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THE TREND IN CORRUPTION, CRUDE OIL THEFT, AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
Over the past decade, Nigeria has faced a complex set of challenges, with corruption, crude oil theft, and national security issues being at the forefront. These problems have created a vicious cycle, where each issue exacerbates the other, leading to significant economic, political, and social repercussions. This study employs a longitudinal research design to investigate the relationship between national security, crude oil theft, and political corruption in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023. Nigeria, a leading global oil producer, has long grappled with security challenges, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where crude oil theft, violent events, and corruption have been pervasive. Using secondary data sourced from repositories, the study examines trends in crude oil theft, violent fatalities, and political corruption. Data were cleaned and analysed using R. The analysis reveals fluctuating trends in crude oil theft and corruption over the decade, with periods of peak activity aligning with political and security instability. The highest levels of crude oil theft were recorded in 2013 and 2023, while the political corruption index saw a significant decline from 2015 onwards, suggesting the partial success of anti-corruption measures. The findings highlight a complex interplay between corruption and oil theft, with spikes in violence and fatalities corresponding to key years of political unrest. The study underscores the importance of targeted interventions to address the cyclical nature of corruption, theft, and insecurity in Nigeria's oil sector.

Keywords National security, Corruption, Crude oil theft, Nigeria, Violence.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Nigeria has faced a complex set of challenges, with corruption, crude oil theft, and national security issues being at the forefront. These problems have created a vicious cycle, where each issue exacerbates the other, leading to significant economic, political, and social repercussions. Corruption has remained deeply entrenched in various sectors, influencing governance, policy implementation, and resource allocation. Meanwhile, crude oil theft, which directly undermines Nigeria's primary source of revenue, has emerged as a major economic threat, costing the nation billions of dollars annually (Ozogu et al., 2023). This illicit activity has not only depleted vital national resources but also fuelled criminal networks, heightened insecurity, and hindered development.

Nigeria's national security situation has been further aggravated by these issues. Corruption within security agencies has weakened efforts to

combat insurgency, terrorism, and organised crime, while the proceeds of crude oil theft have funded illegal armed groups, intensifying instability in key regions like the Niger Delta (Olujobi et al., 2022). These security challenges have, in turn, discouraged foreign investment and hindered sustainable development efforts. Understanding how corruption and crude oil theft are intertwined with national security is therefore critical to developing effective solutions.

Several studies have studied different aspects of corruption. For instance, Kalinowski (2016) explored the complexities of corruption, particularly its challenges in democracies like South Korea. While corruption remains a global barrier to good governance, the study emphasizes the need for international comparisons and detailed case studies to fully understand corruption trends. Despite South Korea's legal reforms and active civil society, corruption persists due to its authoritarian past and the dominance of large conglomerates (chaebols). Gupta et al. (2018)) analyse Nepal's corruption trends, noting regional disparities and the influence of socio-demographic factors, while highlighting the need for targeted anti-corruption strategies. Uberti (2022) demonstrates that corruption negatively impacts economic growth, especially in democracies where decentralized corruption is more harmful than in autocracies. The study advocates for anti-corruption efforts in young democracies, emphasising the uniformly detrimental effects of corruption. Lawal (2021) similarly examines corruption's negative impact on political stability and economic growth in Nigeria, advocating for institutional reforms to enhance governance. Dalton and Esarey (2022) critique the inconsistencies in corruption indicators, introducing a new measure to improve reliability.

Romsom (2022) offers an in-depth exploration of global oil theft and fraud, emphasizing the severe and far-reaching impacts of these crimes. The study estimates that oil theft is a global issue valued at US$133 billion annually, representing 5-7% of the global crude oil and petroleum fuels market. While the financial losses are significant, the study reveals that the consequences of oil theft extend beyond economic damage. The research highlights a stark reduction in government tax revenues in 30 developing countries affected by oil theft, indicating a significant loss in potential funds for public services and infrastructure. Oil theft is often underestimated compared to other major crimes like human trafficking, drug trade, and terrorism.

However, Romsom (2022) argues that it should not be trivialized, as it often develops into organized crime, intertwining with other criminal activities if not properly addressed. The study notes that current efforts to combat oil theft are hindered by a lack of data on the volume of stolen oil, methods of transportation, and illicit transactions. The blending of legal operations with illegal activities further complicates efforts to combat this crime. Romsom (2022) calls for targeted action against transnational crime syndicates, emphasising the need for better data collection, disruption of organized crime, and stronger international cooperation to effectively address oil theft.

