

## EFFECTS OF MILITIA ACTIVITIES ON YAM PRODUCTION AMONG RURAL FARMERS IN UKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

ANCHOVUR, Timothy Tyowase, OCHI, Sunday Ochin,  
UTEGLI, Sedoo Irene & ORTYOM, Julian Onyemowo

Department of Sociology,  
Benue State University,  
Makurdi - Nigeria.

**Email:** [tanchovur@bsum.edu.ng](mailto:tanchovur@bsum.edu.ng),  
[sunnycollins2012@gmail.com](mailto:sunnycollins2012@gmail.com),  
[sedooutegi@gmail.com](mailto:sedooutegi@gmail.com)  
[juli4ortyom@yahoo.com](mailto:juli4ortyom@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

Overtime, the existence of militia groups and their activities has caused great concern in Nigeria and Benue State in particular. Their activities have constituted threat to human security as well as food production. This study examined the factors that birthed armed militia groups and how the activities of these groups have affected the production of yam, a major staple food in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. The study hypothesized that there is no relationship between militia activities and yam production among rural farmers in Ukum Local Government Area. The General Strain Theory was adopted as the study's theoretical perspective. The study utilized Cross-sectional design whereby the study population of 384 (using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula) was drawn from 216,986 residents of Ukum Local Government Area. However, the study sampled 100 farmers through purposive and snowball sampling technique due to the volatile nature of the area. Findings of the study reveals that high rate of poverty, fear of domination/injustice, failure of law enforcement agencies to tame the activities of militia groups, and resurgence of political thugs that have been abandoned by their political godfathers, accounted for the formation and proliferation of militia groups in the study area. Results of correlation statistics show a positive correlation between the existence of militia activities and production of yam. Thus, ethnic militia activities negatively affect the production yam in the study locale. The study recommends, among other things, that concerted efforts should be made by the State government to fully develop the productive forces; provide avenues where youths will be engaged to alleviate poverty in Ukum and indeed Benue State, security personnel should be proactive in responding to identified threats, arrest and prosecute offenders to deter others, politicians should stop empowering youths with arms and the youths should be actively engaged in political matters as this will remove the tendencies of domination and marginalization between them and the political elites.

**Keywords:** Militia, Yam Production, Rural Farmers, Benue State

## Introduction

One of the major issues affecting agricultural activities in rural societies across Nigeria is insecurity majorly occasioned by armed militia groups. The existence of militia groups and their concomitant activities have not only threatened the peace and development of several communities, it has also affected other aspects of their economy, including food production. According to Alimba (2014), in Nigeria, armed groups, including militia, have adopted the posture of intractability and in most cases, they are highly violent by nature. The manner in which these groups conduct their operations is demeaning and rural farmers are the most hit.

Though the phenomenon is not new, militia activities became rampant in Nigeria after the return to civil rule in 1999. According to Nwosu (2020), after 1999, politics of ethnic identity became an underlying factor in the emergence and proliferation of ethnic militias. Anifowose (2000), identified the conditions that gave birth to the proliferation of the ethnic militias to include perceived marginalization, declining economic climate which created acute discontent and frustration among the people, especially residents of the urban slums who had always had their grievances against the government, coupled with a sense of relative deprivation. Since then, militia activities have grown exponentially in power and size and almost beyond State control. Some of the militia groups in Nigeria include the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) emerged in the Niger Delta while the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) emerged from the two major ethnic groups of Igbo, and Yoruba respectively. Similarly, another group known as the Ombatse militia emerged in Nasarawa State (Lysias, 2013). Though these groups claimed to represent parochial interests; they adopted diverse strategies which include violence and criminally motivated actions in the conduct of their activities.

The activities of militia groups have resulted in both intra and inter-ethnic conflicts that have exerted a huge toll on food production. In Benue State, there have been series of conflicts within and between communities, which are often orchestrated by local militias. According to Anikyum, Samuel-Tough, Shagu and Takada (2020), militias of Ikurav-Tiev in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area and the Kusuv of Buruku Local Government Area, for instance, have been in conflict for over 5 decades over the ownership of land for farming and other boundary rights. More so, there have been reports of militia activities in Ukum and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State and extending to Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State (Suswam, (2022). The resultant effect has been wanton destruction of lives and agricultural produce (including yam) worth millions of Naira.

No doubt, one of the major crops among rural farmers that is affected by the activities of militia groups is yam. Orkwor, Asiedu & Ekanake (1998), noted that apart from cereals, yam is the most important staple food in Nigeria and Benue State in particular. However, where insecurity is rampant, yam production is affected. Slobanka (cited in Dekera, 2019), stated that the activities of militia groups are capable of directly reducing economic activities (like yam production) in areas where they operate and may limit these activities altogether. Considering the intractable nature of the activities of militia groups, there are increasingly less incentives to invest in food production thereby affecting yam production capacities.

