

Resurgence of Militancy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

The resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta has reached a seemingly high level, which has contributed to the crumbling economy of Nigeria, as there series of attacks on oil facilities have reduced the barrel production of crude oil per day in the region, which pose an imminent threat with the ongoing recession in the country. The identified reasons have been the cutbacks on the amnesty arrangements, the environmental degradation and continuous deprivation of the oil rich regions from the proceeds of the oil derived from their region and demand for ownership of the region by residents. This work however, through the means of empirical study pinpoints the several reasons for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region, and the viability of the group's bluff in crippling the Nigerian economy, if the ongoing situation is not controlled. Both primary and secondary data was collected for the purpose of clarity and specificity in this research. 300 copies of questionnaires were administered, journal articles, book, newspaper and internet sources were used in collection of data. The study recommends some viable solutions, such as giving more credit to the importance of Niger Delta region, developmental projects that are supervised by stakeholders and disinterested organizations in the regions.

Keywords: Resurgence; Militancy; Environmental; Oil; Government; Economy

Introduction

According to Barry [1] the issue of security, peace and development remains at the center of focus on national and international research and discourse. As security remains a lost entity in which developing countries are always seeking out. Nigeria was granted flagged independence on October 1st 1960, but it has not really enjoyed the peace of being an independent country. There have been economic, political, and socioeconomic crisis, which have always had its way in turning into issues of national security [2]. On National security, Mandel [3] believed that it is the achievement of psychological and physical safety of the citizenry, which is the responsibility of the government, and also the prevention of physical threats to the survival of the existing norms, beliefs and culture of the citizenry and the country at large. Iyayi agrees with the communities in the Niger Delta region on the issue of antagonizing the government and the oil majors, because he believes that the Niger Delta crisis from its inception has always been a result of the fatal consequence of oil extraction on the environment and also the inadequacy in the appropriation of the proceeds from the huge revenue generated from oil extracted from the region. In view of this, the issue of insecurity in the Niger Delta region, especially militancy would remain a recurring one till a lasting and sustainable solution can be proffered to the reasons for the agitations in the region.

Niger Delta region is now as it is an unsafe region in the country, as the resurgence of militancy by the allegedly tactical and formidable Niger Delta Avengers have once again promoted insecurity and uncertainty as to what the future holds as regards the economy and security of both the region and the country as a whole, it has also brought about a major fall in the oil production process in the region due to the incessant attacks on oil facilities in the region.

The Niger Delta Avengers are believed to be energetic, sophisticated and calculative in their attacks compared to previous militant groups, such as; MEND, NDYDF, etc. Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu, said that oil production have reduced by 800,000 barrels per day to 1.4 million barrels per day, due to the series of attacks on the country's oil facilities in the Niger Delta region by the Avengers [4].

Lastly, the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta area do not

only pose threats to the region, but Nigeria at large, considering the on-going fall in the oil price and also the economic challenges in the country. This work however, would be investigating the challenges that brought about the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta and its implication on Sustainable development in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

The Niger Delta remains an important region to Nigeria due to its massive contribution to the economy of the country through its oil resources. However, the resurgence of militancy in the region poses serious challenges to not only the region but also the national security of the country. These challenges as they appear in the Niger Delta area include; bombings of oil facilities, kidnapping, oil bunkering. Responsibilities for most of the recent attacks in Niger Delta have been claimed by a group named Niger Delta Avengers, which intends to deal consequent attacks on the region, with the futuristic motives of crippling the Nigerian economy.

Militancy in the Niger Delta region is not a recent development, but it has been suppressed to the barest minimum in the past through several policy and military actions by the Government and supposed contribution from the oil majors, such as; establishment of the NDDC, Ministry of Niger Delta affairs, Amnesty Programme, JTF operations, etc.

