Oil spillage and Violent Conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region: Implications for Food Sufficiency

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Abstract:
This paper examined the occurring events of oil spillage, violent conflict and its implications for food sufficiency. It drew from the ideas and views of the resource curse theory, which respectively argue that abundance in natural resource breeds room for mismanagement and trigger tendencies for abuse. The paper argued that incidents of oil spillage through various forms including vandalism and bunkering which stands as one of the violent activities in the region can create strong downturn for food production and sufficiency. The paper used secondary sources of data and narrative analysis methods. It showed that while the multinational oil companies and government drilled crude oil that left massive spills for decades, the ecological strength of the region was experiencing a devastating degradation which was left unchecked without any form of remedy, and grew into a horror of economic displacement of the people who had agricultural activities as a means of survival, leading all sorts of violent conflict just to survive the reality of losing it all to be able to survive the harsh economy. This harsh economy is as a result of the negative implications it has created on food sufficiency especially for the few areas available for different forms of agricultural purposes. The paper concluded that more severe cases of agricultural stagnation will occur, which will place pressure on food sufficiency especially with the extinction of certain crops and sea foods if the issues bothering on spillage and environmental damage in the Niger Delta region are not given the needed attention and solution. Its recommendations include: a sensitization program on the dangers of violent conflicts especially ones causing spillage and insecurity towards farmers, fishermen and traders, a collaborative project between government and multinational oil companies in enhancing the agricultural base and carrying out strict routine checks and repairs on facilities that could create spillage causing harm to the land and waters.

Keywords: Agricultural production, Food sufficiency, Niger Delta, Oil spillage, Violent Conflict

1. Introduction

The Niger Delta region is the home of nine oil producing states in Nigeria. Since the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity, the Niger Delta as a whole have been suffering the negative environmental consequences of oil production activities. This has resulted in the existing scourge of hardship and rural underdevelopment (Izu, 2024; UNEP Report, 2011; Ekpebu and Ukpong, 2013). With continuous discovery of more oil wells the states experience deviations in its natural environment following the resultant effects of pollution due to spillage that occur during exploitation activities. Oil spillage has become a great menace to the environment and pose a great threat to economic development as it results to land degradation, air and water pollution; with most crops often destroyed, great land areas left infertile and air water polluted; killing fishes and other sea food (Ekpebu and Ukpong, 2013).

Table 1: Agricultural Outputs from the Impact of Gas Flaring

Farmland Distance from Flare Station	Crop Percentage Loss
600 metres from site	45 percent impact
200 metres from site	100 percent impact
1 kilometre from site	10 percent impact

Source: Opukri & Ibaba, 2009

There are numerous amounts of damages and deprivation which the Multinational oil companies have created in most of these communities. Notable among them include pollution, environmental degradation leading to low agricultural yield, destruction of aquatic lives, home displacement, etc (Omofonmwan & Gilbert, 2009).

Agricultural resources are one major resource, which the Niger Delta region is blessed with in abundance. Economic trees of various kinds are also being made available by this same fertile land and also provides agricultural resources like cassava, rubber, locust bean, palm oil, sugar cane, rice, coconut, mango, cocoa and mahogany. Owing to the rich agricultural resource within the Niger Delta region, over 70 percent of the locals who live in the rural areas not financially stable and as such depend majorly on agricultural activities for their means of survival.

Table 2: Agricultural Investment Resources in the Niger Delta

Agricultural Resources	Potential for Investment
Rubber	Rubber latex industry
Sweet potato	Production of chips in commercial quantity
Rice	Production of rice and paddies for commercial export
Pineapple	Fruit drinks in canned form
Coconut	Coconut oil Production Manufacturing of confectionary products Cosmetics industry
Sugar cane	Sugar Production for various sectors Industrial alcohol Production.
Banana/Plantain	Fruit drinks production in canned form. Production of chips for commercial purpose
Cassava	Production of gari in large amount Production drinks containing alcohol Production of starch for industrial use
Oil palm	Production of oil from palm carnel Production of cosmetics Production of vegetable oil Processing of Palm oil

Source: Bayelsa State Government Report, 2007: 24-25

ERA (2013), confirmed that aquatic lives have been destroyed with the pollution of traditional fishing grounds, exacerbating hunger and poverty in fishing communities. According to Etekpe, (2005) people groan under harsh environmental and economic conditions. Hence, the general tendency for them to become restive when personal safety or comfort is threatened. ERA (2013), also found out that farmers in the oil rich region have lost their lands and are consequently forced to emigrate to other communities in search of better livelihood, exerting additional pressures on natural resources in such areas.

Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) recalled that since 1990s, oil violence in the Niger Delta had constituted festering sore on the thumbs of the stakeholders: Nigerian state, the Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs), and the Niger Delta communities due to pervasive underdevelopment occasioned by blatant environmental pollution, despoliation and political marginalization. To this end, a mismanaged ecology will ultimately necessitate or aggravate challenges of poverty, joblessness and crime of mass of the people - especially in agriculture-based societies which would be systematically dislocated and disempowered (Izu, 2024). The commencement of agitations relating to oil in the region were done to remedy the acts of injustice, which the Niger Deltans had been facing since the discovery of crude oil, through the use of force on the MNOCs and the Nigerian government.

2. Conceptualization

a. Oil Spillage

The term oil spillage refers to or be defined as the accidental release of liquid petroleum hydrocarbons to the environment. The visual nature of black oil coming ashore from a spill commonly attracts public interest on a national and even international scale, oftentimes falsely projecting damages far greater than actually occur. Of all areas, however, long-term damage from oil spillage is likely to be greatest within the ecologically rich coastal zone (Gundlach, 2019). It is the release of hydrocarbons from crude oil into the atmosphere. It is a disaster of global concern that greatly affects the environment and its occurrence could be intentionally or by accident, as a result of human activities that occur on a daily basis thereby constantly releasing crude oil into the land and waters. The occurrence of oil spillage is an aspect of the exploration of oil and it occurs during vessel loading of oil, and during the transportation of oil through mobile tankers, tampering of oil-well heads or vandalization, leakage in oil pipelines and crude oil exploration (Chinedu, 2018).

b. Violent Conflict

Violent conflict can be defined as a situation of conflict of which the of violence involved by the

conflicting parties (Victor, 2020). It is a situation that involves at least two or more conflicting parties using physical force to solve a competing interest or claims. Further stating that we label the violent conflict according to what the conflict topic is concerned about, be it an ethnic focus, religious issue, topic of inclusion or exclusion, a social, ideological or political issue (Marie, 2015).

Violent conflict is seen as evidence and a symptom of "state collapse" or "state failure" (Ghani and Lockhart 2008), and a collapsed state breeds political instability, political disturbances, political unrest, and a conflictual environment (Iqbal and Starr 2008). The state does fail when it can no longer manage its internal crises and leave them to escalate into violent conflict which consequently incapacitates the government from rendering its constitutional responsibilities to the citizenry. In such a situation, the government loses its legitimacy. In addition to this, the very nature of the state becomes "illegitimate in the eyes and the hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens" (Rotberg 2003, 1). Different reasons have been canvased for the upsurge of insurgencies in Nigeria, which include inequality, or the wide gap between the elite and the masses; unfulfilled political and economic promises; high unemployment rate, poverty, injustices, human rights abuses; and poor service provisions, among other reasons. All of these issues lead to frustration and make people aggressive, consequently bringing about the floating of the insurgent's group, which many people are driven to join for self-assistance and sustenance.

A great number of youths, because of unemployment, engage in violent conflict as economic activity, and as such, perform such illicit activities as trading in arms and ammunition as well as hard drugs, which are considered ingredients of violent conflict. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), as of the second quarter of the year 2020, the unemployment rate among young people between the ages of 15 and 34 years was 28.2%. This shows a considerable rise from 25.7% in the third quarter of 2018. This age bracket falls within the active part of the population that is normally involved and used to foment violent conflict. This stance is corroborated by one of the interviewees who states thus: The high rate of youth unemployment is directly linked to violent conflict in Nigeria. Many of the youths' population having completed their various courses in the higher institutions, and without rewarding jobs cannot see anything wrong in violent conflict, in as much the exercise can bring food to their tables, with which they can keep their bodies and souls together (Adegbami, 2013).

c. Food Sufficiency

The term food Sufficiency refers to the amount of food produced meeting the needs of the population. In most cases, the term is often used as food security. In actual sense, food security is when all people at all times have access to safe sufficient and nutritious food to maintain a healthy life. The FAO (1999) defines food sufficiency as the concept of food sufficiency is generally taken to mean the extent to which a country can satisfy its food needs from its own domestic production. It is focused on the supply, or availability component of food security, and is concerned with ensuring that the country state or a particular region has the capacity to produce food in sufficient quantities to meet its domestic needs.

