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The Niger Delta Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (NDJSA) is a peer-reviewed journal that is published biannually (March and November) by the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Niger Delta University. NDJSA publishes reliable and timely studies emanating from original research, meta-analysis, analytical reviews, reviews, case studies, commentaries and book reviews from sociology, anthropology, social works, criminology, and related fields within the social and behavioural sciences, and humanities.

The main aim of NDJSA is to publish high-quality studies which are not only relevant to the field of sociology and anthropology, but also other related areas especially within the social/behavioural sciences and humanities. This journal platform affords scholars and researchers a veritable avenue to interact with colleagues from around the world through dissemination of innovative research in our social world that has become increasingly globalised.

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Sibiri, E.A., & Uzobo, E. (2020). Needs assessment for effective development in the rural areas of the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*. 6(2): 63-73.

- Ayinmoro, A.D., Uzobo, E., Teibowei, B.J., & Fred, J.B. (2020). Sexting and other risky sexual behaviour among female students in a Nigerian academic institution. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 15(2): 116-121. doi:10.1016/j.jtumed.2020.02.007
- Okoye, U. O. (2019). *Health care social work in Nigeria*. In Winnett, R., Furman, R., Epps, D., & Lamphear, G. (Eds.), *Health Care Social Work: A Global Perspective* (pp.149-161). New York: Oxford University Press
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### Editorial

The second edition of NDJSA features ten articles across various aspects of sociological study. The first paper by E.A Sibiri, Dubamo Omukoro and O.V Ameneye entitled: ***“Traditional Belief Systems and Environmental Sustainability in Bayelsa State: A Qualitative Approach”*** examined traditional belief systems used in preserving the environment in Bayelsa state using Sagbama as a case study. This qualitative study found out that the most prevailing belief systems used in environmental preservation are relative to lakes, forests, and animals (*Akpolokia*, *Imbiere*, and *Oka*). According to the study, these belief systems have aided in the sustainability of the environment through the use of various taboos and restrictions. The second paper on ***“Understanding the Attitude of Nigerians Towards Police Treatment of Crime Suspects”*** by B.O Omoroghomwan and C.A Abanimebon explored if socio-economic factors of a crime suspect influence police attitudes towards them. The study concluded that criminal suspects are treated according to their age and educational qualification and that this repressive attitude of the police to suspects have increased public hostility towards.

The next paper with the title ***“Public Perception of the Availability and Accessibility of Government Sponsored Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Ebonyi State, Nigeria”*** authored by G.U. Aghedo, C.C. Iyiani, and P. S. Okah investigated the public perception of the availability and accessibility of government-sponsored PAP in Ebonyi State, Nigeria and concluded that accessing PAP was difficult because of the stringent conditions attached. It also stated that lack of proper coordination of the programmes, hijack by politicians and lack of adequate sensitization have made the people perceive PAP as ineffective in poverty reduction. Following this paper is the study conducted on ***“Determinants of Suicidal Intention among Undergraduate Students in Bayelsa State”*** by V.D Tobin and P.T Oge. This cross-sectional study which investigated the determinants of suicidal intention among 163 undergraduate students in Bayelsa State, focusing on socio-demographic, economic, psychological and health factors, revealed that the CGPA of students, academic satisfaction, the gender of students, relationship with parents/guardian, academic etc were significantly related to suicidal thoughts.

The study of R.T Odubo on ***“Diversification of Livelihoods and income levels in oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria”*** argued that the more the level of livelihood diversification the more the income of the people of the Niger Delta Region. Furthermore, the study entitled ***“Health Seeking Behaviour of Migrant Fishermen for Musculoskeletal Pains along the Taylor Creek of Bayelsa State”*** authored by Endurance Uzobo, K.M Owota and T.J. Olaosebikan indicated that the types of musculoskeletal pains experienced by fishermen include low back pains, muscle pains, joint pains, tendon and ligament pains, bone pains, tunnel syndromes, chronic headaches, myofascial pains and fibromyalgia. Their health-seeking behaviour revealed that majority of them had utilised both modern and traditional health care services for medical help despite the distance of the facilities from their locations.

The last paper on *“Influence of Political Education on Electoral Awareness of Undergraduate Students in a Nigerian University”* by V.C Owede, W.S. Soberekon and C.F. Nwankudu, found out that even though most undergraduate students are aware of the activities of political parties, they are not well conversant with the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) especially with regards to the constitutional mandate given to it.

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## Traditional Belief Systems and Environmental Sustainability in Bayelsa State: A Qualitative Approach

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### Abstract

The importance of environmental sustainability especially in Africa cannot be overemphasised since the environment provides her economic and religious needs. It is based on this reason that this qualitative study was designed to investigate the traditional belief systems used in preserving the environment in Bayelsa state using Sagbama as a case study. The Cultural Ecology Theory postulated by Julian Steward served as the theoretical framework for this study. This study using purposive and snowball sampling techniques sampled a total of 20 persons from three selected communities in Sagbama LGA, namely: Ogobiri from the Mein clan, Tungbo from the Tungbo-Ebe clan, and Bulu-Orua from the Tarakiri clan. Primary data for this study was gathered through the use of an in-depth interview (IDI) structured based on the research objectives, while data analysis was done using thematic content analysis. Findings from the study indicated that the most prevailing belief systems concerning the environment are relative to lakes, forests, and animals (*Akpolokia*, *Imbiete*, and *Oka*). Also, belief systems regarding lakes, forests, and animals have aided in the sustainability of the environment through the use of various taboos and restrictions. It is, therefore, recommended that there is a need for the revitalisation of healthy traditional belief systems and cultural practices that promote the management, preservation, and conservation of natural resources for environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** Environmental Sustainability, Traditional belief systems, Cultural ecology, Environmental taboos, Sagbama

### Introduction

Traditional societies have existed for many centuries before the significant change occurred in the 18th century (Anwana, 2008). These societies formed a close relationship with natural resources within religious, moral, cultural, political, economic, and ecological boundaries. Some were able to preserve biodiversity traditionally before the onset of state-controlled natural reserves, wildlife, and national parks. Examples of such are bounded areas called sacred ecosystems or sacred landscapes. As noted by Awanan (2008), this traditional way of managing natural resources was sustainable for hundreds of years. Sacred ecosystems are ubiquitous, being found in several Amerindian, Asia-Pacific, European and African cultures whose indigenous cultures are known to combine certain ecological ethics into producing a world view of humans being as a part of nature.

They are not particularly associated with any specific religion, but they have a strongly religious context and are influenced by traditional local beliefs. Indigenous people, therefore, in their association with nature, live in environments imbued with symbolic significance where such landscapes are considered as cultural constructions rather than just biological diversity. Cultural symbolic landscapes are evident from several works on sacred ecosystems, such as those of the Malshegu sacred grove of Ghana in particular and these landscapes represent some of the few remaining areas of closed-canopy forest in the country's northern savannah Eco-region. This could mean that for biodiversity dependent on such habitat for survival, the sacred grove would serve as a sanctuary for biodiversity, in consonance with its function as a social/cultural symbol to the people, establishing the relevance and dualist function of sacred landscapes. Also relevant is the argument of Anwana (2008) suggests that spiritual beliefs could be motivators for positive outcomes on conservation and perseverance.

Thus, the environment in most rural societies is one of the most essential aspects of the human relationship with the external world. It is on this note that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) [1992] advocated for the transformation of the ethics of respect and love of the earth in people's lives which the belief system of the people has retained as central to their value system. This position was further buttressed by Cooper and Pamler (1998) who stated that indigenous people have lived in unity with their environment providing them with their economic, social, and religious needs for many years. Thus, the attitude of people towards the environment has been that of respect, guided by ecological wisdom. Wolfgram (2006) added that this respect is shown through the preservation of practices maintained and manifested through traditional modes of agricultural practices (e.g shifting cultivation, mixed farming, and agroforestry) and other traditional belief practices like totemism and ancestral worship (Sibiri, 2014; Eneji et al, 2012).

Similarly, in Sachdeva's (2016) study, he concluded that viewing natural resources as sacred may lead to a diminished perception of environmental risk such as pollution. Adu-Gyamfi (2011) also concluded in his study that indigenous beliefs and practices are more earth-friendly and consistent with biodiversity than that of modern or western ways of life and that they represent the best chance for successful ecological practices that enhance ecosystem conservation. Furthermore, Narayanna

(2013) analysed the role of religion in sustainable development and found out that cultural practices aid sustainable development through values that serve as potentials for social and ecological activism in the realm of self-development. This is why among Africans, religion has been a source of environmental preservation and protection even though abuses also exist. Indigenous people recognise and understand their place in the local environment bearing in mind that nature or the environment has a spiritual dimension attached to it. Because the Africans recognise that spirits inhabit nature, there is a tendency to nurture and take care of it (Grim, 2001; Kanene, 2016).

According to Lssozi (2012), African communities have rich environmental cultures that can be understood by listening to their myths, taboos, stories, proverbs, and beliefs and also by observing their symbols and rituals. For example, amongst some indigenous African communities, the association of some animals and plants with spirits has enabled environmental sustainability. Essentially, amongst the Igbos of Nigeria, there are taboos associated with some rivers and forests to safeguard them from pollution, abuse, and exploitation (Obiora & Emeka, 2015). There is also the strict observation of moral order amongst traditional societies whereby people observe some ecological ethics such as not to defecate near streams where drinking water is fetched. It is believed that contempt for this prohibition attracts severe sanctions from the deity who owns the stream (Obiora & Emeka, 2015).

Hence, cultural practices according to Aniah, Aasogienana, and Bonye (2014), are consistent with the current preservation of practices. The ascription of supernatural powers to a portion of the environment and protection of such places through taboos has helped in preserving the environment and protecting natural resources as well as water species. Aniah, Aasogienana, and Bonye (2014) therefore view the following cultural practices as having a positive impact on the effect of environmental preservation:

1. The demarcation of a portion of the environment as home of the ancestral spirit (sacred groves, ponds, earth, shrines)
2. Aquatic resource. For instance, it's a belief that water species like crocodiles are to not be killed; these practices encourage the perseveration of these life forms.

3. The practice of forbidding people from consuming some species of animals also encourages the preservation of totemic animals and objects. Such totemic life forms are pantheon.

While the above studies are very relevant in understanding how cultural practices can lead to environmental preservation, there still exists a reasonable gap. First and foremost, most of the studies above are theoretical. Also, most studies on traditional practice and environmental preservation have largely been concentrated in Asian countries. While few studies exist in Nigeria, they have also largely focused on the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thus, this study has been designed to cover this gap by investigating how the people of Bayelsa state use traditional belief systems to preserve their environment.

### **Theoretical Framework: Cultural Ecology Theory**

The Cultural ecology theory can be largely attributed to Julian Steward who also coined the term. Cultural ecology theory focuses on how humans adapt to their social and physical environments using cultural tools.

This theory considers the sphere of human culture not as separate from, but as interdependent with ecological processes and natural energy cycles. According to Jack (2017), cultural theorists like Karl Bulzer and David Stoddard focused on flows of energy and materials, examining how beliefs and institutions in a culture regulate interchanges with the natural ecology that surrounded it.

A major point is that any particular human adaptation is in part historically inherited and involves the technologies, practices, and knowledge that allow peoples in an environment (Indigenous Knowledge System). Furthermore, the Sacred Sub-strand of cultural ecology produced by Berkes in 1999 provided a more acceptable cultural relationship with the environment. It seeks lessons from traditional ways of life in order to shape a new environmental perception for dwellers. This particular conceptualization of people and environment comes from the various cultural levels of local indigenous, traditional knowledge about species and place, resource management system using local experience, social institutions with their rules and codes of behaviour, and a world view through religion, ethics, and broadly defined belief systems (Jack, 2017).

In light of this, the cultural theory expresses the underpinnings of the existing relationship between the natural environment and the development of human culture and societal progress. This

relationship is hinged on the interdependent processes of cultural change in that culture change is induced by adaptation to environmental changes and this is reflected in the changes in technologies and methods used to exploit the environment and all patterns of human behaviour/culture associated with the use of the environment.

Hence cultural ecology perspective is closely knitted to indigenous environmental knowledge studies, indigenous environmental practices, perception, values and by extension, sustainable resources use patterns and biodiversity preservation and conservation.

### **Material and Methods**

This case study's qualitative design was conducted among 20 adult residence in various communities located in Sagbama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The choice of the study area was based on the fact that Sagbama LGA in Bayelsa State has one of the largest sacred grooves and totems in Bayelsa State. The inclusion criteria for respondents who participated in this study include adult members of the various communities that have spent at least ten (10) years in their communities. The rationale behind this is that these sets of persons will have more knowledge about the sacred belief practices that have long been used to preserve the environment.

Since the study is qualitative, the sample size was made up of 20 persons which were gotten through the use of the point of saturation. Though, the study had initially proposed a sample size of 30 persons. In selecting the sample for the study, a multi-stage sampling technique which comprises of both the probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling technique was adopted. First, the cluster sampling techniques were used to cluster Sagbama into six (6) clans which include Kunbowei clan, Kabo-Owei clan, Tungbo-Ebe clan, Trakiri clan, Obion clan, and the Mein clan. Secondly, a purposive sampling technique was used to select communities that possess both land and water bodies. Additionally, a purposive sampling technique was still used to select communities with sacred forests and water. Thus, three communities were selected from three clans namely; Ogobri from the Mein clan, Tungbo from the Tungbo-ebe clan, and Bulu-orua from the Tarakiri clan. Finally, a snowball sampling technique, where an elderly person was identified in each community and asked to recommend someone else who has spent up to ten years and have a vast knowledge of sacred places in their communities.

Primary data for this study was gathered through the use of an in-depth interview (IDI) structured based on the research objectives, and presented to respondents to express their views, opinions, and observations on the subject of matter. Hence, the questions covered in the IDI schedule include; prevailing sacred belief practices, beliefs relating to water bodies and their preservation, forest practices and forest preservation, and practices relating to animals and animal preservation. The interview was conducted in the native Ijaw language and later translated before the data analysis was done. The data analysis method for this study was based on thematic content analysis. In doing this, data gleaned from this study were analysed and arranged into themes based on the objectives of the study.

Validating the research instruments was done by experts from measurements and evaluation in both the department of sociology and faculty of education, while a pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument. This was done through an initial administration of the research instrument to respondents from the other three communities in Sagbama LGA which were not part of the selected communities in the study area. Thus, their response indicated that the questions in the IDI schedule were well understood. To ensure that the study conforms with global ethical standards, the following ethical standard was observed; respect for persons, non-maleficence, anonymity, confidentiality, etc.

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic Profile of the respondents**

This section of the study presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents ranging from age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation, religion, average income, etc. From table 1 below, the majority of the respondents (40%) in the study are those who are more than 50 years of age. Other categories of age can be found in table 1. Also, more than half of the respondents (55%) were male, while 45% were female. Additionally, extrapolating from table 1 below, half of the respondents (50%) were married, this is followed by those who were single (40%). Furthermore, findings from the study indicated that the majority of the respondent were Christians (70%). More so, the study revealed that most of the respondents (40%) are those who are unemployed. Further analysis from the table above indicated that about 45% of respondents have acquired tertiary education.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Profile of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (N = 20)</b>	<b>Percentage (% = 100)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 30 years	4	20
30-40	3	15
41-50	5	25
51 and above	8	40
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	11	55
Female	9	45
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	8	40
Married	10	50
Divorce/Separated	1	5
Widowed	1	5
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	14	70
Traditional Religion	6	30
<b>Occupation</b>		
Unemployed	8	40
Fishing/Farming	3	15
Civil Servant	3	15
Artisan	1	5
Trading	5	25
<b>Education</b>		
No formal Education	3	15
Primary	1	5
Secondary	9	35
Tertiary	7	45
<b>Average Income (Monthly)</b>		
N5,000-N10,999	5	25
N11,000-N20,999	5	25
N21,000-40,999	8	40
N41,000 and above	2	10
<b>Duration of stay in Community</b>		
10-15 Years	4	20
16-24	7	35
25-30	4	20
Above 30 years	5	25
<b>Numbers of Children</b>		
1	3	15
2	5	25
3	2	10
4	4	20
5 and above	6	30

The income distribution of the respondents further shows that about 40% of respondents earn 21,000-40,999 monthly. More so from the table, 35% of the respondents have stayed up to 16-20

years in the community. Finally, findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents (30) has 5 children and above.

### **Prevailing Sacred belief systems concerning the Environment**

From the findings, as regards the sacred belief system, the study revealed that almost in all sampled communities in the study, the most prevailing belief systems are about lakes, forests, and animals. However, these beliefs differ from community to community thus, having different names and meanings. For instance, a participant from Tungbo community specifically opined thus;

The community has different beliefs that preserve their lakes, forests, and animals, this belief is a preserver of the water bodies, land, and animals (Male IDI, Tungbo community).

Another respondent in Bulu-Orua asserted that;

The community's belief is centred on forests, animals, and lakes, and that the belief system preserves these as totems in the community (Male IDI, Bulu-Orua community).

In Ogobiri community, a respondent stated thus;

The community's belief is based on lakes, forests, and animals that we the people see as gods that protect the people of this community (IDI, Female IDI, Ogobiri community).

### **Sacred Beliefs Relating to Water Bodies and its Preservation**

From the findings concerning the sacred belief system relating to the preservation of water bodies, the study revealed that all the communities sampled in the study had beliefs regarding sacred lakes. Nevertheless, these beliefs differ from community to community. For instance, the name of the sacred lake in Tungbo community is called "*Akpolokia*", in Ogobiri it is called "*Imbiete*" and in Bulu-Orua it is called "*Oka*". In Tungbo according to the respondents, the lake represents their ancestry and it also brings prosperity to the people in the community. An elderly woman thus opined that;

The Akpolokia lake, which is the greatest of all the lake represent our ancestry and it also represents prosperity for us as a people (Female IDI, Tungbo community).

In Ogobiri community, respondents stated that the lake belongs to the gods of the land and therefore before anything could be done in the lake there must be sacrifices done by the worshippers of the lake. A respondent asserted thus;

The lake is mysterious and nobody goes to the lake unless a date that has been agreed upon by the community (Male IDI, Ogobiri community).

In Bulu-Orua community, it is said that the lake brings good fortune to the people. Hence, a middle-age lady stated that;

The Oka Lake brings good fortune looking at how the lake was found, so the people value the lake and thus we need to preserve the lake (Female IDI, Bulu-Oruah community).

In ascertaining the duration and continuity of this belief, most respondents stated that the practice has endured as long as they can remember. While with regards to the continuity of the belief, the respondents indicated that while the practice is still very much in vogue, it is only a few traditional adherents that continue with practices associated with lakes. In Tungbo, a respondent narrated thus;

The belief has lasted from the days of our forefathers up till now, but because of Christianity, most people do not value the belief system again. Only a few still participate in these practices (Female IDI Tungbo community).

Another respondent in Bulu-Orua also has this to say;

The belief has been there and most people still practice it and value it, but it is not as it was during the time of our forefathers (Male IDI, Bulu-Orua community).

In Ogobiri, one respondent stated thus;

The belief has lasted since the days of our forefathers up to date. But in respect to its continuity people are no longer interested in these practices unlike in the olden days when there was no Christianity (Female IDI, Ogobiri community).

From the findings regarding how the belief systems have affected the preservation of these water bodies, the respondents from different communities stated that these belief systems aid in the preservation of these water bodies through the use of various taboos and restrictions. Thus, a respondent in Tungbo community stated that;

Because of the restrictions and taboos on the "*Akpolokia*" lake, this lake is preserved, until such a time when people are permitted to go to the lake. During this period, people often catch a large number of different species of fish (Female IDI, Tungbo community).

A respondent still, added that in Bulu-Orua;

The preservation of the lake through restrictions affects the water bodies because later when permission is granted, a product from the sacred lake is taken in large quantity (Male IDI, Bulu-Orua community).

According to the findings from this study, penalties associated with violation of these beliefs range from incurring the wrath of the gods, fine, etc. In Tungbo, a respondent stated that;

Anyone, who violates these beliefs and go to the lake outside the time agreed upon will appease the gods or else mysterious things will happen to the family of the defaulter until they make sacrifices (Male IDI, Tungbo community).

In Ogobiri, a respondent recounted that;

There are no actual penalties meted out on the people who violate this belief. However, since it belongs to the gods, they punish offenders as they see fit sometimes through sickness (e.g. swollen stomach) or mysterious death in the family of the offender. These punishments could sometimes be averted if the offender confesses and make sacrifices to appease the gods (Male IDI, Ogobiri community).

In Bulu-Orua, another respondent reported that 'offenders are made to pay fines in monetary terms to the worshippers of the lake' (Male IDI, Bulu-Orua).

### **Prevailing Belief System on Forest Preservation**

Gleaning from the findings concerning the sacred belief system relating to forest and its preservation, the study observed that all the communities sampled in the study have a belief system regarding sacred forests. However, these beliefs also differ from community to community. In Ogobiri for instance, a respondent opined thus;

The belief systems about the sacred forest are mysterious. Some of our forests have mystical creatures at such, they are out of bound for ordinary people (Female IDI, Ogobiri community).

