

**OIL THEFT AND THE CRISIS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED
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EMAIL: oputacollins@yahoo.com****ABSTRACT**

With the emergence of oil in commercial quantity and government insensitivity towards the need of the people, various deviant attitudes have been identified. This attitude emanate through oil theft which found to impact negatively on community development. Given this led to this paper that examined oil theft and community development in selected communities in Emohua LGA of Rivers State. Two research questions and objectives were raised to guide the work. The paper equally adopted Emile Durkheim anomie theory in 1893 to explain the nexus between oil theft and community development. The mix method research design was used. Cochran formula was used to derive the sample size of 138. Also, purposive and quota sampling techniques were adopted. The respondents were elderly, security operatives and farmers. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire and in-depth interview which were supported with other relevant secondary sources. Charts, simple percentage and content analysis were all used for data analysis. The study found that the reasons for the occurrence of oil theft among communities in Emohua LGA of Niger Delta appear to be webbed in grim complexity as poverty, unemployment, government insensitivity and corruption amongst others was a factor. The paper concludes and recommended for good governance as such governance would help to provide employment, reduce poverty level, and provide adequate health care, and thus will limit oil theft as most people who venture into it are very poor and unemployed.

KEYWORDS: Oil Theft, Community Development, Environmental Pollution.**Introduction**

Crude oil is a natural resource, and constitutes one of the main sources for world energy supply (Wu & Chen, 2019, Titilayo, 2019). Nigeria as a nation has a large deposit of crude oil, with proven reserves of 28.2billion barrels, making it one of the largest oil producers in Africa (Reuters, 2014; Elwerfelli & Benhin, 2018). Crude oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956 and the first commercial oil well was drilled in Oloibiri, a town located in Bayelsa state, in the Niger Delta. The region currently houses oil fields, comprising 355 located onshore and 251 offshore (NNPC, 2019). Although crude oil has been discovered in other parts of Nigeria, such as Lagos state (Premium Times, 2016), and oil wells have been drilled in the Chad Basin, the Niger Delta is currently the sole destination for commercial production of crude oil in Nigeria. As such, the oil extracted from the Niger Delta accounts for practically all of Nigeria's oil exports (NNPC, 2010).

Asuni (2009) as well as Katsouris and Sayne (2013) posited that there are three operational methods of oil theft and they includes are: (1) a minor and small-scale pilfering of condensate and petroleum product destined local market; (2) direct hacking into pipelines or tapping with a hose from wellhead through practical removal of the 'Christmas tree'; and (3) excess lifting of crude oil beyond the licensed amount, using forged bills of lading. Thus, the continuous theft of oil has the tendency to destroy or influence community development.

Community development means the process of helping local communities to become aware of their needs to assess their resources more realistically, to organize themselves and their resources in such a way as to satisfy some of their needs and in so doing acquire attitude, experience and cooperative skills for repeating this process again. This explanation sees community development as a dynamic process which when set in the community through their own effort are enable to more steadily toward the goal of self-government and improvement (Onua, 2019). To achieve more community development, especially the rural communities there is need to fight against the crisis that can emanate through oil theft and many other unsecured situations. In fact a study showed that people who are involved in oil theft equally exchange it or purchase arms that can be used to raise tension in the community (Eyina, 2021) and as this inflict crisis, it negates community development as study by Stewart (2004) justifies a correlation between insecurity and development.

In tying the nexus between oil theft and crisis of community development, we should be able to appreciate the relevance of oil and its producing area or region (such as Emohua LGA of Rivers State) to Nigeria; hence, there importance cannot be over-emphasized. It (oil) is the metaphorical goose that lays the golden egg. This is because more than 75% of the Nigerian's national income is generated from oil exports (OPEC, 2019). Also, the quality of the different types of crude oil found in the Niger Delta region makes it attractive for exploration by foreign investors, as they are characterized by low Sulphur content, low salt composition and low soil to water ratio (Dickson & Udoessien, 2012). These qualities make the crude oil easy to transport through pipelines and have informed tagging the crude oil sourced from the Niger Delta, light sweet crude oil blends. In addition, the oil production activities in the region necessitates the location of foreign and local oil companies in the region, therefore providing accommodation to drilling equipment, transportation fleets, and technological devices, that aid the extraction of crude oil from land or sea within and bothering the Niger Delta.

