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Ethnic-conflict and its manifestations in the politics of recognition in a multi-ethnic Niger delta region

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Ethnic-conflict and its manifestations in the politics of recognition in a multi-ethnic Niger delta region

Olakunle Michael Folami[1]*

Abstract: Conflict over oil exploitation and exploration by the multinational oil companies has manifested in different forms in the Niger Delta such as intra and inter-ethnic conflict. Distribution of oil wealth is characterised with marginalisation, bias, nepotism and alienation in the region. Most times, lack of recognition in oil wealth distribution led to ethnic conflict. The ethnic conflict in turn has affected family relations, identity and economy; it has led to a deep division among various ethnic groups in the region like the Urhobo, The Ijaw and the Itsekiri. In this study, Recognition Theory was used to examine the epistemology of ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. This study was carried in Delta State. Purposive method of data collection was used to select one hundred and twenty eight participants such as traders, artisans, civil society members, civil servants, farmers, traditional figures, political office holders and opinion leaders. This study found that the ethnic conflict was a fall out of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta. The ethnic conflict has a chain of reactions on identity, name, family, economy, settlement and tradition. This paper concluded that redistribution of oil wealth among the ethnic group would contribute to enduring peacebuilding in the Niger Delta region.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The Niger Delta conflict is now over sixty years. It was started as a struggle over development but later metamorphosed to a struggle over the activities of oil companies which included digging of lands in search of oil. The digging of lands affected farms, waters and the entire Niger Delta environment. The Niger Delta people have been fighting the oil companies with the belief that they were the cause of environmental problems. This study was conducted to look beyond the activities of the multinational oil companies to examine the reason for a prolong conflict in the Niger Delta. It looks at ethnic factor coupled with oil politics as reasons for unending conflict in the region. It was stated by those that took part in this study that ethnic conflict needed to be address because it has led to political, economic and social divisions among the people of the region.

1. Introduction

The Niger Delta peacebuilding processes focused on amnesty, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). The reintegration aspect of the peacebuilding processes has failed to consider rivalry among ethnic groups over oil deposit as one of the major roots of conflict in the region. The Niger Delta is located in the Southern part of Nigeria. The region is rich in oil deposit. The Niger Delta consists of nine States including Rivers, Bayelsa, Abia, Imo, Ondo, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Cross-River (Oviasuyi & Uwadiae, 2010). Oil was discovered by Shell Oil Company in commercial quantity in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State in 1957 (Odoemene, 2011). Socio-environmental problems pervaded the Niger Delta since discovery of oil in the region such as environmental degradation, marginalisation, resource control and different forms of conflict (Okolo, 2008). The location of oil infrastructures determines the benefits enjoyed by the host community including patronage, loyalties, jobs, contracts, scholarships, social facilities and compensation. This study therefore, seeks to examine how imbalance in the distribution of oil wealth generated ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. Okolo (2008) claims that competition over oil deposit promotes conflict in the Niger Delta. In the Niger Delta, ethnic conflict has had severe consequences on the inhabitants. It manifested in ethnic relations, family relations, urban settlement, regional economy and community development. The Niger Delta conflict also, surfaced in different dimensions such as inter-ethnic conflict between the Ijaw and the Urhobo; the Ijaw and the Itsekiri; and, the Urhobo and the Itsekiri (Ikelegbe, 2005; Ojakorotu, 2010). The first section of this paper discusses recognition and conflict. While the second section provides a detailed examination of inter-ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. The third section discusses the method used to carry out the study while the forth section explains the findings as well as discussions. Finally, the article discusses the conclusion of the study and concluded that resolution of ethnic conflict is crucial to enduring peace in the Niger Delta region.

2. Distribution, recognition and conflict

Recognition Theory was used in this study to understand inter-ethnic conflict based on non-recognition of one another in the distribution of oil wealth in the Niger Delta. This study borrows extensively from the Recognition Theory[1] to explain inter-ethnic relations in the Niger Delta conflict. Okolo (2008) says recognition as equal in resource distribution has taken a centre stage in the Niger Delta conflict. There are two historical epochs that dominated social justice argument: (1) communist to the present day social welfare movement; and, (2) post World War 11, liberation movement to current identity politics (inclusion). It is important to understand distribution justice and its link to recognition theory in order to epistemologically situate ethnic conflict in the oil rich Niger Delta region.

2.1. Distribution

Distribution of oil wealth judiciously is contingents on recognition of others as equal in the Niger Delta. Distributive justice is a way by which the benefits and burden of lives are shared between members of society or community (Armstrong, 2012). The benefit and burden could be social, economic or moral. Maiese (2013) says that it is the principles of distributive justice that arranges how these benefits and burdens *ought* to be shared or distributed among members of a given society. What, how, where, when, who, whom and which are very important in distributive justice. In human society, amount of available resources and Wealth are scarce and limited. Procedure, pattern and process of distribution have always become contestable. Therefore, available resources must be rationalised among members of society. If the principle of rationalisation is based on principle of equity and fairness, generally it is assumed that justice is done and served. Buttram, Folger, and Sheppard (1995) say the morally acceptable form of distribution is "fair share". There are three identified principles of distribution which have become acceptable as "fair share". They are: equality, equity, and need (Rawls, 1999). Where there is unjust distribution of social goods, redistribution is

necessary. Distributive justice in this way is central to any peace or reconstruction programmes. Like the case of oil benefits distribution in the Niger Delta, struggle, mistrust, rivalry, and conflict characterised ethnic relations since distribution processes of oil wealth are seen as unjust. Distribution justice view recognition of every ethnic group in the sharing of oil wealth differently. Redistribution alone cannot ensure justice.

