



Research Article

Resource Control Agitation and Political Instability in Nigeria: A Case Study of Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT:

Akwa Ibom State ranks among Nigeria's major oil-producing regions, contributing substantially to the nation's petroleum output. Despite its resource wealth, the state has witnessed persistent unrest and political instability driven by disputes surrounding resource ownership and revenue distribution. This study explores the nexus between resource control agitation and political instability in Nigeria, focusing on Akwa Ibom State, with particular attention to issues of economic marginalization and environmental degradation. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey administered to 399 respondents drawn from a population of 220,600 in Eket Local Government Area, a region significantly impacted by resource-based conflicts. The data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation to test the formulated hypotheses. Findings reveal that economic marginalization does not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with political instability, while environmental degradation demonstrates a strong positive correlation. The results suggest that environmental deterioration linked to resource extraction serves as a major catalyst for political unrest, surpassing economic inequality in its influence. The study underscores the importance of sustainable resource governance and environmental protection as vital tools for promoting peace and stability in Nigeria. It contributes to a broader understanding of how resource exploitation and environmental neglect intertwine with political dynamics, providing useful insights for policymakers and stakeholders.

Keywords: Resource Control Agitation, Political Instability, Economic Marginalization, Environmental Degradation

INTRODUCTION

For decades, resource control agitation has been a significant contributor to political instability across Nigeria, particularly in states like Akwa Ibom. This agitation stems largely from perceived injustices and exploitation faced by oil-producing communities at the hands of the federal government and multinational corporations. Resource control agitation refers to the collective efforts or movements by communities seeking greater authority and benefits over natural resources found within their territories. It often arises when local populations perceive inequitable distribution or external domination of their resources. Such movements may manifest through protests, legal battles, negotiations, or political advocacy aimed at securing increased autonomy or equitable revenue sharing. Examples of similar movements can be found not only in Nigeria's Niger Delta but also among indigenous communities in countries such as Brazil and Australia (Eme, 2018).

The issue of resource control has deepened distrust among Nigeria's various geopolitical zones, fueling the continuous debate over the most acceptable and fair framework for managing natural resources in a way that ensures political stability (Hassan and Ari, 2023). According to these scholars, addressing resource-related unrest requires reforms in governance, transparency, environmental management, and inclusive economic development. They emphasize that tackling corruption, ensuring fair revenue sharing, mitigating ecological damage, and guaranteeing political representation are critical steps toward reducing agitation and fostering national stability. Okoi *et al.* (2022) emphasize that combating these challenges that pose as threat to political stability will promote quality educational system which by extension enhance students' academic performance.

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It is evident from existing studies that factors such as economic exclusion, environmental degradation, and political marginalization often serve as root causes of resource-related agitation, which subsequently escalate into political instability. Resource control movements typically emerge from communities' demands for justice, environmental safety, and fair access to the benefits derived from their land and resources. Such movements may take diverse forms, including environmental campaigns against pollution, indigenous rights struggle for land ownership, and community resistance against exploitative extraction projects. In other cases, they may appear as labor protests demanding fair compensation or nationalist calls for domestic control over natural wealth (2019).

Political instability in Nigeria continues to pose serious challenges despite numerous studies and policy interventions. While scholars have often linked instability to corruption, institutional weakness, or political polarization, fewer have examined the role of economic marginalization, resource ownership disputes, and environmental decline. This research, therefore, seeks to bridge that gap by exploring how these factors interact to influence political stability in Akwa Ibom State through the study titled "*Resource Control Agitation and Political Instability in Nigeria.*"

LITERATURE OF THE STUDY

Concept of Resource Control Agitation

According to Adeoti, Ezekiel, and Imuoh (2015), resource control involves the authority of state or local governments to manage and utilize resources found within their jurisdiction. Under this system, such governments are empowered to oversee resource extraction following established federal guidelines particularly environmental standards and remit an agreed portion of proceeds to the federal government. Ojo (2010) similarly defines resource control as the right of communities and states to access, manage, and utilize natural resources within their territories without excessive interference from the central government.

Ofeimum (2015) further explains that the principle of resource control underpins the autonomy of each

federating unit, granting them the right to generate revenue through the taxation of both human and material assets in their environments. However, in federal systems like Nigeria's, these powers are constitutionally limited, as the federal government retains ultimate authority over certain fiscal operations. Consequently, states and local governments often face restrictions in collecting or managing taxes outside those permitted by federal law.

