



Factors that Contribute to Economic Effects of Oil Pollution on Men and Women in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State

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To cite this article:

Dappa-Wogu, G. Factors that Contribute to Economic Effects of Oil Pollution on Men and Women in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State. *International Journal of Research and Technopreneurial Innovations* 2024; 1(2): 64-72.

Keywords:

Economic Effects,
Oil Pollution,
Factors,
Men,
Women

ABSTRACT

This research examined the factors that contribute to economic effects of oil pollution on men and women in Eleme local government area of rivers state. The aim of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to economic effects of oil pollution in Eleme Local Government Area from a gendered perspective. Reciprocal determinism Theoretical framework which accepts the possibility that a person's performance may be conditioned through consequences of external social and environmental provocations. Using a descriptive research design and qualitative approach, data was collected from a population of men and women aged 12 years and above in Eleme Local Government Area, with a sample size of 40 selected through purposive sampling technique. Survey method such as in dept interview questions tagged "Factors that Contribute to Economic Effects of Oil Pollution on Men and Women in Eleme" (FCEEOMW). Results from the thematic analysis and data synthesis demonstrated several factors intersect to influence the economic effects of oil pollution on men and women in the area as they battle through their economic situations in their various communities. The study highlighted factors such as level of education, economic status, access to equipment, low self-esteem and access to financial resources contribute to the disparity in economic effects of oil pollution on men and women. Therefore, the study recommended that policies should be gendered and tailored to handle factors that create disparity and generally affect the economic life of men and women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Oil exploration activities have been intense in the Niger-Delta since Nigeria recorded its first shipment of oil from Oloibiri in 1958, and there are hundreds of functional oil wells with implications for pollution in the area (Ngobiri et al., 2007). Pipelines are placed across farmlands, streams, and fishing environment while some pipes

cut across communities and living area. The negative effects of these oil activities consist of devastating destruction of the environment that causes damage to the health and economy of residents (Aghalino, 2000). In most cases, pollution issues rise from leakages in oil storage reservoirs caused by reservoir tank deterioration,

accidental spills, supply and transition pipelines, tanker accident, pipeline deterioration, natural and sometimes manmade disasters. According to Gray (2012) the adverse effects of oil pollution on the people and environment as well as their economic life makes it obligatory for practical management of oil pollution. Gray also stated that oil pollution which can be said to be a deliberate introduction of contaminated elements into the environment at the percentage faster than the earth can accommodate contaminates oil producing communities. The term economic effect can also be said to be the interaction between the economic behaviours of a group of persons in a given environment in which they passionately depend on to survive as a people (NDDC, 2001).

The Eleme people are mainly involved in farming and fishing for survival, they also participate in tapping and distillation of palm wine, boat construction, mat and ceramic making, but the abundant vegetation that provides livelihood for the people is constantly destroyed (Soclo et al., 2000). There was an oil pollution incident recently in Okulu river in Eleto that affected about six communities in Eleme, pollution affected residential areas, farmlands, livestock and aquatic habitats in the area. According to a famous playwright Sir. Ken Saro Wiwa, the environment is man's first right and should be viewed as the foundation and basis for other rights, (Zabbey, 2015). Oil pollution affects both men and women respectively since they are expected to bear the burden of the family in a stable and unstable situation. Traditionally in Nigeria, the financial responsibility of the household is supposed to be on the man to provide, but in some cases today, the financial responsibility of the home also rests on the woman, especially in homes where the woman is the head of the family due to the death of her husband or a single parent home. In that regard, this is a clear indication that there is a need to carry out investigations on a gendered perspective of economic effects of oil pollution in Eleme local government area.

Apata and Rahji (2008) in their study worked on linkages between livelihood activities and intervention of crude oil exploration in relation to poverty. This study focused on the different

livelihood strategies engaged by farmers as a fall out of oil exploration and its implication on the total income of rural households in the region. Adati (2012) also posits that pollution has affected the livelihood of indigenous and people who depend solely on the land and rivers for survival, which has led to increased poverty and displacement of the people. Buckingham-Howes (2019) states that the economic impact of oil pollution and the link between financial loss and health problems cannot be over emphasized. The researcher stated that people respond to economic distress by reducing utility bills and altering food and spending habits. Temperament, complications and depressive indicators stays with residents for years after the pollution. This completely indicates and supports the view of researchers like Omofonmwan & Odia, (2009) who stated that the impact of economic damage of the environment has a lasting effect on health, social and economic well-being of residents after an oil pollution.