Gillies (2020) investigates corruption during Africa's oil boom from 2005 to 2014, highlighting the strategies employed by public and private actors to capture resource rents. Drawing from court cases and investigative reports, Gillies examines 60 controversies across 17 African countries, showing how rising oil prices incentivized corrupt practices, especially in ‘rentier states’ where political power is closely tied to resource wealth. The study reveals that both government officials and private companies

exploited oil sector deals, enriching inner circles and securing political power. Additionally, a wider array of private sector actors, including fixers and offshore companies, became involved in corruption cases, reflecting the increasingly complex nature of the oil industry. Gillies (2020) provides valuable insights into evolving corruption trends and recommends that future anti-corruption efforts focus on these emerging actors and methods to effectively address corruption in the oil sector.

Wilcox et al. (2022) examine the impact of crude oil pipeline vandalism on human security in Rivers State, focusing on the Port Harcourt Refining Company Limited. Using triangulation methods, the study found a strong link between pipeline vandalism and human security issues such as revenue loss, price hikes, and power failures. Factors like government corruption, low productivity, and weak administrative structures contribute to this cycle, leading to aggressive actions such as vandalism. The study recommends enhanced collaboration between oil companies and security agencies, including the recruitment of local security personnel to monitor pipelines. Additionally, the installation of deeper underground pipelines with camera chips is suggested to reduce vandalism. Wilcox et al. (2022) also advocate for empowering local communities to manage oil derivation funds, which could reduce poverty and foster a sense of ownership over regional resources.

Ezirim (2018) delves into the effects of oil discovery in Nigeria, beginning in 1956, and its subsequent challenges in managing oil rents and corporate security. The study highlights how the advent of democracy in 1999 and substantial oil revenues created a rentier approach that excluded much of the population, leading to public frustration and national security threats. Using frustration-aggression theory, the study links the exclusion of citizens from oil wealth to illegal activities such as oil bunkering and pipeline vandalization. Ezirim (2018) calls for reforms in the governance of oil resources to ensure equitable distribution and reduce security threats.

Lawal and Roland (2019) analysed oil spills in the Niger Delta from 2006 to 2016, using trend analysis and spatial statistics. They identify 6,487 oil spills, with significant spatial clustering in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States, and a growing frequency of incidents over time. The study underscores the need for enhanced monitoring and risk management in hot spot areas to mitigate environmental and socio-economic impacts. Wekpe et al. (2024) focus on forecasting future oil spill incidents in the Niger Delta using Space-Time Pattern Mining (STPM) tools. Their analysis identifies significant hotspots in Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta States, and demonstrates the effectiveness of predictive models in guiding resource deployment for spill management. The study concludes that predictive modelling can improve response strategies and reduce the environmental damage caused by oil spills.

Ozogu et al. (2023) conducted an in-depth investigation into the illegal bunkering of crude oil in the Niger Delta, a practice that involves the theft of crude oil and its derivatives through various unauthorized means without the consent of the Federal Government. One of the most alarming findings of the study was the discovery that Nigeria loses an estimated ₦2.184 trillion annually due to illegal bunkering activities. This substantial loss of revenue is compounded by the socio-economic consequences faced by the affected communities. The study noted an increase in poverty levels, a surge in criminal activities involving the acquisition of weapons, and a disturbing rise in school dropouts, particularly among students and pupils in secondary and primary schools. These issues underscore the far-reaching implications of

illegal bunkering beyond just environmental degradation.

In response to these findings, Ozogu et al. (2023) proposed several potential solutions to address the problem of illegal bunkering. They emphasized the need for collaborative efforts between individuals, government authorities, and the petroleum companies operating in Nigeria to control and ultimately eradicate this illegal activity. The study calls for a concerted effort to stop the theft of crude oil, recognizing it as not only an economic crime but a significant social and environmental threat as well.

The literature on national and human security emphasises the need for a broader understanding of security that goes beyond traditional military concerns. Chandra and Bhonsle (2015) argue for a holistic approach to national security, suggesting that it should encompass not only military power but also factors like leadership, economic stability, and environmental health. They propose the creation of a national security index that would measure a country's overall stability by integrating these various dimensions, highlighting the interconnectedness of these factors in maintaining a secure nation.

