An Assessment of the Frustration-Aggression Theory in Peace and Conflict Studies in the Niger Delta Region

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Abstract

The study assessed the frustration - aggression theory in peace and conflict studies in the Niger Delta Region. Two research questions guided the study. The study was anchored on frustration - aggression theory and adopted survey research design. A sample size of 384 was selected from a population of 3,792,500 residents of Bayelsa state using Krejcie and Morgan sample determination table. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were adopted to select respondents. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire which was validated by experts via face and content validity method and used for data gathering. The reliability of the instrument was established at 0.76 using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC). The study found that frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region manifest in multiple, interconnected forms, largely driven by structural inequalities, environmental degradation, and governance failures; and that the Frustration–Aggression Theory is substantially applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region, although its explanatory power is context-dependent rather than absolute. The study concluded that reducing frustrations through addressing structural inequalities is the only viable pathway to eliminating violent aggression in the Niger Delta. The study recommended amongst others that Government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize inclusive socio-economic development, particularly through job creation, skills acquisition programmes, and youth empowerment initiatives, to reduce the structural frustrations that fuel aggression.

Keywords: Frustration, Aggression, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Niger Delta Region.

Introduction

Conflict remains an enduring feature of human societies, particularly in regions characterized by socio-economic inequalities, political marginalization, and resource-based tensions. conflicts often arise from competing interests, unmet needs, and perceived injustices. Within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, various theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain the underlying causes of violence and social unrest. One of the most influential among these is the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which posits that aggression is often the result of blocked goals or unmet expectations (Dollard et al., 1939). The theory suggests that when individuals or groups are prevented from achieving desired objectives (whether economic, social, or political) they are more likely to experience frustration, which may

subsequently manifest as aggression or violent behavior (Berkowitz, 1989). This theoretical lens has been widely applied in analyzing conflicts arising from deprivation, injustice, and perceived marginalization.

In contemporary discourse, the relevance of Frustration–Aggression Theory has extended beyond individual psychology to encompass group dynamics and structural conditions that generate collective grievances. Scholars argue that frustration is not merely a personal emotional response but can be socially constructed and politically mobilized, particularly in contexts where systemic inequalities persist (Gurr, 1970). This perspective aligns with broader conflict theories that emphasize relative deprivation (the perceived gap between expectations and actual socio-economic conditions) as a major driver of unrest and violence. Consequently, the theory provides a useful framework for understanding how socio-economic and political conditions can escalate into organized conflict, especially in developing regions.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria presents a compelling case for examining the applicability of Frustration–Aggression Theory. Despite being rich in natural resources, particularly crude oil, the region has experienced decades of environmental degradation, economic underdevelopment, and political neglect. Oil exploration activities have led to severe ecological damage, including oil spills and gas flaring, which have adversely affected traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming (Esiere, 2026). At the same time, local communities often perceive that the wealth generated from their region disproportionately benefits the central government and multinational corporations, while they remain impoverished and marginalized (Ikelegbe, 2005). This disparity between expectations and reality has created widespread frustration among the populace.

The manifestation of this frustration in the Niger Delta has been evident in various forms of aggression, including protests, militancy, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping, and attacks on oil infrastructure. Militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), have emerged as expressions of collective grievance against perceived injustice and exploitation (Okonta & Douglas, 2003). These developments underscore the relevance of Frustration–Aggression Theory in explaining the link between structural deprivation and violent conflict in the region. However, while the theory provides valuable insights, its explanatory power in complex socio-political contexts like the Niger Delta requires critical assessment.

Furthermore, Peace and Conflict Studies increasingly emphasize the need for context-specific and multidisciplinary approaches in understanding conflict dynamics. While Frustration–Aggression Theory highlights psychological and emotional triggers of violence, it may not fully account for other critical factors such as governance failures, ethnic politics, external economic interests, and institutional weaknesses. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the extent to which the theory adequately explains the nature, causes, and persistence of conflict in the Niger Delta, as well as its implications for peacebuilding and conflict resolution strategies.

