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## Perception of the Amnesty Programme and the Well Being of Ex-Militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This paper examined perception of the amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants in brass local government area of Bayelsa State. The study adopted the descriptive research design, population of study was 185,049, out of which a sample size of 400 was obtained gotten using Taro Yamane. A self-designed 18 items questionnaire was used in collecting data from the respondents. The retrieved copies of the questionnaire were collated, coded and analyzed using frequency and percentage to answer the research questions while chi-square is used to test the hypothesis. The findings revealed that the amnesty is real in brass local government area of Bayelsa State, amnesty programme has a significant influence on the well-being of ex-militants as the p-value = 0.013 is lesser than the alpha level = 0.05 with a X<sup>2</sup>-value of 114.9 and df = 21 as there is a perceived association between amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants. The programme has brought peace, reduce youths' restiveness, and development in the Niger Delta.*

**Keywords:** *Amnesty, Programme, Well-Being, Ex-Militants, Perception.*



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Before Nigeria gained its independence, commercial quantities of crude oil were found in the Niger Delta at Otagbagi, a location not far from Oloibiri in what is now Bayelsa State, the Niger Delta has remained undeveloped and has suffered from both environmental and human deterioration. But despite the implementation of the amnesty programme, complaints are still present. This is due to the widespread belief that the amnesty program of the federal government has mainly benefited the leaders of the ex-militants and ex-agitators at the expense of law-abiding individuals. Additionally, the majority of those who benefited from the amnesty scheme were those with very powerful political negotiating positions (Vidal, 2011). The inhabitants of the Niger Delta have expressed their dysphonia and dissatisfaction with their circumstances via a variety of peaceful methods, such as petitions, litigation, and appeals. Despite the fact that the Nigerian government is completely negligent, insensitivity has not sufficiently demonstrated any sympathy for this predicament on the ground. The Niger Delta youths turned to violent conflict actions to air their frustrations because they were so enraged by their circumstances and the federal government's lack of consideration for their problems. This is what the area is currently known for as militancy (Vanguard, 2012). The violent conflict's ongoing dilemma has been greatly exacerbated by the disparate positioning conceptions of the federal government and the host communities in the Niger Delta. The government of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua implemented the amnesty program to address this militancy in the area and to maintain peace and security (Lawal, 2017).

## **2. RELATED WORKS**

According to Newsom (2011), it will be acceptable to acknowledge the federal government's non-confrontational response to the deadly conflict in the Niger Delta. Numerous committees and commissions have been established to investigate the issue; the commissions were established to promote regional development while the committees were responsible with offering recommendations to the government. Aside from the Willink Commission Report prior to Nigeria's independence, the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) was established in 1961 as the first significant effort to address the issues facing the oil-producing communities (Dauchy, 2004). Following in the footsteps of its successor, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Fund Committee was founded in 1986 with the primary goal of allocating the 1.5% fund from Allocation of Revenue intended for the development of the area. The committee attempted to end it early, but the Supreme Court rejected that (Oyadongha, 2011). According to The Guardian (2011), General Ibrahim Babangida's Decree No. 23, establishing the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission, was published on July 19, 1992 (OMPADEC) while the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established by the National Assembly in compliance with sections 58(a) and 5 of the 1999 constitution, notwithstanding President Olusegun Obasanjo's refusal to sign the law (Chiedozie, 2008). When special people and organizations were appointed to oversee and guide the commission's operations, it appeared that the government had a determined desire to bring about growth (Vidal, 2011). Compared to the enormous funds allotted