As oil theft exists, insecurity persists too. In fact they are intertwined, thus making development becomes a challenge and this has led to the problem of underdevelopment in communities in Emohua Local government area of Rivers State. Against this backdrop, the study will unfold how oil theft induced crisis of community development in some selected communities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of crude oil theft in oil-producing communities is not peculiar to the Niger Delta only. It was reported that in the 1980s, there were reported cases of oil theft in Texas, USA (Telegraph, 1981 cited in Titilayo, 2019). In fact, countries like Indonesia and Mexico were also confronted with this challenge (The Economist, 2020; Jakarta Globe, 2013,

Titilayo, 2019). However, in the case of Nigeria, it leads the pack with a record of up to 300,000 barrels of oil being stolen daily, as against 1,000 bpd in Indonesia (Jakarta Globe, 2013) and 10,000bpd in Mexico (Reuters, 2013). Due to this enormous quantity of oil that is illegally siphoned from the Niger Delta, Nigeria is recognized as a hotspot for oil theft (The Economist, 2020). This problem is one of the issue that inspired the researcher to justify the reason for this situation. However, the challenges emanating from oil theft and refining have prompted various reactions and policies by the government. In fact, the jail term is about 45 years (Mbolo & Udousoro, 2014). Therefore, explaining why the governments are concerned about the fight against the effects of this unscrupulous act. It is not far from the fact that it degrades the environment (air, land and water).

In a report by Ejiofor (2022) titled Wike's magic wand to tackle oil theft explained how the Governor of Rivers State (Nyesom Wike) went through track roads of the forest of Ibaa community in Emohua local government area to uncover the illegal refineries that are fed with stolen crude oil. In fact, the governor lamented that some divisional police officer and commanders of the anti-vandalism unit of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps are actively involved in illegal oil theft in various s communities in Rivers State. Again, Ukpe (2022) was of the view in a report titled oil theft: police, JTF on fight against oil theft, found that in Ibaa community, various illegal refineries and oil theft using network of pipelines that transits through the bushes with connected typical reservoirs as a result caused various spill and waste.

Furthermore, in Ndele community, Igonikon (2018) reported that activities of youths on oil theft led to the pollution of their rivers. As a consequences, the people cannot fish from the river and drink from it. Other observable cases of this nefarious act exist as the people in Ibaa and Ndele communities have adopted a different means of oil refining and crude theft without considering the implication to the community. Truthfully, Rivers State has experienced several environmental changes resulting from many causes but specifically the illegal oil activities. This has affected the environment, social, economic livelihood and health of the people. The study by Titilayo (2019) titled the implications of oil theft on social and economic development in the Niger Delta, found that the activities of oil theft affects social and economic activities. In that study it found that economic implications include reduced revenue, increased unemployment, and diversification of the economy while social implications also include sustained conflict, curbed social development, and displacement of persons. This situation is not far from the situation in the study area as this also prompted this study to consider the socio-economic implication, not living the health implication untouched.

Observably, the continues oil theft and illegal oil refining between 2021-2022, contributed to black soot emission in Emohua local government area and Rivers State at large, with serious health implication that spread through airborne diseases. Given the effect of black soot on human health, justifying the assertion, study by Osilem (2022) on Nigeria security and civil defence corps against illegal oil refining of crude oil in Emohua LGA, Rivers State observed that black soot have emitted the environment given the activities of oil theft; and that other occurrences resulting from it includes oil spillage, deforestation and pollution, which effects are antithetical (negative) to the human health and livelihood.

Study by Elem (2021) on black soot and public health of Rumuolumeni residents in Port Harcourt, Nigeria confirms the consequences of the soot, as it shows that the existences of illegal oil refineries scattered across the area have lead to health challenges such as cholera, diarrhea, cancer, leukemia amongst others. A recent study by Kalagbor, Orji and Ekpete (2019) titled “*exposure to heavy metals in soot samples and cancer risk assessment in Port Harcourt, Nigeria*” reaffirms other studies in this. These scholars confirmed that soot causes leukemia, cancer of the liver oesophagus, and skin. Thus, extrapolations from the above negate development entirely. Implying that for more productivity to occur, the health of the people must be optimal as a sick person cannot be productive.

