OIL BUNKERING IN IKORODU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS: TRACING ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL DRIVERS AND THE DIVERGENT OUTCOMES OF MILITARY INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

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Abstract:

This study looks at how the military responds to domestic security concerns, with a specific focus on oil bunkering operations in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. Using a mixed method technique, the study examines episodes of oil bunkering to assess the military's role in controlling internal security as well as the larger consequences of their interventions on the community and environment. The study uses both primary and secondary data sources to create a full knowledge of the situation. publications and media stories, which helped situate the primary findings within the larger sociopolitical and economic milieu. Primary data was collected through interviews conducted with various stakeholders, including community members, military personnel, local leaders, and security experts, providing firsthand insights into the dynamics of oil bunkering and military responses. Secondary data was gathered from academic literature and media reports, which helped contextualize the primary findings within the broader socio-political and economic landscape. According to the study, resource control disputes, unemployment, poverty, and other intricate economic, political, and social variables are all firmly ingrained in oil bunkering. Even though military actions have been crucial in correcting security lapses brought on by oil theft, the results frequently fall short of expectations, with varying social and security ramifications for the impacted areas. The results imply that addressing the root reasons of oil bunkering requires more than just military intervention. As a result, the report suggests an integrated security approach that incorporates military action along with cutting-edge monitoring tools, focused development projects, and active community engagement campaigns.

Keywords:
Internal Security, Military Intervention, Local Government, Oil Bunkering

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INTRODUCTION

The internal security situation in Nigeria has become complicated through multiple non-traditional security threats which exceed the operational range of standard law enforcement organizations. The deep-seated challenge of illegal oil bunkering encompasses every step from unauthorized tapping to refining and unauthorized sale of petroleum products. The oil-rich Niger Delta originally experienced these activities but now oil bunkering operations spread to other areas including Lagos state. Local government is a smallest unit in the third tier of government in Nigeria. According to Adeyemo (2009), local government is the act of devolution or decentralization. Local government is an administrative mechanism through which authority and control revolves around the people at the periphery or grass root. Awa (1981) defines local government as an administrative authority set up by the state or nation as subordinate authority in order to decentralize political power. Decentralization lessens the burden of responsibility and function performed by the highest level of government in such a way that the needs of each locality within the federating units are given special attention. Nigeria has 774 local government areas that cut across the 36 states and expected to perform wide range of functions that covers economic, social and security functions. Security concern is at the heart of all nations be it at grassroots or national levels. Nigeria presently is ranked at a distant 148th position in the global Peace Index of sovereign states (GPI, 2019). The global peace index captures the present state of insecurity in Nigeria. Insecurity evolves from reoccurring crime and violence across the federation. The perpetrators of crime and violence in Nigeria, cut across age, gender and class position in the society. Crimes commonly committed in Nigeria include armed robbery, human trafficking, smuggling, internet scam, pipeline vandalization, oil theft and host of other illegal activities.

Ikorodu local government area in its role as a semi-urban location with access to creeks and waterways has become a central area for illicit oil bunkering activities. The region's geographical features, coupled with weak state institutions, inability of police personnel, youth unemployment, and local complicity, have created a fertile environment for this illegal trade (Asuni, 2009; Ukeje & Ela, 2013).

The Nigerian military now performs domestic operations as a direct response to oil bunkering and other growing internal security threats throughout the country. The constitutional power granted to the armed forces under Section 217 permits them to provide assistance to civil authorizes when preserving order yet the increasing demand on military forces for internal security operations has generated multiple challenges. These include concerns about the militarization of civil spaces, the potential erosion of democratic policing norms, and the long-term effectiveness of using force to resolve deep-rooted socio-economic problems (Olaniyan & Akinyele, 2020; Ebo, 2007). Security forces from the Army and Navy perform intermittent operations in the Ikorodu Local governement Area for dismantling oil bunkering operations while capturing criminals and establishing basic order. The military's periodic redeployment fails to deliver permanent outcomes because the criminal operations begin again once security forces leave the area. Some community members claim security agents working alongside them engage in the same malfeasance which they were assigned to prevent.