In a similar vein, Nnam et al. (2020) explore the impact of Boko Haram on human security in Nigeria, particularly how the group's activities have led to widespread panic and disruption of key sectors such as education and food security. Their analysis of secondary data reveals the severe implications of Boko Haram's insurgency on national cohesion. They recommend enhancing the trust between security forces and local communities as a crucial step in addressing this security threat and restoring stability in affected areas.

Continuing the focus on Nigeria, Amao (2023) examines the ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, despite official claims of the group's defeat. He attributes Nigeria's difficulties in eradicating Boko Haram to the influence of ISAWP (Islamic State West Africa Province) and the limitations of the Nigerian military. Amao calls for more decisive actions and strategies to effectively counter this persistent threat and ensure long-term peace in the region. Afolabi et al. (2022) shift the focus to Nigeria's internal security challenges, such as the conflict between farmers and herders. They argue that resolving such conflicts requires good governance, better resources for security agencies, and greater societal collaboration. Addressing these internal threats is vital for ensuring long-term stability and peace, as these conflicts undermine national security and social cohesion. Aleyomi and Nwagwu (2023) add to the discussion by highlighting the systemic failures in Nigeria's security landscape. They propose a sustainable security model that integrates human and national security, stressing the importance of rebuilding trust between the government and its citizens. This trust is seen as key to improving intelligence gathering and the effectiveness of security operations, which are crucial in addressing both traditional and non-traditional security threats.

Studies on corruption, oil theft, and national security provide valuable insights into global and regional trends, particularly in developing nations. However, there are significant gaps in existing research. Many studies focus on either corruption or oil theft in isolation, but few provide a comprehensive, integrated analysis of how these two phenomena interact to affect national security. For instance, while Kalinowski (2016) examines the complexities of corruption in South Korea and Gupta et al. (2018) explores regional disparities in Nepal's corruption trends, these studies do not address the interconnectedness between corruption and illicit activities like oil theft, especially in resource-rich nations like Nigeria. Additionally, Uberti (2022) and Lawal (2021)

discuss corruption's negative impact on political stability and economic growth, yet they do not specifically examine how corruption facilitates organized crimes like oil theft, which further undermines national security. Similarly, while Gillies (2020) highlights corruption during Africa's oil boom and its ties to resource wealth, the study does not delve deeply into the broader security implications of oil-related corruption and theft.

The gap also extends to data collection and analytical methods. Romsom (2022) emphasises the need for better data on oil theft, particularly in terms of volume, transportation methods, and illicit transactions. This suggests that current efforts to address these issues are hampered by insufficient data, making it difficult to develop effective solutions. Furthermore, while predictive models for oil spills (Wekpe et al., 2024) show promise in managing environmental impacts, similar tools have not been applied to forecasting or preventing corruption-related oil theft. This study aims to provide a data-driven analysis of these interrelated trends in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023. Using quantitative, the research will examine how corruption has evolved, the scale and impact of crude oil theft, and the state of national security over the past decade. By examining these trends, the study will also shed light on past and current challenges but also to pave the way for more effective governance and security frameworks in the future.

DATA AND METHODS

This study employed a longitudinal research design, which is a method of study where data is collected from the same subjects repeatedly over an extended period (Mohajan, 2020). This approach is particularly useful for observing changes, trends, and developments within a particular phenomenon, population, or environment over time. The study area for this study is Nigeria, a West African nation that is one of the largest oil producers in the world and a significant player in the global energy market (Adedayo et al., 2021). Nigeria's oil industry, concentrated in the Niger Delta region which is comprised of nine states—Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers—and rich in crude oil reserves and has been the hub of the nation's oil exploration and production activities since the 1950s (Edo et al., 2024).

Nigeria is a federal republic comprising 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory, with Abuja as its capital. The executive branch is led by the President, who serves as both the head of state and head of the federal government (Obiadi & Onochie, 2018). Nigeria's economy is the largest in Africa, ranking 31st globally by nominal GDP and 30th by purchasing power parity (PPP) (Isibor et al., 2022). In 2022, its GDP (PPP) per capita was $9,148, which is lower than that of South Africa, Egypt, or Morocco, but slightly higher than Ghana and Ivory Coast (Ojoare, 2023). Nigeria is a key player in Africa, particularly in energy, financial markets, pharmaceuticals, and entertainment. Beyond oil, remittances from Nigerians abroad are the second-largest source of foreign exchange earnings (Ayuba, 2023).

