



CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: NIGER DELTA REGION IN FOCUS

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Article history:		Abstract:
Received:	1 st June 2022	This study, which set out to examine corruption and conflict in the international system, Niger Delta in focus. The objectives of this study included examining the causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta; examining how corruption affects conflict resolution in the Niger Delta region; and determining if the conflict resolution strategies in the Niger Delta have been able to bring about economic development in the Niger Delta region. The research used the Conflict Theory because this research area is focused on conflict. The theory explains that inter-group hostility arises as a result of conflicting goals and competition over limited resources, which largely fits into the situation of conflicts in the Niger Delta. This study used the descriptive research method that focuses on the administration of questionnaires to illicit the opinions and impressions of the people in the field. This research involved both primary and secondary sources of data. For the primary sources, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions to gather data for analysis. For the secondary sources of data, textbooks, past projects, journals, newspapers, magazines, etc were used to gather what other scholars have done in this area before. The findings of this study show that there has been a prevalence of conflicts in the Niger Delta region; and this has been affecting the development of this region. Besides, the conflicts have been largely caused by the poor attitude of the Nigerian State and operating MNCs in the Niger Delta that do not like to develop this region. This study therefore concluded by suggesting that the situation of conflicts in the Niger Delta could be corrected through all stakeholders concertedly stopping corruption and conflicts for the overall development of the Niger Delta region. The recommendations of this study therefore are: control of corruption; punishment of corrupt political leaders in the Niger Delta to serve as a deterrence; creation of employment and awarding contracts to Niger Delta youths; provision of social amenities for development by government and MNCs; and there should be the diversification of the economy of Niger for less emphasis to be placed on oil that has largely served as a divisive factor in Nigerian politics and governance.
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I INTRODUCTION

The irony of the Niger Delta region is that the abundance of natural resources that contribute to development in other parts of the world, pronouncedly lead to conflicts here. As the most strategic natural resource in a world economy that has become dependent on fossil fuel as the main source of energy, oil has become the greatest source of resource-induced conflict. This is as true of the Persian Gulf as it is true of the oil-exporting states of Sub-Saharan Africa notably Nigeria, Angola, Chad, Sudan. The control of oil revenues and claims of exclusion from the benefits of the oil economy is at the root of internal wars and the tension between the central government and the oil producing communities in these states.

In the Niger Delta, the distribution of oil revenues and the environmental impact of oil exploration have been critical to the conflict in the region. The magnitude of the problem is so high that virtually all the oil producing communities in Niger Delta have had one or the other form of conflict. And the bad news is that almost always, Niger Delta communities come off as the pit to pity in such conflict situations. Security operatives are used to fight at random and many lives and property get destroyed. The cases of the Ogonis, Umuechem community, Kula, Ogoada in Ahoada West, many communities in Delta State and Bayelsa State point to the fact that conflicts abound in the Niger Delta region.

In Niger Delta, inter-and intra ethnic contests for oil benefits are cited as having instigated the formation and multiplication of armed youth groups (Joab-Peterside, 2005, pp. 30-51). The point to emphasize here is that the existence of armed groups preceded the violent phase of community conflicts in Niger Delta. These groups merely keyed into the oil-related conflicts and transformed into militia groups when the need for a violent response to State repression arose.

Aptly, Akpakpan (1989, p.30) points out that, "socio-political and developmental frictions are born of complication in the affairs of states and people". Obaabo (2010, P. 5) explains that, considering that crude oil yields more than three quarters of Nigeria's national revenue, it becomes more imperative to put in scholarly perspective why oil wealth should not make and at the same time mar our state by well researched solutions being meted out to befit the oil politics leading to community conflicts in Niger Delta.

Given the foregoing considerations, this study will explore ways of ensuring that oil wealth do not at one and same time make and mar Niger Delta through well researched solutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Different scholars have done works in the past on corruption and conflict resolution in the Niger Delta region. Acemoglu and Robinson (2008, pp. 57-59) see corruption factoring a lot in the conflicts in because the ruling political elite in this region are so corrupt that they only think of their pockets and allies rather than then development of this region. It is proper to agree with this position. However, its pitfall is that it did not suggest how to change the attitude of the ruling elite in Niger Delta for the development of this region.

Naanen (2005, p. 39) observes that corruption in conflict resolution persist because the State has not put in place proper measures to curb corruption in Niger Delta. Referencing the high spate of corruption in the NDDC that is supposed to be a palliative measure to the conflicts in the Niger Delta, this work revealed that the State and the elite sometimes liaise to perpetuate the corruption in conflict resolution observed in Niger Delta. When words are very true, they do not need further explanations.

Olukoshi (2000, pp. 57-61) argued that corruption in the resolution of conflicts is flourishing because the people of he Niger Delta do not stop the corruption process by not voting corrupt leaders. The poverty of this position is that it does not consider the fact that the political class does not even give the poor masses the chance for their votes to count as candidates are often selected rather elected in this region.

