Effects of Militancy Activities on Secondary School Students' Dropout in the Niger Delta Region

Effects of Militancy Activities on Secondary School Students' Dropout in the Niger Delta Region.

Dr. Igwela, J. N., CLN

University Librarian

Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt.

igwelaj@gmail.com

Dr. Amie-Ogan, O. T.

Department of Educational Management,

Faculty of Education.

Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt.

tekena.amieogan@ust.edu.ng

Dr. Osuji, C. U.

Department of Educational Management,

Faculty of Education.

Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt.

catherine.osuji@ust.edu.ng

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how the militancy activities (attacks, hostility, unfairness and victimization) in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria influenced secondary school students' dropout (SSSD) and the implications for educational development.

Methodology: The research design adopted was descriptive survey design using the cross-sectional data from 904 students of 30 public secondary schools located in the communities with high militancy activities in three of the nine Niger Delta states. The direct influence of the outcomes of militancy activities on SSSD were tested using hierarchical regression.

Results: The results show that the outcomes of militancy activities were associated positively with SSSD, indicating that the outcomes of the militancy activities significantly influence SSSD in the study population. The present study contributes to knowledge and extends research on the effects of the militancy activities on secondary school students' dropout and enrolment in school programmes.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The findings have practical and policy implications for educational development in the Niger Delta region. Based on the findings, the

study recommended among others that government should create employment opportunities for the youths.

Introduction

Militancy activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria include terrorism, oil pipe vandalization, bombing oil companies, destruction of private and public infrastructure, mass killing of citizens, kidnappings and other crimes against humanity (Agbiboa, 2013). These activities negatively affect the government of Nigeria's oil mining and exploration businesses, foreign investors and citizens of other countries working in the oil and gas sector in the Niger Delta region. In line with Imhonopi and Urim (2016, p. 20), activities of the militants include "destruction of lives, public infrastructure, private and entrepreneurial investments, the climate of fear, panic and confusion and a heated and ungovernable polity", which has continued to make the region unsuitable for foreign investments. The outcomes of these activities have been experienced in many forms such as attacks, hostility, unfairness and victimizations (Abang, 2014; Ajibola, 2015; Okonofua, 2013). It is important to acknowledge that the low confidence of foreign investors in the Niger Delta region given the activities of the militants has led to the failure foreign investments low development of the region (e.g., Abang, 2014; Aleyomi & Nwagwu, 2020). The Niger Delta region comprises nine states namely, Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Rivers and Ondo. These states cover about 7,000 sq. km, hold Nigeria's oil and gas resources and presently the economic base of Nigeria (oil and gas) (Ajibola, 2015; Iwuoha, 2012).

Previous studies have investigated the causes of the militancy activities in the Niger Delta region and have reported several factors including social conditions, poor development and bad governance, struggle for natural resources, poor economy, poverty, income inequality and political instability (e.g., Agbiboa, 2014; Feldman, 2009; Okonofua, 2013). Also, previous studies have explained that militancy activities may be perceived in forms of attacks, hostility, unfairness, and victimization (Abang, 2014; Agbiboa, 2014; Iwuoha, 2012). Despite previous studies, little is known about how these activities of the militants influenced the secondary school students' dropout (SSSD) in the region and the implications for educational development. In other words, the link between the militancy activities and SSSD has received scant attention in the educational development literature. The paucity of empirical findings on how the militancy activities might have influenced SSSD indicates a significant empirical gap that should be explored systematically. The present study, therefore, fills this gap by exploring whether the militancy activities influence SSSD.

As Lleras (2008) have explained, a hostile school climate may affect students' efforts and attendance to school. This also means that students in schools located in hostile communities may be afraid to attend a school or have poorer attitudes toward school in general.

Also, Lleras (2008) reported that students who attend schools in hostile school climate may adopt strategies for protecting themselves from harm or harassment, which include dropping out of school activities, not participating in classes which may affect the overall student enrolment. Relating to the present study, students who may have witnessed the militancy activities around their school environment or communities may feel unsafe to participate in school activities, and have difficulty adjusting emotionally which may also influence their dropout in school activities. Also, previous studies have found that students who are victimized are at the higher risk of suffering emotional, behavioural and social difficulties such as anxiety, depression, low-self-esteem and drop out of school activities (Juvonen et al., 2000; Olweus, 1994; West & Salmon, 2000).

On the other hand, Ripski and Gregory (2009) reported that student perceived hostility, perceived unfairness and perceived victimization associated with adolescent behaviours. Overall, Lleras (2008), and Ripski and Gregory (2009) explained that students perceived hostility, unfairness and victimization may likely cause low self-esteem, loss of interests in school activities, low participation in school activities or total dropout. Also, such student perceived behaviours (hostility, unfairness and victimization) associate with low academic achievement and success (Gronna & Chin-Chance, 1999; Ripski and Gregory, 2009). Drawing on these previous findings, the present study explores how the militancy activities, as well as student perceived hostility, student perceived unfairness and student perceived victimization associate with SSSD as identified in the previous studies (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016; Lleras, 2008; Ripski & Gregory, 2009). Using this framework, the present study examines the association between the militancy activities, student perceived hostility, student perceived unfairness, student perceived victimization and SSSD. Using cross-sectional data from secondary school students in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, we test a set of hypotheses in the present study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is hinged on the conflict theory. Conflict theory was propounded in the 19th Century by Karl Marx. It states that tension and conflicts arise when resources, status and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and then conflicts become the engine for social change (Crossman, 2019). The theory explicated rivalry competition for scarce and limited resources which the rich (bourgeoisie) in society tend to en-masse for their households exempting the poor (proletariat). Marx was of the opinion that where the socio-economic conditions worsen for the proletariat, it arouses a class consciousness which unravels their level of exploitation by the bourgeoisie (capital class).The trend ensues a revolution to bring to an equilibrium the conflict.