Ukum Local Government is acclaimed to be the largest producer of yam in Nigeria and West Africa at large (Philips, Ogbonna, Etudaiye, Mignouna & Siwoko, 2013), with arguably the

largest yam market in Zaki Biam town. This prospect raises the general expectation that there should be sufficient yams in Benue State and an avenue whereby yam-farming households can sell surplus yam produce to generate enormous financial income, which will translate into continuous availability of sufficient quality food for household consumption and export. However, the rising level of militia activities in Ukum Local Government Area has the propensity to directly or indirectly affect the production of yams.

For over a decade, militia activities have continued to ravage Ukum Local Government Area, affecting yam production in several aspects including inputs, farm fields and harvested/stored produce. Generally, Iorzu et al. (2020), noted that yam production is affected by losses in quantity and quality of tubers, arising from physical damage, rodent attack, fungal and bacterial diseases, and physiological processes such as sprouting, dehydration, respiration and human activities like crises resulting from the activities of militia groups. However, in Ukum Local Government Area, the ravaging nature of militia activities have repelled efforts to curtail its effect on yam production. Despite the fact that the government has stationed security personnel and the traditional institution decreeing war on militia groups, their activities have continued and yam production has been grossly affected. The status of Zaki-Biam Yam market among the major yam markets in Nigeria has continuously diminished. It therefore appears that the intractable nature of militia activities has affected the level of yam production among rural farmers in the area. However, due to lack of adequate empirical literature, there is limited knowledge on the factors that have influenced the formation of these militia groups and the extent to which their activities affect production of yams in the area.

It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to examine the factors that have influenced the formation of militia in the area and the extent to which their activities have affected yam production in Ukum Local Government Area, as well as suggest measures to curb the menace. The study is guided by the hypothesis that, there is no relationship between militia activities and yam production in Ukum Local Government Area, Benue State.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Factors that influence the formation of Militia Groups**

Ethnic militia has been characterized as youth-based groups formed with the purpose of promoting and protecting the parochial interests of their ethnic groups and whose activities sometime involve the use of violence. It is pertinent to note that the prevalence of the phenomenon within the geographical space of Nigeria pre-dates the country's independence (Adejumobi, 2002; Agbese, 2003). According to Duruji (2010), the colonial policy of divide and rule employed to strengthen European control and dominance was significant and affected politics and ethnic relations, characterized by discord and unhealthy competition among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. These ethnic relations were at times expressed in violent forms as the example of the 1953 Kano riots clearly showed. The riot was a result of some value judgement stemming from perceived mistreatment of northern delegates by the southern crowd in Lagos for opposing the 1953 motion moved at the Federal House of Representatives for independence in 1956. That kind of outburst, the first of its kind, was a selective violence targeted at an out-group emanating from the colonial administration's invention of tradition and the mutiny of an 'us versus them' syndrome in Nigeria (Agbese, 2003). This means that ethnic related violence is situated in the public policies of the Nigerian state. This character of the Nigerian state has not fundamentally changed in spite of the transition from colonial to post-colonial dispensation.

Apart from the 1953 violent eruption that occurred in Kano, there has been an avalanche of violent ethnic crises in Nigeria. They include the 1981 bloodshed in Numan, the 1987 mass

killing in Kafanchan and other parts of southern Kaduna, the 1990 clashes in Wukari and Takun, the 1991 massacre in Tafawa Belewa and the mass killing in Kano city, the 1992 Zango–Kataf bloodshed, the 1993 Andoni and Ogoni bloodbath, the intermittent Warri crises between the Ijaws, Itsekiri and Urhobo, the clashes between the Hausa and Yoruba ethnic groups in Sagamu, Lagos, Ilorin and Ibadan, the Nasarawa crises involving the Tiv and other ethnic groups in that state, the Yelwa-Shendam and Jos clashes in Plateau State, among many others (Duruji, 2010).

Explanations of the literature on the rise of ethnic militias in Nigeria have come under two broad perspectives. One perspective views the development from the angle of militarization of the State by repressive governments while the other perspective sees it from a materialistic point of view, borne out of economic frustrations (Duruji, 2010). The state militarization perspective contends that ethnic militias are logical outcomes of the increased militarization of the State, especially during those many years of military dominance of politics in the country (Anugwom, 2000).

The political economy perspective tallies closely with the economic explanation of the development of violent rebel groups which are always motivated by material gains. The argument of scholars with this view point is that the rise of ethnic militias in Nigeria results from a logical outcome of the frustrations brought about by the material deprivation of the people. The economic woes of the country that followed the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, and the inability of the central government that has become much stronger as a result of military rule to deliver economic dividends to the citizens, spurred demands for devolution of power and more autonomy to the regions as was the case prior to the military era in Nigeria (Jega, 2003). The correlation here is that people who believe that local autonomy has potentials of improving their economic wellbeing are amenable to join these violent ethnic formations which they believe shall provide the remedies to their economic downturns (Akinboye, 2001).