Despite the supposed importance accrued to the Niger Delta region and efforts in combating militancy in the region, there has been resurgence of militancy and incessant security crisis which have undermined development. Is the Niger Delta really the bedrock of the Nigerian economy? Policy and Security measures have been introduced, why does it always seem to be short-lived? Or are the security and

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policy actions of the Government mere gimmicks to exploit the region of its oil resources? Do the activities of both government and oil majors in the regions contribute to the insecurity?

Research questions

In the course of this study, some important research questions have been raised, which determines the depth of the research work. These questions include;

1. What are the implications of the renewed agitation in the Niger delta on national security?
2. How relevant is Niger Delta to development of Nigeria?
3. What has the Government done concerning the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta?
4. If truly the oil majors have established some means of avoiding resurgence of militancy, why are they not effective?

Objective of the study

The study examines the renewed agitation in the Niger Delta region and its implications on National security of Nigeria. This study will make an attempt to pay attention to the main reasons behind the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region and how best to overcome these agitations for good.

Thus, the objectives of this study include the following;

1. To examine the implications of the renewed agitation in the Niger Delta region on National security.
2. To identify the relevance of the Niger Delta region in the development of Nigeria, as regards the absence of insurgence in the region.
3. To identify the roles played by the Nigeria Government on the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region
4. To identify actions and inactions of the oil majors in avoiding resurgence of militancy and unrest in the Niger Delta region

Research hypothesis

H1: Renewed agitation in the Niger Delta has negative implications on the National security of Nigeria.

H0: Renewed agitation in the Niger Delta does not have negative implications on the National Security of Nigeria.

H1: Niger Delta is important to the development of Nigeria,

H0: Niger Delta is not important to the development of Nigeria

H1: Some factors are responsible for the inefficacies of the measures the Government have put in place to confront the renewed agitation in the Niger Delta.

H0: No factor is responsible for the inefficacies of the measures the Government have put in place to confront the renewed agitation in the Niger Delta.

H1: There are certain inconsistencies in certain the oil major's efforts to curb resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta.

H0: There are no inconsistencies in the oil majors' efforts to curb resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was used in carrying out this research. Primary data was collected. 300 copies of questionnaire was administered, collected and analyzed for the purpose of this study.

Population of study

The Niger Delta region makes up over 7.5% of the total land mass of Nigeria, these includes; Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers State, Edo, and Ondo State. Oil workers, Staff and Students of Petroleum Training Institute and a tangible number of eligible adults in the state irrespective of gender, state of origin, occupation and qualification.

Literature review

Niger Delta is widely known for its reputation as one of the largest wetlands in the world and also the oils base of Nigeria [5]. Even though the region houses the oil reservoir that generates a huge sum of Nigerian revenue; developmental indicators such as infrastructural development and social amenities are not evident [6].

Several administrations have turned blind eyes or played minimum roles in developing the region; so also the oil majors have neglected corporate social responsibilities expected of them in ensuring a future for the residents and sustainability of the region [7]. This can be an absolute basis for the residents; especially the youth's decision to make the region inhabitable and also the country ungovernable for subsequent administrations.

Continued Inadvertency of the government and expropriation of the Niger Delta contributes to the resurgence of militancy, which has led to a free fall of the oil production and revenue generated within the region; it has also threatened the national security of Nigeria at large [8].

Agitations by some ex-militants, new militant groups and concerned residents in recent times have only served as pointer to the fact that there is a dire need for the demands of the people be met than settlement of the militant groups for temporary peace [9]. In addition to this, Aminu [10] said, there are evidences in existing literatures that connects the violence in Niger Delta to the different unattended age long challenges faced by the residents of the region, and the negligence of the government and oil majors in both psychosocial and environmental development.

Theoretical framework

This study adopts systems theory in explaining the relationship between resurgence of militancy and development in the Niger Delta. David Easton's system analysis holds the idea that relevance and interaction of different components of a system should not be underestimated; he suggests that interaction is a product of the behavior of every member or part of the system, when they play their roles as expected [11]. The political system is open to influences from its environment and the environment is in turn by the actions of the political system. Thus, if we have a region bereft with continuous insecurity and unrest, the national security of the country is threatened.

