

## Economic Marginalisation in Some Selected States in the Niger Delta.

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### Abstract

This paper examined the issue of economic marginalisation in some selected states in the Niger Delta. The issue of economic marginalization of the Niger Delta peoples of Nigeria appears to have got worse as a result of discovery of the “black gold” called petroleum in Oloibiri (1956) in commercial quantity. The objectives of this study are to examine the effects of economic marginalization on the Niger Delta and to proffer possible solutions. This study addressed the following research questions: is the existence of oil and the presence of oil companies responsible for the economic marginalization of the Niger Delta? Is the lopsided Fiscal Federal structure the cause of economic marginalization of the Niger Delta?

The study utilised primary data of information sourced through structured and unstructured questionnaires that were administered to the respondents using random sampling method.

The findings from the study revealed that the lop-sided fiscal structure, pollution and degradation as a result of oil spill, as well as the minority status of the Niger Delta are responsible for the economic marginalisation of the people. It is recommended that employment opportunities should be provided for the youths so that they would no longer be idle and thereby be a ready instrument for violence. Also, the multinational oil companies should apply internationally acceptable standards on the issue of environment.

**Keywords:** economic marginalization, niger delta, fiscal policy, pollution, oil companies

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

What constitutes the Niger-Delta is mired in controversy (Nwachukwu, 1999:106). Apparently, because of increasing economic benefits, and expectation of more benefits, like those derived from the establishment of the Niger-Delta Development Corporation (NNDC) in 2000 by the Federal Government, any state that produces any crude oil at all claims to be part of the Niger-Delta. Accordingly, Nwachukwu 1999:106 gives a geo-political definition of the region to include those states of Nigeria that border the coastal waters of the Atlantic. These are the oil producing Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers and Ondo States, including Abia and Imo States. Alex Asakitikpe, and Philip Oyelaran (1994:174) add Anambra State to the list, arguing that the “Niger Delta is the area that stretches in an east-west direction from south-west Cameroons to the Okitipupa ridge with an apex situated south-east of the rivers Niger and Benue Confluence.” In this view, the whole Niger Delta region covers an area in excess of 105,000 square kilometers. Most people take a more pragmatic view and take the Niger Delta to be the geopolitical area known as the south-south zone, comprising the first six States named. This work shall, however, cover some selected states namely; Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers states.

The Niger Delta of my study is a heterogeneous, multi-cultural, ethnically diverse region of about 10 million people according to the 2006 census. It covers an area of about 40,000 square kilometres. About one third of this area is wetland, one of the largest in the world, but certainly the largest in Africa. Over sixty per cent of Nigeria’s mangrove forest, which is the third largest in the world, is also found here, as are the most extensive fresh water swamp forests in west and central Africa. Accordingly, the Niger Delta is rich in fishes and wildlife resources, has a high biodiversity with many unique species of plants and animals. More importantly, the region is famed for its large deposits of non-renewable energy resources, particularly crude oil and gas. Most of the country’s oil comes from this region. The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) alone has more than 90 active oil wells in the area. Production and exports of crude oil from the region is about two million barrels a day, accounting for well over 90 per cent of Nigeria’s total export earnings and around 80 per cent Federal revenue. It is also estimated that the value of natural gas in the region when fully harnessed will exceed the total economic benefits derived presently from the crude oil (Nwachukwu, 1999:106, Ojeifa, 1999:257, Anyaebunam, 1999:140).

