



Implications of Unchecked Sea Piracy and Porous Nigerian Territorial Waters

Sule Abiodun

Niomr Research, Lagos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Nigeria's territorial waters have remained porous over the years with crimes taking place unhindered and posing a threat to economic development and national security. Border porosity is a dominant-negative factor in Nigeria as there are over 2000 illegal entry points into the country that are unmanned from Niger, Cameroon, Republic of Benin and Chad. The coast of West Africa is challenged by piracy and maritime crime, which threatens development, security and peace in the region. This study investigated unchecked sea piracy and porous Nigerian territorial waters. It is a descriptive survey involving 400 participants selected using non-probability sampling technique. Questionnaire was adopted for data collections and the collected data was analysed descriptively using percentages and frequencies. The results identify the following factors responsible for sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters: Underdevelopment and poverty; Weak law enforcement and justice systems; Neglect of maritime security forces in terms of funding and personnel strength; Incapacity of Nigerian Navy to provide an effective and credible deterrent for such acts; Economic dislocation; and Unregulated oil market. The second result revealed that porous waterways enables criminals escape easily from security operatives among other findings. Based on the result of this study conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

Keywords: unchecked sea piracy, porous Nigerian territorial waters

Introduction

Nigeria's territorial waters have remained porous over the years with crimes taking place unhindered and posing a threat to economic development and national security. Border porosity is a dominant-negative factor in Nigeria as there are over 2000 illegal entry points into the country that are unmanned from Niger, Cameroon, Republic of Benin and Chad (Vanguard, 2020). The coast of West Africa is challenged by piracy and maritime crime, which threatens development, security and peace in the region. The Nigerian waterways in recent time have been tagged in the category of being among the most porous in the world. Maritime criminality in Nigeria, which includes kidnap and piracy, has increased tremendously in recent years, and given the limited efforts of the law enforcement agencies, aided by the porous waterways, this challenge has persistently wreaked havoc on the economy (Lakin, 2018). The impact of unchecked piracy is felt on the international scene which has given rise to global efforts aimed at curbing this problem (Lakin, 2018).

Described as one of the major threat by international security bodies, maritime piracy challenges international peace as well as threaten national security. The operations of pirates in various parts of the world negatively affect countries' economies, threaten every form of maritime business and frustrate efforts made to protect citizens' lives (Udensi, Etu & Chieke, 2014). Nigeria has been ranked top among the list of sea robbery hotspots, however piracy is not a new incident in Nigeria, as the country's coast has consistently been attacked by sea pirates since the 70s (International Maritime Bureau, IMB, 2014).

Sea piracy has severe implications which adversely affect commercial activities, and reduces fleet of Nigerian fishing trawlers leading to a huge loss of revenue to the affected fishermen and traders. Both the Federal and the State Governments have instituted policies to tackle the menace of sea robbery in the region, and measures put in place are still ongoing (Toakodi, Otodo & Adioni-Arogo, 2019), however, the problem keeps persisting and causing huge damage to the country.

Statement of problem

Piracy is a serious problem which requires the efforts of the various tiers of government in eradicating it (Lakin, 2018). Nigeria being labelled as one of the countries on piracy hotlist does not look good for the country, which necessitates conducting a study to identify the causes of maritime piracy (Udensi, Etu & Chieke, 2014). Container ships are constantly being assaulted on Nigerian waterways, an indication that despite various efforts by government to tackle this menace, Nigerian waterways and coast are still porous. Sea piracy prevents ships conveying people and goods from moving freely due to economic consequences associated with it thereby causing a reduction in commercial traffic by boat operators as they become fearful of being attacked by pirates on water and voyagers who travel by water particularly those in the oil and gas sector who are targets to pirate attacks

(Adongoi et al., 2020). Internationally, it gives a bad image to the country and causes hindrances in the country's economy. It is against this backdrop, that this study was conducted to proffer an effective strategy that will assist in controlling the prevalent maritime insecurity in the country.

Research objectives

The study specifically;

- 1) Identified the factors influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters
- 2) Examine the extent to which the porous waterways influence sea piracy.
- 3) Assess the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy.