Nigeria's financial services sector is highly developed, featuring a mix of local and international banks, asset management companies, brokerage firms, insurance companies, private equity funds, and investment banks (Oshikoya & Durosinmi-Etti, 2019). The country has a lower- middle-income economy with abundant natural resources, including coal, bauxite, tantalite, gold, tin, iron ore, limestone, niobium, lead, and zinc. Despite these vast resources, Nigeria's mining industry remains underdeveloped (Ayuk et al., 2020).

Nigeria is the world's 15th largest oil producer, the 6th largest exporter, and holds the 9th largest

proven oil reserves (Adedara & Adetifa, 2022). Oil is a major driver of the Nigerian economy, contributing about 80% of government revenue. Nigeria also has significant natural gas reserves, which are seen as key to unlocking economic growth along the Niger River. However, the country loses an estimated $2.5 billion annually to gas flaring and over 120,000 barrels of oil per day to crude theft in the Niger Delta, leading to conflict and production disruptions. The Niger Delta Basin, in the south-south region, is Nigeria's most productive oil area, containing 78 of the country's 159 oil fields (Olade, 2021). Despite these resources, petroleum was Nigeria's main import until 2021, accounting for 24% of imports. However, challenges like oil theft have prompted international oil companies to consider divesting their Nigerian assets.

DATA

Secondary data used for this study was sourced from data repositories. The nature of the data for this study encompassed several quantitative metrics related to national security, crude oil theft and corruption. Specifically, the data will include crude oil theft, violent events and fatalities, oil spill statistics, and political corruption index. National security data was obtained from databases such as the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). For oil spill data, the study relied on information from the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) while the data on corruption was a political corruption index sourced from the World Bank database.

METHODS

Data on violent events and fatalities, political corruption index, and crude oil theft was collated, sorted and cleaned using R to ensure its alignment with the aim of this study. Moreso, descriptive data analysis was utilised in visualising trends in corruption, crude oil theft and national security over the study period. Results were visualised using a line graph generated from Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 showcases the trend in the political corruption index in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023. Results show that from 2013 to 2015, the political corruption index was at its peak (0.949 to 0.947). Afterwards, there was a noticeable decline in the political corruption index in 2016 with a recorded index of 0.928 which continued in 2017 and 2018 with 0.91 and 0.909 respectively. However, there was a gradual increase in the index from 2019 (0.925) to 2023 (0.928). Overall, there has been a decreasing trend in corruption (measured as political corruption index) in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023.

