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**OIL EXPLOITATION AND EMERGENT YOUTHS' DEVIANT PROCLIVITIES IN HOST
COMMUNITIES IN DELTA STATE OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper aimed at examining the activities of the multination oil companies that inevitably ushered in emergent deviant proclivities among youths in the Niger Delta. The authors an empirical approach in analyzing the relationship between oil companies' activities and emergent deviant behaviour in youths. A total of six host communities in three local government areas in Delta State were selected through lottery a variant of simple random sampling techniques. Data gathered through qualitative observational technique of Focus Group Discussion were analysed using the multidimensional scale. The results reveal that the youths forcefully jettison Institutionalised norms and values as non conformist for reactions as survival strategy to the negative impacts of multi-national companies' activities in their communities.

Introduction

The vast oil and gas deposits drew the attention of multinational Oil Companies (MNOC) - Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron, Total, Texaco Oversea and so forth to Delta State. Presently, various communities cutting across ethnic groups and ecological zones play host to oil companies and have experienced oil companies activities in one way or the other. These activities range from seismic analysis, drilling to refining or production. Each of these activities, doubt, impact on the environment and the inhabitants of host communities (Ogege, 2007; Okpowo, 2002).

The emergence of the multinational oil companies in the state was seen by the inhabitants as a most cherished development. They thought this new economic order will usher in better economic expansion through the creation opportunities for the youths in the formal and informal sector, provision of infrastructural facilities and above all sustainable development in the host communities. Paradoxically, rather than better the lots of the inhabitants in line with their expectations, oil exploitation came with its ancillary problems of oil spillage, gas flaring and other forms of environmental degradation and social disequilibrium which adversely affect the environment and people of the host communities (Akinjide, 1991, Jike 2004, Okal 2004, Ewhrudjakpor, 2006).

Beside the overt damage of oil companies activities on both natural and built environment, there is a worse damage seemingly invisible nature that is done to the socio-

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cultural fabric of host communities. Both visible and invisible and covert outcomes of oil companies activities impact negatively on the youths in particular and the community in general.

The youths are displaced occupationally and thus impoverished. Most disturbing of the host communities is that youths exude behaviour that negates socially acceptable norms of society. The paper sets to establish a relationship between oil companies' activities and emergent behaviour of youths in host communities.

Operationally, there are countless references to the development of a new phase of life between childhood and adulthood (referred to as post-adolescence) here in called youth in this study. In the technical literature of Sociology, different theoretical models have been developed in Sociology to interpret post-adolescence (Youths) the forms and "timing" determining how and when young people leave their parents' house is regarded as the most important constitutive characteristic of the youth phase in sociological theory of post adolescence. We assume here, that this, detachment from the parents house is dependent upon surrounding macro-structural social economic and legal conditions.

The analysis of the process of detachment based upon socio-economic or legal dimensions reveals, that postponed detachment and reversible detachment are all constitutive elements of "youthhood". Youthhood analysis cannot be clearly defined based upon the criteria of age with regard to "youth" or "adulthood". It is therefore an empirical question who and how many members of a specific age category of young adults (20-25 years or 30 years olds) find themselves In the phase according to the theoretical proven criteria (Vaskovics, 2008).

Brief Profile of Delta State

Delta State is the highest oil producing state in the Niger contributing 30% to oil revenue in Nigeria (Aham, 2008, Eni 2008). The State was created on August 27, 1991 out of the defunct Bendel State. Delta State lies roughly between longitudes 5⁰⁰ and 6⁰⁰' east of the Greenwich Meridian and latitudes 5⁰⁰' and 6³⁰' North of the equator. The state is bound in the North by Edo State, on the East by Anambra State. On the south east by Bavela State. On the southern flank is the Bight of Benin which covers approximately 160 kilometres of the state coast line.

The state is generally low lying without remarkable hills it has a wide coastal belt interlaced with rivulets and streams which form part of the Niger Delta. On creation, the state had 12 local government areas with Asaba as the administrative headquarter. The number of local government areas were increased to 19 in that same year and later to 25 in 1996.

These local government areas constitute the three Senatorial Districts of Delta central, Delta North and Delta South. The state is occupied mainly by five ethnic groups namely: Urhobo, Ibo, Ijaw, Isoko and Itsekiri. The state is enormously blessed with vast oil and gas deposits. Apart from the oil and gas deposits, it has abundant human resources and extensive ever green forests and water resources. It is these resources that the inhabitants of the state depended on before the coming of the multinational oil companies (MNOC) and their exploration activities (Ikime, 2006).

The Traditional Economy and Occupational Opportunities for the Youths

Man economic activities are anchored on environmental determinism (Ekpeyong, 2000).