Addressing the oil bunkering issue in Ikorodu Local government area demands deeper analysis of its root causes in addition to enforcement through military forces. An investigation seeks to analyze oil bunkering patterns in Ikorodu including military activities during internal security operations in this framework. This analysis examines whether economic, political and social elements together or independently sustain oil bunkering activities in Ikorodu region.

Research Objective

The major objective of this research is to investigate how the military controls domestic security concerns, with a focus on oil bunkering operations in Ikorodu Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. The study's goal is to examine the efficiency of military internal security management in managing oil bunkering activities, as well as to assess the social and security implications of such measures. Furthermore, the research aims to identify the underlying economic, political, and social factors driving oil bunkering in Ikorodu local government area and to propose a comprehensive security strategy that combines military efforts with surveillance technologies, development initiatives, and community engagement to achieve long-term security and socioeconomic stability.

Theoretical Framework

The research adopts Conflict Theory to investigate the oil bunkering situations in Ikorodu along with military intervention impacts. As Karl Marx suggested conflict happens between social groups fighting to control resources which creates the structure of society. This conflict in Ikorodu oil bunkering operations occurs across local communities next to the Nigerian state alongside its institutions.

Local communities resort to oil bunkering because the central government's abandonment has left them without economic prospects and scarce opportunities. Through military operations the state operates to counter criminal oil operations yet these activities typically worsen the conflict situation. Military focus on obstructing illegal trade overlooks core factors such as poverty and unemployment, social exclusion that drive these illegal activities (Ukiwo, 2015). State military interventions designed to control oil resources are seen by local communities as methods of power abuse. These interventions fail to resolve existing economic problems while creating sustained resentment that produces continuous social turbulence (Obi, 2007).

The criminals who engage in illicit activities through the system receive financial gain which hinders military operations from effectively dismantling criminal operations (Ikelegbe, 2006). Such actors derive financial gains from criminal activities that render military system dismantling efforts ineffective (Ikelegbe 2006). Military operations fail in their mission because they primarily apply short-term suppression methods instead of solving the fundamental underlying causes that sustain the conflict. The Ikorodu Local governement Area intervention by the military to address oil bunkering emerged from the lens of Conflict Theory. Examining social-economic disparities and state-local power contestations demonstrates that solving the fundamental problems behind oil bunkering demands solutions beyond military intervention.

Conceptual Review

Military

Across contemporary states the military functions as an institutional construct which fills its own distinct position. As an institution the military serves as the single authorized agency responsible for

enforcing force to protect both state sovereignty and national interests. Singer and Burk identify military organizations as "distinctive social establishments" that possess legal power to carry out violent acts including destruction and killing. Traditionally used for war operations the military now fulfills added responsibilities that reach into society's non-military aspects (Singer & Burk, 2000). Biddle and Friedman (2019) present the military as a sophisticated structure of specialized units which use force to achieve political targets. According to this definition military operations serve strategic state directives while distinguishing themselves from all other types of organized violence. Their research shows recognition of military organizations as complex systems comprising clear operational doctrine and functional hierarchy and capacity (Biddle & Friedman, 2019).

Ruffa (2020) and Roberts (2020) independently note that combat operations have undergone extensive growth in recent times. Militaries throughout the world have shifted their focus beyond war training and enemy prevention to now conduct disaster relief and peacekeeping and civil assistance operations. These non-combat operations need separate capabilities together with operational approaches that support the overall security goals of the state. These scholars argue for the preservation of core military competencies while recognizing the legitimacy of auxiliary responsibilities in promoting stability and responding to emergencies (Ruffa, 2020; Roberts 2020).

Security

The definition proposed by Akinyeye (2001) clarifies security as an effort to defend properties from destruction and protect human beings from physical injury and asset loss. Security takes shape according to his definition through state protections that shield inhabitants and possessions kept in public control and work to stop hostile encounters. This definition of security demonstrates two distinct capabilities: it defends human beings along with their personal property while simultaneously safeguarding the continued existence of the Nigerian State. A secure society stands as the basic force which upholds national cohesion therefore security failure makes national unity impossible to maintain.