The conflict theory is apt for use in this study because Nigeria is a rich country endowed with diversified natural resources such as oil and gas; and vast land for agricultural cultivation and infrastructural development (Amie-Ogan, 2017). Conversely due to gross class distinction

which dichotomized the rich living in affluence and opulence against the optimistic young graduates without jobs in abysmal poverty and squalor led the country into a siege of upheavals underpinned by poor governance, kidnapping, terrorism, oil bunkering, illegal mining of solid minerals, vandalisation of oil pipelines and electric cables, biodegradation of the ecosystem, child trafficking and other corrupt practices that are inimical to the growth and stability of the nation (Ibid, 2017). It is indeed pathetic that some of these afore listed vices are perceived to be traceable to militancy in Nigeria which has negatively impacted on secondary level schooling in most communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Secondary School Student Dropout (SSSD) in Niger Delta Region

Education is a basic right of every child and its availability in emergencies can provide life-saving information, protect children from trafficking, recruitment by armed groups, and psychosocial trauma. In the long term, it can promote peace and post-conflict reconstruction and help adolescents develop the skills and qualifications that can help equip them to live meaningful lives after the conflict. Principally, education functions as a means of socialization and social control. It helps to encourage the young to develop into "good citizens" and prepares people for employment and productive contributions to society (Ololube, Onyekwerre, Kpolovie and Agabi, 2012). It is also a way of reducing social inequality or a way of reproducing social inequalities. Education, in its broadest sense, is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual (for example, an infant is educated by its environment through interaction with its environment. It is the entire range of experiences in life through which an individual learns something new. In a technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next through institutions and instruction (Ololube et al., 2012). Given the centrality of education across the globe, education has become a powerful instrument of social progress without which no individual can attain professional development (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007).

The Secondary school system, which is also known as post-primary education is divided into two; the junior secondary school (JSS) one to three and the senior secondary school (SSS) from class four to six in the Nigerian education system. Overall, these education levels occupy critical positions in Nigeria's education system, because of its dual role in preparing students for tertiary education and the labour market. In the Niger Delta regions, secondary school education has been critical for the human capital development despite the activities of militants (Pepple & Ogologo, 2017), and the government has made adequate efforts to ensure quality and access to secondary school education in the region. It is, therefore, imperative to understand whether the militancy activities (e.g., the unending conflicts in the oil-producing regions of Nigeria), which have been well established in the literature influence SSSD.

Militancy Activities and Causes

Before explaining the militancy activities in the Niger Delta region, it is important to review the literature around some of the perceived causes of militancy activities in the region to help in making policies that may contribute to dealing with some contextual factors that cause some of the activities as outlined above:

a. *Social Conditions:* This is a potential factor that contributes to militancy activities (e.g., Feldman, 2009). It is important to point out that poor social condition and deprivation of basic social amenities can be one of the major contributing factors. This is because, when the society is not conducive for young people to earn livelihoods to pay their bills and take care of their health and that of their loved one, they tend to revolt against the society when they can no longer take the suppression and sufferings. This may lead to school dropout or low enrolment in schools. For example, Khan and Azam (2008) found that individuals who are unable to receive a quality education and a high standard of living were more likely to be found in terrorism and militancy groups. Feldman (2009) and Khan and Azam (2008) strongly uphold that social conditions were a likely catalyst for people involved in the militancy group.

b. *Struggle for Natural Resources:* The control of natural resources such as oil and gas has also been discussed as another cause of militancy in the Niger Delta region where the bulk of the country's oil and gas resources is found. However, the desire of indigenes of this region to control these resources may well be the major reason for militant terrorism. Bagaji et al. (2011) argued that the natural resources found in the Niger Delta region may have a direct connection to the conflicts in the region. It is also within this premise, as Jegede and Joshua (2013) concluded, that militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is caused by both environmental and economic factors. In their opinion, these factors can lead to deprivation experienced by inhabitants of this region due to pollution, which negatively impacts fishing, the major occupation of people in the Niger Delta region, and also land degradation, which affects their ability to farm. Jegede and Joshua (2013) further argued that the inability to carry out their occupations will lead to poverty and anger and, eventually, drive indigenes to carry out acts of militant terrorism against the Nigerian state as the responsible party for their plight.