The increase of oil theft and illegal bunkering in some communities in Emohua local government area is an economic crime against Nigerian state; it undermines development strategies and engenders social disorder. In the view of Odalonu (2015), it constitutes serious economic, security and environmental challenges to the Nigerian state. However, there are fears among stakeholders and security experts in the industry that crude oil theft in Nigeria may persist for long time to come due to level of sophistication the illicit trade has assumed in recent times and the caliber of persons involved in it even from within and outside the country (Uwotu, 2013). It should be stated clearly that most of the ill-activities carried out by youths in the oil region supposed not to have been done given their huge oil resource. Evidently, despite this huge oil resource, the oil-producing communities are characterized by poor living conditions. This poverty situation however, led to some youth’s involvement into illegal oil theft as means of survival without being considerate of its impact on the people or community development.

Consequently, activity of oil theft does not only affect the economic strength of Nigeria as oil is the major factor to revenue generation, but it has affected the social and health of the people in the study area. Most of the rivers, land and farms are polluted and the local people cannot explore the river for fishing; the land were also affected given oil activities were some farm land were set ablaze by fire and thus devaluing such land and making it infertile. As studies by various scholars (Titilayo, 2019; Osilem, 2022, Mbolo & Udousoro, 2014; Odalonu, 2015) on this issue have been carried, the researcher found that many studies were done that considered oil theft but few studies exist that link then to community development, the linking of the two variables in two separate communities in Emohua LGA become a contribution and gap to fill. Also, the study will add to empirical studies on oil theft and community development in Emohua LGA of Rivers State. The paper therefore, identifies the following research questions as guide to the study.

1. What constitutes some reasons for oil theft that affects community development in the study area?
2. What are the socio-economic and health implications of oil theft on community development in the study area?

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the reasons for oil theft that affects community development in the study area?

2. To identify the socio-economic and health implications of oil theft on community development in the study area.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts Emile Durkheim anomie theory in 1893. Anomie means the lack of normal ethical social standard. It is also a state of lawlessness and normlessness. The theory assumes that anomic situation is a product of industrialization. Theft in such circumstance, industrialization usually brings in a new method of economic relation, thus resulting to social upheaval. As a result weaken collective conscience, previous norms and social control mechanism. By this oil economy is a new economic activity which supplanted traditional economic activities. That is each time a new economic production emerges, it occasion social disintegration, weaken collective conscience or norms. However, Robert Merton (1938) cited in Emeodu (2021) elaborated this theory and pointed that in some circumstance individual no longer find meaning in the society's rules, therefore, opt for or tend to substitute or legitimize their own norms to achieve the society's accepted goals or values. When this occurs development is stagnated and underdevelopment will continue to prevail.

Linking the theory to the situation in the area of study which is Emohua LGA, oil theft is a crime and a result of failure of societal norms and values. Oil theft is a deviant act and cannot bring about progress and development in the area. This emanates from the fact that youths are frustrated and as Durkheim posited, it was attributed to weaken collective conscience, as well as inactive norms and social control mechanism. All the activities affect health, economic activities, social activities, insecurity among others.

Conceptual Clarification

Oil Theft: Oil is unarguably the lifeblood of modern economy and it has now become the most essential commodity in the world. Hence, no nation today can survive without oil that is why Smil (2008) describes it as the "lifeblood of modern world", adding that, "without oil, there would be no globalization, no plastic, little transport, and a worldwide landscape that few would recognize". Yergin (2008) also calls it "the world's most important resource" Nigeria, being a mono-economy nation largely depends on the oil sector for its economic survival. The Nigerian economy is dependent on the exploitation of crude oil and the nation's future is very much tied to the commodity (Okere, 2013). Indeed, oil and gas resources from Niger Delta region accounts for over 90% of Nigerian export and foreign exchange earnings, and over 70% of total Nigerian revenue (Ekuerhare, 2002). This informs Wilson (2012) to state that the increase or otherwise in crude oil production affects directly the revenue base and development programmes of Nigerian state. Oil is now the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. It is the country's major export, fetching millions of petrodollars to the country each day. Sadly, that same resource is being savagely stolen in copious quantities on daily basis (Adeboboye, 2013)