This study is thus situated within the broader effort to critically assess theoretical frameworks used in conflict analysis. By examining the applicability of Frustration–Aggression Theory in the Niger Delta context, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theory and empirical

realities. It aims to determine whether the theory sufficiently captures the complexities of conflict in the region or whether it requires integration with other theoretical perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Statement of Problem

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has, for decades, remained a hotspot of persistent conflict characterized by militancy, resource-related disputes, environmental degradation, youth restiveness, and cyclical violence. Despite numerous government interventions, policy frameworks, and peacebuilding initiatives, conflicts in the region continue to reoccur, often in more complex and violent forms. This persistence raises critical concerns about the adequacy of existing theoretical frameworks and strategies used in understanding and addressing the root causes of conflict in the region.

One of the prominent theoretical lenses in peace and conflict studies is the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which posits that aggression is often the result of blocked goals, unmet expectations, and perceived injustices. In the context of the Niger Delta, widespread poverty, unemployment, environmental destruction caused by oil exploration, political marginalization, and inequitable distribution of oil revenues have created deep-seated frustrations among the local population. These frustrations are frequently expressed through aggressive behaviors such as protests, vandalism of oil facilities, kidnapping, and armed insurgency. However, while the theory appears relevant in explaining the link between deprivation and violence, its applicability to the complex socio-political realities of the Niger Delta remains insufficiently explored and empirically validated.

Furthermore, existing studies on conflict in the Niger Delta have largely focused on structural, economic, and political explanations, often overlooking the psychological dimensions of conflict behavior that the Frustration–Aggression Theory emphasizes. This creates a gap in understanding how individual and collective perceptions of injustice translate into violent actions, and whether the theory adequately captures the interplay between frustration, group dynamics, and organized violence in the region. Additionally, the evolving nature of conflict often marked by the involvement of multiple actors, including militant groups, state agencies, multinational corporations, and local communities, raises questions about whether the Frustration–Aggression framework alone is sufficient to explain the complexity of conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta.

Moreover, there is limited context-specific research that critically assesses the strengths and limitations of the Frustration–Aggression Theory within the framework of peace and conflict studies in Nigeria. Without such assessment, there is a risk of over-reliance on a theory that may not fully account for other critical variables such as cultural factors, political manipulation, identity issues, and economic structures that also drive conflict in the region.
Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the lack of a comprehensive and contextually grounded evaluation of the Frustration–Aggression Theory as an explanatory and analytical tool for understanding conflict in the Niger Delta. By assessing the relevance, applicability, and limitations of this theory, the study aims to determine whether it can effectively inform conflict prevention, management, and resolution strategies in the region, or whether it needs to be integrated with other theoretical perspectives to better address the complexities of Niger Delta conflicts.

Aim/Objectives of the study

This study seeks to assess the relevance and applicability of the Frustration–Aggression Theory in explaining conflict dynamics and peacebuilding processes in the Niger Delta region. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. examine the manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region.
2. assess the applicability of the Frustration–Aggression Theory in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region.

Research Questions

1. What are the manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region?
2. To what extent is the Frustration–Aggression Theory applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region?

Theoretical Framework

This study anchored on Frustration–aggression theory. Frustration–aggression theory, more commonly known as the frustration–aggression hypothesis was propounded by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears in 1939 and was modified in 1969 by Berkowitz. The theory stated that "the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Dollard et al cited in Mentovich, and Jost, 2017). What is especially noteworthy in this definition is that, unlike the use of the word in everyday language, frustration here is not understood as an emotional experience but as an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response.

According to the theory, it is not that aggression automatically happens when someone is frustrated, but rather the aggressor is frustrated at a lack of progress toward a goal and engages in aggression. If possible, the person will aggress toward the thing that caused his/her frustration; if not, they will displace that aggression by directing it toward something or someone else. The idea of displacement is a person who is unable or unwilling to take out their frustration on whatever is causing it, so they take it out on something unrelated to what is actually causing it. Perhaps the best example of this is a person who takes out their frustration on their family when they come home from work because work is frustrating, but there's nothing they can do in a professional sense to be "aggressive."

According to Mentovich, and Jost (2017) it is not that once frustration and the impetus for aggressive behaviour have occurred, it makes relatively little difference who receives the brunt of the violence. In some cases, aggression naturally takes the form of retaliation against the initial source of frustration. In other cases, situational constraints can prevent a person from being able to react against the actual source of frustration (such as when the frustration was caused by a very powerful person or group). In still other cases, such as natural disasters, there may be no one to blame, but the frustration can still produce aggressive inclinations.

