



Issues and Consequences of Violent Engagements and Militant Conflicts on Industrial Growth in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

C.O. Amadi, PhD

Author email: otukiri63@gmail.com

Faculty of Social Science, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The paper investigated causes of violent engagements, cult related security issues, militant conflicts and their consequences on industrial growth in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The violent activities of various militant and cult groups have led to the collapse of the industrial sector of the Niger Delta Region. The study objectives include, to identify the types of cult and militant groups in the Niger Delta Region and ascertain the causes that lead to their and the nature of conflicts that resulted. The research questions of the study are thus; what are the types of violent engagements and militant groups in the Niger Delta Region? and what are the causes for the emergence of violent militant conflicts in the Niger Delta Region? The study adopted learning theory and descriptive research design for which data was retrieved from secondary sources. The findings of the study showed that different violent and militant groups exist and that the causes of violent conflicts include, competition over valuable natural resources, oppression, deprivation, marginalization and the subsequent grievances for non-implementation of resource control appeals. Based on the findings, the study recommends that government should discourage the multiplication of violent and militant groups through youth empowerment programmes that are implementable; and government should collaborate with non-governmental agencies and community leaders to give re-orientation to youths on peaceful coexistence and tolerance amongst others.

Keywords: violent engagements and conflict, cult groups, militants, industrial growth, marginalization, politicization, manipulation, mobilization of ethnic identities, minority ethnic groups scarce resources.

1.0 Introduction

The rising social inequalities, the divide-and-rule methods of the multinational oil firms in Nigeria, the outright alienation of the minority from the national politics by the majority ethnic groups in way of marginalization, etc., all contribute to the constant agitations for resource control in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The seeming political injustice observed in the Nigerian nation, especially the faulty revenue derivation sharing principle, impact so negatively on the social health of the country. Certain socio-political questions can never be stopped from being asked; why do states that do not produce oil have almost equal share with the oil-producing states? Why are solid minerals and other natural deposits found in other states used maximally to the credit of those states and to the exclusion of others; as can be seen in the northern and western regions as against what is obtainable in the South-South of Nigeria states? Questions and questions, begging for answers.

It is imperative to note that violent conflicts which was begun by the Niger Delta militants after the unjustifiable execution of the MOSOP leaders, late Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and others, all of Ogoni ethnic nationality, in 1993 by the late Military Head of State, General Sanni Abacha. The MOSOP activists stood for self-determination and the control of the oil mineral in Ogoniland; but the then military Head of State thought that by killing Ken Saro-Wiwa, all resource control agitation would have sunk underground. Little did he and his co-actors in government know that the entire Nigeria, knows that Wiwa's death would have grave adverse effects on the security and peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian State and the Niger Delta in particular. In this regard, Amaze *et al.* (2016) posits that this brutality (of killing the activists) and intimidation generated a lot of uprising and agitation across the Niger Delta of Nigeria states, and would finally lead to the proliferation of various militant groups in the region, such as; the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), just to mention few.

Studies indicate that few months away from the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers, over five (5) oil wells were attacked and destroyed, affecting oil pipeline supply and electricity within and outside Nigeria, like the electricity supply to Ghana and Cameroon respectively. This development was confirmed by the Minister of Petroleum on June 8, 2016. Ogundipe (2016) posited that this act (of vandalism) posed grave danger to the Nigerian economy, and the economy of the Niger Delta Region in particular. As a nation that operates a mono-

economy, i.e. Nigeria and her over-dependence on oil, the consequent drop in the number of oil barrels produced per day affected the income generation and dollar value which prompted Mr. Ibe Kachukwu, the Petroleum Minister, to state that, "if this crisis is not resolved, the loss on annual budget will be \$7.16 billion" (Ogundipe, 2016).

2.0 Statement of the Problems Incidental to Violent Engagements in the Niger Delta Region

The violent activities of the Niger Delta militants and cultists have kept industrial activities to its lowest decline in the region. This is bad enough for Nigeria, especially for the fact that the region can be seen as the economic hub of the nation. The attack on Soku Gas pipeline from where gas is sent to the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas plant (NLNG), Bonny, (all in Rivers State) and that of Gbaran Independent Power plant, (in Bayelsa State) and also, the destruction of the Trans Forcados pipeline (TFP) (in Delta State) that conveys water associated gas and 400,000 barrels of oil daily from Delta fields, are some of the economic disaster records at hand. Again, the blowing up of Chevron well that supplies Warri and Kaduna refineries with gas, would be counted among the devastating damages done by these militants and violent cults groups; which has adversely affected the oil production from 2.2 mbpd-279 standing at \$14 billion bpd waste to the nation.

Field study indicates that due to the low output in oil and gas, the electricity generation in Megawatts has drastically dropped from 1,010 megawatts in August 2015 to 800 Megawatts in May 2016. Hence, the internally generated revenue through domestic goods has a correspondent drop, leading to low income per capita. Given there was no much technological transfer from foreign firms to boost Nigeria local content, the Niger Delta Region 's economy as well as that of Nigeria has remained challenged, and development through technological advancement remained stagnant.

Unarguably, the larger Nigerian economy which also has bearing on the component states, most times explains the quality of government in place in the country. Democratic rules are usually believed to usher in economic development through encouragement of industrial growth as set in motion through devolution of powers from the Federal to the State governments. The restoration of democratic dispensation in Nigeria in 1999 ushered in some level of development. An attractive annual Gross Domestic Product for per capita income was recorded between 1999 and 2007; while the lowest growth was prior to 1999.

