



The Influence of Militancy Variables on Educational Development of Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of militancy variables on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this purpose three null hypotheses were formulated based on the identified militancy variables namely; hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping, poverty and weapon possession by students. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted, and Cronbach Alpha reliability method was also applied to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The population for the study was 3,049, while the sample size was 939 respondents. The result of the analyzes revealed that militancy variables of hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping, poverty and weapon possession by students exert significant influence on educational underdevelopment of secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was then recommended that the strategy for community-based programmes is effective at reducing youth violence and violence-related outcomes (Rivers State Government Press, 2005).

Keywords: Militancy, Educational Development, Secondary Schools, Rivers State, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Across Nigeria, improving the academic standard of children in their communities have been the responsibility of parents, educators and policy makers. The federal government “No Child Left Behind Act” which stated that schools should improve students’ academic performance, was typically measured by performance on standardized tests. In Rivers State, several commissions and committees has been inaugurated by the Ministry of Education to develop and oversee academic accountability system for the state’s educational system.

The State Ministry of Education has called for clear, vigorous academic standards’ exams and tests to ascertain whether students are meeting the standards for their success or failure (Partnership for Learning, 2001). Tests scores, which is not the only or necessarily the best measure of achievement, do reliably predict some extent of failure and success. Battin-Pearson et al. (2001) in agreement with this view, affirmed that, poor academic performance is a strong prediction of whether a student will continue his or her academic pursuit or drop out of school.

The increased emphasis on accountability at both federal and state levels, highlights the importance of identifying factors that affect educational development and groups of students within the schools. Although most efforts to boost educational development take place in the classrooms, yet certain aspects of the social environment, including risky behaviour such as hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping, poverty and weapon possession by students also exert effect on educational development (Pollard et al., 1999).

Iyagba (1979) contends that attitudes and behaviours that affect educational development are nurtured in social groups, at parties and other gatherings, on the streets, in places where pre-teens and adolescents typically hang out with little or no adult supervision or support. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is faced with developmental problems due to bad environmental changes, land degradation, destruction of indigenous culture, poverty, and the result is youth restiveness and militia upsurge. The recent issue on ground between the foreign oil companies and a good number of the Niger, minority ethnic groups (e.g., Rivers people) who felt being exploited, was destructive. The struggle for oil wealth has fueled conflict and crisis between different ethnic groups, which has resulted in the occupation of the entire region by ethnic militant groups, the Nigerian Police and military Forces. Precisely, deprivation and poverty within the oil and gas resource areas accounts for the protest by the Rivers people for resource control. It is not surprising that the environmental policies, which were upheld in developed countries, are not maintained in Rivers State due to lack of wealth, power and equity of the affected communities. As a result, oil companies always displace inhabitants from their homeland and further marginalize them.

According to Niger Delta Human Development Report (2006), rather than Nigeria using the petro-dollars to develop the entire nation (the Niger Delta inclusive) and Rivers State in particular, only sections of the nation far from the Niger Delta were transformed while Rivers State is suffering from administrative neglect, high unemployment, abject poverty, social deprivation, crumbling social amenities and services and endemic conflicts. Almost all the major oil producing communities in Rivers State like the Bomu field, Ebubu, Afam, unuechem, Aluu, Odagwa to mention a few, are without social amenities and wear the look of an abandoned property. Looking at the economic situation of the region, it is evident that there is no real development, and social amenities such as good roads, electricity and pipe borne water in the area. The underdevelopment is so serious and great that the youths of the region resorted to militancy in the bid to attract the attention of the federal government and the international communities to their plight. Majority of the beneficiaries of oil exploitation are from other parts of the country, far from the oil producing states. The organized protest by the people was followed by several harassments, arrests and killings of

some members of the indigenous communities by the federal government troops. The protesters see all these as assaults and marginalization of the minority groups in the country.

Preye and David (2010) defined militancy as an aggressive and active behaviour geared towards the defence and support of a cause (mainly political). A militant could be described as a person, involved in fighting (or a protest movement) in the defence of a cause. Okoba, in Preye and David (2010) supported and shared the view that the excruciating and harsh socio-economic realities of the people have turned all Niger Deltans (especially Rivers people) into militants. Similarly, the militancy that is causing the country so much concern is the rise in violent insurgency which is adversely affecting the output of oil. This is the aspect of the Niger Delta militancy that has been corrupted and permeated by criminal minded individuals and gangs.