In such situation, where Niger Delta region is believed to hold a gigantic percentage of Nigeria's wealth, resurgence of militancy by the Niger Delta Avengers and there means of attack pose serious threats to the national security of the country at large. System theory focuses more on the relevance of parts of a whole system, in this study however, Niger Delta region remains indispensable and highly important to the whole which is Nigeria, and this sheds more light on the nexus between the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole.

This theory is suitable for this research work as it sheds more light on the causal factors of the resurgence of militancy in the region, which revolves around the activities of the government and oil majors in the Niger Delta region. This elicits the functions or roles the government, oil majors and the residents have played as parts of a bigger system.

Finally, failure or incompetence of the government to ensure high standards of environmental security regulations as regards the operations of the oil majors has posed serious threats to the Niger Delta region. Thus, this failure on the part of the government extends the threat to the National security of Nigeria.

Results of Findings

Table 1 presents the demographic of the respondents, which was categorized by their states of origin, 29% of the respondent were from Delta state, which is the highest, Oyo, Abuja, Niger, Kwara, and Enugu all have 0.3% percent, which is the least on the table.

Figure 1 below presents the distribution of the respondents on histogram; the essence of this is to have a pictorial view through a statistical chart.

Table 2 presents the responses to the above question, and respondents who strongly agreed to this are 57%, those who agreed are 37.7%, undecided response are 4.3%, and those who disagreed are 1.0% (Figure 2).

Table 3 presents the respondents opinion on the importance of Niger Delta to the development of survival of the Nigerian economy. 59.3% strobly agreed, 22.3% agreed, 10.7% are undecided, 5.0% disagreed, and 2.7% strongly disagreed (Figure 3).

Table 4 presents the response to the question of whether Nigerian government is responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta, by scrapping and deviating for the existing condition for truce (Figure 4).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Abia	7	2.3	2.3	2.3
Abuja	1	0.3	0.3	2.7
Akwa-Ibom	2	0.7	0.7	3.3
Anambra	6	2	2	5.3
Bayelsa	38	12.7	12.7	18
Delta	87	29	29	47
Ebonyi	2	0.7	0.7	47.7
Edo	40	13.3	13.3	61
Edor	1	0.3	0.3	61.3
Ekiti	10	3.3	3.3	64.7
Enugu	1	0.3	0.3	65
Imo	5	1.7	1.7	66.7
Kogi	3	1	1	67.7
Kwara	1	0.3	0.3	68
Lagos	13	4.3	4.3	72.3
Niger	1	0.3	0.3	72.7
Ogun	8	2.7	2.7	75.3
Ondo	13	4.3	4.3	79.7
Oyo	1	0.3	0.3	80
Rivers	60	20	20	100
Total	300	100	100	

Table 1: Demographic of the respondents as categorized by their states of origin.

Focus on national security will definitely lead to sustainable development in Nigeria.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agreed	171	57	57	57
Agreed	113	37.7	37.7	94.7
Undecided	13	4.3	4.3	99
Disagreed	3	1	1	100
Total	300	100	100	

Table 2: Focus on national security will definitely lead to Sustainable development in Nigeria.