Food sufficiency can be examined through the proportion of people who are hungry or undernourished. Countries and territories with strong food sufficiency are likely to have fewer hungry or undernourished people. Food sufficiency is clearly located in countries with high agricultural base. This correctly suggests that food sufficiency is strongly correlated to the economic availability of food. There are certain crucial factors that affects food sufficiency in a locality. Some examples of these factors are environmental factors like floods, climate change and pollution, especially oil pollution, another is the demographic factors like rise in population, migration from the farm and fishing areas due to security reasons as a result of fear of attack from hungry persons in search of food. Economic factors like increased food prices and diversification of the economy away from agriculture could also pose a threat to food Sufficiency.

d.Oil Spillage and Agricultural Production in the Niger Delta

Ekpebu and Ukpong (2013) noted the following among the numerous hazards traceable to oil production; which post great challenges to agriculture and rural development in the state;

Oil spillage pollutes both land, air and water resources; causing tremendous havoc on crops, humans and aquatic lives. It contaminates drinking water and loss of aquatic lives and also causes health hazards on the people when consumed. Gas flaring poses great threat to productive vegetation, soils and forest resources. It also pollutes and heats-up the environment resulting to unfavorable temperature condition for surrounding plants and animals.

Within the region, gas leakage is also hazardous to the health of farmers and aquatic lives. The environment is also at risk because when exposed to any source of fire can result into heavy explosion; of

which human settlements and farmlands would be destroyed.

Agricultural reduction on water resources, forest and land; There is high and continuous reduction of lands for agriculture within the region, with the discovery of more oil wells; and more pipelines are continually being created by oil companies, that take an average measurement of 10 to 15 meters in width, along several kilometers in thousands across the Niger Delta region. In line with the pipeline Act, which gives room for what is known as the pipeline right-of-way, any portion of land, no matter how big or small that has an oil pipeline on it, is excluded from being used for any form of agricultural purpose. Some major causes of pipeline construction also are scarification of land, major and heavy deforestation, which exposes the soil to erosion, creating an unsecured habitat for wildlife, which will lead to extinction.

The effect of oil resource extraction on the Niger delta environment has been very glaring in terms of its negative effect on the region (Celestine, 2003). Over the last four decades, oil exploration and exploitation has impacted disastrously on the socio-physical environment of the Niger delta oil-bearing communities, massively threatening the subsistent peasant economy and the environment and hence, the entire livelihood and basic survival of the people (Eregha & Irughe, 2009). Similarly, oil prospecting and exploitation processes pollute underground water (Ojarokutu & Gilbert, 2010). There are numerous amounts of damages and deprivation which the Multinational oil companies have created in most of these communities. Notable among them include pollution, environmental degradation leading to low agricultural yield, destruction of aquatic lives, home displacement, etc (Omofonmwan & Gilbert, 2009). The oil industry in Nigeria, no doubt has affected the country in a various way. On the one hand, an economic landscape that is quite remarkable has be designed for the country. On the other hand, the traditional means of livelihood of the people which are fishing and farming, have been adversely affected by oil exploration. If we consider the oil industry, in the line with the enormous earnings and contribution to foreign exchange, it has achieved a good foot. However, when considered with respect to its negative effects on the socio-economic life and the environment, it has left a balance sheet of ecological and socio-physical disaster (Celestine, 2003). Some of the social and environmental implications of oil exploitation have been identified below:

a) Inter and intra conflicts within the community, amongst others (Celestine, 2003).
b) Oil companies and host community conflict
c) cases of brutality from the police and military.
d) Gross underdevelopment within the socio-economic sphere
e) Effluent disposal and discharge
f) Restiveness amongst the youths and taking of hostages
g) gas flaring effects on the environment
h) Oil spill (destruction of farmlands, marine habitat, mangrove etc)
i) loss of biodiversity and deforestation
j) Contamination of rivers and streams

The presence of the aftermath effects of oil exploitation highlighted above in the region, brought about youth restiveness, which subsequently gave rise to violent conflict in the region.

e.Loss of Food Species in the Niger Delta Region

The presence of the oil industry in this region has adversely affected the production of food and the food culture of local people, which has increased their vulnerability to food insecurity. To the people of the Niger Delta, food is not just considered a basic human need. There are values rooted in culture that is attached to what they produce and consume, which it is central to their cultural wellbeing, identity and existence.

The Niger Delta suffers regular oil spills that contaminate farmland, lakes and rivers, destroy local crops and deplete animal and fish populations. Traditional fish and yam festivals, used to celebrate a bountiful harvest, are no longer sustainable. Steps to protect local food systems and cultures and provide local people with resilience against further environmental degradation is required. In the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, 70 per cent of people live in rural areas and the majority of them rely on subsistence farming, fishing and the collection of non-timber forest products for their livelihood (Babatunde, 2023). There are other causes of environmental damage from the fossil fuel industry aside from oil spillage. Gas flaring is a major local pollutant in the Niger Delta. Gas is a by-product of oil extraction, which is burnt, releasing nitrogen and sulphur oxides. When these gases mix with moisture in the air, it creates acid rain, which devastates agriculture yields and aquatic life. In oil communities, those who have their farmland close to flow stations are the worst affected. Flow stations are facilities located along oil and gas pipelines where oil and gas are processed before being transported to market. In some cases, gas flaring has resulted in fires that have completely burnt down large expanses of farmland, and animals are killed or driven away by heat, smoke, and noise from the flared gas. Despite the damage, local people rarely receive compensation from oil

companies for the displacement of their traditional livelihoods (Babatunde, 2023).