Research questions

- 1) What are the factors influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters?
- 2) To what extent do the porous waterways influence sea piracy?
- 3) What is the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy?

Literature review

Sea piracy refers to the criminal activities and unlawful seizure of properties, attack and capture of seafarers and vessels, overthrow of ships, theft and diversion of vessels for personal, political or economic intentions and which the aftermaths have adverse consequences on the passengers either within a country's shore or in international waters (Hassan & Hassan, 2017). Piracy is encouraged by factors such as lack of economic opportunities, illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping by foreign vessels, lawlessness and governance issues, unemployment and lack of jobs, opportunistic criminal behaviour (Rohwerder, 2016). Sometimes, these crimes are committed for vengeful reasons (Bamburly, 2016).

Nigeria is unquestionably a country that is rich in its population, economic and agricultural advantages, but illegal activities like piracy have been a major disadvantage (Nwalozie, 2020). These criminal actions are carried out majorly by youths from regions that are economically neglected and politically marginalized (Nwachukwu et al., 2020), using weapons that are highly sophisticated to empower them to take-over vessels and redirect them to their desired location (Nwalozie, 2020). The territorial waters in Nigeria envelopes every area of the open sea within twelve nautical miles of the coastal state baseline within which sovereignty is fully exercised over the sea, airspace and land (Hoagland et al., 2019). Nigeria's territorial waters have remained porous over the years with crimes taking place unhindered and posing a threat to economic development and national security. Border porosity is a dominant-negative factor in Nigeria as there are over 2000 illegal entry points into the country that are unmanned from Niger, Cameroon, Republic of Benin and Chad (Vanguard, 2020).

Effects of sea robbery

Sea piracy prevents ships conveying people and goods from moving freely due to economic consequences associated with it thereby causing a reduction in commercial traffic by boat operators as they become fearful of being attacked by pirates on water and voyagers who travel by water particularly those in the oil and gas sector who are targets to pirate attacks (Adongoi et al., 2020), security measures are threatened by these acts of violence, discouraging potential investors and resulting in financial losses to a country (Bamburly, 2016), fishing and other activities are also affected as the fleet of fishing trawlers on the sea are reduced.

The high rate of piracy in the waters between Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea gives the international community a false impression that the country is not secure and is the most unsafe shipping point globally and that there are no efforts on the part of the government to stem these activities by pirates.

Piracy is a world-wide crime which hampers the unrestricted movement of ships conveying people and goods, with its attendant economic ramifications. The culprits are typically armed heavily armed, with sophisticated weapons.

Empirical studies

Nwalozie (2020) explored contemporary piracy in Nigeria, the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea and revealed that most pirate activities happening in Nigeria are mostly found in the Niger Delta region, which is the heart of the country's oil and gas exploration and that some unemployed youths of the state use piracy activities as a fight against resource control which the Federal Government of Nigeria embarked on, putting them at a disadvantage.

In a study by Ezeozue (2019) extant literature was explored on the nature of piracy in Nigeria and the challenges it poses to National Security. It was revealed that increased rate of attacks by sea pirate and illegal activities carried out on Nigerian waters can be linked to underdevelopment and poverty, legal and jurisdictional weakness, underfunded law enforcement, lack of genuine employment and corruption within the security sector.

Jimoh's (2015) investigation on lethal piracy and offshore violence in Nigeria showed that unemployment among Nigeria citizens is unquestionably a drive in their involvement in illegal activities as their sole aim is to make money.

Udensi et al (2014) in a sociological discourse on national security and maritime piracy showed the severity and pattern of piracy in Nigeria waterways, and revealed that while corruption is the chief cause of piracy and insecurity in Nigeria, election misconducts directly or indirectly explicitly equips pirates with arms.

Theoretical Framework

The Failed State Theory, coined in 1993 by Helman & Ratner and later on expanded in 1995 by Zartman, postulates that a state is a failure or considered as one when they fail in delivering their important key responsibilities to the general public and not just as one plagued by war. This study is based on this theory because Nigeria, as reported by IMB in 2018 is described as the country with the highest rate of maritime piracy and sea robberies as a result of its collapsing state that is not delivering its responsibilities. Sea piracy in Nigerian territorial waters can be seen from the viewpoint of a failed state because the government allows a downfall in its infrastructure. The policymakers allow the welfare of its citizens are threatened by many socioeconomic problems which collapses the system and enables criminals to have easy access, soaring its crime rate (Ibrahim, 2019).