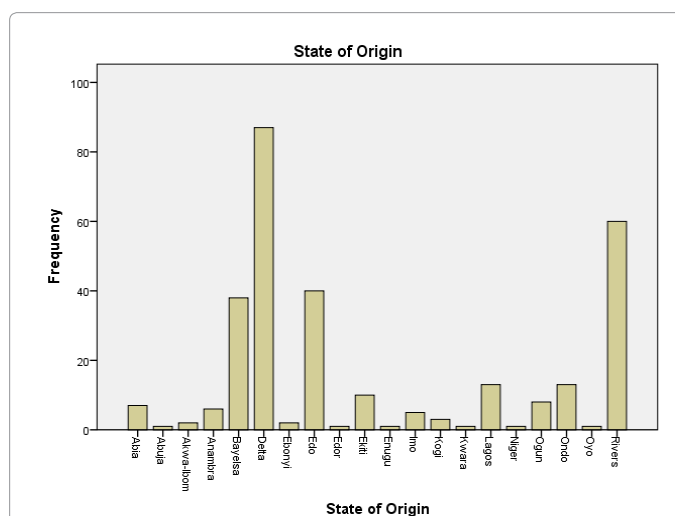


Figure 1: Demographic of the respondents as categorized by their states of origin.

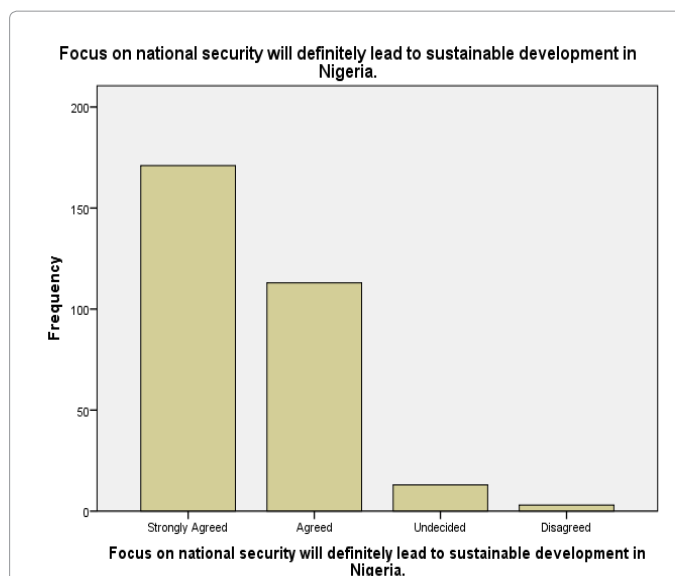


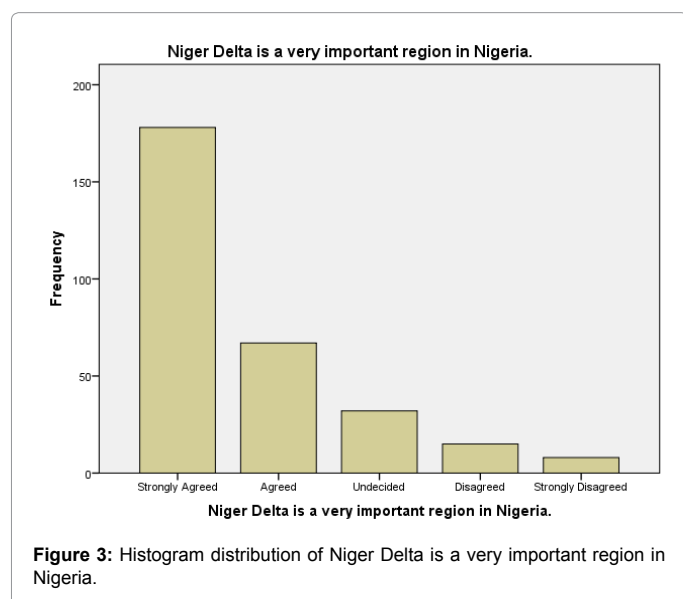
Figure 2: Below shows a Histogram of Response on Focus on National security will definitely lead to sustainable development in Nigeria.

Dialogue with the militants will bring about long lasting peace in the region

Table 5 presents the response to the statement; dialogue with the militants will bring about lasting peace in the Niger Delta Region. 60%

Niger Delta is a very important region in Nigeria				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agreed	178	59.3	59.3	59.3
Agreed	67	22.3	22.3	81.7
Undecided	32	10.7	10.7	92.3
Disagreed	15	5	5	97.3
Strongly Disagreed	8	2.7	2.7	100
Total	300	100	100	

Table 3: Niger Delta is a very important region in Nigeria.