Adebayo (2004) emphasizes that resource control embodies the concept of self-determination within federations, wherein each unit should be free to govern its own resources. This notion implies a collective obligation for other regions to respect and support such autonomy (Eboh and Igbokwe, 2006). Ifesinachi (2007) argues that Nigeria's current revenue distribution system where the federal government retains a disproportionate share contradicts modern trends in fiscal federalism. Thus, the struggle for resource control reflects the quest for equity, environmental justice, and genuine federalism in the country.

Concept of Political Instability

Olu (2018) defines political instability as the condition in which a government or political structure becomes fragile, inconsistent, or ineffective, leading to weak governance and policy discontinuity. Various factors may contribute to instability, including political polarization, poverty, inequality, external interference, and poor governance. In this context, political instability captures the uncertain and fluctuating nature of power relations within a nation, organization, or political system. The concept implies a state of governance characterized by volatility, insecurity, and social unrest. It encompasses conditions where political structures fail to function predictably, leading to frequent regime changes, protests, or civil disorder. Kolstad (2007) notes that political instability is often expressed through uprisings, riots, demonstrations, and strikes, reflecting deeper societal dissatisfaction and weak institutional foundations.

Jong-A-Pin (2019) describes political instability as a multidimensional phenomenon, with no universal consensus on the number of its dimensions. Carmignani (2003) offers a two-tier framework: the first dimension encompasses violent manifestations such as assassinations, revolutions, and mass riots arising from unresolved ethnic, economic, or ideological conflicts. The second dimension captures institutional disruptions, including abrupt government terminations and unexpected electoral outcomes, which mirror shifts in public opinion and power struggles within formal political systems.

Concept of Economic Marginalization

Clionadh (2010) identifies several dimensions of economic marginalization, including unemployment, low income, limited educational access, labor discrimination, lack of credit facilities, and exclusion from economic opportunities. Economic marginalization is a recurring feature of human societies, manifesting across nations, communities, and historical periods. Schatz and Schiffer (2018) conceptualize it as the social and economic exclusion of individuals or groups from contributing to and benefiting from their community's economic activities. When certain populations are denied participation in economic or social processes, their wellbeing deteriorates, fostering alienation and resentment toward leadership.

In this sense, marginalized groups are often excluded from key decision-making and deprived of access to economic, political, and social privileges. Schatz and Schiffer (2018) further describe economic marginalization as the systemic denial of access to authority, resources, and opportunities by dominant minority elites. This imbalance positions marginalized populations at a disadvantage, reducing their ability to influence development outcomes or attain economic security.

Concept of Environmental Degradation

The concept of environmental degradation has been interpreted in various ways, often reflecting both ecological and human perspectives. Cunningham (2002) defines it as the deterioration of the natural

environment resulting in reduced biological productivity, loss of soil fertility, and contamination of water and air resources. Degradation occurs when human activities such as mining, deforestation, and industrial pollution reduce land productivity, biodiversity, and overall ecosystem health. In agricultural regions, it leads to declining crop yields, while in rangelands, it diminishes livestock capacity and biodiversity.

Otong (2011) classifies environmental degradation into two main forms: the destruction of natural habitats through pollution and the overexploitation or depletion of natural resources. Both processes deprive populations of essential resources like clean water, fertile soil, and air quality creating conditions for poverty, migration, and conflict. Environmental degradation, therefore, becomes a direct threat to human security, as scarcity of resources may escalate into communal tension or violence.

Kubis (2006) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe emphasizes that environmental degradation undermines both local and international stability. According to him, poor resource management, combined with demographic pressures, fosters grievances and intergroup competition over scarce resources. Additionally, it weakens state institutions, fuels insurgency, and erodes public trust in government capacity to provide essential services. Thus, the degradation of the environment not only endangers ecological balance but also contributes significantly to political and economic instability.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Study Area

Akwa Ibom State is located in the southern region of Nigeria, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Cross River State to the east, Abia and Rivers States to the west, and Delta State to the north. The state covers an approximate landmass of 7,081 square kilometers and experiences a tropical monsoon climate, characterized by consistently high temperatures and humidity throughout the year. As of 2020, the state's population was estimated at about 5.5 million people (Ofem et al., 2019). The major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom include the

Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Eket, and Ekid peoples, with Ibibio, Annang, Oron, and English serving as the dominant languages. The state's economy is supported by abundant natural resources such as crude oil, natural gas, limestone, and clay. It also boasts strong agricultural production, particularly in crops like cassava, yam, plantain, and palm oil.

