
Organisational and Community Conflicts in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract – This study examines the organisational and community conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to examine the effects of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration on the health, agriculture, and well-being of communities in the Niger Delta Region; investigate the relationship between socioeconomic and political marginalisation and community restiveness in the Niger Delta Region; and assess the effectiveness of youth-inclusive dialogue and negotiation strategies in resolving oil-related conflicts in the region. A cross-sectional design was used by administering copies of questionnaire to stakeholders in the Niger Delta Region. These stakeholders include community leaders in three selected states in the region. The states include Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. Out of three hundred copies of questionnaire administered, 262 copies were retrieved and used for data analysis. The remaining copies were either not retrieved or were not properly completed. The data collected were analyzed using different statistical tools such as frequency count, percentages, and mean with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The study found that environmental degradation caused by oil exploration significantly harms the health, agriculture, and overall well-being of Niger Delta communities. It was also revealed that socioeconomic and political marginalisation are closely linked to the persistent restiveness witnessed in the Niger Delta communities. However, the study shows that youth-inclusive dialogue and negotiation strategies were perceived as effective in resolving oil-related conflicts. It is recommended that policymakers and oil firms should prioritise infrastructure development, ensure equitable distribution of oil revenues, and involve community members particularly marginalised groups in decision-making processes to address socioeconomic and political exclusion and reduce restiveness.

Keywords: “Conflict”, “Environmental degradation”, “Niger Delta”, “Political marginalization”, “Resource exploitation”.

JEL Classification: Q34, D74, I31.

1. Introduction

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interaction, manifesting both within organisational structures and in interactions with external entities, such as local communities (Uduji, Okolo-Obasi, Aja, Otei, Obi-Anike, Ezuka, and Emengini, 2024). Globally, organisational and community clashes present significant challenges, impeding progress towards sustainable development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the importance of addressing such conflicts, particularly through Goal 16, which aims at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. It is believed that there is nowhere in Nigeria that the impact of organisational and community conflict is more pronounced than in the Niger Delta region because of divergent interest on resource control and exploitation. This region, endowed with abundant oil and natural resources, has been marred by decades of conflict stemming from issues such as environmental degradation, marginalisation, and disputes over resource control (Ekpo, Okereke and Omojefe, 2024). Conflict in this region has been a longstanding issue, characterised by tensions between various stakeholders, including government entities, oil companies, local communities, and militant groups. The significance of organisational and community conflict in the Niger Delta cannot be overstated. It has led to widespread socio-economic disparities, environmental degradation, and a breakdown of law and order as well as distortion of mutual trust between local communities, multinational corporations, and the government.

Despite the prevalence and gravity of conflicts of interest in the oil-rich Niger Delta, previous studies have often failed to provide comprehensive insights into how these conflicting issues are resolved (Ebiede, 2017; Ekpo, Okereke, and Omojefe, 2024). While numerous scholarly works have examined the root causes and impacts of conflict in the region, there still exists a gap in the literature regarding effective conflict resolution mechanisms and sustainable peace building strategies. Several research work on conflict management, its causes and effects had been frequently carried out in various organisations both locally and internationally. Findings reveal that conflict involving corporate bodies and their host communities has not been extensively researched and problems not adequately solved in the region, hence creating a research gap in which the study aims to examine empirically with the aim of providing an understanding of the dynamics of organisational and host communities conflict in the oil-rich region and to identify key influencing factors on conflict resolution efforts.

