

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF HOST COMMUNITIES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Man activities occasioned by petroleum exploration in Nigeria have devastating consequences on oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region. These activities ranging from water, air and land pollutions, extinction of wild elements, deforestation, desertification and climate change. In order to address this ugly predicament in the oil producing communities, two objectives and hypotheses were raised to guide the study. Relevant literatures were consulted. The Elite theory was adopted as a theoretical framework for the study. The cross-sectional research design was employed. 45, 000 inhabitants were selected from Umunede, Otor-Owhe and Jesse Communities in Delta State. 300 respondents were picked as the sample size which was determined by Taro Yamane (1967) formula. Questionnaire was used as a major instrument for data collection. The research questions were answered by using descriptive statistics of simple percentage while the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square statistical tool to determine the degree of freedom and relationship between variables. Based on the analysis, it was revealed that the interventionist organization called DESOPADEC established to provide adequate welfare packages to oil host communities has not done enough due to corruption and political interference by the state government. Therefore, the study recommended among others that DESOPADEC as an interventionist agency created by Delta State government to provide welfare to oil host communities should adhere strictly to the constitutional provision in establishing it. The objective of the commission is to provide social amenities in oil host communities and as such corrupt practices, political interference upon its finances should be avoided and more proactive measures should be taken to provide the needed social amenities in oil host communities in Delta State

Keywords: Petroleum Exploration, oil, Pollution, Environment, Host Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

The world has been grappling with the critical issues of the environment. These issues bordered on health, economic, agriculture and aquaculture activities which are human related problems. The issues are increasingly and rapidly advancing and as such they have become a great concern to global leaders, environmentalists, critical stakeholders, policy makers and the general public. Such concern has led to the organization of high profile conferences and submits geared towards addressing the horrifying implications on the use of the world natural resources (Edo, Clark & Etemike, 2023). The health of the environment is a good indicator of the health of any nation. Governments have a duty to give the environment topmost priority beyond mere political pronouncements. The ravages of pollution, deforestation/desertification, erosion, climate change and sundry manifestations of environmental degradation show that much still needs to be done to ensure environmental protection (Kütting, and Hermann, 2019).

The administration of Chief Olusegu Obanssjo created the Niger Delta Development Commission with agreed contributory percentages from the federal government and the multinational oil companies. However, many factors led to the unsatisfactory performance of the board. The unsatisfactory performance of the Niger Delta Development Commission make critical stakeholders to start seeking for explanations and the outcome was the realization that derivations paid to state governments and appropriate same without special recognition of the communities who produces the oil is a colossal error. It was emphasized that, all the state government receiving the 13% attained courtesy of intense agitation have no special interest in the provision of social amenities for the oil bearing communities (Okafor, 2020).

The critical stakeholders especially from Delta State insisted that the oil bearing communities deserve a good and fair share of their God given resources. Consecutively, like minded persons were drawn from the oil producing communities. Series of meetings begin to take place in Delta State and agreed to take the battle for the control of the 13% derivations to Abuja the seat of power. The aim of going to again is to lobby the national assembly to enact an act of parliament that the entire derivation fund should be released to the oil bearing communities. Communities were tasked and paid by willing stakeholders from such communities. Chief Wellington Okrika who was one of the conveners was appointed leader. It became a clash of interest between the stakeholders and the government of Delta State led by Chief Onanefe Ibori who wants the entire funds to be managed by government. As the battle continued, nationwide dimension was introduced to give the struggle the needed force and national outlook.

Having achieved this, the pressure continued to be mounted on the president and the National Assembly and in 2005, at Abuja, the name host communities of Nigeria (HOSTCOM) producing oil and gas was adopted as the official name to be used after bringing together all groups with similar interests. After uncountable trips to Abuja, The president told HOSTCOM that it will be unfair for the entire fund for derivation to go directly to the Host communities producing oil and gas as some states will crumble just as the state governments shouldn't manage the fund and a middle of the road approach was adopted in that, the government of Delta State should create a commission like already had in Ondo State and that 50% of the fund should pass through the board/Commission for the development of the Host communities and having been satisfied by all parties, the Delta State House of Assembly passed the bill for the creation of the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC) (Adesina, 2020).