The various sects which involve in violent conflicts have directly or indirectly impacted negatively on the industrial growth of the state. The progress, regressions or stagnation of a nation is dependent on the environmental friendliness in relation to their local economy which stands in competition with foreign markets, cultures, statuses and diplomatic relations. The violent cult and militant groups, in terms of naming, ranges from, De-gbam, De-well, Green lander, Ice-lander, Doctor's squad, Italians, Blood hunters, Junior Vikings, Bermudas, and so on. These violent groups have permeated all Senatorial Districts in the Niger Delta Region. No doubt, they have a complete web of networking which could enable them to strike simultaneously and defy the government security and intelligence network. At present, its members from these different groups that constitute the phenomenon of Niger Delta militant with their various leaders like Ateke Tom, Alhaji Asari Dokubo, Italian, among others. (Briefing, November 2, 2015; Conflict Incident Monthly Tracker, Rivers State, December 2017-Jan., 2018:1).

As was obvious in the violent conflicts that forced all banks in Omoku in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State to close down for a certain period of time in 2018, these group of violent cult members unleashed mayhem on the residents of the state. Olulu and Amadi (2018) asserted that monies that would have been used in rehabilitating failed industries and the establishment of new ones were being used as security votes. The scholars further asserted that the Niger Delta Region cannot be rated as an industrial delight for both local and foreign investors due to the high level of insecurity occasioned by cult and militant activities.

The violent conflicts witnessed in the Niger Delta Region since 2007-2019 as a result of violent groups activities, have created the "conduit pipe" for siphoning monies meant for industrial growth and the exploring of other sub-sectors. These monies are said to be tailored to security; yet no good dividend has yielded ever. The security template of the Niger Delta Region has cracked since 1999 when unexplainable killings and destruction of property took the centre stage in the state. Decades after, the evil wind has spread to the hinterlands, cult

groups, kidnappers, assassins, pipeline vandals now parade their skills publicly. Business executives are kidnapped unceremoniously, companies are closed by violent groups, the rage is on, and taking dangerous dimensions that have scared industrialists, both local and foreign from the state. This paper indulges on investigating the violent groups and militant sect types and to unfold the factors that lead to their emergence in the Niger Delta Region.

The study objectives are to:

1. Identify the types of violent engagements and militant groups in the Niger Delta Region
2. Evaluate the causes to the emergence of violent groups and militant conflicts in the Niger Delta Region.

Research questions for this study are thus:

1. What are the types of violent and militant groups in the Niger Delta Region?
2. What are the causes to the emergence of violent and militant conflicts in the Niger Delta Region?

2.1 Conceptual Review of the Problems of Violent Engagements and Militant Conflicts

The militant groups initiated different methods and techniques to drag home their demands and compelled various tiers of government to comply or shift their grounds to the oppression of the region. They employed some awesome steps that are inimical to both individuals and the state as they stir up the air against the federal government through individuals, families, communities, clan, local governments and the state, not leaving out the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to add their voices in persuading the state to yield. Some of these strategies were, the kidnapping/hostage taking, assassinations, bombing of oil installations, these steps unleashed economic challenges to both government and individuals, as individuals are kidnapped are those highly placed and the expatriates. By these acts, the Niger Delta Region became highly insecure as evidenced in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Delta States where the heat of the action was much.

3.0 Methodology

The paper employed descriptive design method of which data was taken from secondary sources. The sources include, journals, internet, newspapers and books by which relevant information were contained. The essence of this survey is to critically describe the violent conditions that exist in the Niger Delta Region. However, the sourced data were presented qualitatively in the study.

4.0 Discussion of Findings Relative to Field Studies

The findings below, show that different violent and militant groups exist in the Niger Delta Region. They are "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Deltans" (MEND), The Niger Delta Avenger (NDA), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) The De-Gbam Group, The De-Well Group, The Ice-Landers, The Green-Landers, The Vikings, etc. These groups are all involved in the conflicts decimating industrial growth in the Niger Delta Region. The study shall examine few of these groups.

Further the study showed that there are various causes to the emergence of violent and militant groups and the conflicts they bring to the Niger Delta Region industrial capacity. These causes are competition over valuable natural resources, oppression and oppressive tendencies, deprivation, marginalization and the subsequent grievances of non-implementation of resource control. Other causes are the politicization, manipulation and mobilization of ethnic identities against minority ethnic groups toward distribution of scarce resources.

4.1 Violent Groups and their Impacts on Industrial Development of the Niger Delta Region

(i) The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Deltans (MEND)

First group to be publicly known as standing for the fight for resource control was the "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Deltans" (MEND), which gained International Consciousness in 2006 as the Ijaw ethnic minority front for seeking attention and prominence by a resistant campaign, which they carried out by hostage taking of oil workers both foreign and national workers. Thus, Muzan (2014) posits that the MEND began with guerilla warfare by using speed boats and highly sophisticated weapons and overran the security operatives that are deployed to guide the oil installations in the creeks. They actually succeeded in destroying oil installations, injured and killed people, take hostage and their huge ransom demand for kidnapped captives in hard currencies before they are being released. This method gave them huge revenues with which they acquired heavy weapons and military grade assault hardware for resistance as they were also sponsored by hiding

elites in the region. Studies showed that MEND has been able to bring their demand home using all manners of equipment ranging from machine guns, dynamites, granites, AK-47 rifles, RPGs, etc. Based on these developments, the federal government targeted the leader of MEND; and after the bombing at (FCT) Abuja which was traced to the assumed leader of MEND, Henry Okah. He was arrested, prosecuted and convicted in South Africa.

