

CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria has long faced significant internal security challenges, particularly in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Despite the region's abundant petroleum resources, it has remained plagued by underdevelopment, environmental degradation, and socio-economic inequality. Rivers State, a core oil-producing area, has been at the epicenter of these crises. Grievances stemming from perceived political and economic marginalization, environmental harm caused by oil exploration, and widespread unemployment have fueled public discontent and youth restiveness (Ibeanu & Momoh, 2020; Onuoha, 2022). These tensions have frequently escalated into violence, including attacks on oil installations, the kidnapping of oil workers, illegal bunkering, and clashes with security forces disrupting oil production and threatening national security and economic stability (Akinola, 2018; Olaniyan & Ojakorotu, 2023).

To mitigate these challenges, the Federal Government launched the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in 2009 under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The initiative, grounded in the internationally recognized Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) framework, granted unconditional pardon to militants who agreed to disarm and reintegrate into civilian life. The programme aimed to reduce armed conflict, rehabilitate ex-militants, and foster socio-economic development in the oil-producing communities (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021; UNDP, 2016).

Rivers State was pivotal in the rollout, with many former agitators enrolled in vocational and technical training both domestically and abroad in sectors such as welding, marine engineering, ICT, and aviation. These efforts enhanced human capital, reduced unemployment, and stimulated local economies (Amnesty Office Report, 2021; Ejobowah, 2020). In its early stages, the programme achieved notable gains in regional security, oil production, and investor confidence. However, over a decade later, concerns have emerged regarding the programme's long-term sustainability and impact. While some ex-militants have been successfully reintegrated, many still face unfulfilled promises, inconsistent stipend payments, and limited employment opportunities (Okoli & Orinya, 2017; Omoju, 2019). Moreover, the reemergence of illegal oil activities and sporadic violence suggests that the root causes poverty, weak governance, and environmental neglect—remain largely unaddressed (Aghedo & Osumah, 2020).

Critics further contend that the policy may have inadvertently legitimized militancy as a means of gaining state attention and benefits, marginalizing peaceful but disadvantaged youth and communities (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). With mounting fiscal pressures and evolving national priorities, questions are also being raised about the programme's financial viability (Budget Office of the Federation, 2022). Consequently, this study seeks to critically assess the Amnesty Policy as an instrument for promoting national security and economic development, with a particular focus on its implementation and impact in Rivers State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The persistent insecurity and socio-economic underdevelopment in Nigeria's Niger Delta region particularly in Rivers State have continued to undermine national unity, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Despite its vast natural resource endowment, the region remains plagued by poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and youth restiveness. These issues have historically fueled armed militancy, sabotage of oil facilities, and organized criminal activities, such as oil theft and kidnapping for ransom (Onuoha, 2022; Olaniyan & Ojakorotu, 2023).

In 2009, the Federal Government introduced the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration. The initiative aimed to demobilize militants, reintegrate them into society, and create a platform for peace and development through training and employment. The program initially recorded success, leading to a significant decline in hostilities and improved oil output from approximately 700,000 barrels per day in mid-2009 to over 2 million barrels by 2010 (Amnesty Office Report, 2021; Ejobowah, 2020).

However, over a decade later, there are growing concerns about the long-term impact and effectiveness of the amnesty policy. Several reports have highlighted a resurgence in violent activities and illegal oil bunkering across parts of Rivers State, often perpetrated by disenfranchised ex-agitators and criminal groups who feel abandoned by the programme (Aghedo & Osumah, 2020). For instance, the 2021 destruction of oil pipelines in the Kula Kingdom and Bonny axis has been linked to renewed agitation by marginalized youth who claim their communities have not benefited from the amnesty dividends (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023).

Moreover, the implementation of the programme has been criticized for poor coordination, lack of transparency, and corruption. The uneven distribution of training opportunities and stipends has created divisions among beneficiaries and further alienated non-violent but impoverished youth in host communities (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021). Numerous ex-militants trained in technical skills such as marine welding and ICT have reported no job placements or startup support, resulting in disillusionment and in some cases, a return to criminal activities (Omoju, 2019).

1.3 Research Objectives

- i. Assess the impact of the Amnesty Policy on security and peace in Rivers State.
- ii. Examine the contributions of the policy to economic development and job

creation among ex-militants and the wider community.

- iii. Explore the perceptions of stakeholders on the effectiveness and sustainability of the Amnesty Programme.
- iv. Identify the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Amnesty

Policy in Rivers State.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What has been the impact of the Amnesty Policy on national security and peace in Rivers State?
- ii. To what extent has the Amnesty Policy contributed to economic development and job creation in the state?
- iii. How do various stakeholders perceive the effectiveness and sustainability of the Amnesty Programme?
- iv. What are the challenges facing the implementation of the Amnesty Policy in Rivers State?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its critical examination of the amnesty policy as a strategic instrument for enhancing national security and stimulating economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria. Given the region's historical experience with militancy, insecurity, and economic sabotage particularly in the oil-rich Niger Delta. This research provides valuable insights into how government policies can serve as peacebuilding and development tools. The findings will be beneficial to policymakers, security agencies, development experts, and scholars interested in conflict resolution and economic transformation in post-conflict societies. Furthermore, the study will contribute to the academic discourse on the intersection between peace initiatives and sustainable development, and it may guide future interventions aimed at reintegrating former militants and promoting inclusive growth.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on the implementation and impact of the amnesty policy in Rivers State, with emphasis on its role in reducing insecurity and fostering economic development between 2009 and 2024. It examines the processes of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) of ex-militants, and how these components have influenced peace and productivity in the state. The geographical scope is limited to Rivers State, while the thematic scope includes issues of national security, human capital development, youth empowerment, and post-conflict economic reforms within the framework of the Niger Delta amnesty program.

