

**The Impact of Pipeline Vandalism on National Security and Development in Nigeria:  
The Niger Delta Experience**

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**Abstract**

Pipeline vandalism refers to any deliberate act that is aimed at damaging petroleum pipeline with the sole intention to steal crude oil and its related petroleum products. At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the menace of pipeline vandalism has become an endemic social problem that has impacted negatively on the nation's security thereby distorting the socio economic and ecological well being of the Niger Delta region. This paper focused on the factors responsible for the incidences of pipeline vandalism, its impacts on national security and the implications of its menace on the development of the Niger delta Region in particular and the nation in general. The paper employed IDI and KII techniques to source for data from vandals and security personnel. Secondary sources such as text books, internet materials, newspapers reports, magazines and journals were also employed. Frustration Aggression Theory and the Social Deprivation Theory were used to proffer explanations on some of the inherent factors responsible for the scourge of pipeline vandalism, its impacts on national security and its overall implications on the development of the Niger Delta region. The paper found that the scourge of pipeline vandalism is usually precipitated by issues of poverty, get rich quick syndrome, issues of unemployment that is prevalent among the youth that get involved in the act of vandalism of oil installations thereby bringing about the wanton destruction of lives and properties in the Niger Delta Region. The paper recommended that the scourge of unemployment should be adequately addressed in order to reduce the menace of issues of insecurity in the oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta Region.

**Key Words:** Vandalism, Security, Implications, Development and Pipeline

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## **Introduction**

Pipeline vandalism in the views of Udofia (2012) Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (2012) and Joel (2012), refers to the willful or deliberate act of damaging pipelines with the sole aim of stealing crude oil and its associated petroleum products. The emergence of the menace of pipeline vandalism in Nigeria and the Niger Delta Region in particular has brought about numerous adverse negative consequences on the nations security architecture thereby leading to colossal loss of lives and properties.

As pointed out by (Yoessien, 2014) Nigeria is the largest oil producer in Africa and the eleventh largest in the world. The mainstay of Nigeria's economy is the petroleum sector which accounts for about 90% of the nation's foreign exchange earnings and about 25% of the nation's gross domestic products. Majorly, the significant portion of the nation's oil is produced on shore and is subsequently transported by pipelines. Nigeria oil and gas industry which has its strong presence and operational base in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria has in recent times increased the level of oil production per day.

However, when oil was discovered in commercial quantity in the year 1956, it spurred the petroleum sector in Nigeria such that a network of pipelines of crude oil and refined petroleum products were constructed to facilitate their transportation and distribution. For instance, 666 kilometers of crude oil pipelines and 4315 kilometers of multi product pipelines which makes up a total of 5001 kilometers constituted the entire network of crude oil and Petroleum Products transportation and distribution (Onouha, 2007).

In the views of Yoessein, (2014) the exploration of oil in Nigeria and specifically the Niger Delta Region has presented an increase potential over issues of environmental degradation. This has also led to issues of vegetation losses leading to food insecurity, reduction in the use of aquatic resources and the degradation of soil components meant for farming activities in the Niger Delta Region.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The scourge of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region has become a nagging social problem over the years which have brought about the wanton destruction lives and properties thereby hindering the social, ecological and economic development of that region.

In the views of Ogbeni (2012), a total number of 16,083 pipeline breaks occurred within the last 10 years while 398 out of these pipeline breaks were occasioned by ruptures while the

activities of the vandals resulted in 15,685 breaks which amounted to 97.5 percent of the total number of cases of pipeline vandaisation.

The menace of pipeline vandalism has adversely brought about a threat to food security within the oil bearing communities in Ogoni land and other communities within the Niger-Delta region. For instance, an empirical study carried out by (UNPO, 2008) has shown that large areas of fresh water bodies have been rendered useless as a result of oil spillages emanating from oil pipelines that have suffered different levels of damage as a result of the activities of vandals. As a result of this menace, it has made food to be increasingly expensive and the potential farmers are too poor to pay for seeds and labour. Also, in the communities of Ogoni land the importance of the input of Agriculture to the nation's economy has been grossly challenged due to oil spills as cassava and yam now record low yields in the area.