However, Delta State which is the area of study was created on 27th August, 1991 from the defunct Bendel State is an oil rich state in the south- south geopolitical zone of Nigeria and has excess crude oil which are prevalent in most communities in the State. There is a huge amount of crude oil deposit in many communities hence the name Oil Host Communities of Delta State. For instance, there are numerous oil wells, flow stations, oil pipelines in addition to gas flares sites in many communities like Uzere, Kokori, Ogidigben, Ozoro, Focados among others that make up the various Oil Host Communities in Delta State (Agbogidi, Okonta and Dolor, 2021:17). Oil, among others, is said to be one of the natural deposits God provided for the people of Delta State. There are over 200 Oil Host Communities and 21 L.G.A in Delta State. The group that promotes the interest of these Oil producing communities is the Delta State Chapter of the host Communities of Nigeria Producing Oil & Gas (HOSTCOM). Some Oil Host Communities in Delta State include; Uzere, Oleh/Olomoro, Ozoro, Kokori, Jesse, Otor-Oweh, Umuti, Adegbojern/Otumara, Ebeden, Okuntu, Youbebe amongst others.

However, another dimension of the debate which is who should control Nigeria's huge revenue from oil wealth and the matter was brought to Nigeria's Supreme court by the federal government were the matter was first heard in April 1, 2001 and its verdict was in 5 April, 2002 which favored the federal government more. However, the effects of these Oil crises led to the creation of interventionist agencies like NDDC and DESOPADEC in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. As the aforementioned interventionist agencies were established to address the developmental challenges and infrastructural problems faced in the Niger Delta as a result of negative effect of oil production on the environment arid their source of livelihood (Efebeh, 2021). Nevertheless, a look at the state of oil communities in Delta State shows that there is a dire need of social amenities because of the level of infrastructural decay prevalent in these areas.

Despite the discovery of oil, Nigeria is still a developing nation. Had the oil resource been appropriately managed, it could have eased Nigeria's transition as a developing nation. Ojabo (2020) opined that oil development turned out to be false euphoria, prolonged and deepened Nigeria's dependence on expensive imported commodities, distorted the economy and society towards dualism and disunion and undermined confidence in her ability to raise a modern economy on her resource. Hence the resource was converted to waste to benefit the elite. Social amenities decay experienced in oil communities has worsen the state of oil producing communities in Delta State. There has been a dire need for social amenities in oil host communities in Delta State. An Oil Community like Eseimogbene community in Burutulocal government area of Delta State is one of the communities suffering from lack of social amenities and the condition of its primary school is nothing to write about (Daily Post, 2018). The state at which oil Communities in Delta State needs amenities is alarming and as such need to be provided with all seriousness.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The length at which DESOPADEC is going in providing social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State is seen by the youths of these respective areas as not enough. This has resulted in different frequent protest by the youths in oil bearing communities. Community leaders are not left out in the demand for amenities as Vanguard (2017) reports that over 60 community leaders from riverine towns and villages in Delta and Bayelsa States congregated at Bomadi, headquarters of Bomadi Local Government Area, Delta State, freshly, to confer on the dearth of social amenities and deteriorating security challenges in the oil-rich areas. It can be stated that social amenities remains a basic necessities in improving the wellbeing of inhabitants of any community. In present day times, inhabitants are calling for their leaders to provide primary social amenities that would not only assure their happiness and welfare but additionally promote their safety and socio-economic development (Obiechina, 2021). Sokoh (2018) noted that the present situation of the oil bearing communities in term of adequate development is pathetic because people could not have access to basic needs of life such as potable water, health care, power supply, roads, housing and so on. The reality of governance in Delta State, demonstrates a situation where government and multinational oil companies keep on extracting from the environment without any commitment to the development and welfare of the people in oil host communities (Sokoh, 2018).

The basic social amenities include shelter, clean drinking water, schools, markets hospitals etc. However, the lack of these social amenities can be said to be a resultant effect of the financial embezzlement as mostly perpetrated by some staff of DESOPADEC and contractors. This Day (2022, April 18) reports that a contractor with the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC), has alleged extensive unfold corruption in the commission, describing it as a “coins cow” of the government in the state. The contractor, Dr. Ishaq Osagie-Eweka, in addition bemoaned unwholesome practices in the commission in an assertion made by him to Journalists in Benin City, capital of Edo State. This wide spread corruption reported by This Day 2022 is what has resulted in poorly executed and abandonment of projects. And can be said to also affect the performance of DESOPADEC in the provision of social amenities to Oil Host Communities in Delta State. It is on this identified gap that this study intends to fill.