In Bulu-Orua community, a respondent also narrated that;

The belief system about the sacred forest is different, there is a forest for farming, to bury the dead, etc. In farming, when farming is done for a while, we leave the land to another land for the previous land to regain its former nutrient (Male IDI, Bulu-Orua community).

Similarly, another respondent in Tungbo community indicated that;

The sacred forest is evil and thus nothing is done in this place besides burying the dead. But there are also forests where people go for different purposes (Female IDI, Tungbo community).

Going by the findings, the study revealed that the belief has lasted for years and the practice continues. But there are some changes in the different communities. For instance, a respondent in Tungbo community opined thus;

The belief has lasted right from the day of our forefathers up until now. Those places are still left the way they are but are only used for specific purposes (Female IDI, Tungbo community).

In Ogobiri community, a respondent indicated that;

The belief has lasted for long, but due to Christianity, where some Christian fathers came to pray for the land, some parts of the forest have been developed. However, some parts of the sacred forest remain till date, hence, some still adhere to practices relating to these forests (Male IDI, Ogobiri community).

Just like the sacred lakes, punishment for violating forest beliefs attracts punishments ranging from fines, punishment from the gods themselves etc.

### **Prevailing Belief System on Animals Preservation**

Again, all three sampled communities have sacred belief systems relating to animals or totems. In Tungbo community the totem is a crocodile (*Egiere*), in Ogobiri it is a snake especially a cobra (*Dringbia*), while in Bulu-Orua it is a snail. The nature of these beliefs is on sacred animals. According to an elderly woman;

The cobra called Dringbia in this community symbolizes the gods of our land and as such nobody is allowed to eat or kill it. Also, these gods bring about prosperity and victories during wars to those that worship it (Female IDI, Ogobiri community).

Another respondent in Tungbo indicated thus,

The crocodile which we call Egiere represents the gods of our forefathers and as such is not to be killed let alone eaten. It is the Egiere that protect the people of this community from danger and misfortune (Male IDI, Tungbo community).

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings from this study affirm previous studies on the role of traditional belief systems in environmental preservation. Findings from this study conform to that of Tatira (2000) whose findings indicated that animals (python) were major totems in the African belief system. This assertion was similarly buttressed by Rim-Rukeh et al, (2013) who opined that traditional religious

beliefs are sources of preserving natural resources reflected in varieties of practices including sacred groves and lands.

Furthermore, this study found out that sacred lakes were major sacred belief systems used in the preservation of water bodies through the use of taboos. This finding is supported by the work of Obiora and Emeka (2015) who asserted that indigenous African communities use taboos associated with some rivers to safeguard them from pollution, abuse, and exploitation. Also, Lssozi (2012) affirms that African communities have a rich environmental culture that can be used to preserve their water bodies.

Additionally, this study indicated that the sacred forest was a major sacred belief system used in the preservation of the forest. Thus, there are restrictions from using certain forest resources. The study of Duri and Mapara (2007) in Zimbabwe also noted that sacred forest and mountains reserved and preserved for certain ceremonies and relevant taboos helped in preserving them. They added that institutional prohibitions, such as taboos were designed to develop positive social attitudes towards the environment.

Finally, findings from this study on the use of sacred animals as sources of environmental preservation are consistent with the work of Lumor (2009) who stated that totems are used in the Akan province of Ghana to preserve animals from going into extinction.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that traditional belief systems have been very useful in the sustainability of the environment of Bayelsa state despite the industrial activities that are currently threatening the environment. Thus, lakes, forests, and animals which serve as totems are key traditional belief systems that have existed for a long time and were used in preserving the environment. Based on this conclusion, this study recommended that; firstly, there is a need for a revitalisation of healthy traditional belief systems to promote the management, preservation, and conservation of natural resources. Again, environmental managers (EPA, Forestry Commissions), and modern political institutions and communities should encourage the practice of the belief systems that enhances the conservation and management of natural resources,

this will enable communities where resources are found to participate in the management of the environment.

Furthermore, the government and other institutions and stakeholders interested in conservation should motivate communities that are still practising belief systems that preserve the environment by giving such communities incentive packages in the form of developmental projects. Finally, traditional authorities should implement strict moral and physical sanctions to violators of cultural environmental heritage.

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## Understanding the Attitude of Nigerians Towards Police Treatment of Crime Suspects

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### Abstract

The study examines the attitude of Nigerians towards police treatment of criminal suspects. Specifically, the study examines whether the socio-economic factors of crime suspects influences police attitudes, the educational level of crime suspects influences the way Nigeria Police treat crime suspects. Public awareness varies on police treatment of criminal suspect and the attitude of Nigeria Police have influence crime control. Anchored on Max Weber's Conflict theory, this study adopted the cross-sectional research design and surveyed 400 respondents which comprised the criminal suspects, the police and the general public and tested four specific hypotheses with the Chi-Square statistical technique. The study reveals that Criminal suspects are treated according to their age, and educational qualification. Also, the repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects increase the frequency of crime commission. Police brutality on criminal suspects has resulted to public hostility on the part of the police and when the police brutalize criminal suspects, they do not pay close medical attention to them while in the police custody and getting useful information to assist in crime control is always difficult in that situation. The study recommended that the police should adopt preventive measures rather than proactive systems where some innocent citizens are arrested, detained and treated as criminals without prosecution and the mutual respect of the police will be reciprocated in as much as the police should be-courteous in dealing with the people.

**Keywords:** Police, Crime Suspects, Attitude, Police Treatment, Nigeria

### Introduction

There are several accounts on the origin of Nigerian Police Force, and they all point to the colonial government brutal mechanism of coerciveness and subjugation adopted to facilitate economic and political exploitation across the 250 ethnic groups in the country (Opara, 2000). Before Nigeria's independence, the colonial police force was made up of people from different nationalities to serve the interest of the then Nigeria territory. The adoption of this by the colonial masters was an exploitative mechanism established by the British for her interest. The declaration of Nigeria as an independent State in 1960 from the British colonial rule did less to transform the police system inherited from the colonial rule. The inherited police from the colonial government were like troops constituted to protect government interest and not the collective interest of the people and national security (Elwell, 2009; Opara, 2000; Torrible, 2020).

Following political independence in 1960, there were expectations for re-organization and re-orientation of the Nigeria Police to change from colonial occupational force to serving the people. This expectation did not happen. The parties that were elected into government after independence found it more convenient to retain the colonial structures of coercion in dealing with the people. Instead of re-organizing and reorienting the police to serve and protect Nigerian people, it was only a ceremonial oath for transfer of allegiance from the British to the elected Nigerians and the change of the police crest (Hou, 2001; Torrible, 2020). Other features of the colonial police that made them widely feared and despised under the colonial government were left untouched (Opara 2000; Basham, 2020). These widely feared and displeasure of the police still loom in the people's mind (Cao, & Huang, 2000). This raises some questions such as: Are Nigerian Knowledge and perception about the police operations and activities different from that of the global community? And, how are the Police perceived globally?

Globally, the Police are an important agent of society. They occupy a position to maintain law and order, perform duties of crime prevention, investigation and detection of crimes and criminals, as well as the prosecution of criminals (Tyler, 2004; Sun, & Triplett, 2008; Paoline, 2004; Miller, 2011; Torrible, 2020). Police effectiveness, as enforcers of the state law, largely depends on its relationship with members of the public which they serve. A cordial relationship between the police and the public assist them to discharge their duties efficiently and diligently.

In Nigeria and most third world countries, this cordial relationship promoting police effectiveness is lacking. What exists between the police and the public has been, as described by Alemika (1993), as hostility and mutual distrust. The Nigeria Police received persistent criticism from the public for eroding liberty, freedom, security, human rights and welfare, even more than what holds for other agencies that are involved in criminal justice administration and crime control in the country. Nigerians have severally criticized the police for their non-observance of the rule of law, the poor performance of their tasks including preventing, investigating, detecting and prosecuting of crimes. They have been also accused of suppressing human rights activism and struggles for socio-economic and political -justice and democracy (Opara, 2000).

The Nigeria police do not usually see themselves as a non-performing agency of society. Severally, on crime-related issues, the police are known for persistent arguing that they are performing their

legal and constitutional responsibilities of checking and controlling criminal activities and bringing criminals to book. In bringing criminals control, there are several accounts that the police violate the fundamental rights of the people through brutality, intimidation, harassment, extortion, bullying, torturing, threaten and even killing (Opara, 2000; Terrible, 2020; Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). Though the Nigeria Criminal Law allows the police to use minimal force on crime suspects when the need arises, the police have capitalized on this law to brutalize and intimidate crime suspects during interrogations and make some to confess to crimes they did not commit (Basham, 2020). This attitude of policing and prosecution of not adhering to human rights protection reflect decadence in the Nigeria police force. Although the police are charged with the task of law enforcement and protecting lives and property, they must guard against infringing upon individual rights (Memere, 1982; Tyler, & Fagan, 2008).

A subset of criticisms against police is the nature of treatment against criminal suspects. Nigerian Police attitude towards crime suspects has been severally described as unfair and inhumane. The police are still being accused of brutality, political repression, partisanship, corruption, failure to curb public disorder without inflicting unnecessary injury, failure to protect life and property, illegal killing of citizens and inability to stop protests from escalating into riots (Tyler, & Fagan, 2008; Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). Treatment of crime suspect appears not uniform, but base on certain socio-economic variables of suspects (Omoroghomwan, 2019; Basham, 2020). Psychologist and criminologist have, overtime, accentuated the important socio-economic factors on the behaviour of police criminality and discretion (Sun, & Triplett, 2008). Needless to say, that Police officers' behaviour and actions towards citizens are influenced by the same forces driving citizens in the environment. Research shows that the identification and treatment of crime suspects by a police officer is strongly influenced by place-based cues noticeable by the police. These place-based cues are socio-economic factors, poverty, ethnic configuration, crime density, and topography of the neighbourhood (Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). In Nigeria, past research on police attitude towards crime suspects was based on individual characteristics like sex, age, personal outlook, with little attention given to socio-economic factors (Alpert, Dunham & Smith 2007; Farrel & McDevitt, 2006; Schafer, Katz-Bannister & Wells, 2006; Warren, Tomaskovic-Devey, Smith, Zingraff, & Mason, 2006;

Basham, 2020). This study examines the attitude of Nigerian Police towards crime suspects with attention given to socio-economic variables.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Max Weber's Conflict theory. Weber rejected Karl Marx's (1818 -1883) view that the division between the owners and non-owners of the property was the only significant division between groups in society. He argued that numerous divisions within the two basic classes could depend upon the market situation forcing individuals (Weber, 1954). Weber claimed that people could be divided by their status situation and political interests as well as by their economic positions. For Instance, Parties could be formed based on status, groupings or classes, and that it was also possible for them to cut across class or status groups. The attitude of the Nigeria Police towards criminal suspects is one that the police exercises legitimate power against a "subject-class". The police behave authoritatively towards criminal suspects like "master-servant" relationship leading to conflict in most cases. In this situation, the criminal suspects perceive the police as protecting the political elite class and being against the poor and disadvantaged class.

On this note, the conflict theory of Weber provides a better understanding of police attitude towards criminal suspects, extrapolating that inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources (power and authority) actively defend the advantaged against the disadvantaged (less privileged) class/status.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This was chosen because of its effectiveness in seeking the views of people about issues that concerns them (Ogege, 2010). The study covered the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The Sample size was a pull from the estimated total population of Nigeria. The sample size of this study comprised of members of the public (most especially those who have been victims of police differential attitude or have their relations under police custody), the police and criminal suspects themselves. The actual sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane (1964) formula for sample size determinant to arrive at approximately 400 sample size. The sample size determinant criteria are given below

$$n = \frac{P}{I + Pe^2}$$

Where:      n        = Sample  
               P        = Population  
               I        = Constant  
               e        = Error limit (0.05)

A 400 sample was drawn from the from Nigeria total population. Below is the distribution of the categories of respondents

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents**

Categories of Respondents	Sample Size
Criminal Suspects	56
Policemen	92
Civilians	252
Total Population	400

The sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive sampling techniques. The pool of the sample size was from a larger study which cuts across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The researcher, using research assistants, visited the different Zonal headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force. Police personnel and criminal suspects were purposively selected. Most of the visitors to the police stations were interviewed making up the civilians. The choice of this technique is based on the fact that the individual selected for the study are known and there is an underlying interest in the selected groups. The instrument adopted in eliciting data for this study is the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that questions which are regarded as ambiguous, misleading or vague were avoided (Creswell, 2009). Data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire instrument. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical tables, frequencies and percentages. The Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test was used to test hypotheses. The face and content validity of the item questionnaire instrument was confirmed by the researcher's supervisor after going through them and making necessary amendments. The Test-Retest Statistical method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire instrument. Five Percent of sample size population was used to conduct the pilot survey test and a re-test was also carried out using the 5 % sample size population after 2 weeks of the initial test. Scores derived from both tests were correlated to find the stability of the rank order of the individual respondents over some time, using Spearman's Rank Correlation Co-efficient Formula. The value of the correlation coefficient was 0.67.

## Results and Findings

Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents, only 365 copies were returned completely and accurately filled, while 35 copies, though returned were not accurately filled. It was based on the 365 copies of the questionnaire that the researcher presented the analysis and discussion of findings.

**Table 2: Socio-demographics of the respondents**

Items		Civilians	Criminal Suspects	Police	Total
<b>Sex of Respondents</b>	<b>Male</b>	105(46.3)	39(76.5)	61(70.1)	205(56.2)
	<b>Female</b>	122(53.7)	12(23.5)	26(29.9)	160(43.8)
<b>Age of Respondents</b>	<b>18-37</b>	33(14.5)	173(3.3)	20(23.0)	70(19.2)
	<b>38-57</b>	63(27.8)	19(37.3)	41(47.1)	123(33.7)
	<b>58-77</b>	63(27.8)	10(19.6)	17(19.5)	90(24.7)
	<b>78 and above</b>	68(30.0)	5(9.8)	9(10.3)	82(22.5)
	<b>Total</b>	227(100.0)	51(100.0)	87(100.0)	365(100.0)
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>FSLC</b>	23(10.1)	4(7.8)	14(16.1)	41(11.2)
	<b>WAEC/SSC/NECO</b>	89(39.2)	21(41.2)	29(33.3)	139(38.1)
	<b>NCE/ND</b>	39(17.2)	7(13.7)	10(11.5)	56(15.3)
	<b>Degree/HND</b>	56(24.7)	18(35.3)	32(36.8)	106(29.0)
	<b>Others</b>	20(8.8)	1(2.0)	2(2.3)	23(6.3)
	<b>Total</b>	227(100.0)	51(100.0)	87(100.0)	365(100.0)

Table 2 shows the demographic distribution of the 365 respondents that participated in the survey. About 56% of them were males while 43.8% were females. Specifically, male respondents (76.5%) were higher among crime suspects while female respondents (53.7%) were higher among the civil population. The age distribution shows that age of the respondents was unevenly distributed, for instance, 33.7% were between ages 38-57 years, 24.7% were aged 58-77 years, 22.5% were 78 years and above, and 19.2% were between the ages 18-37. The percentage of the police (47.1%) was higher among those between aged 38-57 years. The crime suspects (33.3%) dominated 18-37 age brackets while the general public had a higher age bracket for those between aged 58 and above. Educational qualification of the respondents shows that 38.1% had WAEC and equivalent, 29% had the first-degree certificate, 15.3% had NCE and equivalent, 11.2% had First School leaving certificate while 6.3% had others academic qualifications. Specifically, the police had more FSLC (16.1%) and First Degree (36.8%). The general public had more NCE (17.2%) and other certificates (8.8%) than others. Also, the crime suspect had WAEC and equivalent (41.2%) than others.

**Table 3: Crime suspects' socio-economic conditions and police attitude towards them**

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total
The Nigeria Police are partial on the way they treat criminal suspects	13(3.6)	18(4.9)	81(22.2)	253(69.3)	365(100.0)
Police detention of crime suspect varies according to their status in the society	8(2.2)	33(9.0)	142(38.9)	182(49.9)	365(100.0)
The repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects increases the frequency of crime commission	12(3.3)	36(9.9)	76(20.8)	241(66.0)	365(100.0)
Those who can bribe the police receive lesser detention in the police custody	10(2.7)	25(6.8)	153(41.9)	177(48.5)	365(100.0)
Nigeria Police does not do a proper and thorough investigation before they conduct arrest and label citizens suspects	10(2.7)	71(19.5)	117(32.1)	167(45.8)	365(100.0)
Nigeria police are predisposed to arresting the less privileged complainants and witnesses at the crime scene event	21(5.8)	40(11.0)	124(34.0)	180(49.3)	365(100.0)

Table 3 shows the respondent's opinion on the influence of the crime suspects' socio-economic conditions on police attitude towards them. The result shows that respondents collectively agreed that police are partial on their treatment of criminal suspects in their custody (69.3%). The partiality in police treatment of crime suspect vary on the procedure for police detention i.e. they detain criminal suspect according to varying socio and economic conditions they face (49.9%). Crime suspects societal conditions promote police repressive attitude towards them and because they consider themselves in a disadvantaged position, the frequency of crime commission tend to increase among crime suspects (66%). Police differential attitude towards crime suspects is pronounced on the eagerness of most crime suspect being able to bribe their way through the criminal justice process as respondents claim that those who can pay bribe receives less detention and treatments from the police (48.5%). The police differential attitude discourages police proper and thorough investigation before they conduct arrest or prosecute criminal suspects (45.8%). This informs why respondents strongly claimed that Nigeria Police are predisposed to arresting the less privileged in the society because they see them favouring crime due to their economic deficiency (49.3%).

**Table 4: Crime suspects education and police treatment**

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Criminal suspects should be treated according to their educational qualification	14(3.8)	85(23.3)	97(26.6)	169(46.3)	365(100.0)
Most of the detainees in police custody are less educated	12(3.3)	17(4.7)	109(29.9)	227(62.2)	365(100.0)
The Nigeria Police do not give preference to educated Nigerians when conducting an arrest.	14(3.8)	68(18.6)	81(22.2)	202(55.3)	365(100.0)
There is usually a separate detaining cell block for the educated and the non-educated	16(4.4)	23(6.3)	110(30.1)	216(59.2)	365(100.0)
Educated suspects are not detained and tried from the prisons	15(4.1)	38(10.4)	79(21.6)	233(63.8)	365(100.0)
The non-educated are not granted immediate bail when they are suspected of committing a crime	16(4.4)	67(18.4)	91(24.9)	191(52.3)	365(100.0)

By implication, it can be summed up that the police differential attitude towards crime suspects is influenced by the prevailing socio-economic condition criminal suspects face in Nigeria. Table 4 shows the extent to which police treatment is influenced by the level of criminal suspect education. Questions raised in this section were all strongly agreed upon by the respondents. Specifically, 46.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the level of educational attainment of criminal suspect influences how the police treat them when in police custody. Respondents strongly agreed (62.2%) that most of the police detainees are the less educated ones. This is true as the educated will seek the services of lawyers or inform the police of their right as citizens. Respondents agreed that the police give separate detaining blocks/cells to both the educated and less educated criminal suspects (59.2%) and more often the educated ones are never detained and tried by the police as it is will the less educated. By implication, the findings reveal that criminal suspect education strongly influences police differential attitude towards treating crime suspects.

**Table 5: Variation in general awareness on police treatment of crime suspects**

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Police brutality on criminal suspects' results in public hostility of the police	31(8.5)	63(17.3)	109(29.9)	162(44.4)	365(100.0)
Police sometimes take tips (bribe) and fail to effect arrest and prosecution	18(4.9)	39(10.7)	84(23.0)	224(61.4)	365(100.0)
Because the criminal suspect is over tortured or under torture, the right and required guiltiness to prove them guilty may not necessarily be derived from them.	94(25.8)	99(27.1)	63(17.3)	109(29.9)	365(100.0)
Criminal suspects refuse to give the required information because they see the police as corrupt in themselves.	59(16.2)	108(29.6)	107(29.3)	91(24.9)	365(100.0)
The lack of confidence in the ability of the Police by the public has affected their performance.	84(23.0)	98(26.8)	123(33.7)	60(16.4)	365(100.0)
The perception of corruption in the Police has sent the innocent to people to jail	52(14.2)	115(31.5)	119(32.6)	79(21.6)	365(100.0)

Table 5 shows the variation among respondents on their awareness of police differential attitude towards the treatment of crime suspects. Respondents vary on their awareness of police treatment of crime suspects. The result shows that less than 50% of respondents strongly agreed that the general public hostility on the police is caused by how they treat crime suspects. Respondents were indifferent on whether the police sometimes take bribe before they arrest or prosecute as 61.4% affirmed that they usually take a bribe to arrest and prosecute criminal suspects. On the question of whether the level of police treatment has helped to generate the required proof for pleading guilty, only 29.9% claimed that the over-torturing and under-torturing of crime suspects affect the extent police could generate proof of pleading guilty of crime suspects. Respondents also

collectively agreed that crime suspects always refuse to give the police information because they see the police as corrupt (54.2%) and they the public lack confidence in the ability of the police also affects the police performance (50.1%). By implication, the result reveals that Nigerians have a differential awareness on police treatment of crime suspects.