While this study provides meaningful insight into the role of the amnesty policy in Rivers State, it is not without limitations. First, the research is geographically limited to Rivers State and may not capture the broader implications of the amnesty program in other Niger Delta states. Secondly, due to time and resource constraints, the study relied on secondary data and a limited number of interviews or surveys, which may affect the depth of primary evidence available. Third, political sensitivities and reluctance of some stakeholders to speak candidly about the policy's implementation may have impacted the comprehensiveness of the data. Lastly, the dynamic and evolving nature of security challenges in the Niger Delta may pose difficulties in drawing generalized conclusions applicable beyond the timeframe of the study.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one contains an introduction, a statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, organization of the study, and definition of terms are used in the study, and references. Chapter two focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework, a summary of the chapter with references. Chapter three deals with research methodology, introduction, sample and population of the study, method of data analysis and references. Chapter four has to do with data presentation analysis and interpretation of findings introduction, brief history of the case study, presentation of data, analysis of data, testing of hypothesis, a summary of data, and references Chapter five contains the summary, recommendations and conclusion with bibliography.

1.8 Definition of Terms

- i. *Amnesty Policy*: A government initiative aimed at granting official pardon to individuals or groups involved in unlawful activities, particularly militants in the Niger Delta, on the condition of disarmament and reintegration into society.

ii. *National Security*: The protection of a nation's citizens, territory, and institutions from threats such as terrorism, insurgency, or any form of violence that could disrupt societal peace and stability.

iii. *Economic Development*: A process of sustained economic growth that improves the standard of living, creates jobs, reduces poverty, and fosters long-term prosperity within a state or nation.

iii. *Rivers State*: One of Nigeria's 36 states, located in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, and often at the center of militant activities due to resource control and environmental degradation issues.

iv. *Reintegration*: The process of assisting former militants or combatants to return to civilian life through training, employment, and psychosocial support.

v. *Militancy*: The use of confrontational or violent tactics by groups or individuals, often to achieve political or economic aims, such as resource control in the Niger Delta.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews various works of Scholars on amnesty policy, national security and economy development. The chapter consists of three sections, namely; conceptual and empirical reviews and the theoretical framework.

2.2 Conceptual Clarification

2.2.1 Amnesty

Rhuks and Omiunu (2013) define amnesty as a political tool of compromise and reunion granted by a sovereign to individuals that have committed acts against the State; usually treasonable offences and/or rebellion. O'Shea who defines amnesty as immunity in law from either criminal or civil legal consequences, or from both, for wrongs committed in the past in a political context opines that granting of amnesty implores the grantee to those committed some form of offence which is identifiable and punishable under some national criminal legal system or in other cases such as crime recognised and punishable under international law.

2.2.2 National Security

Atoyebi (2003) sees national security as the absence of threats, to core values and the prevention of public disorder's, in a wider sense, security, is seen as two levels namely the state and the individual, at the individual level, security is used to reference to core values such as job security, social security, security against national disaster etc, at the state level security connotes the safeguard of the territorial integrity of the state against internal and external aggressors.

2.2.3. Kidnapping

According to Ogabido (2017) "kidnapping" means to abduct, capture, carry off, remove or steal away a person(s). Dode (2007) sees kidnapping as a process of forcefully abducting a person or group of persons perceived to be the reasons behind the injustice suffered by another group.

2.3.4. Economic Development

Economic development includes better education, improved health and nutrition, conservation of natural resources, a clear environment and a richer cultural life (Penn State University, 2016). Economic development generally refers to the sustained, concerted actions of policymakers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. It can also be referred to as the quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy, often involving a combination of both growth and improvements in human well-being (Sachs, 2015). Such actions can include multiple areas such as the development of human capital, critical infrastructure, regional competitiveness, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, health, safety, literacy, and other related initiatives (Stiglitz, 2019).

2.3 Empirical Review

Moshood, Dadiowe, & Seteolu (2018) studied on political ecology of oil and gas activities in the Nigerian aquatic ecosystem. A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques was employed. Content analysis was employed. The findings of the study revealed that the Amnesty Program achieved temporary peace and stability, with a notable reduction in militant activities, including oil theft and pipeline vandalism, which led to an increase in oil production from 700,000 to approximately 2 million barrels per day. Furthermore, the program facilitated skill acquisition and training programs for former militants and members of local communities, leading to increased human capital development in the region.