Other scholars have related this to the rapid population growth that resulted in explosion in the number of youths that could not be taken care of by an educational system that has collapsed with no economic opportunity to take care of them, thus leaving a vast number of able-bodied people to face harsh and difficult conditions. It is circumstances like these that expose them to a culture of marginality rooted in drugs, loose morality, violence, profanity and disrespect for social institution (Sesay et al., 2003). People in this category are the street urchins and hoodlums comprising children and youth; product of broken, collapsed or homeless families, a ready pool for ambitious politicians willing to employ them as thugs and socialise them into participating in organized violence. These politicians tend to discard these youths after elections, but the respectability acquired by these individuals in the process and the need to maintain their new found lifestyle, contributed significantly in transforming them into a more cohesive militia organization most of which now hide under the banner of fighting for ethnically defined interests (Adebanwi, 2002).

The increased availability of illegal small and light weapons (SLAWs) in Nigeria is also identified as a contributory factor to the rise and proliferation of violent social formations. The relatively easy access to these weapons has promoted a culture of violence and emboldened disaffected groups to mount direct challenge to legitimate authorities (Udeh, 2002; Akinwumi, 2005). This is linked to the 20<sup>th</sup> century global phenomenon of de-nationalization of the states that have resulted in the clash of culture and development elsewhere in the world and encourages subnational units in plural society whose inclination to violence is facilitated through easy access to Small and Light Weapons (SALW).

The lack of employment opportunities for the ever-teeming school leavers and the increasing circulation of small arms and light weapons in the country were also cited as the factors responsible for the phenomenon of ethnic militias in Nigeria. A study carried out in 2005 revealed that the use of small arms and light weapon (SALWs) has increased the scale of lethality, the degree of intensity, causalities and the extent of livelihood destruction with wider developmental impact for the country (Ginifer & Ismail, 2005). The duo identified the weapons now in use in Nigeria to include AK-47 assault rifles, automatic pump action short guns, bazookas, berretta pistol, browning pistol, carine riffles, double-barrel short guns, G3 rifles, general purpose machine guns, along with other traditional weapons such as machetes, spears, cutlasses and knives. All these weapons are what have been deployed in the frequent ethno-religious conflicts ravaging the country including those of the northern and middle belt regions.

The perverse Nigerian federalism which is supposed to accommodate the country's diversity has been cited by some scholars as the factor behind the rise of ethnic militias. According to Adejumbi (2002), many civil society activists claim that the ethnic militias are mere manifestations and frustrated expression of the dysfunctional structure of the Nigerian federation and the character of the Nigerian state. The argument is that the effect of military rule bastardized the Nigerian federation and turned it into a unitary state. They therefore posit that the phenomenon of ethnic militia is a logical derivative of the process of de-federalization of Nigeria since 1966 (Babawale, 2001). Ethnic militia is also seen as a consequence of the mismanagement of ethnic grievances by the Nigerian state and its agents (Anifowose, 2000; Akinboye, 2001).

The consensus in the literature is that ethnic militias are organizations with root in ethnicity which have been with Nigeria prior to independence. There is also the general agreement in the literature that ethnic militias in Nigeria are youth based. Drawing from existing literature on the subject; it can be asserted that the generic term of ethnic militia as used in common Nigerian parlance, refers to any armed or organized group with potential for violent tendencies based in any of Nigeria's geographical region and claiming to be fighting for and defending some common ethnic or geo-political interest whether broad or narrow.

### **Effect of Ethnic Militia Activities on Food Production**

The activities of ethnic militia disrupt production. According to Simmons (2013), hostilities, especially armed hostilities by the militia, prevent normal farming, fishing, and herding operations from being carried out. He added that for the millions of poor households, whose principal source of income-and much of their food supply-is derived from agricultural production, activities of armed men can inflict significant damage to livelihoods and food security. For example, a study conducted in 14 countries by Messer et al. (2000), found that production levels were, on average, 12.3% lower in armed conflict periods than in peacetime in 13 of those countries, with Angolan farmers experiencing reductions as high as 44 percent.

There is also evidence that households in militia dominated areas deliberately make choices that reduce their production, thus, the risks of predation, looting, or loss of crops or livestock. In northern Uganda, for example, households shifted their livestock holdings from cattle to small ruminants, reducing the value of their herds by two-thirds (Rockmore, 2012). An FAO analysis concluded that global agricultural losses due to conflict by militia groups between 1970 and 1997 averaged \$4.3 billion annually (in 1995 constant U.S. dollars), exceeding the value of food aid to these countries. This implies a net reduction of food availability not just to producers but also to the consuming population as a whole (FAO, 2000).