The broad objective of the study is to examine the dynamics of organisational and community conflict in The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. examine the effects of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration on the health, agriculture, and well-being of communities in the Niger Delta Region;
- ii. investigate the relationship between socioeconomic and political marginalisation and community restiveness in the Niger Delta Region; and

- iii. assess the effectiveness of youth-inclusive dialogue and negotiation strategies in resolving oil-related conflicts in the region.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organisational and Community Conflict

Conflict, in its broadest sense, refers to a situation of disagreement or discord arising from the perception of incompatible interests, goals, or values among individuals, groups, or entities (Ebiede, 2017). It encompasses a spectrum of interactions ranging from mild disputes to outright hostility, often involving competing interests and power dynamics (Uduji, et al., 2024). Conflict is a natural and inevitable aspect of human interaction, occurring in various contexts, including interpersonal relationships, organisations, and communities (Smaranda, Nicoleta, Petru, and Curşeu, 2010). When considering conflict between an organisation and the community where it is hosted, the dynamics become particularly complex. This type of conflict arises when there is a perceived clash of interests, values, or objectives between the organisation (Smaranda, et al., 2010), typically representing economic or commercial interests, and the local community, which may have cultural, social, and environmental concerns (Kpae, & Onwuka, 2023; Onyenekwe, et al., 2024). Characterised by asymmetrical power relations and differing priorities, organisational-community conflict often revolves around issues such as resource exploitation, land use, unemployment of host communities indigenes, and environmental impact (Smaranda, et al., 2010; Onyenekwe, et al., 2024). One characteristic of organisational-community conflict is the disparity in power and resources between the parties involved (Woo, 2015). Typically, organisations possess greater financial, legal, and institutional resources, allowing them to exert significant influence over decision-making processes and outcomes (Christensen, Bloch, Møller, Søgaard, Klinker, Aagaard-Hansen, and Bentsen, 2019). In contrast, communities often find themselves in a position of relative disadvantage, lacking access to information, representation, and avenues for meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives and environment (Christensen, et al., 2019). This power imbalance can exacerbate feelings of marginalisation and injustice, fueling resentment and resistance among community members.

Furthermore, organisational-community conflict is characterised by competing narratives and perceptions of reality (Mahat, Fadzil, Raseli, and Ibrahim, 2022; White, 2019). While organisations may prioritise economic growth, profit maximisation, and operational efficiency, communities may prioritise environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and social well-being of her local indigenes. These divergent perspectives can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and mistrust between the parties, hindering constructive dialogue and collaboration. Addressing organisational-community conflict

requires recognising and reconciling these differences while fostering mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

2.2. Forms of Organisational and Community Conflict

Organisational and community conflicts can be classified into various types based on their underlying causes and nature. One common classification includes resource-based conflicts, ethnic conflicts, and political conflicts. Resource-based conflicts often arise due to competition over the ownership and control, access, or distribution of natural resources such as land, water, minerals, or energy (Okoye and Umejiaku, 2023). These conflicts may stem from disparities in resource distribution, conflicting land claims, or environmental degradation resulting from resource extraction activities (Emma-Anyasodo, et al., 2024). Ethnic based conflicts, on the other hand, are driven by differences in cultural, linguistic, or religious identities among different groups within a community or organisation. These conflicts may be fueled by historical grievances, discrimination, or attempts to assert dominance or control over resources or territory. Politically based conflicts typically revolve around power struggles, governance issues, or competing ideologies within organisations or communities. These conflicts may arise from disputes over leadership, decision-making processes, or the distribution of political authority and resources. Several key causes can be contributed to organisational and community conflicts, often intersecting and exacerbating each other. Oil exploration and extraction activities, for instance, are a significant source of conflict in many regions, including the Niger Delta (Ogungbade, et al., 2024). The exploitation of oil resources by multinational corporations often leads to environmental degradation, land dispossession, and socio-economic inequalities, triggering protests, sabotage, and violence from affected communities. Land disputes are another common cause of conflict, particularly in agrarian societies where land ownership and access are central to livelihoods and identity (Uduji, et al., 2024). Rapid urbanisation, population growth, and inadequate land governance systems often exacerbate tensions over land use, leading to disputes between individuals, communities, and corporations. Additionally, marginalisation and social exclusion play a crucial role in fueling conflicts, as marginalised groups may feel disenfranchised, neglected, or discriminated against in decision-making processes and resource allocation (Ebiede, 2017; Kariuki, 2018). These feelings of injustice and inequality can breed resentment, mistrust, and resistance, leading to conflict escalation and instability within organisations and the host communities.