Though these scholars have contributed immensely towards a proper understanding of corruption and conflict resolution in the Niger Delta, they all suffer the pitfall of not using a holistic approach that will entail all variables being discussed in one lump in relation to the problems of this area of study. With the holistic approach being a good method in the social sciences that helps for a better understanding of social phenomena, we deem it necessary to take a look at the phenomenon of corruption and conflict resolution in the Niger Delta holistically, which is an approach that considers the historical, economic, social, cultural, and political variables in analyzing any phenomenon.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study shall be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of the conflicts in the Niger Delta?
2. To what extent have the problems of corruption undermined conflict resolutions in Niger Delta?
3. Has the conflict resolution strategies of the state been able to solve the conflicts in the Niger Delta?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study shall be as follows:

1. To examine the causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta.
2. To carefully examine how corruption affects conflict resolution in Niger Delta region.
3. To determine if the conflict resolution strategies in the Niger Delta have been able to bring about economic development in the Niger Delta region.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Corruption

Different scholars have put definitions to the concept of corruption. However, it is proper to point out that this concept is a relative term. Rogow and Lasswell (1963, pp. 132-133) see corruption to be a violation of the public interest. This definition is incomplete to the extent that corruption does not only affect public interest but sometimes affects personal interests of some individuals in the society. This definition is also laden with ambiguities because public interest like public opinion is difficult to determine. Critics maintained that "while agreeing that the public interest can play an important part in the self-understanding of any polity, it is not the sharpest instrument for pinpointing misdeeds that constitute corruption".

In a broader perspective, Egbue (2006, p. 241) sees corruption as "subsuming a wide variety of illegal, illicit, irregular, and/or unprincipled activities and behaviours". From this perspective corruption then, is importantly a moral, political and legal issue. This position is acceptable as corruption encompasses a lot of factors.

Corruption is multidimensional and multifarious and so the approaches to it. According to Klitgaard (1991, p. 90), some ancient authors attributed official corruption to greed. Others have ascribed corruption to particular

cultures (be they dictatorial, personalistic, gift giving) or peoples. Still others have pointed out that corruption tends to be most prevalent when social norms are in flux or breakdown, and during booms and busts. Corruption has been blamed both on too much capitalism and competition and on too little; on colonialism and on the withdrawal of the colonial powers; on traditional regimes and on the breakdown of traditions. All of these except none could explain corruption in Nigeria. Another variable that may help to explain endemic corruption in Nigeria is the politics of godfatherism. Godfatherism, in a broad sense, is an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest (Gambo 2006, p. 88). It is the tradition of looking for a political father to help promote one's political aspirations.

Egbue (2007, p. 87) posits that corruption is a huge challenge in the public administration in Nigeria. It is at the core of the crisis of governance and legitimacy, the establishment of a stable democratic order, rule of law, development and the welfare of citizens. Of all forms of corruption, political corruption has remained a major obstacle to national progress in Nigeria. Corruption is indeed the major explanation for the seemingly insolvable problem of poverty, diseases, hunger and general acute development tragedy in Nigeria. It has also "seriously impeded the growth and effective utilization of resources in Africa."

Médard (1986, pp. 115-131) upholds that corruption exists at the interface of the public and private sectors, and stressed by researchers who point to the Weberian distinction between public and private as the foundation of non-corrupt politics and administration. It is proper to point out here that the main issue should not be propriety or not, but understanding the phenomenon of corruption and finding ways of controlling it from destroying our economies, especially in the underdeveloped countries where it is rife.

Nye (1967, p. 416) defines corruption as "behaviour that deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains." An updated version with the same elements is the definition by Mushtaq Khan, who says corruption is "behaviour that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power, or status" (Khan, 1996, p. 12). The irony of corruption in most countries today, especially in Nigeria, is that those that make the rules are often the ones that quickly break them when it comes to the issues of corruption.

By looking at the different kinds of resources transferred, a distinction has been made between corruption in economic terms and corruption in social terms. Economic corruption takes place in a market-like situation and entails an exchange of cash or material goods, which is basic to corruption. This is a strict definition of corruption, reflected in the regulations that stipulate limits to what amounts can be "given" before it is considered a bribe. Transfers are not only in cash or other tangibles, however, and the exchange takes place in a social setting with a number of cultural and moral meanings. Corruption understood in these broader terms has been called "social exchange" and social corruption. Social corruption is conventionally understood as an integrated element of clientelism. Clientelism often implies an exchange of material benefits but cannot be reduced to this, because clientelism has a wider cultural and social implication. Clientelism, nepotism, ethnic and other favouritism are all variants of corruption, in social terms (Médard 1998, p. 308). This is really true in the Nigerian context. However, the point is that given our level of development, we should have outgrown these circumstances and pursued our developmental goals in Nigeria.

Rent-seeking is sometimes used interchangeably with corruption, and there is a large area of overlap. But, while corruption involves the misuse of public power for private benefit, rent-seeking derives from the economic concept of "rents", i.e. earnings in excess of all relevant costs, and equals what most people think of as monopoly profits. Rent-seeking, the effort to acquire rents, is not necessarily banned by law or regarded as immoral in society, or necessarily uneconomical in terms of development if reinvested productively, but it is largely "directly unproductive", wasteful and very often economically inefficient (Coolidge and Rose-Ackerman, 2000, p. 73).

According to Olugbenga (2007), Odojin and Omojuwa (2007) the word corruption cannot easily be defined. Similarly, Alemika (2012), Falooore (2010) and Igbuzor (2008) maintain that corruption is not an easy task to define. Indeed, defining corruption is a daunting challenging venture. However, Andrig and Fjelstad (2001:4) view corruption as a "complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and contexts". According to them, one of the major difficulties in conceptualizing corruption is that while it is difficult to disappear it has a capacity to take on new forms (Andrig and Fjelstad, 2001, p. 82). In a similar fashion, Tanzi (1998, p. 53) maintains that while it is difficult to define corruption, the crisis associated with corruption is not difficult to recognize.