to it for the region's development, the NDDC has very little or nothing to answer for since its formation on June 5, 2000 (Kivengere, 2015). In addition to these commissions, a plethora of committees have been formed to offer suggestions on how to resolve the Niger Delta conflict through development (Ajayi, 2002). Among other reports pertaining to the Niger Delta, particularly those of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, these committees include the Belgore Report from 1992, the Don Etiebet Report from 1994, the Popoola Report from 1998, the Ogomudia Report from 2001, and the Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta from November 2008 (Gadzama, 2018). According to Okeke (2007), the Niger Delta Ministry was established in 2008 to collaborate with the NDDC in promoting development in the Niger Delta region while Ubhenin (2006) opined that the Niger Delta has remained underdeveloped and the conflict has lingered to the point of low intensity war despite all of these commissions and committees. The government has never made a concerted effort to engage the people of the Niger Delta in genuine negotiation in order to learn more about their true situation; instead, it has always and only highlighted the difficulties they face (Khor, 2010). According to Jaspars & Callaghan (2010), these commissions' original duties have been obscured and dictated by corruption, a lack of political will, and a political conspiracy or scheme between the federal government and oil state governments. Because of these reasons, the public firmly believed that the federal government's reactions to the oil protests had only been intended to allay their guilt rather than to fulfil their needs (Imobighe, 2003). According to Dudouet (2006), the federal government doesn't actually need a commission or committee to force the oil firms to take Niger Delta natives into account when creating job opportunities for them and other Americans. For instance, Lagos was significantly developed by the federal government without the creation of a committee or commission. Duggan (2009) was of the view that without creating a commission, the federal government has spent billions of Naira managing the ocean surge at Victoria Island, Lagos. Perhaps what is required is political authority independent of any power struggles or intrigues between the central government and the governments of the oil-producing states. But one of the panels, the Barr. Ledum Mitee-led Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, delivered its findings and recommendations to the federal government in November 2008 (Cope, 2019). The recommendation for an amnesty programme, which the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua delayed almost seven months to proclaim, is one of the highlights (Lawal, 2017). For militants in the Niger Delta who laid down their guns, unconditionally renounced their membership in militancy, and signed a commitment to this cause, the amnesty establishment offered a 60-day unconditional amnesty period (Omeje, 2007). Another event was the government's pledge to design a program to aid in the militants' demobilization, reintegration, and provision of aid for rehabilitation. These were the main prerequisites for addressing the Niger Delta's larger development concerns. The current strategy for establishing peace in the Niger Delta is through an amnesty (Forlarin, 2007).

### Aim and Objectives

The aim of this work is to examine the perception of amnesty programmes and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. This aim is supported by the following objectives;

1. Assess the perception of amnesty programme among households in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
2. Examine the extent to which the amnesty programme contributes to the well-being of ex-militants.
3. Examine the association between perception of amnesty and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research design, population of study was 185,049, out of which a sample size of 400 was obtained gotten using Taro Yamane. A self-designed 18 items questionnaire was used in collecting data from the respondents. The retrieved copies of the questionnaire were collated, coded and analyzed using frequency and percentage to answer the research questions while chi-square is used to test the hypothesis.

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Research Question 1

What is the perception of amnesty programme among households in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 4.1: Perception of amnesty programme among household

S/N	Perception of Amnesty Programme	SA	A	D	SD
1	The amnesty programme is real and not fake as seen in some quarters	32 (13.91)	133 (57.82)	40 (17.39)	25 (10.86)
2	The amnesty programme is in line with the economic and political will of the Niger Delta	42 (18.26)	136 (59.13)	42 (18.26)	11 (4.78)
3	Amnesty programme brings peace in the region	42 (18.26)	180 (78.26)	3 (1.30)	5 (2.17)
4	Amnesty programme addresses the environmental issues challenging the Niger Delta	46 (20.0)	138 (60.0)	35 (15.21)	11 (4.78)
5	Amnesty programme was not politically motivated in order to buy support from the people	36 (15.65)	124 (53.91)	30 (13.04)	40 (17.39)
6	Amnesty programme is an empowerment for the youths to reduce youths restiveness	42 (18.26)	136 (59.13)	42 (18.26)	11 (4.78)



7	Amnesty programme an opportunity to resources equitably in the country	28 (12.17)	101 (43.91)	61 (26.52)	40 (17.39)
8	Amnesty Programme is in line with the culture and tradition of the people	32 (13.91)	110 (47.86)	45 (19.69)	43 (18.69)
9	Amnesty programme is not a means of scoring cheap political score	15 (6.52)	65 (28.26)	110 (47.82)	40 (17.39)
10	It addresses social injustice in the area	54 (23.47)	98 (42.60)	40 (17.39)	38 (16.52)