### Test of hypothesis

#### Hypothesis one

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of a criminal suspect

**Table 7: Chi-square result on the socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of a criminal suspect**

Comparison	DF	Cal $X^2$	Crit $X^2$	P-Value	Remark
socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of crime suspect	15	130.800	24.99579	0.000	Significant

*(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01\*)*

The test of hypothesis one shows that the socio-economic status of crime suspects has a significant relationship with police treatment of crime suspects ( $X^2 = 130.800$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This by implication means that the status of crime suspect affects how the police treat them when they are arrested.

#### Hypothesis two

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspects

**Table 8: Chi-square result on the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspect**

Comparison	DF	Cal $X^2$	Crit $X^2$	P-Value	Remark
the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspects	15	100.678	24.99579	0.0000	Significant

*(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01\*)*

Hypothesis two shows a test of significance between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatments of crime suspects. The result shows a not significant result ( $X^2 = 100.678$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) which is that there is a significant relationship between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspect. Thus, implies that the education of crime suspects does influence how police treat them when in their custody.

### Hypothesis three

Ho: There is no significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect

**Table 9: Chi-square result on public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect**

Comparison	DF	Cal $X^2$	Crit $X^2$	P-Value	Remark
public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect	15	308.872	24.99579	0.000	Significant

*(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01\*)*

The test of hypothesis on public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspects reveals that there is a significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspects ( $X^2 = 308.872$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that the public is critically aware of police treatment of crime suspects.

### Hypothesis four

Ho: There is no significant relationship between police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police

**Table 10: Chi-square result on police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police**

Comparison	DF	Cal $X^2$	Crit $X^2$	P-Value	Remark
police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police	12	43.758	24.99579	0.000	Significant

*(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01\*)*

The test of hypothesis four shows that the brutality of the police on crime suspects significantly relates to public hostility towards the police ( $X^2 = 43.758$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that the nature of police brutality on crime suspects significantly affects the level of public hostility towards the police. This prevents the co-operation between the police and the public.

### Discussions

This study examined the attitude of the police towards criminal suspects and its effect on crime control in Nigeria. The data analyzed in the previous section of this paper indicates among many findings that the public exhibits negative reactions to the police because of their attitudes to criminal suspects.

Firstly, the study reveals that criminal suspects should not be tortured to get information from them if crime control could be more effective and police brutality on criminal suspect's results to public hostility to the police. Where Brutality is needed by the police, they should attend to the medical

needs of the criminal suspects in their custody to enable the criminal suspect to give useful information to assist in crime control and police taking of bribe prevents the effective crime control process. These findings concur with the previous studies as Alemika (1990), Dike, (2010), Alemika and Chukwuka (2000), and United Nations, (2017). However, this study made findings which challenged that of Omoroghomwan, (2018) which suggests that the public co-operates with the police except when the member of the public is the criminal suspect or his/her accomplice.

Another discovery made by this study was on the area of public hostility with the police on how they treat criminal suspects. The study reveals that the hostile nature of the police on criminal suspects hinders the effective operation of the police and grows the lack of confidence in the ability of the police by the public which affects police performance. This distrust in the police argues that corruption in the police system has caused the innocent to be jailed and the accused freed from jail and because criminal suspects are over tortured or under tortured the right and required quietness to prove them guilty does not drive them thus leading to the criminal suspects' refusal to give the required information becomes a problem. Police corruption has slowed down the criminal justice system and caused increased public discontentment and dis-credibility in the police operation. The police attitude on crime control is negative because the public sees the police as responsible for the problems of crime control in society. This finding again is in congruence with earlier findings such as Alemika (2000) and CLEEN, (2015)

The study further reveals that the pattern of police treatment of criminal suspects is critically not supported by the public. This was shown as the study supports the fact that criminal suspects are seriously tortured by the police to get information from them and the attitude of the police towards criminal suspects and convicts is bad revealing that criminal suspects and convicts are not given medical attention even after torturing to obtain relevant information. Irrespective of age, gender and educational level, the treatment police give to suspects does not change. This is why the public usually isolates and stigmatize police officers and their families due to poor attitude to criminal suspects and their low-performance level. This finding is not in congruence with earlier findings such as Alemika (2000) and CLEEN, (2015) which states that socioeconomic and demographic factors play significant roles in the police differential attitudes to suspects and differential attitudes come in the form of failure to effect arrest and prosecution in the event of having collected tips

from criminal suspects; in the area of detention. While some of the suspects are locked up in the police cells, some others who may have committed more serious crimes are set free.

Again, the study reveals that the police are criminally minded and corrupt which affects their ability to protect the citizens and due to the level of public hostility to the police, the public usually does not co-operate with the police through giving useful information. Dufka, (2010) found a similar situation and further found that the suspects kept behind pay some money. The study also found out that the rich and the powerful enjoy the benefit of bail and that some suspects are tortured and brutalized while others who committed a similar offence or more serious ones are not tortured or brutalized (Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020).

In the test of hypotheses, the study reveals that the socio-economic status of criminal suspects has a significant relationship with police treatment of criminal suspects. This by implication means that the status of criminal suspect affects how the police treat them when they are arrested. The repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects not minding the age and sex of criminals increases the frequency of crime commission, just as found by Omoroghomwan, (2019). The educational level of criminal suspects does significantly influence police treatments of criminal suspects. Thus, this implies that the education of criminals does affect how police treat them when in their custody. Hypothesis on public awareness level and the police treatment of criminal suspects reveals that there is a significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of criminal suspects. This implies that the public is critically aware of police treatment of criminal suspects. This finding concurs with many earlier studies (Alemika and Chukwuka, 2000; Omoroghomwan, 2019). The brutality of the police on criminal suspects significantly relates to public hostility towards the police. This implies that the nature of police brutality on criminal suspects significantly affects the level of public hostility towards the police. This prevents the co-operation between the police and the public. As earlier captured, (CLEEN, (2015) found a similar situation and further found out that the suspects kept behind pay some money. The study also found that the rich and the powerful enjoy the benefit of bail and that some suspects are tortured and brutalized while others who committed a similar offence or more serious ones are not tortured or brutalized.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

It is true that Nigeria police is an important agent of the society for the maintenance and securing of public safety and order and their onerous duties of crime prevention, investigating and detecting of crimes and criminals, as well as the prosecution of criminals, is not doubtable. As a process of achieving these duties, a cordial relationship ought to exist between the police and the public to a large extent that will assist the police to discharge its duties efficiently and diligently. However, what we see and experience as the duties and responsibilities of the Nigeria Police is far from the aforementioned. The treatment given to criminal suspects is dehumanizing and provokes public discontentment of the police activities in the protection of all and restoring of order in the society. This study, therefore, concludes that the Nigeria Police Agency should rethink on mitigating the brutalizing means of coercing criminal suspects to confess and even when brutality is needed, suspects should be given medical attention to reduce the side effect on them.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Prevention they say is better than a cure. In this regard, the police should adopt preventive measures rather than proactive systems where some innocent citizens are arrested, detained and treated as criminals without prosecution. To make the preventive measure work, the police should embark on effective foot and vehicular patrols to effectively deter and debar criminals from carrying out their nefarious activities.
- ii. Suspected criminals under police detention and custody should be decently treated. And in doing so, the mutual respect of the police will be reciprocated in as much as the police should be-courteous in dealing with the people. Moreover, it will be proper and just for the police to see and regard detention as last resort Monitoring people from their residences could be a better way of detention or possibly house arrest.
- iii. The idea of giving preferential treatments to some elites' criminal suspects and degrading others should be discouraged by the Nigeria Police Force. A suspect is a suspect irrespective of their sex, age and educational qualification as well as their economic status.
- iv. The police should recruit and train more competent hands to properly cover all nooks and crannies of the cities where criminal activities are more prevalent. Moreover, the police should recruit highly educated citizens who could develop ideas ahead of criminals. The

force should get rid of those uneducated members of the force who hold tenaciously to the mode of operation that is not functional.

- v. The police should be organizing seminars, and workshops to discuss the current operational strategies as society is now in the computer age.
- vi. The police should also Launder their battered and negative image as well as become more efficient and effective to win back public confidence and trust.
- vii. The government should also pay compensation to those innocent victims of police detention and brutality who after their preliminary investigations, are cleared. The compensation will enable them to feel and realize that they have been unjustly treated and sense of belonging restored.

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## Public Perception of the Availability and Accessibility of Government Sponsored Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

In the last two decades or more, Nigeria has to grapple with many emerging social problems as a result of the increasing rate of poverty. Nigeria is currently the world capital of people living in extreme poverty and about six (6) people slide into the poverty line of \$1.90 per day. Ebonyi, being one of the poorest states in Nigeria is characterized by lack of employment and social infrastructures. Though the Federal and Ebonyi State governments have over the years initiated and implemented some Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) like the National Poverty Eradication Programme, N-Power, Community and Social Development Agency etc aimed at reducing the poverty level, poverty has continued to rise. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the public perception of the availability and accessibility of government-sponsored PAP in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A participatory approach was used as its theoretical framework. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with an in-depth interview as an instrument for data collection. Twenty-six respondents were purposively selected to constitute the sample size. Collected data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings from the study revealed that accessing PAP was difficult because of the stringent conditions attached. The result also indicated that lack of proper coordination of the programmes, hijack by politicians and lack of adequate sensitization have made the people perceive PAP as ineffective in poverty reduction. The study recommended that both the social workers and the potential beneficiaries should be involved in the formulation and implementation of people-oriented PAP to address the issue of poverty.

**Keywords:** Community and Social Development Agency, N-Power, Poverty Alleviation Programmes, Poverty, Participatory Approach

### Introduction

Globally, poverty is one of the most disturbing issues or challenges recently faced by humanity (Omoniyi, 2013). According to Peer (2020), about 9.2% representing 689 million people live in extreme poverty across the world and survive on less than \$1.90 a day. Similarly, about 803 million people live in multidimensional poverty and are undernourished. Thus, 476 million children are out-of-school, 1.2 billion people do not have access to clean cooking fuel, 687 million people do not have electricity, while 1.03 billion people live in substandard houses (United Nations Development Programme {UNDP}, 2020). Though the above figure represents global multidimensional poverty, about 84.3% of this multidimensional poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia with a poverty rate of 558 million and 530 million respectively (UNDP,

2020). Even among the Sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar alone have almost half of the entire poor people in the region (World Bank, 2020). Specifically, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo alone currently contribute about one-quarter of the total poverty rate in Africa with about 170 million people in extreme poverty (Ventures Africa, 2019).

Data from the Brookings Institute revealed that Nigeria is currently the world capital of people living in extreme poverty, with projections that about 87 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty and about 6 people sliding into poverty per minute (Kharas, Hamel, & Hofer, 2018). In the same vein, Omoniyi (2018) states that about 100 million Nigerians are poor as they live below the world poverty line of \$1.90 per day. However, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) states that about 40.1% representing 82.9 million Nigerians live in poverty with 52.1% of the poor people living in rural areas, and 18% residing in urban areas. This means that 4 out of 10 Nigerians have real per capita expenditures of less than N137, 430 yearly. Also, NBS (2019) stated that 79.76% of Ebonyi people are poor. With the above statistics, Ebonyi emerged the fourth poorest state in Nigeria after Sokoto, Taraba, and Jigawa states that took first, second, and third positions with a poverty rate of 87.73%, 87.72%, and 87.02% respectively. The poverty status of Ebonyi State is evident in the lack of food, security, healthcare, employment, lack of shelter, low educational level, poor electricity supply, bad roads etc (Ani, 2020).

The concern over the increasing poverty level in the world especially in low-and middle-income countries and the need for its reduction as a means of improving the standard of living of the people has led to the conceptualization and implementation of various poverty reduction programmes (Oyesanmi, Eboiyehi, & Adereti, 2005). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2006) sees poverty reduction as the efforts of national governments in reducing poverty levels through policy initiatives aimed at enhancing the participation of vulnerable groups in the economic and social development process. Poverty reduction refers to formal activities geared towards lowering the prevalence and rate of poverty and save humanity mainly through empowerment and education, thereby enabling them to take care of their own personal and family basic needs (Odalonu & Obani, 2018; Obiwuru, 2019).

The Nigerian government has over the years initiated and implemented several poverty reduction strategies aimed at reducing the sharp edge of poverty and improving the lives of her citizens. Some of the previous and present poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria include Farm Settlements Option 1960, National Accelerated Food Production Programme 1972, Agricultural Development Programme 1973, Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank 1975, Operation Feed the Nation 1976, Rural Banking Scheme 1977, Austerity Measures 1978, Green Revolution 1980, War Against Indiscipline 1983-1985, Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority 1985, Structural Adjustment Programme 1986, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures 1986, Better Life Programme 1987, Peoples' Bank of Nigeria 1987, National Directorate of Employment 1988, National Economic Recovery Fund 1989, Community Banks 1990, Family Support Programme 1994, Petroleum Special Trust Fund 1995, Family Economic Advancement Programme 1997, Poverty Alleviation Programme 2000, National Poverty Eradication Programme 2001, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies 2004, 7-Point Agenda, 2007, Subsidy Removal and Re-Investment Programme 2013, N-Power Programme 2016, Farmermoni, Tradermoni and Marketmoni 2018, National Youth Investment Fund, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Survival Fund 2020. Others are Low-Cost Housing, River Basin Development Authority, Free and Compulsory Primary Education, Rural Electrification Scheme etc (Hassaini, 2014; Taiwo, & Agwu, 2016; Okah, Iyiani, & Aghedo, 2020).

Given the above efforts, and in a bid to show concern for poverty alleviation, Ebonyi State government since its inception in 1996 has initiated and implemented several programmes, policies and strategies. Some of such programmes include Free and Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, Rural Electrification Projects, Rural Water Projects, Youth Empowerment through Neighborhood Watch, Scholarship Programmes, Family Succor and Upliftment Programme, Farmers' Empowerment Programme, Skills Acquisition Centres and Community and Social Development Agency.

However, even though significant efforts have been made in lifting people out of poverty especially in more developed nations of the world through these programmes, poverty level in most low-and middle-income countries like Nigeria has continued to rise (Okah, Iyiani, & Aghedo,

2020). This means that despite these poverty reduction programmes, the poverty situation in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State, in particular, is in the increase with more people falling below the poverty line daily. In Ebonyi State, there is practically lack of basic infrastructure and low level of income with most of the people dying of preventable diseases (Edeh, Udoikah, & Ugbala, 2017). This is because the poverty alleviation programmes meant to address the issue of poverty in Nigeria are faced with many challenges including poor programmes' implementation, corruption programmes being poorly targeted, and being imposed on the beneficiaries from above without their involvement (Babatunde, Olorunsanya, & Adejola, 2008; Omoniyi, 2013; Edeh, Udoikah, & Ugbala, 2017). Anwar (2017) stated that the poor management of poverty alleviation programmes has made it ineffective in ensuring poverty reduction and therefore, requires the partnership of professional social workers who are trained to help people meet their needs. This is because social workers play vital roles in policy formulation and have shown increased concern on poverty reduction as a result of their long history in working with the marginalized group (International Federation of Social Workers, 2010). Therefore, the poverty alleviation programmes and policies formulated by the government can be managed by social workers for better results (Rajendra, Venkat, & Channeveer, 2017).

Given the above, social workers are needed to assist in the formulation and implementation of people-oriented poverty alleviation programmes to address the issue of poverty and its devastating effects on the people, especially the rural dwellers. Through advocacy, social workers can influence the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and improving the living conditions of the citizens. According to Zastrow (2004), one of the roles of social work is to always advocate for policies and programmes that address the provision of social services especially to the poor. Social workers should therefore liaise with policymakers in formulating favourable and friendly policies that will better the lots of the people. They are therefore expected to ensure that the welfare and living conditions of the people are improved upon through championing of policies that will provide them with social amenities and job opportunities to work towards alleviating the distress faced by the people. Also, social workers have major roles to play in providing public awareness, advocating for resources and education, community organization, planning and delivering peace and reconciliation programmes (Al-Qdah & Lacroix, 2011).

### **Participatory approach**

The study adopted the participatory approach as its theoretical framework. The theory was propounded by Paulo Freire in 1970 and formally introduced in the development arena by Robert Chambers in 1980. Advanced in the works of Fiorino and Bowles (2001), participatory approach is a comprehensive and well-strategized activity requiring the involvement of the beneficiaries right from the beginning stage. At planning or project initiation, the people for which the project is planned for must be the drivers and part of the decision-making process, to help identify areas of felt needs. The participatory theory represents a move from the global, spatial, and top-down strategies that dominated early development initiatives to more locally sensitive methodologies (Claridge, 2004). The importance of participation grew out of the recognition that the world's poor have suffered as a result of development and that everyone needs to be involved in development decisions, implementations and benefits. Erring (2000) argued that the failure of the "top-down" approach to rural development necessitates "the participatory approach" to socio-economic development, and puts the last first as the poverty alleviation process. The assumption is that participation of stakeholders will cause decision-making processes to be more inclusive and therefore, instigate ownership over development processes, which in turn, leads to more sustainable impacts (Chambers, 1983). Therefore, the government's poverty alleviation programmes and policies should make provisions for inclusions of the prospective beneficiaries of the projects from conception, designing and implementation stages so that their views will be considered. This will aid project effectiveness, utilization and sustainability.

The theory can be used in identifying needs, planning, monitoring or evaluating projects and programmes such as poverty alleviation programmes. As a consultation tool, it offers the opportunity to go beyond mere consultation and promote the active participation of communities in the issues and interventions that shape their lives. The employment of participatory approaches in development projects has been a required element of project design for many donor organizations over the years (Thomas, & Van de Fliert, 2014). Despite the importance of the theory in the programme's implementation and poverty reduction, it has been criticized for placing unrealistic demands on people, with more pressing demands on their time. It has also been criticized for lack of better development impacts (Cooker, & Kothari, 2001).

## Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006), Ebonyi State has a population of 2, 173, 501 people with the majority of this population living in rural areas. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with an in-depth interview as an instrument for data collection. The study equally adopted a purposive sampling method in the selection of 26 respondents to constitute the sample size. One community was selected from each of the 13 local government areas in the state. The selected communities are Umuezeokoha, Ikwuato-Idembia, Ndufu-Alike, Ezillo, Izhia/Ezzamgbo, Igbagu, Ishieke, Nkaleke-Echara, Okposhi-Okwu, Oshiri, Amaeze-Ishiagu, Amasiri, and Owutu-Edda. From the selected communities, 2 respondents were further selected and interviewed for the study. The selected respondents were the representatives of youths, town union presidents, opinion leaders and women leaders in their respective local governments. The rationale behind the choice of purposive sampling method was because of the key positions of the selected respondents in their respective communities, their knowledge of PAP and willingness to share such information with the researchers. The interviews took place at homes and offices of the respondents with each interview lasting about 30 to 40 minutes. The respondents were between the ages of 18 and above. Informed consent forms were obtained from the respondents before conducting the interviews; while observing COVID-19 protocol of 2 meters gap. The field exercise took place between August and September 2020. Data collected were transcribed, edited and analysed through themes, phrases and direct quotes and used for the study.

## Findings and results

### *Availability of poverty alleviation programmes*

Majority of the respondents attested that there are poverty alleviation strategies in Ebonyi State. In particular, one of the respondents had this to say:

My brother, all I can tell you is that the government is trying in terms of poverty alleviation initiatives in the state. Apart from the federal government's poverty alleviation programmes that are existent in the state like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), N-Power and the World Bank Assisted Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA) etc, the state government also has in place many other poverty alleviation policies and programmes aimed at reducing the poverty level in the state (*Female IDI, Umuezeokoha*).

Another respondent phrased:

Ebonyi State government has been trying to reduce the poverty level and improve for the better the living conditions of her citizens through numerous programmes and policies. Some of such programmes include the CSDA, which has been instrumental to many development projects in the state. Others are free and compulsory primary and secondary education, farmers' empowerment through soft loans, local and overseas scholarship programmes, rural roads construction, rural electrification projects, and soft loans to civil servants for business and farming purposes to augment their monthly salaries (*Male IDI, Amasiri*).

### *Accessibility of poverty alleviation programmes*

Though available evidence from the respondents showed that poverty alleviation programmes abound in Ebonyi State as stated above. However, the accessibility and utilization of such programmes were said to be difficult and problematic. Some of the respondents reported that many people in Ebonyi State have not been able to access or benefit from any of the available poverty alleviation programmes because of one reason or the other. As a result of the stringent conditions attached to some of these programmes, many poor people have not been able to meet up with such conditions. For example, it was learnt that CSDA requires a counterpart fund of about 10-20% from the applying groups, societies or communities to qualify them for application. This counterpart fund according to the respondents does not guarantee that the application and project will be approved. A female respondent quizzed:

My dear, I can tell you that irrespective of these poverty measures, more than 95% of my people have not benefited from any of the numerous poverty alleviation programmes of the state government. To me, it seems the programmes are just meant for some people alone while excluding the others that have nobody in the government (*Female IDI, Amaeze-Ishiagu*).

