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Corporate Social Responsibility As An Instrument Of Peace Between The Multinational Oil Companies And The Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility came into limelight in the early 20th century in the middle of growing concerns about the duties of organisation as the ideas of charity and stewardship. The paper examines effectiveness of corporate social responsibility as a strategy of peace between multinational oil firms and the host communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta. The work uses a content analysis approach and primarily draws on secondary sources. The paper found that deprivation and uneven distribution of the Niger Delta's natural resources coupled with the failure of oil companies in their corporate social responsibility led to the crisis in the region. To improve the already strained relationships, the oil companies carried out developmental projects such as social and basic infrastructures, education, empowerment and healthcare among others. The study recommends people-centred development strategies, strict adherence to the principle of corporate integrity, protection of citizens against ill effects of oil activities by government and strong community participation in developmental projects. Effective and efficient management of the host community perceptions is also key.

Key Words: Conflict/Violence, Corporate Social Responsibility, Host Communities, Multinational Oil Companies, Community Development

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest wetlands in the world and by far the biggest mangrove forest in Africa is the Niger Delta. Seventy-five percent of Nigeria's petroleum is produced in this area, contributing significantly to national government income. But despite having

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enormous oil reserves, the area is still underdeveloped. The region's inability to develop, stagnating agricultural production, the scarcity of job possibilities in cities, the deteriorating health of the people as a whole, and shaky property rights prevent it from making the most use of its resources and territory.

Local communities and big corporations got into disputes over resource utilization (oil activities). The Niger Delta believes that there is no rationale for maintaining at the current low level of development given the vast money linked with their oil endowments (Efemini, 2002). This prompted the people to call for a just distribution of the resources that God had provided them. These demands have resulted in a range of agitations, from peaceful to violent, which have disrupted the activities of the global oil firms.

Micro and macro corporate social responsibility can be used to understand the corporate reaction of the multinational oil firms to the demand of the Niger Delta. Corporate integrity can also help to better understand the multinational oil companies' intervention programs. According to Secretan (2001), organizations that develop integrity-centered cultures are likely to see a dramatic increase in productivity. As a result, maintaining friendly links with the host communities will be made possible if the multinational oil companies operating in the area adhere to the corporate integrity ethics principle.

Statement of the Problem

The discovery of crude oil and subsequent oil boom in 1958 and1970s respectively coupled with the industrial revolution of the same period combined led gradual to decline in agricultural production. Today, Nigeria depends solely on oil revenue for national income and foreign exchange earnings. Unfortunately, Oil wealth enriches Nigeria but has not alleviate the poverty of the oil-bearing areas of the Niger Delta. The use of force by Nigeria government to suppressive the will of people of the Niger Delta and exploit their resources coupled with the neglect of oil companies' corporate social responsibility led to crisis in the region.

In order to bring peace to the community and the oil firms, the real threat to the national ability to maintain its economic viability and its security therefore emerged as the most significant catalysts. The oil firms, together with the government, accepted responsibility for the effects of their actions on shareholders as well as for environmental sustainability and conservation with the interests of society at heart. However, the effectiveness of CSR programs is still below expectations, evidence shows a gap between the company's intended intentions and the impact of the actual implementation. The goal

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of the work is to evaluate the success of multinational oil firms' corporate social responsibility initiatives toward host communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

Objective of the Work

The objective of the work is to examine the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility as an instrument of peace and security between the multinational oil companies and the host communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

A CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

Many scholars regard conflict as an inevitability in human relations. To Burton (1987) "conflict is an essential element in human relations ... the means to change ... and the means by which social values; welfare, security, justice and personal development may be achieved". In apparent support of this notion, Nnoli (1998) opined that conflict is not only a pervasive phenomenon in human relationships but often, it is the 'basic unit for understanding social existence'. Conflicts have mostly been blamed on factors such as deprivation, social disorganisation, values difference, exploitation and domination (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower and Sears, 1939; Ikelegbe, 2006).

Since corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained so much attention, both academics and social observers believe that businesses must define their roles in the communities where they operate (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). Despite its popularity, the concept's exact nature is ambiguous because there is no universally accepted definition of it. Corporate Social Responsibility is evolving in both its definition and application.