c. *Poor Economy:* Gries et al. (2011) found that the occurrence of violence can be linked to relative deprivation, which is related to a discrepancy in the distributive process in the economy as it relates to individual expectation versus actual receipt. When people perceive that their economy is poor, they may be frustrated. Such frustration may lead to people joining militancy groups and recruit other like-minds to achieve their criminal aims of working against the government.

d. *Poverty:* Another proven cause of militancy is poverty. According to Godovicova (2012), several research studies regarding poverty as a potential determinant of the root cause of terrorism and militancy observed that poverty features among factors that threaten global

security. Poor people often wish to cut their own share of the nation's cake, thereby creating criminal groups to engage in militancy activities. Also, Freytag et al. (2011) noted that poverty can be linked to militancy, which may also result in students' dropout of schools.

e. *Income Inequality:* Income inequality has also been mentioned as a root cause of militancy. Evidence in the literature has shown a clear link between income inequality and militancy (e.g., Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011). There are chances that as militancy activities grow stronger as the level of income inequality increases. Supporting this assertion on income inequality as a motivating factor for militancy, Ross (1993) stated that inequality, or high bias in economic levels, creates an enabling environment and attraction for individuals to join and participate in criminal acts such as terrorism and militancy. Economically poor regions or countries tend to experience more violence due to the easy recruitment of supporters in such a situation.

f. *Political Instability:* Political instability can contribute to militancy activities in that when the government is unstable leading to frequent changes and weak policies, people who feel aggrieved can create violent groups and promote such groups. According to Krieger and Meierrieks (2011), the vacuum created as a result of political change can become an enabling environment for terrorist groups to promote their agenda because they would experience little or no challenge due to the government's weakness at that point. Although political instability may not be the case in the Niger Delta region, in that Nigeria has had a stable government since the return of democracy. Despite the understanding of the causes of militancy in the Niger Delta region as explained in the extant literature, it is imperative to learn how the militancy activities have affected secondary school student dropout from the secondary school education in the region.

The Niger Delta militants have been described as "ethnic militias, criminals, terrorists, rebels, insurgents, revolutionaries and political agitators" who have carried out a series of attacks that have disrupted educational activities in the regions (Ajayi & Adesote, 2013, p. 508). The militant attacks directly or indirectly affect students, teachers, academics, and education personnel including support staff (e.g., transport drivers, caretakers, night-watchmen), education officials, trade unionists, and aid workers (Ejibunu, 2007). The attacks include killing, abduction, forceful military services, kidnapping, torture, and sexual violence that may have negative effects on educational development in the region. According to Pepple and Ogologo (2017, p. 68), the militant attacks include "damaging or destruction of education buildings and facilities including transport, occupation of education buildings and facilities for military/security purposes, and violent attacks on the education process (e.g., convoys carrying examination papers). Along these lines, we might expect a relationship between the militant attacks and SSSD. We hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Militant attacks directly and positively associated with SSSD.

Linking Student Perceived Hostility and SSSD

Previous studies have shown that students who perceived a hostile school climate may be more likely to develop negative attitudes toward school (Lleras, 2008; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Also, such student may experience difficulty enrolling in school activities or participating in school activities (Sutton & Keogh, 2000). Relating to the present study, students who may have witnessed series of militancy attacks around their schools or within the school host community, which may make their school climate hostile may experience a low socioemotional adjustment in schools leading to dropout. For example, students whose peers or classmates have died as a result of bomb explosion during the militants' attacks around the school host communities (e.g., Ikelegbe, 2005; Oluwaniyi, 2010; Thom-Otuya, 2010) may perceive hostility and may adopt the easiest strategies for securing themselves which may be skipping school altogether or dropping out of school for the fear of being attacked (Juvonen et al., 2000). Also, the fear of incessant kidnapping of people in exchange for money, fuelling insecurity, and massive loss of life and destruction of property in the Niger Delta region may affect students' interests in continuing their school programme (e.g., Chinwokwu, 2013; Ngwama, 2014). Based on these previous studies, we propose a significant relationship between militancy activities and SSSD.

Hypothesis 2: Student perceived hostility is significantly associated with SSSD.

Linking Student Perceived Unfairness and SSSD

It is important to note that secondary school students put a high value on fair treatment in their school environment. This is relevant given that student perceived fairness is among the top criteria for assessing good school climate (Caglar, 2013; Meredith, 1983). There is extant literature on students' perceptions of fairness in school climate or learning environment (e.g., Chory-Assad, 2007; Lizzio, et al., 2007; Mauldin, 2009; Özer & Demirtaş, 2010). However, while these studies have focused more on students' perceptions of fairness in the classroom, ours focused more on the school climate given the militancy activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Evidence shows a negative influence on students' perceptions of unfairness in an educational setting (e.g., Caglar, 2013; Ripski & Gregory, 2009). The previous findings reported that student perceived unfairness is correlated with several negative outcomes (e.g., Cobb Rodabaugh, 1994; Lizzo et al., 2007) such as low participation in school activities, low academic achievement or satisfaction as well as a dropout. Relating to the present study, students in the Niger Delta region who may have witnessed series of militancy attacks within or around their school environment may perceive unfairness given the perceived threat to their lives while attending secondary school learning activities. Along these lines, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: Student perceived unfairness is significantly associated with SSSD.