3. OBJECTIVES TO THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of Petroleum Exploration on Oil Host Communities in Delta State. The specific objectives are to:

- assess the impact of Petroleum Exploration on Oil Host Communities in Delta State
- DESOPADEC and Provision of Social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H01: There is no significant relationship between Petroleum Exploration and Oil Host Communities in Delta State

H02: There is no significant relationship between DESOPADEC and Provision of Social Amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State

5. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Petroleum Exploration and Oil Host Communities in Delta State

The various stages of mineral, oil business, geophysical prospecting drilling, production, refining and distribution has caused a lot of environmental stress (Aghalino, 2020:3),. Because of operational accident, equipment failure and some other reasons, some quantities of oil are released into the environment during oil exploration, storage, processing, and distribution. This consequently causes environmental pollution. Impact of oil spillage is noticeable in the flora and fauna of the oil producing communities in Delta state (Ikporukpo, 2021:20). Aghalino (2020:1) opined that the oil spillage has latent physical impact on the people arising from land preparation for seismic activities, oil platform sites, access road, right ways of pipeline and test samples pits. This inevitably has led to land alienation, deprivation, deforestation, and degradation with scanty compensation paid to land owners notwithstanding. Associated with the above problem of land is the removal of soil cover, attendant version as the case may be (Ikporukpo, 2021:15).

One of the long-term effects of these activities is usually a reduction in crop yield in an environment not known to be naturally fertile (Odu 2020; Ikporukpo, 2021). The towering flames resulting from gas burning now seem to the host communities as inevitable consequences of oil production without any health or environmental risk. Soured gas produces sulphur oxide, which are released into the atmosphere. The combination of the compounds mixes up with oxygen and water and produces acid rain with negative effects on the environment. Considering the serious negative effects of gas flaring on the environment the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources proposed that gas flaring would end in Nigeria by 2003 (Edo, Etemike & Clark, 2022).

The oil producing companies jointly fought against the policy as much as they could. In a communiqué, the oil companies argued that accelerating the programme is notional policy and an issue of great economic importance that requires huge investment for the acquisition of the requisite technology, which is not easy to come by. Consequent upon the pressure from the multinational companies, the government rescinded on its initial 2003 deadline and extended it to 2008. Such a compromise on the part of the government makes one to wonder how committed government is to its resolve of attaining terminal flares in the next five years Charles (2013:5). However, Aghalino (2020) identified the impact of oil indicated exploration on oil bearing communities of Delta State.

Oil Exploitation and Socio-Economic Activities

It is certainly not a new thing that the ecological and economic consequences of petroleum development would have multiplier effect on the social and cultural life of the people of oil communities given the near total lack of environmental social responsibility by oil companies and the federal government (Orhero & Edo, 2020). Farmers are forced to turn to other occupations because of the degradation of their land (Ikporukpo 2021:12). Farmers and fishermen who are unable to adjust usually migrate to nearby urban centers such as Warri, Sapele, and Ughelli in

search of greener pastures. The implication of this movement is that the problem of unemployment is worsened in the aforementioned urban centres (Aghalino, 2020:10). This situation led to the shutdown of flow station like the Erhoikie flow station leading to the loss of estimated 44,880 barrel a day there until their demand are meant. Defending their actions, Hon. Idiovwa, said for over fifty years SPDC had marginalized the Orogun community on their facility. According to him, when SPDC divested to NPDC they were not involved even though several letters were written asking for the community representation since none of their sons or daughters was in the management cadre or among the unskilled workforce of the NPDC. This is more disturbing when considered against the backdrop that this flow station is tied to over 42 oil wells. However, in January NPDC made a publication rating this flow station as the second notwithstanding, the community is till poor. The leader of the protesters added that, in the whole of Orogun community for example, there is no medical facility, the market is in terrible shape, and company. Mrs. Mary Dohwoevuroye Obuko, a women leader in the community added her voice thus, “when NPDC took over the mess SPDC left behind in the community in 2013, they said they were aware of the issues and promised to remedy them. After six months they came up with a quick win project as promised but which later turned into a quick kill project” (Vanguard Newspaper, 28 August 2014),

Exploitation of the Socio-Cultural Life

Aside from the deleterious impact of oil exploration, and more ills associated with oil industry there are several socio-cultural setbacks suffered by oil communities. Oil field workers find the teenage girls in their immediate host communities as a ready pool from which they could gratify their sexual urge. In each exploitation site, these migrant workers leave behind venereal diseases, morally polluted girls, and school dropouts. Most societal life support systems like village gods and divinities are been violated. Yet, unlike labour intensive agricultural practices, the petroleum industries offer little or no employment to the displaced and jobless people (Aghalino, 2020:12).