Thus, the emergence of a new leader of MEND proved that the Nigerian state lacks security expertise to forestall their actions, as evidenced in the nature of e-mails that were sent through the internet with video tapes, showing the whole world of their deadly attacks on oil installation and the Nigerian government security operatives, which made the Western countries to start calling back home their nationals from Nigeria and their investments; and hence low oil productivity in the Niger Delta region. Journalist and other news media houses were taken to their camps to see how they treat hostages, installation destructions and the level of their arms and battle ready move to drown the economy. These activities culminated into low industrial turn out for the region and Nigeria in general.

As could be noticed, MEND has been seen as an active terrorist group that uses violent means to support the rights of the ethnic Ijaw people in the Niger Delta Region as it has prominent influence internationally (MIPT, 2007). Also, part of its hidden agenda through the support of some elites who unanimously was to sack foreign oil firms to the credit of local Ijaw indigenous companies rather than other part of Nigeria and the aim was to circulate the money generated from the oil within Ijaw land as to usher in development. In fact, the struggle is nuanced on the impression of military dictatorship, unwholesome environmental challenges, socio-economic deprivation and political and regional alienation among others. Most importantly, is that the hostage taken by MEND were all released unharmed to demonstrate that they meant to emancipate the poor region, (Brian, 2007), as expressed by the MEND's spokesperson, Jomo Gbomo and their membership cut across all Niger Delta arm bearing groups that has been disfranchised of their rights for over 50 years of oil exploration in the region.

Irrespective of all odds, the MEND attention/vexation was on government of Nigeria and the oil companies doing business in the area as shown from the Oloibiri saga, resulting in oil/environmental pollution. In June, 2007 Asari Dukubo, the leader of Niger Delta peoples volunteer force was released from prison and the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2007, all led to some divisions in the MEND's camp, but that notwithstanding, MEND is forging on till date. Cumulatively, the activities of MEND have posed great danger to oil companies and hence serious concern of the western countries that operate in Nigeria.

(ii) The Niger Delta Avenger (NDA)

The primary aim of this group was to cripple oil production in Nigeria to zero by carrying out relentless attacks on oil installations and their workers within the region. As could be recalled, February 2016 marked the beginning of the group and is perceived as coming from some of the elites in Niger Delta states as sabotage to the federal government and to forestall impending EFCC probe on some Niger Delta states leaders and to gain some political appointments and recovery of some oil blocs, (Ogundipe, 2016); this was glaringly made when the governors of the Niger Delta region held meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari and tabled the condition upon which (NDA) would have a ceasefire.

Looking at the list of conditions before President Muhammadu Buhari, at that time, no difference could be seen in respect of those presented by the NDA, before the Federal Government. The list reads as follows;

- i. All APC members accused of corruption must be prosecuted
- ii. Government should ensure immediate implementations of the 2014 National Conference Report
- iii. The President, the state security service (SSS) and All Progressive Congress (APC) should apologize to the family of late Diepreye Alamieyeseia for subjecting him to unnecessary disgrace
- iv. Ownership of oil wells in Nigeria must reflect 60% of oil-producing communities and 40% of non-oil producing investors
- v. That adequate compensation and cleaning of all the communities affected by oil spillage beginning from Ogoniland
- vi. That the Nigerian Maritime University must be located at Okerekenko in Delta State and must commence academic activities in 2015/2016 session

- vii. The release of the IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu
- viii. The Amnesty programme must be allowed to run and adequately funded, and finally,

In view of the foregoing, it could be stated that the Chevron Oil Well called RMP 20 located close to Didi flow station in Warri, Delta State was blown by the avengers in February and June, 2016, and also, they attacked the Chevron Makarba Crude oil line on offshore and about 4,000 barrels of crude oil were lost on daily basis, (Ogundipe, 2016). The report has it that over 308 hostages was recorded since 1999 to 2007 based on the report of Niger Delta Development Monitoring and Corporate Watch (NDDMCOW) and besides that, hostage taking, kidnapping, assassination, armed robbery, rape and cultism has drastically increased in the region, the Niger Delta Region.

(iii) Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF)

It should be noted that Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) was formed by Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) the bush boys and the martyrs brigade. It is important to note that the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) was founded by Ateke Tom. These militant groups are all geared towards resources control agitation across Niger Delta region which spreads from Cross River State in the East to the Ondo State in South-West of Nigeria. Thus, the Bush Boys and the Martyrs Brigade among others are all arm groups propelled by a single ideology which is centered on resource control due to the high level of poverty, hunger, frustration, unemployment, deprivation, alienation, suppression, intimidation, corruption, wrong governance and harassment orchestrated the state and oil multinationals operating in the area. These groups wrecked the economy of the Niger Delta Region and Nigeria as a result bombing and kidnapping of oil workers and the closure of some operational offices in Port Harcourt and Warri for Lagos settlement, which also affected local fishermen and hunters in the area. It also affected farmers as the forest and bushes were all alive with armed militants.

The spate of destruction on oil installations, kidnapping of oil firms' workers and high ransom demand from the companies and the government induced fear in the minds of companies, hence most of their key workers were transferred to Lagos and Abuja, and they shuttle between these areas and the Niger Delta Region, which is very expensive on the companies. The high level of insecurity and arm possession affected oil companies' operation. It also unleashed untold hardship on the Niger Deltans and drastically dwindled the industrial expansion of the Niger Delta Region and Nigeria at large.

4.2 Nature of Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

The differences and misunderstanding occurring among and between groups/people emanating from interactive relationships/behaviour through socio-economic, or areas of vested interest is the root causes of mistrust and perceived hatred resulting to conflict in some given environments. It comes in diverse ways either by compromising and collaborating, avoiding or accommodating, (Behrman, 1998). The unapproved use of force to compel an opponent or the government to effect rules/decision for/against a particular issue which have positive or negative effect on the aggrieved person(s), party, community or sect which might result to chaos within the locality involving arms/weapons for resistance is referred to as violent conflict. Although, there could be conflict without violence, those conflicts are seen as protest/agitation against certain obnoxious policies of the government or hike in certain products of common interest e.g. fuel hikes, tax increase and duties paid on certain goods and services.