However, despite these successes, the program was plagued by corruption and mismanagement. Government officials, militant leaders, and amnesty coordinators exploited the program for personal gain, diverting funds intended for capacity building and reintegration, which hindered the program's full potential. The study recommended that transparency and accountability in the management of resources allocated for reintegration and development should be prioritized. The government must establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the utilization of funds and the effectiveness of training programs. Additionally, there is a need for more sustainable development initiatives in the Niger Delta, beyond the amnesty, focusing on long-term economic growth, infrastructure development, and environmental restoration to address the root causes of militancy, such as poverty and environmental degradation.

Ajibola (2015) examined the role of the Amnesty Program in fostering peace and development in post-conflict Niger Delta. The study utilized a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study revealed that, the Amnesty Program succeeded in reducing militant activities such as oil theft and pipeline vandalism, leading to a notable increase in oil production and stability in the region. Second, the program facilitated educational and vocational training for ex-militants, equipping them with skills in areas like welding, marine engineering, and ICT, contributing to human capital development. However, many ex-militants still face difficulties finding stable employment post-training, which limits the program's overall impact. The study recommended that it is crucial to create sustainable employment opportunities for ex-militants after their training, through government partnerships with private sector companies and support for entrepreneurial initiatives. A more inclusive approach should be adopted to ensure that all militants and youths in the region, including those not directly involved in the Amnesty Program, receive access to training and support.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Social contract theory, a cornerstone of political philosophy, suggests that the legitimacy of the state and the authority of government arise from an implicit agreement between individuals and society. This agreement, or "social contract," is formed to escape the insecurities and disorder of the state of nature, where individuals lived without laws or a structured government. The theory's assumptions revolve around the nature of human society, governance, and individual rights, and it has been developed by several key theorists over the centuries. Thomas Hobbes (1651) argued that in the state of nature, individuals acted out of self-interest, leading to constant conflict and insecurity. For Hobbes, life in this state was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." He believed that individuals entered into a social contract, surrendering all their rights to a powerful, absolute sovereign to ensure security and social order. In Hobbes' view, the state's authority was absolute, and rebellion was unjustified as it would lead to the return of chaos.

John Locke (1689), on the other hand, had a more optimistic view of the state of nature. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke posited that while individuals were free in the state of nature, they were still governed by natural law and could secure their rights to life, liberty, and property. Locke argued that the social contract required individuals to surrender only some of their freedoms in exchange for the protection of their natural rights by the government. He asserted that if the government failed to protect these rights, citizens had the right to overthrow it, thereby establishing the idea of limited government and popular sovereignty. In contrast, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), in *The Social Contract*, offered a more radical interpretation, proposing that the social contract should reflect

the general will of the people. Rousseau argued that humans were naturally peaceful in the state of nature, but the introduction of private property led to inequality and conflict. His ideal society was based on collective sovereignty, where individuals voluntarily submit to the general will, which reflects the common good. Rousseau's theory emphasized the democratic participation of all citizens in governance and the need for laws to align with the collective welfare, in contrast to both Hobbes' authoritarian view and Locke's limited government.

The central assumptions of social contract theory include the idea that in the state of nature, humans are free but face insecurity due to the absence of a governing authority. The social contract is established to address this insecurity, and individuals surrender certain freedoms to gain protection from the state, which is seen as legitimate because it arises from their consent. Another assumption is that the state must protect individual rights and promote the common good, and that individuals have an obligation to obey laws in exchange for the protection of their rights. Additionally, if the state fails to protect these rights or acts unjustly, citizens retain the right to revolt or change the government, as Locke emphasized. This theory also assumes that the government must be based on a rule of law, and it must be responsive to the will of the people, as emphasized by Rousseau's concept of the general will.

The Social Contract Theory is highly relevant to the study of the Amnesty Policy in Rivers State, Nigeria, as it provides a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between the state, its citizens, and the legitimacy of government interventions in conflict resolution. This theory, especially its assumptions about the state's role in protecting individual rights and promoting the common good, aligns closely with the objectives of the Amnesty Policy, which seeks to address militancy and socio-economic marginalization in the Niger Delta region. The policy's focus on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) can be seen as an attempt by the government to fulfill its social contract with the citizens of Rivers State, offering rehabilitation and opportunities for economic development in exchange for peace and security.

According to the Social Contract Theory, the legitimacy of a government is derived from the consent of its citizens. In the case of Rivers State, the Amnesty Policy represents the government's attempt to restore peace and address grievances of marginalization and underdevelopment. This aligns with the assumption that the state's primary responsibility is to protect the welfare of its citizens. By providing rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities to ex-militants, the policy reflects the reciprocal relationship emphasized by the theory, where individuals surrender certain freedoms (such as violence and militancy) in exchange for the state's protection and benefits.