Obioha, (2004) also confirms that the continual effect of oil pollution by oil producing companies is land degradation and outright migration by the members of the host communities to other rural and urban area where more pressure is exerted on another inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure, leading to increased poverty and penury as more displaced inhabitants move to other areas in search of livelihood. In some cases, the entire community have had to relocate due to the heaviness of oil pollution. Ibaba, (2008) also investigated the environmental degradation in the region such as youth militancy and gangsterism due to the denial of benefits accrued from the natural resources of the region and the destruction of its ecosystem have made the people advocate for self-determination, resource ownership and control of their God given resources. Aghalino, (2000) posits that underground water and streams are the only sources of local water supply in most oil producing host communities in the Niger Delta, but whenever an oil pollution occurs, spilled oil seeps deep into the ground and moves into streams and wells which results in the rise of water borne diseases.

According to Bandura (1986), Reciprocal determinism which is also known as triadic reciprocity is a prototypical composed of three

aspects that impacts behaviour of a person, especially in the way an individual thinks and feels in their environment. This means that the environment influences how a person thinks and feels and in turn influences the behaviour of an individual that eventually impacts the environment as well because the behaviour of a person is inclined with mental reasoning processes and the environment. According to Skinner (2014) who also maintained that the behaviour of a person has always been controlled by the environment of the individual, and that the people in the environment have been passive recipients of the influence. He states that behaviour is anything a person does that may be rewarded or penalised and the physical and social environment impacts strongly on the energy, intensity, incidence and frequency of the behaviour of an individual.

Reciprocal determinism also has to do with the belief of an individual to have the ability to achieve anything in life, people with confidence in themselves have the assurance on how to approach problems in life, meaning they the tendency to succeed in different situations in the environment. In a situation where an individual has low confident because of their low educational background and exposure, they also lack the ability to handle crisis in situations such as oil pollution. It is important to note that any external support that offers additional backing, resources, or encouragement can help temporary or permanently improve the situation and boost self-confidence. The environmental factors or elements that constitutes or make up the behaviour of an individual is paramount to their way of living, not just the physical environment, it includes the social environment as well. Individuals react to the bad behaviour they experience from other people or environment and as such reinforce their dislike and creating an aggressive environment, which is why the behaviourists will suggest that the environment shapes the entire behaviour of an individual Kendra (2023).

This study adopted the descriptive research design which comprise of a qualitative and purposive participatory evaluation approach. The concept of this approach is to assemble data from a large sample drawn from a given population and

describe particular features of the sample. Survey methods such as in dept interviews were used to deliver an all-inclusive analysis and explanation of the results. A researcher stated that a descriptive research design is to collect data from a large sample drawn from a given population and describe certain features of the sample which are of interest to the researcher as they are at the time of the study without manipulating any variable of the study in other to find out how some of them impact on other variables Nwankwo (2013). The population of this study consists of men and women from ten communities in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State irrespective of their social and economic status to achieve the objective of the study. The sample size for this study was determined based on qualitative research that is based on recommendations from existing literature. For a multi-location study like this case, Hagaman and Wutich (2017) recommended a sample size of 20 to 40 interviews. In line with the afore reviewed, a total of 40 respondents were randomly interviewed, 4 for each group. The militancy nature of the Niger Delta and the security risks associated with the environment makes the number of samples suitable.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 *Factors that contribute to Economic Effects of Oil Pollution on Men and Women*

The study found that men and women in communities that are heavily affected by oil pollution in their environment such as in the fishing and farming business, be it in large- or small-scale face losses and reduction in their income because of oil pollution and that both men and women in the communities are equally affected by the damages. The study found that factors like level of education, economic status, access to equipment, low self-esteem and access to financial resources contribute to the disparity in economic effects of oil pollution on men and women which can disproportionately affect the economic situation of men and women in various ways that can ultimately affect their healthcare

since their economic status can no longer handle the increased healthcare costs that has strained the household budgets of both gender. Also, access to resources and limited access to clean water, food, and other services resulting from oil pollution affects their ability to work thereby worsening existing predicament of less privileged men and women in the communities. Men and women especially in host communities with very low income and quality educational background often face greater vulnerability to oil pollution due to their lack of exposure to modern facilities and equipment when they suffer or are affected by oil pollution. Additionally, men and women who equally have less access to alternative livelihood options or resources for recovery suffer the same fate. Whereby, addressing the economic effects of oil pollution requires considering the unique vulnerabilities and needs of both men and women in relation to their economic and educational background. The study also revealed that men and women from lower economic backgrounds are more affected by oil pollution as they may not have access to the same resources or support system as those from higher economic backgrounds. The study also found that the exposure and level of education of men and women in the communities can influence their decisions for the next level of their lives and that of their children as they are faced with increased risks of dropping out of school due to lack of finance and income. The study also found that these factors require inclusive plans that consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of men and women, aiming to promote equitable access to resources, economic opportunities, and support services in communities affected by oil pollution.