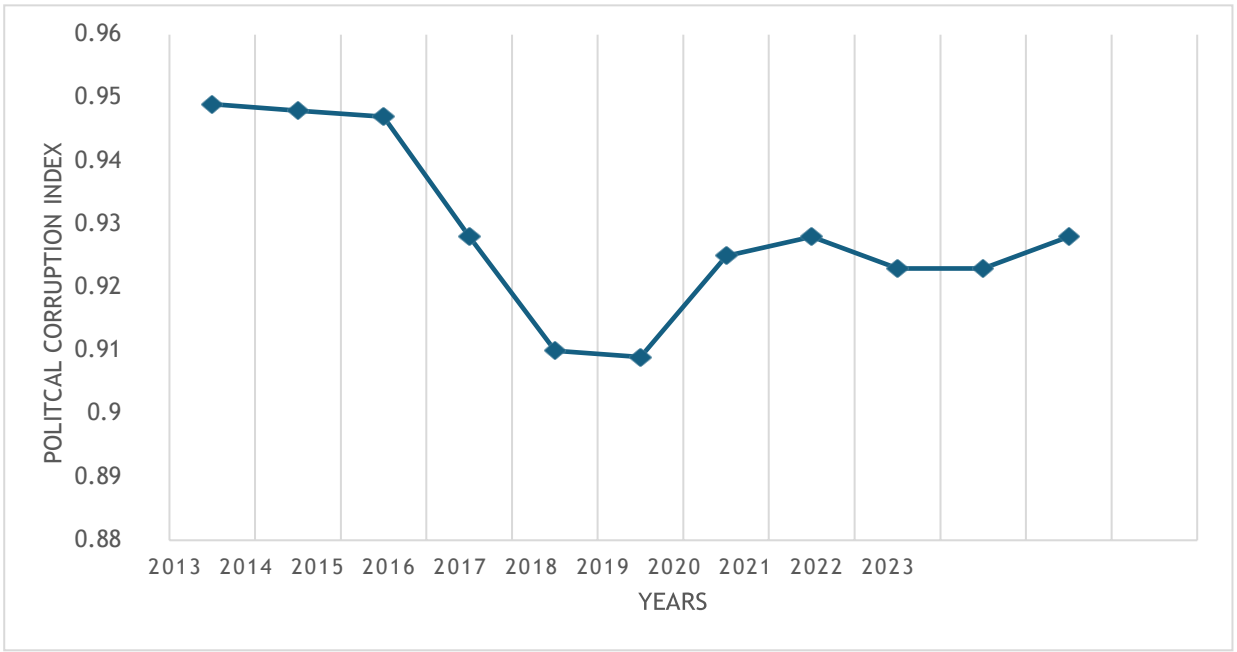

Figure 1. Trend in political corruption index in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023

Authors' Analysis 2024

Figure 2. shows the trend in crude oil theft in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023 revealing significant fluctuations over the decade, reflecting a dynamic situation with varying levels of illicit activity. In 2013, the number of reported crude oil theft events was relatively high at 1,574. The following year, 2014, saw a slight increase to 1,635 events, indicating a persistently high level of theft. A notable decrease occurred in 2015, with events dropping to 1,019. This reduction might be attributed to enhanced government interventions or changes in the dynamics of the illicit oil market. However, the level remained significantly high compared to the subsequent years.

In 2016, crude oil theft declined further to 762 events, marking a significant drop. This decrease could be linked to intensified security measures, military operations, or policy changes aimed at reducing theft. The downward trend continued into 2017, with theft events falling to 669. In 2018, there was a slight rise to 800 events. This uptick could reflect a resurgence in theft activities.

The trend fluctuated again in 2019 with an increase to 926 events while 2020 saw a significant drop to 605 events. This decrease could be associated with disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which might have affected both the operations of theft networks and enforcement actions. Crude oil theft increased in 2021 to 778 events, possibly as the impact of the pandemic began to wane and activities resumed or intensified. The year 2022 marked a substantial rise to 1,209 events, indicating a resurgence in theft activities. However, in 2023, the number of

theft events peaked at 1,550, the highest recorded over the decade.

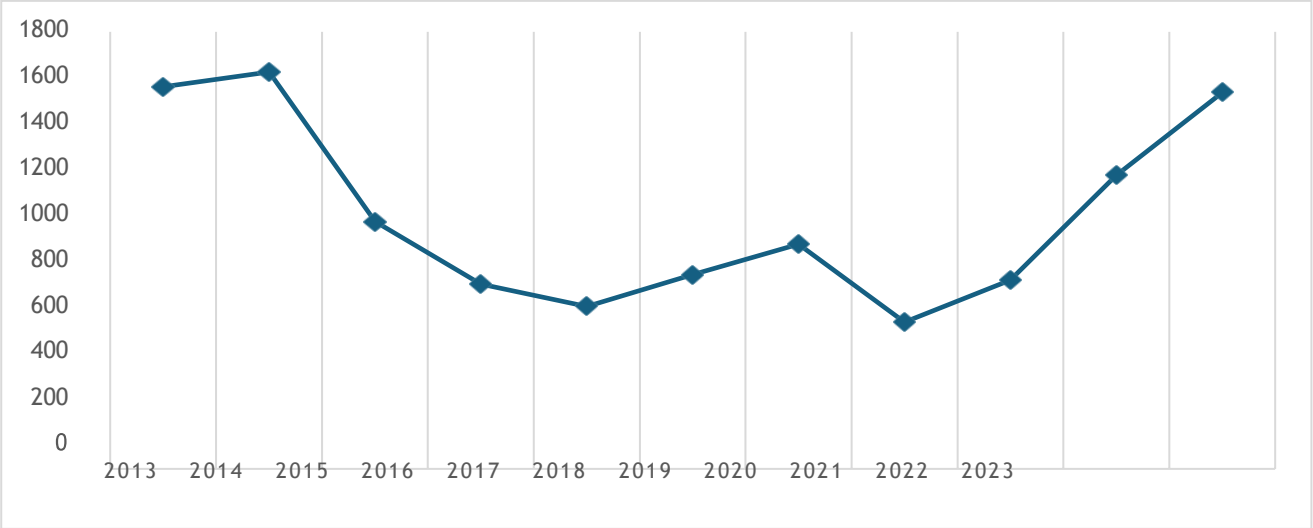

Figure 2. Yearly trend in crude oil theft in Nigeria

Authors' Analysis 2024

Figure 3 The results show significant fluctuations in violent events and fatalities in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023, reflecting periods of instability and change. Initially, from 2013 to 2016, the number of violent events remained relatively stable, with a noticeable dip in 2016, suggesting a period of reduced conflict or improved security measures. However, from 2017 onwards, the number of events began increasing again, peaking at 866 in 2019. This rise could indicate a resurgence in conflict, political unrest, or an intensification of security challenges.