The process by which businesses collaborate with those who are impacted by their decisions (stakeholders) and develop cutting-edge and commercially viable products, processes, and services within core business processes, resulting in improved social and environmental conditions, is known as corporate social responsibility (Hohnen, 2007). CSR is a concept where firms actively integrate social and environmental issues into their everyday operations and relationships with their stakeholders (EU Commission, 2002) referenced in Crowther and Aras (2008).

Corporate social responsibility, according to Enwereonye, Ugorji, Alozie and Awurumibe (2015), refers to methods used by businesses to carry out their operations in a way that is moral, friendly to society, and helpful to the community in terms of growth. Corporate social responsibility is the idea that businesses should take into account the interests of society by being accountable for how their operations affect their stakeholders, local communities, and the environment. In essence, corporate social responsibility can therefore include a variety of actions like collaborating with local

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communities, exhibiting social awareness, cultivating relationships with employees and clients, and being involved in environmental sustainability and conservation efforts.

Theoretical Framework: Frustration Aggression Theory

This concept was first put forth by John Dollard and his research associates in 1939, and it has since been elaborated upon by scholars including Leonard Berkowitz and Aubrey in 1962. The most rational and realistic explanation for aggressive behavior appears to be the inability to meet needs (Dollard et al, 1939). Theorists who rely on the aforementioned explanation use the psychological theories of the frustration-aggression theory. According to scholars, aggressiveness is the discrepancy between what people expect and receive in terms of need fulfilment and what they really receive in terms of what they want or deserve. When expectations don't match reality, people often confront the persons they believe are to blame for their unfulfilled goals.

The theory's major justification is that violence is motivated by dissatisfaction rather than being an automatic response or inclination. This is an instance where a person's righteous aspirations are met, either directly or indirectly, as a result of the way society is set up. Such a person may become violent in order to vent his wrath toward individuals he deems accountable for his feelings of disappointment. This is the actual situation in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Since 1956, the Nigerian government has received an estimated $600 billion in oil money (Watts, 2008), yet this has had no significant effect on the host communities'' quality of life.

Communities made up of individual units with specific demands as a result of a number of problems brought about by the actions of the oil companies. It follows that individuals living in a community can contribute to social discontent. According to Omeje (2004), the disputes are intimately related to the mischief made by oil corporations in communities that serve as their hosts.

The Host Communities and the Multinational Oil Companies Conflicts in the Niger Delta

The minority tribes of the Niger Delta Communities, which can be located in the southern region of Nigeria, are particularly hardy people. Their natural environment had an impact on their primary activities, which include palm oil production, farming, fishing, and hunting. It seems that most oil operations take place in dictatorships and in conflict areas. It has been suggested that the use of oil is linked to violent wars (Saro Wiwa, 1992 and Watts, 2004). Conflicts over oil can be attributed to the multinational oil companies' pursuit of profit maximization, which results in a disdain for best practices in their operations.

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State officials have likewise prioritized the interests of the oil multinationals over that of the locals in the regions that produce oil. The host communities have long complained about the damaging effects of oil production activities on the environment and the absence of benefits from such. The Nigerian oil well is seen as a symbol of the communities' ruin. These people's socioeconomic situation and surroundings were utterly wrecked by the oil companies.

Despite the significant detrimental repercussions of oil production in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian state has managed to maintain continued oil flow by coercing and forcibly suppressing the inhabitants. The continued coerced oil flows between the state and the oil corporations, account for the state total disregard for repression in the Niger Delta. These oil companies work with the government to repress the populace for profit-driven business practices in oil-hosting areas. These actions amply demonstrate the oil companies' collaborative role in the ongoing war in the Niger Delta.

Culture of Violence in Niger Delta Region

The World Health Organization (WHO) has shown how various factors might contribute to the spread of violence. The World Health Organization (2002) emphasized that numerous studies have demonstrated that childhood hostility is a reliable indicator of violence in adolescence and the early years of motherhood. This might be the cause of the Niger Delta communities' violent tendencies. The International Oil Companies' (IOCs) decade-long violence campaigns and the Nigerian government's repressive response to host community activism may have inspired the youth to use violence against the oil companies.

Oil firms had a more advantageous relationship with the government and frequently used their economic clout against the host communities in an asymmetrical partnership with the host community (Frynas, 2000). In favor of the IOCs and with little regard for the host communities, the state has a bias against them. It is believed that the government's alliance with IOCs hinders the development of legal solutions for the unfavorable effects of oil production (Frynas, 2000).