2.2. Recognition

The origin of Recognition Theory can be traced to the work of Johann Fichte in his foundations of Natural Rights.[2] Fichte produces a thorough ontology of humans' existence and justice, and demonstrates that freedom and self-understanding are contingent on recognition (See note 2). Following this conception, in his work on Phenomenology of Spirit, Fitch says "Self-consciousness" exist in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for itself for another self-consciousness: that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or "recognised". Self-esteem, including one's sense of freedom and sense of self-realisation, is not an issue of self-analysis. Rather, understanding oneself requires the recognition of another. Recognition is thus a principal aspect of subject formulation. This idea of recognition developed further in Hegel's works on the Elements of the Philosophy Rights' (See note 2). According to Hegel, recognition becomes contingent on social and political accomplishments. Recognition is an inter-subjectively mediated achievement, which is never simply given or guaranteed, but always dependent upon equal relations with others (See note 2). This co-dependency results in mutual relations of recognition, which are the condition for understanding oneself as a genuinely free being, albeit one that acknowledges, and thus adjusts itself, to the freedom of others.[3] As a result, the two self-consciousness acknowledge them as mutually recognising one another. Hegel characterises this mutuality, which cannot be coerced but rather be freely given and received as being at home in the other (See note 3). According to him, it is through the inter-subjective recognition of our freedom that rights are actualised (Thompson, 2009). Rights are not instruments of freedom; rather they are the concrete expression of it. Hegel says recognition is the mechanism by which our social existence is generated (Stern, 2002). It can be inferred from the position of Hegel that ethnics' inclusion as ethical and political subjects within the Niger Delta community is contingent on receiving and conferring appropriate forms of recognition on all the ethnic groups in the region.

   Hegel works sparked-off the modern understanding of recognition. The contemporary understanding of recognition theory started with Charles Taylor's essay titled "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition" (1994), which was first published in the 1992. In his essay, Taylor believes that lack of recognition could be applied to ethnic divisions. However, inter-subjective recognition is value laden. It depends on symbiosis relationship (Lister, 2004; Morrison, 2011). Recognition Theory advances from atomistic to inter-subjective, mechanical and dialogical understandings between individuals because ethnic identity is shaped precisely through relations to others, and their being recognised by them. And it is through ethnic feelings of self-worth, self-respect and self-esteem that they are positively recognised for what they are (Honneth, 1995). Taylor (1994) sees political theories of recognition as an attempt to reconfigure the concept of justice in terms of due or withheld recognition. Recognition as an act of intellectual apprehension, a form of identification, and the act of acknowledging or respecting another ethnic group, such as when we "recognise" someone's status, achievements or rights. Consequently, ethnic group has authority only if it is genuinely recognised by others. Reciprocity or mutuality is a necessary condition of appropriate recognition (Taylor 1994). Inter-subjective recognition is contingent upon the argument on legitimacy and illegitimacy in the distribution of economic resource. The problem with inter-subjective recognition is that it cannot accommodate group's interest. However, distributive justice foreclosed division. It promotes equality, equity and desert. It is necessary to understand distribution justice before explaining ethnic participatory parity and its implication for peace in the Niger Delta.

2.3. Participatory parity

Fraser's (1997) theory is founded on different principle of recognition called "parity of participation", according to which "justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in

social life". To be unrecognised is not only to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in people's attitudes, beliefs or representation. It is being denied the status of full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value that constitute one as a comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem (Fraser, 1997). Fraser identifies three principles of social justice which include recognition, redistribution and representation. The first principle is "status order". This principle advocates the removal of existing status order that seems to promote inequality. The second principle refers to what she calls the "economic structure of society". Economic order is provided if the society have the resources they need to actualise equality. The third principle is "representation". The principle is for the promotion of political decisions and political boundaries to facilitate equality (Fraser, 2003). Fraser focuses on the way the political decision/rules and the way political boundaries are drawn, can inflict injustice, to a matter of cultural and/or economic injustice (Fraser, 1997). The reason why the third dimension is introduced to the social justice of recognition by Fraser is that, there are ranges of case of injustice which cannot be successfully addressed within distribution and recognition framework (Thompson, 2009). Generally, based on Fraser principles of justice, it can be argued that social justice is obtained if an ethnic group possess the status, resources and voice needed to be equal in socio-political and economic arrangements (Thompson, 2009).