The sharp increase in 2020, with 1,503 events, coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, likely exacerbating existing tensions. The upward trend continued through 2021 and peaked in 2022 with 2,234 events, possibly reflecting worsening security conditions or a surge in criminal activities such as banditry and insurgency. Although there was a slight decline in 2023, the level of violence remained significantly higher than in earlier years.

Fatalities followed a similar pattern, with a sharp increase from 2,126 in 2013 to 7,006 in 2014, before slightly declining to 6,995 in 2015. This spike in fatalities suggests that the violent events during these years were particularly lethal, with 2014 standing out as an exceptionally deadly year, likely due to the peak of the Boko Haram insurgency. Afterwards, fatalities dropped significantly in 2016 to 2,212, followed by a gradual rise through 2019. The drop in 2016 could reflect a period of relative calm or successful military interventions. However, fatalities rose again in 2020 and peaked in 2021 at 4,117, driven by heightened instability, conflicts between herders and farmers, and the activities of criminal groups. In 2022, the number of fatalities remained high at 3,990 but slightly lower than in the previous year, with a further decline in 2023 to 2,965. This reduction may suggest partial

improvements in security or a decrease in the lethality of violent events compared to earlier years.

The extremely high fatalities in 2014 and 2015, compared to the number of events, indicate that violent incidents were particularly deadly during this period. This aligns with the Boko Haram insurgency, which was marked by mass casualties. Additionally, the increase in both events and fatalities during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that the pandemic may have exacerbated existing tensions, possibly due to economic hardship, governance challenges, and disrupted security operations. The decline in both events and fatalities in 2023 points to potential improvements in security or the success of military and governmental interventions, though the overall situation remains unstable. The data show cyclical patterns of violence, with notable spikes in 2014, 2021, and 2022. While the number of events and fatalities fluctuates, there is no sustained long-term reduction, underscoring the persistent security challenges in Nigeria over the past decade.