Student perceived victimization and SSSD

We argue that students who have witnessed victimizations, threats of crime at their school host communities or on their way to or from school as a result militancy activity may experience difficulty enrolling in school activities. According to Akiba et al. (2002), the impact of widespread coverage of violent incidents may create a pervasive pattern of fear of violence on students. As a result, students may drop out of school or stop participating in educational programmes as a measure for ensuring their safety (e.g., Abang, 2014). For example, earlier studies (e.g., Gottfredson, 2001; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985) have reported a significant bivariate correlation between students' report of fear of victimization in school and student enrolment. This could be an indication that secondary schools within the Niger Delta region where the militancy activities are high may be less likely to have high student enrolment, the higher expectation for students and may lack adequate teaching and learning resources for effective learning. Also, schools within the region with high militancy attacks may experience difficulty getting the services of qualified teachers and administrators, which may affect students' interests in enrolling in such schools in their communities. In line with Whitlock (2006), students' perceptions of safety within their school host communities or school climate have been linked to higher student participation in school programmes. Therefore, we might expect a significant link between militancy activities and student perceived victimization as well as student perceived victimization and SSSD.

Hypothesis 4: Student perceived victimization is significantly associated with SSSD.

expect a significant link between militancy activities and student perceived victimization as well as student perceived victimization and SSSD.

Method

Samples and Procedure

The present study used descriptive survey design which adopted a cross-sectional approach to collect data from secondary school students in the Niger Delta regions. All students in this study have completed the compulsory three-year junior secondary school programmes and are in the three-year senior secondary school programmes in their respective secondary schools. Our reason for using this category of students is on the notion that they can provide useful information regarding the subject of study given their long witnessing of several militancy activities in their localities. In this study, we purposefully selected three of the nine Niger Delta states; namely; Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, given that the militancy activities are high and mostly occur within the oil-producing communities of the selected three states (e.g., Ebienfa, 2012; Kuku, 2012; Omeje, 2004). Students were drawn from 30 public secondary schools (10 each state) within the militancy activity prone oil communities of the three selected states. The choice of the 30 selected public schools was on the notion that they have more students from the low-income families who cannot afford the costs of training their children in expensive private secondary schools in the cities where the militancy activities are low.

To collect data from the students (participants) who are less than 18 years old, parents of the students were approached face-to-face during the parents-teachers association (PTA) meetings, which is a formal gathering of parents and teachers in Nigerian secondary school system to discuss issues concerning the improvement of the school system. The meeting usually holds once per term. Given the age of the students, we felt that the consent of both the parents and the students were important. We avoided going through the students' teachers to minimize the possible influence of the teachers on the students' responses. We designed the structured questionnaire and gave them to the parents of the students who willingly agreed to participate in the study to respond and return to their teachers. With the permission and consent of the teachers, they helped to receive the completed questionnaire from the students whose parents willingly accepted to allow their participation in the study. The questionnaire also contained a consent letter which was signed by parents of the student, and we assured them of privacy and that the responses of their children would be used strictly for this study.

Through this approach, we received a total of 1242 copies of the completed questionnaire from the participants between 2016 and 2018. However, 338 copies of the questionnaire were removed from the dataset due to ticking multiple choices in a single item, resulting in a sample of 904 used for the final data analysis. Among the respondents include; males = 468 (51.77%) and females = 436 (48.23%) between the age range of 12 to 16 years old.

Measures

Militancy Activities. This was measured by adapting the 7-item Terror and Risk Perceptions sub-scale (Seabra et al., 2012). We slightly reworded the items to suit the context of the present study. The responses ranged from (1 = *Absolutely disagree* to 5 = *Absolutely agree*). A sample item includes: "I know some of my classmates who were on their way to school during a militant attack". The scale reported a Cronbach's α of 0.78 (indirect contact sub-scale) and 0.88 (direct contact sub-scale). The current study's α was 0.95.

Student perceived hostility. This was measured by adapting the 3-item Perceptions of Hostility Scale (Ripski & Gregory, 2009). The items were slightly reworded to suit the context of the present study. The responses ranged from (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). A sample item includes: "I see some militant gangs on my way to school". The scale reported a Cronbach's α of 0.69. The current study's α was 0.84.

Student perceived unfairness. This was measured by using the 5-item self-developed scale. The responses ranged from (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). The items were slightly reworded to suit the context of the present study. The responses ranged from (1 = *Absolutely disagree* to 7 = *Absolutely agree*). A sample item includes: "I feel I am not protected at school". The Cronbach's α was 0.93.

Student perceived victimization. This was measured using a 6-item self-developed scale. The responses ranged from (1 = *Absolutely disagree* to 7 = *Absolutely agree*). A sample item includes: "I have lost my belongings while running for safety during militant attacks on my way returning from school". The Cronbach's α was 0.91.

Secondary school student Dropout. We measured this variable using a 5-item self-developed scale. The responses ranged from (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). A sample item includes: "I don't feel like continuing my participation in school programmes under the threatening militancy activities in my school host community". The Cronbach's α was 0.96.