The use of arms and ammunitions of all sorts to force down a demand home by a sect on government agencies vis-à-vis, the communities, ethnic groups, ethnic-religious groups which tends to intimidate an opponent/group higher or lower, to alienate, oppress, deprive, collaborate to convert for political reasons or to kill as to quell or reduce the size and strength of the group against the other for selfish aggrandizement is deemed violent as exemplified in the war against the federal government by; Egbesu Adventure and Kaiama declaration as a result of deprivation/neglect and oppression by the state through state apparatus, as exemplified in Odi, 1998, where the Egbesu boys killed some police officers and took some ransom from government for their release while the officers had been killed already and the subsequent government retaliation against Odi community and burning down almost all the houses in Odi and the death of so many people; (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

The use of brutal force to quell uprising in the oil reach region of Niger Delta explains the violent conflicts meted out to the Niger Deltans by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the ethno-religious crisis of the Boko Haram sects against non-Islam is a genuine point of violence against certain group of people. Also, the activities of Fulani Herdsmen against the farmers in the northern Nigeria and South-South region is a clear testimony of violent conflict. The latest in town of violent conflicts are those of the Niger Delta militants and the associated cult rampaging in Ogba/Egbema, Ikwerre and Gokana Local Government areas of Rivers State. The Fulani Herdsmen/farmers strikes on native communities are all examples of non-state armed conflict positioned for political and selfish economic gain against the interest of the masses as seen in the intense fight against farmers by the Herdsmen in Plateau, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Benue States among others.

The sacking of various communities by armed cult groups in the Niger Delta Region and most particularly in the selected LGAs of the Senatorial Districts of the Niger Delta Region which stems from unapproved traditional rulers, political marginalization, land disputes/chieftaincy tussle, corruption/embezzlement of public fund meant for community development/projects are eloquent facts of violent conflicts. Also seen in the conflicts of Ogbogoro in Obio/Akpor, Emohua and Ogbakiri, Eleme and Okirika, Ke and Bille, Okolomade vs Ekunuga, Soku vs Kula, Elem-Sangama vs Olusari, Rumuekpe vs Ogbakiri, B-Dere vs K-Dere, others are Ataba, Buguma, Omuike vs Omuoda Aluu, Ogbodo-Isiokpo, Egbeda, all these are intra-state non-government armed conflict which has taken so many lives and properties and has set the local governments backward socially, industrially, economically and politically, (Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in the Niger Delta Region, Briefing, November, 2015), and (Conflict Incident monthly tracker, the Niger Delta Region: August-September 2018).

In view of the foregoing, dating from 1967 after the independence of Nigeria till date, the Nigerian nation and the Niger Delta Region have been witnessing conflicts, and the Niger Delta Region was created in 1967 as a result of the Civil War to deny the South-East the linkage and control of oil territory of Nigeria which has characterized conflicts arising from ethnicity, religious affiliation, marginalization and self-determination, resource control and resistance emanating from anger of misrule, corruption, intimidation, oppression, exploitation and alienation. The essence of it, was the perceived injustice of forceful amalgamation that superimposed one ethnic group against the other, mostly, the imposition of northern region against the South-South and South-East regions, this is a clear testimony of false amalgamation resulting to false leadership style.

It should be noted that violent conflict appears to be a nationally imbibed phenomenon; as hardly any state is left undaunted or without its impact directly or indirectly. In Nigeria, the 1999-2000 conflicts in Kano State, Okitipupa area of Ondo State, Gwatu in Kaduna State of 2001, and the metropolis, Kano, Maitasain conflicts, Warri ethnic oil conflicts, the Ife-Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri, Niger Delta militancy, Tiv-Jokun and the Igbide-Emedi (Mark & Omorovie, 2016), are all testimonies of violent conflicts rocking the Nigerian state and the Niger Delta Region in particular.

5.0 Causes of Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria- Ethnic Identity Formation

Ethnicity is seen as an entity of group of people with language of different background or origin, culture, heritage and tradition and it is couched basically on politically salient identity in Nigeria (Posner, 2007). (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005) has asserted that Nigerians most time delineate themselves along ethnic affinities rather than any other line of trace. Most political affiliations, religion and business transactions most at times is done in Nigeria through this ethnic boundaries, hence mistrust and hatred brews across other ethnic groups leading to the underpinning plans led by the colonial master (Great Britain) under the concept of "divide and rule", which has imperialized other ethnic groups in Nigeria leading to alienation, intimidations, oppressions, harassment, exploitation, suppression and brutality to other regions of the country.

The ethnic groups in Nigeria was put at 250 tribes while it is recorded as 374 (Otiite, 1990). The regions were divided into 6 geo-political zones and covering 4 regions of Nigeria, viz, Northern region, Western region, Eastern region and South-south regions (Thomas, 2015), writing on: *political parties- identities and violent conflict in Nigeria*, outlined that, politicization, manipulation and mobilization of identities are the causative reasons for violent conflicts in Nigeria. The elites' politics and collaboration across ethnic boundaries for the competition over valuable natural resources rents, the attendant oppression, deprivation and the subsequent grievance that fuels violent conflicts, (Clapham, 1985) and (Marshed & Tadjoeiddin, 2009).

Also, the inequality across diverse ethnic groups, or religious enclave or cultural traits which is preferred against other groups are part of the serious reasons for violent conflict as it is the case in Nigeria, exemplified in various sentiments in political appointments and allocation of social amenities and the developmental strides across the state. Taking example from 2015 election that brought President Muhammadu Buhari to power and the subsequent political appointments and position indicates that almost all key position in the county were allotted to the Northerners.