The emergence of the scourge of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region has adversely led to the killing of government officials and security agents. As a result of the fact that pipeline vandals have gone sophisticated in terms of arms bearing and violence, it has led to the killing of several police men and civilians in attempt for the oil companies to have a "hitch free" operation within the host communities. This case in point also resulted in the death of 10 persons in Ijaw community in the Niger Delta region including damages to farm land and air pollution.

The table below shows the volume of crude oil lost due to illegal bunkering occasioned by Pipeline vandalism as reported by oil producers trade section January – March 2014.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Security Related Deferment (bb/S)</b>	<b>Loss due to oil theft /illegal bunkering (bb/S)</b>
January	4,679,301	2,172,341
February	4,153,114	1,679,874
March	9,534,642	1,253,825
Total	18,367,0571	5,106,040

Source: Chukwujekwu, Chibuzor and Eke, (2014).

As part of the empirical findings reported by Kalejaye (2014) the menace of pipeline vandalism has adversely led to the disruption of crude oil supply from Escravos to Warri and Port-Harcourt refineries. This scourge prompted the federal government to use marine vessels for crude oil deliveries to the refineries.

The main aim of this paper is to find out the impacts of pipeline vandalism on national security and development in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper aims to address other related objective which includes:

1. To examine the factors responsible for the incidences of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region.
2. To explain why the vandals are engaged in the act of pipeline vandalism.
3. To find out the collaborators of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region.
4. To examine the impact of pipeline vandalism in the development of the Niger Delta region.
5. To recommend ways on how the menace of pipeline vandalism can be prevented.

### **Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework**

This section is concerned with the relevant literature such as the overview of pipeline vandalism in Nigeria, causal factors of pipeline vandalism, the impacts of pipeline vandalism on national security and development and methodology.

### **Pipeline Vandalism in Niger Delta: A General Over View**

The Niger Delta region has a population of 27 million and covers an area of 70,000 square kilometers, covering the greater part of the south south region of Nigeria. The geographical location of the region distinguished it from other regions as it was described as the largest oil producing region in Africa. Besides, the region is rich in both renewal and non- renewal resources such as oil, gas bitumen and non timber forest products, wild life among others thus 95% of Nigeria's revenue is generated from the region (Thovoethin and Yusuf, 2010).

At the onset of the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in 1956 in a place known as Olobiri ushered in the emergence of oil exploration and exploitation of crude oil for domestic and international market by multinational oil companies such as Shell, Exxon Mobil, Agip, Total, Chevron etc. As a result of oil exploration activities of these foreign multinational oil companies and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) the production of crude oil increased tremendously. For instance, Ekpu (2009) reported that about 3,000 barrels of crude oil was produced per day.

Since the discovery of oil in about 1958, the people of Ogoni kingdom in Rivers State had complained about the negative implications of oil exploration and production activities on their environment and their political economy. In the 1990 the elites of Ogoni formed the movement for the survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) which was headed by late Ken Saro Wiwa. This body culminated into a mass movement involving all segments of Ogoni people in the campaign. The movement prepared and published the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) which was distributed to the Nigerian government and oil prospecting and exploration companies operating in Ogoni land (Johnson, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study situated the basis of its analysis on the frustration aggression theory and the social deprivation theory. The two theories were actually employed for this study because they proffer some analysis on some of inherent factors responsible for the occurrence of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region and its impact on national security and development in Nigeria. The frustration aggression theory assumes that individuals in the society have expectations and ambitions, but when the expectations and aspirations do not find platforms upon which it transforms itself into reality, Dollard et al posits that it leads to aggression. Although, not all frustration that ends up in aggression. There are frustrations that get instigated to be able to transform into aggression. The impact of frustration may create conditions that encourage anger, hopelessness to a number of different types of response.