The foregoing being obvious, it is proper to conclude that corruption is a bad phenomenon that affects the development of many nations, especially those of the developing nations. This therefore serves as a clarion call for all underdeveloped nations to control their level of corruption if they earnestly seek development.

Conflict

Many scholars have done works on the concept of conflict resolution. Some of such scholars are Cohen, Davis, and Aboelata, (2011), Sethi (2006), Forsyth (2009), Adam and Ash (2009) etc. However, a proper understanding of the concept of conflict will of course require a clear understanding of the concept of 'conflict' first. Cohen, Davis, and Aboelata, (2011, p. 1) define conflict has been defined as a situation between two or more parties who see their perspectives as incompatible. Conflicts have a negative beneficial connotation, but some conflicts are

desirable as they can create change. The problem with this work is that it says that conflict is desirable in some sense. Truth is that whichever way conflict wants to be accessed, it costs much on society, especially the developing nations. Hence, it should be totally discouraged.

Sethi (2006, pp. 67-71) maintains that loss of life is only one corollary of conflicts. Others are destruction of food systems, disintegration of public services, loss of income, dislocation, insecurity and a surge of crimes. What is important to note is that immediate costs imposed by conflicts, though enormous, represent only a small fraction of the price that the affected population has to pay. In particular, institutional costs of conflict can have debilitating consequences for long term growth of society. The physical infrastructure such as roads and buildings destroyed or damaged during conflicts can be repaired or rebuilt, though at a heavy cost, but the breakdown of institutions, the mutual trust and understanding that is lost and the trauma that is heaped on the vulnerable population, make it very likely that the bad blood will persist and conflicts and violence will recur. They lock entire populations into unremitting cycles of violence and that is why prevention of conflicts or their resolution at early stages becomes a compelling challenge.

A conflict is not a single-event phenomenon but is a dynamic process having different stages. The objectives of the parties involved, their approaches, the intensity levels, the likely damage etc all change between the various phases of a conflict's life cycle. Therefore an optimum conflict management strategy differs from stage to stage. This makes it necessary to have a thorough understanding of the dynamics of conflict throughout its life cycle for application of conflict prevention and management strategies. This work should have pointed out some conflict management strategies, showing their strengths and weaknesses. The failure to do this is its pitfall.

The potential for conflict will always exist in a society with its members having different mores, interests, and socio-economic conditions and needs. Thus, in any society, for a variety of reasons, perceptions may be conceived about group or communal interests being harmed or relatively deprived. If fostered, these may lead to expressions of discontent against the State or other social group(s)/communities. If such discontent is not attended to in the primary stages or dealt with in a manner which aggravates the already prevailing feeling of injustice done to the group/community, a major conflict situation may arise.

Forsyth (2009, p. 139) documents that "conflict resolution, otherwise known as reconciliation, is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution." Often, committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group (e.g., intentions; reasons for holding certain beliefs), and by engaging in collective negotiation. Ultimately, a wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including but not limited to, negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and creative peace building. There is actually the need for this worked to stress that sometimes some conflict resolution strategies do not achieve the desired results, which can even be worse than the conflict situation itself. Hence, conflict resolution strategies should always be properly thought up before application.

Adam and Ash (2009, p. 69) record that, "the term conflict resolution may also be used interchangeably with dispute resolution, where arbitration and litigation processes are critically involved." Furthermore, the concept of conflict resolution can be thought to encompass the use of nonviolent resistance measures by conflicted parties in an attempt to promote effective resolution. The problem here is that there is the need to maintain the fact that there are some obvious differences between both concepts. This is more so since there is a saying that, "No two words in English language mean exactly the same thing." Kellett (2007, p. 89) documents that conflict resolution as an academic field is relatively new. George Mason University in Fairfax, VA was the first university to offer a PhD program on it. There are some theories and models of conflict resolution. Some of them are carefully discussed below thus:

Dual concern model of conflict resolution: The dual concern model of conflict resolution is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals' preferred method of dealing with conflict is based on two underlying themes or dimensions, namely:

1. A concern for self (i.e. assertiveness), and
2. A concern for others (i.e. empathy) (Sternberg, and Dobson, 1987, pp. 79-81).

According to the model, group members balance their concern for satisfying personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interests of others in different ways. The intersection point between these two dimensions ultimately lead individuals towards exhibiting different styles of conflict resolution (Goldfien and Robbennolt, 2007, pp. 277-320). The dual model identifies five conflict resolution styles/strategies that individuals may use depending on their dispositions toward pro-self or pro-social goals. They are as follows:

1. **Avoidance Conflict Style:** Characterized by inaction and passivity, avoidance conflict style is typically used when an individual has reduced concern for their own outcomes as well as the outcomes of others. During conflict, these avoiders adopt a "wait and see" attitude, often allowing conflict to phase out on its own without any personal involvement. Unfortunately, by neglecting to address high-conflict situations, avoiders risk allowing problems to fester out of control.
2. **Yielding Conflict Style:** In contrast, yielding or "accommodating" conflict styles are characterized by a high concern for others while having a low concern for one's own self. This passive pro-social approach emerges when individuals derive personal satisfaction from meeting the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships (Forsyth, 2009, p. 61). When faced with conflict,

individuals with a yielding conflict style tend to give into others' demands out of respect for the social relationship