Exploitation of Plants and Aquatic Animals

One conspicuous aspect of the negative impact of the oil industry is certainly the alteration of the ecosystem. Spilled oil is washed into the channels of rivers and streams in oil communities, which causes great havoc in the short run. This havoc includes surface and ground water quality deterioration in terms of portability, aesthetic value, and recreational functions Aghalino, 2020:9). The ecosystem impairment also involves destruction and reduction of fish and aquatic life of the waters. Further findings by Alakpodia (2020:5) revealed that there is vegetation gradient trees slopes towards the gas flaring rendering the land unsuitable for cultivation. This has inevitably led to loss of numerous economic and botanical valuable plants. Traditional healers must now search further into the interior before they can obtain herbs, roots, and barks of trees for treatment of diseases (Lengwati, 2021:99)

Exploitation Human Health

This is one of the fundamental ways the free but harmful means of disposal of natural gas has done so much damage to the health of the people (Aghalino, 2020:9). The Nigeria conservation foundation reveals that in 1994 alone, Nigeria emitted 37 million of carbon dioxide and 12million tones of methane. This means that Nigeria oil fields contribute more to global warming than the rest of the world (National Concord 30th May, 1996:17). Ikelegbe (2019:1) reveals that gas-flaring sites around the western Niger Delta in general generates tremendous heat, which is felt over an average radius of 0.5km thereby causing thermal pollution in the sub-region. Alakpodia (2020) carried out measurement around several gas flare sites found out that temperatures were as high as 40 degrees Celsius. Indeed, the high temperatures around the gas flare sites are an indication that a distinct microclimate had been created by oil spillage. Some of the fishes and animals that escape instant pollution are known to have taken in some toxic substances, which in turns get into human beings that eat them. This will in turn cause infections on man coupled with other side effects in the form of genetic mutations (Olusi, 2020:3). Another very disastrous environmental threat is occasional fire outbreaks resulting from pipelines Vandalization and eruption of oil pipes overdue for replacement.

Exploitation through Oil Companies

It is no exaggeration to say that oil communities have suffered undue political manipulation, intimidation, degradation, victimization, oppression, neglect and injustice without due regard to their loyalty and support to Delta State Government. Associated gases are routinely flared in the course of producing and processing the oil. It seems that the Nigerian case attract more attention given the volume of gas flared since the beginning of commercial oil production in the country. When compared with oil production in the advanced countries data collected by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) in Canada shows that in 1996 about 92% of gases were conserved or used in some other ways. The remaining 8% was flared. This socially responsible attitude towards gas conservation, as demanded partly by environmental requirements in Canada and other advance countries does not apply in Nigeria. (Charles, 2013:1). On the other hand, the companies do very little in terms of transferring technology to the local communities. They prefer

to come with experts in numerous numbers from their home countries. The role of the companies in the development of oil producing communities including is not encouraging. This is because their sole objective is maximizing profit without taking corporate social responsibility (CSR) into consideration. Despite the change from military to civilian government in 1999 there is still widespread deployment of army, navy and paramilitary Mobile Police at oil facilities across the Delta. Much greater sums of money are flowing from the federal government to the Delta region, but ordinary people living in the region see little or no benefit from these funds. A 40-page report "The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend", considers several recent violent incidents around oil facilities and concludes that both the government and the oil company have failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Security forces continue to commit human rights violations with impunity in response to protest and acts of violence at oil facilities. The oil companies remain complicit in many such abuses their stated commitment to respect Human (Human Rights Watch, 2002:15).

Exploitation through Land Use Act

As is the case with other oil-producing countries, the exploitation of oil in Nigeria is carried out under some Legislation. The most important oil-related legislation in Nigeria include: the Petroleum Act 1969, oil pipeline Act 1959, Oil in Navigable Waters Act 1968, Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act 1988, and the Land Use Act 1978. By the petroleum act (continuing a colonial policy), the entire property in petroleum (mineral oils) is vested in the state. The result is that the federal government has absolute right and control over oil resources in the country, which is found only in the Niger Delta region of the country in general. It gives out oil mining rights to oil companies and receives rents and royalties from them. As has been seen above, oil has realized so much money for the Nigerian state over the years.