In nutshell, the modern justice requires distribution and recognition to work together, to promote the course of social justice. Participatory parity argues that social status that creates exclusion must be removed. Participatory parity discusses the infusion of inter-subjective recognition and distributive justice to provide participation and inclusion. It is important to note that this study adopts the social justice theories of recognition to explain ethnic conflict and exclusive access to oil benefits in the Niger Delta. Recognition theory provides an explanation for how ethnic boundaries that led to distributive injustice could be addressed in the Niger Delta. Cultural injustice may lead to lack of self-realisation and distributive discrimination. Lack of recognition as a result of status disorder could also lead to distributive injustice. Ethnic groups in the Niger Delta should ensure participatory parity in order for the communities with oil deposit and those without oil to benefit from oil proceeds because both suffered the consequences of oil exploration and exploration in the region. In this subsection, the argument for a need for the combination of distributive justice and participatory parity is for the communities with or without oil deposit to benefit from oil exploration and exploitation in the region. The combination of both recognition propositions will address marginalisation which is the basis for ethnic tension in the Niger Delta. This subsection can be concluded based on Thompson (2009) argument that it is the participatory parity that could make self-realisation possible, in terms of development and fulfilment of individual or group goals within the community. To have a complete account of ethnic inclusions, recognition must take both participatory parity and distribution into account.

3. Traversing the Niger delta ethnic conflict

The Niger Delta socio-environmental problems left the inhabitants with no other option than confrontation with the government and multi-national oil companies. The late 1990s were marked with a protracted ethno/tribal conflict in the Niger Delta region. The patterns of the conflict can be categorised into inter ethnic groups conflict. The inter-ethnic groups conflict has both direct and remote impacts in the Niger Delta. The conflict has redefined interactions, solidarity, integration and relations among the ethnic groups in the region. It is important to discuss different forms of the conflict before assessing its impacts in the region. The Niger Delta is home to many different ethnic groups. The most prominent among the ethnic groups are the Ijaw, the Urhrobo, the Itsekiri, the Isoko, and the Ilaje.

3.1. Ilaje and Ijaw conflict

The Ilaje and the Ijaw communities are the two major ethnic groups; they live as neighbours in the Niger Delta area of Ondo State. They live 100 miles east of Lagos. The two ethnic groups have engaged in fighting over a piece of land that is believed to be rich in oil deposits and lies close to concessions owned by the Chevron Corporation (Alabi, 2005). Arogbo-Ijaw and Ugbo-Ilaje inter-ethnic conflict has a long history. It started as a gradual process over decades, which later developed into

a full-blown conflict with the attendant destruction of lives and properties. The conflict began in 1997 occurred when young people encouraged by some elders went on a rampage burning down villages, properties, looting and raping women over the location of Ese Odo Local Government Headquarters. Political squabbles among men were reported to be the major reason for sparking this conflict.

As noted earlier, resource allocations were not evenly distributed among the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. The rule is that any community with a Local Government Headquarters is entitled to 13% monthly derivation from the federation accounts. In 1998, the Ilaje and Ijaw renewed their conflict over the creation of a new local government area. Ali-Dinar (1999) notes that boundary disputes resulting from the creation of a new Local Government accounted for the renewed crisis. In 1998 also, the State government compiled an administrative map of Ondo State, which put a substantial part of the disputed oil-rich land-area in the Ilaje enclave, provoking conflict. To this day, the Ugbo-Ilaje persistently refers to the Arogbo-Ijaw as their tenants. In 1999, another attack was launched by the Arogbo-Ijaw. Many in the community thought that conflict and mass destruction could win them back the oil field located at Akpata. The 1999 attack was met with stiff resistance. The attack was directed towards major towns and villages of Legha, Ajapa, Akpata, Tsekelewe, Opuba, Boluwon, Ukpe, and the Oluwade Zion. The Ilajes reportedly launched a series of raids against the Ijaws to re-capture villages held by the Ijaws. The Ilaje spokespersons claimed to have recaptured 51 out of the 68 villages and towns they had lost previously to the Ijaws. The Ilaje solicited the support of people from the Yoruba in the war. Ijaw leaders in the area have accused the Odua People Congress (OPC), a Yoruba ethnic militia, of participating in the Ijaw attacks, which they claim was genocide by the Yoruba. It is critically clear from the above that ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta is characterised by competition over scarce resource and resource allocation (Folami, 2006). Whether accurate or not, a range of rights were certainly violated in the Arogbo-Ijaw and the Ugbo-Ilaje kingdoms, including economic activities in the communities being forced to a halt (such as lumbering, trading and fishing) along with destruction of life, as well as shortages of food and other essential items (Minorities at Risk Project, 2004).

3.2. Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo conflict

The Itsekiri, the Ijaw and the Urhobo are the three major distinct ethnic groups occupying the coastal region of Warri. Warri, as it is popularly called "the oil city" is the most populous city in the Delta State. Warri faces the Atlantic Ocean known as the bright of Benin. Ethnic rivalries had been in existence before Nigerian independence in 1960. The political squabbles centred on control over the Warri city favoured the Itsekiri. This is possible because of the Itsekiri ethnic and political affiliation to the Yoruba people of south west Nigeria. The Yoruba led government by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo recognised the chief of Itsekiri and made him the paramount ruler of Warri, the Olu of Warri. Since 1954, the Itsekiri has been ruling over Warri and its environs. The Olu of Warri's authority over the oil rich town paved the way for easy access of the Itsekiri people to the Chevron Oil Company (Ayomike, 1988). However, it has been claimed by the Ijaws that most other ethnic groups around them such as the Itsekiris and the Urhobos are tenants. They claim to have evidence of being the original owners of the land. The Itsekiris have made a similar claim.

