

The Impact of Amnesty and Post-Amnesty Programs on the Niger Delta Crisis: A Case Study of Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The people's calls and NGO efforts for attention to the Niger Delta were repeatedly ignored and met with repression from successive governments, often in alliance with oil MNCs. This study focuses on the Niger Delta crisis in Bayelsa State, analyzing social conditions during and after the amnesty program. Survey data shows mixed awareness and support for militancy among Bayelsans, with tensions arising from unpaid benefits to ex-militants. Although there is some amnesty support, skepticism persists about government commitment. Bayelsans advocate for true federalism, criticizing elites as primary amnesty beneficiaries. Recommendations include dialogue, increased revenue, corporate responsibility, and international support for local conflict resolution, with stability and investment as essential for addressing root issues.

Keywords: amnesty, post-amnesty, Niger Delta crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's Niger Delta, the core of the country's oil industry, has long been mired in economic and political tensions, with violent conflicts primarily led by militant groups protesting perceived exploitation and marginalization (Osaghae et al., 2011; Nwankwo, 2015). For years, militants disrupted oil production, leading to severe economic losses of around 61.6 billion USD due to oil theft and sabotage between 2006 and 2008 (Okpako & Okolo, 2019; Paki & Ebienna, 2011). The crisis stems from unequal oil wealth distribution and environmental damage, with ethnic groups like the Ogoni and Ijaw at the forefront (Udoh, 2020; Udogbo, 2021). The rise of militias, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), intensified government-militant tensions and violence (Paki & Ebienna, 2011).

In 2009, President Yar'Adua introduced an amnesty program, offering militants peace, reintegration, and training (Abdullahi, 2016), marking a critical peace effort (Ekumaoko, 2013). However, its long-term impact remains uncertain. Despite reducing violence, issues with reintegration and past failed initiatives, such as the NDPVF amnesty, raise doubts (Okpako & Okolo, 2019). New challenges like illegal artisanal refining now worsen environmental damage and poverty (Suku et al., 2024). This study examines the federal government, oil companies, and militias' complex relationships, focusing on the socio-economic impacts of militancy, amnesty program success, and sustainable development.

The Niger Delta crisis, particularly in Bayelsa State, has been a subject of numerous academic inquiries, particularly focusing on the role of the 2009 Amnesty Programme. Nwankpa (2015) examines the socio-political underpinnings of the crisis and argues that the Amnesty Programme contributed significantly to de-escalating violent insurgency by providing ex-militants with skills and education. However, the author highlights that the failure to address structural poverty and underdevelopment continues to stoke local discontent. Similarly, Obi (2014) evaluates the socio-economic outcomes of post-amnesty interventions and concludes that while security improved, the initiatives failed to create sustainable economic opportunities, leaving beneficiaries disillusioned. Egwemi (2010) offers a contrasting perspective, asserting that the amnesty succeeded in stabilising the oil-rich region, albeit temporarily. He argues that the government's failure to provide adequate infrastructural development in the post-amnesty phase weakened the program's long-term effectiveness. In contrast, Ikelegbe (2013) focuses on the reintegration of former militants and the challenges of rehabilitating a generation involved in armed conflict. The study highlights the psychological trauma that complicates reintegration efforts, suggesting that psychosocial support should have been a more prominent aspect of the program. Onuoha (2016) explores the environmental aspects, stating that despite a reduction in violence, environmental degradation persists as a key driver of conflict, implying that post-amnesty programs have not addressed ecological concerns.

In a case study specific to Bayelsa State, Alagoa and Ibaba (2017) present a mixed-methods analysis on the local perception of post-amnesty benefits. Their findings indicate a general dissatisfaction with the program's economic impact, with respondents criticising the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. This corroborates the views of previous scholars who argue that the region remains volatile due to continued marginalisation. These works collectively underscore that while the amnesty and post-amnesty programs contributed to short-term stability, long-term peace and development in Bayelsa and the broader Niger Delta remain elusive.