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research survey method in examining unchecked sea piracy and porous Nigerian territorial waters. The study population comprised of maritime business operators in the Lagos state. Adopting purposive sampling technique, a representative sample was selected for this study. The Sample size consisted of 400 respondents made up of maritime business operators in the Apapa wharf located in Lagos state. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was structured using a four point likert scale format, which was administered to the respondents with the enlistment of research assistants. The data collected was subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency and percentages.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents Occupation as classified by Gender

Gender Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Fisherman/woman	120	30.0	14	3.5	134	33.5
Trader	56	14.0	82	20.5	138	34.5
Maritime Union worker	69	17.3	19	4.8	88	22.0
Speedboat operator	37	9.3	5	1.3	42	10.5
Total	282	70.5	120	30	400	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

The respondents comprises male and female among which are fisherman/woman representing 33.5%; Traders constitute 34.5%; maritime union workers made up 22% while the remaining 10% are Speedboat operator.

Table 2: Respondents years in maritime business as classified by Educational qualification

Years in maritime business Education	Below 5 years		5 -10 years		Above 10yrs		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
OND/NCE	50	12.5	33	8.3	10	2.5	93	23.3
B.SC/HND	100	25	62	15.5	57	14.3	219	54.8
MBA/MSC	30	2.5	14	3.5	20	5	64	16.0
Others	7	1.8	12	3.0	5	1.3	24	6.00
Total	187	46.8	121	30.3	92	23.0	400	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

The table above presents the respondents years of working experience and classified by their level of education. According to the result majority of the participant in the study had BSc/HND representing 54%; followed by those with OND/NCE with 23%. Master degree holders constitute 16% of the respondents while the remaining 6% selected 'others' without specifying what 'others' represents. The result also indicated that 46.8% of the respondents had below 5 years working experience; 30.3% had 5 -10 years; and 23% has above years working experience.

RQ1: What are the factors influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters?**Table 3: Respondents opinion on the factors influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters**

STATEMENTS		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage in agreement (%)
Underdevelopment and poverty	F	192	190	8	10	95.5
	%	48.0	47.5	2.0	2.5	
Weak law enforcement and justice systems	F	166	211	9	14	94.3
	%	39.0	52.8	2.3	3.5	
Neglect of maritime security forces in terms of funding and personnel strength	F	199	178	20	3	94.3
	%	49.8	44.5	5.0	0.8	
Incapacity of Nigerian Navy to provide an effective and credible deterrent for such acts.	F	167	201	12	20	92.0
	%	41.8	50.3	3.0	5.0	
Economic dislocation	F	262	111	7	20	93.3
	%	65.5	27.8	1.8	5.0	
Unregulated oil market	F	114	270	12	4	96.0
	%	28.5	67.5	3.0	1.0	

Source: Field study, 2021

The table above presents the some of the factors identified as influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters from the respondents' point of view. According to the study, the following are factors responsible for sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters: Underdevelopment and poverty; Weak law enforcement and justice systems; Neglect of maritime security forces in terms of funding and personnel strength; Incapacity of Nigerian Navy to provide an effective and credible deterrent for such acts; Economic dislocation; and Unregulated oil market. This result supports Ezeozue (2019); Hassan and Hassan (2017); Ibrahim (2019); and Jimoh (2015) respectively.

RQ2: To what extent do the porous waterways influence sea piracy?**Table 4: Respondents opinion on the extent to which the porous waterways influence sea piracy**

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
Porous waterways enables criminals escape easily from security operatives	F	275	101	13	11	94.0
	%	68.8	25.3	3.3	2.88	
The porous waterways enables pirates conceal boats and stolen commodities in the thousands of inlets, rivers, and mangroves	F	162	216	13	9	94.5
	%	40.5	54.0	3.3	2.3	
Porous waterways enable criminal organisations to move stolen and refined products back onto legitimate markets	F	117	267	4	12	96.0
	%	29.3	66.8	1.0	3.0	

Source: Field survey 2021

The table above presents the respondents views on the extent to which the porous waterways influence sea piracy. With above 90% in support of all the items in the Table, the study conclude that: Porous waterways enables criminals escape easily from security operatives; It enables pirates conceal boats

and stolen commodities in the thousands of inlets, rivers, and mangroves; and enable criminal organisations to move stolen and refined products back onto legitimate markets. The result agrees with Ezeozue (2019) and Hassan and Hassan (2017) respectively.