However, a respondent with a dissenting view said:

Ebonyi State poverty alleviation programmes are there to be accessed by every Ebonyian. He continued, in my community alone, many people have benefited through N-Power, NAPEP, scholarship programmes, and loans for business and agricultural purposes (*Male IDI, Okposhi-Okwu*).

In lending his voice, another respondent had this to say:

My community (Umuezeokoha) has accessed many times the poverty alleviation programmes of the state government. In particular, the Ebonyi State government through CSDA has built a town hall for Umuezeokoha Youth Association (UYA), built lock-up shops at Ohagolode village, and is currently building other lock-up shops at Eke Umuezeokoha market through

the State/Local Government Joint Poverty Alleviation Programme (SLGJPAP) to the glory of God and benefit of the people (*Male IDI, Umuezeokoha*).

Yet another respondent noted:

Many people including myself have accessed and benefited from the government's poverty alleviation programmes especially through the N-Power. That one favoured many of our youths (*Male IDI, Ezillo*).

### *Impacts of poverty alleviation programmes*

Some of the respondents stated that poverty alleviation programmes have impacted them positively especially in areas of rural infrastructure and amenities like electricity, boreholes, health centres, school buildings and unemployment benefits (N-Power). Below is a quote from a respondent:

We were able to complete our town hall building through the assistance of the state's poverty alleviation efforts and the hall now serves our people in various ways. For example, during the last local government election in August 2020, the hall served as our polling unit. Our community also uses the hall for meetings and many others have used it for wedding and other ceremonies (*Male IDI, Izhia/Ezzamgbo*).

Still on the impacts of poverty alleviation programmes in affirming its impacts puts it this way:

I graduated from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki since 2010 and could not get a job for over 6 years. I could not start a small-scale business because of lack of fund. It was in 2016 that I was enlisted into the Batch A N-Power programme and was placed on a monthly stipend of N30,000. The money paid to me through N-Power has helped me to set up a small business and saw me through my M.Sc. programme (*Female IDI, Nkaleke-Echara*).

Another respondent also says:

I know of a friend that was given a loan of N500, 000 through the state government-civil servant loan scheme. He invested the money in farming and he is now doing better (*Male IDI, Igbagu*).

Similarly, another respondent cheerfully says:

My neighbouring community now enjoys a steady electricity supply because of the assistance of the poverty alleviation programme in the state. In addition, 2 of my siblings who benefited from the N-Power programme of the federal government are now doing well in their small-scale businesses (*Male IDI, Ndufu-Alike*).

### *Challenges of poverty alleviation programmes*

Our interviews with the respondents revealed that despite the availability, accessibility and impacts of the government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes on the lives of the beneficiaries in Ebonyi State, several challenges were said to be affecting the effectiveness and smooth operations of the programmes. According to a respondent, many problems are facing these programmes. He said:

Lack of proper coordination of the programmes by the government, difficulties accessing the programmes, projects being hijacked by politicians, lack of sensitization about the programmes and how to access them, lack of fund, corruption, and lack of genuine beneficiaries etc. affect the potency and effectiveness of these programmes in poverty reduction (*Male IDI, Amasiri*).

### *Perceived effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes*

There were mixed reactions to how the respondents perceived the poverty alleviation programmes. While some perceived them as being effective, the majority of the respondents saw the programmes as being ineffective in poverty reduction considering their scope of coverage and the current poverty level in the state. A respondent stated:

My brother, all I can tell you is that there is poverty in this state. Just look around you and see for yourself. You are from this state, you should know better. Poverty alleviation programmes are trying, but the poverty level of the state is far beyond poverty reduction initiatives. Look at me, I am a graduate, yet no job for a good 5 years now. Let me tell you, both the present federal and state poverty alleviation programmes are useless on the face of the state's poverty level. They are just a scratch in the surface of poverty here, simple (*Male IDI, Oshiri*).

Another respondent said:

The government's poverty alleviation programmes are trying but the level of poverty here is bigger than the current programmes meant to tame it. Many individuals, groups, and communities that applied for these programmes did not succeed, probably because of the scope of the programme. In all, more than 90% of those that applied for one form of poverty alleviation programme or another did not get it. You see, you cannot say they are effective when the majority of the people are yet to feel their impacts despite several attempts (*Male IDI, Nkaliki-Echara*).

Another respondent reported:

You cannot say they are effective when the rate of poverty and unemployment is in the increase. In fact, forget what you see in the

state capital here, just go to the rural areas where the majority of the people live and see things for yourself. Poverty is ravaging the lives of the people (*Male IDI, Ikwuato-Idembia*).

### *Ways to make the programmes more effective*

We asked to find out ways in which the programmes could become more effective in poverty reduction and improve the living conditions of the people. One of the respondents tried to suggest ways by saying:

I think the government should put in more efforts to ensure that more people are accommodated into its various programmes. Also, there is no sense in recruiting unemployed people especially the youth in the name of empowerment, pay them for a stipulated period and disengage them without giving them something to fall back on, thereby throwing them back to the labour market and consequently, poverty (like N-power) (*Male IDI, Ishieke*).

Another stated:

There should be sensitization to enable the people to continue to give the programmes a shot. Out of experience, many still believe that the handlers of the programmes always skew it to benefit their people (*Male IDI, Owutu-Edda*).

Another respondent noted:

The government should monitor the programmes for effectiveness. There should also be proper coordination of projects to ensure that the target or genuine beneficiaries are reached. The government should also ensure full implementation of projects and ensure that the people such projects are meant for are involved while conceiving and implementing the programmes (*Male IDI, Ishieke*).

Another respondent who happened to be a social worker suggested the inclusion of social workers in programmes' planning and implementation. She said:

To ensure that the programmes are effective, the potential beneficiaries should be put first and social workers should be involved in all stages of the programmes meant to alleviate poverty (*Female IDI, Ezillo*).

### **Discussion**

Indications show that there are government' efforts to the alleviating of the poverty rate in Ebonyi State. Responses from the majority of the respondents revealed that there is a presence of federal, state and local government poverty alleviation programmes in the area. The study found that apart

from NDE, NAPEP etc that are federal government-sponsored programmes, the state government has also put in place its programmes like the free and compulsory primary and secondary education, local and overseas scholarship programmes, and the World Bank assisted Community and Social Development Agency etc. These programmes are meant to aid the federal government's initiatives in reducing the poverty level in Ebonyi State.

The study equally shows that despite the availability of poverty alleviation programmes in the study area, accessing them was difficult because of the conditions attached to some of them. The respondents stated that as a result of these stringent conditions, the majority of the people in the state have not been able to access or benefit from the programmes. Specifically, they stated that some of the poverty alleviation programmes like CSDA require a counterpart fund of about 10-20% from applicants before considerations. Of course, many people do not have such fund to pay as counterpart fund. It is therefore observed that many people whom the programmes are supposedly meant for were yet to access them. As a result, most respondents expressed feelings of dissatisfaction as the majority of those that accessed or benefited were those that had political affiliation or godfathers in the ruling political party (Damilola, 2013).

On the impacts of the programmes in their lives, most of the respondents stated that the programmes in the state have impacted them positively especially those who have benefited directly or indirectly. Some of them said their respective communities were able to complete their communal projects through the assistance of these programmes in the state. According to them, the completed projects now serve them individually and collectively in their various communities. Many others have also seen their living conditions improved and changed for better through the poverty alleviation programmes like the N-Power. The study revealed that the programme has impacted positively on the beneficiaries, especially in the areas of job creation, improvement in income, improvement in raising the respondents' level of education, improvement in social status, etc (Hussaini, 2014). This is in line with the work of Anya (2017), which stated that poverty alleviation programmes like NAPEP have benefited many people through employment creation, Keke-NAPEP, Otta farm training programme, tailoring and fashion and designing equipment, as well as loan/grants to farmers.

One of the major findings of the study was that irrespective of their impacts on the lives of the people, these programmes still faced a legion of challenges. The respondents stated that lack of proper coordination of the programmes by the government, difficulties in accessing the programmes, politicians hijacking the programmes, lack of adequate sensitization about the programmes and how to access them, corruption, programme discontinuity, lack of funds, and lack of genuine beneficiaries etc affect the potency and operations of the programmes. Therefore, instead of reducing the incidence of poverty, which is their sole aim, these programmes tend to serve as means for draining the national resources due to the pursuit of parochial interests, as a result of fostering corruption, dishonesty, mismanagement, imitation of other country's programmes, political interference, lack of funding etc (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Odalonu & Obani, 2018; Obiwuru, 2019).

There were mixed reactions to the respondents' views of poverty alleviation programmes in the state. Majority of the respondents indicated that the programmes are ineffective in poverty reduction owing to the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in the state. Though the programmes have impacted them positively, it does not transform to effectiveness because many people are yet to benefit from the programmes and the poverty level they seek to reduce is rather on the increase. Several poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, initiated by both the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), aimed at combating and alleviating poverty are not successful as they are considered ineffective in poverty reduction (Taiwo & Agwu, 2016; Okah, Iyiani & Aghedo, 2020). This means that despite these poverty reduction programmes, the poverty situation in Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State, in particular, is in the increase with more people falling below the poverty line daily.

On how to make the programmes better and more effective, they suggested that governments and non-governmental organizations should put in more efforts to ensure that more people are accommodated into the various poverty reduction programmes. They should map out more funds and monitor the programmes for expected results. The findings also revealed that the programmes should be well coordinated to ensure that genuine beneficiaries are reached. This could be done by involving the potential beneficiaries in the conception and execution of programmes and projects. They equally suggested that social workers should be involved in all stages of the programmes

meant to alleviate poverty and sufferings of the people. The programmes should be re-examined and possibly re-designed for effective performance (Anyabe, 2015). The government should as well, create industries and revive the existing poverty alleviation programmes to boost the economy and create job opportunity for the youths; and channel proper allocation of funds into various poverty alleviation programmes of the government to ensure vibrancy and continuity (Odalonu & Obani, 2018). Poverty reduction should also ensure investment by rural communities in agriculture, education, healthcare, electricity, functional feeder roads, distribution of goods and services, investment in human capital and skills acquisition and training for available job opportunities (Edeh, Udoikah and Ugbala (2017).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

This study investigated the availability and accessibility level of government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes in Ebonyi State. Findings revealed that while several poverty alleviation programmes exist in the state and have made giant efforts in tackling poverty in the state, the poverty level has continued to rise in the study area. This is evident in the recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics that named Ebonyi as the 4<sup>th</sup> poorest state in Nigeria. Also, the poverty level in the state is still massive and glaring as manifested in the lack of adequate amenities needed for quality living such as roads, healthcare, electricity, unemployment and hunger. Given the above, the study recommends that government should create more jobs for the teeming jobless youths or make the life span of poverty alleviation programmes like N-Power last longer pending when the beneficiaries will get permanent jobs. The government should involve the potential beneficiaries or their representatives in the planning and execution of projects to ensure that genuine beneficiaries are selected because they know the real poor. The scope of all poverty alleviation related programmes should be widened to allow for more coverage and must be targeted mostly at those in the rural areas. Finally, social workers should be involved in programmes conception, designing and implementation to ensure that the interest of the people is well-protected. They should also be part of the sensitization efforts towards educating the people on the importance of poverty alleviation programmes.

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## Determinants of Suicidal Intention among Undergraduate Students in Bayelsa State

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### Abstract

This cross-sectional study investigated the determinants of suicidal intention among 163 undergraduate students in Bayelsa State, focusing on socio-demographic, economic, psychological and health factors. The study is built on the theoretical model of Durkheim's social integration and regulation theory. Whereas the questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection, chi-square cross-tabulations, Pearson correlation and percentages, through the aid of the SPSS were the basic tools used in data analysis. Findings indicated that the prevalence rate for the thought of suicide among undergraduate students was 18%, whereas, suicidal intention rate was 8.6%. Furthermore, suicidal thought was significantly related to CGPA of students ( $p < 0.041$ ) and academic satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ). Suicidal intention was related to the gender of students ( $p < 0.024$ ) at 0.05 level of significance. Also, social factors like the relationship with parents/guardian ( $p < 0.000$ ), academic pressure ( $p < 0.013$ ) and relationship status of parents ( $p < 0.006$ ), were significantly related to suicidal thoughts at 0.01 level of significance. While only loss of close relation was associated with suicidal intention. Additionally, the findings revealed that the financial status of students ( $p < 0.02$ ) was significantly related to suicidal thought at 0.01 level of significance. Finally, depression ( $p < 0.000$ ) and health challenge ( $p < 0.008$ ) were significantly related to suicidal thought. While depression ( $p < 0.000$ ) and health challenges were also significantly associated with suicidal intention. Based on the findings, it is recommended that there should be the teaching of suicide education in universities. For this to be meaningful, suicide education should be capable of loading its content with topics such as signs, myths and facts about suicide, factors associated with suicide and possible ways of helping the suicidal persons.

**Keywords:** Socio-demographic determinants, undergraduates, social integration, suicidal intention.

### Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) [2012], it was estimated that 804,000 young people aged 15-29 years committed suicide in the world, and has accounted for 8.5% of death among this age category. Evidence in the increment of suicide rates among this population is of concern to academics, considering their possibility of living longer years and the need for

productivity and transformation among young people, especially those in the university (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

A study conducted among 105,000 university students in the United States of America (USA) on suicide behaviour showed that 3.7% had thought about suicide in the past 12 months and 1.5% in the past two weeks (ACHA,2011). Regarding suicide attempt, the report highlighted that 0.89% of the students have attempted suicide in the previous year, 0.3% in the last two weeks and 0.25 in the previous days (ACHA,2011). Another study in north-eastern Brazil among 637 university students a prevalence of 7.5% for suicide attempts and 52.5% for suicidal ideation (Hugo et al., 2017).

Several factors have been suggested as being associated with suicidal behaviour, implying that it is multifactorial and multi-dimensional (Pereira & Cardoso, 2015). Subjective factors such as hopelessness, impulsivity, aggression, body perception, communication difficulties and lack of social belonging have been suggested as possible factors that trigger suicidal behaviour (Braga, & Dell’Aglio, 2013, Gvoin, et al., 2015). Other factors include demographic and socio-economic variables, sexual orientation, religious practices, history of suicidal behaviour in the family and among friends, alcohol consumption and depressive symptoms (Macias et al., 2015; Mackenzie et al., 2011).

Among undergraduate students, the possible factors associated with suicidal ideation include developmental processes that require maturity and autonomy to make decisions, especially in a strict economic environment (Mackenzie, et al., 2011; Mojs, et al., 2012; Nyer, et al. 2013). Although Nigeria comes 91<sup>st</sup> place in the ranking of happiness among 156 countries worldwide, suicide and suicide-related behaviours have been on the increase and more worrisome is the fact that the case is high among college students. For instance, on the first lap of 2017, there were reported cases of suicide in Nigerian universities (Arya, 2017). Reason for such behaviours has become a major scientific concern to both behavioural researchers and health practitioners.

Suicidal behaviour is one of the lead cause of death in the global population and the second leading cause of death among people between ages 15-29 globally (WHO, 2017) it has been estimated to potentially contribute to a proportion greater than 2% to the world burden of disease by 2020

particularly in sub-Saharan African (Vijayakumer et al., 2005). The weighted prevalence of suicide has been put at 7.28% (Adewuya, et al, 2016). In fact, it has been established to be responsible for 9.9 out of every 100.000 (both sexes) death in Nigeria (WHO, 2017)

Other risk factors include; anxiety, stress, Self-esteem, and age. (Adewuya et al, 2016) it also influences individuals' evaluation of their worth. Self-esteem is an important predictor of some behavioural outcomes among youth (Orth & Robbin 2014). Manani and Sharma (2013) reported a negative correlation between self-esteem and suicidal ideation (Singh & Pathak, 2019). This may differ across age group. Chung and Joung (2012) reported that age significantly predicts suicidal ideation among countries of American and Korea Youths.

Religious activities may also be related to suicidal behaviours. Nigeria is a highly religious country which is evident on most campuses with several religions and groups. Research on the link between religion and suicide can be traced to the work of Durkheim's finding that suicidal tendencies were lower among catholic than those who are not religious (Durkheim, 1897, Colucci & Martin, 2008; Hoffman & Marsiglia, 2014).

Though studies investigating trends and patterns of suicide abound, research investigating suicidal thoughts and factors responsible for them are very limited and inadequate especially in Nigeria. This is worrisome as suicidal thoughts are precursors of the actual realisation of the act among students. On this note, this study sought to investigate the determinants of suicidal thoughts among undergraduate students using undergraduate students in Bayelsa state as a case study.

### **Theoretical Framework: Durkheim's Theory of Social Integration and Social Regulation**

The theoretical framework on which this study is anchored in the Social Integration and Social Regulation Model propounded by Emile Durkheim in 1897. The theory states that there is an inverse relationship between suicidal behaviour and the degree of integration of an individual in a social group. He proposed that suicide results, in part, from the failure of social integration. The theory posits that an individual will not commit suicide unless he/she has both the desire to die and the ability to do so. He referred to social integration as the degree to which individuals in the society were bound by social ties and relationship, while social regulation referred to the degrees to which individuals have their desires and emotions controlled by the social values of society.

Durkheim held the view that suicidal behaviour would be more likely if social integration was too strong (leading to altruistic suicidal behaviour), if social regulation was too weak (leading to anomic suicidal behaviour), or if these two social forces were too strong (leading to altruistic and fatalistic suicidal behaviours respectively).

This theory was re-emphasized in 1997 by Simpson. One of the clearest findings in the literature on suicide is that individuals who die by suicide often experience social isolation and social withdrawal before their death (Rubernowitz & Wilhelmson, 2003). Hence this theory can be adequately applied to this study as suicidal behaviour might result from rigid school rules and regulation or poor self-esteem and isolation which might make students commit suicide.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study is a cross-sectional survey that was conducted among 163 undergraduate students in two universities in Bayelsa State, namely; the Federal University Otuoke and the Niger Delta University. The sample size for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's sample size formula.

In selecting the sample for the study, the multi-stage sampling technique was utilised. The first stage used purposive sampling to select two universities in Bayelsa State (Niger Delta University and Federal University Otuoke), from the four existing universities in the state. These two universities were selected because they are the only universities currently operating in the state with undergraduate students ranging from 100 to 500 levels. The second stage used the stratified sampling to group faculties in the two universities into four categories namely; Social/Management Sciences and Humanities; Engineering, Sciences and Agricultural Sciences; College of Health Sciences; and Law, Arts, and Education. The third stage used simple random sampling to select one Department from the four categories of Faculties in the two universities. Thus, twelve (12) Departments were randomly selected namely; Geography and Environmental Management Science, Accounting, History and Diplomacy, Chemical Engineering, Agricultural Economics, Geology, Medicine, Law, Theatre Arts, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Mathematics Education. Finally, accidental sampling was employed to recruit students who were available at their departments for the study.

The questionnaire served as the primary source of data collection. The questionnaire was in different sections which elicited information based on the objectives of the study. Data analysis was done at the univariate and bivariate levels using tools such as; percentages, frequencies and graphs. In testing the hypothesis in the study, bivariate statistics such as chi-square cross-tabulation and Pearson correlation was used in setting the p-value at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results and Finding

### *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Table 1 shows that the average age of the respondents was 22+3.17 while the highest proportion of the respondents (44.2%) were between the ages of 19-21. The marital status revealed that more than three-quarter of the respondents (94.5%) were single compared. More than half of the respondents (68.7%) were males. The FOU yielded 60.1% of respondents, leaving NDU with 39.9%.

The majority of the students (96.3%) were affiliated with the Christian religion. Those in their second year of study had more than half of the respondents (54.6%). While a good number of respondents (33.3%) received an estimated monthly allowance of between N6,000-N10,900,

More than half of the students indicated that they were on clear standing (64.4%). The indigenes of Bayelsa State had the highest percentage (76.1%). Majority of the students (83.4%) resided off-campus. Finally, the majority of students (69.3%) came from monogamous families.