The Longman Dictionary defines security as the approaches which protect people and properties or countries against potential risks along with criminal behavior while everyday usage refers to security as protecting people and structures or nations from harm. Security functions through establishing safety measures that separate important things from potential dangers (ISECOM, 2014). Security according to Arnold Wolfers constitutes 'the absence of threats to acquired values,' as per the analysis by Baldwin (1997). Security demands additional investigation and improvement to allow full recognition of its complex characteristics.

Dimensions of the concept of local government

The definition of United Nations Office for Public Administration and that of Kirk Green as well as definitions of some other writers clearly shows that local government is a multi-dimensional concept. The dimensions are: Social dimension, Economic Dimension and Political Dimension.

Local government is essentially a social institution when viewed through a social lens. It is a structured social organization founded on a sense of unity. This stems from the reality that humans

are social creatures who must inevitably engage with others. The local government gives people a place to express and satisfy their human desire to socialize, and throughout this process, the sense of community highlights the basic requirements of everyone in the area, such as clothing, food, housing, water, etc. These aspects of their sense of unity serve as a unifying factor between the local government and the populace as well as between them. The feelings of convergence are the raison for a local authority. They are a cementing force among local inhabitants. The stronger the feeling, the deeper the roots of a local authority, and the greater the resentment of outside control (Rice and Sumberg, 1997).

Economic dimension Local Government is basically an economic institution with a foremost role to play in promoting the economic well-being the people of the locality. The concept of local government's economic dimension pertains to its financial sustainability. Consequently, one of the main responsibilities of municipal government is to generate cash. The economic circumstances of the local populace cannot be significantly improved by a local government that is not financially sustainable. What you do not have, you cannot give.

If the local government is economically viable, it will have the initial advantage in not only rendering local services, but also in warding off government intervention. Therefore, local governments work on the front lines delivering needed and desired services, such as education, road maintenance, public safety, and health care, to citizens (Kettl and Fesler, 2008). Because of this, localities have adopted a culture of civic engagement where citizens participate in public affairs and promote the public good (Rice and Sumberg, 1997). Different points are put forward in respect of the desirability or otherwise, of the participation of local communities in economic development of a country. These points which are diametrically opposed to each other may be analysed under two broad categories. The first group contends that because local governments have little resources barely enough to cover their own needs and development initiatives need significant financial outlays and advanced technical know-how, they have no special role to play in a nation's economic progress. The second school of thought makes several political, economic, and psychological arguments in favor of local governments' involvement in development. It is therefore argued that their involvement will eventually strengthen local authority. This is because local government introduces economic decentralisation and discourages centralising tendencies in planning and development.

Political dimension Local government is also a political institution. In essence, local government is a political tool used for local governance. It directly affects the local government's nature, which is fascinating and raises a number of questions. The following should be noted in this context: i. Local governance differs from other governmental levels. It typically does not get its authority directly from the Constitution and does not share their legal and political autonomy. ii. Local government is not part of the government's administrative structure. It does not enjoy delegated jurisdiction as an administrative outpost. It is a governmental level that was created by legislation.iii. Local government is not a public enterprise/public utility institution with statutory foundation, enjoying financial and operational autonomy. A corporation that has both legislative and executive branches, as well as territorial jurisdiction and legal authority, might not be considered a local government. From a conceptual standpoint, local government is an essential component of democracy. Self-governing institutions cannot exist without democratic standards. Vox populi, or the right of the people to elect local authorities and grant them the authority to represent them, is closely related to other fundamental democratic concepts like accountability and transparency, which are crucial for a stable and efficient government (Dragos and Neamtu, 2009; Haruta, Radu and Radu, 2009; Haruta

and Radu, 2010). In a real democracy, citizens' involvement is possible for three reasons; because they can, because they want or because they were asked (Verba et. al, 2004, p.316-341).