In other words, the available resources, the present needs and the technology at hand obviously influence the occupational activities of man. The environment and the ecological zonation reveal that the state is made up of two types of settlement: the riverine and up land settlements. The peoples of Ijaw, Urhobo, Isoko and Itsekhi settled in both riverine and up land areas of the state while Igbo are found mainly on the upland settlements.

The major economic activities of the inhabitants are farming, fishing, hunting, palm produce, craft and petty trading. However, occupational activities vary significantly from one region to another. Those who settle in a particular locality embark on the occupation that the environment offers. Farming is the mainstay of those who occupy the locality with relatively dry land. Beside the growing of food crops, cash crop such as rubber, kolanut, palm trees and so forth are cultivated (Oyaide, 1991). Although the production of agriculture products is at subsistence level, revenues are still raised from the small scale commercial engagements that take place after meeting the consumption needs of the household or family. Another economic activity that is mostly with the coastal aborigines is fishing. This category of dwellers mostly the Ijaw have their houses adjacent to the rivers or lakes. This offers them ample opportunity to exploit the water resources. Apart from the Ijaw whose settlements are by the riverside, youths from Urhobo, Isoko and other ethnic nationalities do engage in fishing as a sole occupation or a complementary one. For instance, among the and Isoko, fishing is done during the rainy season when the land for farming is flooded.

Hunting is another economic activity that is also embarked upon by the youths in the state. However, unlike farming and fishing that are occupation of both male and females, hunting is embarked upon by only males. Likely games from hunting expedition are grass cutters, porcupines, antelopes, rabbits, monkey and fresh water reptiles like crocodiles and Iguana. Any person who hunts an elephant, lion; tiger or buffalo is usually declared a hero such a person is revered as such throughout his life time.

Palm production is another occupational activities among the youths in Delta State. They collect ripe bunches of palm fruits. These palm fruits are processed into palm oil, nuts, kernel shells, black soap, black pomades, which constitute the by products of palm produce. Ikime (1995) maintains that it was the trade in palm produce that attracted the European merchants into the Urhobo and Isoko areas of Delta State as far back 1896. Clarke (2000) lend credence to this claim.

Another aspect of the people's economic life that is worth mentioning was the area of Indigenous technology. The Urhobo and Ijaw speaking people specialized in canoe building. These canoes carved from the trunk of wood ease transportation through the waterways that criss-cross the riverine zones of the state. Mortars and pestles are also carved out of wood and are used as traditional grinding stones. Young men also specialize in carving plates, bowls and other house hold utilities from woods.

Pottery, another aspect of indigenous technology was essentially the business of women (Igwilo, 1983) observed that earthen wares constituted considerable articles of trade between the Itsekiri and her neighbours. It was from the Itsekiri that pottery technology diffused into some parts of Urhobo and Isoko lands. Otite (1973) earlier asserts that mat production in Urhobo land is popular among some Okpe villages like Ikerese, Ugbuku - rusu and L-gboren and had well established pottery outfits. Young women also display their technical skills in mats, tray wicker fish trap baskets and hats. Some people in the state who settled close

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to raphia palms engage in local brewery. Otedoh (1972) maintains that in their local breweries, palm wine is distilled into a potent alcoholic beverage popularly known as 'ogogoro' or what the colonial masters derogatorily tagged 'illicit gin'. In recent times young men and women embark on vocational career in tailoring, bricklaying, carpentry and other forms of relationship.

The traditional economy and occupational activities in each of the communities in Delta State apparently reveal that In spite of the ecological differentiation and difficult terrain, the environment still offer something in form of occupation for the youths. With this in place, the youths had variety of occupations to choose from. In essence, the unemployment level if it exist at all, was too low to be noticed. People could easily meet their needs with the available resources and the technical know how of the time (Oteite, 1973).

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, the concept youth, has come with characterization that elicit fear in our minds (Niboro, 1999) Deviant behavioural proclivities is currently recognizable trait among youths especially in communities where multinational companies operates. The youths exude behaviour that transgress the parameter of socially acceptable conduct in society (Ogege, 2007).

The Incursion of multinational oil companies and their exploratory activities caused Land shortage in host communities. Fertile arable land is lost to road, rigs, laying of pipeline and burrow pit embarked upon by the companies. The landlessness is compounded with and institutionalized by the enactment of the obnoxious land use Decree of 1976. The decree altered land ownership structure. According to the decree, the state and not individual own land. Thus mining rent and royalties that ought to be for the host communities now goes to the state.

