



Oil production and conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Social Sciences Research

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Abstract

Nigeria, the sixth largest producer of oil in the world has witnessed years of conflict, and oil production has been at the centre of this conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta for over six decades. The main objective of this paper is to establish the nexus between oil production and conflict in the Niger Delta. The study adopted the *Ex Post Facto* research design using both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. It adopted the frustration-aggression theory in its analysis. Findings reveal that the federal government over the years through various laws and policies accounted for both violent and non-violent responses that trigger conflict in the region, such as the Land Use Decree of 1978 and the Derivation Principle. The paper therefore recommends that government should put in place a policy that reserves certain quota of employment opportunities in the oil industry for the people of the region as this will go a long way in reducing conflict.

Keywords: *Conflicts, Militancy, Oil production, Poverty, Violence*

Introduction

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has a large reservoir of oil and gas. Thus the hub of exploration and production activities of multinational oil companies in the country. These activities had over the years resulted in the pollution of the air, sea and land in the region causing serious ecological and environmental degradation (Smith, 2013).

A historical excursion in to the Nigerian oil industry according to Frynas (2000) revealed that the first exploration was conducted by the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation which was a subsidiary of German company in 1907. The company was forced out of operation following the amalgamation of 1914 and the outbreak of the first World War which resulted in the defeat of Germany in 1918. Consequently, British companies took over the concessions for oil exploration in 1938. Shell and British Petroleum (BP) became the main beneficiaries of the fall of Germany. Meanwhile, drilling continued until Shell-BP announced the further discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in 1956 and other communities in 1958 and since then the Niger Delta became synonymous with oil exploration and production activities. This led to the influx of other major multinational oil companies (Mobil, Elf, Agip etc) and their technology which catalyzed the rapid growth of the Nigerian oil industry and has remained largely dominated by multinational oil companies till date (Gambo, 2008).

Similarly, alongside the massive endowment has been the existence of conflict which dates back to 1854 when the British Royal Niger Company terrorized the indigenous leaders and merchants over the control of palm oil and slave trade. The conflicts led to the exile of some notable leaders of the region that opposed the exploitative trade such as, King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny and King Jaja of Opobo to mention a few (Duru, 2010). According to Duru, (2010), in 1966, the region witnessed a 12day revolution by a Niger Delta indigene by name Isaac Adaka Boro, who led a small guerilla army of Ijaws to declare the 'Niger Delta Republic'. They were over-came by

the Federal troops, tried for treason and condemned to death. This sentence was however waived by the then military Head of state General Yakubu Gowon (Azaiki, 2009).

As earlier stated, these activities never went without serious negative consequences on both the ecosystem and the socioeconomic activities of the inhabitants of the region. According to Azaiki, (2009), rather than experiencing development after over six decades of oil exploration and production, the region and its inhabitants has remained largely underdeveloped. He further posits that since oil exploration, exploitation and production are partly land base related activities, it led to the displacement and loss of the inhabitant's heritage and their traditional means of livelihood which is fishing and farming, thus leaving the people to groan under harsh conditions (Azaiki, 2009). Corroborating this position, Smith (2013) asserts that the only sources of livelihood for the Niger Delta communities was fishing and farming which have been destroyed as a result of pollution, the inhabitants were suffering from both environmental and health hazards without other means of survival since they were unemployed and lived in abject poverty and utter neglect it triggered conflict.

With the negative attitude of both the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies on the development of the region through decades of alienation and marginalization of the indigenous people from their God given resources by the former, and the renegeing from Memoranda of Understanding signed with the communities to compensate them for displacement and damages suffered by the latter. This set the stage for subsequent tension, agitation and conflict. Efforts by the ethnic communities of the region to correct such through decades of pleas, media, representation and litigations made to relevant authorities to sincerely address their plight all failed hence, the inhabitants also changed from their non-violent phase of the 70s, 80s and 90s to the more radicalized violent phase as witnessed especially in the return to civilian rule as a

means of mobilizing and resisting their marginalization, neglect and underdevelopment thus the conflict (Omotola, 2006).