Despite the wealth, infrastructural facilities in most parts of the Niger Delta appear to be at the primordial levels. As Aluko 1999:213) sums up the problem: ecological disasters arising from oil exploration have laid the land waste. They make it difficult, even impossible at times to have potable drinking water and

passable road network. Pollution from incessant oil spillages, together with other hazards of oil exploration and exploitation, has made fishing, the lifeline of most inhabitants of the area, almost impracticable and unprofitable. Spillage also destroys fishing nets worth several thousands of naira. All these have had a negative impact on the quality of life of the average person in the Niger Delta. The people felt dispossessed and are alienated from the polity (Tell Magazine, March 16, 2009:19). The objectives of this paper therefore are to examine the effects of economic marginalization on the Niger Delta and to proffer possible solutions.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

(Ikelegbe, 2005:200) examines the economy of conflict in the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. He asserts that the minorities of the Niger Delta region have been agitating since the 1950s; that they have been marginalised by the federating units of the Nigerian federation; he identified two stages of the struggle. First, it was against marginalization, neglect and the politics of exclusion by the ethnic majority based ruling political parties and governments of the Eastern and Western regions, which the Willincks Commission of 1958 rejected and rather provided constitutional guarantees in the form of fundamental rights. But the commission granted a special developmental status in the form of Niger Delta Development Board (Lawal, 2004:20).

Accordingly, the incidence of primary commodity exports and specifically mineral wealth in states has been found to be associated with conflict and the occurrence and duration of civil wars (Collier and Hoeffler 1998:568 – 569; Nwanasali 2000:145; De Soysa 2000:123-124). This is related first to the acute struggle for the control of resources, which increases vulnerability to conflict, violence and war. He is of the opinion that several conflicts in resource rich states are characterized by violent scramble to control natural resources (Reno 2003:45). This is what has led to the characterization of several wars, such as those of Angola, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Liberia and Sierra Leone as resource wars, rebellion and insurgencies. In some of these conflicts, both rulers and warlords have hired private security companies from different countries such as the Ukraine and South Africa, to offer security assistance in exchange for privileged resource access (Mair, 2003:13).

(Ikelegbe, 2005:201) had used the economy of conflict theory in explaining the situation in the Niger Delta. He discovered that a conflict economy comprising an intensive and violent struggle for resource opportunities, inter and intra community/ethnic conflicts over resources and the theft and trading in refined and crude oil has blossomed in the Niger Delta since the 1990s.

Second, the creation of states in Nigeria in 1967 satisfied the initial aspiration and ensured that the Eastern segment supported the Federal side in the Nigerian Civil War. But that support, the Federal victory and the subsequent Northern hegemony were to be an albatross leading to the second agitation. According to Ikelegbe, the Northern hegemony taking advantage of military dictatorship began a regime of near total appropriation of the region's oil resources through an intense centralization and concentration of power and resources in the Federal government. Oil resources were a major target. By decrees, oil and gas became owned by the Federal government and progressively, the regions entitlements by way of derivation based allocation, declined from 50% to a mere 1.5% in 1984 and later 3% in 1999. Further, the region was marginalized and in fact neglected in the developmental efforts that followed massive oil revenues. The region, according to him, was one of the least developed and poorest by the 1990s. But more unfortunately, increasing oil exploration had made the region economically and socially prostrate, due to extensive environmental degradation and ensuing socio-economic disruptions and poverty (Agbamu, 2004:10).

The circumstance led to a slow heightening of the second struggle from a mild renewal of agitation in the 1970s; to a wide spread community based protest in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the region was mobilized enough by a flowering of civil society, intense identity mobilization and ethnic nationalism, community activism and youth mobilization to commence a broad regime of extensive active resistance. Further, what began as mere articulation by the regions elites had become a mass protest whose content of demands, methods, and strategies of struggle had been transformed considerably.

First, there was a re-orientation of the struggle to that of a struggle for group rights to self-determination, equity, and justice and to issues of the national question, state reforms and corporate governance. Second, there was an emphasis of mass communal, ethnic and pan-ethnic mobilization and the creation of linkages and platforms for general mass action by youths, women and community members. Third, there was a change from the culture of accommodation of the region's elites with the state and multinational companies (MMCs), to that of direct challenge and confrontation. Fourth, there was an enlargement of the methods of struggle to include the extra-constitutional, extra legal and the cultural (Abia, 2003:20)

An economy of conflict slowly emerged. By September, 1999, about 50 Shell workers had been kidnapped and released (Arnold, 2000:224). The objective was clear, "if they do not benefit from the oil output,

then they will stop the oil from being produced.” Then, there began a regime of violent and armed resistance by youth militias and militant groups principally in response to state repression and corporate violence and as part of actions to compel concessions in respect of regional autonomy, resource control and greater oil based benefits. The region has since become the scene of the most extensive military operations since the Nigerian civil war.