Ekpu (2007) contend that the implication of this problem has made Nigerian oil fields one of the most dangerous in the world and has increasingly become a great threat to the country's main source of income. Nigeria has lost billions of dollars in oil revenue, through activities of the militants. However, militancy activities have created a state of insurgency, anomic and distortion of the value system of the indigenous communities. With the increasing flow of blood, current hostage taking/abduction, the irregular closure of production facilities, and the withdrawal of some foreign oil firms from Rivers State, calls for an immediate solution since it is a major setback on educational development.

The Niger Delta region, where Rivers State is located, on almost all the indices that point towards enhanced individual and community development has been assessed as lagging behind. The incidence of poverty is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities, especially those revolving around human security. Ololube et al (2012) views human security as an emerging concept is now widely used to describe the complexity of interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide and the displacement of populations. They further distinguished between human security and national security. The national security according to them, focuses on the defence of the state from external attacks, and communities from any form of political violence, while the human security focuses on protection of individuals. In policy terms according to UNDP (1994), human security provides sustainable and elaborate security against fear, conflict, ignorance, poverty, social and cultural deprivation and hunger. Berezina and Wright (2000) observed that the school setting is unique in that it brings large groups of people together for extended periods of time in a small area. Many state legislatures have recognized that certain acts committed under these circumstances have potentially greater harmful effects to the health and safety of people and have implemented legislation accordingly.

Ajike (2010) reported that the atmosphere of insecurity recently inflicted on the nation by militants, point to poor use of pre-emptive intelligence and a coherent strategy in the management of security affairs emanating thereof. These militants have been there for quite a longtime until politicians started using them against their opponents during elections. According to Ajike (2010), there was a development that took place (or occurred) and the institution association with state power became a target of its structured hostility and attacks. The issue now shifted from politicians to oil companies and now the masses, as these politicians are no longer reachable by the militants. These hungry and abandoned youths now take to robbery, and kidnapping for their daily bread because they are still in possession of those guns given to them during election by their political masters.

Sheley, McGree and Wright (1992) observed that school no longer have distinct roles in etiology of youth violence; rather schools have become the physical locations where larger community problems are manifested. Factors such as community size, crime rate, economic instability and racial composition of neighbourhoods appear related to school crime. Sheley and Wright (2000) in their research findings suggested that the presence of high-crime within

schools and high-crime communities intensifies the level of fear and apprehension experienced by many students. Regarding the use of weaponry in schools, Sheley and Wright (2000) discovered that in the gang world of confrontational crime and violence more retaliation, and such weaponry has moved gang violence from foot to vehicle and more mobile attack teams. Students generally suspect that drug use and violence are linked, but the direction of the association and its application to all forms of drug users across levels of addiction are unclear.

Abraham (2011) suggested that targeting the source of weapons and drug dealing, increasing young people's faith in law enforcement and school administrators, teaching of conflict resolution skills and encouraging youths to develop positive attitudes about themselves and their peers, may assist in creating a safer, violence-free school environment.

Statement of the problem

Traditionally, schools have been expected to teach children academic skills. Places where students, their teachers and administrators can interact with one another are in schools. Student's negative behaviour has always been a concern to educators as they believe student behaviour affects their academic achievement. The concern about students' behaviour has risen to alarming rate in the last decade (Boothe et al, 1993). Students who spend time arguing and fighting have little time or strength for academic pursuit because negative interactions may lead to learning problems.