Furthermore, the assumption of the Social Contract Theory that individuals retain the right to alter or rebel against an unjust government is mirrored in the rise of militancy in Rivers State, which stemmed from perceived governmental failure to address socio-economic issues. The Amnesty Policy can be seen as the government's attempt to correct this failure, offering a peaceful resolution to the unrest without requiring the dismantling of the government. It serves as a mechanism to address the root causes of conflict and reassert the authority of the state, which resonates with the theory's view of the state's role in ensuring security and social order.

The Social Contract Theory provides an essential framework for understanding the relationship between the state and its citizens, particularly in the context of the Amnesty Policy in Rivers State, Nigeria. However, it is not without its critiques, particularly when applied to complex social and political issues like the ones faced in the Niger Delta. One of the major criticisms of the theory is its over-reliance on the assumption that individuals act rationally and willingly enter into agreements with the state for mutual benefit (Hobbes, 1651; Rousseau, 1762). This assumption may not hold true in real-world scenarios, particularly in conflict-ridden regions like the Niger Delta, where social, economic, and political inequalities have led to disillusionment with the state. In Rivers State, many ex-militants who participated in the Amnesty Programme may not have done so purely out of rational choice, but rather out of necessity or under pressure, facing a combination of survival instincts and promises that may not have been fully realized. Thus, the assumption that individuals act voluntarily under the social contract fails to capture the complex motivations behind militancy and insurgency in the region.

Another criticism of the theory concerns its portrayal of the state of nature, which Hobbes (1651) describes as a violent and chaotic condition that individuals seek to escape by forming a social contract. Critics argue that this view is overly simplistic and does not apply to all societies (Gauthier, 1986). In the context of Rivers State, the unrest and militancy cannot solely be explained by the notion of an inherently violent state of nature. Many of the grievances driving militancy in the Niger Delta are rooted in long-standing issues such as environmental degradation, economic deprivation, and political exclusion, issues that the social contract theory does not adequately address. The theory overlooks the role of historical injustices and socio-economic inequality as underlying causes of unrest, which makes it less effective in explaining the motivations of militants in the region.

The theory also assumes a universal agreement among all citizens in society, but this assumption fails to account for marginalized voices, especially in the context of ethnic and regional inequalities in Nigeria. In Rivers State, the Amnesty Policy, while designed to resolve conflict, has been criticized for failing to address the needs of broader communities who did not benefit from it. As such, the social contract may reflect the interests of elites or those in power, further marginalizing vulnerable populations (Rawls, 1971). Many communities in the Niger Delta, who have not directly engaged in militant activities, feel excluded from the benefits of the Amnesty Programme, highlighting the limitations of the social contract in promoting inclusive development and justice for all members of society.

Moreover, Social Contract Theory assumes that the state is capable of enforcing the contract and ensuring the protection of citizens' rights (Locke, 1689). However, in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta, the state's failure to provide security, enforce laws, and deliver on promises has undermined the legitimacy of its interventions. The Amnesty Programme, although well-intentioned, has faced several challenges, including delays in stipends, poor implementation of training programs, and inadequate job opportunities for ex-militants (Oluwaseun, 2015). These shortcomings call into question whether the Nigerian state has truly fulfilled its side of the social contract, thus weakening the theory's applicability to this context.

The Social Contract Theory offers a significant lens through which to understand the Amnesty Policy in Rivers State, Nigeria, particularly in analyzing the relationship between the government and its citizens, as well as the legitimacy and effectiveness of state-led interventions. The theory highlights the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the state and its citizens, where the state is expected to ensure the welfare of its people in exchange for social order and cooperation. The Amnesty Programme, introduced by the Nigerian government, represents a type of social contract where militants, in return for renouncing violence, receive reintegration support such as vocational training and job opportunities. In this context, the government's offer of rehabilitation and economic opportunities for ex-militants aligns with the social contract's idea of providing citizens with the means to contribute to the collective well-being. For instance, ex-militants in Rivers State were trained in various vocational fields such as welding, marine engineering, and ICT, reflecting the government's role in fulfilling its obligation to offer development and opportunities in exchange for peace (Ebegbulem, 2012).

The theory also underscores the legitimacy of the state, which is derived from its ability to ensure security and address the grievances of its citizens. The Amnesty Policy in Rivers State sought to restore security by addressing the underlying causes of militancy, including unemployment and economic deprivation. Through disarmament and reintegration, the government aimed to foster stability, as evidenced by the reduction in violence, oil theft, and other forms of criminality in the region. This aligns with Rousseau's notion of the general will, where actions by the state reflect the collective interests of its citizens, and the government's success in reducing conflict and encouraging socio-economic growth is a sign of the state's legitimacy (Ikelegbe, 2005). The Amnesty Programme led to an increase in oil production and attracted investment, which facilitated broader economic development in Rivers State.

However, the Social Contract Theory also reveals some limitations when applied to the Amnesty Policy in Nigeria. One significant critique is that the benefits of the policy have not been equally distributed. While ex-militants received support in terms of training and stipends, many other communities in Rivers State felt excluded from these benefits, leading to feelings of disillusionment and discontent. This reflects a shortcoming of the social contract, where not all citizens, particularly those who did not engage in militancy, received the same opportunities. This discrepancy highlights the limitations of the social contract in addressing the grievances of all citizens, especially marginalized groups who have not directly participated in violent insurgency. In many instances, the Amnesty Policy disproportionately benefited ex-militants, while broader communities continued to suffer from the same socio-economic challenges, raising questions about the inclusiveness and fairness of the government's intervention (Agbu, 2011).