The Nigerian government is solely responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agreed	82	27.3	27.3	27.3
Agreed	54	18	18	45.3
Undecided	62	20.7	20.7	66
Disagreed	74	24.7	24.7	90.7
Strongly Disagreed	28	9.3	9.3	100
Total	300	100	100	

Table 4: Response to the Nigerian government is solely responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta.

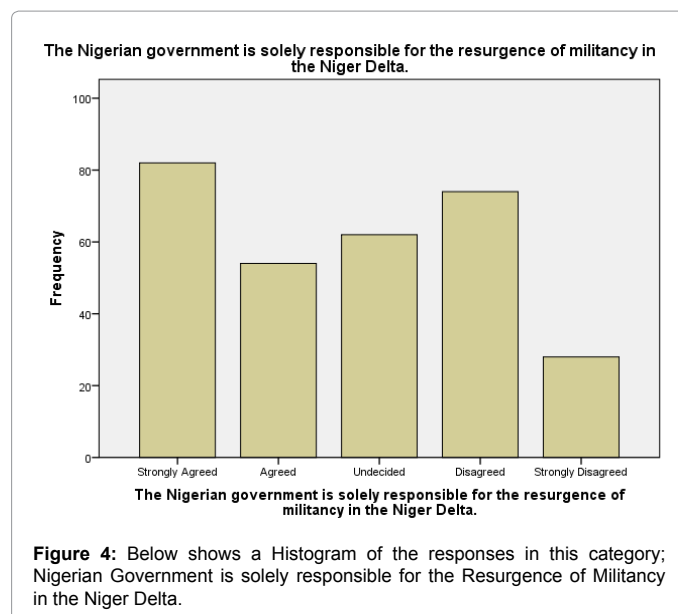
strongly agreed with this statement, 20% agreed, 13.3% are undecided, 3.0% disagreed, while 3.3% strongly disagreed with this statement (Figure 5).

Table 6 presents respondents response to the statement; oil majors are solely responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region. 60% strongly agreed, 18% agreed, 12.7% are undecided, 6% disagreed and 3.3% strongly disagreed (Figure 6).

Table 7 presents the percentage distribution of the response to regular clean-up of Niger Delta being the responsibility of the oil majors. 64.3% strongly agreed, 22.3% agreed, 9.7% are undecided, 2.3% disagreed, and 1.3% totally disagreed with the statement (Figure 7).

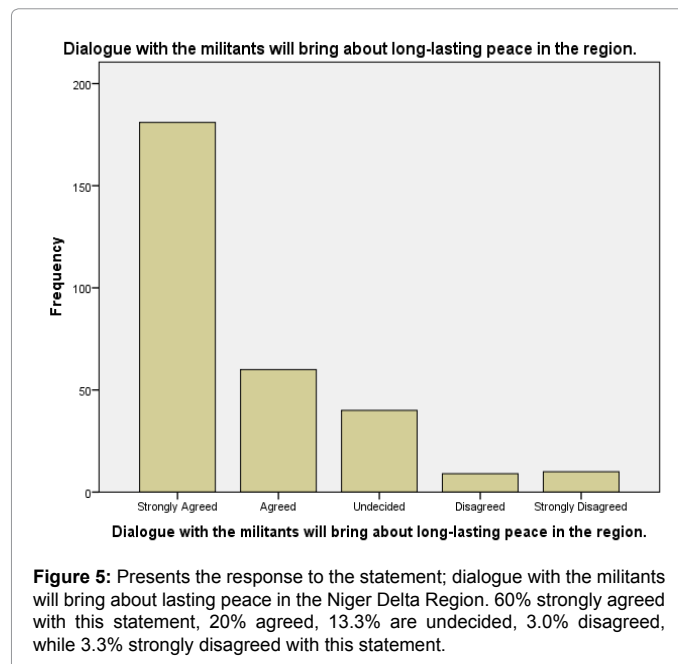
Summary of findings

The findings of this research work are depicted both in statistical tables and statistical charts, which best describes the constituency