Theoretical Framework

Examining underdevelopment and conflict in the Niger Delta requires understanding two theories: realistic group conflict theory and the urban bias thesis, both of which explain socio-economic issues in this marginalized region.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory

Developed by Muzafer Sherif (1966), this theory posits that inter-group conflict arises from competition over limited resources. In the Niger Delta, local communities and the federal government clash over control of oil resources, escalating in-group bias and stereotyping. While insightful, the theory has been criticized for oversimplifying conflict, neglecting factors like historical grievances and external influences (Blumer, 1958).

Urban Bias Thesis

Michael Lipton's Urban Bias Thesis (1977) suggests that urban elites shape policies favoring urban areas over rural ones, leading to unequal resource distribution and educational disparities. In the Niger Delta, urban-centric development perpetuates rural poverty and marginalization. Critics argue that UBT may overstate urban bias and ignore benefits rural communities sometimes receive (Rigg, 2006).

Both theories illuminate the Niger Delta's socio-economic disparities and inter-group conflicts. By exploring resource competition and systemic bias, this study uses these frameworks to analyze the structural inequalities sustaining underdevelopment and conflict, aiming to propose informed interventions.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a survey research design to comprehensively assess the impact of amnesty and post-amnesty programs on the Niger Delta crisis, with a specific focus on Bayelsa State. The rationale for this approach is to capture the program's statistical trends. The research was conducted in Bayelsa State, a core oil-producing state in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Bayelsa has been at the centre of the Niger Delta crisis, with various militant activities leading to the establishment of the Federal Government's amnesty program in 2009. The study focuses on key communities and Local Government Areas (LGAs) that have been significantly impacted by militancy and the implementation of amnesty programs.

The study population comprises ex-militants who have benefitted from the amnesty and post-amnesty programs, government officials responsible for policy implementation, community leaders, and civil society organizations working on peacebuilding and development in Bayelsa State. Other relevant stakeholders include security agencies and oil company representatives.

A multi-stage sampling technique is employed to ensure a representative sample. First, purposive sampling is used to select LGAs with high incidences of militancy and significant post-amnesty interventions. Subsequently, stratified random sampling is used to categorize participants into key groups: ex-militants, policymakers, community leaders, and civil society actors. The final sample size is determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination, ensuring an adequate representation of diverse perspectives.

Primary data was collected through the use of the questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was administered to ex-militants, community members and other stakeholders to assess their perceptions of the effectiveness of amnesty and post-amnesty programs. Secondary data was obtained from relevant government reports, policy documents, academic publications, and reports from civil society organizations and international bodies. This provides context and supports comparative analysis.

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency distribution tables and percentages with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To ensure validity, the research instruments underwent expert review and a pilot study was conducted to refine questionnaire items. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess internal consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant stakeholders' communities. Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Anonymity was maintained to protect respondents' identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presentation is done with the aid of a tabular representation of all data from the questions that the questionnaires distributed and retrieved addressed. The data analysis is done by the use of simple percentages in calculating the ration of differing opinions on the differing questions.

Figure 1
NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED AND RETRIEVED



Figure 1 shows the number of questionnaires distributed and retrieved. Of the 320 questionnaires distributed, 248 were returned, representing 77.51% of the total number distributed. Therefore, the data presentation and analysis would be done on the returned or responded questionnaires.