2.2 Access to Facilities Equipment and Financial Resources

Men and women who equally have less access

to alternative livelihood options or resources for recovery suffer the same fate. The study revealed that men and women from lower economic backgrounds are more affected by oil pollution as they may not have access to resources or support system as those from higher economic backgrounds. The study also affirms that factors like access to facilities, equipment and financial resources affects the economic life of men and women in the area. The study also revealed that men and women from lower economic backgrounds are more affected by oil pollution as they may not have access to the same resources or support system. A participant reported that “Lack of access to facilities, equipment and financial resources after any form of pollution significantly affect the livelihood of men and women in this community. Especially men and women from lower economic backgrounds”. Another participant reveals that “Poor men and women are more likely to experience the effect of oil pollution more than men and women of higher economic background because they lack adequate support from the government and the oil producing companies”. This study completely agrees with (Klugman, 2002) who states that whether men and woman had equal or unequal access to educational opportunities, good health care and economic resources, the disparity in any situation can provide an all-inclusive understanding of the given situation or issue as regards to interventions, equity and efficiency of poverty reduction strategies and inequalities in the community.

Another participant revealed that “Men and women from rich homes and higher economic backgrounds usually have more access to resources and facilities quickly and they are able to bounce back, unlike men and women from lower economic backgrounds who may not have access to resources and facilities”. Furthermore, a respondent states that “The reason why some men and women experience heavier effect of oil

pollution than others. Although, support from the government and oil producing companies may help to ease the pain of the lower class". It is obvious that these conditions increase financial pressures on both men and women of the lower class, making them financially incapacitated because they have nothing else to turn to for their daily bread. This ultimately increases the risk of men and women to become beggars and jobless. Previous studies also reported that poverty in the land due to the effect of oil pollution can indirectly trigger hopelessness and depression amongst men and women such as Apata and Rahji (2008) who states that the linkages between livelihood activities and the effects or intervention of crude oil exploration in relation to poverty and financial resources depends solely on strategies intended by farmers to look for ways to find help.

The government, stakeholders and oil producing companies should as a matter of urgency create intervention strategies to help reduce the effect of oil pollution on men and women in the area. Participant states that "Access to resources and support for facilities can provide more opportunities for men and women that are victims of the effect of oil pollution in our community". This assertion agrees with the reciprocal determinism theory on which this study was anchored, stating that a person's performance may be conditioned through consequences of external social and environmental provocations, which means that changes in the environment will automatically lead to changes in the performance of an individual (Bandura Albert,1986). Lack to access to resources and facilities such as cash, credit and employment is a significant factor in the economic effect of oil pollution.

2.3 Level of Education and Exposure

Men and women especially in host communities like Eleme with very low income and quality educational background often face greater

vulnerability to oil pollution due to their lack of exposure to modern facilities and equipment when they suffer or are affected by oil pollution as they go about their land farming and fisheries. It has become obvious that men and women who have formal education, economically stable and with greater opportunities to bounce back are less affected by oil pollution in the communities. These privileged opportunities reduce the economic effects of oil pollution on both men and women. While on the other hand, the lack of good educational opportunities and good economic background ultimately increases the economic effects of oil pollution on both men and women in the same community and lack of income due to the effect of oil pollution among men and women in the community makes it difficult for them to live up to their expected roles as breadwinners of their families. Situations like this can produce extreme pressure and thoughts of inadequacy amongst men and women, with some men and women turning to drinking and other possible means to overcome their frustrations. A participant reveals that "My sister, I dey regret seriously say i no go school and my children dey struggle because of this oil pollution. I dey notice say people wey go school and get money dey solve their problem fast pass we wey no go school or know which wey to go or wetin to do". This completely agrees with (Omojola 2000) who states that the most visible expression of impoverishment of lives is the declining economic life because of inadequate educational institutions, lack of skilled manpower and scarcity of industrial establishment and facilities in the area. Furthermore, it affirms that the economic effect of oil pollution which can have long-term consequences on both men and women based on their level of education and exposure that would determine how well they are able to approach the issue of oil pollution in the community.