Other studies on the effect of armed conflict on food productivity in developing countries as occasioned by the militia (Ageaoli, Perez, & Rosegrant, 1995; Sambe, Avanger, & Alakali,

2013; Okpiliya, Ekong, & Eni, 2013), showed that several disputes, especially in Africa have impeded food productivity. Arising from an empirical study which found a correlation between violent groups and food security in Africa, Sambe, Avanger and Alakali painted the following scenario:

Violent activities perpetrated by militia groups are enemies of food security... The activities disrupt food production through physical destruction and plundering of crops and livestock, harvest and food reserves. The activities also prevent and discourage farming and also interrupt the lives of transportation through which food exchanges and even humanitarian relief takes place (Sambe, Avanger & Alakali, 2013, p.46).

Activities of militia groups are increasingly becoming threats to rural economic activities such as agriculture in most sub-Saharan African countries (Yamano & Deininger, 2005). The prevalence of these conflicts is escalating at a time when crop yields are stagnant or even declining for some countries in the region (Otsuka, 2006). The destructive tendencies of militia activities are such that have largely affected the developmental prospect of many warring communities. Voors, et al. (2012), in their study of conflict impacts in Burundi, for instance, found that households that experienced militia activities were doing poorly in the shares of cash crops grown in total production and in measures of social capital than their counterparts without such experiences.

Again, Simmons (2013) maintained that, recruitment of young males into militia or rebel groups reduces the supply of labour for herding or farming, which affects food production and availability. Women and children may be left to work the fields and feed the animals, but in many cases they do so under conditions that threaten their safety and well-being. Often, when militia activities become rampant, members of rural households in conflict areas simply flee their farmlands, leaving most of their assets (including stored crops) and livelihoods behind (Dekera, 2019). In many cases, they end up as displaced persons in communities where they have few claims to land or in camps managed by the international humanitarian community. Consequently, the way in which militia activities are carried out reduces food and agricultural production capacities-and the availability of food-even when peace is achieved.

Finally, activities of militia groups result in outright loss through the destruction of food and food-producing assets. Contributing on this, Dekera (2019), asserted that production equipment, animals, seed supplies, and food stocks are often casualties of conflict, deliberately destroyed by competing factions. Such destruction reduces food availability in the short term, but it also prevents a resumption of productive activities and recovery of livelihoods in peace periods. Post-conflict recovery of agricultural production is often further impeded by the increased poverty of people affected by the conflict. Ibáñez and Andrés (2010), maintained that even when farmers are able to reoccupy their lands or homes, they have lost their economic ability to reinvest in lost assets, thus limiting food production and availability. Thus, the menace of militia groups constitutes a serious security concern in Nigeria. This is even as their activities tend to threaten food security in parts (especially Ukum Local Governemnt Area) of Benue State which is considered the food basket of Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The General Strain theory is adopted for this study. Strain theory is a theory developed in 1938 by Robert K. Merton (Watkins, 2018). Other scholars associated with this theory include, Albert K. Cohen (1955), Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin (1960), Neil Smelser (1963), Robert Agnew (1992), among others. The theory states that society puts pressure on individuals to achieve socially accepted goals (such as living a better life), even when such individuals lack the socially

approved means (employment and finance) to meet those goals. This leads to strain which may lead individuals to commit crimes, like selling drugs or kidnapping people for ransom in search of financial security.

The theory was further improved upon in 1992 by Robert Agnew (Agnew, 2001). Agnew believed that people who experience strain or stress become distressed or upset which may lead them to commit crime in order to cope. One of the key principles of this theory is emotion as the motivator for crime. Agnew proposed that various forms of strain cause individuals to experience negative emotional state such as anger, depression, and fear (Agnew, 1992). For Agnew, crime occurs when people seek alternative means to cope with their negative emotions. Agnew explained that an individual's coping strategy is the determining factor of whether or not one will engage in crime.

Furthermore, to explain all crime, rather than just economic crimes among the lower class, Agnew stated that strain was caused by the difference between one's aspirations towards any goal and the means to achieve that goal (Agnew, 1992). Thus, the failure to achieve any goal, rather than strictly a financial goal, would result in strain. Agnew's modification of the definition of strain enabled strain theory to explain any type of crime rather than strictly financial crimes.