3. **Competitive Conflict Style:** Competitive or "fighting" conflict style maximizes individual assertiveness (i.e., concern for self) and minimizes empathy (i.e., concern for others). Groups consisting of competitive members generally enjoy seeking domination over others, and typically see conflict as a "win or lose" predicament (Forsyth, 2009, pp. 61-62). Fighters tend to force others to accept their personal views by employing competitive, power tactics (e.g., argue; insult; accuse; violence) that foster feelings of intimidation (Veenema et al, 1994, pp. 29-38).
4. **Cooperation Conflict Style:** Characterized by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior, cooperation conflict style is typically used when an individual has elevated interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of others. During conflict, cooperators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. Individuals with this type of conflict style tend to be highly assertive and highly empathetic at the same time (Goldfien and Robbennolt, 2007, pp. 277-320). By seeing conflict as a creative opportunity, collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a "win-win" solution (Forsyth, 2009:62). According to the literature on conflict resolution, a cooperative conflict resolution style is recommended above all others (Sternberg and Dobson, 1987; Jarboe and Witteman, 1996).
5. **Conciliation Conflict Style:** Conciliation or "compromising" conflict style is typical of individuals who possess an intermediate-level of concern for both personal and others' outcomes. Compromisers value fairness and, in doing so, anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions (Goldfien and Robbennolt, 2007, pp. 277-320). By accepting some demands put forth by others, compromisers believe this agreeableness will encourage others to meet half-way, thus promoting conflict resolution (van de Vliert and Euwema, 1994, pp. 74-87). This conflict style can be considered an extension of both "yielding" and "cooperative" strategies (Forsyth, 2009, p. 62).

Conflict resolution as both a professional practice and academic field is highly sensitive to culture. In Western cultural contexts, such as Canada and the United States, successful conflict resolution usually involves fostering communication among disputants, problem solving, and drafting agreements that meet their underlying needs. In these situations, conflict resolvers often talk about finding the win-win solution, or mutually satisfying scenario, for everyone involved (Fisher and Ury, 1981).

In truth, it is a proper thing that these variants have been carefully delineated for educational purposes. However, at the level of praxis, some of these theorizing do not hold water, especially in developing nations that the theorists did not consider before making their theories.

In many non-Western cultural contexts, such as Afghanistan, Vietnam, and China, it is also important to find "win-win" solutions; however, getting there can be very different. In these contexts, direct communication between disputants that explicitly addresses the issues at stake in the conflict can be perceived as very rude, making the conflict worse and delaying resolution. Rather, it can make sense to involve religious, tribal or community leaders, communicate difficult truths indirectly through a third party, and make suggestions through stories (Augsburger, 1992, p. 113). Intercultural conflicts are often the most difficult to resolve because the expectations of the disputants can be very different, and there is much occasion for misunderstanding.

III THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework to be used in this work is the Conflict Theory because this research area is focused on conflict. Some scholars have done some works in this area before. Conflict Theory is a social-psychological model of inter-group conflict (Sedanius and Pratto, 1999, pp. 17-18). The theory explains that inter-group hostility arises as a result of conflicting goals and competition over limited resources. (Jackson, 1993: 395-415) Groups may be in competition for a real or perceived scarcity of resources such as money, political power, military protection, or social status. Feelings of resentment arise because groups see the competition over resources as having a zero-sum fate, in which only one group is the winner and the other, loses (Baumeister and Vohs, 2007, pp. 725-726). The length and severity of the conflict is determined by the perceived value and shortage of a given resource.

According to the Conflict Theory, positive relations can be restored only if super-ordinate goals, or goals that can only be achieved through the combined efforts of both groups, are in place (Jackson, 1993, pp. 395-415). Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 19) point out that in addition to negative attitudes toward the out-group; threat from an out-group enhances intra-group cooperation, leading to heightened in-group identification. The theory was officially named by Donald Campbell, but has been articulated by others since the middle of the 20th century (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p. 19).

The theory was in part a reaction to the existing assumptions about inter-group conflict made based on intra-group or intra-individual characteristics. Conflict Theory offers an explanation for feelings of prejudice and discrimination toward other groups because people tend to dislike members of out-groups seen as competing with their own group for needed resources (Whitley and Kite 2010, pp. 18-21).

Using this approach to relate to the topic under study, it enables us to reveal that the intra-community conflicts going on in Niger Delta are mainly due to fight for certain benefits or pursuit of some interests that have led to so many intra-community conflicts. It also allows us the opportunity to concretely analyze the causes, nature,

dimension, and effects of conflicts on the economy of this area and by extension that of the entire country since this area largely contributes to our national economy through its rich oil endowments. These considerations explain why this theory is preferred and used in this study.

IV RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design to be used in this study is the descriptive research. This method is to be used to empirically ascertain the relationship between corruption and conflict resolution in Niger Delta. In doing this, the paper used both primary and secondary sources of data. The use of primary data which includes the use of questionnaires, oral interviews, focus group discussions, and observation are the key approaches obtain relevant primary data to be used in this research work.

The researcher purposively distributed one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires, which was administered to three (Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta) States of Niger Delta States. Regarding how to administer the questionnaires, the simple random sampling technique was used to select States that could be included in the administration of the questionnaires. For data analysis, the paper utilized the simple percentages for the purpose of ease of computation and comprehension by all and sundry that may be interested in this study.