On the other hand, the federal government over the years had responded with the setting up of different boards/ commissions to intervene in the provision of infrastructure ranging from the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 (Azaiki, 2009) the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 1999 (Gambo, 2008). The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2009 and the last efforts was the introduction of the Amnesty programme which was geared towards providing social and economic infrastructure in the region and subsequently bring the conflict to an end.

On the contrast position, the federal government over time had equally responded with harsh, draconian policies which have triggered conflict in the region. Beginning with the Land Use Decree of 1978 which gave the government power over all lands in the country making the federal government the one that decide, dictates and dominates the tempo of events in the oil industry (OShita, p.78). The Petroleum Production and Distribution (Anti-sabotage) Decree No. 35 of 1975 was aimed at safeguarding the oil companies and their facilities against any act of sabotage by the restive people of the Niger Delta. This further made it an offence punishable by death, by firing squad or twenty (21) years imprisonment. It was this injurious legislation that led to the systematic use of violence and murder against the people of the region that culminated in the arrest and execution of 9 Ogoni rights activist (Ken Saro-Wiwa inclusive). Such actions had further fueled the conflicts between the federal government, the oil companies and the people of the region causing angry youth to become more restive and confrontational to both government and multinational oil companies. These they did by taking up arms against security agencies, destruction of oil infrastructures, kidnapping of oil workers and demanding for huge sums as ransoms leading to

conflicts thus making the region a hot bed of anarchy and conflict for years. It is against this background that this study interrogates the nexus between oil production and conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This study will add to existing literature on the Niger Delta by proffering solutions on maintaining the minimal peace in the region. This paper is divided into five(5) parts starting with introduction, literature review, methodology, findings/discussion and conclusion.

Literature Review

Conflicts in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria can be seen as a resource conflict. It dates back to the arrival of the British Royal Niger Company that terrorized the indigenous leaders and merchants for the control of palm oil and slave trade and continued till the discovery of crude oil (Duru, 2010). For over about four decades now, hardly has any issue pertaining Nigeria generated more interest among international commentators, observers, and scholars than the conflict in the Niger Delta region of the country (Olowu, 2010). Since Nigeria depends on oil rent, taxes and royalties paid by multinational oil companies and on profits gained from its equity stakes in those investments (Omeje, 2005). Oil products alone account for 80% of Nigerian government revenues, 95% of export receipts and 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Watts, 2004). The Niger Delta alone accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's oil revenue, and according to Evuleocha (2005), the region hosts over eighteen multi-national oil companies accounting for 99% of oil production making it the goose that lays the golden egg.

Following the successful drilling of oil well in Oloibiri (present day Bayelsa state) in 1956 by the Anglo-Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Company, the communities in the region have known only poverty, pain and privation (ERA 2000). Oil spillage which pollutes farmlands, fishing streams, ponds and rivers, and the indiscriminate flaring of gas which poisons the air they breathe has remained the brutal fact of their daily lives. In addition, the peoples of the Niger Delta do not receive any major share of the oil

proceeds obtained from their land, the bulk of which is appropriated by the Nigerian government and its multinational oil partners. The Niger Delta communities have been protesting against this injustice peacefully for decades as the political framework that sustains this reality of poverty, backwardness and neglect persists till date despite the several changes in governments over years (ERA, 2000).

Despite its richness in oil and gas deposits, the Niger Delta region still remains one of the poorest regions in the world, though paradoxically it is also one of the richest regions in terms of natural resources. Aside oil and gas, the region boost of other resources like agriculture, steel, tin, rubber, palm produce and many more (Sagay, Edo and Avweromre, 2011). According to Olowu (2010), a first time visitor to the region needs no further evidence of the roots of the conflict in the region as vast tell-tale signs abound; severe damage to the flora and fauna of the region; marked underdevelopment, abject poverty; naked squalor; lack and neglect of basic infrastructural facilities like portable water, passable roads and equipped hospitals. In the same vein, arable land, vast farmlands have been turned into unproductive resources as the same level of wanton destruction to land has been done to marine life, leading to declining resources for the people whose livelihood depends highly on fishing and farming. Consequently, the Niger Delta has remained the most underdeveloped region in Nigeria and for decades, oil has been at the centre of the violent conflict between ethnic minorities, federal government and oil companies; thus placing the region on the hot spot map of the world (Ejobowah, 2000).