Economic marginalization Okadigbo (1979:150) defines marginalization as a “sorry existence and suffering – inducing condition of being systematically and economically undermined and alienated in the scheme of things. It involves discrimination and deprivation, channelled to an individual or group.” It is a situation whereby the rightful owners of an economy are denied their rights or access to such economic power. This of course, explains the rate of negligence of the owners of an economy by an alien body or persons. The alien body that now enjoys this economic opportunity at the expense of the rightful owners can do everything possible within its power to eliminate the rightful owners when the rightful owners object.

Marginalization is generally used to describe and analyse socio-cultural, political and economic spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access (societal and spatial) to resources, and full participation in social life (Anderson and Larsen, 1998:241-258; Brodwin, 2001:19; Davis, 2003b:1-4; Sommers, et al, 1999:7-24). In other words, marginalized people might be socially, economically, politically and legally ignored, excluded or neglected, and are therefore vulnerable to livelihood change (Brodwin, 2001:20; Geddes, 205-215; Larsen, 2002b:30; Marcuse, 150; Muller-Boker et al, 2004:225-261; Perlman, 2002:120; Sommers et al, 1999:7-24).

### **Definitions**

The following common definitions of marginalization may be used in understanding the issue of economic marginalization.

Marginalization can be defined as “the temporary state of having been put aside of living in relative isolation, at the edge of a system (cultural, social, political or economic) ... in mind, when one excludes certain domains or phenomena from one’s thinking because they do not correspond to the mainstream philosophy” (International Geographical Union (IGU), 2003:2).

“Socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social wellbeing compared with average condition in the territory as a whole” (Sommers et al ... 1999:7)

Marginalization is primarily defined and described by two major conceptual framework focuses on human dimensions such as demography, religion, culture, social structure (e.g. caste/hierarchy/class/ethnicity/gender), economics and politics in connection with access to resources by individuals and groups. In this regard, the emphasis is placed on understanding of the underlying causes of exclusion, inequality, social injustice and spatial segregation of people (Brodwin, 2001:22; Darden, 1989:50; Gans, 1966:20 ;).

The explanation of the spatial dimension of marginality is primarily based on physical location and distance from centre of development, lying at the edge of or poorly integrated into system (Larsen, 2002b:240; Leimgruber, 2004:1-18; Muller-Broker et al, 2004:225-261). With this concept, it is intended to gain insights into the influence of physical locations and distance on the livelihoods of individuals/groups and the space itself.

These definitions clearly indicate that marginality is a process that emerges and evolves with time in various types and scales under socio-economical and geographical environment. Colonization, apartheid and ethnicity can be taken as examples of situations where one group assumes superior status. In this process, marginalised people are often condemned for making their living in marginal environments despite the fact that they are likely to have resources needed to overcome restrictions imposed by marginal environments (Kirby, 2000:100;

Marginalization as defined by IGU (2003:11) is seen to be a dynamic concept, since each region has potential to overcome the situation that is perceived to be marginal or unsatisfactory. However, the negative consequences of economic marginalization can even serve as the starting point of innovations and potentials. As Japanese innovation and development after the Second World War has illustrated, marginalization can provide even an extra edge to start development Larsen, 2002a:17-19). Again, the case of Mount Everest, one of the most inaccessible and environmentally harsh regions of Nepal inhabited by an ethnic minority (Sherpa) is now developed into one of the most prosperous tourist destinations with much better access to basic infrastructures

and services (health care, communications, education and transportation) than most of the other mountainous areas of the country. This illustrates clearly that the scale of investigations is important to understand the complexity of marginalization in a given space. Focusing on human needs, attention needs to be paid to the marginalization with the spatial and societal dimension of mountains rather than the mountains per se (Muller-Boker et al, 2004:252).