Control Variables. Based on the extant literature review, we control for gender (coded: males = 1; females = 2), poverty, social conditions to learn whether they might influence SSSE.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using Amos 24.0 to test the measurement model fit indices for the scales. The latent variables representing militancy activities, student perceived hostility, student perceived unfairness, student perceived victimization, and SSSE consisted of the measurement model. The overall goodness-of-fit was considered excellent: $\chi^2 = 149.66$; df = 80; χ^2/df = 1.87; CFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.98, IFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.03, and RMSEA = 0.03; PClose = 1.00 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The indicator factors loadings are significant and exceed the acceptable value of ≥0.6 on their corresponding constructs. Convergent validity was established as the average variance extracted (AVE) is ≥ .50. The discriminant validity was established as the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation of the latent variables in the CFA. Also, the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability values are ≥ .70 and ≥ .60 respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Measurement Scale (Model Validity Measures)

Variables with Observed Items	Indicators (Items)	Loadings	CR	Cronbach Alpha (α)	AVE	DV	MSV
Militant Attacks							
I always get exposed to the damaged site shortly after militant attacks	MilAc3	0.93					
I was present on the scene during a militant attack	MilAc5	0.92					
I know some of my classmates who were on their way to school during a militant attack	MilAc2	0.91	0.94	0.95	0.85	0.92	0.00
Student Perceived Hostility							
I don't feel safe going to school	SPH3	0.96					
I see some militant gangs on my way to school	SPH4	0.89					
Militant activities often occur in my school host community	SPH1	0.76	0.83	0.84	0.62	0.79	0.01
Student Perceived Unfairness							
I feel I am not protected at school	SPU1	0.97					
The militancy activities make schooling more harshly in my community	SPU3	0.93					
The militancy activities gave me the impression that my education less important that my safety	SPU4	0.89	0.93	0.93	0.81	0.90	0.00
Student Perceived Victimization							
I had been injured during militant attacks	SPV1	0.91					
I have lost my belongings while running for safety during militant attacks on my way returning from school	SPV2	0.88					

I was threatened by the sight of militants' attack scenes in my community	SPV3	0.83	0.90	0.91	0.76	0.87	0.03

Secondary School Student Dropout

I am afraid of going to school given the frequent militant attacks	SSSE4	0.98					
I feel that enrolling into the next class will be another horrifying experience given the militant attacks	SSSE3	0.97					
I don't feel like continuing my participation in school programmes under the threatening militancy activities in my school host community	SSSE1	0.93	0.95	0.96	0.86	0.93	0.08

CR = Composite Reliability AVE = Average Variance Extracted, DV = Discriminant Validity, MSV = Maximum Shared Variance

RESULTS

The bivariate correlations among the variables are shown in Table 2. The results show that militancy activities ($r = 0.12$, $p < .01$), student perceived hostility ($r = 0.11$, $p < .01$), student perceived victimization ($r = 0.10$, $p < .01$) and student perceived unfairness ($r = 0.13$, $p < .01$) were significantly and positively correlated with SSSD.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and Bivariate correlations among variables

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Male	0.50	0.50	1							
2	Females	0.48	0.50	0.03	1						
3	Poverty	13.4	3.8	0.04	-0.01	1					
4	Social Condition	13.01	3.99	0.02	0.03	0.02	1				
5	Militancy Activities	11.41	3.79	0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.04	1			
6	Hostile	10.59	3.99	-0.04	0.02	0.04	0.05	-0.01	1		
7	Victimization	11.74	4.271	-0.02	-0.04	0.03	-0.06	0.02	0.06	1	

| 8 | Unfairness | 10.8 | 5.323 | 0.06 | -0.05 | -0.01 | -.08* | 0.02 | 0.04 | -0.05 | 1 |
| 9 | Student dropout | 12.69 | 3.759 | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0.11** | 0.06 | 0.12** | 0.11** | 0.10** | 0.13** |

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ (Two tailed)

To test the hypotheses, the direct relationships were tested using the hierarchical regression. We ascertained if militancy activities, hostile school climate, student victimization and unfairness would significantly and positively predict SSSD. As shown in Table 2, the control variables; males, females, poverty and social conditions in model 1 accounted for 3.0% variance in SSSD, $\Delta F(4, 899) = 4.26$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $p < .001$. The inclusion of militancy activities in the model 2, contributed a significant 1.6% variance in SSSD, $\Delta F(1, 898) = 15.04$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p < .001$. Also, the addition of student perceived hostility, student perceived victimization and student perceived unfairness in the model 3 accounted for 4.0% variance in SSSD, $\Delta F(3, 895) = 12.04$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$, $p < .001$. These results indicate that the overall model is statistically significant.

In model 1, the regression results show no evidence that male, $\beta = 0.04$, SE = 0.25, $t(899) = 1.23$, $p = .22$ or female students, $\beta = 0.10$, SE = 0.25, $t(899) = 0.32$, $p = .75$, may be more likely to dropout of school due to the militancy activities, student perceived hostility, student perceived victimization and student perceived unfairness. Also, the regression results of the covariates show that poverty, $\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.03, $t(899) = 3.37$, $p < .001$ and social conditions, $\beta = 0.06$, SE = 0.03, $t(899) = 1.83$, $p = .67$. These results indicate that poverty positively and significantly influence SSSD in the Niger Delta region. In other words, as poverty increases given the militancy activities, students may be more likely to drop out of schools. However, we found no evidence of influence of social conditions on the SSSD in this population.