V RESEARCH SETTING

History and Geography of Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a densely populated region sometimes called the Oil Rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The area was the British Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate (Akoroda, 2000, p. 29). The Niger Delta, as now defined officially by the Nigerian government, extends over about 70,000 km² and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass (Akoroda, 2000, pp. 29-30). Historically and cartographically, it consists of present day Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States. In 2000, however, Obasanjo's regime included Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River State, Edo, Imo and Ondo States in the region. Some 31 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups including the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Igbo, Isoko, Urhobo, Yoruba, and Kalabari, are among the inhabitants in the Niger Delta, speaking about 250 different dialects (Akoroda, 2000, p. 29).

The Niger Delta, and the "South-South Zone", which includes Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State and Rivers State are two different entities. While the Niger Delta is the oil producing region the South-South Zone is a geo-political zone.

Identifying the geographical extent and the component ethnic communities of the Niger delta region, a more appropriate term than the conventional Niger Delta, is problematic. A geographical definition of the Delta is offered by Takena Tamuno, an authority on Nigerian history and an outstanding scholar from the region, stated that "linguistically, ethnographically, culturally, the Niger Delta of the pre-crude oil and gas era, comprised a bewildering mix of ethnic groups" among which "the communities of Ijo (in eastern, western and central Niger Delta), the Ogoni, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Isoko, Ikwerre and Delta Igbo hit more headlines and covered electronic waves more than others" (Tamuno, 1999, p. 63).

Furthermore, the Niger Delta comprised about 70,000 sq. km. This contrasts with the 1995 World Bank Technical Report which gives the total land area of the Niger Delta as 20,000 sq. km. "located in south eastern Nigeria" (World Bank, 1995). An even more restricted concept of the Niger Delta has, unfortunately, been espoused by the Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES), a non-governmental organization funded by the Oil Producers Trade Sector (OPTS) of the Lagos Chambers of Commerce. The NDES placed the limits of the Niger Delta at Aboh to the north, the Imo River estuary to the east, the Benin River to the west, and down to Akassa and Nun River Estuary to the south.

The term "Niger Delta Oil Province" was introduced at the 7th World Petroleum Congress in 1967 by Franki and Cordry for the region southward from Onitsha, Benin and Umuahia, where oil and gas occur in commercial quantities. This is the petroleum definition of the Niger Delta. (Nkomadu, 2003, p. 33) But it must be emphasized that for development purposes it is the coastal, riverine parts of the Niger Delta that is problematic.

The definition of the Niger Delta can be likened to the proverbial elephant that was described in the fable about the seven blind men of Hindustan. Each blind man touched a different part of the elephant and described it differently. The historian, the geographer, the petroleum geologist, the politician and even the farmers and the fishermen of the Niger Delta all perceive their delta differently (Nkomadu, 2003, pp. 33-34). But what is needed is a bird's-eye view of the entire Niger Delta region. The recent Niger Delta Development Bill equates the Niger Delta with the South-South geopolitical zone, comprising Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, to which neighbouring oil-producing parts of Ondo, Abia and Imo States must be added.

The Niger Delta has to be meaningfully and comprehensively defined to be useful to the people that live there, who are exposed to oil pollution and environmental degradation, and have suffered from neglect and poor infrastructural development. It is perhaps equally instructive to view the Niger Delta from the perspectives of both human and natural history, in order to be able to trace the roots of the discontent in the Niger Delta region today. The Delta is an oil-rich region, and has been the centre of international controversy over devastating pollution and ecocide, kleptocracy (notably by the Abacha regime), and human rights violations in which Royal Dutch Shell has been implicated (Ogoloma, 2005, p. 9).

Western Niger Delta consists of the western section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Delta, and the southernmost parts of Edo, and Ondo States. The western (or Northern) Niger Delta is an heterogeneous society with several ethnic groups including the Urhobo, Igbo, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ijaw (or Ezon) and Ukwuani groups in Delta State, along with Yoruba in Ondo State. Their livelihoods are primarily based on fishing and farming. History has it that the Western Niger was controlled by chiefs of the five primary ethnic groups the Itsekiri, Isoko, Ukwuani, Ijaw and Urhobo with whom the British government had to sign separate "Treaties of Protection" in their formation of "Protectorates" that later became southern Nigeria (Ogoloma, 2005, pp. 9-11).

Central Niger Delta consists of the central section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Bayelsa and Rivers States. The Central Niger Delta region has the Ijaw (including the Nembe-Brass, Ogbia, Kalabari, Ibanis (Opobo, Bonny, etc.), Okrika, and Andoni clans, the Ogoni and other groups which consist of the Ekpeye, Ndoni, Etche, Ikwerre and Ndoki in Rivers State (Ogoloma, 2005, pp. 9-11).

Eastern Niger Delta Section consists of the Eastern (or Atlantic) section of the coastal South-South Nigeria which includes Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. The Eastern Niger Delta region has the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ogoja (including Ekoi and Bekwara) people, who are all related with a common language and ancestor.