Also due to corporate social responsibility (CSR) failures, ethnic warfare and acrimony take the centre stage of the region. These problems have also caused the Niger Delta region to become uneasy over time and have almost completely halted business operations, which has resulted in the loss of life and property. Included among these violent acts according to Ikelegbe (2006) and Adedeji (2021) are:

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1. With a high degree of previously unheard of regularity, precision, and intensity, MEND started strategically destroying some of the petroleum facilities in an effort to impair the Nigerian state's capacity to export crude oil.
2. Kidnapping and hostage taking deprived the Nigerian state of the advantages of development partnerships and chances, and as well succeeded in frightening away potential development partners. It had a significant impact on Nigeria's economic growth.
3. The area became a veritable breeding ground for illegal oil bunkering due to militant activity and general unrest. It has hence grown into a genuine source of cash for the acquisition of more advanced weapons and ammunition.
4. Factionalisation, leadership issues, and rivalries among the young organizations led to violent and bloody fighting.
5. As a result **of** youth insurgency, which was characterized by unprecedented criminalities, the security situation in Nigerian territorial waters was compromised and made the second-most dangerous, this occasionally contributes to insecurity in the Niger Delta as well Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

Neglecting of Corporate Social Responsibility By Oil Companies and Government in Niger Delta

It is believed that harsh government policies, environmental contamination, a lack of local participation, and population increase are the main causes of the militancy in the Niger Delta. According to Ojakorotu (2011), the residents of the Niger Delta do not view the presence of oil in their area as a benefit but rather as the cause of their woes. The people would not have lived in a ruined environment, even if the Nigerian governments had not contributed to their growth.

Due to institutional degradation and corruption, the Nigerian government frequently turned a blind eye when companies broke the law. This was done for personal gain, and the Niger Delta's residents suffered as a result. It is interesting to mention the case of Halliburton, an American oil service corporation that admitted to paying corrupt Nigerian government officials bribes totaling $2.4 billion for their involvement in the company's operations in Nigeria (Barbara and Kathleen, 2006). Farmers and fishermen suffer as a result of the oil firms' careless behaviour because pollution-related losses are not fully compensated (Frynas, 2000).

The Nigerian national assembly encouraged the oil firms to pay the court penalty as compensation for environmental destruction, but they declined to do so. The worst

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part of the situation is that the oil firms did not compensate or discuss an alternate option with the residents of the impacted areas (This day news, 2006).

While the host communities expect better living conditions from the oil firms, the latter tend to be neoliberal and only focused on market logic as profitability is the driving force behind the companies and the fundamental expectation to gain from oil production activities (Jenkins, 2004). The resident administration of the state and the federal government was anticipated to be in charge of improving the host communities and dispersing the profits they received from oil production. The connection between the oil industry and the host community is still hotly debated and controversial, which is the fundamental reason why oil firms are never given the benefit of the doubt during crises.

The hostility between oil firms and the local communities in the Niger Delta has resulted in a notable decline in oil revenue, which has a detrimental impact on business profitability. This sad incident has forced the oil firms to adopt CSR-focused strategies in an effort to restore their damaged corporate reputations. The concept that society, oil corporations, and the federal government must work together to tackle the ongoing social and environmental challenges makes it possible for oil firms to connect with and develop partnerships as a way for corporate bodies to fulfill their social responsibilities.

Multinational Oil Companies Efforts To Improve Host Communities-Multinational Oil Companies Relationships

Understanding that social responsibility is a component of companies' policies in their host communities is essential and inevitable for businesses. Companies and their stakeholders continuously benefit when this is recognized by corporations. It became important for both the government and the oil corporations to make efforts to ameliorate the already relationships between industry stakeholders, particularly between host communities and oil firms. The detrimental repercussions of the oil firms' operations are being given more attention than before, and there is more interaction with the host communities. Along with preventive measures, emphasis was placed on giving the underprivileged host communities help.

The suggestions of the Willink's Commission, which was established in 1958 to ascertain the problems of the minorities, are credited with inspiring the first such endeavor (Douglas, Okonta, Kemedin and Watts, 2004). Following the publication of this commission's report, a number of interventionist organizations such as the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) of 1960, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Commission (OMPADEC) of 1993, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) of 2000 have been established to help improve these relationships (Ite, 2004). In addition, former

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President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua established the Ministry of Niger Delta (MND) in September 2008.