In model 2, the result shows that militancy attacks, $\beta = 0.13$, SE = 0.03, $t(898) = 3.88$, $p < .001$. This result indicates that militancy activities positively and significantly influence SSSD in the Niger Delta region. Also, in model 3, the analysis indicates that student perceived hostility, $\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.03, $t(895) = 3.38$, $p < .001$; student perceived victimization, $\beta = 0.14$, SE = 0.03, $t(895) = 3.59$, $p < .001$, and student perceived unfairness, $\beta = 0.12$, SE = 0.02, $t(895) = 3.41$, $p < .001$ positively and significantly influenced SSSD in the Niger Delta region. These results indicate that the increase in student perceived hostility, student perceived victimization and student perceived unfairness were positively and significantly associated with SSSD in this population. These results support the hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4 proposed in the present study.

Discussion

The present study has examined how militancy activities (attacks, hostility, victimization and unfairness) influenced SSSD. Learning how the militancy activities might influence SSSD contributes to knowledge and literature about student dropout and enrolment in school programmes in this population. The present study is the first to test the individual

effects of militant attacks, student perceived hostility, student perceived victimization and student perceived unfairness on SSSD. The present study supports and extends the existing literature on militancy activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Abang, 2014; Ngwama, 2014; Oluwaniyi, 2010 and SSSD (e.g., Lleras, 2008; Ripski & Gregory, 2009; Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007). The present study proposed that militancy activities were associated positively with SSSD, and we found full support for all the hypotheses. The important contributions of the present study are discussed.

The positive association between militancy activities indicate that the SSSD in the Niger Delta region could be attributed to the militancy activities which negatively affect the students' interests or motivation to continue their participation in educational programmes in the communities prone to militancy activities. Also, the results show that an increase in militant attacks, student perceived hostility, student perceived unfairness and student perceived victimization would lead to a proportionate increase in SSSD in this population. Another possible interpretation of these findings could mean that the students' drop-out may increase as a result of risks associated with disruptive and unconducive learning environments (agrees with Lleras, 2008). For example, students who feel less safe in schools within the communities more prone to militancy activities may be forced to drop out of schools as a safety strategy. Also, given that students who school in communities with high militancy activities experience hostility, unfairness, and victimization, they are more likely to develop low interests in participating in school activities. These findings agree with Ripski and Gregory (2009, p. 356) that "students who perceive the school climate as unfair, hostile, and victimizing are more likely to be behaviourally disengaged and have lower achievement". Overall, the findings suggest that the militant attacks, hostile school environment or host community, unfair learning environment and victimization as a result of militancy activities can influence SSSD.

Conclusion and Implications for Educational Development

The present study has shown that all the militancy activities increase the students' dropout in secondary schools in this population. Our study progresses the previous research and reinforces the link between the militancy activities and SSSD. The present study enriches the literature by presenting a model of militancy activities and SSSD. The present study has a policy and practical implications for policymakers, governments, secondary school administrators and practitioners who are working towards improving secondary school education programmes in the Niger Delta as well as other regions. Given that the activities of the militants showed a significant and positive influence on SSSD, the government and policymakers should ensure that new policies and measures are developed to promote the safety of secondary school students in the Niger Delta region. The government needs to make adequate efforts toward the provision of necessary infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region to help resolve the various agitations by several groups.

Also, secondary school administrators can benefit from the present results in that they can understand students' dropout may not be intentional rather, as a safety strategy. The school administrators have a significant role in engaging the governments and policymakers to ensure

that students feel safe participating in academic programmes in a non-hostile school climate where they may not perceive any form of unfairness and victimization. For example, the school administrators within the region can form a group and adopt innovative strategies for dialoguing with many of the militant groups to ensure that school children are not forced out of schools as a result of their struggles and agitations. Also, the educational practitioners and researchers can use the findings of the present study to learn how to improve the students' participation in school programmes and to further investigate other ways for possible improvements. Overall, while this study was conducted in the Niger Delta regions of Nigeria, the findings are of benefit to other countries where militants have their activities.

Recommendations

1. Government should improve on the quality of life by providing of social amenities such as connecting bridges, good roads, electricity and portable water to upgrade the standard of living condition among the citizens of the Niger Delta Region.
2. Government should create employment opportunities for the youths.
3. Niger Delta Communities should be demilitarized by the government to create a conducive environment that is safe and secure for teaching and learning activities to thrive.
4. Adolescents of secondary school age should be encouraged to go back to school for their social, economic and political emancipation.