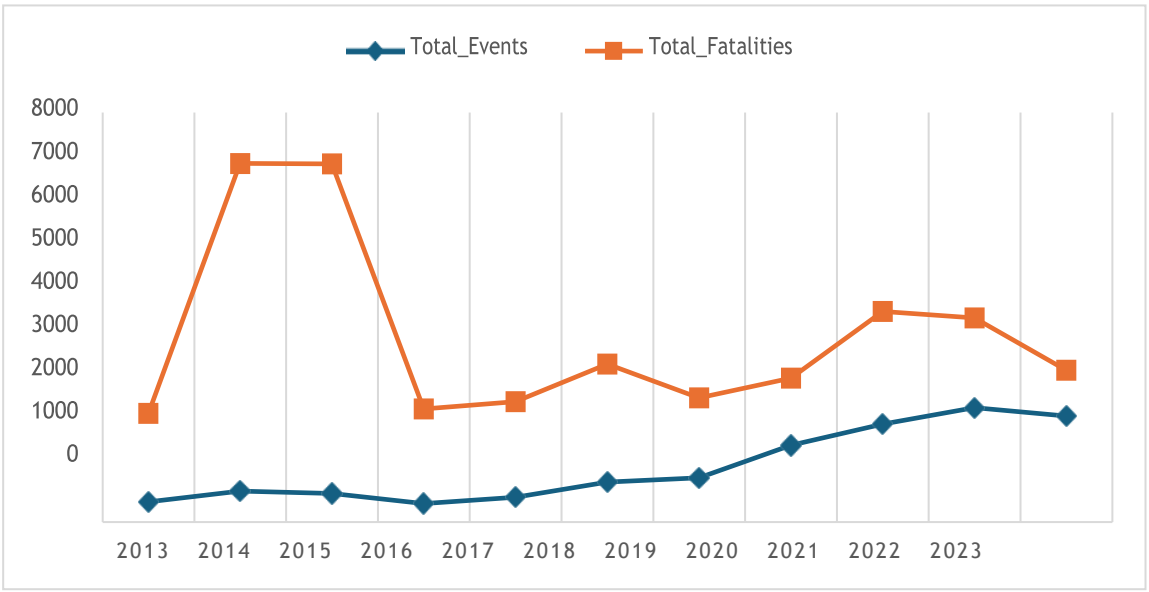

Figure 3. Trend in Violent events and fatalities from 2013 to 2023

Authors' Analysis 2024

The findings on the political corruption index in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023 reveal a complex relationship between corruption trends and national security issues, particularly to crude oil theft. From 2013 to 2015, when corruption was at its peak, crude oil theft was likely exacerbated by the pervasive corruption of that period. High levels of corruption often result in weakened law enforcement, inadequate security measures, and collusion between officials and criminal groups, facilitating illicit activities such as oil theft. This suggests that the peak period might have been marked by increased theft due to the lack of effective oversight and security.

Following this peak, there was a noticeable decline in the corruption index from 2016 to 2018, which could indicate that some anti-corruption measures

or reforms were implemented. This period of relative improvement might have been associated with efforts to strengthen security and regulatory frameworks, potentially leading to a temporary reduction in crude oil theft. However, the effectiveness of these measures in curbing theft would require further analysis to understand their impact fully.

Despite this decline, the corruption index began to rise again from 2019 to 2023, suggesting a resurgence of corrupt practices. This recent increase could have significant repercussions for national security as it may contribute to the erosion of institutional integrity and effectiveness. As corruption rises, it can facilitate the continuation of oil theft by undermining anti-theft measures, enabling access to restricted areas, and falsifying records. These activities not only threaten the security of the oil sector but also contribute to broader national security challenges.

The resurgence of corruption poses serious threats to national security by contributing to instability and funding for illegal activities, including organized crime and militant groups. The economic implications are equally severe, as crude oil theft results in substantial financial losses for Nigeria. The economic instability caused by both theft and high corruption levels can reduce investments, hinder economic growth, and exacerbate poverty, creating conditions that further strain national security through social unrest.

Addressing these issues requires robust governance reforms and effective anti-corruption strategies. Improving transparency, strengthening institutions, and enhancing accountability mechanisms are crucial for combating both corruption and crude oil theft. Investments in security infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and collaboration between government agencies and civil society are essential to tackle these intertwined challenges. Effective governance is not only about improving oversight but also about ensuring the stability and security of the nation.

The observed trends in political corruption align with the broader literature on the impacts of corruption. Studies by Kalinowski (2016) and Gupta et al. (2018) highlight the evolving nature of corruption and its complex effects on governance and security, which supports the findings of fluctuating corruption levels in Nigeria. Similarly, Uberti's (2022) research on corruption's negative impact on economic growth underscores the importance of addressing corruption to ensure national security. The interplay between corruption, economic instability, and security threats highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to address both governance and security challenges effectively.

The analysis of crude oil theft trends in Nigeria from 2013 to 2023 reveals a complex and evolving issue that has undergone significant fluctuations over the past decade. The year 2013 marked a high point in theft rates, highlighting the persistent nature of the problem. This period of elevated theft was followed by an increase in incidents in 2014, suggesting that the underlying issues driving oil theft were not being effectively addressed. However, 2015 saw a notable decrease in theft rates. This decline may have been influenced by targeted government interventions or shifts in the illegal market dynamics, which could have temporarily disrupted theft networks or reduced their effectiveness.

The trend of decreased theft continued into 2016 and 2017, potentially reflecting the impact of intensified security measures or changes in policy aimed at combating oil theft. The government's increased efforts to secure oil infrastructure and enforce regulations may have played a role in reducing theft incidents during these years. Nevertheless, the slight increase in theft rates in

2018 indicates that the reduction was not entirely sustainable. This resurgence could be attributed to a weakening of enforcement efforts, the adaptation of new strategies by thieves, or both. The adaptability of theft networks to evolving security measures suggests that while some progress was made, the issue remains fluid and challenging to control.

The subsequent years show considerable variability in theft rates, illustrating the dynamic nature of the problem. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 introduced new variables into the equation, significantly disrupting both the operations of theft networks and the effectiveness of enforcement measures. The pandemic's impact led to a significant drop in theft incidents, possibly due to reduced economic activities and mobility restrictions that hindered the operations of theft networks. However, as the pandemic's influence waned and restrictions were lifted, theft rates began to rise again in 2021 and reached a dramatic peak in 2023. This peak underscores the ongoing and evolving challenges in addressing crude oil theft, highlighting that the problem persists despite previous efforts and interventions.