Moreover, Social Contract Theory assumes that the government is able to maintain peace and security consistently. The persistence of oil theft and militancy in some areas after the initial success of the Amnesty Programme suggests that the government's efforts have not fully addressed the root causes of unrest, such as systemic poverty, environmental degradation, and the lack of basic infrastructure. As such, the government's ability to provide long-term solutions is questionable, and the Amnesty Policy risks being seen as a short-term fix rather than a sustainable strategy for peace (Oluwaseun, 2015). This reflects a critique of the social contract's assumption that the government will always act in the best interests of its citizens and will effectively manage the challenges of governance, particularly in conflict-prone regions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on methodology to be used to this research work successfully. It explains the research design.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design based entirely on secondary data sources. The design enabled the researcher to analyze existing literature, official government reports, policy documents, academic journals, and media publications relevant to the amnesty policy in Rivers State. The choice of a qualitative approach was appropriate for interpreting the social, political, and economic implications of the amnesty program as a policy instrument.

3.3 Sources of Data

Secondary data for this research were gathered from a wide range of credible sources. These include: Government documents and white papers from the Federal Government of Nigeria, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, and the Amnesty Office, Reports from international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Amnesty International, and the World Bank, scholarly publications and peer-reviewed journal articles accessed through databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate., media and investigative reports from reputable Nigerian newspapers and magazines such as The Guardian, Vanguard, and Premium Times and olicy briefs and conference papers from think tanks and non-governmental organizations operating in the Niger Delta region.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Relevant literature was systematically reviewed and selected based on their direct relevance to the core themes of the study: national security, economic development, and the amnesty policy in Rivers State. Sources were chosen from the period between 2009 (when the Federal Government's amnesty program was introduced) and 2024 to ensure both historical and contemporary perspectives were captured.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Thematic content analysis was employed to analyze the collected secondary data. This analytical approach involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and trends that relate to the outcomes of the amnesty policy in Rivers State. Particular attention was given to the nature and structure of the amnesty policy, its contributions to national security and conflict resolution, as well as its impact on economic development, youth empowerment, and the growth of human capital. To ensure consistency and the reliability of interpretations, findings from multiple credible sources were cross-validated. The data were then carefully synthesized and organized in a way that effectively addressed the study's objectives and answered the research questions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Since the study relied on publicly available secondary data, there were no direct ethical concerns regarding human subjects. However, all sources were duly acknowledged to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents and analyzes the data obtained through secondary sources to evaluate the amnesty policy as a mechanism for national security and economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis is structured to align with the research objectives, focusing on the structure and implementation of the amnesty policy, its impact on peace and conflict resolution, and its contributions to economic development and youth empowerment. The use of thematic content analysis enables the identification of patterns, trends, and insights from existing literature, government reports, policy documents, and credible media publications. By synthesizing these data sources, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the amnesty policy has influenced both security and socio-economic outcomes in the region.

4.2 Result

4.2.1 The impact of the Amnesty Policy on security and peace in Rivers State

The introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Policy in 2009 marked a turning point in efforts to address the endemic insecurity and unrest in the Niger Delta region, particularly in Rivers State. Prior to the policy, Rivers State had witnessed intense militant activities, including armed confrontations with security forces, hostage-taking of oil workers, sabotage of pipelines, and widespread oil theft—all of which severely disrupted Nigeria's oil-dependent economy and posed threats to national stability (Onuoha, 2022; Olaniyan & Ojaborotu, 2023). The disarmament phase of the Amnesty Programme led to the surrender of over 26,000 ex-militants across the Niger Delta, many of whom were based in Rivers State (Amnesty Office Report, 2021). This massive disarmament significantly reduced violent attacks and created a relatively stable security environment. For example, the number of reported pipeline attacks in Rivers State declined sharply between 2010 and 2013, while the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) reported increased oil output following the program's rollout (Ejobowah, 2020).

Additionally, peace-building initiatives tied to the programme helped to de-escalate tensions between youth groups and government forces. Ex-agitators in Rivers communities such as Okrika, Bonny, and Ogoni were enrolled in non-violence training and conflict resolution workshops, which contributed to a reduction in communal clashes and cult-related violence (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). The demobilization and reintegration components of the Amnesty Policy also promoted peace by engaging former militants in vocational and educational programmes. Many ex-militants from Rivers State received training in welding, marine engineering, ICT, and agriculture, both in Nigeria and abroad. This shift from militancy to skill-building reduced the likelihood of relapse into violence, especially among youths who saw new avenues for livelihood and inclusion (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021).