**Table 1: Distributions of Respondents by Socio-demographic variables**

Variables	Frequency (n=163)	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
16-18	22	13.5
19-21	72	44.2
22-24	45	27.6
25 and above	24	14.7
<b>Mean/SD Age (22 ± 3.17)</b>		
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	154	94.5
Cohabiting	5	3.1
Others specify	4	2.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	112	68.7
Female	51	31.3
<b>Name of university</b>		
NDU	65	39.9
FOU	98	60.1
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	157	96.3
Muslim	3	1.8

Others specify	3	1.8
<b>Year of study</b>		
100	28	17.2
200	89	54.6
300	17	10.4
400	27	16.6
500	2	1.2
<b>Estimated allowance per month (₦)</b>		
1,000-5,000	28	17.3
6,000-10,900	54	33.3
11,000-15,900	31	19.1
16,000-20,900	23	14.2
21,000 and above	26	16.0
<b>Current CGPA</b>		
1.00-2.99	36	22.1
3.00-3.49	61	37.4
3.50-4.49	53	32.5
4.50 and above	13	8.0
<b>What is your academic status?</b>		
Clear stand	105	64.4
1-3 carryovers	54	33.1
4-6 carryovers	4	2.5
<b>Ethnic affiliations</b>		
Bayelsan	124	76.1
Non-Bayelsan	39	23.9
<b>Residence pattern</b>		
Off-campus	136	83.4
Hostel	27	16.6
<b>Type of family</b>		
Monogamous	113	69.3
Polygamous	50	30.7

### *Trends in Suicidal Intention*

Figure 1 displayed the distribution of suicidal intention among the students' the figure further revealed that majority of the students had never intended committing suicide (91.4%). However, a few of the respondents (8.6%) admitted to having had suicidal intentions.

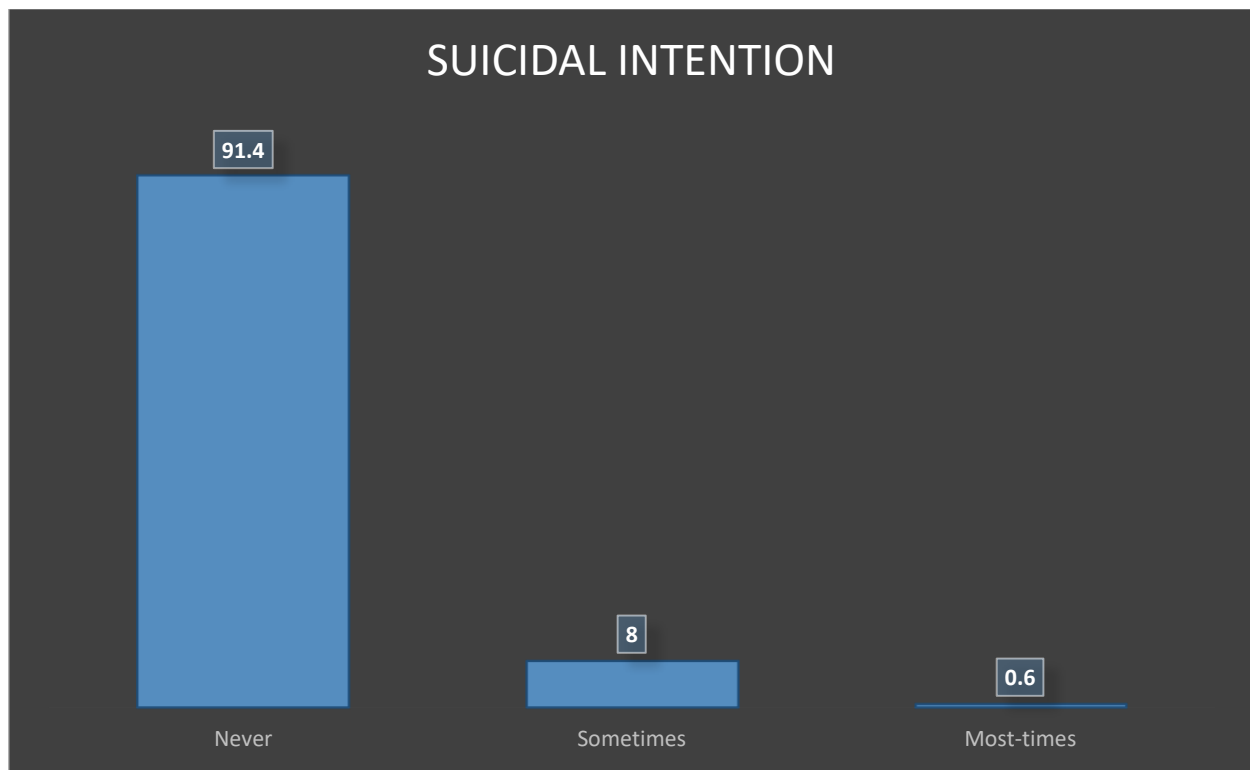


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of Suicidal Intention

***Demographic correlates of suicidal intention***

As shown in Table 3, none of the demographic variables was significant with the students' suicidal intention. Though, suicidal intention was highest among single students' (8.6%) followed by cohabiting students' (3.1%).

**Table 3: Demographic Correlates of Suicidal Intention**

Demographic Variables	Suicide Intention (N=163)			Total ( N% )	X <sup>2</sup>	P-value
	Never	Sometimes	Most times			
<b>Age</b>						
16-18	20(12.5%)	2(1.3%)	0(0.0%)	22(13.8%)	4.281	.639
19-21	64(40.0%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	69(43.1%)		
22-24	42(26.3%)	3(1.9%)	0(0.0%)	45(28.1%)		
25 and above	20(12.5%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	24(15.0%)		
<b>Marital status</b>						
Single	140(85.9%)	13(8.0%)	1(0.6%)	154(94.5%)	.895	.925
Cohabiting	5(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	5(3.1%)		
Others specify	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(2.5%)		
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	106(65.0%)	5(3.1%)	1(0.6%)	112(68.7%)	6.398	.041
Female	43(26.4%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	51(31.3%)		
<b>Name of university</b>						
NDU	60(36.8%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	65(39.9%)	1.967	.374
FUO	89(54.6%)	9(5.5%)	0(0.0%)	98(60.1%)		
<b>Religion</b>						
Christian	144(88.3%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.8%)	2.945	.567
Muslim	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.8%)		
Other specify	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.8%)		

<b>Year of study</b>						
100	25(15.3%)	2(1.2%)	1(0.6%)	28(17.2%)	5.500	.703
200	82(50.3%)	7(4.3%)	0(0.0%)	89(54.6%)		
300	16(9.8%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	17(10.4%)		
400	24(14.7%)	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	27(16.6%)		
500	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.2%)		
<b>Estimated allowance per month</b>						
1000-5000	23(14.2%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	28(17.3%)	11.971	.152
6000-10,900	47(29.0%)	7(4.3%)	0(0.0%)	54(33.3%)		
11,000-15,900	31(19.1%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	31(19.1%)		
16,000-20,900	22(13.6%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	23(14.2%)		
21,000 and above	25(15.4%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	26(16.0%)		
<b>Current CGPA</b>						
1.00-2.99	34(20.9%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	36(22.1%)	4.206	.649
3.00-3.99	53(32.5%)	7(4.3%)	1(0.6%)	61(37.4%)		
4.00-4.99	49(30.1%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	53(32.5%)		
4.50 and above	13(8.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	13(8.0%)		
<b>What is your academic status?</b>						
Clear stand	95(58.3%)	10(6.1%)	0(0.0%)	105(64.4%)	5.206	.267
1-3 carryovers	51(31.3%)	2(1.2%)	1(0.6%)	54(33.1%)		
4-6 carryovers	3(1.8%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.00%)	4(2.5%)		
<b>Ethnic Affiliations</b>						
Bayelsa	115(70.6%)	9(5.5%)	0(0.0%)	124(76.1%)	3.614	.164
Non-Bayelsa	34(20.9%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	39(23.9%)		
<b>Residence pattern</b>						
Off-campus	125(76.7%)	10(6.1%)	1(0.6%)	136(83.4%)	.620	.733
Hostel	24(14.7%)	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	27(16.6%)		
<b>Type of family</b>						
Monogamous	106(65.0%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	114(69.9%)	2.865	.239
Polygamous	43(26.4%)	5(3.1%)	1(0.6%)	49(30.1%)		
<b>Number of siblings</b>						
None	9(5.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	9(5.5%)	6.807	.339
1-3	43(26.4%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	48(26.4%)		
4-7	70(42.9%)	9(5.5%)	0(0.0%)	79(48.5%)		
8 and above	27(16.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	27(16.6%)		
<b>Age of admission</b>						
15	3(1.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(0.0%)	7.194	.156
15-16	12(7.4%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	14(8.6%)		
17-18	55(34.0%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	59(36.4%)		
19-20	37(22.8%)	1(0.6%)	1(0.0%)	39(24.1%)		
21 and above	41(25.3%)	6(3.7%)	0(0.0%)	47(29.0%)		

Others can be found in table 3. Again, the table indicated that students' who are resident off-campus had higher suicidal intention (6.7%) when compared to those staying the hostels (1.8%). Other categories can be found in table 3 above.

### ***Social correlates of suicidal intention***

Results showing from table 4 revealed that only loss of close relation had an association with students' suicidal intentions. The table further showed that suicidal intention is higher among students' who have not lost their close relation (6.7%), while it is lower among those who have lost a close relation (1.8%).

**Table 4: Social correlates of suicidal intention**

	Suicidal Intention (N=163)			Total (N/%)	X <sup>2</sup>	p-value
	Never	Sometimes	Most times			
<b>Satisfaction with course of study.</b>						
Very satisfied	32(19.8%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	36(22.6%)	3.383	.908
Satisfied	35(21.6%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	39(24.1%)		
Moderately satisfied	56(34.6%)	3(1.9%)	1(0.6%)	60(37.0%)		
Dissatisfied	22(13.6%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	24(14.8%)		
Very dissatisfied	3(1.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(1.9%)		
<b>Support from friends</b>						
High	32(19.8%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	36(22.2%)	2.611	.625
Moderate	106(65.4%)	7(4.3%)	1(0.6%)	114(70.4%)		
Low	10(6.1%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	12(7.4%)		
<b>Relationship with parents/guardian</b>						
Very cordial	69(42.3%)	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	72(44.2%)	4.706	.788
Cordial	53(32.5%)	7(4.3%)	1(0.6%)	61(37.4%)		
Moderately cordial	20(12.3%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	23(13.5%)		
Distant	6(3.7%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	7(4.3%)		
Very distant	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.6%)		
<b>Loss of close relation</b>						
Yes	63(38.7%)	10(6.1%)	1(0.6%)	74(45.4%)	6.998	.030
No	86(52.8%)	3(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	89(54.6%)		
<b>Academic pressure</b>						
Never	36(22.2%)	0(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	37(22.8%)	2.792	.593
Sometimes	77(47.5%)	8(4.9%)	1(0.6%)	86(53.1%)		
Most-times	35(21.6%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	39(24.1%)		
<b>Suicide attempt by family members</b>						
Never	138(86.3%)	12(7.5%)	1(0.6%)	151(94.4%)	170	.918
Sometimes	8(5.0%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.6%)	9(5.6%)		
<b>Relationship status of parents</b>						
Ever remain married	101(62.0%)	8(4.9%)	1(0.6%)	110(67.5%)	2.130	.712
Divorced	26(16.6%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	30(18.4%)		
Lone parent	22(13.5%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	23(14.1%)		
<b>Estimated number of friends</b>						
None	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	8(4.9%)	11.428	.076
1-3	33(20.2%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	41(25.2%)		
4-6	43(26.4%)	2(1.2%)	0(0.0%)	45(27.6%)		
7 and above.	65(39.9%)	3(1.8%)	1(0.6%)	69(42.3%)		

\*significant at 0.05 level of significance

Again, the table indicated that students with 1-3 friends have the highest suicidal intentions (4.9%), while it is lowest among those with 4-7 friends (1.2%) others can be found in table 4.

*Economic correlates of suicidal intention*

With regards to the economic correlates of suicidal intention, no variable was found to be associated with students' suicidal intentions.

**Table 5: Economic Correlates of Suicidal Intention**

Economic factors	Suicidal Intention (N=163)			Total (N/%)	X <sup>2</sup>	p-value
	Never	Sometimes	Most times			
<b>Current economic status</b>						
High	8(4.9%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	9(5.5%)	4.223	.377
Moderate	109(66.4%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	117(71.8%)		
Low	32(19.6%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	37(22.7%)		
<b>Affordance of materials and textbooks</b>						
Yes	83(51.2%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	91(56.2%)	1.434	.488
No	65(40.1%)	5(3.1%)	1(0.6%)	71(43.5%)		
<b>Current financial status</b>						
High	12(7.9%)	1(0.6%)	0(0.0%)	13(19.0)	3.618	.460
Moderate	103(63.2%)	8(4.9%)	0(0.0%)	111(68.1%)		
Low	32(20.9%)	4(2.5%)	1(0.6%)	39(23.9%)		

However, students with moderate financial status had the highest suicidal intentions (4.9%). Other categories can be found in table 5.

*Socio-economic status of respondents and suicidal intention*

According to table 6, academic satisfaction had an association with suicidal intentions (.001), likewise relationship with parents (.002) and relationship status of parents (.002).

**Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between the socio-economic status of respondent and suicidal intention**

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	N	R	P-value	Rmks
Academic satisfaction	2.50	1.050	163	.987	.001	Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				
Relationship with parents	1.80	.876	163	.308**	.000	Sig.
suicide thought	1.21	.477				
Relationship status of parents	1.47	.731	163	.180*	.022	Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				
Economic status	2.17	.504	163	.132	.092	Not Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				
Financial status	2.16	.543	163	.288**	.003	Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				

\*Significant at 0.01 level of significance

Though, the table still indicated that economic status was not significantly associated with students' suicidal intentions. Finally, the table showed that financial status was also found significant with the student's suicidal intentions (.003).

### *Psychological correlates of suicidal intention*

Regarding the psychological correlates of suicidal thoughts, table 7 revealed that only depression had an association with student's suicidal intention (.000), which was significant at 0.01 level. While other categories can be found in table 7 above.

**Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Ppmc) showing the relationship between respondents' psychological status and suicidal intention**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	R	P-Value	Remark
Depression	1.72	.613				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.348**	.000	Sig.
Self-esteem	2.41	.902				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.103	.193	Not Sig.
Stress	2.18	.547				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.136	.084	Not Sig.

Sig at 0.01 level, 0.05 level.

### *Health correlates of suicidal intention*

Table 8 showed that only health challenge among other variables was significant with students' suicidal intention (.008). Other categories can be found in table 8.

**Table 8: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Ppmc) showing the relationship between respondents' health status and suicidal intention**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	R	P-Value	Rmks
General health status	2.35	.814	163	.066	.406	Not Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				
Visit the Doctor	1.53	.500	163	-.133	.090	Not Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				
Health challenge	1.47	.501	163	-.208**	.008	Sig.
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477				

Significant at 0.01 level of significance

***Physical and drug correlates of suicidal intention***

According to table 9, no variable was found to be significantly associated with students' suicidal intention. This can be found in table 9 below.

**Table 9: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Ppmc) showing the relationship between physical and drug status of respondents and suicidal intention**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	R	P-Value	Rmks
Bullying	1.22	.485				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.147	.062	Not Sig.
Starvation	1.55	.557				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.052	.512	Not Sig.
Smoking	1.20	.499				
Suicidal thought	1.21	.477	163	.029	.714	Not Sig.

**Discussion of Findings**

In this study, it was found out that no relationship exists between age and suicidal intention. This finding is similar to that of Asante, Kugbey, Osafo Quarshie & Sarfo (2017), Hugo, Samira, Mariano, Makilin & Paula (2017) and Omigbodun, Dogra, Oluyemi, Esan & Adedokun (2015) which also affirmed that no relationship exists between age and suicidal ideation. Nevertheless, this study found that gender has an association with suicidal intention. Although, Hugo et al, (2017), had contrasting findings which revealed that gender is not associated with the presence of suicide ideation. The findings still indicated that the number of carryovers is not associated with suicidal intentions. This finding again is similar to that of Amare, Woldey Hannes, Haile and Yeneabat (2018), which also found out that there is no relationship between disappointed with grade results and suicidal ideation. Again, Meng, Jian Li, Loerbroks, Jiao Wu and Hui Chen (2013) also found that no relationship exists between poor academic performance and background (rural/urban).

Additionally, findings in this study revealed that no relationship exists between religion and suicidal intention. However, Hugo et al (2017) contrasted with these findings as they found out that a relationship exists between religious practices and the presence of suicidal ideation. Year of study from the findings is also not associated with suicidal intentions. Thus, Hugo et al (2017) also found that no relationship exists between the year of study and the presence of suicide ideation.

However, findings in this study still showed that relationship with parents/guardians has a significant relationship with suicidal intention. This finding is also similar to that of Asante et al (2017) which found out that parental understanding has a relationship with suicidal ideation, suicidal plan and suicidal attempt. However, the findings in the study revealed that financial status has a relationship with suicidal intention, this is similar to the findings of Meng et al. (2013) which found out that there is an association between financial problems and suicidal ideation.

In continuation, the findings in this study again indicated that there was an association between the loss of close relations and suicidal intention. However, Hugo et al (2015) had a contrary finding that no relationship exists between attempted suicide among friends and the presence of suicidal ideation. The study still found that relationship status of parents had an association with suicidal intention. Also, Omigbodun et al (2015) in a study found that the relationship status of parents has an association with suicidal ideation and suicide attempt.

Nonetheless, the findings in this study indicated that no relationship exists between suicide attempt by family members and suicidal intention. However, Hugo et al (2017) in a study found out that attempted suicide in the family has a relationship with the presence of suicidal ideation. Findings in this study again showed that there is a relationship between loss of close relations and suicidal intention. On the contrary, Hugo et al (2017) found that no relationship exists between attempted suicide among friends and the presence of suicidal ideation.

This study again found that the estimated number of friends has no association with suicide intention. However, Asante et al. (2017) found in a study that there is a relationship between close friends and suicidal plan.

Findings in the study still showed that no relationship exists between intoxication by alcohol and suicidal intention. Thus, Asante et al. (2017) in a study discovered that alcohol misuse also has no association with suicidal ideation, plan and attempt. Still, Hugo et al. (2017) figured that alcohol consumption has no relationship with suicidal ideation among universities students.

The findings again indicated that involvement in physical fights and been attacked are also having no relationship with suicidal intention. This is similar to that of Asante et al (2017) which also indicated that attacked and in a fight are not associated with suicidal ideation, suicidal plan and suicidal attempt. Still, in the findings of this study, bullying was found not having a relationship

with suicidal ideation and intention. However, Asante et al. (2017) discovered that being bullied is a predictor of suicidal ideation, plan and attempt. Starvation with regards to the study's findings has no relationship with suicidal ideation and intention. However, Asante et al. (2017) in a study revealed that food insecurity is a risk factor for suicidal ideation, plan and attempt. Again, findings in this study indicate that smoking is not associated with suicidal ideation and intention, this is similar to Asante et al. (2017) which also indicates that smoking has no relationship with suicidal ideation, suicidal plan and suicidal attempt. Also, Meng et al. (2013) in a study revealed that Cigarette smoking has not association with suicidal intention.

Finally, the findings in this study revealed that depression is associated with suicidal intentions. This finding is similar to that of Hugo et al (2017) which also found out that there is a relationship between the presence of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation among university students. Again, Animasahun and Animasahun (2016) still found out that depression is a risk factor for suicide among Nigerian youths. Again, Adewuya, Ola, Coker, Atilola, Zachariah, Olugbile, Fasawe and Idris (2016) also found depression to be associated with suicidal ideation.

## **Conclusion**

The suicidal intention is relatively low among the undergraduates. However, the major routes with which they intend killing themselves whereby hanging and drinking harmful substance. Again, gender is the only demographic correlate found significantly related to suicidal intentions. Also, the loss of close relation influences their (students') suicidal intentions. Nonetheless, only the financial status among other economic factors is significant with the students' suicidal intentions. Additionally, depression served as the risk factor for the undergraduates' suicidal behaviour.

## **Recommendations**

There should be teachings of suicide education and prevention in schools and colleges. For this to be meaningful, suicide education should be capable of loading its contents with topics such as signs, myths and facts about suicide, factors associated with suicide and the possible ways of helping the suicidal persons. Also, parents are in the unique position of helping adolescents build healthy interpersonal relationships, self-esteem and improve problem-solving and coping skills; in turn, this can help them deal with negative life stressors and reduce the occurrence of intrusive intentions about suicide.

University authorities should ensure that possession of harmful substances and lethal weapons by students in the campuses must be drastically checked and students found with dangerous weapons rusticated or dismissed from the university to serve as a deterrent to others. Bulletins on suicidology should be mounted; prevention centres whose scope should not only be that of preventing suicide but also handling other psychological and emotional problems of crisis nature should be opened. These centres could be staffed through volunteer agencies, mental health services, public health departments and hospitals. Programs of preventive intervention strategies should be organized in the various universities for the students.

Additionally, specific university-based mental health services should be established in various universities in Nigeria. These services should aim at finding out and taking care of depressed and at-risk students to prevent incidences of suicidal behaviours. Lastly, the government should tackle vigorously social health problems. This can be done by sponsoring studies to identify factors that can enhance suicidality and to find solutions to them.