The assumption that if negative behaviours are eliminated, the classroom climate will be conducive to learning; traditional disciplinary practices which include various forms of punishment were adopted. The deviant behaviours which have led to militancy activities are against the values of the society and the schools system. This situation has attracted a lot of research work into the causes of differences in academic or school achievement among school children. Thus, it has in turn negatively affected educational development. The key goal of education is to bridge the gaps and ensure that every child is given a chance to excel in their life endeavours. It is based on these that this study intends to investigate how militancy activities influences educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of militancy variables on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study was to:

- Determine the influence of hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers state;
- Establish the influence of poverty on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers state;
- Determine the influence of weapon possession by students on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- Hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Weapon possession by students does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

- Poverty does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design because it gives accurate and purposeful report of observed phenomenon. The study area is Rivers State, Nigeria, one of the States in the Niger Delta region. It has 23 Local Government Areas, and their major occupation is farming, fishing and trading. Port Harcourt is the economic and political state capital. The population of the study is 2,637 SS 2 students and 412 SS 2 teachers technique is stratified and simple random sampling from 20 secondary schools and 10 local government areas. The sample consisted of 527 students and 412 teachers, bringing the total population to 3,049. The sample technique was stratified and simple random sampling from 20 secondary schools from 10 local government areas. The sample consisted of 527 students and 412 teachers.

Data was collected with the use of an instrument titled: Militancy Variables and Educational Development Assessment scale (MVEDAS). Section A, of the instrument comprised of items which elicited information on the respondents personal data such as their age, gender, qualifications (for teachers only) ethnic affiliation and years of living in the state. Section B, measured hostage taking/abduction, poverty and weapon possession by students. Section C, on the other hand, was devoted to collecting information, from respondents on education development of secondary schools. Here the respondent expressed their opinions based on their degree of agreement on the options. The sum total of the weight items was categorized into four groups, and on this basis a respondent was assigned to one of the four groups of very high extent (VHE), High extent (HE), low extent (LE), very low extent (VLE) and they were expected to tick one depending on their options.

The instrument was face-validated, by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot test was carried out using Cronbach Alpha method and the reliability co-efficient ranges from 0.74--0.87 which shows that the instrument was reliable. Data obtained was coded and subsequently analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

Militancy in terms of hostage taking does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of influence of hostage taking on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State

Extent of Edu. Dev.	N	\bar{X}	SD		
Very low extent	249	26.46	8.86		
Low extent	265	25.94	7.97		
High extent	280	25.47	7.81		
Very high extent	145	26.02	9.18		
Total	939	26.05	8.46		
Source of Variable	Sum of square	Df	Mean of square	F	Sig.
Between group	121.408	3	40.409	5.650	.000
Within group	65603.191	936	71.619		
Total	65724.599	939			

The finding implies that militancy with regards to hostage taking/abduction/kidnapping significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State. Thus, hypothesis one was rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Militancy in terms of weapon possession by students does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique of influence of weapon possession on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State

Extent of Edu. Dev.	N	\bar{X}	SD		
Very low extent	185	25.86	7.46		
Low extent	229	25.20	8.52		
High extent	379	27.21	8.88		
Very high extent	146	26.66	8.64		
Total	939	26.23	8.37		
Source of Variable	Sum of square	Df	Mean of square	F	Sig.
Between group	632.885	3	210.962	2.969	.031
Within group	65091.714	936	71.061		
Total	65724.599	939			

The finding revealed that the respondents who perceived militancy in terms of weapon possession by students are high; as a result, it influences educational development. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected, which means that there is a significant influence of weapon possession on educational development of Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three

Militancy in terms of poverty does not significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique of influence of poverty on educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State

Extent of Edu. Dev.	N	\bar{X}	SD		
Very low extent	127	25.59	8.94		
Low extent	164	24.56	8.12		
High extent	328	27.59	8.26		
Very high extent	320	29.51	6.80		
Total	939	26.81	8.03		
Source of Variable	Sum of square	Df	Mean of square	F	Sig.
Between group	2462.163	3	820.721	11.884	.000
Within group	63264.436	936	69.064		
Total	65724.599	939			

The result in table 3 revealed that those who perceived militancy in terms of poverty as very high extent and high extent show that the poverty rate in the region influences educational development of Rivers State. Thus hypothesis three was rejected, which depicts that poverty significant influence educational development.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study indicated that militancy in terms of hostage taking significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings of the present study agrees with those of Musharbash (2005) and Yun (2006) who in their findings showed that some terrorist groups have engaged in hostage taking to support their continuing terrorist activities, while others do so exclusively for the purpose of generating revenue, after re-discovering the new income source. The finding similarly disagree with that of Machintyre (2006) who posited that hostage taking was also used as a supplement tactic to campaign against political opponents. That hostage taking has become one of the most valued weapons in the modern terrorist agenda. The finding on militancy demand variable is as expected. When there is a demand for ransom or non-ransom demand, the chances of the hostage's life can reasonably be expected to be spared as long as the hostage taker has something to gain from this hostage exchange. Yet, the finding is contradictory and unexpected. This contradiction, the researcher observed, might be explained by the effects of the state intervention and the federal government amnesty programmes on militancy had a positive perception of militancy activities.