2.3. Consequence of Conflict on the Niger Delta Region

The consequences of conflict in the Niger Delta region are profound, affecting various aspects of the region's socio-economic fabric. One of the primary socioeconomic consequences is displacement, as communities are often forced to flee their homes due to violence, environmental degradation, or government-led interventions (Okoye, and Umejiaku, 2023). Displacement disrupts livelihoods, social networks, and cultural traditions, leading to increased vulnerability, poverty, and dependence on humanitarian aid. Moreover, conflict exacerbates poverty and unemployment by disrupting economic

activities, destroying infrastructure, and undermining investor confidence. The cycle of violence and instability further deters private investment and hinders efforts to diversify the economy, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment in the region. Environmental degradation is another significant consequence of conflict in the Niger Delta, with far-reaching effects on communities and ecosystems (Kpae, and Onwuka, 2023). Decades of oil exploration, extraction, and spills have led to widespread pollution of land, waterways, and air, destroying agricultural lands, contaminating water sources, and harming aquatic life. The loss of biodiversity and degradation of natural habitats undermine ecosystem services vital for human well-being, such as clean water, fertile soils, and climate regulation. Furthermore, environmental degradation exacerbates food insecurity, health hazards, and social tensions, as communities struggle to cope with the impacts of pollution, loss of livelihoods, and declining health outcomes.

In addition to the tangible socio-economic and environmental consequences, conflict in the Niger Delta region also has profound psychological impacts on individuals and communities (Williams, 2016). Prolonged exposure to violence, displacement, and insecurity can lead to widespread trauma, anxiety, and depression among affected populations (Olabode, 2018). The breakdown of social networks, loss of trust in institutions, and erosion of cultural values further contribute to feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and despair. Moreover, conflict-related trauma can have intergenerational effects, perpetuating cycles of violence, substance abuse, and social dysfunction. Addressing the psychological impacts of conflict requires comprehensive mental health services, psychosocial support programs, and community-based interventions that promote resilience, healing, and reconciliation.

3. Methodology of Study

This study investigated the dynamics of organisational and community conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. A cross sectional design was used by administering copies of questionnaire to stakeholders in the Niger Delta Region. These stakeholders include community leaders in three selected states in the region. The states include Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. The copies of questionnaire used as a research instrument were administered electronically to the aforementioned stakeholders residing in the region. The questionnaire items were adopted from the work of Onibere, Egbokhare, Ekong and Amadin (2018). The instrument was validated by an HR expert that specialises in conflict resolution and management. After the validation, twenty copies were administered for pilot study in order to conduct the reliability study. Cronbach's Alpha method of reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The value of the reliability score was above 0.7 which shows that the instrument was reliable. Out of three hundred copies of questionnaire administered, 263 copies were retrieved and used for data analysis. The remaining copies were either not retrieved or were not properly completed. The data collected were analyzed

using different statistical tools such as frequency count, percentages, and mean with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Description of Respondents' Profile

This section contains the results of data analysis done in line with the research objectives and the discussion of findings.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	18-25	48	18.3	18.3
	26-35	18	6.9	25.2
	36-45	90	34.4	59.5
	46-55	70	26.7	86.3
	56 and above	36	13.7	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	
	Female	84	32.1	32.1
	Male	178	67.9	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	
Educational Level	Secondary Education	96	36.6	36.6
	Tertiary Institution (B.Sc/HND/NCE)	110	42.0	78.6
	Postgraduate	56	21.4	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	
Occupation	Employed	164	62.6	62.6
	Self employed	40	15.3	77.9
	Student	48	18.3	96.2
	Unemployed	10	3.8	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	
Ethnicity	Edo	78	29.8	29.8
	Efik/Ibibio	20	7.6	37.4
	Ijaw/Kalabari	122	46.6	84.0
	Urhobo/ Itsekiri	34	13.0	96.9
	Others	8	3.1	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	