Methodology

A qualitative case study research design studies military involvement in Ikorodu internal security operations concerning oil bunkering throughout Lagos state. In-depth interviews along with field observations and document analysis served as the data collection methods. The study used purposive sampling to select 15 participants: The research included one (1) community elder, one (1) youth leader, two (2) military personnel, one (1) police officer, two (3) academic scholars, and seven (7) civilians who specialized in both oil bunkering and security operations. The research team delivered the collected information to thematic content analysis for identifying major patterns and themes which expounded the reasons behind oil bunkering and evaluated military effectiveness and recorded community understanding. The research method enabled researchers to understand the issue thoroughly by examining it in its proper regional environment.

Threats To Security in Local Government Areas in Nigeria

Nation Bureau of Statistics (2019) states that 40.1percent of total population are poor. Poverty results in inadequate care and lack of provision of basic necessities of life. Poverty as an enduring social Calamity in Nigeria that is the primary cause of crime and violence and other unlawful activities in the society. The incidence of unemployment is disturbing. National Bureau of Statistic (2019) states that unemployment in Nigeria increased to 23.10% in the third quarter of 2018 from 22.70% in the second quarter of 2018. Poverty and unemployment is a contradiction in Nigeria considering that the nation is blessed with abundant natural and human resources which if utilized judiciously will enhance the wellbeing of Nigerians.

Perceived Material Inequality and Unfairness

The increasing awareness of disparity in life is a significant root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. There is general perception of disparity and unfairness which has resulted in grievances by a large number of people. This perception stems from the perception of marginalization by a segment of the people. Government development, policies and political office has become a primary source of disaffection and anger as large number of populace in most rural areas feel frustrated and have lost hope especially the youths and have now emerged to express their dissatisfaction about the perceive state of inequality.

Environmental Threat

The environment is basically the external condition that surrounds an entity particularly the living organism, physical and chemical components of the earth surface (Boden et.al. 1990). The environment is made up of biophysical components and processes of natural environments. The environment is the natural habitat of man with its several components that includes water, air, land and all plants and animals that exist and their interrelation (Ogboru & Angi, 2015). The environment by implication is the sum total of all conditions that surround man at any particular point in time. Environmental problems emanate when there is variation in the quantity and quality of the environment. Humans are primary responsible for most of the factors accountable for these changes which directly and indirectly have adverse impact on human lives.

Ukpong (1994) identified the under listed as factors accounting as factors accounting for environmental degradation.

- Improper resource utilization,

- Overgrazing and over farming,

- Flood and wind damage,

- Natural land slip,

- Mineral mining, and

- Deforestation.

Contextual Background: Oil Bunkering in Ikorodu Local Government Area

The geographic location of the Ikorodu Local governement Area in Lagos state enables it to reach Nigerian maritime routes directly through waterways and creeks. The position of Ikorodu Local governement Area near Nigeria's main oil-producing Niger Delta region alongside its limited protective security structure makes it a perfect location for oil bunkering activities. Over time, the area has become notorious for illicit oil trade, facilitated by the availability of crude oil, weak law enforcement, and local complicity (Obi, 2007; Sada, 2016).

Reported cases of tragedies resulting from oil theft were documented by Nnadi, Hassan, Smith and Mooney (2014, Symposium Series No. 159: Harzard 24) thus: About 100 people died on 16th May 2008 at Ijebu, Lagos; 15 persons lost their lives at Osisioma, Abia State on 1st October 2012; About 30 persons died on 13th January 2013 at Arepo, Ogun State. Similarly, in May, 2016, 2 and 3 persons were killed while residents fled their homes at Elebute community, Ogun State and Iba, Lagos State respectively when Police Officers and oil pipeline vandals clashed (Oji & Itaro, 2016; Sunnews, 31st May, 2016). In the same vein, Oyadongha (2017) reported that explosion occasioned by oil theft caused the death of over 20 persons at Kolo Creek, Bayelsa State on 5th December, 2017.