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work is anchored on two basic theories: economy of conflict theory and rentier state theory.

The economy of conflict theory states that economic motive is actually the cause of rebellions and war. It states that warlords and patrons of crime merely disguise their pure economic agenda with political grievances in order to legitimize their activities. The incidence of primary commodity exports and specifically mineral wealth in countries have been found to be associated with conflicts and the occurrence and duration of civil war according to (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998:568).

This argument is supported by (Nwanasali, 2000:145) when he examined the incidences of conflict in Angola, Sudan, Zaire (DRC), Liberia and Sierra Leone, he concluded that conflicts/wars tend to be fought by state actors and the hitherto excluded or claimant to the resources and can be regarded as contest over power and wealth, he asserted. According to (Reno, 2003:45) several conflicts in resource rich states are characterised by violent scramble to control natural resources.

The second assumption of the economy of conflict theory is that rebellion and war are prolonged and sustained by war economic opportunities and trade networks. In the Liberian Civil war, Charles Taylor, according to (Ellis, 1998: 161) captured large rich areas, exploited diamonds, gold, iron ore, hard wood and other commodities and controlled commerce through informal and external commercial alliance, his family and inner circle.

Ellis (1998:161) also claimed that the various Liberian warlords acquired substantial interests in various forms of trade to which their use of armed forces gave them access. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, rebels and mercantilists were at the centre of illegal exploitation in crisis prone Kivu province. Also in Congo Brazzaville, the struggle for control over resources in part underpinned the violent conflicts of 1997 (Havermnase, 1999:150).

(Nafziger and Auvinen, 2002:158) assert that rebels, warlords and insurgents struggle for control through external commercial networks, illegal trading and violence.

The third assumption of the theory is that greed and profiting from economic gains could be seen as under-pinning violence in conflicts in Africa's resource rich regions. Violence by youth militias, rebels and armed gangs and even government soldiers are common features. (Vlassenroot, 2002: 79) This involves plundering, looting, extortion, imposition of tolls and robbery of local people, traders and farmers. There is the tendency for these set of people to have some benefits from violence.

Furthermore, resource interests tend to underpin the interference of neighbouring states in conflicts in most of African states. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda on the one hand while Angola and Zimbabwe on the sides of the rebels and the state respectively. The former were involved in illegal exploitation, while Zimbabwean, Angola and Namibian companies were authorised by the Kabila regime to exploit minerals (Doom and Vlassenroot, 2001:80).

In Liberia, the Guinean and Ivorian officials and traders benefited from illegal trading and commercial networks during the Liberian Civil War (Ellis, 1998:164).

In the case of the Niger Delta, of our study there have been reported cases of foreigners benefiting from the crisis that have characterised the region.

### 2.2.1 The Rentier State Theory (Analysis, Strengths and Weaknesses)

Attempt would also be made here to discuss the Rentier State Theory as a tool of analysis. The concept of the rentier state goes back to Hossein Malidavy's study of pre-revolutionary Iran. It was particularly expanded upon by Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (1987:80-81), who classified a rentier state as a state in which at least forty per cent of the total government revenue consists of economic rents. These rents can be defined as "the excess of production put to their next best use" (Dunning, 2008:39).

According to the rentier state theory, the two central effects of dependence on economic rents are economic inefficiency and, as a consequence, the obstruction of socio-economic development like in Liberia, Sudan (Beck, 2007:46). With regard to the political effects, the rentier state theory proposes that (oil) rents have a stabilizing effect on authoritarian rule (Mahdavi, 1971:151; Beblawi/Luciani, 1987; Ross, 2001:325-361). Initially, based on empirical findings in the Middle East, the rentier state theory is claimed by its proponents to be universally valid (Beck, 2007:44). It attributes the linkage between oil rents and authoritarianism to the following casual mechanisms.