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## **Diversification of Livelihoods and income levels in oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The environmental impacts of oil pollution in the Niger Delta region cut across the three spheres of air, water and land. The resultant adverse economic impacts are felt more in farming and fishing have given their dominance in the main traditional livelihood activities in the region. This becomes a strong reason for affected local people to diversify their livelihood activities as a coping strategy. Using the sustainable livelihood framework, this study examined the diversification of livelihoods and income levels in oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta Region. A cross-sectional research design was adopted in this study. The research was carried out in six communities in the three states with the highest prevalence of oil pollution in the region, namely; Oruma, Aguobiri in Bayelsa State; Ido, Bille in Rivers State; and Egwa 1, Tebujoh in Delta State. Data were obtained through primary and secondary sources. The simple random sampling technique was used to select households from which 400 respondents were drawn for the study and the data collection instruments used were Questionnaire schedules, focus group discussions and key interview informants. Based on the data analysis, findings from the study showed a positive relationship between livelihood diversification and income. The implication of this is that the more the level of livelihood diversification the more the income. Hence the study recommends that the government and other stakeholders should improve the capital assets of farmers and fishers to enable them to adapt to the vulnerabilities of oil pollution.

**Keywords:** Diversification; Income levels; Livelihoods; Oil-producing; Niger Delta

### **Introduction**

In the advent of declining resources due to threat to livelihoods, affected rural households may device means to diversify their livelihood activities. Kassa (2019), identified livelihood diversification strategies in Ethiopia such as farm, on-farm and off-farm, though he identified on-farm activities as the most practised. Diversifications may involve agricultural or non-agricultural livelihoods. Rural livelihood diversification means the act of expanding livelihood activities by rural households in a bid to raise their standard of living to cushion the limitations associated with the reliance on a single mainstream economic activity. It is a non-stop coping process that involves embarking on supplementary livelihoods in addition to the existing one or completely moving away from existing ones for new livelihood activities all in a bid to increase sources of livelihood (Ellis, 2000). Fikru (2008), adduced that complementary livelihood activities increase productivity

and reduce poverty. He explained that non-agricultural activities create more employment, reduce rural-urban drift in search of work and increase economic growth.

He also explained that the more diversification by households, the more income that will accrue to them. This implies that diversification increases sources of income leading to an increase in growth and standard of living. Diversification implies operating varieties. According to Awoniyi and Salman (2012), agricultural households that do not combine non-agricultural activities are more prone to poverty when viewed within the context of those engaged in non-agricultural income fetching activities. Just like Kassa (2019), Ellis (2000), had also shared the view that livelihood activities are of three categories, on-farm, non-farm and off-farm. While on-farm activities are directly related to agricultural activities, non-farm activities take place outside the agricultural sector. Off-farm activities are agricultural activities that are completely off the agricultural wage of households. Jack (2019), averred that due to oil pollution, several households who are engaged in Traditional livelihoods in the Niger Delta region such as fishing and farming are abandoning same due to poor economic returns caused by oil pollution. He also stressed that diversification of livelihood by farmers and fishers significantly promote income. Oil exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta region account for severe oil spills and pollution. The incidence of oil pollution reflects mishaps that are disasters that occur in regions where crude oil exploration and production takes place leading to monumental devastation of the environment all year-round if not effectively regulated.

In addition to oil pollution, other activities associated with the petroleum industry tend to undermine the environment of the people. For instance, the expansionary nature of the petroleum industry since the 1950s has contributed significantly to massive deforestation in the Niger Delta. The region has an expansive crossing of pipelines for oil movements leading to massive vegetation destruction. Areas that earlier had rich forests now have oil well heads, pipelines & flow stations (Mirza, 2003). Apart from the activities of multinational companies, pollution also stems from oil bunkering activities and artisanal oil refining (UNEP, 2011). UNEP in its 2011 report identified artisanal refining and oil bunkering as major sources of contamination in the region. The report further averred that the release of hydrocarbon into the atmosphere by these various sources leads to environmental depletion due to the production of pollutants that are harmful to traditional

livelihoods tied to land and water. The report also indicated that the forestry sector is in jeopardy because the forests are devastated just as fishes are almost depleted since fish has the propensity to migrate from polluted waters to less polluted areas. Also, crops in hydrocarbon ravaged areas are damaged. Even the recommencement of farming on such affected areas often produces low yields as against unaffected areas. UNDP affirmed that over 60% of those dwelling in that region rely on their physical surroundings for survival. Oil pollution varies in scope and content due to the differences in the spills in relation to the nature, context and circumstances leading to the release of petroleum products into the environment. Also, to be considered are the resource at risk, and how people respond to the spill (Wiens, 2013). Even though the presence of crude oil floating on the water surface seemingly reduces, a large chunk of the spilt oil will still be present under the surface leading to another dimension of the problem. Spill affected areas are covered with toxic infected products which affect the future of the affected area. Also, the dissolved oil produces dangerous compounds that cause water, land and air pollution that contaminates the soil and groundwater (Petrosense, 2015).

When the oil is spilt into the ocean or river, animals and plants are harmed. One major effect of an oil spill is the washing away of shorelines caused by oil exploitation and exploration activities. With the expansion of oil production in the Niger Delta region, the incidence of oil spills has greatly increased (Akpofure, 2008). Spilt oil which is retained in the environment exposes plants and animals to degradation especially in the case of non-moving water. In the case of flowing streams and rivers, the oil collects on plants and grasses growing on the banks and also interacts with sediments, thereby affecting the organisms. If a stream that provides potable water is affected by a spill in an area, the inhabitants will suffer potable water shortage (Egbe & Thompson 2010). This is in addition to associated health challenges when used by people. Oil spills and pollution occur in the Niger Delta region in the course of oil exploration and production activities. The causes are broken down as follows: Tanker accidents (50%), sabotage (28%) and oil production operations (21%). Inadequate or non-functional production equipment accounts for 1% of the spills, i.e. corrosion of pipelines and tankers leading to rupturing or leaking of old unmaintained production equipment (Nwilo & Badejo, 2001).

Oil spill occurrences are pervasive in the Niger Delta region. Edoho (2008), puts the estimated quantity of spills in the region at 2,567,906 barrels from 5733 incidents of spills from 1976-2000, cumulatively surpassing the Exxon Valdez spill by almost ten times. The effect of oil spills and pollution in the Niger Delta is quite alarming because they affect terrestrial ecosystems, shorelines, swamps, defoliation and mortality of existing mangroves, fish, turtle etc. According to Osuji and Opiah, (2007), sometimes, contamination of soil results from floating oil stick on water being blown by wind and wave to shorelines. They noted that onshore and close to shore oil contaminates the terrestrial ecosystem and that all these leads to a shortage of fish and agricultural products which are key to livelihoods of the affected communities. Another dimension to the effects of oil spillage is the occurrence of bush fire caused by the explosion of oil tankers during bunkering or pipeline vandalization. This also, has a devastating effect on agriculture, water and biodiversity. According to a report released in 2009 by Amnesty International, oil spills, waste dumping and gas flaring by oil companies has been ongoing in the Niger Delta for several years. The study revealed that oil spills figures are not properly assessed and evaluated to know the scale of pollution and environmental devastation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used in this study is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. Carney, (1998) highlights various assets namely, human, social, natural, physical and financial capitals that are used in diverse ways by people to tackle eventualities like shocks and stress within the context of external vulnerability caused by external shocks and other factors. The interplay of these assets, underlie or undermine the wellbeing of households in terms of sustainability. The ability or capacity of individual households determines livelihood strategies and acquisition of the assets. Households are required or needed to combine these assets in a bid to have a decent standard of living. Oil pollution affects these assets adversely and thus households become vulnerable to poverty due to poor agricultural yields. This diminishes the socio-economic life of households in communities that are affected by oil pollution. Oil pollution, within the context of vulnerability, emanates from human activities. These activities create adverse impacts on the environment as well as on the livelihoods of the affected communities. Unsustainable oil exploration and production activities have severely damaged the ecosystem and livelihood assets of people living in the Niger Delta region. Part of the strategy adopted by rural households in the affected

communities to cope with the underlying problems of assets depletion is diversification of livelihoods. The impact of oil pollution is felt in all the spheres of the environment namely; air, water and land. A combination of these spheres of impact with regard to oil pollution presents a compound situation where the totality of the environment of the region is endangered. This is seen in the form of contamination of the air, soil and waters through pollution, causing the destruction of farmlands and crops, destruction of rivers and fishes, destruction of forest resources, biodiversity, deforestation, loss of aesthetic and vegetation cover. This creates food insecurity. The nexus between rural households and socio-economic, political and environmental conditions depends on the availability of the various assets, human, social, natural, physical and financial capitals. These are used in diverse ways by people to tackle eventualities like shocks and stress within the context of external vulnerability caused by external shocks and other factors which in this regard is majorly oil pollution. Oil pollution adversely affects the assets leading to a reduction in the quality of livelihood pattern in the region, thus causing traditional livelihoods to be unsustainable. Livelihood is sustainable if it possesses the enabling capabilities and assets to cause those yet unborn to have sustained opportunities (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

### **Materials and Methods**

The research design adopted in the work is the cross-sectional research design carried out in six communities in three states with the highest prevalence of oil pollution in the region, namely; Oruma, Aguobiri in Bayelsa State, Ido, Bille in Rivers State, and Egwa 1, Tebujoh in Delta State. Data were obtained through primary and secondary sources. While a simple random sampling technique was used to select households for the study, data collection instruments were Questionnaire schedules, focus group discussions and key interview informants were also used. The sample size was 400. The analysis was based on the usage of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22.0). The sample size of 400 was distributed proportionately among the communities based on their populations. 314 respondents actively participated in the research. To identify the efficacy of diversification and or otherwise, the correlation between livelihood diversification (sources of respondents' income) the average monthly income of respondents was tested, using the Spearman Rho coefficient. The test showed a weak positive relationship between livelihood diversification and income. This shows that the more the level of livelihood

diversification the more the income. The sample size of 400 was derived based on Taro Yamane sample size formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+N(e)^2)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population

e = level of significance (0.05)

1 = constant

## Findings and Discussion

### Socio-economic circumstances of Rural Households in the Niger Delta Region

The impacts of oil pollution in the Niger Delta region are felt in the three environmental spheres of air, water and land. This represents a compound case of environmental pollution for the region. The resultant adverse economic impacts are felt more in farming and fishing, forest and biodiversity, household items and occupational tools. 17.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that oil pollution impacts negatively on livelihoods. 24.2% disagreed, 7.0% were undecided, 9.6% agreed while 42.0 strongly agreed. The responses obtained from respondents in the study locale showed concern for the level of destruction of farms and crops caused by oil pollution. Communities in the freshwater areas that have farming as a major livelihood activity dwelt more on this. Communities in freshwater areas engage in both farming and fishing.

While both men and women engage in fishing, women do more of the farming. The change of the ecosystem for the worst due to oil pollution is agonizing to these rural dwellers. Farming is basically for subsistence purpose and the surplus is usually channelled into commercial use. Major crops produced are cassava, plantain, yam, cocoyam, sugarcane and corn. The riverine location of the communities in the study area has placed them at a naturally advantaged location for fishing. The strategic location of the communities gave them a comparative advantage for fishing. The oil-polluted water has made it difficult for fishes to breed. One of the predominant livelihoods of the Niger Delta people is fishing. Being mostly riverine communities, they are naturally placed to have an abundance of fish and other aquatic species. But this has been altered by the adverse effects of

oil exploration activities and worsened by artisanal oil refining. The same communities now experience shortages with regard to fish and other aquatic foods. The dumping of wastes and oil spills into the rivers and creeks causes serious pollution. Men and women who engage in fishing catch less and as such, find it difficult to meet subsistence and commercial needs. Occupational tools are often destroyed by oil pollution. The research interviewees maintained that fishers often get their equipment destroyed by the polluted waters. Livelihood activities such as Lumbering, Palm wine tapping, Canoe carving, Hunting and Palm oil production are also affected by oil pollution. The degradation of the forests (deforestation) has economically affected practitioners of the above-indicated livelihoods. The destruction of mangrove forests has led to the near depletion of periwinkles and crabs.

As earlier stated, farming and fishing are mainly for subsistence purposes, though surpluses are sold to raise income. The respondents complained of the high cost of food and fish due to the prevailing environmental degradation caused by oil exploration and production activities, worsened by artisanal crude oil refining and oil bunkering. They averred that the prevailing circumstances have made farming and fishing to be less inspiring to several persons due to the attendant food shortages and low financial capital amongst the practitioners. They pointed out that these traditional livelihood activities were more profitable in the past and that the situation was getting worse by the expansion of oil exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta communities.

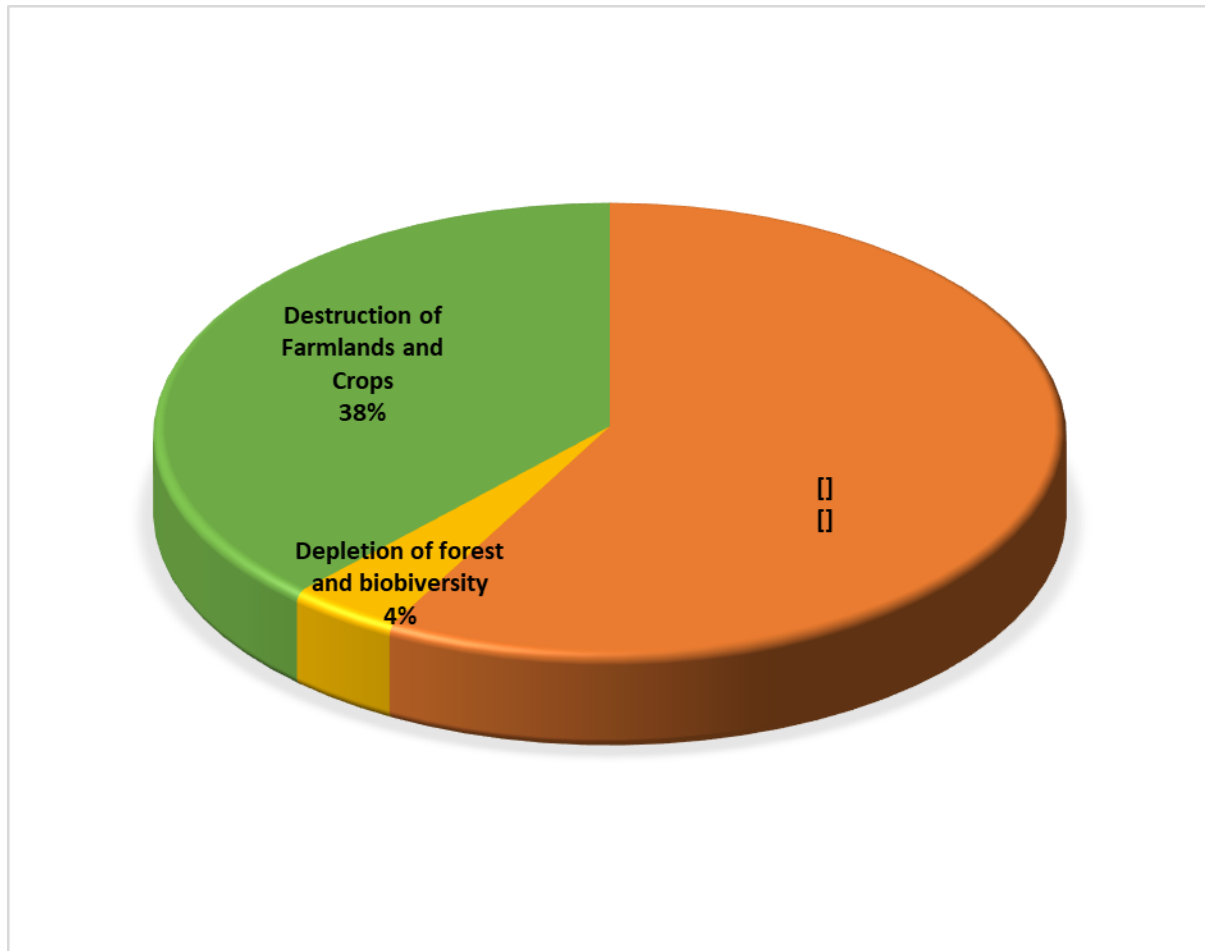


Figure 1: Showing the impact of Oil Pollution on Livelihoods

Figure 1 above, shows the impact of oil pollution on livelihoods. The resultant devastating economic impact of artisanal refining is felt more in farming, fishing, forest and biodiversity, as well as household items and occupational tools. While 19.7% of the respondents indicated the destruction of farmlands and crops, 29.9% indicated the destruction of rivers and fisheries. Also, 1.9% indicated the depletion of forest resources and biodiversity. The economic impacts of pollution are felt more in farming and fishing, forest and biodiversity, household items and occupational tools. While the impact on farming manifests in shortage of food items, low crop yield, low income, high cost of food, general food insecurity, reduction in spending, loss of livelihood, the impact on fishing comes in the form of shortage of fish, low income, high cost of fish, loss of livelihood and reduction in spending. Economic impact on forest and biodiversity

leads to depletion of animals and economic trees, reduction in hunting, loss of livelihood and low income.

In the advent of declining resources due to threat to livelihoods, the affected local people device means to diversify their livelihood activities while deliberate attempts are made to cut-down consumption. These diversifications may involve non-agricultural livelihoods. The study showed various alternative occupation. The alternative occupations highlighted in the study, include palm oil processing (1.8%), canoe carving (2.5%), Ogbono picking (10.8%), snail picking (2.9%), trading (12.7%), sale of petroleum products (6.1%), farming (15.3%) and fishing (40.8%). It was noted that some respondents combined fishing and farming to adapt. Some combine more than one or two supplementary occupations. The combination of two or more livelihoods is subject to the capacity and capability of the persons involved. Below are extracts from FGD sessions.

*Fish has drastically reduced because of oil pollution. Periwinkles and crabs have also reduced. The reduction of these commodities has kept us with less money (FGD/TEBUJOH).*

*Land pollution caused by oil companies and artisanal oil refining contaminates the soil. This affects farmlands and crops leading to loss of livelihoods and income. (FGD/ORUMA).*

### Diversification by Income levels

Table 1: Cross Tabulation of Diversification by Income

Diversification	INCOME				Total
	<10,000	N10,000- N30,000	N31,000- N50,000	N51,000 and Above	
Agriculture only	18(75.0)	50(75.8)	64(55.2)	50(46.3)	182(58.0)
Non-Agriculture	0(0.0)	14(21.2)	22(19.0)	40(37.0)	76(24.2)
Agriculture and Non-Agriculture	6(25.0)	2(3.0)	30(25.9)	18(16.7)	56(17.8)
Total	24(100.0)	66(100.0)	116(100.0)	108(100.0)	314(100.0)

Source: Field survey, 2019

Results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that 75.0% of respondents who are solely dependent on agricultural sources of income, earn below N10, 000 a month, 75.8% earn between N10, 000 - N30, 000, 55.2% earn between N 31, 000 – N 50, 000 and 46.3% earn up to N51, 000 and above. For respondents who solely depend on non-agricultural sources of income, whereas none of them

earns below N 10, 000 monthly, 21.2% earn between N10, 000 - N30, 000, 19.0% earn between N 31, 000 – N 50, 000 and 37.0% earn N51, 000 and above. For respondents who combine both agricultural and non-agricultural sources of income, it shows that 25.0% earn below N 10, 000 monthly, 3.0% earn between N10, 000 - N30, 000, 25.9% earn between N 31, 000 – N 50, 000, while 17.8% earn N51, 000 and above.