The fish and animals that were commonly found around the Niger Delta before the advent of oil exploitation are suffering from depleted populations or complete extinction. Some varieties of bush meat have almost all disappeared because of oil spills and acid rain. The declining marine resources such as shellfish, crabs, and oysters which the local women used to gather from the streams and mangroves for consumption and sale is also a major issue. In the coastal communities, moon fish has become scarce, while scale fish that used to be plentiful in natural fishponds have disappeared (Babatunde, 2023). The populations of tilapia and catfish are depleted, and fishermen must travel far out to sea for their catch, which is often small and contains fish that smell of crude oil and are not safe for consumption.

Traditional cultural practices have been affected by oil pollution. Fish and yam festivals, which were organized to celebrate a bountiful harvest during rainy and harvest seasons, are no longer sustainable. As food production decreases, local people find it difficult to access staple food that is indigenous to the region and is commonly consumed in their communities. The Niger Delta has been drinking natural pure water healthy for their metabolic balance and entire social existence, but now they must drink chemically treated water, they must drink sachet water, they must drink poorly derived borehole water (Izu, 2024). Most of the indigenous food consumed in the oil communities is prepared with cassava. In the Owodokpokpo-Igbide community, the indigenous dish is garri and starch (made from fermented cassava), eaten with soups made of banga (palm fruit) or fish pepper. In Otuasega, fufu (pounded meal) is made from fermented cassava (akpukuru) with ogbono (wild mango) and fish (Babatunde, 2023). The decline in cassava yield is attributed to the effect of oil pollution on soil nutrients and this affects the availability of these local foods. When oil spills affect soil nutrients, this in turn affects cassava leaves, and if they grow at all, they grow slowly and only yield tiny tubers.

Other staple food crops that are indigenous to the region such as yam, plantain and cocoyam are often not available because of poor harvests. In the Beneku community, the high cost of yam seedlings and the threat of pests have prevented most farmers from cultivating yam, even though it is the local food, indigenous to the community. In Otuasega, mama coco (known as amasi in the local dialect), is a species of cocoyam that used to be a local delicacy eaten with palm oil and smoked catfish (Babatunde, 2023). But the crops planted since the completion of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas plant project have all withered.

3. Methodology

This paper examined and explained the events of oil spillage, the creation of violent conflict, its impact on food Sufficiency in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study utilized secondary sources of data like journals, government publications/reports, text books, newspapers, online publications etc. to obtain relevant information on the topic. The resource curse theory was used as the lens to picture the irony surrounding a region blessed with a superb natural resource as the black gold and still suffer and lack the basic necessities of life to survive and live comfortably. The method used for analysis was Narrative Analysis.

4. Theoretical Framework

Resource curse theory, also referred to as "paradox of plenty or adverse effect of abundance", was first coined by Professor Richard Auty in 1993. The theory mainly claims that natural resources abundance in general encourages civil war for they offer motive and opportunity for conflict and create and enable indirect institutional and economic causes of instability.

Countries with fewer or no resources have both opportunities and challenges: economic, political and social. When resource wealth is efficiently used, these resources may be a source of greater prosperity for present and forthcoming generations. However, when poorly managed, they may be a triggering factor of economic uncertainty, social conflict and lasting environmental damage. The resource curse theory alludes to the failure of resource-rich countries to use their wealth to fully benefit the development of their country and that of their people, (Burgis 2015) due to the failure of their institutions to effectively live up to public welfare needs. The resource curse as a concept refers to the significant social, economic and political challenges that are particular to minerals-rich countries. While it could be argued that after a country discovers natural resource wealth, better development outcome is expected, resource-rich countries however tend to have a great number of conflicts and authoritarian institutions, and high rates of economic instability and economic underdevelopment especially in areas that concerns agriculture and food production, compared to non-resource-rich countries (Williams 2016). Drawing on political and economy theories about why some resource-rich countries do not do as well as expected, political scientists and economists put forward that mineral wealth, particularly hydrocarbons, is different from other types of wealth due to its

environmental pollution, agricultural stagnation, large rents, scale price, production volatility, its non-renewable nature and the secrecy of the industry (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). On the grounds of resource curse theory, it might be held that many of mineral-rich countries are still struggling, or have failed to use their wealth to reach their full potential. In general, these countries also appear to be more authoritarian, more disposed to conflict and economically instability compared to those without these resources (Williams 2016). While mineral-rich countries generally face unique challenges linked to oil, mining and gas extraction, governments might produce policy decisions that could help address the negative consequences of extraction, hence maximizing the benefits.