FIGURE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON SEX

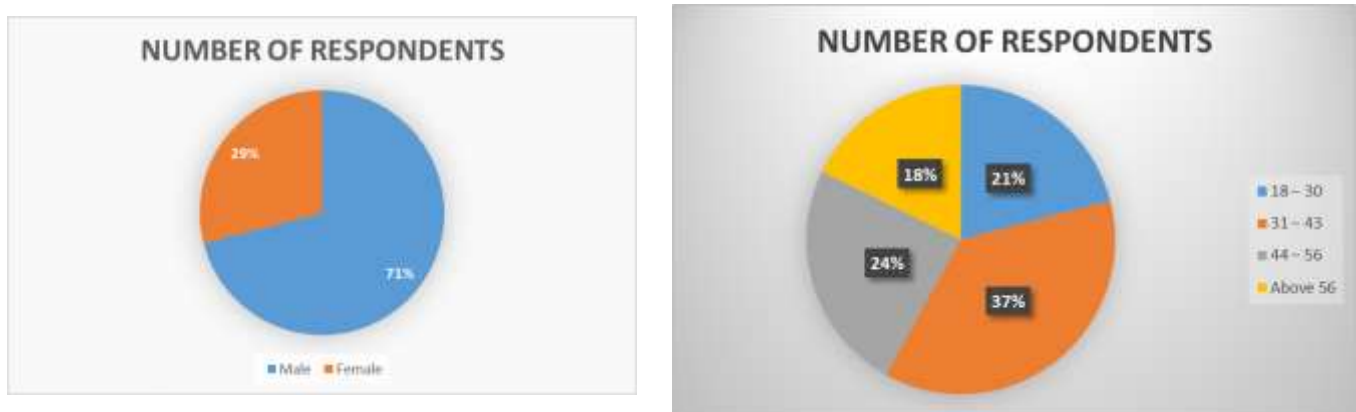
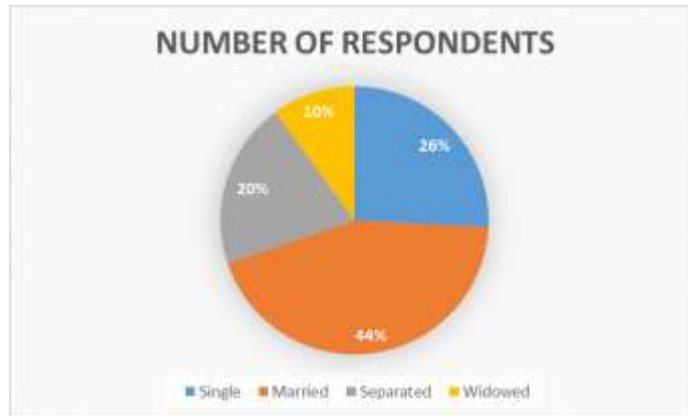


Figure 2 showing the distribution of respondents based on sex highlights that of the 248 respondents, 176 were males and 72 were females, showing that men were the most respondents, constituting 70.97% of the total respondents.

FIGURE 3 :DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON AGE



The above figure shows that the age composition of the total respondents was (18–30) 52 respondents representing 20.97%, (31–43) 92 respondents representing 37.1%, (44–56) 60 respondents representing 24.19%, and (above 56) 44 respondents representing 17.74% of the total respondents. Showing that the most respondents were individuals between the ages of 31 and 43, with 37.1% of the total 248 respondents.

FIGURE 4 : DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

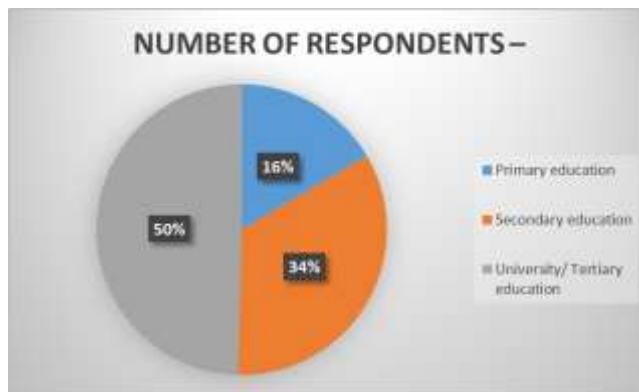


Figure 4 shows that of the 248 respondents, 64 respondents representing 25.81% were single, 109 respondents representing 43.95% were married, 50 respondents representing 20.16% were separated, and 25 respondents representing 10.05 were either widows or widowers.

FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Figure 5 shows that of the respondents, 41 respondents representing 16.53% had primary education, and 84 respondents, representing 33.87% had secondary education, constituting the most Respondents of 123 respondents, representing 49.6%, were those with university or any tertiary education.

Tables 1 to 12 test first hypothesis “The activities of the militants over the years have led to the instabilities in the socio-economic and political milieu of the state, the region and the entire Nigerian state.”

**TABLE 1
 AWARENESS OF ACTIVITIES OF migrants**

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	228		91.94
No	–		–
Partially	20		8.06
TOTAL	248		100

Table 4.2.5 shows that of the 248 respondents, 228 respondents, representing 91.94%, were aware of the activities of militants, while 20 respondents, representing 8.06%, were partially aware. No respondent was unaware of the activities of militants in the state and region.

**TABLE 2
 MILITANT SUPPORT OF THE ARMED (MILITANT) STRUGGLE**

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	60		24.2
No	103		41.53
Partially	85		34.27
TOTAL	248		100

Table 2 shows that 60 respondents representing 24.2% were in total support, 103 respondents representing 41.53% were against, and 85 respondents representing 34.27% were partially in support of the armed form of the Niger delta struggle.

**TABLE 3
 NATURE OF IMPACT OF MILITANCY ON LIVES OF BAYELSANS AND NIGER DELTANS**

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Positive	35		14.11
Negative	213		85.89
No impact	–		–
TOTAL	248		100

Table 3 shows that 35 respondents, representing 14.11% of the total respondents, were of the opinion that the impact of militancy on the lives of Bayelsans was positive, while 213 respondents, representing 85.89%, noted that the impacts of militancy were negative.

TABLE 4
LEVELS OF AGREEMENT ON THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF MILITANT ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOOD OF BAYELSANS AND NIGER DELTANS

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	131		52.82
Agree	71		28.63
Neither agree nor disagree	37		14.92
Disagree	9		3.62
Strongly Disagree			
TOTAL	248		100

Table 4 shows that 131 respondents representing 52.82% strongly agreed, 71 respondents representing 28.63% agreed, 37 respondents representing 14.92% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 9 respondents representing 3.62% disagreed that militant activities have had a destructive impact on our environment and the livelihood of Bayelsans and Niger Deltans.

TABLE 5
LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MILITANCY ON POLITICS IN BAYELSA

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	82		33.06
Agree	59		23.79
Neither agree nor disagree	52		20.97
Disagree	47		18.95
Strongly Disagree	8		3.23
TOTAL	248		100

Table 5 shows that 82 respondents representing 33.06% strongly agreed, 59 respondents representing 23.79% agreed, 52 respondents representing 20.97% neither agreed nor disagreed, 47 respondents representing 18.95% disagreed, and 8 respondents representing 3.23% strongly disagreed that militancy has had a negative impact on politics in Bayelsa and the Niger Delta.

TABLE 6
LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON NEGATIVE IMPACT OF REWARDS OF MILITANCY ON COST AND STANDARD OF LIVING IN BAYELSA AND NIGER DELTA.

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	98		39.52
Agree	21		8.47
Neither agree nor disagree	94		37.9
Disagree	35		14.11
Strongly Disagree			

TOTAL	248	100
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Table 4.2.10 shows that 98 respondents representing 39.52% strongly agreed, 21 respondents representing 8.47% agreed, 94 respondents representing 37.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 35 respondents representing 14.11% disagreed, with no respondent strongly disagreeing that militancy has negatively affected the standard and cost of living in Bayelsa and the Niger Delta. The tables 4.2.11 to 4.2.15 test the second hypothesis, “There is a relationship between the Federal Government post-amnesty program and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.”

**TABLE 7
 AWARENESS OF THE DETAILS OF THE AMNESTY AND POST-AMNESTY PROGRAMMES**

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	73	29.44
No	82	33.06
Partially	93	37.5
TOTAL	248	100

Table 7 shows that 73 respondents representing 29.44% were aware, 82 respondents representing 33.06% were unaware, and 93 respondents representing 37.5% were partially aware of the details of both the amnesty and post-amnesty programs.

