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Stopping the Militancy and Youth Restiveness in Oil Producing Communities: The Case of Niger Delta Communities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT: The problems of oil exploration/exploitation companies with their host communities have always been a recurring decimal due largely to oil companies not being true to their corporate social responsibilities and government's insensitivity to the plight of host communities as a result of the environmental degradation, and agricultural and economic disarticulation of the host communities embedded in oil exploration and exploitation. Consequent upon these is youth restiveness and militancy. It is these issues that necessitated the study. The sample size of the study was 393. Data was gathered using questionnaire and was analyzed using simple percentage. The theory of general welfare and policies was employed to explain the phenomenon. Cross-sectional survey was deployed. The findings showed that 77.7% of the respondents believe that environmental degradation, poor corporate responsibilities by oil companies, and favoritism to some locals are the major reasons for youth restiveness and militancy, and that oil companies and government should be more proactive to the yearnings and aspirations of the host communities in order to stem the level of violence and general social disorder in the oil producing communities of Rivers State as occasioned by the effects of oil production.

KEYWORDS: Environmental Degradation, Militancy, Niger Delta, Oil Companies, Youth Restiveness

INTRODUCTION

The most important duty of a state is the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens. As a matter of fact the general duty of a state is to ensure the survival of that particular entity. Measures put in place to accomplish this onerous task include security tending to ensure the protection of the citizens from external incursion and to put measures that will also ensure the maintenance of internal social and political order. Internal social and political disorder may come in terms of militancy, youth restiveness, kidnapping, protests and demonstrations amongst others. It is the duty of a responsive government to look into and resolve issues that may lead to these upheavals.

In the Niger Delta region in general and oil producing communities of Rivers State in particular the incidence of social and political disruptions are occasioned by the relationship the oil producing communities and the oil corporations. The study intends to look for a way out of this imbroglio.

Statement of the Problem

There has been an ongoing militancy and youth restiveness in the oil producing areas of Nigeria as a result of the oil companies' inability to perform their social responsibilities, and government insensitivity towards the plight of the oil producing communities. Oil exploration and exploitation activities have led to the distortion of the natural traditional economy of the host communities which is based on fishing and farming. The host communities have mounted efforts to make the oil companies and government authorities come to terms with the problems they encounter following the oil production activities. The oil producing communities of Rivers State have employed a combination of peaceful advocacy, legal action, and sheer confrontation to force oil companies and governments to address environmental devastation, agricultural and economic disarticulation, and poverty in their communities. In spite of these efforts, the problems still persist. The study therefore, seeks to analyze the current situation and proffer solutions to this militancy and youth restiveness to ensure harmonious existence between the oil companies and the host communities.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

i. Determine the reasons for the youth restiveness and militancy in oil producing communities of Rivers State.
ii. Ascertain the damages by the youth to the oil companies operating in the area.
iii. Find out the effect of youth restiveness on the development of the host communities and government infrastructure.
iv. Determine the route of execution of development projects by the oil companies.

v. Examine the level of implementation of corporate social responsibility of the companies in the area.
vi. Determine the effect of oil production activities on the host communities' economic activities.

Research Questions

The research questions by which this study shall be guided are:
i. What are the reasons for the youth restiveness and militancy in oil producing communities of Rivers State?
ii. What are the damages by the youth to the oil companies operating in the area?
iii. What are the effects of youth restiveness on the development of the host communities and government infrastructure?
iv. What are the effects of such damage to the Nigerian state?
v. What are the corporate social responsibilities of the oil companies in the area?
vi. What are the effects of oil production and activities on the host community economic activities?

Hypotheses

i. Nonchalant attitude and insensitivity of both government and oil companies are the cause of youth restiveness and militancy in oil producing communities of Rivers State.
ii. Youth restiveness and militancy have led to extensive damages on oil companies' properties and government infrastructure.
iii. Youth restiveness and militancy rather than promote development of the communities tend to retard it.
iv. The inflow of fund into Nigeria's coffers diminishes as a result of the damages caused the oil companies.
v. The corporate social responsibility of oil companies is of great importance to the oil producing communities.
vi. The major effect of oil production and activities on the host communities' economic activities is the environmental degradation that affects their livelihood from fishing and farming.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oil production has really affected the lives and economics of the oil producing areas. The flaring of gas and oil spillage have led to a lot of ecological devastation and general degradation of the environment as well as a significant negative impact on the socio-economic life of the oil producing areas (Babatunde, 2014).