**Test of Hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between livelihood diversification and income.

Table 2: Spearman Rho Correlation Test of Hypothesis

			Livelihood Diversification	Average Monthly Income of Respondents
Spearman's rho	Diversification	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.196**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	314	314
	INCOME	Correlation Coefficient	.196**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	314	314

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 2 presents the Spearman Rho correlation between livelihood diversification (sources of respondents' income) and the average monthly income of respondents. The Spearman Rho correlation produced the following result:  $r = 0.196$ ,  $p = 0.000$

This means that the test produced a correlation of 0.196 and a p-value of 0.00 hence the test is statistically significant and the null hypothesis is thus rejected. There is therefore a positive relationship between livelihood diversification and income. This shows that the more the level of livelihood diversification the more the income. This is in line with Fikru (2008), assertion that complementary livelihood activities increase productivity and reduce poverty and that non-agricultural activities create more employment, reduce rural-urban drift and increase economic

growth. He explained that the more diversification by households, the more income that will accrue to them. Our findings are also in tune with the study of Jack (2019) that due to oil pollution, several households who are engaged in traditional livelihoods in the Niger Delta region such as fishing and farming are abandoning same due to poor economic returns. And that diversification of livelihood by farmers and fishers significantly promotes income. Some of the interviewees have this to say:

*I am a farmer. I am also involved in fishing and I sell petroleum products too. (KII/CBO REP/AGUOBIRI)*

*Relying on fishing alone will be disastrous so I do trade and thrift business to survive with my family (KII/CBO REP./ IDO)*

*Some persons in the community have added other livelihood activities to their original livelihoods as a means of diversification to add to the low income from farming and fishing. Some persons now sell all these fuel and kerosene to survive. (FGD/TEBUJOH)*

*Some of the livelihood activities people do are petty trading, menial jobs, boat hiring services, etc. Some persons who were doing only farming or fishing in the past now combine both of them. (FGD/ORUMA)*

## Conclusions

This study examined the diversification of Livelihoods and income levels in oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. It is apparent that rural households in the region are increasingly diversifying their livelihoods. Declining resources due to threat to livelihoods by oil pollution had compelled several rural households to devise means to diversify their livelihood activities. The diversification is in three folds: agriculture only, non-agriculture only and both agriculture and non-agriculture. The economic impacts of oil pollution are felt more in farming and fishing. While the impact on farming is reflected in shortage of food items, low crop yield, low income, high cost of food, general food insecurity, reduction in spending, loss of livelihood, the impact on fishing comes in the form of shortage of fish, low income, high cost of fish, loss of livelihood and reduction in spending. To identify the efficacy of diversification and or otherwise, the correlation between livelihood diversification (sources of respondents' income) and the average monthly income of respondents was tested, using the Spearman Rho coefficient. The test showed a positive relationship between livelihood diversification and income. This shows that the more the level of livelihood diversification the more the income.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The government and other stakeholders should, therefore, improve the capital assets of farmers and fishers to enable them to adapt to the vulnerabilities of oil pollution through diversification of livelihoods. Credit facilities should be extended to rural households who cannot diversify.
- ii. Compliance to existing environmental laws by oil prospecting and production companies should be enforced to ameliorate oil pollution. Artisanal crude oil refining and bunkering should be stopped to avoid further deterioration of the environmental and livelihood crisis in the region.
- iii. The government should embark on regular environmental remediation exercises to clean up oil spills in the region.
- iv. The government should strongly consider the urgent provision of physical capital assets such as roads, electricity, modern market, micro-finance banks, drinking water to help stimulate the adaptive capacities of rural households.
- v. Operating oil companies should institute efficient corporate social responsibility schemes to engender training of rural households on diversification methods, new techniques on agriculture and the provision of fertilizers and fish feeds.
- vi. To avoid the complete abandoning of traditional livelihoods, the government should aid the diversification efforts of rural households to non-agricultural activities while maintaining their traditional occupations to avoid food scarcity. This can be achieved through extension services, compensation for agricultural losses incurred due to oil pollution and the provision of preservation facilities for agricultural products.

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## Health Seeking Behaviour of Migrant Fishermen for Musculoskeletal Pains along the Taylor Creek of Bayelsa State

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### Abstract

There is a dearth of literature on the health-seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen with musculoskeletal pains in the Niger Delta region even though the majority of the people in this region are fishermen. Thus, this study investigated the health-seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen for musculoskeletal pains along the Taylor Creek in Bayelsa State. This descriptive study conducted among 224 fishermen used the Health Belief Model (HBM) as its theoretical framework. The respondent-driven sampling technique was used to administer a structured questionnaire to migrant fishermen in the region. Data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistics. The Findings from this study indicated that the average age of the respondents was 33 years. The result from this study also indicated that majority of the respondents had their origin traced to Biseni, Kolukuma and Okordia, while a large proportion of the respondents were from the Ijaw ethnic group. The types of musculoskeletal pains experienced by the fishermen revealed that more than half of them had experienced low back pains (91.1%), muscle pains (82.1%), joint pains (82.1%), tendon and ligament pains (73.2%), bone pains (62.5%), tunnel syndromes (62.1%), chronic headaches (62.5%), myofascial pains (53.6%) and fibromyalgia (44.6%). Their health-seeking behaviour revealed that majority of them had utilised both modern and traditional health care services for medical help despite the distance of the facilities from their locations. The study concluded that more health care facilities should be provided for migrant fishermen in their respective locations.

**Keywords:** Musculoskeletal pains, health-seeking behaviour, health care facilities, migrant fishermen, Taylor Creek

### Introduction

Indeed, musculoskeletal condition remains one of the major non-communicable diseases among people carrying out strenuous activities and the elderly. This situation has therefore been a global concern to health practitioners and stakeholders. For example, Briggs *et al.* (2018) study measures that can reduce the global burden of this condition; Hay *et al.* (2017) in their research mentioned

that musculoskeletal condition is one of the 333 diseases and injuries that result into national disabilities in 195 countries.

Most often, fishermen tend to prioritise opportunities to fish and earn a sustainable livelihood, while paying little attention to the health consequences of fishing (Emery, Hartmann, Green, Gardner, & Tisdell, 2014). As such, according to MacCalman, Shafrir, Cowie and Ritchie (2011), they are less likely to seek medical attention. No doubt strenuous activities such as paddling, lifting heavy nets, mending nets etc. could result in musculoskeletal health-related problems among fishermen thereby reducing their professional efficiency and quality of life. Again, musculoskeletal pains among fishermen especially in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria can be attributed to the fact that they generally use crude fishing tools. This is compounded by the migratory nature of most fishermen along the creeks and rivers of the Niger Delta Region. It is on this note that Woodhead, Abernethy, Szaboova and Turner (2018), stated that fishing occupation is dangerous, and fishermen are likely to be exposed to numerous health-related challenges both at on-shore and offshore.

Nonetheless, extant literature has suggested that fishermen, apart from the strenuous activities engaged in by fishermen, their engagement in risky behaviour such as; tobacco and alcohol use, poor sleeping habits and stress could impact their health conditions (King, Kilpatrick, Willis, & Speldewinde, 2015). Additionally, new studies are also suggesting that apart from physical health-related problems, fishermen are also likely to experience mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (King, Kilpatrick, Willis, & Speldewinde, 2015). Others have added that the health condition of fishermen is exacerbated by their self-employed nature, particularly those who are often compensated on a catch share basis (Matheson *et al.*, 2001; Symes, & Phillipson, 2009).

Furthermore, studies have also noted specific health problems and injuries among fishermen as a result of accidents emanating from working in an unstable weather condition, and tiredness relating to long working hours (Allen, Wellens, & Smith, 2010; Rezaee, Pelot, & Finnis, 2016). Importantly, given the nature of the fishing occupation, they are often isolated and disconnected from modern health facilities, this has compelled them to a large extent to rely on traditional health practices when they are sick (Prosenewicz, & Lippi, 2012). It is also significant to note that the

poor health condition of fishermen has enormous implications for their social integrity, economic viability, and environmental sustainability of fisheries (Woodhead, Abernethy, Szaboova & Turner, 2018).

While it has been acknowledged that fishing activities play an important role in the Niger Delta rural economy, there is a general dearth of research focusing on the specific health needs of fishermen in relation to musculoskeletal pains, even though this health challenge has been identified as the most common health problems experienced by fishermen (Briggs, Woolf, Dreinhöfer, Homb, Hoy, Kopansky-Giles, Akesson, & March 2018).

Few studies that have tried researching on this issue such as those of; Allen, Wellens and Smith (2010) on the fatigue of British fishermen; Rezaee, Pelot and Finnis (2016) on the effect of extratropical cyclone weather conditions on fishing vessels incidents' severity level on fishermen; Woodhead, Abernethy, Szaboova and Turner (2018) on health in fishing communities; Stubbs, Schofield and Patchay (2016) on mobility limitations and fall-related factors contribute to the reduced health-related quality of life in older adults with chronic musculoskeletal pains among others etc were mainly done outside the shores of Nigeria. Also, these studies have not sufficiently addressed the health-seeking behaviour of fishermen with musculoskeletal pains especially in the Niger Delta region where the movement of fishermen from one place to the other is a common occupational phenomenon. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the health-seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen for musculoskeletal pains along the Taylor creek of Bayelsa State.

### **Theoretical Framework: Health Belief Model**

The theoretical basis for this study is rooted in the Health Belief Model (HBM) developed in the year 1950s by social psychologists (Rosenstock, 1974). The HBM is a socio-psychological health behaviour change developed to explain and predict health-related behaviours, particularly regarding the uptake of health services. Afterwards, it was extended by other scholars to explain differing reactions to symptoms and to explain variations in adherence to treatment. It has afterwards been used as a guide in designing interventions to improve compliance with preventive procedures.

The HBM opines that behaviours related to health are influenced by a person's desire to avoid illness or to get well, and by their confidence that the recommended action will achieve this (Janz, et al., 2002). The model breaks down health decisions into stages and offers a catalogue of variables that control health action. It does not supply a model of exactly how these operate. In the model, the likelihood that a person will follow this preventive behaviour is largely influenced by their actions.

Another major assertion of the model is that health behaviours are influenced by a person's desire to avoid illness or to get well, and by their confidence that the recommended action will achieve this (Janz, et al., 2002). This is in-line with the various health-seeking behaviours exhibited by fishermen as mitigation or coping strategies against musculoskeletal pains and disorders. Fishermen exhibit various forms of health-seeking behaviours such as mechanization of fishing system, constant medical check-up, exercise, etc. based on the perceived benefits of such health behaviour.

This behaviour is of course different and varies across different fishermen and communities. This is because the perception of Fisherman A is different from the perception of Fisherman B. Therefore, when the health-seeking behaviour of Fisherman A is the mechanization of a fishing system, for instance, the health-seeking behaviour of Fisherman B could be exercise and medical check-up. The model explains that the people's response to a health issue is determined by a range of factors he listed;

**Perceived susceptibility:** The risk of developing a health problem by subjective assessment refers to perceived susceptibility. In other words, individuals who perceive that they are vulnerable to a specific kind of health challenge will employ behaviours to reduce the risk of contracting. As the model implies, fishermen's use of health services might depend on their susceptibility of the risk of contracting a particular musculoskeletal disorder.

**Perceived severity:** The severity of a health problem and its potential consequences through perceived assessment is referred to as perceived severity. In other words, individuals who perceive a given health challenge as serious, are likely to employ behaviours that will prevent the health challenges from occurring. This is in line since fishermen who have experienced musculoskeletal

disorder or have a close family member or friend who has experienced this disorder imbibe more of the health-seeking behaviours that will reduce their risk to musculoskeletal disorder while fishermen who have not experienced musculoskeletal disorder or who do not have a close family member or friend who has experienced this will not do this because they are unaware of the severity of the disorder.

**Perceived benefits:** Health-related behaviours are also influenced by the perceived benefits of taking action. What this implies is that if a fisherman believes that particular health-seeking behaviour will abbreviate susceptibility to musculoskeletal disorder or pain or decrease its seriousness, then the fisherman is likely to engage in that health-seeking behaviour regardless of objective facts regarding the effectiveness of the action.

**Perceived barriers:** Obstacles to behaviour change through an individual's assessment refer to perceived barriers. For instance, before a fisherman imbibes any health-seeking behaviour, the fisherman weighs the benefits and barriers, the perceived benefits must outbalance the perceived barriers for the health-seeking behaviour to occur. Perceived barriers to practising health-seeking behaviour that reduces the risk of musculoskeletal disorders.

## Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted among 224 migrant fishermen along Taylor Creek in Bayelsa State. The Taylor Creek stretches from Bisini clan to Gbarain clan both in Yenagoa Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta region. The creek lies between longitude  $6^{\circ} 17'$  to  $6^{\circ} 21'$  E and latitude  $5^{\circ} 01'$  to  $5^{\circ} 05'$  N. The communities found around the creek are Ikrama-Okordia, Kalaba-Kordia, Akumoni-Okordia and Agbobiri Community.

The sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's sample size formula (Cochran, 1977) which yielded a sample size of 224 migrant fishermen. A respondent-driven sampling technique was used to select respondents along Taylor Creek by the use of initial identification and contact of migrant fishermen in each community along the creek before referrals of other respondents were made. The initial contact of respondents along the communities facilitated the administration of the structured questionnaire through the referrals process until the sample size for the study was completed.

Data for this study were generated using a structured questionnaire that was designed according to the overall and specific objectives of the study. Hence, in addition to the socio-demographic variables of the respondents captured in the research instrument includes; the origin of migrant fishermen, types of musculoskeletal pains experienced by the respondents, and health-seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen for musculoskeletal pains. The validity of the research instruments was determined using face validity, while the reliability of the quantitative data was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded  $\alpha = 0.7$  showing that the instrument for the study measured what it purported to measure.

The method of analysis of the research was carried out at univariate levels which employed the use of percentage distribution tables and charts. To ensure the ethical standard for this study, verbal consent was sought from individual respondents before proceeding with the administration of the research instrument. The researcher also ensured that all ethical standards such as confidentiality, non-maleficence, anonymity, justice, neutrality etc were observed as set by the National Health Research Ethics Code (NHREC).

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, which ranged from gender, age in years, marital status, religion, education, family type to average income. On the gender of the respondents, more than half of them were male respondents (57.1%), while 42.9% of them were female respondents. On the age of the respondents, the average age of the respondents was 33 years, while the highest proportion of the respondents (28.6%) falls within the age bracket of 25 – 30 years. On the marital status of the respondents, more than three-quarter of the respondents were married (80.4%). The religious affiliation of the respondents, more than half of the respondents were protestants (62.5%).

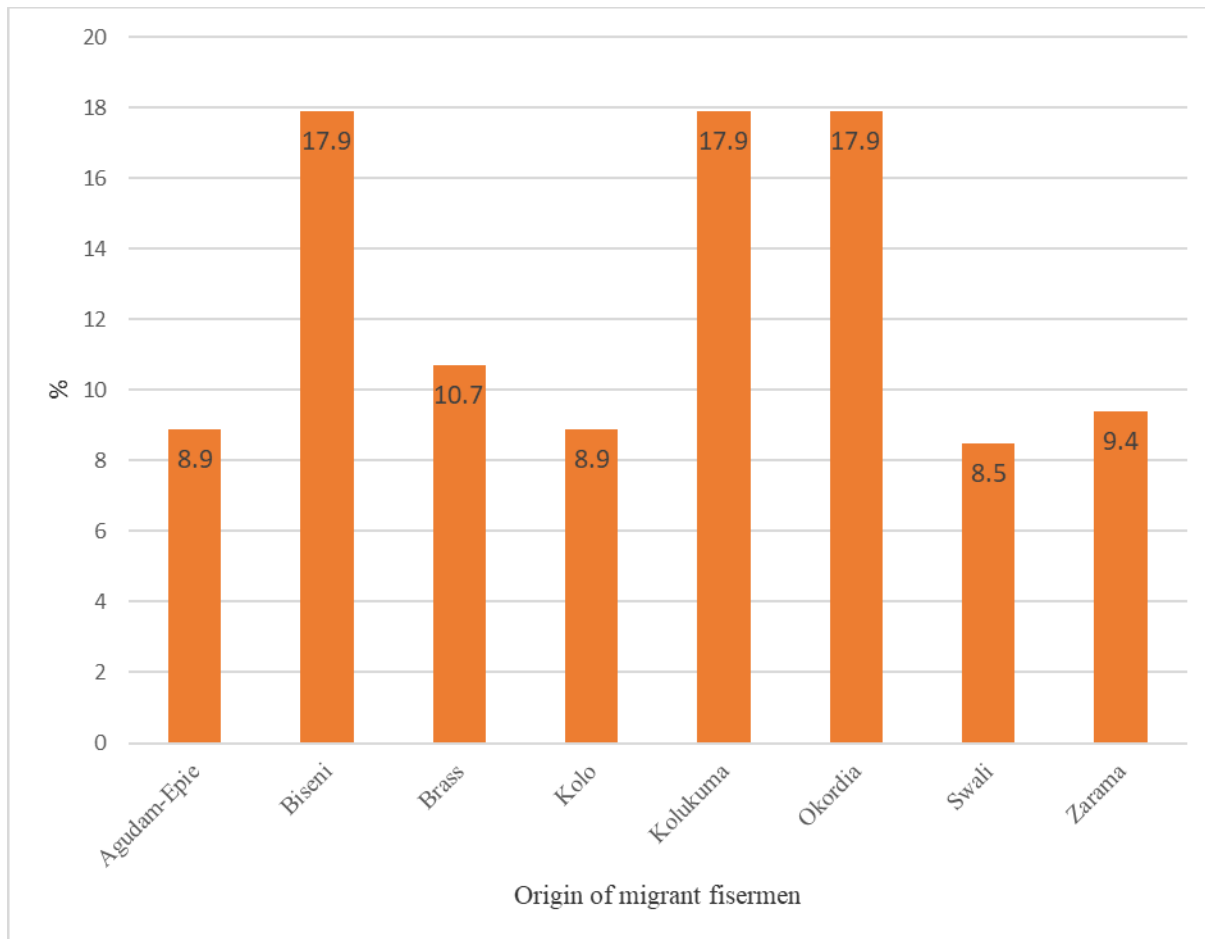
On the family type of the respondents, more than half of the respondents (53.6%) were from monogamous family while 46.4% of them were from a polygamous family. The average income of the respondents indicated that the highest proportion of the respondents (35.7%) earned between N101,000-N150,000, followed by those who earned less than N50,000 (28.6%).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

<b>Socio-demographic variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n=224)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	96	42.9
Male	128	57.1
<b>Age in years (Mean age=33.02± 8.12)</b>		
18 – 24	40	17.9
25 – 30	64	28.6
31 – 34	20	8.9
35 - 39	60	26.8
40 years and above	40	17.9
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	-	-
Married	180	80.4
Cohabiting	44	19.6
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	44	19.6
Protestants	140	62.5
Islam	40	17.9
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	20	8.9
Primary	40	17.9
Secondary	80	35.7
Tertiary	84	37.5
<b>Family type</b>		
Monogamy	120	53.6
Polygamy	104	46.4
<b>Average income</b>		
Less than N50000	64	28.6
51000 – 100000	40	17.9
101000 – 150000	80	35.7
151000 – 200000	20	8.9
201000 – 250000	20	8.9

### **The origin of migrant fishermen**

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by place of origin. The study revealed that nearly one out of every five respondents had their origin traced to Biseni, Kolukuma and Okordia respectively, while at least one out of every ten respondents had their origins traced to Brass. Given these origins, it implies that all respondents had their origins in various Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State where the study was conducted. In other words, they all had inter-local migration rather than an inter-regional typology of migration.



**Figure 1: Distribution by the origin and ethnic groups of the respondents**

### Types of Musculoskeletal Pains Experienced or Experiencing

In multiple responses, table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents had experienced low back pain (91.1%), muscle pain (82.1%), joint pain (82.1%), tendon and ligament pain (73.2%), bone pain (62.5%), tunnel syndromes (62.1%) and chronic headaches (62.5%). Also, more than half of them have experienced myofascial pains (53.6%). Finally, the least form of health challenges experienced by the respondents is fibromyalgia (44.6%).

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by the types of musculoskeletal pains experienced**

Types of musculoskeletal pains	Frequency	Percentage
Bone pain (usually results from severe injury)	140	62.5
Muscle pain (muscle spasm)	184	82.1
Tendon and ligament pain	164	73.2
Fibromyalgia (pains in the tendons or ligaments caused by injuries)	100	44.6
Joint pain (arthritic pain)	184	82.1

Tunnel syndromes (pain due to nerve compression)	140	62.5
Myofascial pains (chronic muscle pain)	120	53.6
Chronic headache	140	62.5
Low back pain	204	91.1

### Health seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen

Table 3 reveals the various health facilities visited for health care services among the migrant fishermen. Concerning the modern health care delivery categories as revealed by the respondents in multiple responses, the study revealed that all respondents indicated that they have visited modern healthcare services at one point or the other.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by the health care services utilized for the treatment**

Facilities visited for health care	Frequency (n=224)	Percentage (%)
<b>Modern health care</b>		
Health centre	224	100.0
Government hospital	60	26.8
Visit chemist	204	91.1
Visit physician at home	164	73.2
<b>Traditional health care</b>		
Meditation	124	55.4
Massage therapy	184	82.1
Acupuncture	60	26.8
Movement therapy	144	64.3
Relaxation techniques	224	100.0
Spinal manipulation	40	17.9
Healing touch	64	28.6
Hypnotherapy	44	19.6
<b>Application of natural products</b>		
Probiotics	80	35.7
Herbs	204	91.1
Animal fats	60	26.8
Prayers	184	82.1
Others	124	55.4

Also, most of the respondents (91.1%) indicated that they have visited the chemist for health care services, and the home of a physician (73.2%). In the categories of traditional health care, it was further revealed that all respondents indicated that they have adopted relaxation as a technique in relieving pains emanating from their occupations. More than half of the respondents have used massage therapy (82.1%), movement therapy (64.3%) and meditation (55.4%). Other traditional methods utilised by the respondents included healing touch (28.6%), acupuncture (26.8%),

hypnotherapy (19.6%), spinal manipulation (17.9%), etc. The results further revealed that respondents applied some forms of natural products to speed up their recovery and these ranged from the use of herbs (91.1%).

### Discussion of Findings

Findings on the origin of the respondents showed that nearly one out of every five respondents had their origin traced to Biseni, Kolukuma and Okordia respectively, while at least one out of every ten respondents had their origin traced to Brass. Given these origins, it implies that all respondents had their origins in various Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State where the study was conducted. In other words, they all had inter-local migration rather than an inter-regional typology of migration.