Industrial activity in Akwa Ibom revolves around oil refining, petrochemical operations, and light manufacturing. The state has a developed transport infrastructure that includes the Ibom International Airport, seaport facilities, and major road networks. Notable power installations such as the Ibom Power Plant and Alaoji Power Plant serve the region's energy needs. In the health sector, institutions like the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital and the Ibom Specialist Hospital provide tertiary medical services. Educationally, Akwa Ibom hosts prominent institutions including the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic. With a literacy rate of roughly 70%, the state also takes pride in its vibrant cultural life, reflected in festivals such as the Ibibio, Annang, and Oron cultural celebrations.

Research Design and Method

This study adopted a **descriptive survey research design**, suitable for examining relationships among variables within a defined population. The design allowed the researcher to gather data from respondents and analyze trends without manipulating the study environment. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' perceptions of economic marginalization, environmental degradation, and political instability.

A four-point Likert scale was employed for measurement, where:

- 4 = **Strongly Agree**
- 3 = **Agree**
- 2 = **Disagree**
- 1 = **Strongly Disagree**

The study targeted residents of **Eket Local Government Area (LGA)** a key oil-producing zone and focal point of resource control agitation. The total population was estimated at **220,600 persons**, based on projections by the **National Population Commission of Nigeria** and the **National Bureau of Statistics** (web sources, 2024). The **sample size of 399 respondents** was derived using the **Taro Yamane formula**, ensuring that the selected participants were representative of the larger population. The sampling method ensured inclusiveness across demographic and occupational categories.

Data collected were analyzed using the **Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC)** to examine the relationships between the independent variables (economic marginalization and environmental degradation) and the dependent variable (political instability). Hypotheses were tested at the **0.05 level of significance**, ensuring that the results met conventional statistical standards for reliability and validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What is the relationship between economic marginalization and political instability in Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between economic marginalization and political instability in Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Remark
Economic Marginalization	399	13.4715	1.49474	.018	Weak
Positive					
Political Instability	399	28.8057	5.17848		

Table 1 reveals the type and strength of relationship between economic marginalization and political instability in Nigeria. The result reveals that the r-value of .018 is weak in nature and positive direction. Hence, the result means that there is a

strong and positive relationship between economic marginalization and political instability in Nigeria.

Testing of Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between economic marginalization and political instability.

Table 2: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between economic marginalization and political instability

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Economic Marginalization	399	13.4715	2.30720	.018	.724
Political Instability	399	28.8057	5.17848		

The result in table 2 reveals that there is no statistically correlation between economic marginalization and political instability. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.724 is greater than the typical threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states there is no

significant relationship between economic marginalization and political Instability in Nigeria is retained.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between environmental degradation and political instability in Nigeria

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between environmental degradation and political instability in Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Remark
Environmental Degradation	399	8.9663	2.88595	.235	Weak
Positive					
Political Instability	399	28.8057	5.17848		

Table 3 reveals the type and strength of relationship between environmental degradation and political instability in Nigeria. The result reveals that the r-value of .235 is weak in nature and positive direction. Hence, the result means that there is a strong and positive relationship between

environmental degradation and political instability in Nigeria.

Testing of Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between environmental degradation and political instability.

Table 4: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between environmental degradation and political instability

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Environmental Degradation	399	8.9663	2.88595	.235	.000
Political Instability	399	28.8057	5.17848		

The result in table 4 reveals that there is a statistically correlation between environmental degradation and political instability. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the typical threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). While ($r = 0.235$) indicates a

moderate positive linear relationship between environmental degradation and political instability. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states there is no significant relationship between environmental degradation and political Instability in Nigeria is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Economic Marginalization and Political Instability

The study revealed that there **is no statistically significant relationship** between economic marginalization and political instability in Nigeria. Although the correlation coefficient suggested a positive association indicating that increases in economic marginalization could correspond with increases in political instability the relationship was found to be extremely weak. This outcome aligns with the findings of **Kamais, Mulu, and Macharia (2023)**, whose study on *economic marginalization and youth radicalization in Kisauni, Mombasa County, Kenya* demonstrated that economic deprivation did not significantly influence the radicalization of youth. Similarly, **Uzoagu (2022)**, in a study on *socio-economic marginalization and youth restiveness in community development*,

reported that while youth participation in socio-economic activities promotes peace and sustainable development, such marginalization was not strongly correlated with political instability.