The presence of illegal pipeline tapping operations nearby is the primary factor driving oil bunkering activity in Ikorodu Local governement Area. Criminal networks gain entry into these pipelines to extract crude oil before delivering it to unauthorized refineries that process the stolen petroleum products. Basic unregulated refineries that lack regulations result in major environmental harm because they pollute water sources and air and contaminate surrounding land and water bodies. Many members of local communities choose to work with artisanal refineries because these facilities create economic opportunities that traditional sectors do not provide (Chatham House, 2017).

After being refined through black market channels stolen crude oil ships away to buyers through water routes. Security agencies remain unaware of the transportation of stolen crude oil because operations take place at night. Often, these illegal activities are conducted with the support of local actors, including power brokers who offer protection in exchange for financial or political gain (Ikelegbe, 2006; Okonta & Douglas, 2003).

Various factors such as bribery along with resident cooperation and inadequate law enforcement enable oil bunkering to persist in Ikorodu Local governement Area. The business of illegal oil dealings remains active because government officials as well as security agents and military personnel continue to take bribes. Legal authorities such as police officers and military personnel face accusations of conducting illicit operations for monetary gain according to Asuni's (2009) report. The absence of accountability combined with weak enforcement allows criminal cartels to run their operations without fear of punishment.

Local residents actively support oil bunkering which maintains its ongoing existence. People living in Ikorodu benefit from trade activities either by taking active roles in it or because they gain secondary monetary advantages from it. The creation of artisanal refineries and transportation routes creates jobs for local communities who lack access to formal economic activities. Oil bunkering produces significant environmental deterioration as well as serious public health problems.

Oil bunkering operations create extensive damage to both environmental systems as well as public health conditions. Unregulated refining in artisanal refineries produces toxic waste which causes serious water body contamination and air pollution. The exposure to pollutants has triggered a growing incidence of respiratory diseases along with other health challenges within affected communities (Nwapi & Okpara, 2017). Research shows that populations exposed to these pollutants now experience more respiratory diseases and other health complications (Nwapi & Okpara, 2017).

Oil bunkering threatens Nigeria's oil market which generates essential revenue for the nation. Lawless bunkering operations distribute their earnings to criminal organizations which perpetuate violence and unrest throughout the area (Ikelegbe, 2006). This massive oil theft decreases Nigeria's GDP value because oil revenue makes up a major part of the national budget. The oil bunkering problem in Ikorodu's area exists as a difficult crime problem linking local residents with criminal organizations and official security forces.

Year	Location	Actors Involved	Nature of Incident	Military/Internal Security Response	Economic Factors	Political Factors	Social Factors	Outcome
2015	Rivers State	Local militants, illegal refiners	Discovery of illegal refineries and pipelines	JTF raids and site destruction	Loss of oil revenue; theft ~150,000 bpd	Pre-election instability	Youth unemployment, poor development	Short-term clampdown
2016	Delta Region	Niger Delta Avengers, local gangs	Pipeline attacks and bunkering	Launch of Operation Crocodile Smile	Crude output fell by 40%	Restructuring debate reignited	Displacement of communities	Continued unrest
2017	Bayelsa	Community-based gangs	1,500 litres seized; multiple arrests	Navy/NSCDC joint ops	Recession spurred theft	Weak governance	Bunkering as economic alternative	Limited deterrence
2018	Niger Delta Creeks	Armed syndicates	Over 181 refining sites uncovered	Massive coordinated military raids	Multibillion-naira losses	NDDC failures, corruption	Pollution & protests	Temporary disruption
2019	Nembe (Bayelsa)	Pipeline vandals	Major sabotage of Trunk Line	Shell & JTF surveillance intensified	Export disruption	Pipeline security contract controversies	Youth protests	Partial restoration
2020	Warri, Delta	Community actors	Refining surge amid COVID-19	Low response during lockdown	Oil price crash enabled black-market rise	Weak state presence	Communities depended on bunkering	Expansion of illegal sites