According to Aka (2003), these situations are further made worse by the unwillingness of the Federal Government of Nigeria and its joint venture partners to sincerely integrate environmental concerns into national development. Thus the perennial failure of successive regimes in Nigeria whether military or civilian, to translate the enormous taxes and royalties accruing from the resources lifted from the region into wealth

generation and empowerment for the host populations manifested in growing resentment, restiveness and the current conflict (Aka, 2003 cited in Olowu 2010).

According to Okonjo-Iweala, Soludo and Mukhtar (2003), Nigeria generated about US\$300 billion between 1970 and 2000 from oil alone amounting to 96% of the country's foreign earnings. Against this background, it is expected that Nigeria should have reduced poverty with prudent management of resources, and also rank among the richest countries of the world. Paradoxically, Nigeria is the poverty headquarters of the world presently based on the recent projection by the World Poverty Clock compiled by Brookings Institute poverty index which indicates that Nigeria had overtaken India as the nation with the largest number of its citizens in extreme poverty with an estimated 87 million living on less than \$1.90 a day (Adebayo 2018), and the Niger Delta region which is the goose that lays the golden egg has been enmeshed in grinding poverty till date. Corroborating this, Ikejiaku (2009) argued that the level of poverty in the Niger Delta has gone beyond the level of absolute poverty to the level of poverty qua poverty, a term he coined to describe the practical absolute poverty where majority of the populace find life excruciating because it is difficult to meet their basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and education beyond primary school level. He posits further, that it is very pathetic that an average Niger-Deltan has grown poorer over the past decades, notwithstanding the enormous natural resources available in the region. Thus poverty qua poverty is a situation no human would be contented with because of the agonizing pains that follows that lack of basic needs. Thus the people have reacted negatively leading to conflict.

Furthermore, the formula and principles for revenue allocation have been so manipulated to disempowered the 'original' owners of oil from which the bulk of the nation's revenue is generated. According to Omotola (2006), the situation was so bad that the derivation principle was almost removed from revenue allocation at the

expense of such principles as land mass, population, fiscal efficiency, terrain and internal revenue efforts. The aforementioned are the principles that put the Niger Delta region at a disadvantaged position when compared to other regions in the country. Normally, derivations would have advanced the cause of the region, it started from 100% in 1946, remained 100% in 1953 when the Western region pushed for it despite the 50% recommendation by the Hick-Philipson Commission in 1951 and remained same to 1970. However, it was reduced to 45% during the civil war, by 1975, it was reduced to 20% by the Obasanjo regime; Shagari's regime pegged it at 5% in 1981, squeezed to as low as 1.5% under the Buhari regime. It was raised to 3% by the Babangida regime and currently stands at 13% since it was adjusted upward by the Abacha regime through the 1994/95 Constitutional conference due to the growing conflict in the region (Ofeimun, 2000; Eteng 1998 cited in Gambo 2008). This derivation principle is at the heart of the conflict as the acute sense that the wealth derived from the Niger Delta land is siphoned off by the federal government and used for the development of the majority ethnic nationalities equally breeds conflict. It is on record that resource distribution in Nigeria has historically been skewed to favour the Northern region (Eteng, 1996), and seems to have remained till date.

However, the aforementioned action and policy gave rise to another key dimension to the Niger Delta conflict in the recent past known as 'Resource Control'. According to Abdullahi (2014), the controversy and agitation for resource control in Nigeria is not new as it has been on since the advent of crude oil as the main stay of Nigerian economy and the quest for justice and an end to marginalization of the region. However, the return to democratic rule in 1999 brought it to the front burner of national discourse again championed by the oil producing states as it became a political term for the efforts of the Niger Delta peoples to get a fairer share of their God-given resources. Regardless of the constitutional provision that grants that nothing less than 13% of the

revenue accruing to the Federation Account should go to the producers of natural resources based on derivation, the Obasanjo administration however remitted only 7.9% throughout his eight-year tenure. Such anomaly helps to fuel conflict. Efforts to have it increased from the present 13% to 25-50% by the south-south delegate to the 2005 constitutional reform conference were not approved. Till date the quest for resource control has become a rallying cry for the long suffering peoples of the Niger Delta region who want justice and commensurate compensation for the havoc caused to their environment which has left them in want and penury.