**TABLE 8
 OPINIONS ON POST-AMNESTY PROGRAMME BRINGING DEVELOPMENT TO THE NIGER DELTA**

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	86	34.68
No	50	20.16
Maybe	70	28.23
Not really	42	16.94
TOTAL	248	100

Table 8 shows that 86 respondents representing 34.68% felt that the post-amnesty program would bring development to Bayelsa, while 50 respondents representing 20.16% were of the opinion that it would not, 70 respondents representing 28.23% felt it may bring development, while 42 respondents representing 16.94% felt it was unlikely that the post-amnesty program would bring development to Bayelsa and the Niger Delta.

**TABLE 9
 OPINIONS ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CARRYING OUT THE PROJECT PROMISED AS PART OF THE AMNESTY PROGRAMS**

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	49	19.76
No	50	20.16

Maybe	117	47.18
Not really	32	12.9
TOTAL	248	100

Table 9 shows that 49 respondents representing 19.76% felt that the federal government would carry out its proposed projects, 50 respondents representing 20.16% were of the opinion that it would not, 117 respondents representing 47.18% felt it may carry them out, and 32 respondents representing 12.9% felt it was unlikely

TABLE 10
OPINIONS ON IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE EFFORTS TO REDUCE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF OIL EXPLORATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	78	31.45
No	72	29.03
Maybe	4	1.61
Not really	94	37.9
TOTAL	248	100

Table 10 shows that 78 respondents representing 31.45% are of the opinion that the federal government would make efforts to reduce the damaging effects of oil exploration in the region, 72 respondents representing 29.03% were of the opinion that it would not, 4 respondents representing 1.61% felt the government might make some efforts, and 94 respondents representing 37.9% felt it was unlikely.

TABLE 11
OPINIONS ON GOVERNMENT IMPROVING OTHER SECTORS TO PREVENT A REAROUSAL OF THE CRISIS

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	108	43.55
No	40	16.13
Maybe	100	40.32
Not really		
TOTAL	248	100

Table 11 shows that 108 respondents representing 43.55% opined that the government would improve other sectors to prevent the conflict from rising again; 40 respondents representing 16.13% did not share this opinion, with the remaining 100 respondents representing 40.32% of the opinion that the government may improve other sectors.

Tables 12 to 15 test the third hypothesis, “There is a significant increase in the level of peace and security in the Niger Delta since the offer and acceptance of the Federal Government amnesty.”

TABLE 12

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON RISE IN CRIME RATE SINCE AMNESTY OFFER

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	58	23.39
Agree	71	28.63
Neither agree nor disagree	35	14.11
Disagree	54	21.77
Strongly Disagree	30	12.1
TOTAL	248	100

Table 12 shows that 58 respondents representing 23.39% strongly agreed, 71 respondents representing 28.63% agreed, 35 respondents representing 14.11% neither agreed nor disagreed, 54 respondents representing 21.77% disagreed, and 30 respondents strongly disagreed that the crime rate has risen and is rising since the amnesty period.

**TABLE 13
 LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON FORMER MILITANTS CONSTITUTING A THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN BAYELSA**

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	82	33.06
Agree	63	25.4
Neither agree nor disagree	50	20.16
Disagree	13	5.24
Strongly Disagree	40	16.13
TOTAL	248	100

Table 13 shows that 82 respondents representing 33.06% strongly agreed, 63 respondents representing 25.4% agreed, 50 respondents representing 20.16% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13 respondents representing 5.24% disagreed, with 40 respondents representing 16.13% strongly disagreeing that former militants constitute a threat to peace and security in Bayelsa.