Under the laws of most countries, 'Land' includes mineral oils entrapped in the land. However, this is not the case with Nigeria. Section 1 of the Interpretation Act 1964 explicitly excludes mineral oils from the meaning of land. Moreover, while oil was vested in the states, ownership of land supporting oil remained vested in communities and families until 1978 when the land Use Act was made. The Act (promulgated as a Decree by the then military government) vested all the lands comprised in the territory of a state of the federation in the governor of the state in 'trust' for all Nigerians. It is significant to note that before the promulgation of the Act oil companies that had obtained mining rights from the federal government, approached oil bearing/land-owning communities for a right of access to the land for its operations. There was a way by which the communities had some sense of participation in oil operations, as they received some compensation for granting access and for any damage to land and any surface rights thereon. It would appear that this sense of participation has been lost since the unity of land rights with oil rights in 1978 (Aghalino, 2020). This undemocratic decree has robbed the people of their right to ownership and control of their lives and resources. Delta State is located in the South-south geographical region of Nigeria. The State lies between longitude 5⁰ and 6⁰ 30 North. The state has population of 4,098,391 with a total of 17440km (2006 population and Housing Census). It has 25 Local Government Areas. This implies that with a 3.2% population growth rate the estimated population of the state in 2011 is 4,797,466 and 5,109,416 in 2014. The state is the leading producer of oil and gas production in Nigeria accounting for about one quarter of the daily volume of oil produced (Uzochukwu, 2021:3). The state is composed of various oil producing communities with underdeveloped environment. In addition, it is safe to sound that the quality of the environment is critical to the survival and maintenance of animal, plants, and human existence in particular. No wonder, Aawondola (2020:6) ranked environmental degradation as second to economic depression that is currently facing the world. Tyonongo (2018:34) stated that environmental degradation is critical because the ability of the environment to support and sustain life depends on the proper natural balance of its properties: soil, water, plants, and animals. He further posited that the environment has to possess the right temperature, needed oxygen and carbon dioxide in its atmosphere, good rich soil, water, rivers, lakes, ocean, precipitation, vegetation's and other condition that are necessary for the sustenance of life.

Oil resource exploitation, which involves chemical seismic wave generation, is a major source of environmental degradation particularly through liquid discharges and oil spill as well as gas flaring. Petroleum renders the soil infertile, burn vegetation, and kills useful soil organisms thereby hampering agricultural output and productivity. Ajaikaye (2020:20) & Adekoya (2019:4) in their work argued that before mineral resources are harnessed they pass through the stages of exploration, mining, and processing which result in different types of environmental damages and hazard. They went further to say that petroleum consists of complex mixture of aliphatic, salicylic, and aromatic hydrocarbon, as well as polar organic compounds. These components are transformed into other structures on entering the environment.

Oil spill either in crude or refined form, gas flaring or deforestation are common phenomena in oil communities and have cause several environmental degradation in Delta State. This is because they contaminate the environment and cause water and land pollution with dire consequence on human health, aquatic and terrestrial life due to the toxic

nature of the chemical being discharged (Wild, 1996:10). Besides, once the environment is contaminated it becomes a potential threat for years after. Fishes living in in surface water are killed and fishermen are rendered jobless. Also, when there is oil spill. Oil starts spreading immediately making its gaseous and liquid components to evaporate. Some get dissolve in water and even oxidize and yet some undergo bacteria changes and eventually sink to the bottom by gravitational action. The soil is contaminated with a gross effect upon the terrestrial life. As the evaporation of the volatile molecular weight component affect the aerial life so the dissolution of the less volatile components with the resulting emulsified water affect aquatic life (Aakpofure, 2020:5). In Nigeria, about 62.8% oil spill affected farmlands (Nwankwo & Infeadi, 2018:12). A major impact was a reduction in the availability of fish products, thereby, leading to an increase in prices.

Statistics also indicates that 9,107 oil spill incidences occurred in Nigeria between 1976 and 2005 resulting in about 3,121,909.8 barrels of oil spilled into the environment (Odu & Offodum, 2021:36). Some of the major spill in the state included the Escravosoil spill (Funiwa 5 blowout) of over 400,000 barrels spreading through the Delta region polluting about 1,200km (Nwilo & Badejo, 2020:10). In the disaster, about 180 people died while 300 people contacted various illnesses through drinking polluted water and eating contaminated foods in the affected area. In 1986, it was estimated that eight major creeks and villages were affected. Several barrels of oil were lost and economic activities paralyzed in the affected areas. The damages done to fishnets, ponds, and traps of the farmers was said to be over two million naira (Odu & Offoduun 2021:12). Also, the Jesse spill of 1998 resulted in a serious fire incidence that claimed over a thousand lives and ravaged the ecosystem. Oil spill was also recorded in communities such as Tebujor/Okpele-Ama, Ikpokpo, Okerenkoko, Gbene, Opuedebubor, Opuede, Opuedeziom, Atanba, Oto-Gbene, Meke-Ama communities in Gbaramatu kingdom which damaged a lot of fishing nets, properties and the environment.