The theory is adopted for the study because it explains why people engage in militia activities which further poses a challenge to the production of yam. The relevance of the theory to the topic under study is that, the theory relates the emergence as well as perpetration of militia activities to the strain experienced by people who feel marginalised by the existing structures. Political domination and marginalization, among other factors which hinder the achievement of goals, compel people to form militia groups across ethnic lines in the quest to demand for 'justice'. It also explains that these militia groups indulge in criminality in order to cope with their poverty conditions and life challenges in general. In other words, the inability of the people to legitimately achieve their goals compel them to enroll into militia groups which in turn, engage in activities that are consequential to socio-economic development. As a consequence, their activities have also affected the production of yam by inhibiting access to inputs, reducing labour, limiting the time of cultivation as well as harvest and distribution of yam.

## Methodology

The cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted to examine the activities of ethnic militia on yam production in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. As of 2006, Ukum LGA had an estimated population of 216, 983, at an annual growth rate of 3.05% (National Population Commission, 2007; National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The Local Government Area has thirteen council wards and its headquarters is Sankera. The council wards include: Aterayange, Adzendeshi, Borikyo, Kundav, Kendev, Lumbur, Mbatiam, Mbayenge, Mbazum, Tsaav, Tyuluv, Ugbam and Uyam. In Ukum LGA, yam is the most cultivated crop (Ani, Iorkaa & Ogebe, 2014). In fact, Suswam (2022), posits that the "Food Basket of the Nation" status of Benue State is a derivative of the massive production of yams and other crops from the area.

Both male and female population of farmers from 18 years and above constituted the study population. The study population of 384 (using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula) was drawn from 216,986 residents of Ukum Local Government Area (NPC, 2016). However, the study sampled 100 farmers through purposive and snowball sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was used to select five council wards that are mostly affected by militia activities. These council wards include Aterayange, Borikyo, Tyuluv, Ugbam and Uyam. The reason for limiting this study to the affected areas was to understand the extent to which militia

activities exert a toll on the production of yam among the rural farmers in the affected communities. Similarly, simple random sampling was used to select one village from each council wards making a total of five villages. This technique gave a fair chance for all the affected villages to be part of the study. Lastly, snowball sampling technique was used to select respondents. This was to ensure that only yam farmers were engaged in the study. Farmers were approached on the basis of referral where each previous farmer referred to the next and the exercise continued until a total of twenty (20) persons were selected from each village and the researcher snowballed from one farmer to another until the sample size for each village was covered.

To collect data effectively, a 3-likert scale self-structured questionnaire was used. The researcher administered the questionnaire through face-face method. This method ensured that where the respondent did not understand the questionnaire the researcher explained it for easy understanding. The researcher strictly monitored the completion process and ensured that all questionnaires were retrieved. The data generated from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and simple percentages. In-depth interview was also conducted with five key informants (one informant from each of the selected villages) in order to compliment the questionnaire aspect of data collected.

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data collected were analyzed quantitatively using frequency counts, percentage distribution tables, mean and standard deviation. The benchmark mean was 1.5 score. Spearman Ranked Correlation statistics was used to test hypotheses.

### Socio-Demographic Attributes of Respondents

Analyses in this section focused on describing social characteristics of respondents.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Attributes of Respondents**

Attributes	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (% =100)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	60	60.0
Female	40	40.0
<b>Age (in years)</b>		
18-28	26	26.0
29-39	59	59.0
40 and above	15	15.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	07	7.0
Married	87	87.0
Divorced	06	6.0
<b>Highest Educational Qualification</b>		
Primary school and below	38	38.0
Secondary School	46	46.0
Tertiary Education	16	16.0

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

Table 1 presents a summary of the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents. The data reveal that 60 (40.0%) of the respondents were males, while 40 (40.0%) were females. The data also show that 26 (26.0%) were aged between 18 and 28; 59 (59.0%) were between 29 to 39



years; 15 (15.0%) were aged between 40 years and above. Marital status of the respondents showed that 7 (7.0%) of the respondents were single, 87 (87.0%) were married, while 6 (6.0%) were divorcees. Educational status showed that, majority of the respondents 46 (46.0%) had secondary education, followed by 38 (38.0%) who had attained at most the primary level of education, and finally 16 (16.0%) had attained tertiary education. Summarily, the socio-demographic data of respondents indicate that the study comprised more males between the ages of 18 and 29 who were married and who were mostly at the secondary level of education.