These findings align with Romsom's (2022) analysis, which emphasizes the severe global impact of oil theft, including significant financial losses and disruptions in government revenues. Romsom (2022) argues that oil theft is a sophisticated and evolving issue that intersects with organized crime, exacerbating broader criminal activities. This perspective resonates with the observed fluctuating trends in Nigeria, suggesting that oil theft is not only a persistent issue but also one that adapts to changing circumstances and enforcement efforts.

Furthermore, Gillies (2020) provides a broader context by examining the corruption associated with oil booms, particularly in Africa. Gillies highlights how periods of high oil prices are often accompanied by increased corruption, as various actors exploit the lucrative opportunities presented by the oil sector. This pattern of corruption during oil booms mirrors the situation in Nigeria, where the theft of crude oil is intricately linked to corrupt practices and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The corruption described by Gillies reflects the complex landscape of crude oil theft in Nigeria, where economic incentives and weak governance contribute to the persistence of the problem.

The analysis of detrended yearly event counts and fatalities from 2013 to 2023 reveals significant fluctuations in violence and fatalities, offering a clearer picture by removing overall trends and seasonal effects. In 2013, both event counts and fatalities were within expected levels, suggesting a period of relative stability. However, 2014 marked a dramatic increase in both metrics, indicating an exceptionally high level of violence. This spike aligns with other studies, which identified 2014 as a peak period of violence in Nigeria, largely driven by intensified Boko Haram activities and associated insurgent actions (Nnam et al., 2020).

Despite a slight decrease in event counts in 2015, fatalities remained high, reflecting persistent violence beyond expected levels. This observation is consistent with Amao (2023), who noted that violence continued to be significant due to unresolved insurgency issues and military inadequacies, even though the number of incidents varied. In 2016, a significant drop in both events counts and fatalities suggests a period of reduced violence. This reduction aligns with Afolabi et al. (2022), who highlighted brief periods of calm amidst ongoing security challenges, demonstrating that improvements can occur but may not be sustained.

The years 2017 and 2018 saw moderate increases in event counts and fatalities, indicating a resurgence in violence, though not reaching the

extremes observed in 2014 and 2015. This trend corresponds with the findings of Aleyomi and Nwagwu (2023), who emphasized the need for a more strategic and inclusive approach to security management. The peak in both metrics in 2021 reflects an exceptionally high level of violence, consistent with reports of worsening security conditions and increasing fatalities. This aligns with Oluyemi (2020) and Abiodun et al. (2020), who highlighted the severe impact of militarized responses and insufficient security reforms.

Recent years, specifically 2022 and 2023, show slight decreases in both event counts and fatalities, suggesting potential stabilization or improvement in security conditions. However, the levels remain elevated compared to earlier years in the decade. This trend underscores the ongoing volatility and aligns with Nnam et al. (2020), who stressed the importance of sustained policy efforts and community engagement for long-term security improvements.

Overall, the detrended analysis highlights the complex dynamics of violence and fatalities in Nigeria, reflecting periods of severe instability and relative calm. These findings emphasise the need for targeted interventions during peak periods of violence and are consistent with broader literature that calls for comprehensive and strategic security reforms. Addressing corruption, improving military readiness, and fostering community trust are crucial for navigating Nigeria's ongoing security challenges.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of trends in political corruption, crude oil theft, and national security in Nigeria over the past decade underscores the intricate and interrelated nature of these issues. The fluctuating patterns of corruption and oil theft reveal a significant impact on national security, with periods of heightened corruption correlating with increased theft and security challenges. The rise in corruption from 2019 to 2023 has contributed to the erosion of institutional integrity, undermining anti-theft measures and exacerbating broader national security threats. Crude oil theft, a persistent and evolving problem, has shown variable trends, with notable peaks and declines influenced by shifting enforcement measures, economic conditions, and external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings suggest that while some progress has been made in addressing these issues through anti-corruption reforms and security measures, the persistence and adaptability of both corruption and oil theft continue to pose significant challenges. The complex relationship between corruption and theft indicates that addressing these problems requires more than temporary solutions. Effective governance reforms, enhanced transparency, and robust anti- corruption strategies are essential to curbing both corruption and crude oil theft. Additionally, comprehensive security measures and socio-economic interventions are crucial for stabilizing national security and mitigating the broader impacts on economic growth and social stability.

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