Historically, the Urhobos have been close neighbours of the Ijaws; the same is not true for the Itsekiris. The ethnic divisions can be seen noticed in Warri by the settlement pattern of the people. Geographically, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo occupy Warri mainland, while the Ijaw occupy the Island (Okolo, 2008). According to Ayomike (1988) the conflict over controlling Warri is about the ways in which indigenous groups claim access to land rights. Indigenisation confers the rightful claimant of oil rents and the creation of political institutions such as local government authorities. Indigenisation is also important for the protection of the inhabitants' rights to revenue allocation. The rightful owner of lands in the Niger Delta region is marked by fierce competition for gaining access to oil loyalties from the oil companies who are ready to do business with the indigenous people. In Warri, this means conflict between three dominant ethnic groups, that is, the Urhobo, the Itsekiri and the Ijaw.

The conflict in the Niger Delta can also be traced to the historical antecedent of the three major ethnic groups in the region (Imobighe, Bassey, & Asun, 2002). According to Ayomike (1988), there are some undisputed assertions in the literature on the rightful owner of Warri in the Western Niger Delta. First, as mentioned earlier, there are three ethnic nationalities in Warri. Second, the ethnic groups have lived in Warri for over a hundred years. Third, the three ethnic nationalities have no other place that can be called "home" and lastly, all the three ethnic groups claim to be the original settlers, i.e. the indigenous. The recent conflict between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri is therefore more about economic relations than political identity. According to the Africa Research Bulletin (1997), the conflict between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri was over the relocation of the headquarters of the newly created Warri South west Local Government Area to a rival town, Ogidigben of the Itsekiri community from Ogbe-Ijaw. According to the Africa Research Bulletin (1997), the conflict involved the Itsekiris, the Ijaws and the Urhobos clan and was over the transfer of a Local Government headquarters. It was further stated by the Africa Research Bulletin (1997) that three members of the Ijaw tribe were killed in rioting, and the home of former information Minister Edwin Clark was destroyed in a fire caused by arsonists. The result is that many of the Ijaw population in the region have been deeply disturbed by the inter-ethnic conflicts.

Looking at the landscape of conflicts in Warri, one could argue that truism such as binary contrasts between a "Self and Others" are crucial to identity construction in most if not all context. Most time, the actors in the Niger Delta conflict explore the lacuna in the constitution to seek favouritism and deprive others of their legitimate rights. Huber (2013) says that constitutional arrangements on ethnic origin are not clear in Nigeria. There are unclear statements between two parallel regimes of citizenship, a national civic citizenship and a localised ethnic citizenship or indignity. The legal interpretation of indigenous in the Nigerian Constitution is "belong to". It is practically impossible for an outsider to become an indigene no matter the number of years he/she has spent in the community. According to Bach (1997) the legal definition of "belong to" has been interpreted as referring to a person in a state either of whose parents or any of those grandparents was a member of a community indigenous to the state. Those whose parents or grandparents are not a member of a community indigenous to the state are considered non-indigenous of the state, de facto non-citizens of the state. According to Purefoy (2005) indignity is imported into the definition of national citizenship and operates in an exclusionary manner within states of the federation. The outcome of this interpretation is that a Nigerian can only claim to be an indigene of one state in the federation, which, in official parlance, is called his/her "State of Origin". Manby (2010) says the law of ethnic origin was mentioned briefly in Section 25 of Nigerian constitution as regards to "national citizenship".

However, the law of ethnic origin is not Ill spelled out in the Constitution. It implies indignity has no place in the Nigerian constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). From Tamuno's (1999) point of view, at independence, the granting of citizenship rights has been enshrined in the constitution. The rights are matched with the preservation of customary forms of rule, which are predicated on the notion of indigenous groups. As a consequence, it is only indigenous people that can make a legitimate cultural, social and political claim in any part of the country. Isa-Odidi (2004) also raises the question as to who is seen as an indigene. An indigene implies the hegemony of particular systems, tribal and territorial rule. This has a direct implication for the politics of a community, on which group can establish a State, a Local Government Area or an electoral ward and the control over oil.

3.3. Urhobo and Ijaw conflict

The conflict between *Urhobo/Ijaw* was a result of ethnic mistrust, apprehension and resource allocation. The Gbarigolo, an Urhobo and Esanma, an Ijaw community shared a boundary along Warri/Port Harcourt road between the Ugheli South Local Government Area, and Bomadi and Burutu Local government Area. The Esanma people claim that the Gbariogolo are tenants to the Oboro community and that they should vacate a piece of land they have occupied before oil was discovered in the Niger Delta. They claim that there is a tenancy agreement between them and Gbariogolo community to pay rates on the piece of land they occupied and the tenancy agreement given to the

commission of inquiry by the Gbariogolo community has been tampered with. It is apparent that the initial cause of the conflict between Esanma and Gbarigolo was land, while the immediate cause was the oil field found on the land. Building on the original conflict that was not resolved, the conflict escalated resulting in the wanton destruction of life, property and villages. The Federal Government was held liable for not acting fast enough and for failing to provide security to forestall the outbreak of the conflict.