It is obvious that both the past military coups in the state were insinuated by ethnic sentiments which explains the misuse and abuse of ethnicity in the country for selfish gain at the expense of the masses, especially those that have something to do with authority and power. The idea of, 'he is my tribe's man', 'my constituency', 'local government' or 'party ward' person, at the helms of affairs and not to be criticized or challenged by another section for his wrong doings, politics and programmes brews violent conflicts among ethnic line as it is also the case in the Niger Delta Region. The Nigeria Civil War of 1967 resulted from this perceived sense of injustice; and the war was fought along that line even other ethnic groups were co-opted. The ethnicity which created very sharp demarcation and feeling of "we" and "you", "ours" and "them", weakened the unity and spirit of oneness, transparency, accountability and patriotism among Nigerians which gave birth to the ugly monster called "corruption", in the polity of the nation; and everyone given opportunity to serve, seize it to loot as it is called "our turn", and are hardly brought to book as members of such ethnic group will rally round to scuttle any plan for indictment on that culprit.

It is quite obvious that the languages which is directly proportional to political and economic powers determines one's status and ethnic identities as politicized, (Erikson, 1996). Both in the colonial and post-colonial eras, ethnicity has continued to set the four regions apart each time at the expense of national interest as orchestrated by the amalgamated fathers of Nigeria. A clear indication of this fact could be related to the governors of the of the various states in Nigeria who mainly concentrate projects in their localities of origin, irrespective of the contribution of their communities of or native lands to the general resources of the state. Thus, where the governor comes from enjoys social amenities at the expense of others, leading to disequilibrium, (Adeyemi, 2003) and (Okpanuchi, 2010).

Dating from the formation of some political parties in Nigeria, in the 1960s to the present day, parties were formed along ethnic and religious line as demonstrated in the formations of "National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) by the Ibos, the Yoruba went with Action Group (AG) (Cohen, 1968), and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and later, the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) at the second republic, while the north formed, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) an Hausa-Fulani party in the first republic.

It is also important to note that from 1999, the trend has taken a new shape as Niger Delta militants and their elites and the middle-belt region have added their voice to agitate the large marginalization meted out to their zone, (Soludo, 2007) and have kicked against ethnic-religious sentiments through solidarity against the Hausa-Fulani extraction. The political instability being witnessed in Nigeria stems from this point and has characterized the various formations of ethnic militias like; the cult and militant in the South-South region (Soludo, 2007) and the tension is most prevalent in the Niger Delta region (Uzodike & Whetho, 2011), and the Niger Delta Region in particular as was the case in the last concluded 2019 general election in Nigeria where bigger ethnic groups instigated and sponsored violent conflicts through the federal might against the Rivers State, particularly, in Ikwerre, Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government areas of Rivers State which resulted to wanton destruction of lives and properties as was the case in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State Dr. Gberegbe B. Ferry was shot by SARS operatives acting in consonant with some security operatives of the Federal Government without penalty till date.

The actual misuse of ethnicity for selfish political and economic interest is quite overwhelming, as this concept is used to achieve most unholy properties/positions across the nation without minding its consequences of destroying oneness, patriotism and nationality spirit among members/groups as was demonstrated in the 1967 Nigerian Civil War, (Samuel, 2005). At the other hand, naïve groups/ethnicities believed doing so, i.e. "towing" ethnic way will offer them so much gain from such alignment which always is an aberration. Land acquisition due to accruing benefits, either on natural resources, induces the ethnic violent conflicts at all parts of the

country Nigeria, most times, people do not have the patient to wait as to get to the real truth of the issue, as most traditional and political leaders lead the people astray due to anticipation of selfish gains. As we have earlier mentioned, the Nigerian colonial masters kept the nation in a serious weak political institution without integrated units for the federation. Due to this challenge, unstable federating units, has led to huge chaos in the areas of boundary demarcations, resources ownership, instability and tensions and the fight against being dominated by other ethnic groups leading to total insecurity, mistrust and sometimes communal attacks.

The triple effect of this ethnic identity in Nigeria drips down within the circles of the Niger Delta Region. Within the enclave of the Niger Delta Region, there are over 30 local languages, culture boundaries and similarities, the ideology of “we” versus “them” is also there, due to the natural resources deposit within the Niger Delta region. There has been serious boundary adjustment problem, chieftaincy and oil well locations and the citing of some government projects. Ethnicity and identity has brewed so many fierce wars leading to the sack of most communities and destruction of life and properties of the communities which affect economic development of the state as security is highly challenged.

Many reasons stand out in Nigeria for this dastardly act of segregation and mistrust among various ethnic groups in Nigeria and the Niger Delta Region in particular. The ethnic religious, economic/social political and cultural undertone are the causative agents for this violent conflicts. The government through her policies and programmes gave credence to ethnic conflicts through some oppressive laws, like, Land Use Decree, No 88 of 1976 and 92 (now Land Use Act, 1978) which deny land owners the rights to the benefits of natural resources accruing from their lands, thereby enthroning poverty, alienation, suppression, depression and intimidation, and increasing unemployment among the youths, tribal sentiments and ethno-religious differences, fuel marginalization, corruption and high quest for wealth among the elite class.