Firstly, it is presumed that oil rents foster the formation of stabilizing patronage networks, widespread clientelism, and assistentialistic distribution policies, all of which lessen the pressure from the population to

democratize and may additionally result in the de-politicization of the society.

Secondly, the abundance of revenues generated by the oil sector means that national rulers do not need to tax the population. This again, may disburden the political elite of demands from the population for political participation and accountability on the part of the elites. The causal mechanisms assumed to be responsible for this link include, on the one hand, the fact that natural resources can be the motive for violent conflicts, Angola, Sudan Niger Delta (Nigeria). This means that parts of the population might feel that they are deprived of the financial benefits of the resource revenues – while possibly also suffering from the ecological and social impacts of production (Motive of grievance) – or that resource wealth can be the target of avaricious rebels who wish to take possession of the resource revenues (Motive of greed) (Collier/Hoeffler, 2001:202). On the other hand, resource revenues can serve as a catalyst for violent conflict by financing the rebel groups and other actors involved (opportunity, feasibility) and thus prolonging the conflict (Collier/Hoeffler, 2004:563-595).

Finally, resources and institutions and/ or by triggering socio-economic decline in the conflict area. Authors such as Fearon and Laitin argue that “oil producers tend to have weaker state apparatuses than one would expect given their level of income because the rulers have less need of a socially intrusive and elaborate bureaucratic system to raise revenues” (Fearon/Laitin, 2003:81).

### **2.2.2 Rentier State Theory**

The rentier state theory is based on the following assumptions:

First, is that rentier state is a state in which at least forty per cent of the total government revenue consists of economic rents. The rents is seen as excess of production that is been put into their best use for the overall benefits of the people (Dunning, 2008:39)

The rentier state theory holds the view that two central effects of dependence on economic rents are economic in affiances which the consequence of the obstruction of socio-economic development as has found in Liberia (Beck, 2008:46). The theory tends to agree that oil rents have a stabilising effect on authoritarian rule according to (Rose: 2001:325-361).

The second assumption of the rentier state theory is that oil rents have stabilizing effects on authoritarian rule (Beck, 2007: 44). It is believed that there is a linkage between oil rents and authoritarian rule. With oil rents there tend to be a formation of stabilizing patronage of the authoritarian ruler as the client may not be willing to think of democratizing like in the case of Libya, under Gadaffi. The pressure to democratize would have been weakened by the system; this may result into de-politicization of the society.

The third assumption of the rentier state theory is that, it is assumed that because of the revenue generated by the oil sector, it means that rulers do not need to tax the population. It is assumed that taxing the population may lead to political instability, which will not be advantageous to the authoritarian ruler hence he does not support tax payment. (Collier/Hoeffler, 2001:202).

Part of the population might feel that they are deprived of the financial benefits of the resource revenues, while possibly suffering from the ecological and social impacts of production like the complaints of the Niger Delta against Nigeria. (Rose: 2001:325-361).

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study benefited both from primary and secondary sources of data collection. The need to have a more purposeful and result oriented methodology is critical to a study like this one.

The study examined the social characteristics of the respondents by looking at their educational levels, with a view to determining whether educational background has played any significant role in the demand for economic liberation by the Niger Delta region.

The section includes the section of data presentation, in which primary and secondary data were been utilised. Primary data and information were sourced through structured and unstructured questionnaires which were administered to the major stakeholders in the Niger Delta of our study. In doing this the respondents in the Niger Delta were requested to give answers to the questions in the questionnaire. To complement the information and data from the questionnaire, unstructured oral interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted on some stakeholders in the Niger Delta. Visits were made to the selected states in the Niger Delta namely: Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers in order to interact with the local people who experience directly the impact and the effects of the alleged economic marginalisation.

In the same vein, information and data were obtained from secondary sources which included publications, reports and documents on Niger Delta, books, articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers on Niger Delta. Random sampling was also used to gather data and information.