The Socio-Economic Activities of the People of Niger Delta

Nigeria has become Africa's biggest producer of petroleum, including many oil wells in the Oil Rivers. Some 2 million barrels (320,000 m³) a day are extracted in the Niger Delta (Okiowe, 2003, p. 39). First oil operations in the region originated in 1950s and were undertaken by Multinational Corporations, which provided Nigeria with necessary technological and financial resources to extract oil. Since 1975, the region has accounted for more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings. Together oil and natural gas extraction comprise "97 per cent of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenues" (Okiowe, 2003, pp. 39-40). Much of the natural gas extracted in oil wells in the Delta is immediately burned, or flared, into the air at a rate of approximately 70 million m³ per day. This is equivalent to 41% of African natural gas consumption, and forms the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions on the planet. In 2003, about 99% of excess gas was flared in the Niger Delta, although this value has fallen to 11% in 2010 (World Bank, 2011, pp. 1-3). The biggest gas flaring company is the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd, a joint venture that is majority owned by the Nigerian government. In Nigeria, "...despite regulations introduced 20 years ago to outlaw the practice, most associated gas is flared, causing local pollution and contributing to climate change" (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2009, p. 3). The environmental devastation associated with the industry and the lack of distribution of oil wealth have been the source and/or key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including recent guerilla activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Despite the vast wealth created by petroleum, the benefits have been slow to trickle down to the majority of the population, who since the 1960s has increasingly abandoned their traditional agricultural practices. Annual production of both cash and food crops dropped significantly in the latter decades of 20th century, cocoa production dropped by 43% (Nigeria was the world's largest cocoa exporter in 1960), rubber dropped by 29%, cotton by 65%, and groundnuts by 64% (Nwamadi, 2007, p. 18). In spite of the large number of skilled, well-paid Nigerians who have been employed by the oil corporations, the majority of Nigerians and most especially the people of the Niger Delta states have become poorer since the 1960s.

The Delta region has a steadily growing population estimated to be over 30 million people as of 2005, accounting for more than 23% of Nigeria's total population (Amnesty International, 2009, p. 10). The population density is also among the highest in the world with 265 people per kilometre-squared (reference NDDC) (Nwamadi, 2007, pp. 18-19). This population is expanding at a rapid 3% per year and the oil capital, Port Harcourt, along with other large towns are growing quickly. Poverty and urbanization in Nigeria are on the rise, and official corruption is considered a fact of life. The resultant scenario is one in which there is urbanization but no accompanying economic growth to provide jobs. This has ironically forced the growing populace to begin destroying the ecosystem that they require to sustain themselves.

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is among the richest deltas in the world. Other major deltas are either famous for crude oil and natural gas (Amazon in Brazil, Orinoco in Venezuela, Mississippi in the U.S.A., Mahakarn in Indonesia) or grow mainly rice (e.g. Indus in Pakistan, Ganges in Bangladesh, Mekong in Vietnam) (Friends of the Earth, 2004, p. 21). Adetula (1996, p. 9) explains that the Niger Delta however has huge oil and gas reserves and ranks as the world's sixth largest exporter of crude oil and the second largest producer of palm oil, after Malaysia that even obtained its palm seedlings from Nigeria.

Akekue (2004, p. 13) documents that environmental conservation and economic development in the Niger Delta depend on the flow of federal funding and goodwill into the region, and on improved understanding of the delta, its petroleum occurrences and its peoples. But the historical background and human dimensions of the unrest in the Niger Delta have, hitherto, not been sufficiently highlighted in the search for lasting peace in the oil producing communities. Tamuno (1999, p. 17) explains that since pre-colonial days, the Niger Delta has played a crucial role in the Nigerian economy. Its ports and rivers provided access for the British to penetrate the Nigerian hinterland; the gateway for the trade in slaves, and later export commodities such as palm produce, timber, rubber and even groundnut and cotton from the distant northern parts of Nigeria.

The potentates who ruled the Niger Delta city states and neighbouring kingdoms were also the sentinels that guarded the lucrative trade routes of the Niger Delta. They either received or resisted British mercantilism and

imperialism. But through negotiations, the Europeans, principally the British secured the co-operation of the rulers of the Niger Delta city-states, who then became the middlemen in the slave and palm oil trade (Obi, 1999, p. 7).

Participatory continuity is what their descendants in present-day petroleum-rich Niger Delta seem to be clamouring for, whether for peaceful resolution of the unrest in the Niger Delta, or for environmental protection and development, the human factor has a crucial role to play (Obi, 1999, pp. 7-8). Modo (2007, p. 8) narrates that the Niger Delta is also among the world’s major wetlands; with one of the largest mangrove ecosystems. Environmental degradation, arising from total dependence of the rural population on unsustainable agriculture, fishing, forestry and wildlife exploitation, has seriously threatened the Niger Delta. Land resource degradation, renewable resource depletion and oil pollution are now the irreversible consequences of prolonged dependence on the natural resources of the region by the indigenous population and the nation. Ikporukpo (1998, p. 21) however suggests that “conservation must start with human considerations before it can succeed”. This should ideally be the case for the Niger Delta situation.

VI DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This heading examines the presentation and analysis of data. Here, the paper focused on the presentation of data and analysis in relation to corruption and conflict in the Niger Delta region. This paper also used available field data to make analysis using tables. However, it is appropriate to reiterate at this stage that the researcher administered one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires to some randomly selected States in Niger Delta (Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta States). However, only one hundred and twenty (120) of them were successfully retrieved and used for analysis in this study.

Table 4.1: Age of Respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
18 – 23 years	18	15%
24 – 29 years	24	20%
30 – 35 years	54	45%
36–above years	24	20%
Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

Table 4.1 shows the age range of the respondents to be 18 – 23 years 18 (15%); 24 – 29 years 24 (20%); 30 – 35 years 54 (45%) and 36 – above years 24 (20%).