However, while the policy contributed to short-term security gains, its long-term impact on peace remains mixed. Sporadic violence and criminality continue to surface, often linked to disillusioned ex-agitators or groups that felt excluded from the amnesty benefits. For instance, between 2017 and 2021, Rivers State recorded renewed cases of pipeline vandalism and cult-related killings in areas like Abua-Odual, Ahoada East, and parts of Port Harcourt, suggesting that some security threats persist despite the programme (Aghedo & Osumah, 2020). Moreover, the failure to fully address root causes of insecurity such as youth unemployment, poverty, and environmental degradation has limited the policy's peacebuilding outcomes. Many ex-militants have complained about delays in stipends and lack of job placements after training, leading to frustration and in some cases, a return to criminal activities (Omoju, 2019). Critically, while the amnesty policy succeeded in disarming violence, it did not create a sustainable structure for peace, especially in marginalized communities of Rivers State where grievances remain unresolved. The reliance on financial incentives without comprehensive institutional reforms also risks encouraging future cycles of militancy as a strategy for gaining state attention (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023).

4.2.2 The Contributions of the Policy to Economic Development and Job Creation

among Ex-Militants and the Wider Community

The Presidential Amnesty Policy, introduced in 2009, has significantly contributed to economic development and job creation in Rivers State, particularly among ex-militants and, to a lesser extent, the wider community. One of the key impacts of the policy has been the enhancement of human capital through structured skills acquisition and vocational training. Thousands of ex-militants from Rivers State were trained in various technical fields, including marine engineering, ICT, pipeline welding, automobile repair, and agriculture, both locally and internationally. These programs empowered many beneficiaries to either secure employment or establish small-scale enterprises, contributing to the local economy and reducing dependence on state stipends. For instance, several ex-agitators in Port Harcourt now operate successful businesses such as auto-mechanic workshops and computer training centers, employing other youths in the process (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023; Amnesty Office Report, 2021).

In addition, the reintegration component of the policy promoted entrepreneurship by providing some ex-militants with start-up kits and limited access to financial support. This encouraged the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in sectors like poultry farming, fishery, fashion design, and logistics, which helped create employment and stimulate local economic activity. A notable example can be found in Bonny and Kula communities, where beneficiaries have successfully established fish farms and poultry businesses that supply local markets (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021). Beyond direct job creation, the amnesty program also helped stabilize oil production in the Niger Delta by reducing militant attacks on oil facilities, thereby contributing to national economic recovery. Rivers State, being central to Nigeria's oil infrastructure, benefited from the restored investor confidence and increased oil output, which translated into higher federal revenue and state allocations (Ejobowah, 2020; NEITI, 2022).

Moreover, the cessation of violence allowed the government and private sector to resume or initiate infrastructure development projects in communities that had previously been inaccessible. Some vocational centers established for training ex-militants have continued to offer services to non-militant youths, indirectly expanding access to employment skills. However, the economic gains of the Amnesty Policy have not been uniformly experienced across all communities. Many ex-militants continue to face post-training unemployment due to inadequate follow-up, while non-beneficiary youths feel marginalized and excluded from the program's benefits. This has led to renewed frustrations and, in some instances, a return to criminal activities by disillusioned individuals (Onuoha, 2022; Omoju, 2019). Critics also argue that the policy has inadvertently created a culture of dependency and rewarded militancy while neglecting peaceful but economically disadvantaged youths (Olaniyan & Ojaborotu, 2023).

4.2.3 The Perceptions of Stakeholders on the effectiveness and sustainability of

the Amnesty Programme

The perceptions of various stakeholders regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of the Amnesty Programme in Rivers State are diverse and reflect a complex mixture of optimism, skepticism, and concern. Ex-militants, who are the primary beneficiaries, generally view the programme as a significant step toward personal rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Many of them acknowledge the benefits of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, particularly the access to vocational training and monthly stipends that have helped reduce poverty and unemployment among their ranks (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). However, some ex-agitators have expressed deep frustration over inconsistent payments, unfulfilled promises, and lack of post-training employment opportunities, which they argue undermine the long-term viability of the programme. In several cases, this discontent has led to renewed calls for protests or threats of returning to militancy (Onuoha, 2022).

Government officials and policymakers often highlight the programme's achievements in restoring relative peace and stabilizing oil production in the Niger Delta, particularly in key areas of Rivers State. From their perspective, the reduction in attacks on oil installations, kidnapping, and piracy in the region signifies a level of success that justifies the programme's substantial financial investment. Nevertheless, some officials admit that the over-centralization of the programme at the federal level and weak institutional frameworks have hindered effective monitoring, implementation, and inter-agency coordination (Ejobowah, 2020). They also raise concerns about the programme's financial burden on the federal government, especially in times of economic downturn, questioning whether it is sustainable in its current form without deeper reforms and strategic planning.

From the perspective of community leaders and local stakeholders, the Amnesty Programme is viewed with mixed feelings. On one hand, they acknowledge that it helped reduce violence and brought a level of social stability to once volatile areas. On the other hand, many community leaders criticize the programme for being exclusive and narrow in scope, noting that it largely benefits former militants while neglecting broader community development and youth empowerment initiatives. This has created feelings of injustice and marginalization among non-militant youths, some of whom now see militancy as a route to government attention and rewards

(Olaniyan & Ojakorotu, 2023). Community leaders also emphasize that without investments in infrastructure, education, environmental restoration, and economic diversification, the peace brought by the Amnesty Programme may be temporary and fragile.