The aggregate data collected within the period of study was analysed using both the quantitative and the qualitative methods of analysis.

In a study like this the outcome is contingent upon the choice of the states in the study, the way and manner data

are collected and indeed the study methodology adopted. It is in recognition of the importance of the above variables that this section will deal with choice of states in the Niger Region to be included in the study, the data collection and study methodology.

There are six states that can be classified as being in the Niger Delta Region namely: Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers and Edo states. However, the agitation for economic marginalisation is concentrated in three states namely: Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states. Majority of the militants were from these three states hence the choice of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states as the states to be included in the study.

Data was collected from different individuals and groups in the three states of the study. In order to ensure broad coverage of target population major ethnic groups in the states were included namely: Ijaw, Ogonis, Ikwerres, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Elemen and the Ukwuanis. Apart from opinion leaders, ex-militants and the educated ones, the local people were included in the study because they are directly affected by the impact of the economic marginalisation and effects of environmental degradation and oil pollution.

The number of respondents included in the study was done by quota sampling frame, especially in terms of number of questionnaires to be distributed. In gathering the data random sampling was used. A pre-visit was made to each state as well as gathering information in terms of population, extent of oil activities and intensity of agitation for economic agitation. The purpose of this was to enhance the number of respondents and the number of questionnaires to be administered in each state.

#### 4.0 ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Table 1** indicates the number of questionnaires distributed per state in the study and the numbers returned.

States	Numbers of questionnaires Distributed	Numbers of questionnaires Returned	Percentage Returned
Bayelsa	135	102	33.8%
Delta	135	100	33.1%
Rivers	139	100	33.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2012)**

Out of 409 questionnaires distributed, 302 were retrieved representing a response rate of 75%.

##### **The Social Characteristics of the Respondents**

The respondents were drawn largely from the age group 20 - 25, 26 – 34, and 35 – 45 years which included both male, female, Christians and non-Christians, while some were married and some not married. This age group were chosen because they formed the age group of the agitators for economic marginalisation in the region. They had secondary and post secondary educational qualifications. Some were self employed, unemployed, public servants, business men, private sector employees. Their income status was low and middle class. In ethnic terms they are mixture of Ijaws, Ikweres, Ogonis, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Elemen, and the Ukwuanis.

## The Bio-Data

**Table 2: The Bio-data of the Respondents**

<i>Gender</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	130	43.0%
Female	117	38.7%
Missing	55	18.2%
Total	302	100%
<b><i>Age</i></b>		
20-25 years	38	12.6%
26-34 years	135	44.7%
35-45 years	68	25.5%
46 years and above	33	12.9%
Missing	28	9.3%
Total	302	100%
<b><i>Marital Status</i></b>		
Single	141	46.7%
Married	106	35.1%
Missing	28	18.2%
Total	302	100%
<b><i>Religion</i></b>		
Christianity	260	86.1%
African traditional religion	1	.3
Missing	41	13.6
Total	302	100%
<b><i>Qualification</i></b>		
Primary School Leaving Certificate	1	.3%
Secondary School Leaving Certificate	18	6.0%
Ordinary National Diploma	24	7.9%
Higher National Diploma	70	23.2%
Degree Holder	130	43.0%
Post graduate Degree Holder	28	9.3%
Missing	31	10.3
Total	302	100%
<b><i>States</i></b>		
Bayelsa	102	33.8%
Delta	100	33.1%
Rivers	100	33.1%
Total	302	100%

**Source: Field Survey (2012)**

Table two shows the bio data of the respondents who consist of community leaders, youths, and some ex-militants, belonging largely to the age bracket 26-34 and 35-45, and made up of male, female, Christians, married and unmarried, and had secondary or post secondary education. They were mostly unemployed, self employed and private sector employees and fall within the low income and middle income categories. They were mainly Ijaw, Urohobos, Itsekiris, Ogonis, Ukwannis and Eleme.