Apart from having inadequate land to farm, the oil companies activities monumentally degrade the environment through pollutions. The exploration of crude oil wrecked the environment with loss of unquantifiable biodiversity. The major traditional occupations are farming and fishing and these have been seriously affected by the despoliation caused by oil companies activities. The effect of this is that the environment is gradually losing its capacity to sustain life thus ushering unbearable economic travails on the inhabitants of host communities. In the face of these economic hardship caused by environment degradation and, its attendant effect of occupational displacement, compensation by the oil companies becomes a veritable relief measures. More often than not these compensation are not paid (Deeka, 2000; Benike, 2002). The non payment of compensations is justified by accusing the youths of causing spillage through sabotage of oil pipelines. The multinational companies offer them occupational displaced employment opportunities. According to the companies they are largely illiterate and lacking in requisite qualifications as such do not neatly fit into their oil companies employment scheme (Niboro, 1997).

The youths In the face of these artificially created gap between aspirations and opportunities, are left with no other option than to device survival strategies. As a response to the predicament caused by the activities of the multinational companies, the youth exude a non conformist behaviour as one of the strategy to their employment and wide spread poverty.

Equally reinforcing the deviant behavioural proclivities is alteration of the existing social structure. With the influx of migrant oil companies staff has drastically alter the value systems

of host communities. The value of honesty, hardwork, respect for elders and host of others which constitute the core components of the socialization process are diminishing. The oil companies in its 'divide and rule' strategy set the youths against the elders and constituted traditional authorities in host communities (Chido, 2000; Akinjide, 2000; Aham, 2008).

Activities of local indigenous youths against MNOC has resulted in the destabilisation of the region. Hostage of western workers of shell, the primary corporation in operation in the region, taken by outraged local youths, is rampant. Such activities have also resulted in greater governmental concern in the area, and the mobilization of the Nigerian army and coastguard into the state (Jike, 2004; Benike, 2002; Afolabi, 2005).

In April of 2006, a bomb exploded near an oil refinery in the Niger Delta region a warning against Chinese expansion in the region. The group of youths in an organization-Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) stated; "We wish to warn the Chinese government and its oil companies to steer well clear of the Niger Delta. The Chinese Government by nesting in stolen crude places it Citizens in our line of fire". http://eriwikipedia.org/wiki./Niger_Delta_7/27/2007.

In fact, the seeming resolution of these brewing crises was the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDPC) in the year 2000 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. Its terms of reference was clear; to focus on the development of social and physical Infrastructures, ecological and environmental remediation and human development. Paradoxically (Ekpanpou, 2000) instead of N DIX redressing these problems, they escalated them to the extent that these youths now get more organized in several militant groups such as; Ijaw Youth Council, (IYC), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDC), Greenlanders, Icelanders, Vultures and the powerful Niger Delta People's Volunteers Force (NDPVF), (Adegbamlgbe, 2004; Niboro, 1999). The youths now throw caution to the wind and have earnestly began to act in utter disregard to elders and constituted authorities. In extreme cases, they can forcefully dethrone a monarch if he refuses to carry out their biddings or can gruesomely murder a traditional ruler as the case of the killing of a monarch. In Ewreni an Urhobo community in Delta State (Chido 2000).

The above scenario is quite agonizing especially when viewed against the background that oil companies activities will better the lots of the youths. Rather than direct their action towards the multinational companies, the youths exhibit deviant proclivities that are detrimental to the innocent citizens in the host communities. One is force to ask whether there exist a relationship between the exploration of oil and be behaviour of youths in host communities.

The Strain Theory of Deviance

The theory was propounded by Robert Merton to explain deviant proclivities in society. Merton (1968) argues that deviant behaviour result not from pathological personalities but from culture and structure of society itself. Arguing from a standard functionalist perspective of value consensus, he maintain that all members of society, however, since members of society are placed in different position in the social structure they do not have the same opportunity of realising the shared values.

These shared values translate into cultural goals. These cultural goals may be material possession, money, education and so forth. While the institutionalised means is hardwork in legitimate jobs or occupations. In society equal emphasis is placed on both cultural goals and

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institutionalised means of achieving the goals. The response or adapting pattern are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, rebellion.

Figure 1: Showing Merton Strain Theory of Deviance

Mode of Adaption	Cultural Goals	Institutional Means	Method of Adaptation
Conformity	+	+	Accept culturally approved goals and pursues them with the cultural approved means
Innovation	+	+	Accepts the goals but adopt socially disapproved means of achieving them
Ritualism	-	+	Abandons the goals but continue to conform to the approve means
Retrealism	-	-	Abandon both the goals and the means
Rebellion	±	±	Challenges both the approved goals and means

Source: Merton, 1968

According to Merton (1968) people feel strain when they are exposed to cultural goals that they are unable to obtain because they do not have access to culturally approved means of achieving these goals when the structure of society denies them access to these goals, some persons seek access through deviant means. Strain theory is often used to explain deviance by people from low income neighbourhood, who are typically depicted as being left out of the economic mainstream feeling hopeless and sometime turning their anger and rage towards of the people or things.