In the foregoing regard, virtually all the states in Nigeria have tested one violent conflict or the other depending on the range of interests. The Warri city oil-ethnic conflicts, Igbide-Emede, the Tiv-Jukun, the Kano Maitasane conflicts, the Modakeke, the Aguleri-Umuleri and that of 1991-2001 conflicts in Bauchi State, 2000-2001 conflict in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State, Okitipupa area of Ondo State, the 1991-2000 conflicts in Kano State, the Gwatu, Kaduna State in 2001, the 2000 conflicts in Kaduna metropolis, the Boko-Haram, the Herdsmen/farmers clash in Benue State, these and so many unmentioned issues constitutes ethnic-identity violent clashes since inception of the nation of Nigeria. Conflicts are categorized into minor conflicts and violent conflicts (war), and also, into non-state conflicts (political) and non-state arm conflicts (ethnic/inter-tribal). The outcome of these conflicts results into so many death profiles. And the non-state arm conflicts emanate as a result of depression, alienation, starvation/hunger coming from political (state conflicts) which ushers in poverty and unemployment. These conflicts institutes hatred, the loss of some bread winners of the family and destroy businesses and infrastructures, (Ikejiaku, 2009). As people are deprived from their natural ecological environment that imbues hope on them, it translates to inaccessibility of some biological/psychological needs that can change their lives for the better and sustains economic growth of the state.

5.2 Issues of Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region

The study enlisted some factors responsible for violent conflicts in Nigeria and the Niger Delta Region in particular. The Niger Delta Region condition is hinged on the position of the Niger Delta struggle mainly on resource control against the Federal Government. But, that is not all the causes of violent conflict in the Niger Delta Region, as the Federal Government Land Use Act which alienated land owners from their God-given natural resources control and to decide how and when lands can be ceded to the third party is one of the reasons for violent conflicts, (Wabah & Ukpere, 2018). And the false leadership styles, where other irregularities stem from is one of the most causative agents in the Niger Delta Region and Nigeria at large. Also, the chieftaincy tussles arising from stools occupation and the progenitor succession based on vested traditional rights to any stool occupation, and the attendant benefits from oil multinational and government projects are part of the problems causing violent conflicts in the state.

Boundary adjustments as a result of local government creation/units or constituency are part of it from the 1980s to the twentieth century. Most of the communities lost their sources of livelihood due to urbanization

through industrialization and the creation of cosmopolitan cities. The quest to cushion these effects on the people introduced corruption, tribalism, sentiment and religiosity in the appointment and allocation of certain social amenities to the society. Also, the politics in the state which also encourages the use of touts/hoodlums to achieve political selfish ends, characterized the excessive use of force and wanton killing of perceived opponents or intimidate them openly, hence the firm standing of various cult groups and their clashes across the state.

Some elites, traditional rulers and opinion leaders uses the services of cult boys to loot the treasury of the communities by silencing any agitation/oppositions which actually destroyed the security network of the state as even legal security agents are also involved in the “divide and rule” game, (Wabah and Ukpere, 2018). Sometimes, SARS operatives are engaged to unleash mayhem on any opponent as they use the police to incarcerate any opponent as the reprisal act remain unabated.

The culmination of these issues gave birth to intra and inter-communal conflicts that has taken so many lives and properties in the Niger Delta Region a careful study of the trend in the region using Rivers State as a case study would reveal that in those violent conflicts or fights, houses, churches, markets and schools were burnt and destroyed. It could be exemplified in the crisis of Andoni and Ogoni, Emohua chieftaincy crisis of Chief Oriji and Chief Eke 1989-97, Rumuolumeni Aka Base Oil company right of ownership crisis, Okolomade and Ekunuga conflicts in Abua/Odual LGA of Rivers State, Ogo-Abuan Chieftaincy crisis, the Ogbakiri cult supremacy crisis, the Rumuekpe leadership over representation of community and oil company negotiations 2006-10, Okrika and Gokana boundary crisis, the Ogoni resources control, the Umuechem Etche oil crisis, Choba leadership tussle of 2019 and Omuike versus Omuoda Aluu cult supremacy crisis of 2016-2018. The armed robbery, assassinations and kidnapping in the state are all violent conflicts rocking the peace, security and safety of lives and properties of Rivers State residents and which adversely affects industrial growth “(Conflict Incident Monthly Tracker, Rivers State, August-Sept. 2018)”. Not also leaving out, the Eleme and Okrika, Eleme versus Ogu, Bakana crisis, the Ikwerre vs Okrika on Port Harcourt city ownership, Okrika vs Kalabari (Brief: November, 2015).

It is quite obvious that the community leaders, political leaders and the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta states are all collaborators to these violent acts against the peace loving people of the region. In the views of this study, it does appear that agents of State and the companies within the areas are deliberate in their constant attempts to circumvent the rule of engagements thereby giving credence to the incessant crisis of blood bath in the region and the selected local government areas in particular. Some leaders ascend to the throne illegally only because of economic gains or appoint some cult boys as leaders as to quell every agitation and the possibility of driving away or killing any person standing against their way for riches, as host communities’ relationship is thwarted for selfish reasons, (Sampson, 1997), (Ukpere, 2016).

Using the instrument of government to intimidate or quell any uprising group as demonstrated in the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) involvements in the well known Ogoni crisis, the Nembe and Kalabari over Soku oil fields, the Umuechem invasion orchestrated by SPDC oil company and that of Obagi land and Obirikom sponsored by Elf and Agip oil companies as to have free access to exploit the resources while the host communities are in disarray, (Ukpere, 2016), (Sampson & Laub 1997). These conflicts ordinarily would have been averted, should the traditional institutions, community leaders and every stakeholder had done their biddings well.