RQ3: What is the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy?

Table 5: Respondents opinion on the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
The price of imported goods becomes spike, further imperilling local economy	F	169	211	17	3	95.0
	%	42.3	52.8	4.3	0.8	
Deterioration in the development and stability in the region	F	266	102	21	11	92.0
	%	66.5	25.5	5.3	2.8	
Decrease in revenue collected from trade	F	192	179	21	8	92.8
	%	48.0	44.8	5.3	2.0	
Threat and death to the lives of sailors	F	114	270	12	4	96.0
	%	28.5	67.5	3.0	1.0	
Prevention of ships conveying people and goods from moving freely	F	199	178	20	3	94.3
	%	49.8	44.5	5.0	0.8	
Discouragement of potential investors resulting in financial losses to the country	F	266	102	21	11	92.0
	%	66.5	25.5	5.3	2.8	

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 5 above contains the respondents' opinions on the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy. With above 90% in a agreement to all the items in the table, the following are the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy: The price of imported goods becomes spike, further imperilling local economy; Deterioration in the development and stability in the region ; Decrease in revenue collected from trade; Threat and death to the lives of sailors; Prevention of ships conveying people and goods from moving freely; and Discouragement of potential investors resulting in financial losses to the country. The result agrees with previous studies such as: Adongoi, Otodo, and Azibasuum (2020); and Nwachukwu, Obasi, Akpuh, and Olaiya (2020).

Conclusions and recommendations

Sea piracy has severe implications which adversely affect commercial activities, and reduces fleet of Nigerian fishing trawlers leading to a huge loss of revenue to the affected fishermen and traders. Both the Federal and the State Governments have instituted policies to tackle the menace of sea robbery in the region, and measures put in place are still ongoing (Toakodi, Otodo & Adioni-Arogo, 2019), however, the problem keeps persisting and causing huge damage to the country. Sea piracy refers to the criminal activities and unlawful seizure of properties, attack and capture of seafarers and vessels, overthrow of ships, theft and diversion of vessels for personal, political or economic intentions and which the aftermaths have adverse consequences on the passengers either within a country's shore or in international waters (Hassan & Hassan, 2017). The result of this identify the following are factors responsible for sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters: Underdevelopment and poverty; Weak law enforcement and justice systems; Neglect of maritime security forces in terms of funding and personnel strength; Incapacity of Nigerian Navy to provide an effective and credible deterrent for such acts; Economic dislocation; and Unregulated oil market. The second result indicated that porous waterways enables criminals escape easily from security operatives; It enables pirates conceal boats and stolen commodities in the thousands of inlets, rivers, and mangroves; and enable criminal organisations to move stolen and refined products back onto legitimate markets. Finally, the result of the study indicated the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy to include: the price of imported goods becomes spike, further imperilling local economy; deterioration in the development and stability in the region; decrease in revenue collected from trade; threat and death to the lives of sailors; prevention of ships conveying people and goods from moving freely; and discouragement of potential investors resulting in financial losses to the country. Based on the result of this study, the study concludes that there is need to check the activities of seafarers to ensure that they abide by the stipulated rules and regulations meant to protect waters and its inhabitant. There should be well equipped armed forces on patrol in the seas to put to check the activities of pirates in the seas.