In this light, Mohammed (2022) states that corporate social responsibility has been identified as an effective strategy for oil and gas companies to mitigate the hardship and turbulence that arise from oil exploration and exploitation. He avers that social corporate responsibility is seen as an effective strategy for oil and gas companies to obtain social license from their host communities. Oil companies have not been effective in their corporate social responsibilities (Gyane 2021). Gusov et al (2022) agree that it is necessary that every oil company should initiate policies through which it can assess itself and its place in the society. Literature abound on oil companies corporate social responsibilities but none has zeroed in on the need and importance of having Memorandum of Understanding between the oil companies and the host communities (MOU). The signing and vigorous pursuit of MOU by both parties will mitigate the issues arising from corporate social responsibility.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of General Welfare and Policies was employed to explain the issue. Welfare Economics as a branch of Social Sciences has built a considerable body of theories of which there are two basic schools of thought: Alfred Marshall the leader and his student, A.C. Pigou, whose economics of welfare is relevant, and Vilfredo Pareto, the Italian economist and sociologist. Fundamentally, there is no distinction between the two approaches. Both of them considered welfarism as an economic policy which improves the wellbeing of some people without affecting others in a given community or society.

The activities of these oil companies and government policies in their areas of operation in particular and rural areas in general are ideal for welfarism vis-à-vis creation of mutuality to harmonize cordiality, development and relationships between oil companies and the indigenes of such areas. The oil companies and government have great social responsibilities which must be sought and fully implemented.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Cross-sectional survey was employed for this study as it allowed the researchers to study a large number of respondents at a relatively short time. The researchers use quantitative method of data collection for the study

Area of study: The study was carried out on the Niger Delta oil producing communities of Rivers State. The oil producing communities studied are Okwuzi, Aggah, and Mgbede.

Population of the Study:

Advocates for Community Alternatives (2025) states that Okwuzi community in Rivers State has a population of about 7250 while Aggah has a population of about 10,000. Nairaland (2025) on the other hand puts the population of Mgbede at about 4810.

Table1: Breakdown of the population of the three communities of Niger Delta in Rivers State under study therefore stand thus:

S/N	Name of community	Population	Percentage
1	Okwuzi	7200	32.7
2	Aggah	10,000	45.4
3	Mgbede	4810	21.9
Total		22010	100

Source: 1 and 2 Advocates for Community Alternatives (2025). 3 Nairaland (2025).

In determining the sample size of the study, the population of the three communities was considered. As a result of the relatively large population size of the communities, the researchers carried out simple random sampling techniques. The researchers also used the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size for the study. The formula is as follows:

$$N = \frac{n}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Level of significance (or limit of tolerance error: It could be 0.10 down to 0.01. In this work 0.05 was used)

I = Unity constant

Substituting N = 22010 and e = 0.05

In the above formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Target population = 22010

$e^2 = (0.05)^2 = 0.0025$

$\frac{22010}{}$

$n = 1+22010\ (0.05)^2 = 1+22010\ (0.0025)$

$=1+55.025 = 56.025$

$n = \frac{22010}{56.025} = 392.86$

$n = 393$

Sampling Technique: Since the sample size of the study is 393 the researchers administered 393 questionnaire in the communities in relevant percentages Okwuzi 130 (33.7%), Aggah 137 (45.4%) and Mgbede 86 (21.9%) in order to have a balanced data for the study. Thus, the data generated therein can be generalized with the use of random sampling techniques, where the various respondents from the three communities were randomly selected for the administration of questionnaire. Different categories of people from the communities were randomly selected and represented in the sample size. Thus, the data from the study was reliable and representative enough to draw a valid conclusion.

Based on the above, the researchers state that the data gathered through the administered and returned questionnaire are presented in tables and analyzed using percentages, which is followed with the discussion of results. Three hundred and ninety three (393) copies of questionnaire were administered in the three communities in the Niger Delta area of Rivers State. These communities are Okwuzi, Aggah and Mgbede. Of the 393 questionnaire administered in the three communities only three hundred fifty four (354) copies were returned thus:

Okwuzi - 119

Aggah - 156

Mgbede - 79

Total - 354

Thirty nine (39) copies were therefore not returned. This is statistically represented as follows, using simple percentage formula

$\% = \frac{F \times 100}{N\ 1}$

F = Observed frequency

N = Expected frequency or Targeted population

Thus, applying this formula where the total number of questionnaire administered = 393

Total number of questionnaire returned = 354
Total number of questionnaire not returned = 39
Therefore, percentage (%) of questionnaire returned

$$= \frac{354 \times 100}{393} = \frac{}{1} = 90\%$$

While percentage (%) of questionnaire not returned = $\frac{39}{393} \times \frac{100}{1} = 10\%$

The researchers therefore submit that data presentation, analysis and discussion of results were based on three hundred fifty four (354) copies of questionnaire that were returned out of the targeted three hundred ninety three (393) copies administered, which represents 90% of the sample size.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was primary involving questionnaire. The researchers wanted to include interviews but because of the volatile nature of the area, those approached declined but accepted to fill the questionnaire which they deemed non-personal. Those approached in the oil companies declined. We could not ascertain whether it was as result of official directives or personal discretion. Our persuasions did not yield any fruit.