### **Factors responsible for the formation of Militia Groups in Ukum Local Government Area**

Presented under this chapter are the perceived factors for the formation of militia groups in the study area as opined by the respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to perceived factors responsible for the formation of militia in Ukum Local Government Area

S/N	Factors	A (%)	D (%)	U (%)	X	STD
1	The phenomenon of militia has existed for a long time in the area	42(42.0)	49(49.0)	9(9.0)	1.67	.64
2	High rates of poverty and unemployment influence the formation of militia groups	85(85.0)	14(14.0)	1(1.0)	1.66	.39
3	Poor leadership and lack of political recognition are responsible for the emergence of militia groups	47(47.0)	50(50.0)	3(3.0)	1.56	.56
4	Fear of domination/injustice influences the perpetration of militia activities	72(72.0)	19(19.0)	9(9.0)	1.57	.65
5	Failure of law enforcement agencies to tame the activities of militia groups have led to the proliferation of such groups	45(45.0)	50(50.0)	5(5.0)	1.60	.59
6	Lack of proper education/ ignorance leads many people to form and perpetuate militia activities	83(83.0)	16(16.0)	1(1.0)	1.18	.41
7	Thugs who were hired and later abandoned by politicians have enrolled into militia activities	79(79.0)	12(12.0)	9(9.0)	1.51	.63

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

Table 2 is a presentation of the perceived factors responsible for the formation of militia groups in Ukum Local Government Area. The data in the table show that items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are all above the benchmark mean of 1.5. This means that militia have existed in the area for a long time ( $\chi=1.67$ ) and the factors responsible for their emergence in the study area include poor leadership and lack of political recognition ( $\chi=1.56$ ), high rate of poverty ( $\chi=1.66$ ), fear of domination/injustice ( $\chi=1.56$ ), failure of law enforcement agencies to tame activities of militia groups which have led to their proliferation ( $\chi=1.60$ ), and resurgence of political thugs that have been abandoned by their political godfathers ( $\chi=1.51$ ). This means that the activities of militia are entrenched and their emergence is as a result of the high rate of poverty and other factors which have strained youths who took to indulgence in militia activities to achieve their goals. Consequently, they sometimes attack innocent farmers in the area, an action that has the propensity of retarding yam production. This resonates with the findings of Dekera (2019) that activities of violent actors in rural areas, usually perpetrated by youths recruited from host communities, create more tensions and inhibit food security. Anikyum et al. (2020), also found that armed militia are

usually violent youths who are sometimes sponsored by politicians to cause mayhem in order to foster their political agenda.

Similarly, Key Informants interviews revealed that the activities of militia groups in Ukum LGA which are criminal and violent in nature, emerged as a result of poverty and political thuggery influenced by some politicians in the area. The informants also blamed the prevalence of militia groups on lack of proper education and unemployment that characterized the local government area. A 64-year-old traditional ruler from Tyuluv council ward lamented how lack of access to quality education, and employment of youths as political thugs who eventually are abandoned by their political godfathers, thereby forming themselves into militia groups. The activities of these militia groups have affected yam production in the area because they sometimes attack farmers to either collect money or farm produce. In his words,

We have experienced situations where militia groups attack farmers on their farms or stop them on their way from the farms and demand for yams or cash, and when the farmers argue or resist, they are beaten seriously and sometimes their properties are destroyed. More worrisome is the fact that their activities have been responsible for high rate of crime in our area. All the attempts we have made to stop them from carrying out their activities have so far failed (KII, Male, 64, 2023).

### **Effects of the Activities of Armed Militia Groups on the Production of Yam in Ukum Local Government Area**

This section captures the effect of armed militia on food security in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents with regards to the effect of militia activities on yam production in Ukum Local Government Area

S/NO	Effect	A(%)	D(%)	U(%)	$\chi$	STD
1	Farmers find it difficult to go to farm and cultivate yam thereby reducing the quantum of cultivated yam in the area	50(50.0)	47(47.0)	3(3.0)	1.53	.55
2	Farmers abandon their yam farms thereby reducing the number of harvested yams in the area	72(72.0)	27(27.0)	1(1.0)	1.59	.48
3	Militia activities inhibit transportation of yam thereby hindering effective distribution of the commodity	37(37.0)	60(60.0)	3(3.0)	1.66	.53
4	Where the militia operates, consumption of yam is also reduced	34(34.0)	62(62.0)	4(4.0)	1.30	.54
5	Farm inputs cannot be accessed leading to low productivity	21(21.0)	33(33.0)	46(46.0)	2.25	.78
6	Activities of armed militia lead to rising hunger and starvation	77(77.0)	21(21.0)	2(2.0)	1.55	.48

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

Table 3 reveals that items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 are significant because they recorded scores of 1.5 and above which is the benchmark mean. By implication, the data show that militia activities inhibit farmers from going to the farm due to fear of being killed ( $\chi=1.53$ ), most farmers completely abandon their yam farms leading to low or no harvest ( $\chi=1.59$ ), and even the available yams cannot be effectively distributed ( $\chi=1.66$ ). Worst of all, militia activities limit access to farm inputs ( $\chi=2.25$ ), which ultimately leads to low production of the commodity. This obviously affects the quantity of yam available for consumption ( $\chi=1.55$ ) and indeed, for export. This coheres with the findings of Dekera (2019), that militia activities negatively affect all the four dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability. In addition, Deininger and Castagnini (2006), stated that armed militia activities create insecurity over accessed land and hence, impede land improvement, which translates to low agriculture output per hectare.