Source: Researcher’s field work 2019

From table 4.1, it shows that 71.73% of the people agreed that amnesty programme is real and not seen as fake in some quarters, 77.39% conceded that amnesty programme is in line with the economic and political will of the Niger Delta, 96.52% indicated that amnesty programme has brought relative peace in the area, 80.0% confirmed that the programme has addressed the environmental issues challenging of the Niger Delta region, 69.56% indicated the amnesty programme was not politically motivated in order to buy support from the people, 77.39% of the people agreed amnesty programme is an empowerment for the youths to reduce youths restiveness, 56.08% of the people are in line that amnesty programme is an opportunity distribute resources equitably, 61.77 % agreed that the amnesty programme is in line with the culture and tradition of the people, 65.21% disagreed that amnesty programme is not a means of scoring cheap political score while 66.07% agreed that amnesty programme will address social injustice in the area.

Research Question 2:

To examine the extent to which the amnesty programme in relation to the contribution to the well-being of ex-militant.?

Table 4.2: Extent of contribution of amnesty programme to the well-being of ex-militants

S/N	The well-being of ex-militants	SA	A	D	SD
1	They are given contracts of pipe line surveillance	32 (13.91)	133 (57.82)	40 (17.39)	25 (10.86)
2	They are properly trained in skill acquisitions some event sent to abroad	98 (42.60)	67 (29.13)	60 (26.08)	5 (2.17)
3	After the training, they are given monthly stipend and allowances that is event higher than civil servants	99 (43.04)	55 (23.91)	56 (24.34)	20 (8.69)
4	They are living well and are taking good care of their family members with the resources from the Federal Government	46 (20.0)	138 (60.0)	35 (15.21)	11 (4.78)
5	There are employment opportunities for them	134	74	12	10





		(58.26)	(32.17)	(5.21)	(4.34)
6	The ex-militant are reintegrated with their love ones and are doing well	110 (47.82)	26 (11.30)	60 (26.08)	34 (14.78)
7	The federal government have not neglected the programme	124 (53.91)	23 (10.0)	34 (14.78)	49 (21.30)
8	The ex-militants are doing well even more than some civil servants	32 (13.91)	110 (47.86)	45 (19.69)	43 (18.69)

Source: Researcher’s field work 2019

From table 4.2: The result shows that 71.73% of the people agreed that ex-militants are given contracts in pipeline surveillance, 71.73% confirmed that the ex-militants are properly trained in skill acquisition, 66.95% of the people are of the opinion that ex-militants are receiving monthly allowances that is even higher than civil servants, 80.0% submit that the ex-militants are living well and are caring good care of their family members with the resources from the Federal Government, 90.43% of the people are of the opinion that there is employment opportunities for the ex-militants, 59.12% agreed that the ex-militants are reintegrated with their love ones, 63.91% of the people are in total submission that the Federal Government has not neglected the programme while 61.77% agreed that the ex-militants are doing well even more than civil servants.

Research Question 3:

What is the association between perception of amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

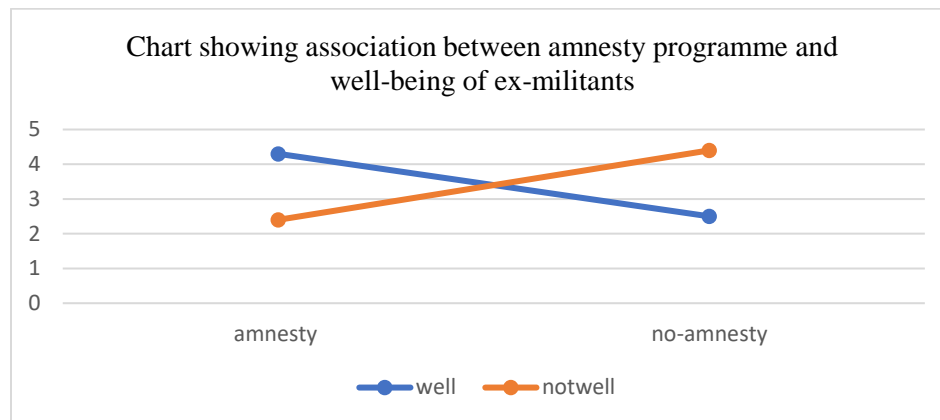
Hypothesis: There is no significant associated between Amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State