References

- Adongoi, T., Otodo, I. & Azibasuum A. (2020). The activities of sea robbers and its implication on water transportation: experience from Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: C Sociology & Culture Volume 20*, Issue 8.
- Bamburry, R. (2016). The socioeconomic impacts of robbery at sea on the economic stability of Guyana. United Nations – The Nippon Foundation of Japan Fellowship Programme
https://www.un.org/oceancapacity/sites/www.un.org.oceancapacity/files/randy_bumbury_thesis_final_draft.pdf
- Ezeozue, C. (2019). Piratical Challenges in the Nigeria Ocean Space: Implication for National Security. iv. 57-65.
- Hassan, D. & Hassan, S. (2017). Effectiveness of the current regimes to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: An Evaluation. *African Journal of Legal Studies*. 10(1), 35-65.
- Ibrahim, S. Z. (2019). Strengths and weaknesses of the legal strategies to combat sea piracy in Nigeria. World Maritime University Dissertations. 1134.
https://commons.wmu.se/all_dissertations/1134
- Jimoh, A. (2015). Maritime piracy and lethal violence offshore in Nigeria. *IFRA-Nigeria working papers series, No. 51*. <http://www.ifra-nigeria.org/IMG/pdf/maritime-piracy-lethal-violence-nigeria.pdf>
- Nwachukwu, P. I., Obasi, E. I., Akpuh, D. C. & Olaiya, S. B. (2020). The Impact of Piracy on Economic Prosperity in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) Volume IV*, Issue II.
- Nwalozie, C. J. (2020). Exploring contemporary sea piracy in Nigeria, the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. *J Transp Secur* 13, 159–178.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12198-020-00218-y>
- Rohwerder, B. (2016). Piracy in the Horn of Africa, West Africa and the Strait of Malacca (GSDRC Rapid Literature Review). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Udensi, L. O., Etu, N. O. & Chieke, E. O. (2014). National security and maritime piracy in Nigeria: a sociological discourse. *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 60-71.
- Vanguard (2020, August 15). Source of Boko Haram weapons: Arms come through our porous borders — Ikponmwen. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/08/source-of-boko-haram-weapons-arms-come-through-our-porous-borders-ikponmwen/>
- Hoagland, P., Jacoby, J., Schumacher, M. & Burns, C. (2019). Law of the Sea. Encyclopedia of Ocean Sciences (Third Edition), Academic Press, Pages 526-537, ISBN 9780128130827. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-409548-9.11344-2>
- Lakin, T. (August 27, 2018). Growing piracy in Nigeria. accessed at shipsandports.com.ng/growing-piracy-nigeria/
- Toakodi, A., Otodo, I. & Adioni-Arogo, A. (2019) An Appraisal of Sea Robbery Control in Nigeria's Waterways: Lessons from Niger Delta Region, *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2019, 8, 75-90

Appendix -I**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on “Unchecked sea piracy and porous Nigerian territorial waters”, and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

SECTION A

Gender: Male () Female ()

Education qualification

- a) OND/NCE ()
 b) B.Sc./ HND ()
 c) M. Sc./MBA ()
 d) Others () Specify.....

Occupation

- a) Fisherman/woman ()
 b) Trader ()
 c) Maritime Union worker ()
 d) Speedboat operator ()
 e) Others () Specify.....

Years of Maritime Business Experience

- a) Below 5yrs ()
 b) 5-10yrs ()
 c) Above 10yrs ()

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
RQ1	What are the factors influencing the activities of sea pirates on Nigerian territorial waters?				
1	Underdevelopment and poverty				
2	Weak law enforcement and justice systems				
3	Neglect of maritimsecurity forces in terms of funding and personnel strength				
4	Incapacity of Nigerian Navy to provide an effective andcredible deterrent for such acts.				
5	Economic dislocation				
6	Unregulated oil market				
RQ2	To what extent do the porous waterways influence sea piracy?				
7	Porous waterways enables criminals escape easily from security operatives				
8	The porous waterways enables pirates conceal boats and stolen commodities in the thousands of inlets, rivers, and mangroves				
9	Porous waterways enable criminal organisations to move stolen and refined products back onto legitimate markets				
RQ3	What is the impact of unchecked sea piracy on the Nigerian economy?				
10	The price of imported goods becomes spike, further imperilling local economy				
11	Deterioration in the development and stability in the region				
12	Decrease in revenue collected from trade				
13	Threat and death to the lives of sailors				
14	Prevention of ships conveying people and goods from moving freely				
15	Discouragement of potential investors resulting in financial losses to the country				