Informants have also collaborative reports which indicated that militia groups engaged in nefarious acts in order to achieve their aims. This includes, among others, attacks on innocent civilians, rival militia groups, security forces, motorists as well as marketers. Thus, acts of intimidation, extortions, threats, and violence against the locals were often used to control mapped territories and extract resources. This situation has instilled fear in the local populations especially among farmers, who are no longer willing to go to their farms in order to avoid been attacked by militias. This has led to low yam production in the area, thereby causing hunger and starvation. In his submission, a 57-year-old community leader in Ugbam reported that the militia groups continually engaged in activities that do not warrant peace and though security forces have been working tirelessly, still, they are far from containing the situation. According to him,

People are afraid even to go to their farms because of series of intimidation from militia groups. Some are even hired by politicians to attack their rivals. There are instances where members of these militia groups kidnap people and request for various ransoms and if not paid, they kill the victims. In some cases, they attacked farmers who have bomber harvest and have sold it with huge sums of money. There may be times they will block roads and extort farmers and local business people (KII, Male, 57, 2023).

Some informants emphasized that, in many cases, militia groups exacerbated communal conflicts by taking sides, providing support, or directly participating in hostilities. The involvement of militias usually inflamed existing tensions and escalate violence. Similarly, it was reported that militia groups often sought to control and exploit local resources, such as land, water, and trade routes, which have been central issues in communal conflicts. Their control of resources usually intensified disputes and fueled ongoing conflicts. In fact, the participation of militia groups in communal conflicts often led to heightened violence, including targeted attacks, reprisals, and displacement of communities. It is evidently clear that their activities have far reaching effects on yam production in the area.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between the activities of militia groups and yam production in Ukum LGA.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a relationship between the activities of militia groups and yam production in Ukum LGA.

**Table 4: Correlation between existence of ethnic militia and yam production in Ukum Local Government Area.**

		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.248	.098	2.536	.013 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.307	.100	3.197	.002 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		100			

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.  
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.  
c. Based on normal approximation.

From the presentation in Table 4, there is a positive correlation between the activities of militia and yam production ( $r=.307$ ). This means that militia activities in Ukum Local Government have affected yam production in the area. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Conclusion

The study has established that there is a preponderance of militia activities in Ukum Local Government Area (LGA) which have negatively affected yam production in the study area. The militia groups emerged because of a number of factors among which are poverty, betrayal by politicians, inadequate security measures, illiteracy, and injustice. Apart from the fact that the activities of these groups are inimical to socio-economic development of the people of the area as well as visitors and potential investors, the militias also constitute a threat to food security. There is therefore the need to tackle the menace by both State and Non-state actors. The political class as well as traditional institution need to evolve strategies to contain the situation in both Ukum LGA and the Sankera axis of Benue State. This done, will guarantee surplus and sustainable production of yam and other agricultural produce.

### Recommendations

The study recommends as follows:

- Concerted efforts should be made by the State government to fully develop the productive forces; provide avenues where youths will be engaged to alleviate poverty in Ukum and indeed Benue State.
- The security personnel should be proactive in response to identified threats, arrest and prosecute offenders to deter others.
- Politicians should stop empowering youths with arms to perpetrate electoral violence. Rather, they should endeavour to conscientize their followers on the importance of unity and progress and equally assist in youth empowerment. Youths should be actively engaged in political matters as this will remove the tendencies of domination and marginalization between them and the political elites.

- (d) There is the need to inculcate in the younger generation, values of unity and peaceful coexistence. This can be done by the traditional institution and at the family levels.