2021	Rivers & Bayelsa	Local and regional bunkering rings	367 sites dismantled	Navy-led raids	$3.5B losses	PIB delayed	Rising fatalities from toxic sites	Temporary effectiveness
2022	Cross River, Niger Delta	Coastal smuggling rings	Seizure of 500,000L in vessels	Naval + EFCC patrols	High-level corruption linked to losses	Oil policy inertia	Deepened community distrust	More foreign oversight
2023	Ikorodu, Lagos	Maritime oil theft gangs	Bust of floating illegal depot storing 300,000L	Lagos Navy Command raid	Transit loss; port security flaws	Politicized due to proximity to capital	Urban crime rise; complicity by some officials	Depot dismantled, arrests made
2023	Ogun State (Ijebu Waterside)	Cross-border smugglers	Discovery of bunkering jetty near riverine border	Joint Customs/NSCDC operation	Oil rerouted via land border to Benin	Weak border governance	Youth criminal networks linked	Jetty sealed, but trafficking routes remain
2024	Bonny & Akwa Ibom	Transnational syndicates	Maritime bunkering escalates	Navy/air patrol + intel sharing	Theft ~400,000 bpd	Election debates focused on oil theft	Youth radicalization in neglected zones	Coordinated crackdown
2025	Bayelsa, Delta, Lagos (Ikorodu)	Local remnant cells	Digitally tracked low-scale theft	AI surveillance + real-time air support	Improved recovery; more transparency	Stabilized post-reform efforts	Community inclusion programs ongoing	Gradual decline in operations

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Findings and Discussion in Ikorodu Local Government Area.

Economic and Political Drivers

Through interviews researchers found that economic factors drive oil bunkering because residents view this activity as an opportunity to extract crude oil at reduced prices. Several interview respondents noted that the lack of available formal jobs and impoverished circumstances in the region push numerous young people toward participating in criminal dealings involving oil bunkering. As one community elder explained:

> Many people derived financial gain from oil bunkering operations because numerous local residents purchased oil from these illegal facilities. Anyone in the business of oil bunkering make more in a day than some people make in a month.

Political support strengthens the illegal activity. Findings showed diverse elite groups have created alliances with oil bunkering participants and nearby elites sustain peaceful relations with militant groups. People in influential positions contribute actively to the practice of oil bunkering. Members of the upper-class safeguard ocean product crimes because they want to make money. A youth and a community leader noted:

> There's a network of elites and security personnel who benefit from oil
> bunkering. They often turn a blind eye to it or even support it because they
> have something to gain whether financially or through power consolidation.

Furthermore, many of the respondents, particularly the civilians and police officer, noted the involvement of compromised security personnel. These individuals, some of whom are allegedly bribed or coerced, facilitate the oil bunkering trade by ignoring or aiding the perpetrators. One of the civilians shared:

> You know, some of these security guys are part of the syndicates.
> They come, pretend to be investigating, but then they leave, and the
> bunkering continues. It's a cycle.

This finding emphasizes the role of both economic hardship and political complicity in sustaining oil bunkering activities.

Military Intervention: Tactics and Challenges

The military's response to oil bunkering in Ikorodu Local governement Area was primarily executed under the police personnel, which employs a combination of raids, surveillance, and arrests. However, the respondents highlighted several challenges that undermine the effectiveness of these police operations. One military officer described the typical approach:

> We were called in to stop the oil bunkering since the police became
> ineffective and their weapons were not able to tackle the militias that
> were responsible for oil bunkering.

This sentiment was echoed by the academic scholars, who pointed out that while the Police presence only offered temporary solution, it does little to address the killing, kidnapping associated with Oil bunkering in the area. All of the scholar commented in the same direction that:

> The police inability to tackle the problem of the insecurity called for
> Military interventions which often result in long-term gains.

Several civilians also expressed frustration with the lack of long-term solutions. Many believed that the military's tactics though aggressive do not address the core causes of the problem, such as unemployment, poverty, and inadequate local governance.

Community Perceptions

Community perceptions of military interventions are mixed, reflecting a divide between those who see the military as a force for order and those who view them as an occupying force. On one hand, some residents appreciate the military's efforts to reduce visible criminal activities, especially the violent aspects of oil bunkering. The youth representative expressed:

> While I don't support oil bunkering, we have to admit the military
> has helped reduce crime in some areas. Without them, the criminals
> would have taken over completely.