The youths in the host communities have been denied access to the cultural goals of their communities by the activities of the multinational oil companies. Through monumental degradation of their environments, the occupational opportunities of the youths became blocked. In the face of these innovation stance as their mode of adaptation.

As innovators, they cherished the cultural goals of these communities. They want money and other material possession of life but they reject the institutionalised means of achieving money from estate developers, shop owners, kidnappings, thefts and other forms of behaviour that are outside the parameties of socially acceptable code of conduct in society.

Method

The qualitative method of observational techniques was used in this study. Specifically the procedure of focus group discussion (FGD) was used to gather data from the youths. This is because from the investigators experience during the test retest validation of the research instrument, the youths show evidence of low educational status. Twenty questions used to conduct the FGD were written in pidgin English which is the Lingua franca in the state. These 20 questions were framed under three topical themes for discussion:

- a. knowledge about traditional norms and values of their communities

- b. knowledge about MNOC activities
- c. attitude-behaviour towards MNOC activities

Again, the main rationale for the use of the FGD is due to the nature of the information being sought from lowly educated people, hence an indepth qualitative data on the knowledge about MNOC activities and their dislocation of the socio-cultural practices in these communities is appropriate.

Procedure for Data Collection

The data were collected using the scale developed by one of the researchers (Ewhrudjakpor, 2004) based on the knowledge –attitude-behaviour concept. The researchers conducted 12 FGD sessions in three days during the month of November 2007. Four FGD were conducted in the selected three communities in each of the sampled three local government areas. The communities are; Ewreni (Ughelli North), Uzere (Isoko South) and Ukpai (Ndokwa East).

The researchers made use of a micro cassette recorder for recording the groups discussion. Before the FGD sessions with the youths, the researchers informed the youths of community of the discussion, noting that their names or pictures are not taken. Again the researcher discussed fully the tropical issues with the youths to ensure they clearly understood it. The FGD discussion was broken down into four subgroups of; youth males, youth females, female students, and male non-students.

The second phrase is the determination of size of FGD sessions and duration. This size relates to the number of participants in any session while duration relates to the amount of time spent in a session. There is no optimal number of participants advocated in the literature. However, in order to fully involve every participant, while also not turning the sessions into uncontrollable discussions (Frich-Lyon: 1981:6) recommended a - 12 participants. Vlassof (1990:31) recommended participants, Oke and Oluwadare, 2002:128, recommended 5-8 Thus in this study, the researchers used 7-11 participants based on the total number of youths available considering sex and literacy status of the participants.

The duration of each of the 12 FGD session was between 1 hour and 1.5 hours. At the end of every session, a participant is called on to say the closing prayers. At the end of each day, all the tapes recorded from the FGD sessions were played back and transcribed. The transcribed versions of the FGD sessions were compared with the notes taken during FGD sessions to fill in the gaps.

Findings

Results obtained after the data were subjected to descriptive and qualitative statistical techniques of dimensional statistical analysis are presented (Table 1) at the rear of this paper. The multi-dimensional scaling analysis shown in (table 1) is a technique for determining the scalability of a particular set of attitude or behaviour items, opinions observation. This was used to analyse qualitatively relationship between multi-national oil corporation activities youths' emergent rebellious proclivities.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that there is a significant relationship between oil exploitation and deviant behavioural proclivities of youths in host communities in Delta State. This is supported by the Merton's 1968 strain theory of deviance. That these youth are 'innovators' cherishing

cultural goals but using abnormal means in reaching their goals. The activities of the multinational companies paradoxically usher in widespread deprivations and poverty. Every phase of oil companies activities has environmental cost on the inhabitants of the oil bearing communities (Okpewo, 2002).

The prospecting for and exploration activities dispossess inhabitants of oil bearing communities of their large tracts of land. These tracts of land appropriated from the inhabitants are used by the oil companies for the network of pipelines, access roads, borrow pit, and so forth. The implication of this is that displacement of farmstead and farmers.

Beside the displacement of farmsteads and farmers, oil exploration produces a more devastating impact on the environment through spillage and gas flaring. Oil spills have a far more reaching effect on the environment. Its toxicity adversely affect the soil, plants, micro - organism and water resources. In otherwords, oil spillage unleashes damage on the flora and fauna elements of the environment (Ewhrudjakpor, 2006).