4.2.4 The Challenges encountered in the implementation of the Amnesty Policy in

Rivers State

Despite its initial success in curbing militancy and promoting peace, the implementation of the Amnesty Policy in Rivers State has faced significant challenges and limitations that have affected its overall impact and sustainability. One of the most persistent issues has been the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of funds and the selection of beneficiaries. Allegations of favoritism, political interference, and corruption have marred the program's credibility, leading to widespread disillusionment among ex-militants and communities (Onuoha, 2022; Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). In many cases, those who genuinely embraced the disarmament process were sidelined, while individuals with political connections were prioritized for training and stipends. Additionally, poor coordination between federal agencies, state authorities, and local stakeholders resulted in duplication of efforts and delays in training, reintegration, and payment of allowances. The irregular payment of stipends and delays in post-training support left many beneficiaries stranded, frustrated, and at risk of returning to criminal activities.

Moreover, the short-term focus of the program meant that while some ex-agitators received training, they were not adequately equipped with long-term job placements or access to sustainable means of livelihood. Many of the vocational centers established for training were either under-resourced or failed to offer market-relevant skills, resulting in low employability rates among graduates of the program (Omoju, 2019). The wider community also expressed concern over being excluded from the benefits of the policy, which was largely focused on former militants rather than on broader youth empowerment. This exclusion created resentment and a perception of injustice, especially among peaceful but impoverished youths. In addition, the program's dependency model, where ex-militants rely heavily on monthly stipends, has been criticized for fostering entitlement rather than self-reliance.

Furthermore, insecurity and sporadic violence have continued in some areas of Rivers State, indicating that the policy may have only suppressed, rather than resolved, the root causes of conflict such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and political marginalization. Critics also argue that the failure to effectively monitor and evaluate the program's outcomes has hindered the identification of gaps and the improvement of its design (Aghedo & Osumah, 2020).

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Findings from objective one showed that the 2009 Presidential Amnesty Policy significantly mitigated insecurity in Rivers State by facilitating the disarmament of over 26,000 ex-militants, reducing attacks on oil infrastructure and boosting national oil production (Amnesty Office Report, 2021; Ejobowah, 2020). Through peace-building initiatives and vocational training in areas like welding, ICT, and agriculture, the policy fostered short-term stability and diverted many youths from violent paths (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021; Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). Communities such as Okrika and Ogoni witnessed notable declines in cult violence due to non-violence and conflict resolution programs. However, recent studies indicate that the long-term impact remains mixed. Despite early successes, Rivers State experienced a resurgence of criminality and pipeline vandalism from 2017 to 2021, often attributed to disillusioned ex-agitators and groups excluded from the program (Aghedo & Osumah, 2020; Onuoha, 2022). Olaniyan and Ojakorotu (2023) argue that while the amnesty policy disarmed violence, it failed to resolve underlying grievances such as unemployment, poverty, and environmental degradation. Omoju (2019) and Ibaba & Olumati (2023) further contend that the absence of institutional reforms and the overreliance on stipends without sustainable reintegration frameworks risk normalizing militancy as a political bargaining tool. Consequently, although the policy achieved notable short-term gains, its structural limitations hinder lasting peace and development in Rivers State.

Findings from objective two revealed that the 2009 Presidential Amnesty Policy significantly advanced economic development and job creation in Rivers State, particularly among ex-militants. A major success was the enhancement of human capital through vocational and technical training in fields like marine engineering, ICT, welding, and agriculture, enabling many ex-agitators to establish small businesses or secure employment (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023; Amnesty Office Report, 2021). These enterprises, especially in cities like Port Harcourt and communities like Bonny and Kula, have generated jobs and stimulated local economies (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2021). The program also supported entrepreneurship through the provision of start-up kits and limited financial assistance, fostering MSMEs in sectors such as poultry, fishery, and logistics. Additionally, reduced militant activity under the program helped stabilize oil production, bolstering investor confidence and increasing both national revenue and Rivers State's allocations (Ejobowah, 2020; NEITI, 2022). Infrastructure development resumed in previously volatile areas, and some vocational centers have continued to serve the broader youth population. However, the policy's benefits have been uneven. Many ex-militants

remain unemployed post-training due to poor follow-up, while non-militant youths feel marginalized, leading to renewed frustration and occasional criminal relapse (Onuoha, 2022; Omoju, 2019). Scholars like Olaniyan and Ojakorotu (2023) critique the policy for fostering dependency and inadvertently incentivizing militancy over peaceful engagement, thus highlighting its limited inclusivity and sustainability.