Oil theft started around late 1970s to early 1980s under military rule. It was carried out under the command of top military personnel for the purpose of enriching themselves and forcefully maintaining political stability (Katsouris & Sayne, 2013). The upsurge of oil theft in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in recent times is alarming. Oil theft can be referred to as illegal bunkering. It involves the act of hacking into pipelines to steal crude which is later

refined or sold abroad (Ugwuanyi, 2013). It is an illicit trade that involves the theft of crude oil and its derivative products through a variety of mechanisms. In a related view, Asuni (2009) refers to oil theft as oil taken from pipelines or flow stations, as well as extra crude oil added to legitimate cargo that is not accounted for. In support of the above positions, it is imperative to posit that “illegal oil bunkering” in Nigeria is a generic term surrounding not only illegal loading of ships but also all acts involving the theft, diversion and oil smuggling”. The illegal activity however, took a new turn with the advent of agitation for resource control by Niger Delta indigenes and the emergence of youth militancy (Ikelegbe, 2005; Katsouris & Sayne, 2013). Given this, Adegbite (2013) posited that oil theft is carried out at different levels and quantities; hence there are various methods in which oil theft operations are carried out in the Niger Delta. The most popular method for stealing the crude oil is to puncture the pipeline conveying the product from one point to the other and tap it at the point where it had been punctured or ruptured.

At the outset of the agitations in the Niger Delta, the objective was primarily political with the citizens of the region demanding for an increase in the derivation fund (a specific percentage of oil rents accrued to the federal government), but when the government was unable to meet all their demands, many of the youths in the community took up arms against the government and engaged in criminal activities such as oil theft, kidnapping, destruction of oil facilities and sea piracy (Ikelegbe, 2005; Katsouris and Sayne, 2013). According to Ikelegbe (2005), the involvement in oil theft by youths were at first limited to providing security for oil thieves, an activity from which they were able to enrich themselves and acquire weapons, but after a while they were able to engage in oil theft autonomously and this led to escalation of the illegal activity in the region.

However, oil theft further occurs when it is carried out without requisite statutory licenses or valid documents, or in violation of the Nigerian maritime sector (Odalonu, 2015). In this sense again, oil theft is considered to be the illegal appropriation of crude or refined oil products from the pipelines of multinational oil companies. The act is facilitated by the pragmatic cooperation between security forces, militia organizations, cult groups and local people, oil company employees who use a variety of methods to steal oil from oil pipeline ad multinational oil corporations that are stationed within the country (Akani, 1996; Ralby, 2017).

The reasons for the occurrence of oil theft in the Niger Delta however, appear to be webbed in grim complexity. Some authors have identified oil theft as an integral part of the economy of conflict in the oil communities region (Ezirim, 2011; Obi, 2010; Ikelegbe, 2005 and Watts, 2007). Others have linked it to the corrupt practices of government officials (Katsouris & Sayne, 2013; Asuni, 2009). Based on the different reasons identified, the first point that will be discussed is the situation of oil theft as part of the conflict in the Emohua LGA. Ikelegbe (2008) gives a classification of the militants into three groups namely insurgent, deviant insurgent, and criminal armed, and identified the third group as those responsible for oil theft in the Niger Delta region where Emohua LGA is located. The ‘criminal armed’ groups are led by warlords and with their engagement in illegal oil bunkering and other illicit economic activities, the warlords gained access to funds with which they acquired weapons, built camps, strengthened their membership (Obi, 2010) and were able to operate with or without

the support of political patrons (Watts, 2007). Basedau and Lay (2009) note that countries experiencing the resource curse have the characteristic of selective distribution of rents. Katsouris and Sayne (2013) also attest that funds that could be used for developmental projects may be diverted to non-productive areas in a rentier state. Hence, a possible basis for the low community development as well as conflict in the Emohua Local Government Area that has led to stealing of oil in the region can be said to be the rentier state structure of Nigeria.