However, this study's result contrasts with **Edwards and Means (2019)**, who found a significant positive relationship among globalization, privatization, and marginalization, indicating that economic exclusion can heighten instability and social unrest. The divergence suggests that the role of economic marginalization in driving political instability may vary depending on contextual factors such as governance quality, institutional strength, and regional socio-economic dynamics.

Environmental Degradation and Political Instability

Findings also demonstrated a **statistically significant relationship** between environmental degradation and political instability in Nigeria. The correlation coefficient indicated a moderate positive association, implying that as environmental

degradation intensifies, the likelihood of political unrest also increases. Specifically, the analysis revealed that environmental degradation accounts for approximately **5.5%** of the variation in political instability ($r^2 = 0.235^2 = 0.055$). This suggests that although environmental degradation is not the sole determinant of instability, it plays a notable role in influencing political outcomes.

This result corroborates **Inyang's (2019)** findings in his research on *environmental degradation and sustainable development in Nigeria*, which established a positive correlation between environmental degradation and developmental challenges in the South-South region. He emphasized the need for both government and non-governmental institutions to integrate environmental concerns into national policy frameworks as a means of achieving sustainability. Similarly, **Uche (2018)**, in a study examining *environmental degradation and political anarchy in the Niger Delta*, reported a significant correlation between ecological damage and political disorder. He advocated for urgent measures such as environmental cleanup, ecological restoration, and the establishment of an Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP) to mitigate the effects of degradation.

The findings also support **Kayode and Samuel (2015)**, who examined the human dimensions of environmental degradation and discovered a strong link between unsustainable environmental behavior and resource-related conflicts. They concluded that environmental education is a critical tool for fostering responsible behavior and promoting sustainable management of natural resources. Collectively, these results imply that environmental degradation not only undermines ecological stability but also erodes public trust in governance, exacerbates grievances, and heightens the potential

for political instability in oil-producing regions like Akwa Ibom. Hence, addressing environmental deterioration through effective policies, community engagement, and sustainable development initiatives is vital to mitigating conflict and promoting long-term stability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between **resource control agitation** and **political instability** in Nigeria, with a focus on **economic marginalization** and **environmental degradation** as the primary variables. The findings demonstrate that while economic marginalization has no statistically significant association with political instability, environmental degradation exhibits a meaningful positive relationship with it. These results indicate that environmental degradation rather than economic exclusion is a stronger driver of political unrest in resource-producing regions like Akwa Ibom State. The implication is that ecological damage caused by oil exploration and poor environmental management contributes significantly to citizens' grievances, loss of livelihoods, and mistrust in government institutions. Consequently, the agitation for resource control is shaped not only by economic interests but also by the deteriorating environmental conditions that threaten human security and community welfare.

The study therefore concludes that the dynamics of resource control agitation and political instability in Nigeria are **multifaceted and interdependent**. While economic marginalization alone does not directly cause instability, the interplay of environmental degradation, governance failures, and political exclusion intensifies the risk of unrest. Addressing these challenges requires

comprehensive policies that combine environmental restoration, equitable resource distribution, and participatory governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. **Implement Robust Environmental Management Policies:** The Nigerian government should strengthen environmental protection laws and ensure strict compliance by oil companies operating in resource-rich regions. Continuous environmental impact assessments and remediation programs should be prioritized to reduce ecological damage and restore degraded lands.
- ii. **Promote Sustainable Resource Governance:** Authorities should reform existing resource management frameworks to emphasize environmental sustainability, transparency, and social justice. Effective resource governance should ensure that host communities derive tangible benefits from natural resource exploitation.
- iii. **Enhance Community Participation and Inclusion:** Stakeholders, particularly local communities, should be actively involved in decision-making processes related to resource management and environmental

regulation. Inclusive participation will promote trust, reduce alienation, and foster a sense of shared responsibility for development outcomes.

- iv. **Strengthen Socio-Economic Empowerment Programs:** While economic marginalization was not a major predictor of instability in this study, efforts should still be made to promote local employment, entrepreneurship, and capacity-building initiatives in oil-producing areas. Empowering citizens economically can help sustain peace and development.
- v. **Integrate Environmental Education and Awareness:** Public enlightenment programs should be developed to educate communities about sustainable environmental practices and the long-term consequences of ecological neglect. Such education will help reduce harmful practices and encourage a culture of environmental stewardship.

In essence, mitigating political instability in Nigeria's resource-producing regions requires a **holistic approach** that addresses both the human and environmental dimensions of resource control. Sustainable peace and stability can only be achieved when environmental restoration, equitable resource management, and participatory governance are pursued concurrently.

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