Administration of Instrument:

The questionnaire was administered by the principal researcher and his research team with the help of five assistants. The research assistants were recruited based on the fact that each of them has an educational attainment of West African School Certificate and could therefore read and write, and could communicate effectively with the local dialect. They were trained for three days on the objectives and relevance of the study, and the administration and retrieval of questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

In this study simple frequency distribution, tables and percentages were used to analyze the demographic variables (personal information of the respondents), and the substantive issues of this study. The aim is to determine the percentage responses of the respondents in each question and analysis based on them.

RESULTS

Out of 393 copies of questionnaire administered only 354 (90%) copies were returned valid while 39 (10%) were either not retrieved or invalid.

Section A: Profile of the respondents

Table 2: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	208	58.8
Female	146	41.2
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Table 1 indicates that 58.8% of the respondents are male while 41.2% are female.

.**Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18-40 years	30	8.4
31-40years	119	33.6
41 and above	205	58.0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Table II shows that 8.4% of the respondents are between 18 and 30 years whereas 33.6% of the respondents are between 31 and 40 years. 58.0% of the respondents are 41 years and above. This means that majority of the respondents are 41 years and above.

Table 4: Level of Education Attainment of the Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
FSLC TO WASCE	23	6.5

First Degree and Equivalent	252	71.2
M.Sc. MA and Above	79	22.3
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

According to table III 6.5% of the respondents' educational attainment of between first school learning certificate (FSLC) and West African School Certificate (WASCE). 71.2% of the respondents have first Degree or its equivalent while 22.3% of the respondents have M.Sc. MA and above.

Table 5: Marital status Distribution of the Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	138	39.0
Married	216	61.0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Table 5 indicates that 39.0% of the Respondents are single while 61.0 of the Respondents are married. This shows that married people were more proactive in filling and returning the questionnaire.

Table 6: Working Experience Distribution of the Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 10 years	128	36.2
10-30 years	146	41.2
31 years and above	80	22.6
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Table 6 above indicates that 36.2% of the respondents have worked for a period below 10 years while 41.2% of the respondents have worked for a period between 10-30 years. The table further indicates that 22.6% of the respondents have worked for a period of 26 years and above.

Section B: Substantive Issues: Responses from Respondents

Item 6: What is the reason for the Youth Restiveness and Militancy in your community?

Table 7

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Environmental degradation as a consequence of oil exploration	30	8.5
Poor level of corporate social responsibility by the oil companies	26	7.3
Favouristism to high ranking individuals to the chagrin of the youths	23	6.5
All of the above	275	77.7
None of the above	0.0	0.0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in the above table shows that 77.7% of respondents chose option All of the Above as responsible for youth restiveness and militancy, we therefore accept that environmental degradation as a consequent of oil exploration, poor level of corporate social responsibility by the oil companies, and favoritism to high ranking individuals of the communities to the chagrin of the youths are the reasons for youth restiveness and militancy in the Niger Delta oil producing communities of Rivers State. We accept this since none of the respondents stated otherwise.

Item 7: What type of damages do youth cause the oil companies operating in your community?
Table 8

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Destruction of the offices and accommodation	66	18.6
Destruction the pipelines and other installations	84	23.7
Destruction of oil companies vehicles	11	3.1
All of the above	193	54.5
None of the above	0	0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in the above table indicates that 54.5% of respondents chose option All of the above, we therefore accept that the type of damages the youth of Niger Delta oil producing communities of Rivers State cause the oil companies operating in their communities include destroying their offices and accommodations, destroying their pipelines and other installations and kidnapping oil companies workers. Those who chose other options are 8.6%, 23.7% and 3.1% respectively.

Item 8: **How does youth restiveness affect the development of the host community?**
Table 9

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Retards development	275	77.7
Affect them positively	30	8.5
Combination of (a) and (b)	23	6.5
Don't know	21	5.9
No answer	5	1.4
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in the table above shows that 77.7 respondents chose option Retards development, we accept that youth restiveness in the Niger Delta oil producing communities of Rivers State retards the development of their communities. The respondents who chose other alternatives scored 8.5%, 6.5%, 5.9% and 1.4% respectively.

Item 9: How do oil Companies execute development projects in your community
Table 10

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Through Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT)	303	85.6
By the oil companies themselves	41	11.6
Through the Town Unions	9	2.5
All of the above	1	0.3
None of the above	0	0.0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in table IX shows that 85.6% respondents chose option Through Host Development Trust, we therefore accept that oil companies in Niger Delta communities of Rivers State execute development projects in these areas through local contractors. The other options scored less percentage respectively.