Again, the theory stipulated that the displacement of aggression onto a socially sanctioned (i.e., convenient) victim group serves several purposes. First, and most important, it channels the expression of aggressive impulses and creates cathartic relief once the aggression has been released. Second, it is socially undesirable to behave violently toward others in the absence of justification, but prejudicial attitudes can be used to justify (or rationalize) the expression of

hostility. In that way, members of disadvantaged groups can be blamed for their own plight as targets of hostility and prejudice. Finally, in accordance with psychoanalytic thought, the theory of scapegoating suggests that victim blaming is exacerbated by the projection of (typically unconscious) guilt that frustrated parties feel as a result of their own prejudice and violent activity.

From this conceptualization, it is not difficult to find a link among the social phenomenon of crime such as kidnapping, cultism, violent attacks, gangstarism and vandalization of school facilities in schools. In Nigeria today, oppression and injustice have become a norm in the social, economic and political frameworks. Poverty and humans lack of basic needs have spread like wildfire causing many people in the society to be frustrated.

It is for this reason that some perpetrators of these crimes like kidnappers transfer their aggression to members of the society with the aim of possibly attracting government attention and making outrageous demands, while some who engage in violent attacks, cultism, ganstarism and vandalization of public facilities (pipelines especially), see it as a way of venting out their frustration. In this situation, the entire society becomes scapegoats for these individuals and bear brunt of their aggressions.

Concept of Frustration and Aggression

Frustration can simply be defined as an emotional reaction to an unfavourable situation. It usually arises when an individual's expectations, objectives/goals or needs are not met or are blocked. It is an emotion that occurs in situations where a person is blocked from reaching a desired outcome or goal (Jalal & Rani, 2023). In other words, frustration is a common emotional response to opposition, related to anger, annoyance and disappointment. Al-hadrawi (2017) described frustration as an emotional that occurs as response to circumstances that block a person from reaching personal goal or a desired outcome. According to Zeigler-Hill & Shackelford, (2017) frustration is a key negative emotion that roots in disappointment and can be defined as irritable distress in response to limitation, exclusion, and failure (a state of dissatisfied insecurity). It evolved to deal with a particular, evolutionarily recurrent situation type and is experienced when people encounter unresolved problems, such as contextual or psychological barriers or obstructions, which must be removed to fulfill personal goals, desires, drives, or needs. Technically, frustration is elicited when a goal-pursuit is not fulfilled at the expected time in the behavioral sequence (an unexpected nonreward).

Frustration can be internally or externally generated. Internal frustration is one that come within oneself whereas external frustration comes outside the individual. There are several factors that causes frustration, however, some common stressor that lead to frustration include family and relationship, implementing the households responsibilities, community and neighborhood, participating extracurricular and creative activities, official environment, seniority position, scarcity of resources and financial problems, limited resources, unclear communication, foal difference, personal background, lack of effective personal policy etc (Jalal & Rani, 2023)

Aggression on the other hand, is any form of behavior directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. It is any behavior enacted with the intention to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm

(Anderson and Bushman, 2002; Bushman and Huesmann, 2010). This definition emphasizes **intentionality** as a key element, distinguishing aggression from accidental harm or unintended consequences.

Within the framework of peace and conflict studies, aggression extends beyond individual actions to include collective violence, such as protests, militancy, insurgency, and other forms of organized conflict behavior. Early scholarly work conceptualized aggression largely as a response to frustration, as proposed in the classic frustration–aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939). However, subsequent developments expanded this view, recognizing that aggression can arise from multiple sources, including learned behavior, environmental influences, and cognitive processes (Berkowitz, 1989). Thus, aggression is now widely understood as a **multidimensional phenomenon** influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors.

Aggression can manifest in different forms. **Physical aggression** involves bodily harm, such as fighting or destruction of property, while **verbal aggression** includes insults, threats, or hostile language. In addition, **indirect or relational aggression** may occur through social exclusion, manipulation, or spreading rumors (Baron & Richardson, 1994). In conflict-prone environments, these forms often overlap, escalating from verbal hostility to physical violence. From a social learning perspective, aggression is also viewed as a behavior acquired through observation and reinforcement. Individuals may learn aggressive responses by observing others, especially when such behaviors appear rewarded or go unpunished (Bandura, 1977). This perspective is particularly relevant in contexts where violence becomes normalized, such as regions experiencing prolonged conflict or weak institutional control.