The possession of weapons by students who are supposed to be in school and learn is not encouraging. The use of weapon in school does not make for any type of good environment for academic work and so cannot positively impact on educational development. Young offenders are described as heartless fellow and their victims as rival gang members in urban war zones. The United State Senate Committee Report (1991) revealed that the causes of use of weapons in school may be connected with hard core drug addicts, dealers and deadly weapons (three DS) violence. Supporting the US Committee Report, Blumstein (1995) and Huston, Auglin, Kgriancou, Hart and Spears (1995) argued that most killings that take place in the troubled areas may be associated with drug use and gang-related conflicts. Government and other relevant stakeholders have a role to play in disarming and dissuading the young adolescents in school from the use of weapons, since it does not promote learning and hinder educational development.

RMC Research Corporation (2001), affirmed a specific relationship between alcohol use and low commitment to school among students living in urban slums. Other scholars have also reported that high levels of substance use are associated with poor attachment to school (Flannery et al, 1994 Voelki & Frone, 2000). Similarly, Voelki (1997) observed that violent and rebellious behaviours such as delinquency were negatively associated with increased identification with school. Poverty, or low socio-economic status, directly increases the likelihood of general school failure and early high school dropout (Battin-Pearson et al, 2000; Newcomb et al, 2001). Washington Kids Count recently reported that having high concentration of students from low-income families is the most predictor of both average school and average district performance on the Washington Assessment of student learning (2001b). Poverty is also associated with risky health behaviours (Hawkins et al, 1992) and must be taken care of when examining the effect of these behaviours on educational development. Poverty is a potent factor that influences students' behaviour, attitudes and academic achievement. The percentage of students from low-income homes directly affects tests scores in schools. Poverty increases levels of community risk, which is linked to harmful behaviours like armed robbery, kidnapping and other ill vices and also lowers achievement (development) of any kind in the communities.

The researcher as an eye witness, observed the exodus of non-indigenous business men and women out of certain local government areas of the state, to places where they can find peace and continue their businesses, due to constant threats from the kidnapers and armed robbers. In such areas as this no tangible work or business can function well, where

people sleep with one eyes closed and the other opened. Students and teachers go to school in fear of being victims. Evidence of these poverty effects also is found for both middle class and senior secondary school students. Among groups of senior secondary students violent behaviour and substance use are correlated. Groups of students who engage in substance use tend to engage in violent behaviours, but the relationship does not always hold, because several groups engage in one's behaviours and not the other. Still the fact that these behaviours are linked suggests that prevention programmes should address violence in concert.

CONCLUSION

Based on these findings, it was concluded that militancy variables, of hostage taking/abduction, poverty and weapon possession by students, significantly influence educational development of secondary schools in Rivers state. Students with even moderate involvement with militancy and violence had extremely lower academic performance than groups with little or no involvement in these behaviours. Parents' low socio-economic status (poverty) is a high level of perceived community risk, low levels of school commitment, and social/moral understanding increased the probability that such groups of students would engage in these risky behaviours.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and the conclusion of the study, it was therefore recommended that:

- Students learn more about the ways in which non-classroom factors impact the broader learning environment, if schools and communities are concerned about improving academic performance;
- Government should incorporate peace education into the school curriculum, teachers should be motivated and rural schools equipped with modern social amenities to attract qualified teachers accept transfers to the rural communities;
- Federal and state government should try as much as possible to address the issue of unemployment by providing opportunities for self employment (i.e training for skill acquisition) and overall socio-economic development. These measures will help to engage the violent youths and frustrated citizens positively, who might be tempted to go back to militancy.

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