

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES IN MANAGING ANTHROPOGENIC DISASTER CONTROL IN THE NIGER DELTA

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Abstract: This study was an examination of a critical assessment of public relations techniques in managing anthropogenic disaster control in the Niger Delta. The study was anchored on three theories; the systems theory, Environmental Justice Theory and stakeholders' theory. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised of two streams, first the public relations department of the selected multinational companies and secondly, the population of their host communities in the Niger Delta. The total population of the study for the first stream was 3,825,499. The population of the second stream was 25. A census and Taro Yamane Sampling size determination formula was used to arrive at sample size of 400 for the study. Purposive sampling technique and the proportionate sampling technique were used for the study, and the data obtained from the instruments were analyzed using the four-point Likert scale. Findings of the study showed that the three companies employed public relation techniques to address anthropogenic disasters in Niger Delta. Findings of the study further showed that the three multinational companies had best practices of public relations techniques with which they successfully engaged local communities' remediation efforts in the Niger Delta. The conclusions drawn from the study revealed that not without certain challenges, the SPDC, Total Energies, and NAOC each implemented public relations techniques tailored to address anthropogenic disasters in the Niger Delta, demonstrating that PR was a core instrument in their environmental management frameworks. The companies consistently aligned their approaches with best practices in public relations, which facilitated meaningful engagement with host communities and enhanced the legitimacy of their remediation efforts. It was therefore recommended that oil companies in the Niger Delta should adopt more structured, transparent, and inclusive public relations techniques in the remediation of man-made disasters to ensure active participation and trust from host communities. The study also recommended that companies should align their

public relations strategies with internationally recognized best practices, integrating proactive and reactive communication measures such as early warning systems, crisis preparedness, and rapid response mechanisms.

Keywords: Critical Assessment, Public Relations, Techniques, Managing Anthropogenic, Disaster Control, Niger Delta

Keywords: Public Relations, Anthropogenic Disasters, Niger Delta, Remediation Efforts, Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

Over the years, multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta Region have been facing one form of crisis or the other due to perceived inadequate attention in the remediation of anthropogenic disasters most especially with their host communities. This often leads to militancy, kidnapping of oil workers, vandalization of facilities. Thus, this has sometimes raised some question marks on the public relations crisis management strategies of the oil firms.

The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) sees public relations as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Hence, public relations is a process that must be deliberately planned, carefully implemented and assiduously monitored to achieve a given goal or objective, targeted mainly at building and sustaining mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Onwaunali, 2006). Every organization has both internal and external publics with whom mutual understanding must be nurtured and maintained for the growth of the organization.

According to Meintjes (2011) issues management in public relations practice is the proactive monitoring and resolving of simmering issues with negative potentials before they escalate into crisis. On the other hand, crisis management is the coordinated effort to handle effects of unfavourable publicity and ensuring fast and accurate communication in times of emergency especially during anthropogenic disasters. Furthermore, it involves the communication management function used to convey accurate facts and data to the general public and to specific publics during a crisis or disaster situation in order to minimize negative publicity that could adversely affect the success of the company (Fuchs, 2009). This involves identifying the type of disaster, planning a response to the disaster and confronting and remediating the disaster.

In addition, the success and failure of multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta region such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) and Total Energies Nigeria Limited will be determined by the strategies employed by the company's public relations department to address and redress reputation, issues, challenges, and disasters that arise in the course of their operations, that is, exploration, exploitation and distribution of petroleum and gas product (Nwosu & Uffor, 2005). According to Asemah, (2011), today's business would have become very competitive; hence, to survive in this ever-changing business environment requires the recognition as well as acceptance of public relations crisis communication tools as vital weapon in the hands of all organization in all modern societies. The Mexican statement 1978 as

stated in Uduji (2012) must have borne disaster management in mind when it defined public relations practice as “the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of actions which will serve both the company’s and the public interest.” In this very definition, analyzing trends, predicting their consequences and counseling company leaders entails proactive disaster management approach.

According to Hazarika (2013) disaster is an incident or event with consequences which pose a significant threats to the strategic objectives of the company or an organization. These include oil spillage, water pollution/soil, gas flaring, soot pollution and other environmental degradations. Disaster management works to minimize all these and the consequent damage to a company’s reputation. At the same time, it tries to take advantage of any benefit that can be obtained from the disaster such as communication that occurs with response phase of emergency management method of a company (Hazarika, 2013). This is because all stages of oil exploitation negatively affect the environment and the gritest single intractable problem caused by crude oil exploitation in the Niger Delta is oil spillage.