The study also revealed that men and women with lower educational and economic background and

exposure might not have access to the same resources information or support systems that those from higher educational and economic background or exposure may have, which aligns with another participant who states that “Even though all of us dey suffer oil pollution wahala for this community, the people wey get money, go school and get people wey fit help dem no get too much problem and dem no dey think of how dem go take feed their children. Nobi we wey no get idea where the next food go come from”. Furthermore, the study also found that men and women who are victims of oil pollution and do not have proper educational background in affected communities suffer greatly. The study also reveals that communities with higher levels of poverty and inequalities in areas like education and exposure are more likely to experience higher levels of economic effect of oil pollution. Oil pollution heavily affects the economic live of men and women in the community because they are not exposed and educated. Which means that they may not know how to handle the situation because of their lack of exposure. People with different educational background and exposure often have different attitude and management strategy to the effects of oil pollution in communities. Men and women with higher educational level are more likely to handle the issues of economic effects of oil pollution better than men and women of very low educational level because they are more enlightened and know what to do in time of this type of crisis or pollution. This impression was articulated by some participants who states that “It is obvious that most of the educated once in our midst always have a way around this issue each time there is an oil pollution in our community, although some educated once still suffer like those of us who usually do not know what to do”. Another participant states that “Each time we have oil pollution issues in our community, the truth is, majority of our people who are very educated always have a way out of this issue before people

like me will find any solution”. Therefore, providing a support system and educational opportunities for men and women in the communities will help.

2.4 Economic Status and Low self Esteem

Lack of opportunities like good economic status brings about low self-esteem in the community and the nonintervention by the government and oil producing companies leads men and women who are victims of oil pollution to sadness and eventually leads them to deep depression which subsequently makes them vulnerable to habits that may eventually take their lives because of depression and low self-esteem. A participant reveals that “Men and women experience significant negative economic effects of oil pollution, but the oil pollution may not have the same economic effect on them due to their different level of economic status and livelihood which in turn brings about low self-esteem for some”. Another participant also states that “Men and women with low-income opportunities in the community experience increased unemployment rate and greater challenges in providing for their family members as the can lead to low self-esteem”. Men and women, in the community who are sole providers often face additional burden due to their roles in giving care to members of their family, providing food and general household management. It is now obvious that whenever they are not able to provide for their household, it degenerates to low self-esteem. This agrees with Pyagbara (2005) who states that the consequences of oil pollution include destruction of Mangrove forests with toxicity of oil pollution, farmlands have been rendered infertile with consequences on rights to food.

Men and women in oil producing communities with very low economic status and low self-esteem also face greater vulnerability to oil pollution and its effects. Another participant reveals that “Not

being able to provide for the family makes me feel like I am nothing, how can you go back home from after toiling with an empty hand because to say the truth, most farmlands and rivers are polluted and even the fishes are contaminated. My Christian mind will not allow me sell contaminated fishes to the public". This completely agrees with (Onojake 2004) who states that some of the consequences of oil pollution in oil producing communities are damaging to the fragile mangrove forest, rivers, and crops because oil pollution is a threat to species and destruction of livelihoods of many men and women in the area. The study also revealed that men and women with low economic status and low self-esteem are willing to do anything for money because they are desperate. In most cases they are the men and women that are being used by oil producing companies to create problems in the community.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings clearly show that men and women are affected by oil pollution in Eleme Local Government Area and the reciprocal determinism framework identifies the connecting elements that combine to increase the effects of oil pollution on men and women in the area and also that there are disparities in the effect of oil pollution on men and women. Civilization has gradually come to recognize that men and women experience the effects of oil pollution and there is a general agreement that certain inequalities aggravate the surviving and management of the defenseless group of persons be it male or female members of the communities. The results showed that the economic effects of oil pollution in the area is serious and persistent in the lives of study participants with consequences as regards their health and general well-being. This study provides reasons for re-designing gender policies that is tailored to handle factors that create disparity and generally affect the economic life of men and

women in the area. It is also very imperative to note that the gender perspective in any given situation has the power to inform the public and raising consciousness regarding a needed change in any given society because dissemination of gender perspective in policy making on any given subject reduces gender stereotypes and misrepresentations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. A proper and all-inclusive assessment of the economic effects of oil pollution on men and women in Eleme should be carried out to ascertain the level of decadence for a holistic resolution and intervention.
2. Policies should be gendered and tailored to handle factors that create disparity and generally affect the economic life of men and women.
3. The curbing of oil pollution and compensations as regards the effects of oil pollution on men and women should be more rapid in implementation. The government should establish a scheme that will be managed by sincere citizens to help elevate the economic situation of men and women in the area and offices or centres where men and women can access help.
4. The government through all relevant agencies and stakeholders should ensure that active enlightenment programmes aimed at re-orientation of men and women about their economic and spheres of life are re-established.
5. To ensure that men and women who have suffered economic effects of oil pollution in Eleme should access psychological attention and treatment because of the physical and mental issues that come with financial and economical disorder.
6. Government at the local, state and national level

and the oil producing companies should ensure genuine and sincere steps at enacting and enforcing stringent gender policies and regulations that will protect and guarantee a better economic condition and livelihood of men and women in Eleme.

7. All political positions, appointments and elective positions should be constitutionally allotted to men and women in the community.

8. Multinational oil companies operating in Eleme should desist from harmful and wasteful practices in the area and should engage in immediate clean-up of all polluted areas.

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