In peace and conflict studies, aggression is often examined at both **individual and collective levels.** At the collective level, aggression may manifest as group violence, protests, militancy, or insurgency, often driven by shared grievances and perceived injustices (Gurr, 1970). Structural conditions such as inequality, marginalization, and resource competition can intensify aggressive tendencies within groups, transforming individual frustrations into organized collective action.

Modern theories, such as the **General Aggression Model (GAM),** provide a comprehensive framework for understanding aggression. The GAM explains aggression as the outcome of interactions between personal factors (e.g., personality, attitudes) and situational factors (e.g., provocation, environmental stressors), which influence cognition, emotions, and arousal (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This integrative approach highlights how aggression is shaped by both immediate triggers and broader contextual influences.

Importantly, aggression is not always expressed in overt violence; it may also be suppressed, displaced, or channeled into non-violent forms such as protest or advocacy. The expression of aggression depends on factors such as cultural norms, institutional controls, and conflict management mechanisms (Berkowitz, 1989). Where these controls are weak or absent, aggressive tendencies are more likely to escalate into violence.

The above indicates that aggression is a **complex, intentional behavior aimed at causing harm,** shaped by a combination of psychological processes, learned experiences, and

structural conditions. Its relevance to conflict studies lies in its role as a key mechanism through which grievances and frustrations are expressed, making it essential for understanding the dynamics of conflict and violence in regions such as the Niger Delta.

Empirical Review

A study by Adedeji (2024) found that ineffective governance, poor implementation of development policies, and institutional failures significantly contribute to persistent conflict in the region. The study, which utilized quantitative survey methods, revealed that communities experiencing neglect and lack of development interventions tend to exhibit higher levels of unrest and resistance, reinforcing the link between unmet expectations (frustration) and conflict escalation. Similarly, Esiere (2026) examined the relationship between oil exploitation, poverty, and militancy in the Niger Delta using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that environmental degradation and economic marginalization resulting from oil exploration have fueled militant activities and insecurity in the region. The study concludes that these conditions create deep-seated grievances that translate into aggressive actions such as pipeline vandalism and armed resistance, thereby supporting the frustration–aggression explanation of conflict behavior. Also, Wisdom (2022) investigated the nexus between frustration/aggression theory and militancy in the Niger-Delta. It noted like in previous studies that frustration over long years of misery, poverty, unemployment, environmental pollution in the Niger-Delta transmogrified into aggression in the form of kidnapping, piracy, destruction of oil installations among others by youth of the region. However, the study went beyond examining frustration/ aggression theory as an explanatory tool for militancy in the Niger-Delta but analyzed if the basic assumptions of the theory can serve as a framework for curtailing or eliminating militancy in the region. The study made use of ex-post factor research design, qualitative descriptive method of data analysis and adopted frustration/aggression theory as it theoretical framework. The study noted that lack of basic amenities, high level of poverty and unemployment over the years have resulted into frustration which conduced violent aggression. Also, the study showed that state policies can reduced belligerency in the Niger-Delta region if it is focused on reducing/eliminating sources of frustration, and that Multi-National Corporation can genuinely foster local development or else they become target of deferred aggression. It recommended among others, the formulation and implementation of state policies that can check mate or reduce the sources of frustration which can curtail violence, improvement in the level of governance in the region and that Multi-National Corporations should through its social corporate responsibility provide social services to their host communities.

Empirical evidence from broader Nigerian contexts also reinforces the applicability of the theory. Okonkwo and Akanji (2025), using longitudinal conflict datasets and qualitative analysis, found that political violence in Nigeria is strongly driven by structural factors such as state fragility, inequality, and institutional weakness. These factors create widespread dissatisfaction and grievances among citizens, which often manifest in violent conflicts. Their findings align with the frustration–aggression framework, suggesting that systemic deprivation and governance failures are key triggers of aggression. In another study, Tomwarri and Igoli (2024) examined ethnic militias in the Niger Delta and adopted the Frustration–Aggression Theory as an explanatory framework. Their analysis revealed that the perceived neglect of the region by the central government and multinational oil corporations has contributed to the emergence of militant groups. The study demonstrates that prolonged

frustration arising from political and economic marginalization leads to organized aggression, particularly in the form of militia activities and insurgency.