Table 1 which contained the results of the demographic profile of respondents reveals that majority of respondents (34.4%) were aged 36–45, followed by those aged 46–55 (26.7%). A higher proportion of participants were male (67.9%) compared to female (32.1%). In terms of educational attainment, most respondents held tertiary qualifications (42.0%), while 36.6% had secondary education and 21.4% possessed postgraduate degrees. Occupationally, 62.6% were employed, with smaller proportions self-employed (15.3%), students (18.3%), and unemployed (3.8%). Ethnic distribution showed a predominance of Ijaw/Kalabari

respondents (46.6%), followed by Edo (29.8%), Urhobo/Itsekiri (13.0%), Efik/Ibibio (7.6%), and others (3.1%).

4.2. Impact of Environmental Degradation on Health, Agriculture, and Community Well-being in Niger Delta Region

Table 2: Effects of environmental degradation on Niger Delta communities

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	My community is directly affected by ecological destruction of Oil spillage activities.	30 (11.5%)	22 (8.4%)	52 (19.8%)	48 (18.3%)	110 (42%)	3.71
2	The impact of environmental pollution, oil spillage, displacement and economic changes impoverish our people	18 (6.9%)	14 (5.3%)	26 (9.9%)	66 (25.2%)	138 (52.7%)	4.11
3	Our farmlands are not fertile because of large Oil deposit in my community	28 (10.7%)	22 (8.4%)	36 (13.7%)	72 (27.5%)	104 (39.7%)	3.77
4	Gas flaring and water pollution has worsened over the past decades in my community.	14 (5.3%)	14 (5.3%)	42 (16%)	70 (26.7%)	122 (46.6%)	4.04
5	The government and regulatory bodies are not addressing environmental degradation in my community adequately.	12 (4.6%)	24 (9.2%)	50 (19.1%)	76 (29%)	100 (38.2%)	3.87

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
6	The environmental degradation such as Air soot, polluted water affects the health and well-being of individuals in my community	14 (5.3%)	18 (6.9%)	28 (10.7%)	64 (24.4%)	138 (52.7%)	4.12
7	Gas flaring and Oil spillage are major specific environmental degradation incidents in my community	14 (5.3%)	26 (9.9%)	26 (9.9%)	86 (32.8%)	110 (42%)	3.96
8	Oil spillage are major pollution to water and deforestation in my. Community	18 (6.9%)	16 (6.1%)	32 (12.2%)	82 (31.3%)	114 (43.5%)	3.98
Overall Mean							3.95

Results in Table 2 reveal significant evidence of the detrimental effects of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration on the health, agriculture, and well-being of communities in the Niger Delta Region. The overall mean score of 3.95 indicates a strong agreement among respondents regarding the negative impacts. Specifically, a majority affirmed that oil spillage directly affects their communities (mean = 3.71) and contributes to impoverishment through environmental pollution, displacement, and economic disruption (mean = 4.11). The decline in agricultural productivity, evidenced by infertile farmlands (mean = 3.77), emphasises the ecological consequences of oil activities. Moreover, the worsening of gas flaring and water pollution (mean = 4.04) further exacerbates public health issues, as reflected in the high mean score (4.12) linking environmental degradation to poor health outcomes. Additionally, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with governmental and regulatory responses (mean = 3.87), reinforcing the perception of neglect in addressing these critical environmental challenges.