Table 4.2: Sex of Respondents

Sex	No. of respondents	Percentage
Males	72	65%
Females	48	35%
Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

Table 4.2 shows that the sex distribution of the respondents is 72 (65%) males and 48 (35%) females.

Table 4.3: Occupations of Respondents

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Civil servant	78	65%
Student	24	20%
Private business	12	10%
Others	6	5%
Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

For the occupation of the respondents, table 4.3 reveals that 78 (65%) are civil servants; 24 (20%) are students; 12 (10%) are into private business; and 6 (5%) belong to other careers not listed on the table.

Table 4.4: Educational qualifications of Respondents

Qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
FSLC	48	40%
O/Level	30	25%
First Degree	18	15%
Masters and above	24	20%
Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

Table 4.4 above shows that 48 (40%) are First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) holders; 30 (25%) are O/Level certificate holders; 18 (15%) have First Degree certificates; and 24 (20%) have Masters Degrees and above

Table 4.5: Work experiences of Respondents

Work Experience	No. of respondents	Percentage
No experience	66	55%
1 – 5 years	12	10%
6 – 10 years	18	15%
11 – 15 years	15	12.5%
16 – above years	9	7.5%
Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

Table 4.5 shows that 66 (55%) have no form of work experience; 12 (10%) claimed to have worked for 1-5 years; 18 (15%) have worked for 6-10 years; 15 (12.5%) answered that they had worked for 11-15 years; and 9 (10%) claimed to have worked for 16 years and above.

Question 1: Do you really think that corruption factors in conflict resolution in Niger Delta region?

Table 4.6: Corruption and conflict resolution in Niger Delta region.

S/N	Responses	Number of Respondents	% of Total
1.	Yes	102	85%
2.	No	18	15%
3.	Don't know	-	-
	Total	120	100%

Source: *Field Work, 2021*

From table 4.6, it is obvious that a majority of the respondents feel that corruption factors in conflict resolution in Niger Delta region. This is represented by 102 (85%) ticking 'Yes'; 18 (15%) answered 'No'; and no respondents ticked 'Don't know'.

Question 2: What are the causes of causes of the conflicts in the Niger Delta?

Table 4.7: Causes of the conflicts in the Niger Delta.

S/N	Responses	Number of Respondents	% of Total
1.	Corruption	78	65%
2.	Class interest	6	5%
3.	Greed	30	15%
4.	Environmental issues	6	10%
	Total	120	100%

Source: *Field work, 2021*

From table 4.7 above, one can say that an impressive percentage of the respondents think that corruption is the main cause of the conflicts in the Niger Delta. This is represented by 78 (65%) ticking 'Corruption'; 6 (5%) answered 'Class interest'; 30 (15%) ticked 'Greed'; and 6 (5%) ticked 'Environmental issues'.

Question 3: Would you agree that the problems of corruption undermined conflict resolutions in Niger Delta?

Table 4.8: Corruption and conflict resolution in Niger Delta.

S/N	Responses	Number of Respondents	% of Total
1.	Yes	111	92.5%
2.	No	9	7.5%
3.	Don't know	-	-
	Total	120	100%

Source: *Field work, 2021*

From the table above, we have 111 (92.5%) of the respondents answering 'Yes' and 9 (7.5%) answering 'No'; and no respondents indicated 'Don't know'. These figures indicate that the problems of corruption undermined conflict resolutions in Niger Delta.

Question 4: Has the conflict resolution strategies of the state been able to solve the conflicts in the Niger Delta?

Table 4.9: Conflict resolution strategies and conflicts in the Niger Delta.

S/N	Responses	Number of Respondents	% of Total
1.	Yes	15	12.5%
2.	No	96	80%
3.	Don't know	9	7.5
	Total	120	100%

Source: Field work, 2021

The table above reveals that 15 (12.5%) of the respondents answered 'Yes'; 96 (80%) answered 'No'; and 9 (7.5%) indicated 'Don't know'. These figures reflect the fact that the conflict resolution strategies of the state have not been able to solve the conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Question 5: Is it correct to say that there is a relationship between corruption and failure of conflict resolution in the Niger Delta?

Table 4.10: Corruption and failure of conflict resolution in the Niger Delta.

S/N	RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF TOTAL
1.	Yes	120	100%
2.	No	-	-
3.	Don't know	-	-
	Total	120	100%

Source: Field work, 2021

Table 4.10 above shows that all the respondents 120 (100%) are of the position that there is a relationship between corruption and failure of conflict resolution in the Niger Delta. On the other hand, no respondents ticked 'No' or 'Don't know'.

Question 6: Would you agree that there is a relationship between conflict resolution and relative peace and security in the Niger Delta?

Table 4.11: Conflict resolution and relative peace and security in the Niger Delta.

S/N	RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF TOTAL
1.	Yes	72	60%
2.	No	42	35%
3.	Don't know	6	5%
	Total	120	100%

Source: Field work, 2021

Table 4.11 above shows that 72 (60%) are of the position that there is a relationship between conflict resolution and relative peace and security in the Niger Delta. On the other hand, 42 (35%) answered 'No'; and 6 (5%) answered 'Don't know'. The size of the 'Yes' respondents indicate that there is a relationship between conflict resolution and relative peace and security in the Niger Delta.