Community Development: The issue of community development is a global phenomenon, especially the third world countries. According to Ndukwe (2005) posited that community development is a process that is concerned with the improvement as well as the transformation of the social, mental, economic, institutional and environmental conditions of the rural dwellers through the mobilization and rational utilization of their human, material and institutional resources as to enhance their capacities to cope with the daily tasks and demands of modern times.

In understanding what community development means, it becomes imperative to define the concept of development. Although, the concept of development does not attain a mono definition, hence, Walter (1972) observed that development implies increased skill, capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, and responsibility and material well-being. While all human societies have experienced development, the levels of development vary from one society to another and even within distinct parts of the same society. Given this, Nmomo (2004) citing Brawnwell Bakeri, defines community development as an educational process. It is not better road, better bridges, pure water, nor better sanitation. It is something of the spirit more than something of material. It must reach into deep, cultural pattern of people, examining them and testing them as principle of faith. It is not a temporary, physical construction. It is a building within the heart and mind of men not a recreation centre in the middle of field. The point made in this definition is that community development is much more than construction of physical things. It must be a way of life the community embraced by every member of that community. With that, all physical solution to problem shall follow and in the proper order. For him “psychological development” is first before any other development.

The term community development involves process that is geared with the improvement and also the transformation of the social mental, economic, institutional and environmental conditions of the rural dwellers through the mobilization and rational utilization of their human material and institutional resources as to improve their capabilities to adopt with the daily tasks capabilities to contemporary times (Onua, 2019).

Mury cited in Nmomo (2004) defines Community Development as the utilization under one single programme of approaches and techniques which rely upon local communities as units of actions assistance with organized local self-determination and efforts and initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of change. This definition as other does attempt to emphasize the importance of participation by the people of a community in improving their living conditions and physical environment.

Again, Authus cited in Nmom (2004) opined that community development is a method of helping local communities to become aware of their needs to assess their resources more realistically; to organize themselves and their resources in such a way as to satisfy some of their needs and in so doing acquire the attitude, experiences and cooperative skills for repeating this process again". By this definition, community development is a process in the sense that is a dynamic sequence which when set in motion, supplies its own motive, power, so that people in the community through their own effort are enabled to move steadily toward the goal of self-government and improvement.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a mix method design which incorporates quantitative and qualitative method. The study was carried out in two selected communities in Emohua local government area such as Ibaa and Ndele selected through purposive sampling technique. The selection of these communities was due to the fact that these communities are well known for oil theft and artisanal refining by the youths. The populations of the two communities were not known, thus Cochran formula was used to derive the sample size of 138, and is expressed as thus;

$$no = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$$

Where: **no** = the sample size; Z = Confidence level for Z (1.6); e = Level of precision = (0.05)

p = Estimated proportion; q = 1-p

Thus, our sample size becomes

No =

no = 138

Through purposive sampling, the respondents were selected to include elderly, security operatives and farmers. In each community, 69 respondents were selected while in each category, 23 respondents were selected using quota sampling technique (e.g. elderly=23 persons; security operatives=23 persons; and farmers=23=persons). Thus primary (questionnaire & in-depth Interview) and secondary sources (published & unpublished materials) of data collection were utilized. Therefore, charts were used to represents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, simple percentage was used for the analysis of research question while content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative instrument.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Fig 1. Chart Showing Sex Distribution of Respondents

Source: Research Fieldwork (2022).

The chart above represents respondent's sex distribution. In a nutshell, it implies that more male participated than female as such 78 male and 60 females.

Fig 2. Chart showing the various categories of Respondents

Source: Research Fieldwork (2022).

The above fig two represents the categories of respondents ranging from security officers, elderly and farmers. The result showed there was equal distribution of respondents.

Research Question One: What constitutes some reasons for oil theft that affects community development in the study area?