The existence of high level corruption in the oil sector is symptomatic of the endemic corruption in the country and it is a key driver of conflict. According to Ahmed, Saidu and Umar (2016), the short run availability of such resources increases the opportunity for its theft by greedy and desperate political leaders. As those in control of assets use the wealth to maintain themselves in power, either by legal means (spending on political campaigns) or coercion (e.g. funding of militias). They further posit that corruption is the hall mark of the oil industry itself since the presence of oil and gas wealth has over the years produced weak state structures that make corrupt practices to thrive among government officials, and this comes in various forms. In Nigeria, the ruling class has maintained the country's dependence on revenues from crude oil as a quick and ready source of petro-dollars (Oshita, 2009). He further asserts that Nigeria is a dysfunctional and highly corrupt country till date, having spent long years under military dictatorship; have perfected its neglect and victimization of the oil rich region by enacting decrees such as the Land Use Decree on March 29th 1978 under the military regime of General Obasanjo which alienated all land rights from the local communities that owned them and vested all in the Federal Government (Oshita, 2009).

Conceptual Clarifications

Oil Production

Oil production is seen as the quantities of crude that is extracted from the ground after the removal of inert matters and impurities (www.data.oecd.org). In the same vein, it can be defined as the process of extracting the hydrocarbons and separating the mixture of liquid hydrocarbon, gas, water, and solids, and further removing the constituents that are non-soluble from more than one well since, oil is almost always processed at the refinery; and natural gas may be processed to remove impurities either in the field or at a natural gas processing plant (www.oilandgasmps.org).

Conflicts

Conflicts are seen as part of human existence and a natural phenomenon as it's basically a part of their experiences. This stems from the fact that in every society, there are bound to be disputes, claims, counter-claims and contestation over resources. According to Franke (2007), conflict is about gaining a relative advantage or control in the struggle over who gets what, when, and how? This surely explains the advantage the federal government has in the allocation of the resources that accrues from the oil producing communities, when it is distributed and how it is apportioned over the years and, it is this that fuels conflict in the Niger Delta.

Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria geographically lays between latitudes 4^o and 6^o north of the Equator and 4^o and 8^o east of the Greenwich. By political delineation, it comprises the states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. This makes it coterminous with all of Nigeria's oil producing states. Stretching over 29,100km² of swamp land in the littoral fringes of the country, it embraces one of the

world's largest wetlands, over 60% of Africa's largest mangrove forests, and one of the world's most extensive (Azaiki, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Frustration-Aggression theory as its analytic construct. The theory was propounded by McDougall and Freud but, popularized by John Dollard and his colleagues at the Yale University. The theory is based on the following assumptions: that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of aggression (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1990). They further defined frustration as "an interference with the occurrence of an integrated goal response at its proper time in the behavior sequence". This means that whenever a barrier is interposed between persons and their desired goals, an extra amount of energy will be mobilized to dislodge it. For Stagner (1967, p.16), when energy mobilization is continuous and unsuccessfully channeled, it flows over into generalized destructive behavior. The theory further asserts that not every frustrating situation produces some overt aggression, as acts of aggression can be inhibited especially when their commission would lead to punishment or undesirable consequences. Thus the expectation of punishment reduces overt aggression and the greater the certainty and amount of punishment anticipated for an aggressive act, the likely for that act to occur. This to some extent did not fit correctly into the Niger Delta conflict as the stick/carrot approach of the federal government failed to stop the conflict, rather it raged on. Similarly, the self-aggression or regression aspect of the theory which is an extreme situation where individuals injure selves or commits suicide even though not a preferred type of aggression has not also occurred in the region. Finally, it is assumed that any act of aggression either direct or indirect is a release of aggressive energy and a reduction in the instigation to aggression. The approach scientifically studies and gives the most common explanation for violent behavior emanating from