**TABLE 14
 OPINION ON IF RELOCATING EX-MILITANTS TO THE STATE CAPITAL WAS A WISE DECISION**

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	48	19.35
No	93	37.5
Maybe	55	22.18
Not really	52	20.97
TOTAL	248	100

Table 14 shows that 48 respondents representing 19.35% were of the opinion that relocating the ex-militants to the state capital was a wise decision, 93 respondents representing 37.5% were of the opinion that it was not, 55 respondents representing 22.18% felt it might be, and 52 respondents representing 20.97% felt it was not really a wise decision.

TABLE 15

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON REDUCTION OF LEVEL OF PEACE AND SECURITY SINCE AMNESTY PERIOD

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	100	40.32
Agree	32	12.9
Neither agree nor disagree	67	27.02
Disagree	49	19.76
Strongly Disagree		
TOTAL	248	100

Table 15 shows that 100 respondents representing 40.32% strongly agreed, 32 respondents representing 12.9% agreed, 67 respondents representing 27.02% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 49 respondents representing 19.76% disagreed, with no respondent strongly disagreeing that the level of peace and security in Bayelsa and the region has reduced.

Table 16 tests the fourth hypothesis, “The Federal Government amnesty is not the panacea to the crisis in the Niger Delta region.

TABLE 16

OPINIONS ON WHO RESPONDENTS BLAMED FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE STATE AND REGION

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Militants	40	16.13
State Government	126	50.81
Federal Government	82	33.06
TOTAL	248	100

Table 16 shows that 40 respondents, representing 16.13%, blamed the militants for the problems of the state and region, 126 respondents, representing 50.81% of the majority, blaming the state government, and the remaining 82 respondents, representing 33.06%, blaming the federal government for the problems of the state and region.

TABLE 17

RESPONDENTS’ OPINION ON IF THE AMNESTY HAS ACHIEVED ITS DESIRED OBJECTIVE

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)

Yes	141	56.85
No	53	21.37
Partially	54	21.77
TOTAL	248	100

Table 17 shows that 141 of the respondents were of the opinion that the amnesty achieved its desired objectives, 53 respondents representing 21.37% felt it had not, and 54 felt it had partially achieved its objectives.

TABLE 18
RESPONDENTS OPINION ON WHAT THE amnesia HAS ACHIEVED IN BAYELSA AND NIGER DELTA

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Increased level of peace and security	68	27.42
Increased production and export of oil	96	38.71
Peaceful environment for development	84	33.87
TOTAL	248	100

Table 18 shows 27.42% of the respondents feel the amnesty has led to an increased level of peace and security, 38.71% feel the amnesty has led an increase in production and exportation of oil, and 33.87% felt it has created a peaceful environment for the development of the region.

TABLE 19
LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON IF AMNESTY IS THE CURE TO THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS

OPINIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree		
Agree	50	20.16
Neither agree nor disagree	45	18.15
Disagree	66	26.61
Strongly Disagree	87	35.08
TOTAL	248	100

Table 19 shows that 50 respondents representing 20.16% agree that the amnesty is the cure to the Niger delta crisis, 45 respondents representing 18.15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 66 respondents disagreed, and 87 respondents, representing 35.08%, strongly disagreed. This further shows that the majority, i.e., 61.69% of the respondents, feel the amnesty will not solve the Niger Delta problem.

TABLE 20
RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON IF THE POST AMNESTY PROGRAMME HAS SUCCEEDED SO FAR.

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	43		17.34
No	133		53.63
Partially	72		29.03
TOTAL	248		100

Table 20 shows that 43 respondents feel the post-amnesty program has succeeded so far, 133 respondents are of the opinion that it has not succeeded, and 72 respondents accept that it has partially succeeded.

TABLE 21
LEVEL OF AGREEMENT OF RESPONDENTS THAT THE FEDERAL AND STATE POLITICAL CLASS ARE THE MAJOR BENEFICIARIES OF THE POST-AMNESTY PROGRAMME

OPINIONS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	153		61.69
Agree	42		16.94
Neither agree nor disagree	31		12.5
Disagree	22		8.87
Strongly Disagree			
TOTAL	248		100

Table 21 shows that 153 respondents representing 61.69% strongly agreed that the federal and state political class were the major beneficiaries of the post-amnesty program rather than the ex-militants, 42 respondents representing 16.94% agreed, 31 respondents representing 12.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 22 respondents representing 8.87% disagreed.