This paper does not however, preclude political factors such as undue interference over budget allocations meant for the development of the Niger Delta region which serves as a necessary instigators to frustrations. The environment of politics in Nigeria is such that creates adversarial conditions where socio- cultural groups in Nigeria often times call the attention of government over their prolonged marginalization, deprivation and issues of environmental degradation. For instance, some movements in the Niger Delta region such as *MOSOP* have continued to propagate their sense of despair and utter deprivation concerning decades of environmental degradation, oil spillages and issues of youth unemployment which they feel that they have suffered in the hands of the government and the multinational oil companies in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general. The use of the military as a suppressive force by the government as a medium of silencing the agitators especially the unemployed youth has also increased the tempo of aggression.

On the other hand, Proponents of Social Deprivation theory includes Samuel Stoufer (2015) Krahn, Harrison and James (1992). Proponents of social deprivation theory are of the views that social deprivation refers to the combination of factors that prevents an individual from having easy and frequent access to many different aspects of their culture and society. The feeling of deprivation arises when desires become legitimate expectations and those desires are blocked by society. Poverty, lack of income and opportunity are for reaching contributions to social deprivation. Some of the crisis in the Niger delta region can be traceable to the decades of neglect and deprivation that the people within that region have suffered as a result of the insensitivity of the state actors and multinational oil companies over their plight. All these issues joined together now metamorphosed into social movements and acts of youth military and hostage taking as a means of drawing the attention of the government over their plight.

In the views of Lawson (1965) in his analysis concurred that unresolved frustrations normally provide fertile ground for individuals within society to get frustrated. By extension, it can be assumed that the unaddressed frustrations of the Niger Delta militants have given birth to group alliances in order to enable them to confront the source of their frustration. In this regard, proponents of the frustration aggression theory as part of their assumptions are of the views:

That all humans have aspirations and expectations and when there is disparity between expectations and achievements, there is bound to be violent reactions by those who cannot restrain their frustration. They also assume that their economic deprivation and hopelessness ultimately leads a frustrated individual or group to become aggressive and therefore resort to violent activities.

In addition, the denial of certain aspiration of individual or group encouraged the denied and the deprived to respond aggressively against those whom they perceive to be responsible for their deprivation and frustrations. For instance, the militants usually kidnap foreign expatriates of multinational oil companies because the expatriates are seen to be responsible for their marginalization and deprivations.

## **Methodology**

In the course of this study, from which the paper was written the study employed mix method of quantive and qualitative data to source information from the participants who were covered in this research. The researcher used in-depth interview (IDI) to source data from the vandals, the community heads, ex-militants while key informant interview was used to source data from the top management staff of Shell and the security operatives in Ogoni land. Purposive

sampling techniques was employed to select members of the host communities, the top management staff of Shell, while snowballing was employed to select the vandals covered in the study. The largest population of the study is 55 participants.

## **Results and Discussion of the Findings**

### **Causal Factors of Pipeline Vandalism**

When the researcher conducted an in depth interview among some community leaders in Ogoni land on the factors responsible for the reoccurring cases of Pipeline Vandalism, in the Niger Delta region, they were of the views that;

*The factors responsible for the reoccurring cases of Pipeline Vandalism among the youths in the Niger Delta region can be traceable to issues of frustration occasioned by challenges of unemployment, lack of proactive response by the government and shell over hazards that are associated with oil exploration in the region and lack of political will to address the problem (IDI with some community leaders in “ Khana Local Government Area”).*

In a similar vein, when the researcher conducted an (IDI) with the vandals in order to ascertain their views about the factors responsible for the re-occurring cases of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region, they were of the views that:

*The act of Pipeline vandalism is re-occurring in the region because it has become a lucrative business in the sense that a lot of money is generated from stolen crude oil whenever there is a successful operation. Also, the issue of pipeline vandalism is reoccurring in the region as a means of drawing the attention of government and the multinational oil companies over issues of marginalization and issues of negligence such as delays in handling problem of oil spillages, provision of job opportunities and the desired social amenities for the host communities (IDI with Pipeline vandals in Ogoni land).*

The lucrative nature of oil theft in the Niger Delta region is supported by the views of Omotola (2009) cited in Umar and Othman (2017). For Omotola, the Niger Delta region is credited to

have an estimated 37 billion barrels of oil reserves and 168 trillion cubic feet of gas deposit that generates 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. This goes to explain the attraction of pipeline vandalism and oil bunkering to the vandals in the Niger Delta region.