The Ideheze community of Isoko south local government area also experiences a similar mayhem following the outbreak of oil spill from a major Nigeria Agip oil company (NAOC) pipeline. According to eye witnesses, the spillage started at twelve midnight resulting in a serious fire out break leading to the destruction of farmland and economic crops in the process (Nomso, 2019) Fagade (2020:6), Ikorukpo (2017:17) & Jaiyeoba (2021:9) all agreed that chemicals discharged from oil spills have toxic effects on soil, water, air and animal life. Oil spill is also responsible for deforestation. Essoka, Ugboogu & Uzu (2021:15) found heavy metal concentration in Warri area of Nigeria, and the oil industry constitutes a potential hazard to its immediate environment due to high level of waste. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the rural economy of the area, is therefore threatened and human life by extension is in danger. The acts of environmental degradation have resulted in direct or indirect increase in road traffic accidents and destitution.

A corollary study by Sebastian & Hurting (2017:8) on the potential effect of oil pollution on women living near oil fields also observed that such women exhibit symptoms such as mycosis, tiredness, itchy nose, sore throat, headache, red eyes, ear pain, diarrhea, and risk of spontaneous abortion was high among these women. Similarly, a higher incidence of cancer was discovered among men and women in areas where exploration was done for twenty years. The result also stated that women were observed to have an increase in hematopoietic cancers, while many children also have distended bellies and light hair a condition commonly referred to a Kwashiorkor, a protein deficiency syndrome (Tyonogo, 2020:40).

DESOPADEC and the Provision of Social Amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State

In order to establish a nexus between DESOPADEC and Provision of Social Amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State, it is crucial to first and foremost, focus on DESOPADEC and its mandate. The concern of Delta State government between 2007 and 2011 was to provide a structure through which organized interventions would speed up development in the disregarded 19 oil producing LGAs of the state (Ifaka and Odigie, 2021:63). The Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC) was set up in 2006 however began its operation in the state in July 2007. The mandate of DESOPADEC within the time frame of 2007-2011 was to develop the oil producing areas of Delta State with crucial interest to offer peace and security, infrastructure development and human capital development. Ifaka and Odigie (2021) explains that "DESOPADEC was expected to fund its operation from 50% of the 13% oil derivation fund accruing to the state, as is enshrined in section 162 of the 1999 constitution and the DESOPADEC act of 2007". Social amenities is essential for the wellbeing of the inhabitants of any community. In the provision of social amenities, there has been dearth of basic amenities in some oil host communities in Delta State. For instance, the Esemogbene community in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State drew the attention of all tiers of government in the country and multinational oil companies to their sufferings and to the condition of the primary school in the locality. Since the establishment of Esemogbene community in 1976, they have got no attention from the government; the oil bearing community had

over the years contributed money to build structures for the school despite the presence of multinational oil companies in the area (Daily Post, 2018).

Ikenga. and Oluka. (2023) stated that the proceeds from the removal of fuel subsidy should be concentrated on providing adequate and acceptable form of development in oil host communities. The authors lamented that the diversion of fund meant for the development of the oil host communities to personnel gain by some government officials need to be addressed to give the people a sense of belonging and commitment.

A linkage between DESOPADEC and Provision of Social Amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State can be said that there is still a dearth of basic amenities in Host Communities as most Communities have decried that funds meant for project have not been fully utilized in providing social amenities in Oil Bearing Communities in the State. A group of youths drawn from the five oil and gas producing communities of Delta State have decried alleged under funding of the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission DESOPADEC (Independent, 2021). These Lamentations by mostly youth of these Communities Oil Host Communities in Delta State can be worrisome due to this situation that there is an inadequacy in provision of social amenities in these Communities by DESOPADEC due to funding as project funds meant to provide social amenities are not fully utilized or are being embezzled by staff and contractors of DESOPADEC. Social Amenities such as good roads, markets, hospitals, schools, clean and safe drinking water costs billions of naira to execute but the 50percent from the 13percent derivation accrued to the state are not fully disbursed by Delta State Government to DESOPADEC. Hence the Lamentations by these youth in these Oil Host Communities in Delta State.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Elite Theory was adopted in this study to explain the relationship between petroleum exploration and Oil Host Communities in Delta State. The early proponents of this theory are Gaetano Mosca, who lived in (1858-1936), Vilfredo Pareto (1948-1925), Robert Michels (1876-1936) in their various postulations, emphasized the influence of the elite on the masses. Mosca maintains that the elite have certain defining characteristics such as intellectual ability, moral superiority over the governed. Vilfredo postulates that in any society, the elite are the most talented and deserving group of individuals who are most adept at using two modes of political rule, force and persuasion. They usually enjoy important advantage such as inherited wealth and family connection (Marshall, 2007).