Table 4.3: Chi-squared test showing perceived association between amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants

Test variables	df	X <sup>2</sup> -value	P-value	Decision
Amnesty programme	21	114.9	0.013	Ho Rejected
well-being of ex-militants				

\*p<0.05 Significant

The table above shows the significant associated between Amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The finding of the study showed that amnesty programme has a significant influence on the well-being of ex-militants as the p-value = 0.013 is lesser than the alpha level = 0.05 with a X<sup>2</sup>-value of 114.9 and df = 21. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant associated between Amnesty programme and the well-being of ex-militants in Brass Local Government Area is rejected as the result shows a significant association. The nature of the association is depicted in the graph below:



The research question one seeks to the perception of amnesty programme among households in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, the finding shows that the amnesty programme is real and not fake as seen in some quarters, this agreed with the findings of UNEP (2011) confirming that the amnesty programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria is real also Hewitt et al. (2007) adding that the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta is real but the leadership and the administration is trying to show insincerity.

The amnesty programme is in line with the economic and political will of the Niger Delta according to the findings, this is in line with Adeleye et al. (2009), which affirms that the wish of the Niger Delta as an economic boom of the nation is to raise the economy of the area thereby improving the standard of living through ameliorating the suffering of the people in the area and that was the more reason while the Niger Delta Ministry and the Niger Delta Development Commission were created to oversee the affairs of the region.

The amnesty programme brings peace in the region, Facah et al. (2009) are of the opinion that since the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry and the Niger Delta Development Commission insurgency, militancy, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping and other social vices had reduced to its barest minimum and the people are enjoying relative peace in the region but Chizea & Iyare (2006) opposed this finding saying in spite of the introduction of the amnesty programme oil theft, kidnapping, militancy, vandalism and other social crimes are still on the increase in the region because the amnesty programme is being partial that is favouritism.

The amnesty programme addresses the environmental issues challenging the Niger Delta region, this finding is opposed by the UNEP (2011) and Ebiri et al. (2009) who affirmed that the environmental issues such as oil pollution, ecosystem destruction, wildlife extinction, land degradation etc challenging the area are not addressed through the creation of the amnesty programme instead the programme is used to settle the ex-militants thereby neglecting the environmental challenges in the Niger Delta.

The amnesty programme was not politically motivated in order to buy support from the people, this finding is similar to that of Lawal (2017) who supported that amnesty programme was not created for political reasons but was the growth and development of the Niger Delta.



Amnesty programme is an empowerment for the youths to reduce youths' restiveness, this agreed with the findings of Hinshaw (2012) & Varma (1975) who believed that the amnesty programme was created for the purpose of reducing youths' restiveness in the Niger Delta and this is a clear evidence of the relative peace been enjoyed in the region today.

Amnesty programme an opportunity to evenly distribute resources in the country is similar to the findings of Oyadongha (2011) & Nichols (2003) who agreed that the amnesty programme is a window opportunity to share the nation resources equally, they also added that the allocation of the programme is mismanaged and there is nothing to show that the resources are distributed evenly in the country.

The amnesty Programme is in line with the culture and tradition of the people, this is in consonant with the findings of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (2000); Khor (2010) & Newsom (2011) who uphold the fact that amnesty programme is in accordance with the culture and tradition of the people owing to the fact "the more you give the more you receive".

The amnesty programme addresses the social injustice in the area, this is similar to the findings of House (2008); O. Ubhenin (2006) & Ajayi (2002) who are of the opinion that the programme is aimed at solving the problem of social injustice meted by the Federal Government against the people of the area owing to the fact that the people of the area are receiving less that they are producing to the government and the amnesty programme is not a means of scoring cheap political score, this finding was opposed by Onyekakeyah (2010) & Osaghae et al. (2011) saying it a means of scoring cheap political scores from the Niger Delta.