Lawrie *et al.* (2004) earlier research has indicated that chronic physical problems are linked to heavy labour and behaviour. Findings on the types of musculoskeletal pains experienced or still being experienced by migrant fishermen revealed that majority of the respondents had experienced different forms of musculoskeletal pains which ranged from low back pain, muscle pain, joint pain, tendon and ligament pain, bone pain, tunnel syndromes, chronic headaches, myofascial pains and fibromyalgia. Given that one form of musculoskeletal pains or the other was indicated by the respondents, this finding corroborates the study of Woodhead *et al.* (2018) who found that fishing is a dangerous occupation in which fishers are exposed to health risk both on- and offshore.

Findings on the health-seeking behaviour of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents visited the health centre, chemists (pharmacy) including the home of a physician for medical advice. In fact, they tend to utilize both modern and traditional health care services for musculoskeletal pains. These findings contradict the studies of Emery *et al.* (2014) and MacCalman *et al.* (2011) that fishermen tend to prioritize opportunities to fish over health as well as being less likely to seek medical help when they had health problems. This follows that even though most communities where fishing activities were carried out were far from the available health facilities, migrant fishermen still ensure that they conveyed themselves to any available health facilities for medical care particularly for musculoskeletal pains.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined the health-seeking behaviour of migrant fishermen for musculoskeletal pains along Taylor Creek in Bayelsa State. It is evident that different forms of musculoskeletal pains affected migrant fishermen due to the nature of their work and the environmental conditions they were subjected to. However, the study has shown that there were both modern and traditional health care services utilized by the migrant fishermen for their health. This is by implication suggesting that migrant fishermen are more conscious of their health while they employed different health-seeking behaviour for musculoskeletal pains to get well.

Given the findings of the study, the following are the recommendations of the study:

- a) Migrant fishermen should be sensitized on the use of preventive medicine rather than the use of curative medicine.
- b) Migrant fishermen should be sensitized on the use of modern health care delivery systems than the traditional methods of health care delivery.
- c) The government should ensure that modern health care facilities are located close to their respective communities to facilitate quick recovery from musculoskeletal pains.

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## Influence of Political Education on Electoral Awareness of Undergraduate Students in a Nigerian University

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### Abstract

This study examined the influence of political education on awareness of the electoral process among undergraduate students in a Nigerian University. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study while final year students in Niger Delta University constituted the target population. A total of 150 students were randomly sampled from the Departments of Social Science Education and Political Science. A 20-items researchers' designed questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The validity of the instrument was established by experts in Test and Measurement from the Faculty of Education of the Niger Delta University. A test-retest method was employed to determine the reliability of the instrument using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation in which a reliability index of 0.72 was obtained. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicated that most of the undergraduate students were aware of the activities of political parties. However, the results also indicated that most of the undergraduate students were not well conversant with the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) especially with regards to the constitutional mandate given to it. The study concluded that an effective way of creating awareness of the whole electoral process in Nigeria especially among university students is to enhance the teaching and learning of political education contents. Therefore, it was recommended among others that a compulsory course that has in its contents, relevant political education themes be introduced and domiciled in the General Studies Unit in the universities so that students can be aware of issues relating to elections and politics in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Undergraduates, Political Education, Electoral Awareness, Political Parties, Electoral disputes

### Introduction

In John Locke's educational philosophy of human understanding, it is believed that man is born a '*tabular rasa*' (blank slate), without having the ability to process information (Duschinsky, 2012). That is, the traits that are found in humans are learnt through the process of either a formal or informal educational system. In fact, education is seen as a process that imbues in the individuals the values and traits that make people useful to themselves and the society at large. This position

is supported by the National Policy on Education which states that education is an instrument for effecting national development in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The foregoing is not only true but real in that schools do not only provide the fundamental knowledge and skills to enable one to be gainfully employed but it also develops the competence of students towards the improvement of their democratic culture. As such, education reinforces the awareness of students towards their rights and responsibilities, especially on electoral issues. The performance of this function is not exclusive to schools as even core political institutions like; political parties, election management bodies, etc, also take part in educating citizens on their rights and responsibilities in the political system.

Political parties participate in the performance of the function of political education. They educate the electorates on how to vote and why they should vote. They orient the electorate on what they should stand to gain from the activities of government (Anamgba, 2000). Parties organize rallies, campaigns, debates and symposia on the people. They provide information on candidates contesting for elective positions and they also provide avenues for electorates to vote for candidates of their choice during elections. Elections are conducted under the auspices of election management bodies (EMBs). Election management bodies are bodies charged with the duty of organizing and conducting elections, resolution of election disputes, the conduct of referendum and plebiscites in a state (Ekundayo, 2015). This body also performs the function of a political education by enlightening and educating the electorates (voters) about the processes of the election, that they should vote and the need to avoid electoral malpractices. This implies that there is a fundamental theoretical and practical connection between education and politics.

There is an argument in the literature that the political awareness of student has improved drastically over the years through education (Hamad, Qodrat & Zulham, 2001; Golombek, 2002; Barwari, 2006). Others argue that despite the political education carried out by both governmental and non-governmental organizations, the political awareness of students are on the decline (Ikelegbe, 2005; Russell, 2002; Omari, 2013). This indicates that whether or not political education increases, political participation is contentious. It is on this note that this study is investigating the influence of political education on electoral awareness among undergraduate students in a Nigeria

University with attention given to undergraduates' awareness of political party activities, electoral management and disputes resolution processes in Nigeria.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to elicit relevant data on the influence of political education on electoral awareness among undergraduate students. The Niger Delta University was purposively selected as a case study. The university has massive attendance of students from all parts of the country. The targeted population was undergraduate students of the Department of Social Science Education (Political Science Programme) and the Department of Political Science (in the Faculty of Social Sciences). A random sampling technique was used to select 150 final year undergraduate students from both Departments. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed 20-items questionnaire titled "Political Education and Electoral Awareness Questionnaire (PEEAQ)". The PEEAQ consisted of two sections (A & B). Section 'A' focused on the respondents' socio-demographic variables such as gender and department while section 'B' consisted of 20 closed-ended structured items that addressed the study subject matter. The instrument was structured based on a modified 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) which were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The expert's comments and observations were used to correct errors noticed in the instrument before administering to respondents. The test-retest technique was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. Thirty copies of the research instrument were administered twice to a population with similar attributes (among Political Science Students of the Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State) within one month and the correlation coefficient of the outcome was computed given a coefficient of 0.72 which indicated positive correlation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of socio-demographic variables of respondents. As indicated, 59% of the respondents were male undergraduate students while 41% were female. On the age bracket, 67% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 18-29 years while 33% were within the age bracket of 30-49 years.

## Results

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographic Variables of Respondents**

Variables	Levels	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	89	59
	Female	61	41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-29	101	67
	30-49	49	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Department</b>	Social Science Education	50	33
	Political Science	100	67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

Meanwhile, the distribution of respondents also indicated that 33% of them were drawn from the Department of Social Science Education (Political Science option) in the Faculty of Education while 67% were drawn from the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Results of the socio-demographic variables of respondents revealed that male students still account for the majority of those admitted for undergraduate programmes in most Nigerian universities. In other words, most Nigerian universities including the (Niger Delta University) are yet to achieve gender parity in general enrolment and into specific degree programmes. This also implies that the contributions of the universities in Nigeria in meeting the goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls; may not be highly felt when it is measured in relation to school enrolment.

Results also proved that majority of students running undergraduate programmes in most Nigerian universities falls within ages 18 and 29 years. This is an indication that as of today, students within the 18-29 years age bracket remains the most active population offering undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities in terms of demographics.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistical representation of responses on the influence of political education on undergraduates' awareness of political parties' activities. The result indicated that 47% of the respondents agreed that to be a member of political party activities is voluntary while 10% of them strongly disagreed to the view that to be a member of political party activities is

voluntary. This is also confirmed by the mean statistic result of 2.90 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.89 indicating that indeed, being a member of a political party in Nigeria is voluntary.

**Table 2: Influence of Political Education on Undergraduates' Awareness of Political Parties' Activities**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.
1	To be a member of a political party in Nigeria is voluntary.	40 (27%)	70 (47%)	25 (17%)	15 (10%)	<del>2.90</del>	<b>2.89</b>
2	Political parties in Nigeria are usually formed without clear-cut ideology.	10 (7%)	20 (13%)	40 (27%)	80 (53%)	<b>1.73</b>	<b>1.72</b>
3	To secure the party nomination during primary elections in Nigeria is the exclusive preserve of political godfathers.	60 (40%)	75 (50%)	10 (7%)	5 (3%)	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.24</b>
4	Funding for political parties in Nigeria is not usually done by every card-carrying member of the party.	40 (27%)	80 (53%)	20 (13%)	10 (7%)	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.98</b>
5	Several of the political parties do not engage the electorates on voter education before elections	70 (47%)	50 (33%)	15 (10%)	15 (10%)	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.15</b>
6	Political campaigns in Nigeria are generally lacking in issue-based politics especially during campaigns.	50 (33%)	85 (57%)	5 (3%)	10 (7%)	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.15</b>

**Decision:**  $\bar{X} = \text{or } \geq 2.50$

On whether political parties in Nigeria are formed without clear cut ideology, 7% strongly agreed while 13% of the respondents agreed to the assertion whereas 53% of them strongly disagreed. This could mean that, for the majority of respondents, political parties in Nigeria have some form of ideology that drives their quest for the capture of state power.

Results further show that 50% of the respondents agreed to the statement that to be nominated for an election is the exclusive preserve of political godfathers of the party while 3% strongly disagreed to this statement. A further check from the mean statistic result of 3.27 with a corresponding standard deviation of 3.24 also attests to the fact that the overbearing influence of godfathers is still very much present in the selection and nomination of party's candidates during primary elections in Nigeria. On whether or not political parties in Nigeria usually engage the electorates on voter education before elections, 47% strongly agreed that several of the political parties in Nigeria do not engage the electorates before the election on voter education while 10%

thought otherwise. This also reflects in the mean and standard deviation results of 3.17 and 3.15 respectively.

In terms of funding of political parties' activities, 53% of the respondents agreed that the responsibility of funding the parties is not usually done by every card-carrying member of the party while 7% strongly disagreed to this statement. Of course, this may not be far from reality because the way most political parties are structured in Nigeria, not every member of the party is allowed to contribute financially. In most cases, those who may have won elective positions or get appointed may in one way or the other contribute in funding party's activities such as campaigns. The table also shows that 57% of the respondents agreed that political campaigns in Nigeria are usually lacking in issue-based politics especially during electioneering campaigns while 7% of the respondents disagreed to this statement.

**Table 3: Influence of Political Education on Undergraduates' Awareness of Election Management Process**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.
7	Election can better be managed by INEC if the entire process is automated and digitized in order to minimize electoral fraud.	45 (30%)	70 (47%)	20 (13%)	15 (10%)	<b>2.97</b>	<b>2.95</b>
8	INEC's power to conduct elections in Nigeria is clearly defined in the Electoral Act.	82 (55%)	50 (33%)	8 (5%)	10 (7%)	<b>3.36</b>	<b>3.33</b>
9	Voter registration can only be done by INEC	40 (27%)	90 (60%)	12 (8%)	8 (5%)	<b>3.08</b>	<b>3.06</b>
10	Voter education is the sole mandate of INEC	20 (13%)	15 (10%)	70 (47%)	45 (30%)	<b>2.07</b>	<b>2.05</b>
11	Voter apathy usually experienced in Nigeria is caused by INEC alone	16 (11%)	5 (3%)	89 (59%)	40 (27%)	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.97</b>
12	The capacity of INEC to deliver on free, fair and credible elections is hampered by weak electoral laws	45 (30%)	73 (49%)	20 (13%)	12 (8%)	<b>3.01</b>	<b>2.99</b>
13	INEC ought to be empowered to conduct all elections including Local Government Elections.	45 (30%)	70 (47%)	20 (13%)	15 (10%)	<b>2.97</b>	<b>2.95</b>

**Decision:**  $\bar{X} = \text{or } \geq 2.50$

Table 3 shows the statistical analysis of the influence of political education on undergraduates' awareness of election management process. From item-by-item analysis and using the two

extremes in the response options alongside the mean and standard deviation, results for item 7 revealed that 47% of the respondent agreed that election in Nigeria can better be managed by INEC if every electoral procedure is automated and digitized in order to minimize the incidence of electoral fraud while 13% disagree to this statement. Additionally, with 2.97 mean and a corresponding 2.95 standard deviation; it can be inferred that the management process of elections in Nigeria could be enhanced if every electoral procedure is automated and digitized in order or minimize incidences of electoral fraud. Also, from the result, as shown in item 8, there is no doubt that the respondents are aware that apart from the constitution, INEC's powers to conduct elections in Nigeria are further amplified in the Electoral Act. That is, 55% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that INEC's power to conduct an election in Nigeria is well defined in the Electoral Act while 7% of the respondents strongly disagreed. There is no ambiguity on what is expected from the electoral umpire (INEC) and almost everybody in Nigeria is aware of this fact. This also explains why in item 9 which addresses the issue of voters' registration, 60% of the respondents agreed to the statement that registration of potential voters in Nigeria can only be done by INEC while 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed to this statement. Additionally, the mean result of 3.08 also attests to the fact that by group response, majority of the respondents believed that it is the constitutional responsibility of INEC to periodically carry out Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise.

However, on the question whether or not voter education can only be carried out by INEC, 13% of the respondents strongly agreed that voters' education is the sole mandate of INEC alone while 47% of them strongly disagreed. What this means is that with a mean score of 2.07 and standard deviation of 2.05, INEC alone cannot solely assume responsibility to carry out regular voter education as this is also the responsibility of political parties. Also noticeable from item 11 in Table 3 is that 11% of the respondents strongly agreed that voter apathy experienced in Nigeria is caused by INEC alone while 59% of them disagreed to this statement. What this represents is that, with a mean score of 1.98 and standard deviation of 1.97, INEC alone cannot be blamed on the high level of political apathy observed in most eligible voters as several other factors such as bad governance, unfulfilled electioneering promises, etc are implicated on being a cause of voter's apathy experienced especially during elections in Nigeria.

Similarly, on whether or not INEC as presently structured can conduct free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria as shown in item 12, 49% of the respondents agreed to the statement that the capacity of INEC delivers free, fair and credible election in Nigeria hampered by electoral laws while 8% of them strongly disagreed to this statement. Also, by simple majority, 47% of the respondents agreed that giving the way and manner most local government elections are conducted in Nigeria, INEC ought to be empowered to conduct elections including Local Government in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Influence of Political Education on Undergraduates' Awareness of Electoral Disputes Resolution Process**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.
14	Political parties in Nigeria lacked effective internal mechanisms for resolving disputes.	70 (47%)	60 (40%)	15 (10%)	5 (3%)	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.28</b>
15	The best way to resolve electoral disputes is to approach the election petitions tribunals and regular courts.	65 (43%)	60 (40%)	15 (10%)	10 (7%)	<b>3.20</b>	<b>3.17</b>
16	Election related-disputes can best be resolved through violence	10 (7%)	20 (13%)	35 (23%)	85 (57%)	<b>1.70</b>	<b>1.69</b>
17	Election-related disputes could be avoided if the entire management process is seen to be transparent.	75 (50%)	40 (27%)	25 (17%)	10 (7%)	<b>3.20</b>	<b>3.17</b>
18	Elections in Nigeria could be violence-free if every stakeholder plays by the rules.	70 (47%)	45 (30%)	20 (13%)	15 (10%)	<b>3.13</b>	<b>3.11</b>
19	Maintaining neutrality and professionalism by INEC and security agencies could help resolve election-related disputes.	80 (53%)	60 (40%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	<b>3.43</b>	<b>3.41</b>
20	No matter what has been put in place, election-related disputes are inevitable.	65 (43%)	70 (47%)	10 (7%)	5 (3%)	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.28</b>

**Decision:**  $\bar{X} = \text{or} \geq 2.50$

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of responses on the influence of political education on undergraduates' awareness of electoral disputes resolution process. The result indicated that 47% of the respondents agreed that most political parties in Nigeria lacked effective internal mechanisms for resolving conflicts while 10% of them strongly disagreed to the statement. This is

also confirmed by the mean statistic result of 3.30 with a corresponding standard deviation of 3.28 indicating that indeed, the lack of effective ways of managing and resolving conflicts is one of the reasons why most pre-election disputes are taken to conventional courts. This explains why most pre-election cases in Nigeria linger in courts even after a winner has been sworn into office. On whether or not the best way to resolve electoral disputes is to approach the election petition tribunals and regular courts, 43% strongly agreed while 40% of the respondents agreed to the assertion whereas 7% of them strongly disagreed. This could mean that, for the majority of respondents, rather than resorting to violence, the best way to settle disputes arising from elections is for the aggrieved parties or actors to go to the civil courts or the election petition tribunals specifically set up to settle electoral disputes. This can further be cross-checked from the mean score of 3.20 with a corresponding 3.17 which that by group response, the majority agrees with the statement in item 2.

Closely related to this result is the majority agreement on item 16 which states that election-related disputes cannot be resolved through violence. As it were 7% of the respondents agreed to the statement while 57% strongly disagreed to it. A further check from the mean score result of 1.70 with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.69 also attests to the fact that the use of violence as a tool to settle electoral scores is no longer desirable by the vast majority of Nigerian including the students. On whether or not elections in Nigeria could be violent-free if every stakeholder plays by the rules as shown in item 18, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement while 10% of them strongly disagreed. This also reflects in the mean and standard deviation results of 3.13 and 3.11 respectively. This means that there is a high possibility of achieving violent-free elections in Nigeria when every stakeholder whether political parties, INEC, security agencies, election observers and voters themselves strictly adhere to what is expected of them.

In item 19 which deals on maintaining neutrality and professionalism by INEC and security agencies, 53% of the respondents agreed that election-related disputes could be reduced these agencies maintain the highest level of neutrality and professionalism while 3% strongly disagreed to this statement. Of course, this may not be far from the reality because most of the violent-related cases are recorded when in the planning and execution of elections, public agencies like INEC and security agencies are perceived to taking sides with any of the parties contesting in the elections.

Finally, results in Table 4 shows that 47% of the respondents agreed that no matter what has been put in place, election-related disputes are inevitable while 3% of the respondents disagreed to this statement.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result on the influence of political education on students' awareness of political parties' activities shows that there is a strong relationship between political education and awareness of the functions and activities of political parties by the majority of undergraduate students in Nigeria. This is in line with Ibaba (2010) stated that political socialization serves as the function of political education through campaigns, rallies, posters, workshops, seminars and manifestos and political parties, citizens are being educated. The finding also lends credence to the opinion of Ikelegbe (2005) that, political parties organize rallies, campaigns, debates and symposia on government programmes and activities educate the people. What can be deciphered here is that through formal and informal political education and enlightenment programmes, citizens become aware of what the policies, programmes, ideologies and manifestoes of political parties are. With this, citizens would be in a vantage position to hold political parties accountable for every promise made during campaigns and electioneering periods.

On the relationship between political education and undergraduate students' awareness of the election management process, the descriptive statistical analysis made shows that respondents' awareness of the variable is high. This agrees with Ekundayo (2015) who stated that one of the major functions of election management bodies all over the world is to perform the function of political education through enlightenment and education for effective delivery of free, fair and credible elections for sustainable democracy and development. Similarly, finding also revealed that political education can be used to scale up the awareness level of electoral conflict/dispute political resolution process among undergraduate students. This finding aligns with Bargiacchi and Florinder (2017) when they argued that electoral conflicts and disputes are not only inevitable in pre and post-election matters but they have the potential to undermine the integrity and outcome of elections. The fact that the political system aids in the protection of certain values that support every electoral action and every electoral procedure also goes to underscore the fact that, while some traits found in most humans are learnt through the process of either a formal or informal

education system, political education, therefore, provides fundamental knowledge and skills towards the improvement of their rights and responsibilities especially within the framework of electoral awareness.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The point has been made that political education is not only important for the survival of our constitutional democracy but it also fosters national consciousness for national development. It is vital for the socio-economic and political development of any society. Therefore, it can be concluded that political education is very important for electoral awareness and meaningful political process or participation. It also helps in the maintenance of democratic values and survival of democracy where individuals are well-positioned to be aware of their constitutional guaranteed social, economic and political rights on one hand and in having a full understanding of their civic duties and obligations to the Nigerian state on the other hand. Thus, based on the data collected and analyzed, discussions made and a conclusion drawn based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Depending on the course of study, some kind of political education should be encouraged and extended to all faculties in universities as effective political education is crucial to electoral consciousness and effective political participation. This can be done by introducing a compulsory university-wide course to be manned and domiciled in the General Studies Unit.
- ii. University managements should organize workshops, seminars and in-service training for lecturers on political education programmes to equip and improve their knowledge of teaching.
- iii. The teaching and learning of subjects such as Civic Education, Social Studies and Government should be strengthened at the primary and secondary school levels so that those who will eventually gain admission into the university would have become politically aware and conscious of the electoral process been operated in the country.

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