In respect to food sufficiency, the resource curse stands as a major hindrance to the Niger Delta Region, particularly as it concerns oil spillage and food production. Crude oil is seen as the current major natural resource in the region and Nigeria at large, is supposed to be source of wealth, progress and development especially for the people of Niger Delta. However, the reverse is case as the mining of crude oil for decades has created devastating and harmful effect to the environment. The primary economy of the Niger Delta is agriculture. It is largely resource based as over 80 percent of the population participates in the primary sector of the economy (Augustine, 2013). The environmental space in this regard, refers to the agricultural landscape of the region, which is the main source of livelihood of the people in the Niger Delta region. The Niger Delta region is known for its fishing and crop production, which has catered for tremendous needs regarding sea foods, farm produce, and a lot of agricultural crops. Sadly, the events of oil spillage have altered the very fabric that sustains the food chain of region. Farm produce and sea foods are insufficient due to the contamination of most rivers and farmlands and as a result, reduced the amount of these agricultural produce. Consequently, this has created the need for the price of these food items to increase, thereby leading to strive on the part of the people purchasing these food items and poor sales on the farmers and market traders. The resource curse stand point in this vein, sees the exploitation of a particular resource which is the crude oil and how these exploitative activities have created a downturn on the progress of another resource which is agricultural resources in respect to food production and Sufficiency in the Niger Delta region. Problems arising from this can be averted, through prioritizing the need to reduce incidents of oil spillage, channeling oil funds towards rebuilding and repairing lost lands and waters for rapid agricultural produce.

As regards to conflict, there are those who believe, for instance, that areas where natural resource abundance is visible, civil conflicts are bound to occur. The argument of scholars associated with this school of thought is that negative motivation is induced by abundance of natural resources which is enhanced by greed and afterwards violent conflicts and agitations (Raimi, 2019). The main activities are agriculture, fishing, forestry and traditional craft industries. With the constant disturb on the key livelihood and occupation of the Niger Delta people, it would not be out of place to say that the aggression which has resulted into a full-blown violent conflict has a link with the later owing to the misplacement of their means of survival. There are some scholars who also believe that conflict could be created as a result of scarcity of resource. This idea goes in tandem with the effect of oil spillage on agriculture and food sufficiency in the Niger Delta region as insufficiency in agricultural produce and hike in price of food items could result in violent conflict of various kinds to ensure that foods needs are met. People are most likely to get involved in kidnapping, armed robbery, oil bunkering and piracy activities in other to survive and meet up with the daily needs owing to the fact that majority of the populace are farmers, fishermen and traders and most have been affected by incidents of oil spillage.

Some studies (Picton-Turbervill 2014; Beblawi and Luciani 1987; Williams 2016) have proved that natural resources could trigger internal conflicts as different armed groups tend to fight for control of the resources, or use natural resources to fund their fighting. Since 1990, suggestions from political scientists (Alao 2007; Chidi 2010, Williams 2016) advise that oil-rich countries in Africa have been twice as likely as expected to have a civil war compared to non-oil-producing countries. Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, Libya and Nigeria are examples which illustrate this tendency (PictonTurbervill 2014; Williams 2016).

Inefficient expenditure and borrowing are one of the prevailing characteristics of resource rich countries. A few researchers in the field have been of the consensus that the amount of resource revenues collected by mineral-rich governments could fluctuate greatly from year to year owing to changes in commodities prices and production (Downey, Bonds and Clark 2010; Okunola and Ikuomola 2012; Green and Otto 2014). In essence, these scholars are of the view that in resource-rich countries, a government's tendency is to overspend on things such as government salaries, inefficient fuel subsidies and large monuments, while food, agriculture, health, education and other social services are allocated meagre budget. In effect, spending fluctuations and

unpredictable revenues are problematic. One of the endemic concerns in most of mineral-rich countries is that during boom-bust cycles governments often get trapped as they tend to spend on legacy projects, including airports and monuments, when revenues are increasing and then have to make painful cuts or impose austerity when revenues drop (Picton-Turbervill 2014). Dutch disease offers a perfect illustration of this stance. In the same vein of thinking, some have held that while inflation and exchange rate appreciation could deteriorate large swathes of the economy within a few years, their impacts can last for decades. This argument concurs with the documentation of the disadvantageous effect of natural resources on other economic sectors and/or industries as occurred in Iran, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela, all of which have either underdeveloped manufacturing sectors or have experienced a rapid deterioration in manufacturing (Bonds and Clark 2010). However, these impacts could be reduced, provided that the country develops the absorptive capacity to transform resource revenue inflows into palpable investments, namely agriculture, roads and electricity. As a panacea to this, researchers advise countries to initiate policies that protect manufacturing so as to avoid Dutch disease.