4.3. Socioeconomic and Political Marginalisation as Drivers of Community Restiveness

Table 3: Drivers of community restiveness in the Niger Delta Region

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	Crude Oil exploitation by Oil firms without significant evidence of development represents a serious challenge in my community.	16 (6.1%)	10 (3.8%)	20 (7.6%)	58 (22.1%)	158 (60.3%)	4.27
2	Multinational Oil corporations invest so much on infrastructures development in my community.	94 (35.9%)	68 (26%)	46 (17.6%)	38 (14.5%)	16 (6.1%)	2.29
3	The main sources or causes of these conflicts stems from Multinational Oil Firms unwillingness or refusal to employ our indigenes in top mgt. positions	20 (7.6%)	46 (17.6%)	52 (19.8%)	68 (26%)	76 (29%)	3.51
4	Sometime management often uses external machinery to silent the youth restiveness in Niger Delta region or community.	12 (4.6%)	28 (10.7%)	46 (17.6%)	78 (29.8%)	98 (37.4%)	3.85
5	Our youth are always sidelined during meetings with our local chiefs and Oil firms' representatives.	12 (4.6%)	36 (13.7%)	76 (29%)	80 (30.5%)	58 (22.1%)	3.52

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
6	Inadequate socio-amenities like health care infrastructures, illiteracy & poverty increases high mortality rate in my community and this provokes community restiveness.	8 (3.1%)	22 (8.4%)	44 (16.8%)	84 (32.1%)	104 (39.7%)	3.97
7	In my opinion, communities in the Niger Delta region are more impoverished than other regions in Nigeria.	18 (6.9%)	24 (9.2%)	58 (22.1%)	74 (28.2%)	88 (33.6%)	3.73
8	I perceived significant inequality in the distribution of wealth and resources in the Niger Delta region?	14 (5.3%)	14 (5.3%)	40 (15.3%)	78 (29.8%)	116 (44.3%)	4.02
9	Every conflict between Oil Firms and youth always resulted in value addition to the community	46 (17.6%)	54 (20.6%)	62 (23.7%)	62 (23.7%)	38 (14.5%)	2.97
10	Our communities' indigenes are politically marginalized because of uneven representation in the governance hence, we are	18 (6.9%)	36 (13.7%)	76 (29%)	72 (27.5%)	60 (22.9%)	3.46

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
	politically oppressed						
Overall Mean							3.56

Table 3 reveals a strong relationship between socioeconomic and political marginalisation and community restiveness in the Niger Delta Region. Items 1, 6, and 8 recorded high mean scores of 4.27, 3.97, and 4.02 respectively indicating a widespread perception that crude oil exploitation without corresponding community development, inadequate social amenities, and significant inequality in resource distribution are key drivers of discontent and restiveness in the region. Furthermore, statements regarding political marginalisation (Item 10, mean = 3.46) and the exclusion of youths from decision-making processes (Item 5, mean = 3.52) reveal the sense of systemic exclusion felt by community members. The low mean score of 2.29 for infrastructure development by multinational oil companies further highlights the limited visible benefits of oil activities in the region. Overall, the cumulative mean of 3.56 suggests a general agreement that socioeconomic deprivation and political exclusion are closely linked to the persistent restiveness witnessed in the Niger Delta communities.

4.4. Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Strategies

Table 4: Effectiveness of strategies for resolving oil-related conflicts in the region

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	We are always encouraged to dialogue with Oil companies so as to settle peacefully.	16 (6.1%)	32 (12.2%)	50 (19.1%)	102 (38.9%)	62 (23.7%)	3.62
2	Involving the youth in negotiation between community and Oil Firm's representatives will help reduce mishaps.	8 (3.1%)	12 (4.6%)	42 (16%)	78 (29.8%)	122 (46.6%)	4.12

S/ N	Statement	Strongly Disagre e	Disagre e	Neutral	Agree	Strongl y Agree	Mea n
Overall Mean							3.87

Table 4 reveals a generally positive perception of youth-inclusive dialogue and negotiation strategies in resolving oil-related conflicts. With a mean of 3.62, respondents moderately agreed that youth are encouraged to engage in dialogue with oil companies. More notably, a higher mean of 4.12 indicates strong agreement that involving youth in negotiations between communities and oil firms would significantly reduce conflicts and mishaps. The overall mean score of 3.87 suggests that youth-inclusive strategies are viewed as effective by the majority of respondents. These findings highlight the critical role of youth participation in fostering peaceful resolutions in oil-impacted communities.