Looking at the various reports from government and non-governmental agencies, mostly from (The Voice, 2012), (Coalition for Freedom and Civil Rights, 2009), it is estimated to have on record, almost 1,000 lives and properties worth billions of naira damaged in the Niger Delta Region as the jobless youths faced with poverty are easily vulnerable to the violent conflicts rocking the Niger Delta Region most particularly the three selected LGAs of the three Senatorial Districts orchestrated by the wicked and greedy power thirsty politicians and corrupt minded selfish groups who sponsored/fueled all political, cult, militant attacks and assassinations in the state as to gain their selfish ends, as cited in Wabah and Ukpere (2018). They further observed that between 2000 to 2010 sophisticated weapons such as AK-47 were deployed in the violent agitations in the Niger Delta Region. It should be noted that the use of AK-47 rifles, gun boat, machine guns, grenades, dynamites and petrol bombs among others sent clear message across to the multinational companies and institutions of government. This

message resulted the relocation of many companies from the Niger Delta region to other more peaceful areas such as Lagos, Ogun and Abuja.

5.3 Oil and Gas as Significant Causes of Industrial Conflicts

It is important to note that oil is one of the richest natural endowments created by God and deposited right inside the soil, either on land or sea which out of procreations, human invented instrument for its exploitation and exploration and translate the product to so many bye-products of the crude oil for human use. Originally, God never made it for catastrophic purposes rather, to enhance human existence. The ownership, exploitation and application has resulted in huge corruption, mis-governance, human abuses, and violent conflicts for so many decades now, (Gary & Karl, 2003), and (Obi, 2007). To know the causes and types of violent conflicts in Nigeria, and the Niger Delta Region in particular, it is obvious that crude oil has been the main cause of violent conflict in the Niger Delta region and the selected LGAs of the senatorial districts of Rivers State, attest to this claim. In this regard, the type of conflicts that has been identified by this study are as follows:

- (i) the militancy and related criminalities
- (ii) political thuggery
- (iii) corruptions motivated ethnic conflicts, among others.

The expectations of Nigerians were to see the blessings of oil on them through economic relationships and industrial expansion. Rather than seeing such, the reverse became the case. Thus, oil has brought about serious struggle or competitions among individuals, ethnic groups, communities, local governments, constituencies, states, regions and the federal government of Nigeria over who owns what, who has right of control and who gets what, leading to serious ethnic sentiments (Auty, 1993); ethnic identity, ethno-religious instigations and conflicts, corruption, deprivation, depression, suppression, alienation, poverty, unemployment, hunger, starvation, misrule, political violence, inter and intra-tribal wars, destructions of lives and properties, intimidation and harassment by bigger ethnic groups ruler ship and minority ethnic creation and silence.

Sequel to the foregoing, the assertion by Billon (2001), posits that, “beyond increasing the risk of armed conflict by financing and motivating conflicts, natural resources also increases the vulnerability of countries to armed conflict by weakening the ability of political institutions to peacefully resolve conflicts. Thus, apart from subverting development, natural resources have the potentials to increase the risk of war and insecurity in developing countries. It is important to note that the creation of the Nigerian state through the amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Lugard was the pivot for placing the Niger Delta region under minority ethnic group and was dominated by the politically created interest, majority of the north, south and the south-east regions. This marginalization of the southern minority gave credence for incessant agitations across the Niger Delta states for power devolution and integration of her people into strategic positions in government.

As could be reckoned with, Oloibiri, which was the first community of instance in oil discovery in the then old Rivers State, and now Bayelsa State in Nigeria forms the bedrock to oil history in Nigeria dating from 1956 by SPDC and the first crude oil that was exported was in 1958, while other world oil multinationals joined in 1959. Shell Petroleum Development Company took the lead of all other multinationals like, Chevron-Taxaco, Exxon Mobil, Total and Agip-Eni, (Obi, 2007). At this point there was a global interest in the oil rich countries and when threatened, the oil state with the multinationals pulled resources and forces together, incorporating local leaders to resist it through protest.

The Niger Deltans could no longer have good drinking water, air or environment for some economic activities due to acidic rainfall, depletion of heavy metals into the ground waters and the increase to its alkaline content. The farmers and the fishermen in the region could hardly find it easy to cope with the situation to sustain their livelihood, hence, hunger, poverty, unemployment sets in among them. Some of the spills were as a result of “blow out, sabotage, corrosion pipes, equipment failures, third party encroachment and natural spills”. As these portends that the trans-national oil firms were not interested in the affairs of the host communities/region as they evade taxes, disguise real wages for the rural people, manipulation of charges for transactions, thereby stampeding development both in human capital and infrastructural services (Badey, 2000).

The idea behind the oil multinationals in instigating one host community against the other and within host communities through their leaders and the involvement in the purchase of fire arms for law enforcement agents

to repress protesting groups/communities and the hostilities was exemplified by the (AM News, 1996) on Hamanitex Nigerian Limited and made it clear that Shell, “cannot give undertaken not to provide arms in the future due to the weakening security situation in Nigeria as to protect Shell people and property upgraded”.

5.4 Violent Conflicts Related to Political Intrigues

So many forces find expressions that are very complex hinging on the dialectics of oil-alliance which some time are quite confusing and antagonistic in nature, as the perception builds up momentum aimed at destruction and can be destroyed and fizzle in again. The act of engaging militants and cult groups by politicians to harass, intimidate their political opponents is a clear demonstration of instigation by some political leaders to outwit their opponent cruelly. (Best & Kemedi, 2005) rightly put, that the 1999 and 2003 general elections in the country was marred by political thuggery through the use of militants/cult groups to sack opponents as was the case of Rivers State and few Niger Delta States governorship election of 1999 and 2003. He further explained that three states governors succeeded in using the services of armed militia groups in the region to bring down their opponents such as the engagement of the leader of (IYC) Ijaw Youth Council, Mujaheed Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom, the leader of Okrika Vigilantee, and later became the Niger Delta Vigilantee Force, (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

The militant groups have their local elites supporting them in the villages and creeks, using them to force government on the creating of policies favorable to their sponsors; such as the deal between the Niger Delta states governors with Niger Delta Avengers, the governors used this group to haze on Federal government to drop-down their financial crime investigation through the EFCC on the governors and to demand other things ranging from, adequate compensation and the cleaning of all polluted lands occasioned by oil spillage, starting with the Ogoniland to all other Niger Delta areas; to have the maritime University built in Okerekenko in Delta State and commence the release of the (IPOB) leader, Nnamdi Kalu unconditionally, to prosecute all APC members accused of corruption, the implementation of the National Conference of 2014 and the ownership of oil well must reflect 60% and 40% for non-ownership as derivation principles among others, (Ogundipe, 2016).