## References

- Adejumobi, S. (2002). Ethnic militia groups and the national question in Nigeria. *Social Science Research Council*. Retrieved from <http://programs.ssric.org>.
- Ageaoli, M. P. & Rosegrant, W. (1995). *Impact of resources degradation on global food balance*. Paper presented at workshop on Land Degradation in the Developing World: Implication for Food, Agriculture and the Environment to the Year 2020. Anapolis.
- Ani, D. P., Iorkaa, J. T. & Ogebe, F. O. (2014). Technical efficiency of yam production in Ukum Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Agriculture and Veterinary Science (IOSR-JAVS)*, 7(7), 14-19.
- Anifowose, R. (2010). *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv, Yoruba, and Niger Delta Experience*, Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.
- Anikyum, R. O., Samuel-Tough, L. A., Shagu, J. I. & Takada, S. J. (2020). Socio-Political Effect of Armed Militia in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area. Undergraduate Project, Benue State University. (Unpublished).
- Babawale, T. (2001). The rise of ethnic militias, de-legitimisation of the State and the threat to Nigerian federalism. *West African Review*, 3(1), 1-12.
- Badmus, I. (2006). Ethnic militia movements and the crisis of political order in post military Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science*, 13(3), 191-198.
- Bristow, E. (1998). Individualism versus Socialism in Britain. New York: Fordham University Press. Department for International Development (DFID,200). Justice and Poverty Reduction. U.K London DFID pp2-7.
- Dekera, F. (2019). Communal Conflicts and Food Security in North-East Senatorial District of Benue State. M.Sc. thesis. Benue State University, Makurdi. (Unpublished).
- Duruji, M. E. (2010). Ethnic militias and sub-nationalism in Nigeria: A comparative study of MASSOB and OPC. *M.Sc. Dissertation*, Covenant University, Ota.
- Effevottu, E. S. (2016). Ethnic militia and nation building in Nigeria. A seminar paper presented at *Department of History, Faculty of Arts*, University of Ibadan.
- FAO (2000). Conflicts, Agriculture, and Food Security. In: *The State of Food and Agriculture 2000*. Rome: FAO. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x4400e/x4400e07.htm>.
- Francis, D. (2005). Civil Militia: Africa's Intractable Security Menace.9incom
- Guichaoua, Y. (2005). The Making of an Ethnic Militia. The O'odua People's Congress in Nigeria. Oxford: Centre for Research in Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE).
- Ibáñez, A. M. & Andrés, M. (2010, July). Do Conflicts Create Poverty Traps? Asset Losses and Recovery for Displaced Households in Colombia. In Di Tella, Rafael, Sebastian Edwards, & Ernesto Schargrotsky (Eds.). *The Economics of Crime: Lessons For and From Latin America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Available online at [www.nber.org/chapters/c11837.pdf](http://www.nber.org/chapters/c11837.pdf)
- Ikelegbe, A. (2001). Civil Society, Oil and Conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: Ramifications of Civil Society for regional resources struggle. *Journal of modern African Studies*, 39(3), 437-450.
- Iorzua, D. A., Ikyuba, A. A., Aan, J. T. & Nwofor, S. C. (2020). Post-Harvest Loses and Socioeconomic Sustenance of Yam Farmers in Southern Agricultural Zone of Nasarawa State. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 26(8), 88-98 DOI: [10.9734/jsrr/2020/v26i830298](https://doi.org/10.9734/jsrr/2020/v26i830298)

- Laitin, D.D. (2007). *Nations State and Violence*. Oxford New York University Press.
- Mamkaa, I. H. (2018). Farmer-Herder Conflict and Socio-Economic Development in Tivland, 2009- 2016. PhD thesis, Benue State University, Makurdi. (Unpublished).
- Messer, E., Cohen, M. J. & Marchione, T. (2000). Conflict: A cause and Effect of hunger. In: *Environmental Change and Security Program Report, No.7*, G.D. Dabelko (ed). Washington D.C. Woodrow: Wilson Centre, pp.1-20.
- National Population Commission (2016).
- Nwosu, C. (2020). Politics of ethnic identity: Emergence and proliferation of ethnic militias in Nigeria. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS)*, 3(2) , 402 – 411,
- Okpiliya, F. I., Ekong, A. E. & Eni, I. (2013). Wetland ecosystem conflict: Implication for agricultural productivity and food Security in Mbiabo, Odukpani, Cross River State, Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4, 55-61.
- Otsuka, K. (2006). Why Can't We Transform Traditional Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa? *Review of Agricultural Economics*, 25(3), 332-337.
- Phillips, D., Ogbonna, M., Etudaiye, H., Mignouna, D., and Siwoku, B. (2013). Nigeria: Detailed Yam Value Chain Analysis. Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security on West Africa (YIIFSWA) Pp 28.
- Rockmore, M. (2011). Conflict and Agricultural Portfolios: Evidence from Northern Uganda.
- Sambe, N., Avanger, M. Y. & Alkali. T. T. (2013). Communal Violence and Food Security in Africa. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 9, Issue 3 (Mar.–Apr.).
- Sesay, A, Ukeje, C, Aina, O. & Odeiyi, A. (2003). *Ethnic Militias and the future of Democracy in Nigeria*, Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Simmons, E. (2013). *Harvesting Peace: Food Security, Conflict, and Cooperation* (Environmental Change & Security Program Report, Vol. 14, Issue 3). Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Voors, M. J., Nillesen, E. E., Verwimp, P., Bulte, E. H., Lensink, R. & Soest, D. P. (2012). Violent Conflict and Behavior: A Field Experiment in Burundi. *American Economic Review*, 102(2), 941-964.
- Yamano, T. & Deininger, K. (2005). Land Conflicts in Kenya: Causes, Impacts, and Resolutions. *FASID Discussion Paper*.