However, the majority of respondents, particularly among the civilians and community elder, voiced concerns about the military's heavy-handed approach. Accusations of human rights abuses were

common, as military personnel have been accused of excessive force and mistreatment of local populations during operations. One community elder observed:

> The military comes in and treats us like criminals after the raids. They began to partake in civilian issues as cases of human right abuse and assaults was on a high note as there are cases of people being harassed or even beaten.

Moreover, a recurring theme among the interviews was the lack of community engagement in military operations. Many respondents pointed out that the military's operations are often conducted without any consultation with local stakeholders. As civilians pointed out:

> We need the military to work with us, to understand our situation. But they act like they don't care about the people. There's no real effort to engage the community in finding solutions.

Military personnel responded:

> When we are deployed to internal security operation, we don't go there happy as we see everyone as criminals. We go in with one mind set which is to get the work done" this meant that everyone is their friends and everyone is their enemy

Impact on Security and Governance

Military operations implemented in Ikorodu temporarily reduced visible criminal activities including pipeline vandalism and illegal refining. The research participants noted that military intervention has brought about a persistent decrease in oil bunkering activities. The main area of concern was the insufficient funding directed at local law enforcement and neighborhood development. One academic scholar explained:

> The military presence reduces overt criminality, but the lack of local policing to do their jobs have not allowed the continuous fight against crime to be fought or alternative economic opportunities leaves a vacuum.

The lack of security became even more delicate because military forces continued to use brute force when they neglected crucial governance problems. The police officer interviewed stated:

> There's no long-term solution. The military might clear the bunkers, but unless we focus on local law enforcement and address other key issues, the problem will persist.

An academic scholar noted:

> Law enforcement needs proper attention throughout all community sectors. Their ammunitions and welfare must be taken in high regards.

The success of military intervention to reduce visible crimes requires attention to additional vital areas for sustainable peace alongside harmonious civil military bonds. The lack of governance reform together with neglect of community development alongside security efforts has created a weak security condition throughout Ikorodu Local governement Area.

The research shows that Ikorodu Local governement Area oil bunkering exists because of economic poverty together with political backing and insufficient government control.

While military interventions, had its success in disrupting oil bunkering activities, they have not addressed the root causes which cuts across addressing several sectorial decays. Moreover, mixed community perceptions and the lack of sustained legal action further undermine the effectiveness of these military operations. To achieve long-term success, a more comprehensive approach is needed one that combines military efforts with stronger law enforcement, community engagement, and socio-economic development.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Integrated Security Architecture

Policy demands an Integrated Security Architecture that unites military operations with local law enforcement and intelligence networks and judicial oversight as a critical response. Military operations have shown their effectiveness in stopping illegal oil operations but they fail to deliver sustainable solutions. Insufficient coordination between military forces and police and local communities permits criminal organizations to thrive in this area according to interview results.

Policy Implication: A complete security plan must structure police transformations with intelligence collection and authorities who deliver justice within their structure. The efficient use of intelligence depends on better military-police-local authority coordination. The combination of a properly equipped trained police force and local intelligence networks enhances the ability to supervise oil-related operations.

Community Engagement

Multiple interviewees underscored the need for community involvement since they observed how military initiatives fell short of meeting local population needs. Local residents consider military forces to be outsiders who fail to work alongside them as partners against oil bunkering activities. Developing trust between security forces and local stakeholders remains essential for reducing resentment and enhancing operational success in security measures.

Policy Implication: Security forces together with residents can develop cooperative relationships through proactive community engagement and dialogue practices. The involvement of community leaders and local organizations in decision-making procedures will assist in clarifying the military and law enforcement roles within their geographic areas. Improving infrastructure and education sectors together with health services through development projects creates an atmosphere of goodwill and cooperation among residents.