From the table, it is shown that 130(43.0%) of the respondents are male, 117(38.7%) are female, while the remaining 55(18.2%) did not indicate their sexes. Regarding their ages, 38(12.6%) indicates that they are between ages 20-25 years, 135(44.7%) indicates that they are between 26 and 34 years of age, 68(22.5%) indicate that they are 35-45 years and 33(10.9%) indicates that they are 46 years and above. However, 28(9.3%) did not indicate their ages.

The table shows that 141(46.7%) of the respondents are single, 106 (35.1%) of the respondents are married, while 55(18.2%) did not indicate whether married or single. On the issue of religion, 260(86.1%) of the respondents indicates they are Christians, while 1(.3) indicates they belong to the African Traditional Religion.

On qualifications, the table shows that 1(.3%) of the respondents are Primary School Leaving Certificate holders, 18(6.0%) are Secondary School Leaving Certificate holders, 24(7.9%) Ordinary National Diploma holders, 70(23.2%) are Higher National Diploma holders, 130(43.0%) are Degree Holders while 28(9.3%) are Post graduate Degree holders.

The table indicates also that 102(33.8%) of the respondents are from Bayelsa state, 100(33.1%) from Delta state, while 100(33.1%) from Rivers state.

Some oil producing communities were orally interviewed on electoral ward bases among the three states visited. Ten (10) interviews were conducted each in Bayelsa, Delta and River States. Three Focused Group Discussions (FGD) each was conducted in Bayelsa (Yenagoa), Delta (Warri) and Rivers (Elemen) with sample sizes of 10, 06 and 05 respectively.

The data elicited from the structured questionnaires was analysed using a question-by-question content analysis of responses. Distributive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were employed in the analysis of the data.

The rationale for these cases was dependent on selecting a random and statistically representative sample that would permit confident generalization from the sample to a larger population. For example, the findings could be generalized to other communities in the Niger Delta.

The focus group interviews and oral interviews were transcribed from tapes. Content analysis was then undertaken to derive insightful comments by contact analyses. In all the instruments and particularly in the oral interviews and the Focus Group Discussion, important comments and arguments were identified where relevant.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings quantitatively and qualitatively, using both the findings from the questionnaires, the oral interview and Focused Group Discussion as a tool of analysis.

**Table3.** The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta could be said to be responsible for the economic marginalisation of the Niger Delta people.

Variable	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Disagree	60	19.9%
Disagree	78	25.8%
Agree	83	27.5%
Strongly Agree	72	23.8%
Missing	9	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012)

Table 3 indicates the responses of the respondents whether the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta was responsible for the economic marginalization of the Niger Delta people in Nigeria. The table shows that 60(19.9%) strongly disagreed, 78(25.8%) disagreed, 83(27.5%) agreed while 72(23.8%) strongly agreed. 9 (3.0%) however were anonymous. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that the discovery of oil in the area led to the economic marginalization of the people from the area.

**Table4.** The activities of the multinational oil companies have affected the peoples of the Niger Delta negatively.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	21	7.0%
Disagree	50	16.6%
Agree	107	35.4%
Strongly agree	120	39.7%
Missing	4	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012)

The questionnaires tried to ascertain whether the activities of the multinational oil companies have affected the peoples of the Niger Delta negatively. Table 4, indicates the views of the respondents on the effect of the multinational oil companies 21(7.0%) strongly disagree, 50(16.6) disagree, 107(35.4%) agree, 120(39.7%) strongly agree. While 4(1.3%) were indifferent. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that the activities of the multinational oil company have affected the Niger Delta negatively.

This opinion was also corroborated by a discussion with a Focused Group Discussion at Kaiama, Bayelsa state, Ogoni in Rivers state and Warri in Delta state that the activities of the multinational oil companies have affected their eco system, fauna, farm lands and vegetation as a result of the pollution of their environment by oil spill and gas flaring.