Another example of inter/tribal conflict that is related to oil is the conflict between the Kpakiama and Olodiama that took place in February 1992. Kpakiama is an Ijaw community very close to the Bomadi town, located in the Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta State, while Olodiama is an Ewu clan, an Urhobo community located in the Ugheli South Local Government Area of the same State. The Kpakiama people claim that the Olodiama are their tenants and that they Ire collecting tenant rates from them until the 1930s. They support this claims with evidence from the colonial documentation, court judgments and other security reports (Okolo, 2008).

In the early 1990s, according Mart´ınez-Alier (2002) the socio-economic, environmental and human rights abuses against the Ijaws by the multinational oil companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria increased tremendously. These subsequently increase agitation for resource control and self-rule. According to Okolo (2008) the internal uprisings within the Niger Delta are a product of divide and rule mechanisms employed by the State and multinational oil companies among the inhabitants of the region. The State and multinational oil companies usually used allocated of oil fields and oil installations to determine communities that could benefit from oil the proceeds of oil exploitation and exploration in the Niger Delta (Okolo, 2008).

4. Methods
In this section, methods used to gather information from the respondents were discussed including description of study location; selection of participants; data collection; and, data Analysis.

4.1. Study location
The study was carried out in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State is one of the nine States which comprised the Niger Delta. Warri is located in South south of the Niger Delta region. It houses the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko, Anioma, Urhobo and other ethnic groups such as Igbo, Hausa, Fulani etc (World66, n.d.). Warri is a multicultural city with population of about 530,000 (National Population Commission, Nigeria, 2006). Warri was under the rule of Benin Kingdom in the 15th century. Later, Portuguese occupied the city and started using it as a trading port. Warri later became an important trading port for slave trader. The abolition of slave trade in the 18th century affected the influence of Portuguese on Warri. Around 1810, Warri eventually became a part of British colony and it increasingly used as a trading point for palm oil business and other forest resources like rubber and cocoa. The increasing trade volume led people from various ethnic backgrounds to set up homes and small settlements in and around the city (World66, n.d.).

In the city of Warri, three major ethnic groups were selected in this study: the Ijaw, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo. The three ethnic groups were purposively selected because they shared the same socio-economic characteristics such as settlements, neglect, poverty, unemployment and ethnic rivalry. The three ethnic groups had experienced inter-ethnic conflict; their settlements are in close proximity and they have oil resources (Figure 1).

4.2. Selection of participants
The participants in this study were drawn from traders, artisans, civil society members, civil servants, farmers, traditional figures, political office holders, and opinion leaders. Purposive critical case sampling technique was used to select 134 participants in the three locations. According to Patton, 2001) critical case sampling is a process of selecting a small number of important cases that are likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge (p. 236).

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Figure 1. Map of ethnic areas in Warri.

Source: waado.org.

4.3. Data collection

Data collection began after the first visit of the researcher to the region on familiarisation. I visited opinion leaders and traditional figures in the three areas to intimate them with the study. The visit gave me an opportunity to develop a mind map on how to collect the data. The data were collected with the aid of qualitative technique. In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. I use semi-structured in-depth interview guide to obtain information from the participants. The interview guide contains various questions on everyday interaction among various ethnic groups in the region. The questions range from recognition of every ethnic group as beneficiary of oil resource to ethnic relations in the distribution of oil wealth in the region.

I started data collection with the Urhobo ethnic group because they were easily accessible and majorly settled in Warri mainland. I collected the contact addresses of the participants during my previous visit to the city. This made contact with the participants very easy for me. The collection of addresses of the participants saved my time. It also improved confidence the participants had in me. Before the interview, the information sheets and consent forms were given to the participants. I interpreted the information sheet to the participants in Pidgin English for a proper understanding of the purposes of the study. The information sheet contained rights of participants, duties of researcher and duration of interview. Before the interview, I collected well signed consent forms from the participants. Data collected from the participants were tape recorded. The information on the tape was immediately uploaded on the email designated for this study.

Approaches toward data collection among the Ijaw and the Itsekiri were different. The two ethnic groups are not settled on the mainland. The Itsekiri and the Ijaw settlements are on the Island. A ferry service was acquired to reach out to the participants. The participants among the Ijaw requested for a teacher, an Ijaw native speaker to conduct the interview with them. There were evidences that the teacher had involved in the similar assignments in the past. This made me to approve his involvement. The Itsekiri participants asked me to seek permission from their leaders in Warri before they could grant me interviews. When I visited the region, I was welcomed by the community leaders with a bottle of gin and a box of biscuit. After the completion of the fieldwork, the researcher donated exercise note books to each community as a token of appreciation. This is a custom in the region. I took the interviews within three months. The total number of interviewees that finally participated in the study was one hundred and twenty-eight (128). The following distributions of participants were obtained:

Ijaw = 43 (Traders 09, artisans 05, civil society 04, civil servants 07, farmers 04, traditional figures 06, political office holders 05, and opinion leaders 03.);

Itsekiri = 42 (Traders 08, artisans 06, civil society 05, civil servants 07, farmers 03, traditional figures 04, political office holders 05, and opinion leaders 04.); and,

Urhobo = 43 (Traders 08, artisans 06, civil society 06, civil servants 06, farmers = 02, traditional figures 06, political office holders 03, and opinion leaders 06).

