such as

sea – piracy, oil bunkering, oil theft, bugling, kidnapping for ransom, cultism, prostitution, pipeline vandalism, militancy among others as alternative means of livelihood and sustenance.

Nigeria, with her vast spread of natural resource endowment, has the potential to provide jobs for the citizens. But the current economic under-performance is erratic and short of expectations, such that 66% of Nigeria’s citizens, educated youths especially, live below the international poverty line, at just \$1.00 a day or \$300.00 a year (Omotosho, 2009). This is an indication that the nation of Nigeria over the years has gradually disintegrated from its highly buoyant and respected position among developing nations of the south. The ensuing political instability and inconsistencies in the socio-economic and educational policies of successive governments, however, emerged as major factors that led to the manifestation of high level of joblessness in Nigeria.

Overall, unemployment in Nigeria has affected youths from a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups, both the well and less well educated, although it has particularly stricken a substantial fraction of youths from low income backgrounds and limited education. From the foregoing, it is obvious that unemployment, especially the unemployment of graduates, impedes Nigeria and her citizens’ progress in many ways. Apart from economic waste, it also constitutes danger for political stability (Oyedele, 2012). It is disturbing to note that Nigeria’s youth have limited chances of becoming gainfully employed. It is even more disheartening that the country’s economic condition is such that, it is hardly able to absorb an optimal proportion of the production of its own educational system. Gone were the days when employers go about looking for employees. It is now the turn of employees to move from one office to the other seeking non-existent jobs. These days thousands of young people are found waiting to be interviewed for just one, two or few vacant positions in some organisations or firms. Most people who cannot earn their living are prone to social vices. They look at themselves as second-class citizens for being unable to contribute to the society. The state of unemployment can even lead to depression, low self-esteem, frustration and a number of other negative consequences. Youth employment is a crucial issue in Nigeria because the youth constitute a major part of the labour force and they have innovative ideas, which among other factors are important in their development and enhancement of their standard of living.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

**Table 1: There is a significant relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State**

<b>Chi-Square Tests of Corruption and Pipeline Vandalization in Bayelsa State</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	138.822 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	173.842	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	28.993	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	683		

Table 1 provided the data for chi-square test of hypothesis one which states that “There is a significant relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State”. The chi-square test shows that the P-value = .000,  $X^2 = 138.822$  and  $df. = 3$ . Since P-value (.000) is less than 0.05, hypothesis one is accepted.

**Table 2: There is a significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa**

<b>Chi-Square Tests of environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	234.649 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	246.867	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	48.761	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	683		

Table 2 provided the data for chi-square test of hypothesis two which states that “There is a significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State”. The chi-square test shows that the P-value = .000,  $X^2 = 234.649$  and  $df. = 3$ . Since P-value (.000) is less than 0.05, hypothesis two is accepted.

**Table 3: There is a significant relationship between unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa**

<b>Chi-Square Tests of unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa State</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	130.698 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	135.436	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	122.006	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	683		

Table 3 provided the data for chi-square test of hypothesis three which states that “There is a significant relationship between unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa State”. The chi-square test shows that the P-value = .000,  $X^2 = 130.698$  and  $df. = 3$ . Since P-value (.000) is less than 0.05, hypothesis three is accepted.

**Table 4: There is a significant relationship between poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State.**

<b>Chi-Square Tests of poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	111.361 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	133.863	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.246	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	683		

Table 4 provided the data for chi-square test of hypothesis four which states that “There is a significant relationship between poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State”. The chi-square test shows that the P-value = .000,  $X^2 = 111.361$  and  $df. = 3$ . Since P-value (.000) is less than 0.05, hypothesis four is accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following were the outcomes of the research findings:

1. Corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State.
2. Environmental neglect has resulted in kidnapping in Bayelsa State.
3. Unemployment has resulted in hostage taking in Bayelsa State.
4. Poor infrastructural development has increased bunkering in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a positive relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State. Findings from the study revealed that corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State. Evidently, corruption manifests mostly in the provision of low-quality infrastructure through kickback and over – invoicing by agents of government, distribution of contracts, empowerment programmes and employment on political bases/sentiments, execution of ambitious and unviable projects; embezzlement and misappropriation of development funds and ethnic power to promote sectional interest as against common interest. Our respondents decried the abysmal and low quality of infrastructure provided by the government in their communities. Such infrastructure like schools, roads, clinics among others recorded decay just few years of execution due to corruption. The payment of kickbacks before executing projects means that such contractor or government agent will first recoup money used to “settle” the godfathers and others responsible for signing the necessary contract documents. In the long run, low quality project is provided for the people. Furthermore, some communities see corruption as responsible for lop-sided allocation of empowerment and employment based solely on political/party affiliation. In as much as one cannot divorce political patronage towards the allocation of shared socio-economic goods, the point is that corruption kills competence, fair-play and equity in ensuring the right personnel were chosen to serve their communities. In terms of execution of projects, it has been found that most of the projects sited were not based on the people felt-need. Most politicians in both state and Federal Houses of Assemblies were accused of siting ambitious and unviable projects just to get illegal money for themselves. It was also revealed that corruption has resulted in massive loot, misappropriation and embezzlement of development funds. This finding corroborated with the works done by Ibekwe (2014); Ogbuagu, Ubi & Effiom (2014); Musa & Shehu (2016); Muntasir & Ashraf (2018) that corruption is a breeding ground for militancy in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. From our FGDs, the discussants also affirmed that widespread corruption has caused dissatisfaction and distrust between the people and their representatives (including elected officials and community leaders). One could adduce that corruption whether from the government, their cronies and corporate oil companies have denied the local people the benefits of oil and gas revenue as indicated by table 4.11. Corruption thus adversely impacts on sustainable development as it imposes heavy burden on cost of governance, made investor (local and foreign) to be unwilling to invest in development programmes/projects and increased poverty among the people. A further proof is the test of hypothesis one which shows that there is a significant relationship between corruption and pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State. We can infer that corruption has exacerbated pipeline vandalization thereby adversely impacting on sustainable development.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there is no significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State. Findings from the study showed that environmental neglect has resulted in militancy in Bayelsa State. Oil exploration and exploitation has been responsible for the destruction of farmlands, forestlands and vegetable, destruction of fishery production



and pollution of air, water and land of the oil – bearing communities. It was found out that many of the farmers and fishers have lost their means of livelihood due to contamination of water bodies, construction of oil well and on-shore oil platform on farmlands. This has remained a major source of militant agitation in Bayelsa State’s oil-bearing communities. This finding supports the works done by Amugo (2018) that environmental degradation pushed the youth and militia groups taking up arms against oil companies and government in order to protect their environment. We also found the presence of black sooths that has made the environment toxic. Equally findings from FGDs attested to this fact. A discussant aptly noted that the government and oil companies have adopted the strategy of branding the communities militants when they complain of environmental degradation in order to sway the narratives in their favour. Although there is the popular sentiment that militant groups are fighting to save their environment from neglect and degradation from oil companies and government, our study revealed that a majority of the respondents affirmed that militants are equally culpable for the destruction of their environment. The operations of illegal refineries in the bush and oil bunkering have had devastating negative impact on the mangrove forests. It has rendered these lands uncultivable. A number of oil pipelines sabotaged by militants have completely destroyed the environment. The consequences of all these human actions are the damage of plant’s support system for sustainable future. Sociologically, land is tied to human identity, culture, spiritual and physical inheritance. Therefore, land is at the centre of human conflict and violence. In essence, the sequestration of the people’s land for oil exploration renders them landless with no root and identity. Environmental neglect and degradation clearly had negative impact on sustainable development. A further proof is the test of hypothesis two which shows that there is a significant relationship between environmental neglect and kidnapping in Bayelsa State. The government has failed to implement laws enacted to control the pollution of the environment by oil companies despite being signatory to plethora of summits aimed at achieving environmental sustainability (Adetunji, 2006 in Ugboma, 2015).

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a positive relationship between unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa State. Findings from the study revealed that unemployment is prevalent in Bayelsa State and therefore fuels militancy. Table 4.8 made a serious revelation that the government has done very little to tackle the challenge of unemployment. Respondents overwhelmingly concurred that the government and oil companies operating in their communities have not adequately provided them most especially the youth with entrepreneurial and apprenticeship scheme. A further proof is the test of hypothesis three which shows that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and hostage taking in Bayelsa State. Equally, our FGDs showed that despite the possession of requisite skills and know-how, most the indigenous oil-bearing communities were short-changed and out rightly rejected. Hence, frustration and alienation give rise to violent agitation and militancy. Table 4 clearly shows that members of militant groups had higher educational qualification status like B.Sc/HND. It is therefore, erroneous to consider members of militant groups as illiterate that are not employable. Unemployment among the educated youth is a ticking time bomb that poses threat to sustainable development. From table 4.19, those within the youthful age 25 – 40 years view unemployment as a precipitator to militancy in their communities. Dagaaci and Digoke (2019) study also gave credence to the fact that unemployment is responsible for political violence in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Unemployment adversely impact on sustainable development as it tends to increase general insecurity among the population, creates a cycle of poverty, deprives people of the ability to generate income and support their families. Unemployment affects the standard of living of the people and also incapacitates them to participate and access economic opportunities in the society. This was in line with Adejomo’s

(2018) position that unemployment adversely affects the standard of living of the people in Ikare Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. Government effort towards the alleviation of unemployment in Bayelsa State is grossly inadequate and therefore negatively impact on sustainable development.