Beyond the Niger Delta, empirical studies in other parts of Nigeria further validate the frustration–aggression nexus. Obi et al. (2025) investigated armed banditry in Northwest Nigeria using communal-level data and found that socio-economic pressures, resource competition, and weak governance structures contribute to frustration, which in turn fuels aggressive behaviors such as banditry and vigilantism. Although conducted outside the Niger Delta, the study provides comparative insights that strengthen the generalizability of the theory across Nigerian conflict settings. Moreover, quantitative evidence shows that exposure to violent conflict negatively affects individuals' socio-economic expectations and perceptions of well-being. A study by Tuki (2024) found that individuals exposed to conflict tend to develop pessimistic expectations about economic performance, indicating a cycle where frustration and insecurity reinforce each other. This cyclical relationship further supports the argument that frustration not only triggers aggression but also sustains conflict dynamics over time. In addition, broader empirical analyses of conflict patterns in Nigeria reveal that violence is spatially and temporally linked to socio-economic inequalities and governance challenges. A study by Wang, Gao & Liu (2024) demonstrated that armed conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria are closely associated with developmental disparities and shifting social perceptions, suggesting that perceived injustice and deprivation play a critical role in fueling aggression.

Collectively, these empirical studies provide strong support for the Frustration–Aggression Theory as a useful framework for understanding conflict in the Niger Delta. They consistently show that frustration arising from environmental degradation, economic marginalization, political exclusion, and governance failures often leads to aggressive manifestations such as militancy, violence, and social unrest. However, the studies also highlight that aggression is not automatic; it is mediated by contextual factors such as institutional responses, community structures, and alternative coping mechanisms.

Despite these contributions, gaps remain in the literature. Many studies rely heavily on secondary data or qualitative approaches, with limited use of mixed methods or longitudinal primary data specific to the Niger Delta. Furthermore, there is a need for more context-specific empirical investigations that directly test the causal relationship between frustration and aggression in the region, hence, the present study.

Methodology

The study employed survey design. A sample size of 384 was selected from a population of 3,792,500 residents of Bayelsa state using Krejcie and Morgan sample determination table. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were adopted to select respondents. A researcher designed questionnaire structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly (SD) weighted in scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 point respectively, was validated and used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument for the study was subjected to face and content validity and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC). was used to establish a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The data collected from the respondents were collated, coded and analyzed using mean statistics and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question one: What are the manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region?

Table 1: Mean statistics and standard deviation on manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region**.**

S/N	Assessed manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region	_ **X**	SD	Decision
1	Frustration in my community is often expressed through protests and public demonstrations	3.41	0.19	Strongly agreed
2	Acts such as vandalism of oil facilities are common ways people express anger in this region.	2.89	0.17	Agreed
3	Youth restiveness and militancy are visible signs of frustration in the Niger Delta.	3.31	0.18	Strongly agreed
4	Conflicts in my community frequently escalate into aggressive or violent confrontations.	2.88	0.18	Agreed
5	Criminal activities such as kidnapping and armed robbery are manifestations of frustration among some individuals in the region.	2.72	0.17	Agreed
	Grand mean	**3.04**	**0.18**	**Strongly agreed**

The result of the data in table 1shows that frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region manifest in multiple, interconnected forms, largely driven by structural inequalities, environmental degradation, and governance failures.

Research Question Two: To what extent is the Frustration–Aggression Theory applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region?

Table 2: Mean statistics and standard deviation of extent to which Frustration–Aggression Theory is applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region

S| N	Assessed ways Frustration–Aggression Theory is applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region	_ **X**	SD	Decisio n
1	The Frustration–Aggression Theory adequately explains the causes of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta region.	3.28	0.18	Strongly agree
2	Feelings of frustration among residents often lead to aggressive actions, as suggested by the Frustration–Aggression Theory.	2.82	0.17	Agree
3	The link between unmet expectations and violent behavior in the Niger Delta supports the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory.	2.72	0.17	Agree
4	The Frustration–Aggression Theory provides a useful framework for understanding youth militancy in the Niger Delta.	2.73	0.17	Agree
5	The Frustration–Aggression Theory is relevant for explaining most conflict situations in the Niger Delta region.	2.61	0.17	Agree
	Grand mean	**2.83**	**0.17**	**Agreed**

Results in Table 2 indicates that the Frustration–Aggression Theory is substantially applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region, although its explanatory power is context-dependent rather than absolute.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings of this study reveals that frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region manifest in multiple, interconnected forms, largely driven by structural inequalities, environmental degradation, and governance failures. These manifestations align strongly with the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which posits that persistent deprivation and blocked opportunities often translate into aggressive behaviors.