Item 10: What is the level of implementation of corporate social responsibility of the oil companies in your community?
Table 11

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Poor	94	26.6
Very poor	196	55.4
Good but not adequate	60	16.9
All of the above	4	1.1

None of the above	0	0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in the above table indicates that 55.4% of respondents chose option Very poor, we therefore accept that the implementation of corporate social communities of Rivers state is very poor. This is because other respondents who chose other options scored 26.6% or below respectively.

Item 11: What is the effect of oil production activities on your communities' economic activities?
Table 12

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Oil spillage and inflow has degraded the farm lands	32	9.0
Oil inflow into the rivers and streams has affected fish production.	37	10.5
It led to scarcity of food and subsequent hunger in the communities	41	11.6
All of the above	244	68.9
None of the above	0	0
Total	354	100

Source: Field work 2025

Since our result in the above table indicates that 68.9 of respondents chose option All of the above, we therefore accept that oil spillage and inflows degraded the farm lands, oil flow into the rivers and stream have affected fish production and these have led to scarcity of food and subsequent hunger in the oil producing communities of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The reason for youth restiveness and militancy.

Majority of respondents (77.7%) states that the reasons are the environmental degradation as a consequent of oil production, poor level of corporate social responsibility and favoritism to high ranking individuals of the communities to the chagrin of the youth. Ovie-Ejumudo (2014) contends that modification of the obnoxious and eco-environmentally disadvantageous laws and a holistic developmental approach and action-based programs by the Nigerian government and oil companies will provide sustainable windows of opportunity and safety nets for the socio-economically dislocated youth will help stem youth restiveness and militancy in the oil producing communities.

The damages youth cause to the oil companies

54.5% of respondents state that the damages include destruction of offices and accommodations, destruction of pipelines and other installations, and destruction of company vehicles. Snapps (2012) maintains strongly that youth restiveness leads to the destruction of pipelines, kidnapping of workers, and forced shutdowns of production facilities.

The effect of youth restiveness on the development of the host communities.

Majority of respondents 77.7% strongly state that it retards the communities' development. Arowosegbe (2009) agrees that youth restiveness has severely reduced oil production, created massive insecurity, and hindered economic development in the oil producing communities of Niger Delta, Rivers State.

Execution of development projects in host communities by oil companies.

85.6% of respondents state that it is done through Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT). Punch Newspapers (2025) also affirms that execution of development projects is through HCDT.

Implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The combination of respondents who state that it is either poor or very poor stand at 80.0%. This means that the host community thinks the situation is terrible. Dandago and Arugu (2014) maintain that corporate social responsibility by oil corporations in the Niger Delta area is largely considered unsuccessful in achieving sustainable development in spite of some superficial benefits.

The effect of Oil Production Activities on the Host Communities

Majority of respondents (79.9%) state that the situation is horrible as oil spillage and inflow have degraded the farm lands affecting agricultural and fish production and generally led to scarcity of food and subsequent hunger in the communities. Edun (2021)

contends that oil and gas production activities result in environmental pollutions which is a threat to human and ecosystem well-beings, especially as it has to do with farm lands and streams into which oil flows.

CONCLUSION

The study provides evidence that oil production activities bring untold hardship to the oil producing communities not only because of the degradation it causes the environment but mainly because of oil companies' and government's insensitivity to the plight of the host communities which have led to agitations that find expression in youth restiveness and militancy.

LIMITATIONS

The problem the researchers met on ground was the volatile nature of the research area which made many indigenes refuse to fill the questionnaire. Same thing with the oil companies workers. They all refused to be interviewed. Those we approached in the open kept looking behind their shoulders with visible apprehension. This definitely have affected the data and information from host communities and oil companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS/POLICY OPTIONS

The findings suggest some policy implications:

1) Corporate Social Responsibilities

Oil companies should take seriously their corporate social responsibilities to the host communities as breakdown of the relationship between the oil companies and host communities would always have adverse and enduring negative implication to the host communities, oil companies and the Nigerian state.

2) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Oil companies and oil producing communities should sign a Memorandum of Understanding that is strictly adhered to. It is the belief of the researchers that the signing and vigorous pursuit of MOU by both parties will mitigate the issues arising from corporate social responsibility.

3) The Government

The government should show more interest in the oil production activities and its impact on the host communities and be part of the effort to mitigate the negative and devastating impact.

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Authors' Contribution

AUI conceptualized the idea and wrote the manuscript; RN and UE commented on it. All the researchers participated in the data collection. AUI did the statistical analysis and interpretation. RN did the qualitative analysis and the three authors read and approved the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from corresponding author.

DECLARATIONS:

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical principles. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Directorate of Research and Publications, Abia State University, Uturu.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable

Competing interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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