inability of people to fulfill their needs. This is explained further in the differences between what people feel they deserve or want to what they actually get i.e. -the “want-get-ratio” and the difference between “expected need satisfactions” and “actual need satisfaction” all lies at the centre of this theory. In other words, where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. The central premise of the frustration-aggression theory is that aggression will always result in frustration. This is also the central argument that Gurr’s relative deprivation thesis addresses by noting that “the greater the discrepancy, however marginal between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result” (Gurr, 1970).

Therefore, the main explanation is that aggression is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual or group is denied either directly or by the indirect consequences of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such person or group to express their anger through violence that will be directed at those they hold responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. This assertion is a truism and explains the ceaseless attacks on oil workers and installations by aggrieved youths. Given the essential conditions, an individual or group whose basic desires is thwarted and experiences a profound sense of dissatisfaction and anger is more likely to react to his condition by directing aggressive behavior at what is perceived as being responsible for thwarting those desires, or at a substitute. Thus the greater the perceived import of the desires, the more vigorous and intense the aggressive response. Thus where feelings of frustration become widespread among the population and the feeling is that people are getting less than they deserve as has been in the Niger Delta region, the more aggression that is exhibited thus leading to conflict that has become intractable over the years in the Delta.

Methodology

The study adopted the *Ex Post Facto* design to investigate the relationship between oil production and conflicts in the Niger Delta. The study area comprised four states of the Niger Delta region; namely; Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers that experienced the highest conflict in the region and, Akwaibom was added as the highest oil producing state in the country. It adopted purposive sampling and employed survey instrument such as key informant interviews, focus group discussion, questionnaire for the generation of data in the region. The states have a population of **14,611,35** based on the 2006 National Population Census.

The study selected one local government council in each senatorial district arriving at 3 local government council per state making a total of 12 Local governments in all that were studied. It made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data. The secondary data was mainly library based and consisted of reports, government white-papers; Oil Company bulletins textbooks journals, internet websites, newspapers and magazines. The primary data consisted of results from questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Adopting Krejcie and Morgan (1970) techniques, **384** of the population was sampled in each state giving a sum total of **1536** questionnaire administered. A total of **1284** which equals **84%** were received, while a total of **252** equals **16%** were not returned.

Findings /discussion

This section presents the findings of the study.

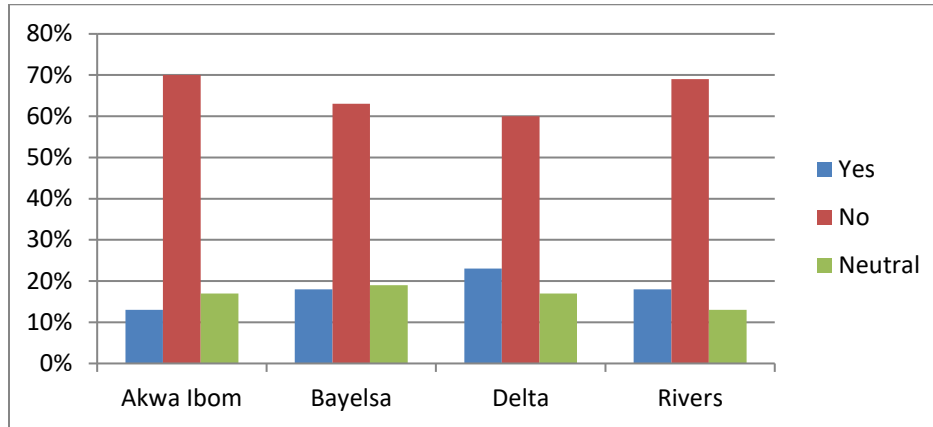


Fig. 4.1 : The Rate of Conflict in the Niger Delta before oil production

Figure 4.1 presents that 13%, 18%, 23% and 18% of the respondents from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states respectively which averaged 17.99% of the study admitted that conflicts existed in the region before the discovery of crude oil. While 70%, 63%, 60% and 69% of the respondents from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers respectively which averaged 65.52% of the study which is the majority, stated that there were no conflicts in the Niger Delta before the discovery of oil. Also on this, 17%, 19%, 17% and 13% of the respondents which averaged 16.4% of the respondents in the study area were neutral.