Limitations

The present study acknowledges some limitations. First, the study adopted a cross-sectional design which made causal inferences difficult. However, the present study allows scholars to understand the predictors of SSSD in this population. Secondly, study variables were evaluated using self-report measures which may result in self-report bias or common method variance, and make variables stronger or weaker than the observed association in the present study. We recommend future studies to use other measures. Another limitation is that the Niger Delta region comprises nine states, however, the present study was conducted only in three of the nine states in the region. Although the three states (Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers) have the highest impact of the militancy activities, future studies should include the other Niger Delta states to learn the influence of militancy activities on SSSD. The population of the present study are secondary school student only, which constraints the generalizability of the findings to other students in the region such as primary school and higher education. However, these limitations create more opportunities for progressing the present study.

References

Abang, S. O. (2014). The Niger Delta crisis and the roles of governmental agencies in Nigeria. *African Identities, 12*(2), 180–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2014.885779

Agbiboa, D. E. (2014). Transformational Strategy or Gilded Pacification? Four Years On: The Niger Delta Armed Conflict and the DDR Process of the Nigerian Amnesty Programme. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 50(4), 387–411.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614530082

Ajibola, I. O. (2015). Nigeria's Amnesty Program. *SAGE Open, 5(3),.*https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015589996

Akiba, M., LeTendre, G. K., Baker, D. P., & Goesling, B. (2002). Student victimization: National and school system effects on school violence in 37 nations. *American Educational Research Journal, 39(4), 829–853.* https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312039004829

Aleyomi, M. B., & Nwagwu, R. C. (2020). Strategic model for Nigeria's security and socioeconomic development. *African Identities, 1–21.* https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1828041

Amie-Ogan, O. T. (2017). Value re-orientation: The index for management of secondary education for poverty eradication in Nigeria. *African Education Indices*, 10(1), 68-81.

Caglar, C. (2013). The relationship between the perceptions of fairness of the learning environment and the level of alienation. *Egitim Arastirmalari -Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *50*,185-206.

Chinwokwu, E. C. (2013). Terrorism and the dilemmas of combating the menace in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 3(4), 265–272.

Cobb Rodabaugh, R. (1994). College Students' Perceptions of Unfairness in the Classroom. To Improve the Academy. 319. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podimproveacad/319

Cosmos, A. (2019). Understanding conflict theory. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/conflict-theory-306622019

Ebienfa, K. (2012). Militancy in the Niger Delta and the emergent categories. *Review of African Political Economy*, *38*, 637-643.

Feldman, R. L. (2009). The root causes of terrorism: Why parts of Africa might never be at peace. *Defence & Security Analysis*, *25*, 355–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/14751790903416707

Gottfredson, G. D., Gottfredson, D. C., Payne, A. A., & Gottfredson, N. C. (2005). School climate predictors of school disorder: Results from a national study of delinquency prevention in schools. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *42*, 412–444

Gottfredson, G. D., & Gottfredson, D. C. (1985). *Victimization in schools*. New York: Plenum Press.

Ikelegbe, A. (2005). Encounters of insurgent youth associations with the state in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Journal of Third World Studies*, *22*(1), 151–181.

Imhonopi, D. & Urim, U. M. (2016). Expensive democratic politics and unemployment in Nigeria: A comparison with China. In C. Enwere, & M. Khalil-Babatunde (Eds), A comparative study of Nigeria: Lessons from the global south. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian Turkish Nile University.

Jegede, A. E. & Joshua, S. (2013). Domestic terrorism, official response and the politics of black gold in Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Ife Psychologia, 21*(1), 114-126.

Juvonen, J., Nishina, A., & Graham, S. (2000). Peer harassment, psychological adjustment, and school functioning in early adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*, 349–359.

Khan, M. & Azam, A. (2008). Root causes of terrorism: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 20*(1/2), 65-86.

Kuku, K. (2012). *Remaking the Niger Delta: Challenges and opportunities*. Surrey, UK: Mandingo Publishing.

Lleras, C. (2008). Hostile School Climates: Explaining Differential Risk of Student Exposure to Disruptive Learning Environments in High School. *Journal of School Violence, 7(3), 105–135.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220801955604

Lizzo, A., Wilson, K. & Hadaway, V. (2007). University students' perceptions of a fair learning environment: a social justice perspective. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *32*(2), 195-213.

Malik, F., Khawar, R., Iftikhar, R., Saeed, S., & Ilyas, R. (2010). *Terrorism Impact Scale (TIS)* [Database record]. APA PsycTests. https://doi.org/10.1037/t44059-000

Ngwama, J. C. (2014). Kidnapping in Nigeria: an emerging social crime and the implications for the labour market. *International Journal of Social Science, 4*(1), 133–145.

Odia, L. O., & Omofonmwan, S. I. (2007). *Educational System in Nigeria Problems and Prospects. Journal of Social Sciences, 14(1), 86–85.* https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2007.11978347

Okonofua, B. A. (2013). *Triangulation, Emotional Reactivity, and Violence in the Niger Delta. SAGE Open, 3(2), 215824401348375.* https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013483758

Ololube, N. P., Onyekwerre, L. A., Kpolovie, P. J. & Agabi, C. O. (2012). Human security and educational development in the Niger Delta Region. *Journal of Human Security, 8*(1), 47-67

Oluwaniyi, O. O. (2010). Oil and youth militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 45*(3), 309–325.