Findings from objective three showed that stakeholder perceptions of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in Rivers State reveal a nuanced mix of support and concern regarding its effectiveness and sustainability. Ex-militants largely view the programme as a positive intervention, particularly due to its disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) framework that provided vocational training and financial stipends, contributing to reduced poverty and social reintegration (Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). However, recurring frustrations over inconsistent payments, unmet post-training job expectations, and poor reintegration follow-up have led to renewed agitation and threats of militancy resurgence (Onuoha, 2022). Government officials emphasize the programme's contributions to regional stability and increased oil output, viewing reduced pipeline attacks and piracy as indicators of success. Nonetheless, they acknowledge structural weaknesses such as poor inter-agency coordination, over-centralization, and fiscal burdens that question the programme's long-term sustainability (Ejobowah, 2020). Community leaders and local stakeholders express mixed feelings, commending the temporary peace but criticizing the exclusion of non-militant youths and lack of broader development efforts. Scholars like Olaniyan and Ojakorotu (2023) and Idowu and Okonkwo (2021) argue that the PAP's selective approach has fostered perceptions of injustice and incentivized militancy as a pathway to state recognition. Similarly, Asuni (2021) and Eke (2022) stress that the absence of community-based development, environmental restoration, and youth empowerment undermines durable peace and inclusive growth. Without deeper structural reforms, the current model risks entrenching cycles of violence and dependency rather than delivering long-term stability.

Findings from objective four revealed that transparency and accountability remain major problem of the policy, with widespread allegations of corruption, favoritism, and political interference undermining the credibility of the programme (Onuoha, 2022; Ibaba & Olumati, 2023). Many genuine ex-militants were excluded from training and stipend benefits, while individuals with political ties were prioritized. This led to growing disenchantment and a weakening of trust in government interventions. Poor inter-agency coordination between federal, state, and community actors further caused delays in disbursement of benefits, training rollouts, and reintegration processes. Asuni (2021) and Eke (2022) highlight that the short-term orientation of the programme failed to provide sustainable post-training employment opportunities, with vocational centers often underfunded or offering skills misaligned with labor market demands. As a result, many trained ex-agitators remained unemployed, increasing the risk of a return to criminality. Non-militant youths in affected communities also expressed frustration over their exclusion, which exacerbated feelings of marginalization and social injustice. This exclusivity has, according to Idowu and Okonkwo (2021), encouraged a dangerous narrative that violence is rewarded while peaceful behavior is ignored.

Ede and Adisa (2023) stresses that the programme's heavy reliance on stipends fostered a culture of dependency, undermining self-reliance and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the persistent insecurity in areas like Ahoada and Port Harcourt underscores that the root causes of violence such as environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, and political marginalization remain unresolved. Olaniyan and Ojakorotu (2023) argue that the lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework has stifled adaptive learning, making it difficult to measure impact or redesign the programme to meet changing needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the amnesty policy as a mechanism for national security and economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria, using secondary data analyzed through thematic content analysis. The amnesty policy was designed as a conflict resolution strategy aimed at disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating former militants into society. Its structure was centered on providing conditional pardon, vocational training, and economic incentives to promote peace and reduce violence in the Niger Delta region. The policy contributed significantly to enhancing national security in Rivers State by reducing incidences of armed militancy, oil pipeline vandalism, and kidnappings. Reports from government agencies and independent researchers consistently show a marked decline in militant-related violence following the implementation of the amnesty programme.

The policy had a notable impact on economic development. The restoration of peace led to improved oil production levels and renewed investor confidence, which in turn boosted the state's revenue and Nigeria's overall economic performance. Additionally, many ex-militants benefited from vocational training and education, which enhanced their employability and facilitated human capital development. However, findings also highlight challenges such as poor policy coordination, limited post-training job opportunities, and perceptions of inequality in beneficiary selection, which have affected the sustainability and long-term success of the programme.

5.2. Conclusion

The Presidential Amnesty Policy has played a crucial role in curbing militancy and facilitating temporary peace in Rivers State. The study concludes that a more inclusive, transparent, and development-driven approach is necessary to secure lasting peace and socio-economic growth in Rivers State and the broader Niger Delta.

5.3. Recommendations

The Presidential Amnesty Office (PAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), should decentralize the administration of the programme, involving state governments, local councils, and community-based organizations (CBOs) for more inclusive and context-specific interventions. Transparency and accountability can be improved through regular audits and public disclosures, with the National Assembly Committees on Niger Delta and anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC playing a critical role in investigating allegations of corruption and favoritism. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) should provide structured support, including microcredit, job placements, and mentorship programmes for ex-militants transitioning to civilian life.

Moreover, the scope of the programme should be expanded to include peaceful but disadvantaged youths, with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and State Ministries of Youth and Empowerment leading efforts to mitigate resentment and reduce the perception that militancy is rewarded over law-abiding behavior. The Ministry of Environment and NDDC should prioritize the restoration of environmental damage caused by oil exploration and production, while also investing in infrastructure development such as roads, healthcare, and schools in affected communities. Additionally, the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) and the National Planning Commission should work together to design a sustainability framework with regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms to track programme outcomes and adapt policies accordingly. Finally, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and civil society organizations (CSOs) should increase efforts in community sensitization, peace education, and intergroup dialogue to foster reconciliation, reduce violence, and promote national integration.

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