	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agreed	181	60.3	60.3	60.3
Agreed	60	20	20	80.3
Undecided	40	13.3	13.3	93.7
Disagreed	9	3	3	96.7
Strongly Disagreed	10	3.3	3.3	100
Total	300	100	100	

Table 5: Dialogue with the militants will bring about long lasting peace in the region.



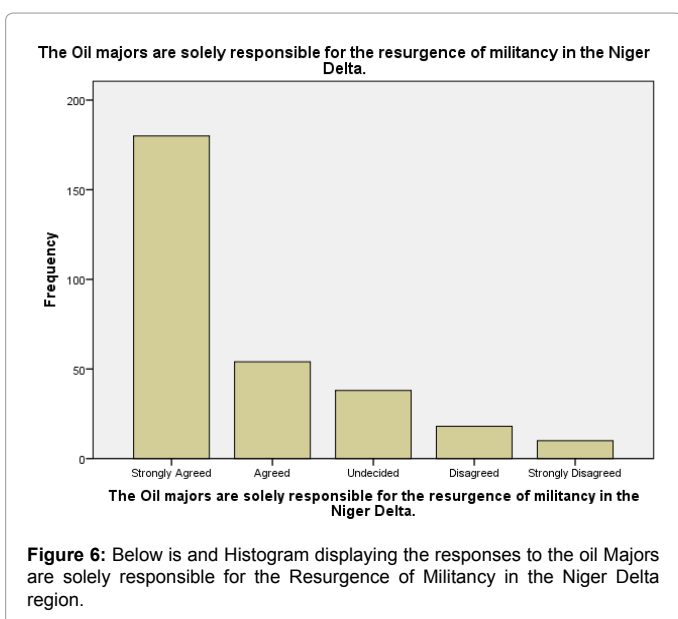
and viability of the data gathered. This research work is based on the following research questions

1. What are the implications of the renewed agitation in the Niger delta on national security?

The Oil majors are solely responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agreed	180	60.0	60.0	60.0
Agreed	54	18.0	18.0	78.0
Undecided	38	12.7	12.7	90.7
Disagreed	18	6.0	6.0	96.7
Strongly Disagreed	10	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Oil Majors are solely responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region.



Regular clean-up of the Niger Delta is the responsibility of the oil majors				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agreed	193	64.3	64.3	64.3
Agreed	67	22.3	22.3	86.7
Undecided	29	9.7	9.7	96.3
Disagreed	7	2.3	2.3	98.7
Strongly Disagreed	4	1.3	41.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

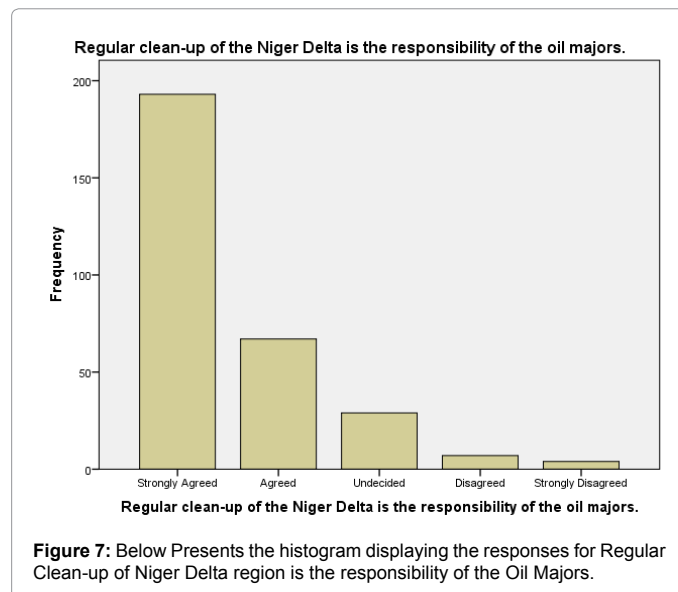
Table 7: Responses to regular clean-up of the Niger Delta is the responsibility of the oil majors.