Violent Conflict in the Niger Delta Propelled by the Discovery and Production of Oil

To further investigate the link between oil production and conflict particularly for those who believed that there were no conflicts before the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta region, the following question was asked; do you agree that the beginning of violent

conflict in the Niger-Delta region was as a result of discovery and production of oil? Figure iishows the percentages of respondents across the study area.

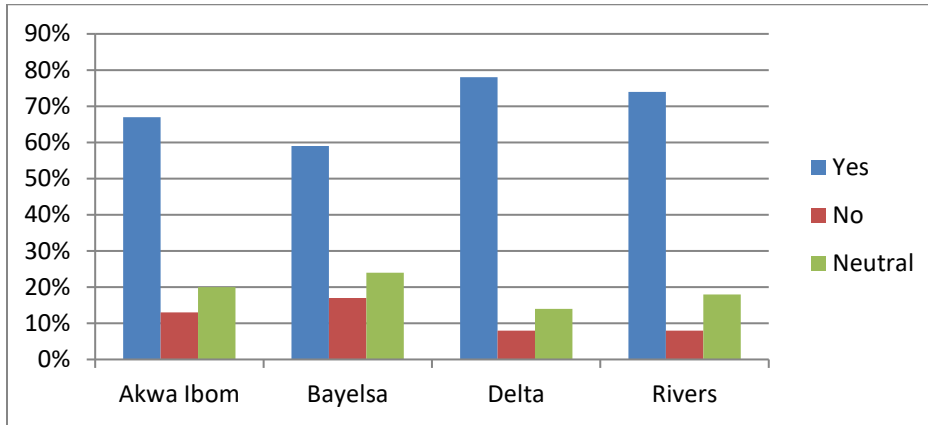


Fig 4.2: Violent conflict in the Niger Delta as a result of the discovery and production of oil

Figure ii presents the responses that the beginning of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta were as a result of the discovery and production of oil in the region. The responses show that 67%, 59%, 78% and 74% which averaged 69.45% which represents majority of the respondents across the states under study admitted that the beginning of the conflicts in the Niger-Delta was due to the discovery and production of crude oil in the region. Whereas, 13%, 17%, 8% and 8% of the respondents from across the same states which averaged 11.52% of the respondent’s respectively acknowledged that the discovery and production of oil did not bring about conflict in the region but rather the continual denial of the oil producing communities the benefits of oil production that led to the current conflicts been experienced. In other words factors such as neglect of the oil producing region by the federal government and oil companies, lack of basic social amenities, high level of unemployment among the youth, environmental pollution and deplorable condition of the land, political misrepresentation of leaders, lack of general development of the region and domination of the region by other ethnic nationalities as

well as excessive federal government control over the resources were the major causes of the current conflicts in the Niger-Delta region.

This is also very correct as the mere discovery of oil cannot cause conflict. After all, oil was similarly discovered in the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Norway, Iran etc. and there was no conflict in those settings. Corroborating this, a male respondent in his early 60s in a face-to face interview in Lokoja (on the 23rd of May, 2019 at 2:00pm) stated that the neglect of the region by the government and oil companies, the absence of infrastructure and general under-development of the communities which had led to the blockage of the waterways due to oil spillage are some of the causes of the conflict. He further said that government in agreement with multinational oil corporations release money to community/traditional leaders whenever there is agitation, and that these moneys are diverted while the region continue to lose out. He added that government in conjunction with multinational oil giants carry out seismic surveys which includes making an underground explosion in family farm lands without notification, and that when oil is not found, the testing destroys the farmlands, and the farmers are left without compensation. That these actions of betrayal of the region by its own people especially the traditional leaders and elites are the key triggering aspect of the present conflict. On the other hand, the same respondent opined that he would want to refer to what is happening as an 'operation' as against conflict since the government and the multinational oil corporations move into any part of the region, do whatever they want to do without the consent of the host communities, and when confronted they take whatever action they deem fit, hence the region is the big loser at the receiving end.