There were six participants that initially volunteered to participate but later withdrew. Information collected from the participants was destroyed.

4.4. *Data analysis*

Data collected from the participants were transcribed in my office, at the Department of Sociology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria. The transcribed data were securely saved on desktop. Thematic method of analysis was used to categorise the data. The themes used were generated from the literature and fieldwork. The initial coding involved marking of emerging themes with yellow pen. This is followed by categorisation of data to main themes and subthemes. The emerging themes and subtheme were loaded into NVIVO for analysis. Direct quotes from the fieldwork and literature were used to form narratives. The themes and subthemes analysed in this study included:

Ethnic identity-recognition

    Political
    Economic
    Human settlement
    Government institution

Family-Recognition

    Relationship and social ties
    Marriage
    Integration and solidarity

Names-Recognition

    Choice of names
    Foreign names
    Indigenous names

Community Development-Participatory Parity

    Social relations
    Development

Economy-Distribution

    Market
    Agricultural products
    Poverty

Ethnic Relations-Participatory Parity

    Compensation
    Cooperation
    Peace
    Ownership

5. Findings and discussion

This section of the paper discusses the consequences of ethnic conflict on the inhabitants of Warri. The consequences as discovered in this study included identity, family, peoples' names, community development, economy, and ethnic relations.

5.1. Identity-recognition

Participants in the in-depth interviews in the selected three communities for this study revealed the dangerous dimensions ethnic conflict have taken in the Niger Delta region. Many participants said that people hide their ethnic identity for fear of economic and political discriminations. A question was asked from the participants on *how ethnic conflict affected peoples' identity in this region?* An Urhobo civil servant participant claimed:

> In Warri, there are different human settlements identified with different ethnic groups that occupied the city. It is easier for a foreigner to access plots of land than the indigenes of the antagonised communities.

The Ijaw, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo that participated in this study revealed how ethnic conflict interacted negatively with human settlements in the region. According to the participants, Warri has different settlements called "Ekurede". the Ijaw cannot live within "ekurede Itsekiri", the Itsekiri would deliberately avoid "ekurede Ijaw." The reason given by the participants was associated with episodic nature of the conflict. An Ijaw civil society participant said:

> It is so unfortunate that the Ijaw is not ready to live with the Itsekiri. The Urhobo don't want to welcome the Ijaw.

The participants revealed that militants in the region were divided along ethnic lines; though they have the same agenda. According to Etekpe (2007), it has been observed that the bulk of militants in the Niger Delta region could be traced through ethnic identity.

The participants in the three communities selected for this study also revealed that ethnicity and ethnic divisions have affected government institutions. For example, Delta State Oil Community Agency (DESPODEC) has different offices for the three ethnic groups in Warri. The recognition of needs based on ethnic differences has affected enduring peace in the region. The Ijaws want sensitive offices to be occupied by their kith and Kin. The Urhobo ethnic group want "son of the soil" to control both the economic and political affair in the region. It is a historical justice whenever the Itsekiri people dominate the political landscape in the region. People suffered untold social and economic recognition based on ethnicity in the oil rich delta region. Ethnic conflict could be resolved and peace returns to the region if equal ethnic recognition formed the basis of resource allocation in the region.

5.2. Family relations-inter-subjective recognition

Ethnic conflict has considerable impacts on family. The participant said that family relationship and social ties became weakened as a result of conflict. According to Fraser (2010) recognition becomes contingent on social and practical accomplishment. The participants said that husband and wife from different warring communities became separated. Many husbands sacrificed their wives on the altar of ethnicity. Wives became their husbands' enemies for the simple reason that they were from different ethnic groups. Men and women from opposing ethnic groups could not get on well as a result of ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. An Itsekiri artisan that participated in the interview said:

> Many genuine relationships have absurdly interrupted on primordial ethnic identity. Marriages between the children of two opposing ethnic groups have become a taboo. Before the discovery of oil and oil exploration in the region, different ethnic groups saw themselves as one. The introduction of petro-dollars in the region has created ethnic hatred, hostility, struggle and differentiation.

Another Itsekiri participant said that the presence of oil minerals in one community and absent of it in other has endangered community solidarity and integration that existed before the discovery of oil in the region. According to Margalit (2001), "recognition is an act of intellectual apprehension, a form of identification, and the act of acknowledging or respecting another being, such as when we 'recognise' someone's status, achievements or rights." Recognition requires that we authorise someone to confer recognition (12).

5.3. Names-inter-subjective recognition

The consequences of the ethnic conflict reflected in the choice of names adopted by parents. Jike (2004) says that the indigenous names are facing extinction. The participants said that no members of any ethnic group want their children to be identified with indigenous names. Parents drop indigenous names that could show ethnic affinity. Instead of indigenous names that were rooted in culture and identity of ethnic groups such as Ebi, Ogenekaro, Aghogho, Omatsola and others, many parents now substitute indigenous names for English or Christian names such as Goodluck, Favour, Blessing, Mark, Matthew, Godpower and others. An Itsekiri interviewee said that ethnic conflict has destroyed the cultural capital of the region:

> Go everywhere in Warri today, the common names are Goodluck, Clinton, Godday, Joy, Peace etc. Many people have substituted their traditional family name like Dagogo, Iginiwari, Ubeku and others.