5. Discussions

Firstly, environmental degradation resulting from oil exploration in the Niger Delta was found to have adverse consequences for the health, agriculture, and overall well-being of the affected communities. The oil extraction process has led to extensive land pollution, water contamination, and destruction of local ecosystems which have resulted to food insecurity and health risks for the communities (Kpae and Onwuka, 2023). Such degradation disrupts the livelihoods of local farmers, fisherfolk, and other community members who depend on the land and water for sustenance. As Smaranda et al. (2010) suggest, this environmental harm often leads to a perception of incompatible interests between multinational oil corporations and local communities, escalating conflict as the latter's concerns for cultural preservation and environmental sustainability clash with the former's economic priorities. This conflict, fueled by asymmetrical power dynamics (Christensen et al., 2019), has exacerbated local disenchantment and heightened community unrest.

Secondly, the research reveals that socioeconomic and political marginalisation are closely linked to the persistent restiveness witnessed in the Niger Delta communities. Marginalised communities in the Niger Delta often experience exclusion from political processes, limited access to resources, and inadequate infrastructure, fostering a sense of injustice (Ebiede, 2017). As Onyenekwe et al. (2024) highlight, the resulting socio-political disenfranchisement fuels resentment, making communities more susceptible to unrest and resistance. This marginalisation, coupled with the exploitation of oil resources, intensifies conflicts, especially in regions where local communities feel that their rights and resources are being usurped for the benefit of powerful corporate and political elites.

Lastly, youth-inclusive dialogue and negotiation strategies have been found to be effective in addressing oil-related conflicts in the region. Engaging the youth in discussions and negotiations offers a pathway for resolution, as these individuals represent a vital demographic in the region's socio-political landscape. Including youth in dialogue helps to foster mutual understanding between the oil corporations, government, and communities. These strategies serve as a means to address not only the environmental and political

grievances of the communities but also to empower youth to play constructive roles in community development and peacebuilding (Mahat et al., 2022). The incorporation of youth perspectives provides an avenue for bridging generational divides, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable conflict resolution outcomes.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria remains entrenched in conflict, stemming from historical injustices, socio-economic disparities, environmental degradation, and political instability. The consequences of these conflicts are far-reaching, with significant socio-economic, environmental, and psychological impacts on individuals and communities. Despite numerous peace building initiatives and efforts to address the root causes of conflict, resolving the complex and multifaceted conflicts in the Niger Delta remains a formidable challenge. The effectiveness of past and present conflict resolution efforts has been hampered by various challenges, including deep-rooted grievances, mistrust among stakeholders, limited institutional capacity, and the presence of armed groups and criminal networks. Moreover, the volatile security situation and the absence of effective governance structures exacerbate tensions and undermine efforts to foster lasting peace and stability in the region. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that prioritises inclusivity, dialogue, and sustainable development, while also addressing the underlying socio-economic and environmental drivers of conflict.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Government agencies and oil companies should implement rigorous environmental remediation initiatives to improve healthcare facilities, and invest in agricultural revitalisation programmes to mitigate the adverse impacts of oil exploration on community health, farming, and livelihoods.
- ii. Policymakers and oil firms should prioritise infrastructure development, promote equitable distribution of oil revenues, and involve community members particularly marginalised groups in decision-making processes to address socioeconomic and political exclusion and reduce restiveness.
- iii. Community leaders, government bodies, and oil companies should formalise and fund regular youth engagement forums, negotiation training programmes, and conflict resolution initiatives to harness youth participation in fostering lasting peace and cooperation in the Niger Delta.

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