Table 1: Showing descriptive analysis on some reasons for oil theft that affects community development

S/N	ITEMS	A%	SA%	D%	SD%	Total
1	Poverty/unemployment crisis	170 42.5%	210 52.5%	20 5%	-	400 100%
2	Resource control	230 57.5%	150 37.5%	15 3.75%	5 1.25%	400 100%
3	Government insensitivity	145 36.25%	160 40%	60 15%	35 8.75%	400 100%
4	Greed and get rich quick syndrome	200 50%	160 40%	25 6.25%	15 3.75%	400 100%
5	Economic/political agitation of the people of the Niger Delta	110 27.5%	195 48.75%	55 13.75%	40 10%	400 100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Given the result of this study, it was found that poverty, unemployment situation, government insensitivity, greed and get rich quick syndrome as well as economic/political agitation of the people of the Niger Delta constitutes the reasons for the involvement of people in oil theft in the study area. All the items were accepted and is evident that people who venture into it are basically for economic reasons. In a nutshell, the study by Ikelegbe (2005) and Obi (2010) are related to findings of this study. According to them, oil theft and bunkering is a key activity of militant youths in the Niger Delta, who launch attacks against the government of Nigeria and Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in their fight for resource control; and Obi (2010) explained that the emergence of youth militancy in the oil producing area (such as in Emohua LGA) has been linked to non-violent struggles that spread through the oil producing communities against the deplorable living conditions in the region and decrease in the derivation fund from 50% of oil rents and royalties to 1.5%.

Sadly, Ezirim (2011) lamented that from what began as a political uprising, Niger Delta militant youths are now known for 'economic and financial criminal activities including pipeline vandalization, piracy, oil bunkering, small arms proliferation, hostage taking and kidnapping. Thus, it can be said that oil theft occurs in the Emohua LGA as part of the violent escalation of the political agitation of the people of the Niger Delta and it persists as a financial mechanism for established criminal groups. Also, a basis for the political struggle in

the region can be singled out as the neglect of development activities and inequitable fund allocation by the Nigerian government.

An in-depth interview on this proves that:

Most of the security personnels deployed in our community are conniving with our youths to steal oil and also refining it with them taken a good share. In fact, some of the security agencies even bribe to be posted in our area so as to have a fair share of oil stolen from the pipe (IDI/Respondents from Ibaa and Ndele communities/Rivers State/2022).

One of the respondents also has this to say:

Why our children and many strangers venture into this act is because government has abandoned us and the people are seriously suffering. What do expect a man to do when his house is on fire... is to find solution... the solution the youths found was to involve into oil bunker for survival (IChief/DI/Respondents from Ndele community/Rivers State/2022).

Some security Personnel were of the view that:

Sometimes we don't blame the boys, but just that the youths are not getting much from the government that's why they are into bunker and oil theft. Some narrated that most youths because their friends bought cars and has buildings and are living large, they have decided to involve into the business not minding the implications. Others also explain the high rate of poverty in the areas given series of communal crisis without any ideal compensation (IDI/security Respondents from Ibaa and Ndele communities/Rivers State/2022).

The above report of IDI findings shows that corruption constitutes some of the reasons for involvement of youth in oil theft. This reflects the view of Asuni (2009) who describes the existence of corruption in the Niger Delta and in Nigeria as an endemic one that has enveloped many law enforcement officials, government personnel and politicians. Also, Katsouris and Sayne (2013) also confirm the involvement of these officials in oil theft. Thus, explained that top Nigerian officials cut their teeth in the oil theft business during military rule. Over time, evidence surfaced that corrupt members of the security forces were actively involved. In fact, since the country's return to democracy in 1999 then gave some civilian officials and political 'godfathers' more access to stolen oil (Katsouris & Sayne, 2013). To explain the incentives that may have driven corrupt officials to engage in oil theft, Katsouris and Sayne (2013) report that the proceeds from the illegal activity is used to fund election campaigns and carry out atrocities such as targeted killings, buying votes or paying thugs to disrupt election processes. They also mention that the corrupt officials fund these atrocities for the purpose of remaining in power and securing continued access to oil rents. Finally, as these occur it affects community development given its socio-economic consequences.