**Table 5.** The degradation of the Niger Delta environment is the cause of the poverty in Niger Delta.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	39	12.9%
Disagree	86	28.5%
Agree	95	31.5%
Strongly Agree	72	23.8%
Missing	10	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012)

The questionnaires sought to know whether degradation of the Niger Delta environment is the cause of the poverty in the Niger Delta.

Table 5, shows that 39(12.9%) strongly disagree, 86(28.5%) disagree, 95(31.5%) agree, while 72(23.8%) strongly agreed. However, 10(3.3%) remained anonymous. It could be said therefore that from the findings the degradation of the Niger Delta environment is responsible for the poverty in the Niger Delta region of our study. This is also supported by (Saro-Wiwa 1990:12) which contended that the degradation of the Niger Delta environment is the cause of poverty in Niger Delta. This point was also underscored by the discussion with 'Focused Group Discussion' in Warri, who claimed that the degradation of the Niger Delta environment is the cause of poverty, unemployment, rape, prostitution and the social ills now prevalent in the Niger Delta. The respondents agreed that the government has not done enough to cushion the negative consequences emanating from the degradation of the environment.

**Table 6:** The inability/denial of the Niger Delta people to have access to economic opportunities is the cause of the marginalisation of the people.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	29	9.8%
Disagree	70	23.2%
Agree	107	35.4%
Strongly Agree	90	29.8%
Missing	6	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012)

Table 6 shows the result of the analysis of the questionnaires which tried to ascertain whether the inability/denial of the Niger Delta people to have access to economic opportunities as the cause of marginalization of the people. As can be observed from the 29(9.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 70(23.2%) disagreed, 107(35.4%) agreed while 90(29.8%) strongly agreed. 6(2.0%) respondents were however, anonymous. From the findings it evident that majority of the respondents agreed that the inability of the Niger Delta people to have access to economic opportunities is responsible for their marginalisation. They see the nation as drifting, failing, repressive, oppressive, exploitative, unstable, indifferent to the sufferings of the Niger Delta and incapable of meeting their basic needs and harnessing the abundant human and material resources. This, they opined could be attributable to the Nigerian leadership that is corrupt, greedy, visionless, weak, insincere and insensitive.

**Table 7:** Could the minority status of the Niger Delta people be responsible for their marginalisation in Nigeria.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	46	15.2%
Disagree	79	26.2%
Agree	88	29.1%
Strongly Agree	80	26.5%
Missing	9	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012)

The study sought to investigate if the minority status of the Niger Delta people is responsible for their marginalisation in Nigeria. From the findings 46(15.2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 79(26.2%) disagreed, 88(29.1%) agreed, while 80(26.5%) strongly agreed. However, 9(3.0%) were anonymous. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that the minority status of the Niger Delta people could be responsible for their marginalization in Nigeria. A respondent in Yenegoa was quite vehement by saying that they are being

neglected because they do not belong to the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. He further contended that Nigeria is an ethno centric nation. His position was that if the oil so discovered in the Niger Delta was to be found in the soil of the so called major ethnic groups, the issue of marginalisation would not have occurred. He queried the general sitting of the Federal projects in the domain of the major ethnic groups, and yet the money comes from the minority ethnic group(s). Another respondent put it this way “the other regions consume without producing to the national purse while we produce without consuming.”

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The paper examined economic marginalization in some selected states in Niger Delta namely: Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers State.

The study showed that the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta is responsible for the economic marginalisation of the people in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The study also revealed that the activities of the Multinational Oil Companies in the area prospecting oil have affected the people of the area negatively. It is argued that their activities have affected the environment, which has led to the poverty of the people.

The study also discovered that the inability of the Niger Delta people to have access to economic opportunities as a result of the lop-sided local structure is the cause of the economic marginalisation of the area. In addition, the people are of the view that their minority stratus in a country dominated by major ethnic group could be responsible for their economic marginalisation.

The study recommends that employment opportunities be provided for the youths so that they would no longer be idle and thereby be a ready instrument for violence. Also, the Multinational Oil Companies should apply internationally acceptable standards on the issue of environment in the Niger Delta.

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