The overall implication is that multinational companies through the appropriation of land and environmental degradation of the environment, the economy and the economic activities of the youth have been truncated. There are no land to farm, or land without nutrient, rivers without fishes, forest without trees and animals. Virile young men now found themselves out of job due to the activities of multinational oil companies in their communities (Okaba, 2004; Jike, 2004; Ogege, 2007; Aham, 2008).

Preponderantly unemployed and economically displaced, the youths become highly impoverished. Their poverty is not due their personal inadequacies but because they have access but to inexorably restricted range of opportunities. Accordingly, as the strain theory posits, in the face of this restricted access to opportunities they jettison institutional parameters of social control (Merton, 1968) and thus embark on ventures that can ameliorate the suffering that characterized their class position. It this survival strategy that find expression in sub culture of aberrant behavioural proclivities among youths in host ommunities.

Knowledge of MNOC and their activities in Delta State oil bearing communities subjected to multidimensional scale revealed that the youths have significant amount of knowledge of what their community was preceding the presence of MNOC, and what it is post MNOC, the (Table 1) is explicit and self explanatory. It also show the significant negative attitudes of the youths and their eventual deviant behavioural proclivities. This corroborates earlier studies (Akinjide, 2000; Chido, 2000; Adegbamigbe, 2004; Afolabi, 2005; Ikime, 2006 and Aham, 2008). The responses of the 132 youths from three local government areas using the multidimensional scale show that they were unanimous in their agreement that Government leaders are the solution (Benike, 2002) to youth restiveness (Item No: 20). We fund in the course of reviewing literature relating to this subject, that activities of MNOC in developing economies like Nigeria is fferent from that of developed economies like Britain and the United States. For instance (Niboro, 1997; Ekpanpou, 2000) found that recruitment policy of shell differs significantly between these two categorized economies Nigeria and Britain. Therefore these youths devise alternative measures (Niboro, 1999; Afolabi, 2005) deemed illegal by government, to survive. For Instance they engage in "bunkering" a process in which and oil pipeline is tapped and the oil extracted onto a barge. Oil corporations and the Nigerian State point out that bunkering is illegal; the youths justify bunkering, saying they are being exploited

and have not received adequate profits from the profitable but ecologically destructive oil industry. Bunkered oil can be sold for profit, usually to destinations in West Africa, but also abroad. This practice is fairly common, practiced in Delta State (<http://hrw.org/backgroundafrica/nigeria0205/index.html>).

These deviant proclivities of youths in MNOC host communities, make life sometimes unbearable for the inhabitants, because these behaviour is extended to venting anger even at the parents (Aham, 2008) young adults with their uncontrollable ill-gotten money now divide parents, elders, and authority in their communities, traditional values, norms and ethos are replace with proclivities acts (Chido, 2000). This further raises and brew more tension, confusion and conflicts that retrogresses the communities that ought to urbanize with wealth and commensurate standard of living. Instead, as more oil wells are discovered and exploited there are much more troubles, conflict and impoverishment. The current proclivities act of these youth's points to a state of anomie when they become leaders. The NDDC is not doing enough to check this awful trend; again, due to corruption (Ogege, 2007) that permeates this agency. Instead of NDDC empowering people and society, (Ogege, 2007) argues, are enriching themselves and family members. Educational are dilapidated, roads are death traps with uncountable pot holes per kilometre, prostitution and armed robbery has increased astronomically even though churches are growing at the same rate due to their consolatory and 'opiumic' functions, dailies (Ekpanpou, 2000, Deeka, 2000; Okpowo, 2002) are awash with sordid stories of these paradoxes between oil wealth and poverty, oil wealth and armed banditry, and so forth. The government well designed and established NDDC must be people oriented to ease these problems and urbanise progressively Delta State MNOC host communities.

Conclusion

The activity of multinational oil companies, which ought to be a blessing to the youths in host communities, has now turned out to be a curse. The youths by virtue of their common position are displaced occupationally by the activities of the oil companies. Oil companies don't find the youths employable largely because they are lacking in education requisite and skills to secure jobs. As a strategy out of their predicaments, the youths exude behaviour that is utter disregard to normative principles of society.

We therefore recommend that the oil multinational corporation should establish skill acquisition centres to teach displaced and impoverished youths. These training should incorporate requisite skills for self-employment and employment into contemporary job opportunities. At the end of the training, the multinational oil companies should engage the youths in their establishments. Those they cannot employ should be granted loans to enable them start something for themselves. The government should strengthen the activities of the NDDC to practically impact educational, social and economic empowerment of the youths.

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