In more related term, study by Adegbite (2013) correlate with this study and presented that the perceived reasons for engaging in crude oil theft include (a) poverty; (b) ignorance; (c) greed; (d) lack of respect for national economic survival; (e) get rich syndrome; (f) lack of gainful employment ; (g) exploiting the loopholes in the criminal justice system to circumvent the law ; (h) evolving culture of impunity from the wrong perception that some

people are above the law; (i) weak institutional structure to checkmate criminals; (j) malice; and (k) bad governance (corruption, incompetency), just to mention a few.

Also, Igbuku (2014) also identified some of the underlying causes of this scourge to include poverty, community-industry expectation mismatch, corruption, unemployment, ineffective law enforcement and poor governance. He adds that high unemployment, for instance has created a huge population of idle young people who are easily lured to oil related crimes. In any vantage it may be looked at, the study have been able to justify the various reasons why youths venture into oil theft.

Research Question Two: What are the socio-economic and health implications of oil theft in the study area?

Table 2: Showing descriptive analysis on the socio-economic implications of oil theft on community development

S/N	ITEMS	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	Total
1	Impediment to social development	120 30%	260 65%	18 4.5%	2 0.5	400 100%
2	Sustained conflict	210 52.5%	140 35%	30 7.5%	20 5%	400 100%
3	Increase the rate of unemployment	190 47.5%	200 50%	10 2.5%	-	400 100%
4	Reduced Manpower	140 35%	230 57.5%	20 5%	10 2.5%	400 100%
5	It generates soot particles and other health crisis to the people	180 45%	220 55%	-	-	400 100%
6	It displaces farmers and places threat to food security	200 50%	120 30%	40 10%	20 5%	400 100%
7	It generate social disharmony	140 35%	210 52.5%	40 10%	10 2.5%	400 100%
8	Most youths may lose their lives in the process	180 45%	200 50%	20 5%	-	400 100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The result of the findings showed the socio-economic and health implication of oil theft in the study area. It agreed that it leads to impediment to social development, and as well led to sustained conflict were people or youths are opportune to raise money for ammunition and causing social disharmony in the communities selected for the study. In the same vein, the study posited that the involvement of youths in oil theft led to the displacement of farmers and places threat to food security, causing increase in the rate of unemployment as the place could not attract more development projects from the government and other sectors that boost economic activities. Evidently, a Police reports from Rumuji Divisional Police Station, established that:

Over 40 persons died from the activities of oil theft in Ibaa and Ndele communities in Emohua local government area, Rivers State. These include

both male and female. It also gave that over sixty persons were arrested transporting this stolen oil to other areas.

As this occurs, it reduces manpower needed for operation and production. The researcher also revealed that the health implication of this given that it generates soot particles led to various health crises on the people.

The above study especially area of reduced economic and social manpower correlate with the findings of Soremi (2020) who observed that young people of school age may choose to join the 'criminal armed' gangs (or cult groups) rather than remain in school just so that they can acquire wealth from engaging in oil theft and this may lead to increase in number of out-of-school youths and increased cult activities in the study area. This may also result in loss of manpower for credible development of the community, as the cult members who involves in oil theft may lose their lives in clashes with the military or other criminal groups or even end up in prisons.

Some Respondents explained that:

Given the situation of oil activities, some farm land cannot be used for years and this is affecting the people. The rivers are affected as most fishermen cannot go for fishing. The crops are not yielding well as usual because the soil is polluted and cost of living is on increase (IDI/ Respondents from Ibaa and Ndele communities/Rivers State/2022).

Some security posited that:

Some youths and cultists in the various communities have used the money gained through these nefarious acts to purchase light guns and heavy weapons as well bullet. Explaining further that there is need to curb this crisis as the cultists has used these ammunitions to carry out activities that disrupt the harmony of the community (IDI/Chiefs and Farmers Respondents from Ibaa and Ndele communities/Rivers State/2022).

Most of the respondents decried that

There has been soot everywhere due to these illegal activities if not the early intervention of Governor Wike. The youths have adopted another means such as Keke Pot unlike the bigger drums used in the process of refining. Many youths have died and some injured (IDI/security Respondents from Ibaa and Ndele communities/Rivers State/2022).