The principle of the elite is that there exists in society, a minority of the population which makes and takes major decision that affects the general society and because these decisions have wide scope, they touch most aspects of the society. This underscores the preponderance and stratification of Nigeria States into local government system. These decisions are usually regarded as political decision even when the minorities are not politicians. At the early stage, the study of the elite theory was not given much consideration in the field of Political Science until the late 19th and early 20th centuries with St. Simon attempting to study the nature and character of the elite. Ikenga (2018) noted that the role of the elite in the society especially the accumulation of political and economic power over the masses is alarming. He further stated that the elite in the Niger Delta Region especially Delta State are not left out in this regard. However, leaders in Delta State need to be accountable to the masses in the oil host communities.

Ikelegbe (2019:35) notes also that public policy reflects the values, aspirations and preferences of the elite rather than the demands of the masses. It is based on self vested interest in the protection of its status quo. They owe their positions to the control of the productive resources of the society hence one can talk of the military elite, religions elite, business elite, bureaucratic elite, political elite and the governing elite. The elite theory emphasizes the roles of the political and economic powers which the proponents had earlier seen as the two types of instruments at the hands of the elite through which they control the resources and administration of the day and by so doing helping to protect and guide their interest hence one can talk of the political elite and economic elite.

Pareto (1935) has presented the circle theory of the elite class that constantly engages in the changes in her attempt to have grip over the people as a strategy that dominated civil regimes in Nigeria by constantly engaging in corresponding provision for their sustainability, they constantly create the space for only themselves and their cronies to be in position where they have access to the common wealth of the people and turning it into personal income for aggrandizement. This underscores the reason behind persistent underperformance of government agencies and functions. So many billions of naira is usually budgeted for provision of goods and services, yet not much is seen on ground because in most cases the few privilege members of the society have decided to privatize government resources into personal pocket. This underscores the reason the present governor of Rivers state called on the people of the Niger Delta region to call their governors to account for the recent billions of naira accrued to the oil producing states of the region which was recently released by the regime of President Mumammdu Buhari. He asserted that sine 1999 13% derivation meant for oil producing states has been hanging and withheld but not for the recent benevolence

of the administration of this current regime that have deemed it fit to release these fund (Wike, 2022). True to his assertion nothing is on ground for the people of Delta to make a boast that they are classified oil producing communities not to talk of state. The government of the day keeps accruing debt for generations yet unborn in the state. Pareto (1935) had earlier sounded a warning to all elite that “there are problems that economies and politics cannot solve”. Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960 there have been a long search and effort for rural development by successive government be it civilian or military. In this regard several organizations, institutions such as the local government has been set up to undertake and monitor the complicated processes of nation building, development and integration. This postcolonial orientation is a deviation from the erstwhile colonial agreement was development and concentrated only in the urban centres to the neglect of rural areas. Moreover, with this well carved thought out policy and ideas rural communities still suffer a lot from deprivation and all manner of low life living.

Therefore, the elite theory as adopted in this study clearly explains the reason behind this ugly incidence found in our rural communities of Delta state. The bulk of the elite constitute the military head of states, presidents and present day governors who continue to manipulate the constitution to suit their interest and also engage in swindling monies met for the masses to execute their functions for personal aggrandizement under the guise of faulty constitutional arrangement perpetrated by them and arbitrary execution of decisions to perpetually make local government an appendage of their office and not a separate distinct tier of government.

7. RESEARCH METHOD

The quantitative method which is a reflection of the cross-sectional research design was adopted. The reason for this design is that it enables the researcher to elicit data in across-sectional study. The cross-sectional design helps the researcher to assemble extensive assortment of data from the field. Information regarding the study was sourced through primary and secondary sources. The primary method includes the use of questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The administration of the copies of questionnaire was done by the researcher and three research assistants who reside in the study areas, who distribute the questionnaire to the respondents selected for the study while the secondary method of data collection include the review of related literature from other scholars that are relevant to the topic. The responses from the questionnaire were presented in statistical tables and converted to percentages for analytical purposes. Descriptive and inferential tools like simple percentages and mean rating were also used to analyze the data and present findings. Therefore, the calculation of mean rating presented as: strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Strongly Disagree (D)=2, Disagree (SD)=1

$$\text{Mean score} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

Chi-square statistical tool was employed to test the hypotheses to ascertain the degree of freedom and significant relationship between the variables being studied. The chi-square statistical tool is relevant and appropriate in this nature of research because it enables the researcher to determine causative effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. It is very instructive to note that measurement between independent and dependent variables helps the researcher to present constructive findings and draw an acceptable conclusion.

8. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between petroleum exploration and Oil Host Communities in Delta State

A Table of relationship between petroleum exploration and Oil Host Communities in Delta State

Table 1

Source of Variation	Responses		Df	X ² -Cal	X ² -Crit.	Alpha Level	Decision
	Observed	Expected					
SA=4	595	604.35	12	189.17	21.026	0.05	Significant
A=3	170	160.65					
SD=2	590	580.65					
D=	145	154.35					

Source: Author Computation 2023

As presented in the chi-square (χ^2) summary Table above, the calculated chi-square (χ^2) value of 189.17 is greater than the chi-square (χ^2) table value of 21.026. The null hypothesis which stated there is no significant relationship between environmental degradation and Oil Host Communities in Delta State is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between environmental degradation and Oil Host Communities in Delta State. Hence, the multinational oil companies and government should take urgent steps and proactive measures to address the issues of environmental degradation which has destroy the livelihoods of the people in oil host communities in Delta State. This will help reduce the tension and agitation for self- government and resource control in the whole Niger Delta Region.

Hypothesis2

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between DESOPADEC and provision of social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State

A Table of relationship between DESOPADEC and provision of social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State

Table 2

Source of Variation	Responses		Df	X ² -Cal	X ² -Crit.	Alpha Level	Decision
	Observed	Expected					
SA=4	440	552.26	12	169.22	21.026	0.05	Significant
A=3	320	207.73					
SD=2	650	537.73					
D=1	90	202.26					

Source: Author Computation 2023

As presented in the chi-square (χ^2) summary Table above, the calculated chi-square (χ^2) value of 169.22 is greater than the chi-square (χ^2) table value of 21.026. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between DESOPADEC and provision of social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between DESOPADEC and provision of social amenities in Oil Host Communities in Delta State. DESOPADEC as an interventionist organization was created to provide social amenities and address the problems of oil host communities in Delta State, but since inception of this agency, it has not provided reasonable social amenities that have direct bearing to the lives of the people in oil host communities in Delta State. A walk to any oil host community, one will attest to the above fact that DESOPADEC with all the 13 percent derivation funds received from the federating account for the development of oil producing communities in Delta State has been diverted to personal gain leaving the people to suffer without adequate provision of social amenities like drinking water, electricity, link-roads, hospitals, schools, recreation centres, scholarships for younger ones and women empowerment. Urgent and proactive measures needs to be taken to address this problem before it get to full flesh conflict between oil host communities, federal government and multinational companies operating in the area.

9. MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of data, the following findings were made:

- It was discovered that petroleum exploration in Delta State have severe consequences on the ecological activities such as aquatic and farming elements in the oil host communities in Delta State
- It was revealed that the multinational oil companies operating in Delta state has not provided the needed environmental security rather more harms are done to the health and livelihood of the people in oil host communities in Delta State
- It was discovered that the interventionist organization established to provide adequate welfare packages to oil host communities has not done enough due to corruption and political interference by the state government.
- It was revealed that the 13 percent derivation fund was embezzled by some top government officials in DESOPADEC. Thus, depriving the oil host communities of acceptable development.

10. CONCLUSION

The environmental security is a prerequisite for a healthy and economic prosperity of any given nation. Such security will guarantee development in the rural areas which by extension contribute to the national economic development. Repositioning DESOPADEC to a state of liveliness will demand a sincere desire by all and sundry to pursue truth because whether the commission super perform or underperform, it is to the detriment or the joy of every one because

its viability, activities or death will have a negative or positive precursor on all and sundry. Therefore, since the development of the state mean the entire development for all there should be passion to do what is right always and at all times no matter whose ox is gored and opportunities predisposed to.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of data of and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- Multinational oil companies operating in Delta state and the State government should create a synergy in providing environmental security by adhering strictly to international environmental best practices so as to address environmental pollution and climate change ravaging the oil host communities in Delta State
- DESOPADEC as an interventionist agency created by Delta State government to provide welfare to oil host communities should adhere strictly to the constitutional provision in establishing it. The objective of the commission is to provide social amenities in oil host communities and as such corrupt practices, political interference upon its finances should be avoided and more proactive measures should be taken to provide the needed social amenities in oil host communities in Delta State
- The 13 percent derivation accruing to the state government should be directly disbursed to oil host communities for their infrastructural development.

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