DISCUSSION of Findings.

The findings from Tables 1 to 12 provide key insights into the hypothesis that militant activities have contributed to socio-economic and political instability in Bayelsa State, the Niger Delta, and Nigeria. Table 1 shows that nearly all respondents (91.94%) are aware of militant activities, while Table 2 highlights divided opinions on support, with only 24.2% fully supporting militants and 41.53% opposing them. A strong majority (85.89%, Table 3) acknowledge the negative impact of militancy on people’s lives, and 81.45% (Table 4) agree that it has harmed the environment and livelihoods. Politically, 33.06% strongly agree and 23.79% agree that militancy has destabilized the region (Table 5). Table 6 further underscores the economic toll, as 47.99% believe militancy has worsened the cost and standard of living.

These findings suggest that while militancy initially had some support, its broader negative impacts—environmental, economic, and political—are now widely recognized. Additionally, most Bayelsans are aware of the region’s restiveness but offer only moderate support for armed

struggles due to the failure of dialogue. Tensions remain high in the state capital due to disruptions caused by ex-militants over unpaid benefits.

Initially, the amnesty was welcomed, but disillusionment grew as militants turned to kidnapping for ransom. Many Bayelsans are only vaguely aware of the amnesty's details, fueling uncertainty about government promises. They also believe amnesty alone won't solve the crisis, advocating for greater regional autonomy through practical federalism. Furthermore, the political elite are seen as the main beneficiaries of the amnesty, contributing to continued unrest among ex-militants.

In summary, initial support for militancy has faded as its damaging effects on the region's stability, economy, and environment have become clear.

Recommendations

For the Federal and State Governments: Federal and State governments should engage in ongoing dialogue with Niger Delta stakeholders to resolve conflicts peacefully, empowering local voices and building trust. They should increase derivation revenue from 13% to at least 25% and update petroleum laws to support community rights. The additional funds should be directed to job-creating sectors, especially non-oil industries. Decentralizing development projects, like those managed by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), will encourage community ownership. Governments should support local entrepreneurship, diversify the economy, and closely monitor oil companies to ensure environmental safety and compensation. Ending gas flaring and strengthening indigenous oil companies to compete globally are also essential.

For Multi-National Oil Companies: Oil companies should revamp their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs to support sustainable community development, respect local rights, and avoid fueling violence. They must cooperate with the government on reviewing oil-related legislation and strictly adhere to environmental protection and compensation regulations. Transparency initiatives like NEITI and tax reforms should be embraced to reduce waste and tackle youth unemployment.

For the International Community: International partners should support Niger Delta communities in addressing conflicts, environmental degradation, and gender-based violence. They should work with the Nigerian government to stop illegal oil bunkering, limit arms proliferation, and promote demilitarization in the Gulf of Guinea. Increased development assistance for civil society, conflict prevention, and infrastructure development is essential, as is promoting cooperation on tackling corruption related to oil revenues.

For the People of the Niger Delta: The people of the Niger Delta should prioritize dialogue over violence to improve the region's image and create a supportive environment for development projects. Education should be a focus rather than solely blaming the government, as development requires both government action and community participation.

CONCLUSION

Conflicts in the Niger Delta stem from the people's legitimate demands for fair treatment from the Nigerian state and transnational oil corporations. However, the strategies used by major actors threaten to worsen the situation, undermining potential resolutions. Stakeholders seem uncertain about the way forward, and the region appears to be slipping into a chaotic state where little functions effectively. Stability and substantial investment in social and infrastructure development are essential to address the roots of conflict, including youth unemployment, which drives young

people to armed groups. Democratization, credible elections, and strengthening state and local government capabilities are also crucial for improving service delivery, accountability, and overall governance.

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