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is a significant relationship between poor infrastructural development and bunkering in Bayelsa State. Findings from the study revealed that poor infrastructural development has increased bunkering in Bayelsa State. Table 4 clearly indicated that government has neglected the communities in the provision of development infrastructure. The major development infrastructure that yearns for attention include healthcare services educational facilities and road constructions. This shows the direction of people's needs in terms of infrastructural development. Without doubt infrastructure is one of the major key to industrial and socio-economic development. It is hard to understand why the government pays lip- service in its provision. Idoniboye - Obu & Tambou's (2020) study also affirmed that there was high rate of programme and project abandonment by various governments and hence interprets it as lack of commitment to the long- term development of Bayelsa State. There was no sustainable infrastructural development in the communities despite huge capital investment in infrastructure. The FGDs also gave credence to the view that there is dearth of infrastructural development on projects that directly affect them. Most of them accused the government at embarking on elephant projects like construction of colourful round-about on major streets in the towns just to show off. Okinono Salleh & H., Din's (2016) study has revealed that the absence of sustainable infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region especially in the rural communities contributed to their agitation and conflict.

### **Implications of the Results of the Study**

Numerous implications could be derived from the results presented in this study. But we will concern ourselves with a few important implications. They include the followings:

- i. Lack of development: the uprising of militia groups in the Niger Delta has indeed hindered the development of the region in many ways. As we all know, no investor company will dare enter a place where its staff would not be safe.
- ii. Deteriorating economy: with the level of damage done to the land, crops destroyed and aqua cultures through contamination of the ground water which pollution affected productive ventures in the region. The militants' anti-social activities are a major setback to sustainable development in Bayelsa state.
- iii. Farmlands and aquatic lives have been destroyed because of sabotage by the militant groups on pipeline vandalization in Bayelsa State.
- iv. Loss of creativity and innovation: the crisis conditions of the people in the Niger Delta minority ethnic groups of the country are as a result of idleness and poverty amidst the area that produces the resources for the development of the Nigeria state, but has nothing to show for it.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

This study has enhanced the understanding on how government neglect has resulted in militancy and consequently impacted on sustainable development in Bayelsa State. Further studies could compare the activities of some other states in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Also, this study identified that there is little research in the area of environmental degradation

as caused by the activities of militant themselves. Most research endeavour has mainly focused on how multinational oil companies cause environmental degradation without critically looking at the activities of militants fighting for social and economic justice.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

A lot of scholars have carried out related studies on Niger Delta conflict in relation to oil exploration in the region. Such scholars like Ibekwe (2014) Amugo (2018); Ugboma (2015); Okimono, Salleh and H; - Dim (2016) have all contributed immensely in the study of Niger Delta Conflict and its impact on development of the people.

Despite the plethora of works done by these and other scholars, a lot of gap still exists. The gap has been that no such study at such a scale has been carried out on the area of focus. This present study presented a nuance analysis on how government neglect from the federal and state level fuels militancy in Bayelsa State.

This present study used large sample size that has characteristics representative of the target population. This work also adopted both descriptive and empirical research approaches.

### **Conclusion**

Government neglect of the people of Bayelsa State despite their enormous contribution to Nigeria's total foreign exchange earnings and government revenue has undoubtedly plunged the state into endless cycle of conflict. The people of Bayelsa State can be succulently described as victims of a depraved and ineptitude state apparatus and political class. Consequently, the people have taken their fate in their own hands through various forms of militancy. From the findings the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. That corruption at various levels of government operations perpetuates militancy in Bayelsa State. Corruption deprives the real benefit of sustainable development as it places heavy burden on the cost of governance and leads to wastage of resources.
2. That oil companies and government have neglected the environment thereby fuelling militancy in the area. The oil bearing communities see their environment as completely destroyed and the government has failed to compel the oil companies to stop gas flaring as done in other areas of crime. Also the militant were found to be culpable in the destruction of the very environment they are fighting to save through actions like illegal oil bunkering, breaking of oil pipelines thereby causing spillage among others.
3. That unemployment fuels militancy in Bayelsa State. With the reality of high unemployment rate especially among the youth, feelings of frustration and abandonment has led to youth looking for alternative means of eking a living. Unemployment is a serious threat to sustainable development as it strips people the ability to engage in productive venture and other economic opportunities.
4. That poor infrastructural development has resulted in militancy in Bayelsa State. There are plethora of infrastructure abandoned in the communities. The apparent lack of government effort in the provision of necessary development infrastructure such as hospital, good roads, school, among others, has galvanized support for militant agitation. Hence, sustainable development may not be achieved in the absence of the necessary development infrastructure for the communities.

### Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusion reached in this work, the following interventions were recommended;

1. The existing laws on corruption in Bayelsa State should include a life sentence for corrupt government officials and individuals found wanting in corruption;
2. The multi-national oil prospecting companies must ensure that they rehabilitate and ameliorate the hazards from oil and mining exploration during and after their activities as a result of health and environmental effects in the course of their operations;
3. Government should foster job creation and organize training schemes to train youth in the region and Bayelsa State in different vocations to enable them to be industrious and self-employed;
4. The government and existing multinational oil companies (MNOCS) in Bayelsa State should embark on robust infrastructural development that will have direct positive socio-economic impact on the people of the state.

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