Targeted Economic Programs

Economic scarcity served as the primary reason leading residents of Ikorodu to engage in oil bunkering activities. Young people participate in illegal oil activities because they lack other accessible economic opportunities according to survey respondents. To achieve lasting success in reducing illegal oil trade activities it remains fundamental to address the core issues of unemployment along with lack of options for survival.

Policy Implication: Job-focused economic programs while providing specialized vocational training to youth populations will eventually diminish oil bunkering recruitment targets. The government can provide alternative employment by training people in technology along with construction and agriculture to eliminate their involvement in criminal activities. Government agencies and private sector companies together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate to build sustainable employment opportunities which Ikorodu Local governement Area requires. One of the academic scholars interviewed suggested, "Without creating alternative livelihoods, the fight against oil bunkering will be like chasing shadows."

CONCLUSION

Military operations targeting oil bunkering activities in Ikorodu demonstrate the intricate security situation combined with both the positive and negative elements of using force against crime. Military suppression of illegal oil activities remains effective but temporary whereas achieving long-term crisis resolution needs holistic solutions which confront social-economic factors and governance issues behind the problem. Military operations succeed at reducing open criminal activity but they do not handle the fundamental problems which permit illegal oil enterprise to continue.

Military operations have been efficient in conducting raids and carrying out security patrols and through arrests to disable illegal bunkering operations. The brief interruptions of illegal activities through military presence do not last once military forces depart from the area. Several interviewees including military representatives and civilian participants revealed that the issue remains active because the fundamental crisis drivers like poverty and inadequate leadership systems receive insufficient attention. The military intervention against bunkering activities proves temporary but no solution emerges because the basic economic factors that create criminal conditions persist.

One major drawback of military interventions involves their inability to establish peace that endures beyond short-term results. Simply using force without additional governance and law enforcement and community development actions creates an insecure environment which undermines intervention success. Tactical operational priorities of the military lack consideration for the complex local socio-political environment of Ikorodu with elite and patronage systems that sustain oil bunkering. The integration of security staff with compromised integrity creates multiple obstacles because it allows corruption to dominate and reduces the successful interruption of oil theft efforts.

Lasting peace requires security through extensive multi-sectoral and community-centered approaches that exceed traditional military involvement. Making progress in local governance stands as an absolute key element for any such approach. Transparent governmental institutions together with responsive governance practices that provide accountability can establish trust between the people and security forces and the government. This development depends heavily on community involvement. The local communities possess the optimal capacity to deliver information to security forces because they can both help enforcement and build safe conditions for their areas. Security improvements will depend on establishing open dialogue between military forces and residents alongside shared decision power and community joint activities.

The reduction of illegal activities also requires attention toward economic factors pushing youth toward criminality. Many young people view oil bunkering as a promising economic option since jobs remain scarce and conventional opportunities are restricted.

Any long-term intervention plan must prioritize the development of enduring work opportunities that include vocational training and encourage young people to establish their own enterprises. Creating realistic job opportunities stands as a preventive measure to stop youth recruitment into bunkering organizations. Strengthening youth empowerment programs depends on the combined support of private businesses alongside NGOs and government agencies working to create employment opportunities.

This research discovered that military operations alone fail to address community development needs despite their effectiveness. Military deployments for guaranteeing emergency security and stability require supporting initiatives which target the underlying sources of insecurity. The research reveals that high rates of unemployment and poverty and low levels of education among young people in Ikorodu Local governement Area create conditions that allow illegal oil operations to flourish. The implementation of alternative livlihoods through vocational training and education combined with job creation roles as a preventive measure to shrink the available talent pool for oil bunkering and similar unlawful practices.

This study concludes that military action does affect oil bunkering activity in Ikorodu but such measures alone cannot establish a permanent resolution to the problem. Effective resolution of regional conflicts demands implementing simultaneous military tactics with combined methods of community cooperation and economic development initiatives and institutional changes.

Environmental sustainability and enhanced security initiatives should work in concert to reduce the drivers of oil bunkering and increase stability for residents living in Ikorodu Local governement Area. Combining security measures and development initiatives produces a sustainable solution which reduces oil bunkering activities while creating stability for Ikorodu residents.

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