In most mineral and hydrocarbon-producing countries, governments have a limited capacity to amass resource benefits. In some cases, just a little portion of the production value of the resource remains in the country (Alao 2007). One reason is that the existence of several fiscal regimes and the rules regarding the share of profits between companies and governments always fails to recompense the state and communities for exhausting their wealth and the related environmental destruction or loss of livelihood (Johnston 1994; Gordon, Paterson and Usenmez 2011). These unorthodox and bad arrangements may often occur when countries are so keen to promote resource extraction that they reduce the rates for taxes and royalties with little knowledge of the real worth of their resources. Furthermore, in capital-intensive (but not labor-intensive) extractive industries, few non-tax benefits, such as jobs, go to local people. Even though mineral-producing countries could often have very high prospects for employment, inland business development and enhancement of workforce skills (also referred to as local content), the real number of opportunities might remain few. One explanation of this is that the industry has a very small employment rate relative to the scope of investments and those jobs seem to be tremendously specialized, while the appropriate equipment required to implement them is commonly imported from abroad, (Picton-Turbervill 2014). Beblawi and Luciani (2016) put forward that in mineral-producing countries, leaders are unlikely to invest in industrious enterprises, such as job-creating manufacturing industries. Instead, they fight for control of resources. Furthermore, this elites‟ rent-seeking pursuit always results in weaker institutional development. It might be argued that the high weakness of institutions in resource-rich countries is the result of the ease with which elites can access large sums of money for themselves (Williams 2016). Those who support this theory further submit that large single-point sources of revenue, like an oil project, can be managed outside the required budget practice, hence making it relatively easy to be seized by potent elites. Sovereign wealth funds, national oil companies and contractors for extractive operations are often used as examples of tools utilized to capture revenues. In a few circumstances, politicians or state officials have also been using what is termed "rent-seizing" which consists of purposefully dismantling societal checks or developing new regulations to access these resources or to provide access for friends or family (Green and Otto 2014, Burgis 2015). Sharing and compensating for resources such as land, water and minerals could be source of conflict between the extraction companies and the communities. Social and environmental problems arise when the extractive industries attempt to balance their needs against those of the community and the protection of the environment. Kadafa (2012) advises that the point source nature of extractive industries frequently goes together with conflicts when attempting to balance people's needs with those of the mining environment. Kadafa's statement concurs with Downey, Bonds and Clark‟s (2010) view that extraction projects often entice great arrivals of people, whether or not supplementary employment is really available. Failure to reconcile both needs could be a source of grievance as mining minerals always involves disturbance on economic, social and cultural relations (Downey, Bonds and Clark 2010; Kadafa 2012). It is also worth underlining that many of the political and economic problems described above result in the violation of human rights. On this point, the contract between the government and the extraction company could set out these issues and elucidate who would be accountable for managing these impacts. This is where the greediness of those in power and the grievance of local community, as developed further, collide and would often end in open conflict.

5. Results and Discussions

Based on the data revealed, violent conflict in the Niger Delta region is a crisis of complex and diverse dimensions. It is a crisis of environmental degradation and despoliation and a struggle for environmental responsibility, sustainability,

remediation and restitution as the nature of the oil environment nexus as managed by the state and oil companies has generated conflicts and violence between the region's communities and groupings and the multinational oil companies (Augustine, 2013). In all truth, the environmental burdens borne by the Niger Deltans as a result of the debilitating activities of the oil companies easily form a summary of the basis of the Niger Delta challenge, and constitute the foundation of their militant action (Izu, 2024). It is a crisis of the character of governance and the state particularly as it pertains to political representation, minority rights and the national question that has fostered minority nationalism and self-determination struggles. It is a crisis of resource distribution, allocation and application as perceived insignificant benefits from oil resources has fueled agitation for resource control, regional autonomy, self-determination, minority rights, state reforms, federal re-structuring and constitutional reform (Augustine, 2013). A crisis of human security as state responses and management of the conflict has subjected the region to human and civil right abuses, extra-judicial killings, destruction of properties and communities and huge internal displacements. These dimensions have fueled mass social discontent, social restiveness, communal, ethnic and sectional mobilization, sustained opposition, popular violence, separatist tendencies, intermittent rebellion and militia movement (Augustine, 2013). The core issues of the conflict are related to environmental and resource concerns. Oil exploitation taken much land and water resources, thereby making them scarce. Pollution and degraded land and water, leading to infertility for farming and fishing activities. Much emphasis is laid on the social and economic life of communities been dislocated through the devastation from oil spillage. The general ecological impact of oil spills including fishery resource decrease and damage to wild life such as marine mammals and sea birds, consumption of contaminated sea foods leading to human hazards, aesthetic value decreases due to oiled beaches having unsightly slicks and habitat modification leading to delay in re-colonization and succession (Augustine, 2013). The negative effects are too numerous to mention. Creeks, Land, rivers, air, cultural and vegetation sites have all been devastated. It is in this light that Izu (2024:129) noted that:

> At this juncture, it gives increased credence to reiterate that as a result of this environmental decay and degradation, Jesse (Delta State) was burnt, Oloibiri (Bayelsa state) was suffocated in oil bath, and in Ogoni (Rivers State), instead of the people fetching water from their ancestral wells to drink and cook, what they now see are oil spills; when they get to their farmlands to work, all their green crops have become yellowish, and when they get to to their rivers to fish, which is their traditional occupation, all the fishes they could see have been murdered by oil firms and float on top of their habitat which have been turned to spilled-oil reservoirs. The remaining fishes that managed to survive the first hit of oil spill swim far away from the Niger Delta into the deep blue sea, nay, to neighboring countries where no oil spill is celebrated. So, all the fishes disappear.

The out migration of the rural displaced farmers in Akwa Ibom State as a result of environmental degradation caused by oil extraction in the region has led a significant percentage of the local inhabitants to remain a cyclical poverty and penury (Onuoha, 2018). This has meant greater environmental degradation as a result of the intensive exploitation of the few remaining fertile land in the region by the residents. It has also led to increasing urban blight in the urban areas in the State as more and more displaced rural inhabitant flood the urban areas in search of non-existent Jobs. Most farmers are concerned with problem of displacement without resettlement during oil spill (Essien, 2005). This state of events brings them to a point of having to think what the next stage of their lives will seem like or how to rebuild themselves into other engagements for survival.

In revisiting various discourses on oil spillage and violent conflict thriving in the region being researched, I might argue that with the events of oils spillage in various communities in the Niger Delta hindering the progress of farming and fishing which is the main occupation of the people, there is no doubt, that violent conflict is bound to occur in various forms like vandalism and bunkering, kidnapping, piracy etc. Taking a cursory look at various studies and ideas on this topic, it is evident that these violent activities are also capable of hindering food sufficiency in the region. How is this possible? When oil bunkering activities take place, spillage occurs and further creates a compounding

effect on the soil or water for agricultural produce. The farmer or fisherman is also unable to go carryout is agricultural activities on the farm or sea based on the already identified security threat from kidnapping and piracy. This in one way or the other slows the pace of food production there by making these agricultural items scarce and uneasy to purchase due to its high cost. Furthermore, when there are scarcity of food items or people find it difficult to purchase, they resort into forceful theft of these items especially directly from the farm.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this work, it is important to note the major ideas and issues that surrounds the occurrences of oil spillage, how it has caused a disruption in the agricultural system which happens to be to the major occupation and further created room for several kinds of violent conflicts that exists till date. The oil producing areas have experienced major threat to the environment as a result of oil spillage and could lead to the total ecosystem collapse if not effective checked. One of the ten most important ecosystems which are represented in marine and wetlands in the world is the Niger Delta. One major fact that cannot be disputed is that the country's development and growth has been greatly enhanced as a result of the oil industry that is present but no doubt, the events and activities of oil exploration has placed the region in the world as the fifth most damaged ecosystems as a result of petroleum. Studies have shown that at least 9-13 million barrels of oil have been spilled over the past 50 years, which has spills equivalent of 50 Exxon Valdez (FME, et. al. 2006). Within the years of 2001 and 2019, occurrences of oil spillage have been extremely high. When put together, the volume of oil being exposed to the environment is about 466,214 barrels (NOSDRA, 2019).

Agricultural resources have been seen as a major resource for food sufficiency, which the Niger Delta region is blessed with in abundance. Economic trees of various kinds are also being made available by this same fertile land and also provides agricultural resources like cassava, rubber, locust bean, palm oil, sugar cane, rice, coconut, mango, cocoa and mahogany. Owing to the rich agricultural resource within the Niger Delta region, over 70 percent of the locals who live in the rural areas not financially stable and as such depend majorly on agricultural activities for their means of survival through the production of various food items for sale and consumption.