On the other hand, the oil firms that operate in the area have over the years taken part in many CSR projects with the objective of enhancing these relationships. These CSR programs, often known as community development projects or initiatives, have grown in recent years as a result of host communities' raised expectations of the oil industry (Idemudia, 2007). Some of the initiatives and projects are highlighted below:

a. **Social and Basic Infrastructure**:
Construction of roads, water supply, market stall construction, and energy availability are examples of social and basic infrastructures. In addition to this, community and municipal centers were built and supplied for use by the towns for gatherings and other social activities (Ojo, 2009).

b. **Education:**
Funds were invested in the educational field to support the construction of classrooms, the hire of teachers who are paid directly by the companies, as well as student scholarships (Eweje, 2007). To help the students in the area with their academics, computers and science equipment were also supplied (Ojo, 2009). Additionally, financial aid was given to instructors as inducements to get them to work in remote areas (Idemudia, 2009).

c. **Empowerment:**
The development of skills for empowering and giving the people economic capacity is known as empowerment. Eweje (2007) cites the topics that are addressed as including teaching women how to make soap and pomade, sew, do hair, and cater. Additionally included in the empowerment categories were microcredit and business development programs. Carpentry is added to the list by Idemudia (2009). After participants in the host communities have successfully completed their skill-acquisition programs, microcredit schemes typically take the form of loans with lower interest rates given to them as a means of establishing them. The beneficiaries are required to repay the loans over time.

d. **Sports:**
As Ojo (2009) points out, this is one area on which businesses have concentrated as part of their contribution to community development. The main reason for this is to deter adolescent restlessness, according to the businesses. Additionally, it encourages young people to integrate their academic studies with their athletic abilities in order to benefit their families and the community at large.

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e. Capacity Building:

Building capacity is considered as being essential to make any developmental endeavor lasting and is related to social capital. Its main focus is on human resource development, which is essential for ensuring that all other facets of community development are maintained and sustained. It aims to provide participants with the mindset and abilities necessary for success in any endeavor. Additionally, it was done to offer skilled and unskilled residents of the host communities work opportunity (Ojo, 2009)

f. Healthcare: According to Idemudia (2007), the oil companies have improved the delivery of healthcare services. In order to improve the services previously offered to the public, collaborations with foreign organizations are formed. Additionally, health centers and clinics are renovated or built, and medicines and equipment that are in short supply in the host communities' health centers are donated. They collaborate with the government and civil society to educate people on how to stem the spread of diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS in addition to providing ambulances and land and swamp mobile clinics (Ojo, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

The attitude of the Federal Government in collaboration with multinational oil companies in the use of force to keep the people down and exploit their resources coupled with neglection of oil companies CSR led to crisis. The serious threat to the country's economic existence and national security is one of the key impetuses for the oil firms' adoption of corporate social responsibility to promote peace between the host society and the oil corporations. It said that without prejudice to whatever solutions that key stakeholders may proffer to the restiveness of the host communities, multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta must as a matter of responsibility ginger up their efforts in performing their corporate social responsibility in the region.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made for policy implementation in light of the findings presented above:

1. The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) must reflect the opinions and goals of all significant industry players and reflect the government's separation from its joint ownership with multinational oil companies, which will improve its roles and obligations in the sector.

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2. After being signed, the MOUs between industry stakeholders should be taken seriously by all parties, and to support this, a clause that makes the MOU a document that is admissible in court and is enforceable by other parties, respectively should be included.
3. Development initiatives must be centered on the needs of the people and tailored specifically to the natives of the Niger Delta, with a focus on those who have already been uprooted due to oil exploration activities.
4. The government must safeguard its population from the negative impacts of oil activities and not only concentrate on the financial benefits of the joint venture with the oil companies by turning a blind eye to the dishonest behavior of oil firms and government officials.
5. Using armed personnel is not the only option for peacefully resolving disputes. It is advised that persistent involvement and respectful discussion be used instead of the use of lethal force. The government and oil firms of Nigeria should promote peace in the local communities.
6. The Nigerian government must properly and efficiently manage community attitudes. The successful management of various perspectives through routine town hall meetings of stakeholders will enable the success of this complex relationship. Meetings that are inclusive and open will foster goodwill and mutual trust.

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