From the Interview

Two school of thoughts were present. One school of thought from Ibeletie Ama Community agreed that amnesty programme, is a good and noble project was being a sincere response by the Federal Government to curb youth restiveness in the whole region not only in Brass Local Government Area. The government did well to achieve the aim for which it was made. But doing well was not enough as it did not curb militancy and restiveness to a significant level. Undoubtedly, many militants benefitted, many were trained and were lucky to get jobs after that but many were not that lucky. Expectedly, these unlucky ones roamed the street and eventually went back to militancy. Conversely, the second school of school of thought from Sangakubu Community condemned the amnesty programme in its entirety. They see it as a political programme used to siphon money from the government. In their own opinion if people who profited from the amnesty programme had been empowered after the training or employed that would have helped in curbing the menace, this view was that nothing works in Nigeria.

In their own view, the amnesty programme as a good and noble project that was intended to curb militancy and restiveness but could not reduce it to the barest minimum. However, the programme did not work a complete magic as it was riddled by nepotism and corruption and unfortunately too, the government could not employ all who were trained in and outside Nigeria. The effect of this was that many unemployed youths had to go back to their old way of life.

The research question two seeks to the extent to which the amnesty programme in relation to the contribution to the well-being of ex-militant, the finding revealed that ex-militants are given contracts of pipe line surveillance, this confirms the findings of Isine (2008) & Forlarin (2007) that





the ex-militants are now contractors to the Federal Government in securing pipe lines conveying petroleum and gas and these contracts may run into millions or billions of naira making the ex-militants rich. Ex-militants are properly trained in skill acquisitions some even sent to abroad for training, this is similar to the finding of Ikelegbe (2010) who said that the Federal Government has centres in the Niger Delta States for training the ex-militants in various skills acquisition, equipping them with requisite skills for productive venture and peace building through peaceful co-existence.

After the training, they are receiving monthly stipend and allowances that is even higher than civil servants, this supports the idea of Khor (2010) who explains that the ex-militants are receiving higher monthly allocation when compared to civil servants in state secretariat which he added the non-violence youths who are law abiding citizens are left with nothing but in the streets nearly becoming boys to the ex-militants. The ex-militants are living well and are taking good care of their family members with the resources from the Federal Government, this is a true fact because their monthly allowances and proceeds from contracts are enough to care good care of their family members and also there are lots of employment opportunities for them while the educated and well behaved have less opportunity of employment as supported by Ibaba (2009).

The ex-militants are reintegrated with their loved ones and are doing well due to the training, rehabilitation empowerment they had passed through. This contradicts the findings of Horowitz (2000) & Gurr (2015) who are of the opinion that the ex-militants are still in the creeks perpetrating their devilish acts causing more harms to the society.

The federal government has not neglected the programme in terms of disarming, demobilizing and reintegration and providing the enabling environment for dialogue which is supported by Akasike (2010). Ajaero and Azubike (2011) said that the amnesty programme has changed the life of the ex-militants making them responsible to themselves, to their families and to the society at large adding that though nepotism, corruption and insincerity are the major challenges bedeviling the programme. In my view, the ex-militants are doing well in terms of well-being because the programme is comprehensive taking care of the cognitive, effective and psychomotor with the financial empowerment. For instance, the likes of Ateke Tom, Asari Dokobo, Tom Polo, Fara but to mention a few are big guys as a result of the amnesty programme. This means that there is a relationship between the amnesty programme and the well-being of the ex-militants even though not all of them are opportune to attain that level.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The findings revealed by the researcher show that the amnesty programme has been a very beneficial to the beneficiaries of the programme. This arises from the idea that there is a reduction in violence and other criminal proceedings that were rampant in the Niger Delta region. Despite the amnesty programme being a good conflict resolution tool in the region, it has not totally removed youth's restiveness due to corruption, nepotism and favouritism.



## **Recommendations**

1. Government should make sure that the amnesty programme is sustainable till the issues bedevilling the region is completely resolved.
2. All entitlements, allowances and monthly stipends due to the beneficiaries should always be paid on time to avoid recurrent protest and violence of the ex-agitators since the government had given them hope of taking good care of their welfare or well-being.
3. The ex-militants should be given a place as stakeholders in the oil and gas sector especially when critical decisions are taken so as to give a sense of belongings.
4. All issues of payment should be done through the ex-militants account (Bank Verification Number) and not through individual or leader of any group to avoid further clashes.

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