An extrapolation from the various findings, it correlates with the findings of Obi (2010) which explains how proceeds from oil theft are often used by cultists to acquire weapons and also to recruit and train fighters. An extrapolation from this, it explains the crisis of community development, as cultists in some of the study areas sells oil and purchase guns and ammunitions to invade their rivals.

On health implication, it was found that series of health crisis existed. In fact soot was massively noticed in Emohua local government area that people cannot easily spread their clothes outside. A separate study by Akutu (2018) titled "Health issues to know about soot,

preventive measures” revealed that long-time exposure to soot can cause pneumonias, that this pneumonia makes patients prone to other respiratory diseases like asthma. Observing further Yakubu (2017), claim that findings from different studies relate adverse health problems like eye and skin disorders with people who are frequently exposed to polluted air. Niranjan and Thakur (2017), in a study titled established that soot and carbon black constitute public health problem. In their study, it was revealed that soot and carbon black can cause many diseases. That soot, apart from that it is carcinogenic, can also lead to multiple diseases to man.

Its socio-economic impacts include environmental degradation, loss of economic activities for the communities, loss of revenues to the government resulting in inadequate funding for development initiatives, increased criminality in Niger Delta region, lack of security due to illegal activities and infiltration of international collaborator and bad image for the country (Duru, 2013; Okere, 2013). Also, due to the loss of oil revenue to the oil thieves, Nigeria can no longer export crude oil above two million barrels per day as opposed to budgetary provision of 2.5 million barrels per day (Olateju, 2013). Nigeria is no longer selling enough crude oil to meet budgetary provisions. The government is failing to meet some of its obligation and domestic debt is rising rapidly. For instance, the country targeted, according to its financial plans for the year 2013, 2.53 million barrels per day production, a projection it failed to meet due to oil theft. Ogbefun (2014) noted that the negative impacts of vandalism and crude oil theft include the destruction of aquatic and farmlands, economic sabotage which explains the shortfall of Nigeria’s 2014 budget from \$29.3 billion in 2013 to \$23.3 billion in 2014 and divestments by some International Oil Companies, IOCs, with attendant job losses thereby compounding the unemployment situation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study has highlighted the reasons, health, economic and social implications of oil theft. In a way to ameliorate this quagmire, the Nigeria government has put various efforts in the fight against illegal oil theft. The Federal Government had also engaged the services of some ex-militant leaders in the Niger Delta like Tompolo with huge billions of naira to patrol the country’s vast coastline and protect her strategic oil installations but all these measures have not yielded a remarkable positive result. With the low standard of living in many oil producing communities, the Emolga people may see their situation where oil exist as resource curse. Apart from being among the oil producing region that is largely underdeveloped is also infamously known for oil theft as the study proves that poverty and unemployment characterized the area.

Recommendations

In recommending the way forward, the paper suggested the following:

1. There should be good governance, such governance would help to provide employment, reduce poverty level, and provide adequate health care. Such effort will limit oil theft as most people who venture into it are very poor and unemployed.
2. Furthermore, there should be increased funding and equipment of the Joint Task Force, the Navy, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp, the Nigeria Maritime

Administration and Safety Agency and other security operatives working in the region by the Federal Government to enable them defeat oil theft.

3. The government should also facilitate socio-economic development of the Emohua people in Niger Delta as well as carry out intensive and extensive concerted campaign to curtail criminality and oil theft in the region.
4. The relevant bodies that are affected by and can influence oil production in the Niger Delta (particularly the different layers of government, MNCs, community groups and international bodies) should be encouraged and if possible compelled to be transparent and accountable in their modes of operation as this will help ensure that they give thorough consideration to the implication of their words and actions.
5. Again, if the Nigerian government is able to gain the confidence of Niger Delta activists and indigenes, there will be less agitation and oil thieves will have less opportunity to take advantage of a genuine social movement for executing and justifying their disreputable actions in Emohua LGA. Through this development can thrive as this would limit conflict, pollution and other health implications.

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