The agricultural stagnation within the region is huge and it is as a result of current and past spills from oil activities. These neglects within the agricultural sector, especially not paying serious attention to needs of the people within the region, has further resulted in various violent conflicts. The use of resources unfairly by the federal government in conjunction with the multinational oil companies (MNOCs) has resulted into the crisis within the region. There has also been a neglect on aspects relating to corporate social responsibility on the part of the multinationals in dedicating substantial resources towards the growth of these communities, owing to the oil production practices with substandard procedures engaged by oil corporations. These practices have resulted in heavy oil spills of about 9870 incidents through which 466214 barrels of oil were exposed between 2001 and 2021 as well as gas flaring damaging the environment. These has limited the agricultural base which is a major means of survival for the large number of people within the rural areas and also the demand of local communities and lack of adequate responses towards increased participation in resource allocation and administration have added to the anger and frustration in various communities in the region. This has led to the creation of certain vices of militancy (cutting across sea) animosity and violent conflict as a means through which the indigenes can claim a fair share of the resources that are taken and used by the government and MNOCs.

7. Recommendations

Aneej (2004) in his study of the challenges of community's development; observes that development starts only when a man is able to take control of his environment, to manipulate and manage progressively everything in that environment to increase his production and productivity of all those things he needs to live a qualitatively better life. To him, communities development is the physical transformation of backward habitats to sages represented by symbolic presence of such structure as modern building, town-halls, school building, hospitals, good roads, electricity, pipe borne water, and bridges etc, all these are artifacts of environment reports that it is an idea of positive approach to the handling of affairs, which aims at developing the initiative of individual and communities by obtaining the willing participation of the people in the scheme for promoting their own betterment (Aneej, 2004). This means that, a particular programme embarked upon must be the priority of the people. Furthermore, deep progress in development comes with a rooted understanding of the needs of the people within that society. True development or progress cannot be attained by scratching the surface, addressing issues as it is thrown at first sight, or adopting temporal management ideas over sustainable resolutions. The violent conflict in areas in Niger Delta region does not seem easy to tackle, but with the right approach it is possible to achieve sustainable peace. There is a

great need to first and foremost, identify the very foundation from which the conflict arose which will lead to further identification of other areas fueling restiveness in the region. When it is said that there are violent conflicts in the region, it is not enough to feel that there is unemployment and the people desire certain incentives that will make them happy. The fact here is that how sustainable are these incentives that are being given and how many affected persons will these incentives reach? Below are effective necessary recommendations based on the findings of this work, that will ameliorate the standard and create room for a sustainable livelihood that will benefit and drastically lessen the burden and foster food sufficiency in the Niger Delta region.

1) There should be a special renewed sensitization project that will see to it that school student (primary – tertiary), market traders, farmers, women, the youths in general on the dangers of oil bunkering and the need to embrace more agricultural activities to boost the availability of food and its production. This is because oil bunkering vandalization of oil pipelines contributes immensely to the spillage in the region and as a result, has adverse effects on the environment. By engaging in grassroot sensitizations like these, there is a positive signal that is sent towards the knowledge that if any good or bad is done on the environment, it is reflected on the populace who reside there.

2) Food production comes with an array of stages. These stages involve certain processes like planting, harvesting, processing, conversion into finished produce and packaging for consumption. All these processes involve man power and support to effectively achieve the much-needed amount of food Sufficient enough to cater for the needs. With the occurrence of oil spillage in various lands and waters in the region, the hope of achieving this level of growth in food production is unrealistic. There should be a direct inhouse delivery and execution of strong collaborative programmes to set up individuals in the agricultural line in order to enhance food sufficiency and further help to put the people on a path away from every form of violent conflict.

3) In line with the first recommendation made, it is not enough to create sensitization and awareness on the dangers of oil bunkering, piracy, kidnapping and embrace agricultural activities. The people should see a stand by and ready alternative that is sustainable enough to match the gains of oil bunkering activities, kidnaping, sea piracy and other violent means of survival. Areas within the environment that are due for cleanups should be cleaned up thoroughly and declared safe for farming activities. Furthermore, the sector needs encouragement and support from both the government and the Multinational Oil Companies, in the sense that more money and farming materials should be given out to farming in order to enhance and speedy the output generated. The same applies to the water areas contaminated by crude oil, as it will help to crash down the prices of various river and sea foods as well as farm produce in the market. With this strategy in place, the idea of engaging in activities that could ruin or damage one's life and environment via violence would be curtailed and create room for sufficient and availability of food in the region.

4) There is an urgent need for Multinational Oil Companies to carry out strict and regular routine maintenance procedures on oil facilities that are susceptible to leakage. This is very crucial, as it will put a stop or reduce the rate at which spillage occurs, especially ones caused by organizational faults.

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