### **Collaborators of Pipeline Vandalism**

When the researcher conducted a (KII) with the top management staff of Shell about their knowledge on the collaborators of pipeline vandalism, the response generated from the interview includes the following:

*The collaborators of Pipeline vandalism in the Niger- Delta Region Vandalism in the Niger- Delta region ranges from mischievous security personnel who are guiding the pipelines that provides information to the vandals on the right time to strike, some corrupt officials of NNPC that provides some expertise knowledge on the vital channels that is required to sell crude oil, some community leaders resident in the host communities and dubious politicians that provides the covering for the vandals by facilitating their release whenever the vandals are arrested because of their own benefits and interest in the business (KII with Shell Operations Manager).*

To buttress the above fact, Katsouris and Sayne (2013) pointed out the complicity of Senior Military Officials of the ranks of Brigadier General and Rear Admiral who were at the helm of affairs of the Joint Task Force (JTF) that got involved in the illicit trade of oil bunkering.

### **Impacts of Pipeline Vandalism on the Development of the Niger Delta Region**

When the researcher conducted a (KII) with the top management staff of Shell over the impacts of Pipeline Vandalism in relation to their operations in Ogoni land and other regions of the Niger Delta, the data illuminating the interview includes:

*The implication of Pipeline Vandalism is enormous because it usually leads to the destruction of our installations/ equipments thereby leading to the interruption of our exploration activities in the area. This also leads to a gross loss of revenue whenever an incident of Pipeline vandalism is recorded (KII with Shell Project Engineer).*

From the point of view of Shell Project Engineer, it agrees with Ibeuegbu (2017) who pointed out that the impact of pipeline vandalism usually result to outbreak of fire, environmental destruction and outbreak of preventable diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and other water born diseases.

When the researcher conducted a (KII) with the security agents about the general impacts of Pipeline vandalism in the Niger delta Region they were of the views that:

*The impacts of pipeline vandalism are enormous as it has greatly led to the wanton destruction of lives and properties. In an attempt to arrest pipeline vandals, it has led to the death of some security agents in that area during the process of cross fire as the vandals are also armed. The vandalisation of pipelines sometimes leads to explosion or fire out breaks which usually claim lives of people who come to scoop petroleum products from a vandalized pipeline. Also, the act of pipeline vandalism leads to loss of revenue, issues of environmental degradation it also affects the farm produce of the host communities and their ecosystem (KII with some surveillance JTF operatives in Ogoni land).*

Due to the fact that members of the host communities in the Niger Delta region are mainly peasant farmers and fishermen as such, any occurrence of pipeline vandalism do greatly affect their daily survival. Okolo (2013) reported that between 2010 and 2012, the Nigerian state lost over N12.53 billion from a total of 2,787 pipelines vandalization. In a related development Okere (2016) captured the political and economic impact of pipeline vandalism. To this scholar, the scourge of pipeline vandalism has often resulted in revenue losses, environmental degradation, fire out break often leading to the loss of lives and property.

In addition, when the researcher conducted an in depth interview with some community elders, about the impact of pipeline vandalism, they were of the views that;

*It makes our crops and our farm produce such as yam, cassava to record low yields , it has also affected the source of our drinking water and the ecosystem such that fishes dies ad floats in the rivers whenever the issue of pipeline vandalism occurs. Also, when this occurs, it sometimes results to the outbreak of fire which affects our environment and leading to vegetation loss (IDI with some elders form 'Eleme in Ogoni land.*

To buttress the above point, (UNPO, 2008) commenting on the implications of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region stated that the menace has caused fresh water bodies and fishing grounds useless as a result of oil spill occasioned by the activities of vandals.