I went further to probe if colonial experience impacted family name. The following question was asked from the participants: *Can you say if the change in the names was influenced by the colonial experience?* A female participant from the Itsekiri ethnic group said:

> My grandmother told me that the colonial masters forced them to change their names to foreign names because of difficulties in pronouncing our traditional names. Many people that enrolled in schools and those that were working with the colonial masters changed their names. Look let me tell you… but after the independence people dropped the foreign names. The changeover to foreign names four decades after independence was sudden. Let me say it was due to ethnic conflict. It is easy to hide under foreign names …

Honneth (1995) identified three forms of recognition, such as love, rights, and solidarity. These forms of recognition are intersubjectively mediated. The submission in this subsection is that if an individual is shown love, respect and self-esteem by others, then they can acquire the self-confidence, self respect and self-esteem necessary for self-realisation.

5.4. Community development-distribution

Another area of social relations affected by the conflict is community development. The participant said that community bonds became weaken. People confidence in traditional institutions and traditional figures is fussed out. According to Jike (2004), the legendary "respect for elders" in Africa society is largely affected in most Niger Delta communities. An Urhobo civil society member that participated in the study claimed:

> As a result of the conflict, the typical Niger Delta youth sees the elder as corrupt, inept and the epitome of failure. The traditional authorities have been tagged government or multinational oil companies' agents. The inhabitants have seen the traditional figures as titular heads and "sell out". Let me tell you. The traditional figures do not command respect any longer among our people. The oil companies rather than involve themselves directly in the development agenda; they prefer to (settle) give money to some vocal local chiefs. This usually resulted into crisis.

Participants in this study further said that community development has taken a back seat as a result of ethnic conflict. Distributive justice is important to a meaningful post conflict peace processes, whether rooted in economy, social or politics. In any situation of distributive injustice, renewed conflict is more likely (Maiese, 2013). An Itsekiri political office holder claimed:

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> No meaningful development can occur in an atmosphere of conflict. The government and oil companies have profited by hundreds of billions of dollars since oil was discovered. But most inhabitants of the region are in dire poverty.

5.5. Economy-distribution

The impact of ethnic conflict on economy of the region is enormous. Different ethnic groups have separate markets in line with ethnic identity. An Urhobo trader who participated in this study revealed the consequences of the conflict on a common market for the ethnic groups, she said:

> Before the escalation of the conflict, market days were rotated among different ethnic groups.

Participants in this study said that conflict has nullified rotational market days. The rotational market days among the ethnic groups in the region are significant in the sense that it serves other purposes other than exchange. An Itsekiri traditional figure participant claimed:

> Common marker serves as a meeting pot for friends and family members that have been married off to another ethnic group. It serves as a way of cementing love relationship and attachment. Many love affairs were contracted at the market place.

The participants said that ethnic conflict has affected the distribution and exchange of agricultural products. For example, some agricultural products cannot grow on the Ijaw land but can survive on Urhobo land such as cassava and vegetables. According to Waldron (2010), distributive justice involves choosing criteria for the distribution of something valuable among people who have some claim to a common social good or benefit. The Ijaw and the Itsekiri also have access to some sea foods that are not available in the Urhobo rivers such as periwinkles, crabs etc. An Ijaw trader that participated in the interview revealed:

> Protracted conflict in the region has affected the distribution of essential commodities. Apart from lack of income and opportunity to attain basic necessities of life such as, food, shelter, clothing and acceptable levels of health care and education, ethic conflict has made life difficult for our people.

Poverty and other social issues have manifested in the Niger Delta conflict including voicelessness and powerlessness in oil resource exploration and exploitation. The participants said that majority was living in poverty in the community. Wealth in the region is not equitably distributed. The participants said that distribution should be based on need, equity and equality. An Itsekiri civil society member that participated in the interview said:

> The problem with the distribution of oil resource is nepotism, ethnic patronage and inequality. Multinational oil companies usually used divide and rule between the community with oil and those with no oil resource. The oil proceeds end up in some peoples' pocket.

Many participants concluded that equitable access to oil wealth could reduce ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. In this subsection it can be concluded from Rawls (1971) submission on recognition that one's place of birth, social status, and family are matters of luck and should not unduly influence the amount of benefits we receive in life. He maintains that the job of distributive justice is to limit the influence of primordial sentiment so that socio-political and economic benefits could be distributed more fairly and to everyone's advantage.

5.6. Ethnic relations-participatory recognition

The Niger Delta region needs peace from the warring ethnic groups in order for the region to be able to move forward economically and socially. Ethno-nationalism movements often emphasize the inventive side of identity construction: creation of ethno-histories, folk-lore celebration of cultural "traditions," literary "revivals" in vernacular languages, and so on (Aspinall, 2007). Ethnicity has formed the basis of allocating government institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and other

facilities. Government used ethnic patronage to award contracts, scholarship and benefits. For example, according to participants, government awarded contracts for monitoring of oil facilities to a particular ethnic group at the expense of others in the region. The participants alleged that the multinational oil companies usually favour the host communities in the award of contracts and jobs.