The foregoing buttress the fact that militancy is not totally the true reflection of the oppression, deprivation, alienation, corruption, intimidation and harassment by the Federal Government, but in some cases it is an instrument or agent of selfish achievement of some power brokers in the state who are never tired of wealth acquisition at the expense of the people. And to further say, that violent conflicts does not emanate based on the underpinning points, rather, conflicts is synonymous to socio-political intrigues and they are likely inevitable where rich natural resource endowment exist. It is coterminous to say that “where good exist, evil also exist alongside”.

These elites instigate both political, communal and ethno-religious conflicts to achieve their selfish aims thereby wasting lives and properties. Some of the elites in the Niger Delta induces militancy most times, more especially, when they perceive that certain government policies wouldn't be in their favour, either by political appointments or allocation of some social amenities or empowerment projects that may not be directly under their purview. These men by a little drop of water are even ready to pay the sacrifice. Some could be influencing Federal Government for oil blocs, appointments in federal government agencies such as, NDDC, contracts, etc.

It is quite obvious that politically induced violent conflicts in Nigeria has taken so much lives, when the civilian government came on board on May 29th 1999 with President Olusegun Obasanjo, multi-party democracy was also introduced against the two parties allowed by President Ibrahim Babangida who introduced only two party system, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC). Babangida as a president then did it as to eliminate tribalism, ethnicity and ethno-religious conflicts as ideas and opinions will be interchanged as cross-cultural identity and such will be integrated for more national unity.

6.0 Theoretical Framework Incidental to the Applied Learning Theory in the Study

The applied theory in this study was propounded by Albert Bandura (1977). The work of Klineberg (1981), posits that most of the characters exhibited by human beings are learned via socialization/ interaction processes, identification, imitation and reward, even as some innate/ instinctual wishes like dancing, sex, eating and

twisting of the body. Also, the habit formed in eating styles, times and meals sorts. The bane of this theory is that, outside other personality traits, aggression is learned, the outcome of an enduring norm in which there is an impetus to aggress, a lack of factors that prevent aggression and an object of aggression. It therefore portends that aggressive behaviour is acquired through selective reinforcement and examples especially when such an act is encouraging or rewarded and when the presence of a punishing agent is either low or non-existent.

This is the reason why the militants' groups, the secret cult groups, the Boko-Haram and herdsmen/farmers clashes appear to be gaining prominence in Nigeria and parts of Africa. Instead of the state and federal government to come out with blueprint on how to develop the people and society as to roll out stiffer drastic measures against these armed groups aimed at putting a full stop to all these illicit criminal activities in the name of struggle, the government rather than fight it, indirectly, fueling the violent conflicts as some cabinet members at state and federal levels are sponsors and members of one fraternity or the other.

As the younger youths watch on and convinces themselves of the huge financial reward accruing from violent conflicts, action through kidnapping and ransom payment running into hundreds of millions without stiffer measure and punishment thereof, the acronym ushered into the ring, kingpins in the society as government at various levels appoint them to various position of trust and thereby enriching them the more. Some are chief security officers, protocol officers, special assistants to local government chairmen, governors and ministers. Also, the impunity, that the sects weds during and after general elections, where they are giving various "brand new cars" as gift openly by governors and local government chairmen across the state is a worrisome trend and a booster for the innocent and quiet ones to join the bandwagon and perpetrate the crime in a wider horizon.

The assumptions of this learning theory is hinged on the fact that, human beings are social creatures and social learning strategies should be utilized when teaching and thus knowledge is demonstrated through competence. That participation exhumes from learning and active involvement with the group and environment. It also holds that the learning and participation produces meaning which might translate to gains either in kind or financial with or without much punishment which constantly reposition one for more recognition. This is a clear state of the various militant groups in the country and the Niger Delta Region in particular.

6.1 Conclusion

As these marginalized groups are constantly intimidated, maligned, brutalized and compelled into silence with the use of the state apparatuses. No doubt, it has been the actualization of this act that is responsible for incessant and increasing ethnic and religious tensions as well as militancy and cult activities. To agitate against oppression when such condition is fully understood is one of the innate social traits of every human being. Therefore, it is quite easy to recruit able bodied youths for any crisis in the Niger Delta Region considering the high rate of unemployment ravaging the Nation and the Niger Delta Region in particular. It will only cost a little effort to encourage this ideology in the state due to the level of hunger and starvation.

6.2 Recommendations

As a result of the findings, the study therefore provides the following recommendations.

- i. Government should discourage the multiplication of cult and militant groups through youth empowerment programmes that are implementable.
- ii. Government should collaborate with non-governmental agencies and community leaders to give re-orientation to youths on peaceful coexistence and tolerance.
- iii. Government should ensure fairness and equitability in distribution of natural resources dividends to communities that are endowed with natural resources.
- iv. Government should de-escalate conflicts through banning cult and militant groups and proscribing them as terrorist sects.

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