- To what extent is the Niger Delta relevant to Nigeria?
- What has the Government done concerning the renewed agitation in the Niger Delta region?
- What have the Oil majors done to curb violence and unrest in the Niger Delta region?

Discussion of findings

The major findings of this work validate the research hypothesis and are stated as follows;

- Promotion of National security is a major drive for sustainable development. 94.7% of the respondents on Table 2 strongly agreed with the idea that focus on national security will definitely lead to sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.



- Niger Delta region, like every other region is important to Nigeria, but resources derived from the region cannot be undermined in the economy of Nigeria.
- Resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region by the Niger Delta Avengers is equally the fault of both the Government and Oil majors. Table 4 shows the response of respondents on the question of Nigerian government being responsible for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region. Only 45.3% of the respondents hold the government responsible, while 78% of the respondents on Table 6 hold the oil majors responsible. According to Hinshaw and Kent [12] Nigerian Government has been at odds with Niger Delta residents since the 1990s due to the several decades of continuous oil spills and popular perception of the vast petroleum wealth derived from the region has enriched only a few, which has motivated residents to violent acts such as; destruction of oil facilities, abduction, bunkering, etc. the government shares equal responsibility as against the figures because the oil majors are the responsibility of the government.
- Lastly, dialogue with the militants would be very helpful in managing militancy in the Niger Delta region, as the resurgence is as a result of the aggravations from tamper with some mechanisms put in place by past administration to manage militancy and security crisis in the Niger Delta region. Table 5 shows respondents perceived solution to the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region, 80.3% of the respondent agreed that dialogue with the militants will bring about lasting peace in the region. Considering the fact that the Niger Delta Avengers arrived at a period the Nigerian Government was running low on funds and the country was approaching recession has made their attacks more pronounced.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Niger Delta Avengers are driven by economic and environmental scores, and would not rest until these challenges are attended to or they continue their series of sabotage on oil resources and facilities, this however is a major threat to the national security of Nigeria [4].

Inability of the President Muhammad Buhari led administration to uphold the ceasefire agreement put in place by the immediate past administration through the amnesty programme and benefits accrued to it, is one of the reasons for the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region [13]. Insecurity in the Niger Delta region can be said to be as a result of economic and environmental grievances which pose a lot of threat not only to the region, but Nigeria as a whole as the importance of the Niger Delta region to Nigeria cannot be underestimated.

Thus, the following recommendations are proposed for the sake of this research work;

1. The question of the importance of Niger Delta in Nigeria should be suppressed to the barest minimum, as its indispensability to the Nigerian state is a fact.
2. Nigerian government should dialogue and take the militant groups more seriously, as they are not only young, educated and sophisticated, their actions are also well calculated and they would stop at nothing to ruin all the oil activities in the Niger Delta, which still represent a bulky amount of Nigerian Oil activities. While at this, Nigerian government should consider a completely inclusive form of governance in the Niger Delta region. A closer rapport with the residents of Niger Delta, as the militants have not helped their people either, this presents an opportunity for the government to cause an implosion within the militants cabal.
3. More measures should be put in place to ensure regular cleanup of the Niger Delta region, especially by the oil majors and also swift response of the government concerning issues that affects environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region. A sense of belonging and responsibility should be inculcate by the government, the people of Niger Delta region, disinterested third parties and Non- Government/Civil Society

Organizations should be empowered and educated to identify, recognize and report irregular practices of the oil majors in their production process.

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