One major manifestation of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta region is in militancy and armed resistance. Empirical evidence shows that prolonged socio-economic marginalization and environmental neglect in the Niger Delta have led to the emergence of militant groups engaging in violent activities. These include attacks on oil facilities, armed confrontations, and insurgent actions. Studies indicate that such militancy is not random but a direct response to long-standing frustration over poverty, unemployment, and perceived exploitation by both the state and multinational oil corporations (Wisdom, 2022). This supports the theoretical claim that when legitimate channels for addressing grievances are ineffective, frustration is often redirected into organized aggression.

Another key manifestation is pipeline vandalism, oil theft, and illegal refining activities. Findings show that these activities are widespread and are often rationalized by local actors as economic survival strategies in the face of deprivation. Research highlights that the region has experienced continuous violent crises characterized by oil theft, sabotage, and destruction of infrastructure, reflecting deep-rooted frustration among affected communities (Ekure, Nwaizugbo, Nkamnebe, & Egbule, 2024). These actions demonstrate how aggression may be economically motivated yet rooted in broader structural grievances.

The study also finds that kidnapping, hostage-taking, and criminality are prominent expressions of aggression in the region. Empirical studies reveal that militant activities, including kidnapping and violent attacks, have contributed to loss of lives, displacement, and economic instability in the Niger Delta (Oluwole, 2023). These forms of aggression illustrate how frustration can evolve into opportunistic and organized criminal violence, especially in contexts where state authority is weak.

In addition, youth restiveness and violent protests emerge as significant manifestations of frustration. Findings indicate that unemployed and marginalized youths often engage in protests, demonstrations, and confrontational behaviors to express dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions. This aligns with broader empirical evidence in Nigeria, where frustration stemming from inequality and governance failures has been linked to collective violence and unrest (Nwogu, Egobueze, & Onyekwere, 2024). Such behaviors reflect both emotional reactions (anger and resentment) and strategic attempts to draw attention to grievances.

Furthermore, the study identifies communal conflicts and inter-group violence as another manifestation of frustration and aggression. Competition over scarce resources, land disputes,

and ethnic tensions often escalate into violent clashes. Empirical research suggests that these conflicts are frequently rooted in perceived injustice and unequal distribution of resources, which heighten collective frustration and trigger aggression at the community level (Nwogu, et. al., 2024).

The findings also highlight displacement, destruction of property, and loss of livelihoods as indirect manifestations of aggression. Violent activities such as militancy and sabotage have led to forced migration, environmental damage, and economic disruption in the region (Oluwole, 2023). These outcomes reinforce the cyclical nature of frustration and aggression, where violence further deepens deprivation, thereby sustaining conflict dynamics.

The foregoing shows that the manifestations of frustration and aggression in the Niger Delta are multidimensional, encompassing political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. These include militancy, vandalism, kidnapping, youth unrest, communal clashes, and criminal activities. Importantly, the findings confirm that these manifestations are not isolated incidents but are deeply rooted in systemic issues such as marginalization, environmental degradation, and governance failures. In line with contemporary empirical studies, the results also suggest that frustration does not automatically lead to aggression; rather, it is mediated by contextual factors such as institutional weakness, lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and normalization of violence. However, in the Niger Delta, where these mediating structures are often inadequate, frustration is more likely to escalate into aggressive and violent expressions.

The present findings provide strong empirical support for the Frustration–Aggression Theory in explaining the nature of conflict in the Niger Delta. The various manifestations of aggression observed in the region are clear outcomes of prolonged frustration, thereby underscoring the need for policies that address the root causes of deprivation and inequality as a means of promoting sustainable peace.

The second findings of this study indicate that the Frustration–Aggression Theory is substantially applicable in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region, although its explanatory power is context-dependent rather than absolute. Evidence from the study aligns with contemporary empirical literature, which shows that frustration arising from socio-economic deprivation, environmental injustice, and governance failures plays a critical role in shaping aggressive and conflictual behaviors.