However, 20%, 24%, 14% and 18% of the respondents which averaged 19.03% of the population under study respectively were neutral.

Based on the objective of the research, majority of the respondents stated that there were insignificant conflicts in the Niger Delta before the discovery and the production

of oil. This finding confirms the views of Omotola, (2006), Azaiki, (2009), Duru (2010) who all asserted that conflict in the Niger Delta is not a thing of recent past. It shows that the earliest conflict started with the colonialist over the control of palm oil trade, thus a resource conflict similar to the present one. However, it is quite different from the current which has assumed a multi-dimensional nature as it is now inter and intra community, between federal government and the indigenous oil communities as well as between the communities and the multi-national oil companies.

This response, the study believed is based on the nature and dimensions of the current conflict (this fourth republic) which is more magnified in scope and deadlier thus making previous conflicts a flash in the pan. This is correct to the extent that the discovery and production of oil led to the influx of multi-national oil companies into the Niger Delta for exploration activities as confirmed by Gambo (2008), Azaiki (2009). This position was corroborated by a male respondent in his mid-50s in Port Harcourt in a telephone interview (on the 18th of May, 2019 at 12noon) when he asserted that right from the colonial period when oil was discovered, the colonial government established the Oil Mineral Act which made all minerals within the country the patrimony of the federal government. He added that the introduction of the Land Use Act which also made all land in the country the property of the federal government are all drivers of conflict. He posits further that it is these obnoxious laws that led to the alienation of the region from their God given resources, reckless exploration and production of oil by the multinational oil companies without adherence to global standard practice that led to the terrible environmental degradation which impacted negatively on the livelihoods of the inhabitants and the care free attitude of the federal government in reaction to the despoilment of the environment that resulted in conflicts.

According to him, since the people of the region have been dispossessed of their resources and excluded from the management of the resources within their home land, they became very restive. In addition, having lost their means of survival they now

turned 'resource predators' engaging in oil bunkering activities that have pitched them against security agencies, as years of feeling humiliated and suffering from bottled –up anger led to their asking for a greater share and control of the resources hence the conflict in the region.

Again, about 69.5% respondents across the region agreed that large scale conflict came with the discovery and production of oil thus confirming the position of majority scholars such as Aka, (2003), Azaiki (2009), Oshita (2009), Duru, (2010) to mention a few. The scholars have argued on the prevalence of high poverty and harsh economic conditions that pervade the region thus spawning conflicts.

Conclusion

Nigeria is indeed a major player in the global oil business and this oil emanates mainly from the Niger Delta region of the country. It is also a fact that conflicts had existed in the region before the discovery of oil, but today's conflict is multifaceted occurring between the oil communities and the federal government on one hand and between the communities and the multinational oil companies on the other. It has become more-deadlier today and has led to huge loss of lives, investments, resources and revenues by all sides in the conflict. Thus the time to end it is now by correcting all past ills of over six decades since conflict can never lead to peace and development. The paper therefore makes the following recommendations:

- i The government should formulate a policy that reserves certain quota of employment opportunities in the oil sector to the people of the Niger Delta region as it will go a long way in reducing the much talked about domination and marginalization by other ethnic majorities.
- ii Government should embark on de-militarization of the region, as the high presence of the Joint Task Force (JTF) has not reduced conflict in the region.

- iii The government should re-visit and repeal all obnoxious legislation surrounding the oil industry to end conflict, and most importantly ensure the clean-up of the region.
- iv The government should open up the oil industry and make its activities more transparent to checkmate corrupt activities.
- v All the three tiers of government and oil multinationals operating in the region should engage in massive infrastructural building to help develop the Niger Delta as commensurate to the level of resources that is taken out since it is the goose that lays the golden egg.

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