Olweus, D. (1994). Bullying at school: Long-term outcomes for the victims and an effective school-based intervention program. In L.R. Huesmann (Ed.), *Aggressive behavior: Current perspectives* (pp. 97–130). New York: Plenum

Omeje, K. (2004). The state, conflict and evolving politics in the Niger Delta. *Review of African Political Economy, 31*(101), 425–440.

Ripski, M. B., & Gregory, A. (2009). Unfair, unsafe, and unwelcome: Do high school students' perceptions of unfairness, hostility, and victimization in school predict engagement and achievement? *Journal of School Violence, 8(4), 355–375.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220903132755

Seabra, C., Abrantes, J. L., & Kastenholz, E. (2021). TerrorScale: A scale to measure the contact of international tourists with terrorism. *Journal of Tourism Research & Hospitality, 1*(4), 1-1-8.

Sutton, J., & Keogh, E. (2000). Social competition in school: Relationships with bullying, Machiavellianism and personality. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 70*, 443–56.

Thom-Otuya, B. E. N. (2010). Kidnapping: A challenge to Nigeria security system. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, *2*(8), 107–116

West, A., & Salmon, G. (2000). Bullying and depression: A case report. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Clinical Practice, 4*, 73–75.

Whitlock, J. L. (2006). Youth perceptions of life at school: Contextual correlates of school connectedness in adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, *10*(1), 13–29.

Whitney, I., & Smith, P. K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior/ middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research, 35*, 3–25.

Table 1

Measurement Scale (Model Validity Measures)

Variables with Observed Items	Indicators (Items)	Loadings	CR	Cronbach Alpha (α)	AVE	DV	MSV
Militant Attacks							
I always get exposed to the damaged site shortly after militant attacks	MilAc3	0.93					
I was present on the scene during a militant attack	MilAc5	0.92					
I know some of my classmates who were on their way to school during a militant attack	MilAc2	0.91	0.94	0.95	0.85	0.92	0.00
Student Perceived Hostility							
I don't feel safe going to school	SPH3	0.96					
I see some militant gangs on my way to school	SPH4	0.89					
Militant activities often occur in my school host community	SPH1	0.76	0.83	0.84	0.62	0.79	0.01
Student Perceived Unfairness							
I feel I am not protected at school	SPU1	0.97					
The militancy activities make schooling more harshly in my community	SPU3	0.93					
The militancy activities gave me the impression that my education less important that my safety	SPU4	0.89	0.93	0.93	0.81	0.90	0.00
Student Perceived Victimization							
I had been injured during militant attacks	SPV1	0.91					
I have lost my belongings while running for safety during militant attacks on my way returning from school	SPV2	0.88					

I was threatened by the sight of militants' attack scenes in my community	SPV3	0.83	0.90	0.91	0.76	0.87	0.03
Secondary School Student Dropout							
I am afraid of going to school given the frequent militant attacks	SSSE4	0.98					
I feel that enrolling into the next class will be another horrifying experience given the militant attacks	SSSE3	0.97					
I don't feel like continuing my participation in school programmes under the threatening militancy activities in my school host community	SSSE1	0.93	0.95	0.96	0.86	0.93	0.08

CR = Composite Reliability AVE = Average Variance Extracted, DV = Discriminant Validity, MSV = Maximum Shared Variance

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and Bivariate correlations among variables

		Mean	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1	Male	0.50	0.50	1							
2	Females	0.48	0.50	0.03	1						
3	Poverty	13.4	3.8	0.04	-0.01	1					
4	Social Condition	13.01	3.99	0.02	0.03	0.02	1				
5	Militancy Activities	11.41	3.79	0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.04	1			
6	Hostile	10.59	3.99	-0.04	0.02	0.04	0.05	-0.01	1		
7	Victimization	11.74	4.271	-0.02	-0.04	0.03	-0.06	0.02	0.06	1	
8	Unfairness	10.8	5.323	0.06	-0.05	-0.01	-.08*	0.02	0.04	-0.05	1
9	Student dropout	12.69	3.759	0.05	0.01	0.11**	0.06	0.12**	0.11**	0.10**	0.13**

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ (Two tailed)

Table 3

Summary of HR for Secondary school student dropout (SSSD)

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Control Variables		**95% CI**		**95% CI**		**95% CI**
Male	0.04	-0.18, 0.79	0.04	-0.19, 0.78	0.04	-0.19, 0.76
Female	0.10	-0.41, 0.57	0.01	-0.42, 0.55	0.02	-0.35, 0.61
Poverty	0.11***	0.04, 0.17	0.12***	0.05, 0.18	0.11***	0.04, 0.17
Social Conditions	0.06	-0.00, 0.12	0.07*	0.00, 0.12	0.08*	0.02, 0.14
Independent Variable 1						
Militancy Activities			0.13***	0.06, 0.19	0.12***	0.05, 0.18
Independent Variables 2						
Perceived student hostility					0.11***	0.04, 0.16
Perceived student victimization					0.14***	0.05, 0.15
Perceived student unfairness					0.12***	0.03, 0.12

Notes: ***$p < .001$; *$p < .05$; CI = Confidence Interval; HR = Hierarchical Regression