First, the findings showed that the theory effectively explains the root causes of conflict in the Niger Delta. The data suggest that persistent deprivation manifested in unemployment, poverty, and environmental degradation, creates widespread frustration among individuals and communities. This is consistent with empirical studies in Nigeria which demonstrate that economic hardship and blocked opportunities generate hostility that is often redirected into violent or criminal activities (Ighotomo, Ihekoromadu, Onuoha, Okpunuzor, & Ndudi, 2025). In this sense, the theory provides a strong framework for understanding *why* conflict emerges, particularly in contexts where expectations of development and resource control are unmet.
Secondly, the findings revealed that the theory is highly relevant in explaining collective aggression and organized violence. In the Niger Delta, aggressive behaviors such as militancy, pipeline vandalism, and communal violence are not isolated incidents but collective responses

to shared grievances. This aligns with recent empirical research by Obi et al. (2024), which shows that frustration–aggression dynamics can explain organized violent activities such as banditry when communal-level grievances and structural inequalities are present. By extension, the Niger Delta conflict reflects a similar pattern where group-based frustration transforms into coordinated aggression. However, the findings also indicate that the applicability of the theory is not universal or deterministic. While frustration is a significant driver of aggression, not all frustrated individuals or communities resort to violence. This supports the argument by Etim & Ukpere (2023), who found that even in contexts of intense deprivation and frustration, aggression does not always occur, suggesting that additional mediating factors influence outcomes. In the Niger Delta, such mediating factors include cultural norms, leadership structures, availability of non-violent channels, and government interventions (e.g., amnesty programmes).

Thirdly, the findings revealed that the theory is more effective when integrated with other explanatory frameworks, particularly relative deprivation and structural inequality theories. The study shows that frustration in the Niger Delta is largely rooted in perceived injustice and inequality, which intensify grievances and increase the likelihood of aggression. This supports broader empirical insights that link frustration–aggression processes with relative deprivation in explaining political violence and insurgency in Nigeria (Akinyetun, 2020). Thus, while the Frustration–Aggression Theory is useful, it is most effective when applied within a broader socio-political context. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that situational and environmental factors significantly condition the theory's applicability. For instance, weak institutional responses, corruption, and lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms in the Niger Delta amplify the likelihood that frustration will escalate into aggression. Conversely, where effective governance and conflict management structures exist, frustration may be expressed through non-violent means such as dialogue or advocacy. This supports contemporary theoretical refinements which argue that frustration creates a *predisposition* to aggression rather than an automatic outcome. Again, the study finds that the Frustration–Aggression Theory has high explanatory relevance but limited predictive certainty in the Niger Delta context. It successfully explains the underlying causes and motivations of conflict, particularly the transition from deprivation to aggression. However, its ability to predict when and how aggression will occur is constrained by intervening variables such as institutional strength, social control mechanisms, and individual or group coping strategies.

Finally, the findings show that the Frustration–Aggression Theory is highly applicable to a significant extent in explaining conflict situations in the Niger Delta region. It provides a robust framework for understanding how socio-economic and environmental frustrations translate into aggressive behaviors and violent conflicts. However, its applicability is not absolute, as aggression is influenced by additional psychological, social, and political factors. Therefore, a more comprehensive explanation of conflict in the Niger Delta requires integrating the theory with broader perspectives on governance, inequality, and conflict management.

Conclusion

The findings of the study affirm that the Frustration–Aggression Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the dynamics of conflict in the Niger Delta region. They equal reveal that persistent socio-economic deprivation, environmental degradation, political

marginalization, and perceived injustice serve as major sources of frustration among local populations. These frustrations often manifest in various forms of aggression, including protests, militancy, vandalism of oil infrastructure, and communal clashes. However, the study also establishes that while the theory is useful, it does not fully capture the complexity of conflict in the region. Factors such as political manipulation, economic opportunism, identity issues, and external influences interact with frustration to shape patterns of aggression. This suggests that conflict in the Niger Delta is multidimensional and cannot be explained by a single theoretical framework, rather there is need for a more integrative approach to addressing the root causes of frustration among citizens of the region.

Base on the forgoing, this study concludes that reducing frustrations through addressing structural inequalities is the only viable pathway to eliminating violent aggression in the Niger Delta.

Recommendations

1. The study's findings indicate that frustration in the Niger Delta often manifests through protests, militancy, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts. Therefore, Government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize inclusive socio-economic development**,** particularly through job creation, skills acquisition programs, and youth empowerment initiatives, to reduce the structural frustrations that fuel aggression.
2. Researchers and policymakers should apply the theory with contextual sensitivity, recognizing that not all frustrations automatically lead to aggression. Intervening variables such as leadership influence, group dynamics, economic incentives, and state responses should be incorporated into analysis and policy design

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