The participants said that ethnic conflict has destroyed social integration. There is absence of solidarity towards fighting environmental degradation. It should be noted that environmental degradation is associated with the exploration and exploitation of oil by the multinational oil companies in the region. The participants in the in-depth interviews lamented that multinational oil companies have failed to pay compensations for oil spillage because of ethnic divisions and lack of cooperation among the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. *What are the consequences of the Niger Delta on the integration of different ethnic groups in this region?* An Itsekiri political office participant revealed:

> One ethnic group fails to recognise others as joint ownership of natural resources. The Ijaw believed that the oil belong to them alone. I want to ask, what about the Urhobo and the Itsekiri that share the consequences of oil exploration. What about non-indigenes that have chosen Warri as their home? The proposedd oil deposit bill should be all-inclusive.

The participants said that lack of cooperation among the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta affected the passage of Petroleum Industry bill by the National Assembly. An Ijaw political office holder who participated in this study stated:

> The Urhobo, the Itsekiri and the Ijaw representatives have not been speaking with one voice. Each ethnic group wants different opportunity from oil exploration. This cannot work. Divided we fall, united we stand.

Recognition is the bridge that links self and others in identity construction, at least in instances where others are depicted as both hostile and powerful. In this way, recognition should be seen as integral to identity construction, not as antecedent to or contingent upon it (Aspinall, 2007). A question was asked from the participants *who gains from the ethnic conflict?* Whether it was oil bearing communities, the government or the multinational oil companies that failed to adopt the international benchmarks in oil exploration and exploitation in the region. According to Odoemene (2011) most of ethnic conflicts are State-sponsored in the Niger Delta region. The participant in the three selected areas in Warri: the Urhobo; the Ijaw; and the Itsekiri said that ethnic conflict were usually caused by the struggle over the ownership of oil deposit, sharing of oil wealth and the "spoils" from the State and multinational oil companies. Many participants opined that oil deposit in the region could be beneficial if ethnic groups recognise themselves as legitimate owners of the free gift of nature.

The inhabitants of the region could not agree on post conflict peace agreement. The participants alleged that the Itsekiri and the Urhobo were not adequately involved in the amnesty programme. The three ethnic groups interviewed in this study had different understanding of peace and this has negatively impacted ethnic relations. An Ijaw political office holder said:

> Imagine, the Itsekiri were complaining of marginalisation. Marginalisation from the amnesty processes. I want to tell you, the Niger Delta conflict was championed by the Ijaw. Our men and women were killed. Most of our villages and communities were destroyed.

Many participants that were interviewed among the Itsekiri said that they were not involved directly in the peace agreement. They said that the government negotiators paid attention mostly on the conflict as it affected the Ijaw. An Itsekiri traditional figure lamented:

> The Itsekiri wants a different peace meeting with the government. Our needs are different from what the Ijaw demanded from the government. Government should hold town hall meeting with our people. Our people are peace loving. What we want from government is development… basically development nothing more. We want peace and development that will sustain the entire region.

Generally, looking at the effects of ethnic conflict, it can be concluded that ethnic conflict has destroyed social relations and peoples' everyday life. The effects cut across identity, politics, economy, settlement, family and cooperation. The protracted ethnic conflict has created deep divisions. It could also be concluded in this section that the inhabitants of the region lacks cooperation to confront environmental degradation that threat the region, and to seek government attention for the socio-economic neglect associated with multinational oil companies operations in the Niger Delta.

6. Conclusion

As mentioned in the introductory section. this paper focused on ethnic conflict and its manifestations in the Niger Delta. Unequal recognition in the distribution of oil benefits sets pace for unhealthy competition and subsequently, ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. This paper used Recognition Theory to examine how unequal recognition in the distribution of oil benefits led to ethnic conflict among ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. Recognition prepositions also provided explanation for the consequences of ethnic conflict on identity, family, name, development, economy, name and ethnic relations. This study impinged largely on participatory parity by Fraser (2010). As discussed in the body of this paper, participatory parity explained the way by which ethnic conflict arose as a result of politics of recognition in the distribution of oil benefits could be addressed in the Niger Delta.

The extraneous consequences of politics of recognition in the Niger Delta as manifested in the family, marriage, economy, settlement, identity and custom were identified in this study. Many participants in this study said that cultural capital was affected as a result of the conflict. For examples, traditional values are facing extinction. "Pidgin" English is replacing indigenous languages. Foreign names are taking precedence over indigenous names. The traditional authorities are degraded. It could be concluded in this paper that the traditional figures could regain their social recognition by refrain from oil politics.

The resource-based ethnic conflict such as the Niger Delta conflict has untold effects on the economy and development. In the Niger Delta, ethnic bias, marginalisation, discrimination and favouritism have created subsistence poverty. To alleviate poverty, this paper suggested that the government should develop the Niger Delta region. Joint-owned market and rotational market should be encouraged in the region. Multinational oil companies should invest in the provision of social and economic facilities in the Niger Delta. Government should create equal playground in the distribution of oil benefits. Finally, recognition as it was used in this paper provided epistemology for the understanding of ethnic conflict. It can be concluded in this paper that lack of recognition of various ethnic groups in the distribution of oil benefits was responsible for ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta. Recognition of every ethnic group in the distribution of oil wealth could ensure durable peace in the Niger Delta.

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