This ugly situation has made the prices of goods and services such as yam and cassava that are produced by the host communities to be expensive.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The findings of the study has shown that the scourge of Pipeline vandalism is an endemic social problem that comes with devastating impacts on the security of lives and properties of the citizens thereby resulting to the slow pace of the nation's socio- economic development. In this regard, the annual report of the Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (2013) stated that Nigeria lost a total of 10.9 billion US Dollars to oil theft between 2009 and 2011. By implications, this huge sum that was lost due to the activities of oil pipeline vandals could have generated huge amount of revenue that would have been chanelled towards the provision of some essential amenities such as pipe born water, good roads, hospitals, electricity etc. for the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta region and the citizens in general.

The information gathered from the interview conducted amongst the respondents that participated in this study has shown that the menace of pipeline vandalism is usually precipitated by a lot of factors. They include poverty, the scourge of unemployment especially amongst the youths, lack of proactive response by the government and the multinational oil companies over issues of oil spillages, issues of environmental degradation, complains of marginalization over issues of appointments of their well meaning sons and daughters to position of authority and the slow pace in the provision of essential amenities such as pipe borne water, good road network, electricity, good hospitals and the issues of Ogoni clean up etc.

To buttress the above point, in the views of Eyekpimi (2016) the occurrence of oil spillages in the environment of the host communities in the Niger Delta region without adequate and appropriate clean ups adversely reduced the level of economic activities and access to clean water. This negative development in the area culminated to the quest for resource control, acts of youth militancy and vandalisation of oil installations and other forms of unrest as a means of drawing the attention of the government and the multinational oil companies over their plight.

## **Conclusion**

This paper on the impact of pipeline vandalism on National Security and Development has appraised the activities of oil pipeline vandals in the Niger Delta region and how their activities has affected the security of lives and properties of the citizenry. The study has also appraised how the lack of proactive response by the government and the multinational oil companies over issues of youth unemployment, issues of environmental degradation, issues of Ogoni clean up, complains of marginalization, ecosystem system damage, lack of essential amenities etc.

The collaboration of workers within and outside the oil industry was stressed as part of the issue that is weakening the government's efforts at addressing the problem. The study also emphasized that the impact of the scourge of pipeline vandalism has also led to the huge loss of revenue generation, issues of insecurity and the epileptic nature of power supply through the national grid. In line with above premise, the following below are the recommendations of this study.

1. Direct and Proactive Investment on the oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta Region should be encouraged: This can be done through a proactive job creation initiative or the rebranding of the Amnesty programme that will create an aggressive scheme acquisition scheme for the youths in that region.
2. Severe sanction should be meted out to the collaborators of pipeline vandalism who are within and outside of government: Any corrupt NNPC official conniving with oil bunkers to divert petroleum products should be severely dealt with. Also, any security operative no matter how highly placed that connives with pipeline vandals to secure the movement of stolen crude oil from the shores of the Niger- delta region to their syndicates abroad should be made to serve severe penalties.
3. There is need for continuous dialogue between the restive youths and other relevant stakeholders of the Niger Delta region and the government, the multinational oil companies irrespective of whether there is a change in power. This step will help the government and other relevant stakeholders to be in the picture responsible for the scourge of pipeline vandalism in the country.
4. Cleaning of communities that are affected by oil spillages: there is need for the government to liaise with multinational oil companies exploring and exploiting oil reserves in the Niger Delta region on how to clean up communities that have suffered

different degrees of ecosystem damage and other forms of environmental degradation. This will go a long way in addressing the plight of the host communities whose main source of livelihood has been grossly affected by oil spillages.

5. There is need for enlightenment campaigns probably in local languages of the host communities: The issue of enlightenment campaigns of the host communities is very vital in the sense that it will enable the vandals and their collaborators to know that vandalizing oil pipelines in their localities comes with some devastating impacts such as loss of lives and properties and colossal loss in revenue generation.

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