Analysis of Baseline Data

There actually has been the phenomenon of conflicts in the Niger Delta. Some of the conflicts have to be carefully put in tabular form above.

Table 2: Baseline data on some conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Conflicts	Year	Effect/Consequences	Conflict management strategy
Conflict Owaza youths and SPDC	2005	Destruction of lives and property	Dialogue with the chiefs and the youths
Conflict between Egi youth and Elf Nig Ltd	1996	Massive destruction and looting of Elf property at Obagi and the shut down of site for weeks	Elf agreed to provide basic social amenities free of charge
Agip Nig Ltd versus Ogoda youths	2001	Many youths of Ogoda and neighboring Ubeta community got killed by the security operatives and the site was shut down	Compensations were paid to the family of the deceased
Omoku and Obirikom youths versus Agip Nig Ltd	2005	There was a destruction of lives and property of Agip and there was a shut down of power in the area for sometime	The use of dialogue with the chiefs and the youths of the area
Youth militancy activities	2000 to date	High level of social insecurity in the Niger Delta as there was the high level of kidnapping, hostage taking, armed robbery cases and political assassinations etc	The use of the Amnesty programme initiated by late President Musa Yar'Adua in 2007
Ogoni youth (MOSOP) versus SPDC	Close to two decades now	Several instances of shut down of SPDC activities and destruction of lives and properties	Government intervention that has been poorly executed
Umuechem youths versus SPDC	1994	Destruction of property	Government biased intervention
Kula youths versus SPDC	2004	Death of some youths and shut down of SPDC site	Dialogue with chiefs and some youths
Delta State youths versus Esravus	2002	Destruction of lives and properties as well as shutting down of sites for a very long period of time	Witnessed the intervention of the Federal Government
Egbeu Boys versus government in Odi community	2001	Many hundreds of lives were killed and their community destroyed by government security operatives	Setting up of Okadigbo committee to look into the issue

Table 4.12: Camps and arms surrendered by Niger Delta Militants

Source: Deduction from newspapers

Camp	Quantity of arms surrendered	State
Ateke's Camp	3, 756	Rivers
Farrah's Camp	2,958	Rivers
Boy Loaf's Camp	3, 131	Bayelsa
Tomplo's Camp	5, 867	Delta
Young Shall Grow	3, 572	Bayelsa
Africa's Camp	4, 633	Bayela
Joshua Makava's Camp	2,843	Bayelsa
Total	26, 760 ammunitions of different types	

The situation of conflicts was so bad that many youths decided to engage in militancy activities. Luckily today, there has been the Amnesty programme that made some youth gangs to declare their arms as shown on the table below.

It is obvious, given the figures of arms on the table above, that the conflict situation was terribly bad. The types of arms declared by the ex-militants looked more like there was a mini-war in the Niger Delta. These conditions call for appropriate recommendations.

VII CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the fact that oil wealth has been causing a lot of community conflicts in Niger Delta, it primarily lies within the purview of the Nigerian State to create systematic and institutionalized methods that will detect early warning signs for preemptive actions and design effective conflict resolution and peace building strategies through operational structures and personnel for monitoring conflicts and transform the existing community conflict(s). Nevertheless, it is appropriate to say that corruption factors a lot in the conflicts that take place in the Niger Delta.

It is the researcher's opinion that in the search for lasting peace to conflicts in Niger Delta, academics, religious leaders, traditional rulers, women groups, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), social critics and activists, trade associations, civil societies, various youth leaders, students bodies, and multinationals companies of particular interests in corporate social responsibility, etc and not our corrupt political elite should be involved in conflict resolution and peace building process. This will ensure enduring and sustainable peace.

Finally, all Niger Delta people owe the State the allegiance of discharging their duties and responsibilities, while the state should reciprocate with the guarantee of all rights and privileges. Recognizing the differences in identities and exploiting the dynamic rich multi-cultural nature of the various ethno-religious groups, will no doubt enhance coexistence and encourage unity in diversity in this region. It is not enough for the State to make pronouncements, but mechanisms mentioned earlier should be in place for facilitation and proper dialogue through peaceful means to end conflicts in Niger Delta.

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. Corruption by the political elite in the Niger Delta should be properly monitored to control its detracting factors.
2. Corrupt political elite in the Niger Delta should be recalled and squarely dealt with to serve as deterrence.
3. The federal system of government in Nigeria should be jettisoned because it is dysfunctional and unsuitable for a society like Nigeria which is driven much by 'ethnic national' inclinations. Incorporating equal development for the diverse parts of the country seems infeasible in the present system of government and has created deep feelings of sidelining and marginalization. It is recommended here, that Nigeria adopt a confederacy to facilitate the development of the diverse ethnic nationalities.
4. It is better for the government to award contracts directly and hold the contractors responsible for non-execution than giving funds to the commissions only to be embezzled. Massive infrastructural development of Niger Delta is the sure answer to the desired peace.
5. There is the need to have a social reengineering of the Niger Delta area. So many abuses have been committed by the Nigerian security forces, loss of lives, properties, detentions, torture, rape and all the social ills.
6. There should be the provision of employment for the youths of Niger Delta to reduce the spate of conflicts in this region.
7. Improvement and diversification of the economy; The Niger Delta region, with its stock of natural and human resources, offer immense opportunities for developing a diversified and growing economy. Over-dependence on oil is causing so much conflict.

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