In spite of all these, the manner and way in which these multinational companies, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Nigeria Agip Oil Company and Total Energies Nigeria Limited apply their public relations will either go a long way in reducing the problems faced by the companies as a result of inadequate attention given to remediation of anthropogenic disaster in the Niger Delta region or compound the woes of these companies. The Niger Delta region, rich in oil and natural resources, has suffered decades of environmental degradation and anthropogenic disasters due to oil exploration and extraction activities. Multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in the region have been criticized for their role in these disasters, sparking public outrage, protests, and litigation. Effective public relations (PR) techniques are crucial in addressing these issues, restoring stakeholder trust, and ensuring sustainable operations. The thrust however, is to appraise the use of public relation techniques in the remediation of anthropogenic disasters in Niger Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, rich in biodiversity and natural resources, has been plagued by anthropogenic disasters primarily stemming from the activities of multinational corporations involved in oil exploration and extraction. These disasters, which include oil spills, gas flaring, and environmental degradation, have had devastating effects on the local communities, resulting in significant ecological damage, health issues, and socio-economic challenges. The repercussions of these disasters extend beyond the immediate environment, affecting the livelihoods and well-being of the communities that depend on these natural resources for their sustenance. The inability of traditional communication strategies to effectively address the challenges posed by these disasters necessitates an exploration of public relations techniques that can facilitate effective remediation and foster better community relations.

Despite the presence of numerous multinational corporations operating in the Niger Delta, there seems to be noticeable gap in the understanding of how these companies employ public relations strategies to engage with

local communities affected by man-made environmental disasters. Existing literature on public relations and environmental communication often overlooks the specific dynamics at play in the Niger Delta, where distrust between local communities and multinational companies has reached alarming levels (Emenike, 2018). This disconnect has resulted in a lack of effective communication and engagement strategies that could potentially mitigate the impact of anthropogenic disasters and enhance corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This study therefore sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the intersection of public relations and environmental management in the context of anthropogenic disasters in the Niger Delta.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the public relations techniques often adopted by the oil companies under review in the remediation of man-made disasters in their areas of operations;
2. ascertain if the public relations techniques are in line with conventional practice by way of being proactive and reactive; and
3. Appraise how well the public relations techniques have served the companies under review by way of goal accomplishment.

Public Relations

Wilcox and Cameron (2009:p.5) explain that folks often define public relations by a number of its visible techniques and tactics, like publicity during a newspaper, a television interview with an organization's spokesperson, or the looks of a star at a special event. What people fail to know is that a public relations may be a process involving many subtle and far-reaching aspects. Public relations include research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication, and feedback from numerous publics. Its practitioners operate two distinct levels as advisers to their clients or to an organization's top management and as technicians who produce and disseminate messages in multiple media channels.

Public relations is therefore, a particular management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of and the way it relates to the study. Emphasis is placed on the concept, role, functions, the positioning of public relations within the hierarchy of a corporation and an in-depth discussion on how public relations differs from marketing.

Defining public has been, for academics and professionals alike, a difficult obstacle to bits. The matter is not in knowing what it is that public relations does, or hopes to accomplish, but rather breaking it right down to an easy, easily understood definition. One amongst the challenges lies within the incontrovertible fact that public relations is practiced in many various sorts of organizations, and focuses on many various stakeholders, and sometimes to the dismay of writers of textbooks, it is difficult to parse all of these areas into an easy definition. Texts public relations centers on different areas. Each generally will mention a minimum of several of the following: investor relations, community relations, employee relations, various practices and tactics public relations focused on educational institutions, corporations, agencies, hospitals, not-for-profits, entertainment,

religious institutions, and an assortment of other areas counting on the interests or expertise of the authors (Adams, 1965; Cutup, Center & Broom, 1994; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman. Toth & Van, 2004; Lesly, 1950; Seitel, 2007; Stephenson, 1960; Wilcox, Cameron, Ault & Agee, 2003). The commonly mentioned tactics, strategies and general principles of practice in each of those areas often includes the design of special events, developing relationships with targeted audiences, doing research and evaluation, strategic planning and analyzing audiences, composing speeches and using other internal communication vehicles. However, one thing that is common across all texts public relations is a thorough discussion of media relations (Turk & Snedeker, 1986).

Though seemingly as challenging as it is to define as public relations can generally be viewed as the relationship between the uncontrolled mass media and public relations practitioners (Kendall, 1996). Media relations are often seen as the systematic (Kendall, 1996), planned (Lesly, 1991), purposeful (Miller, 1984) and mutually beneficially relationship (Guth & Marsh, 2003) between journalists within the mass media and public relations practitioners. Its goal is to determine trust, understanding and respect between the two groups (Lattimore et al., 2004). Fetig (2004), a media relations practitioner, sums up the relationships.

Public Relations Techniques

The following are examples of common PR tactics you can use to gain a competitive advantage:

- a. **Press release:** Press releases are a conventional PR tactic that organizations use to make announcements about their activities, such as a new product launch or merger. A press release is essentially a detailed news article. It consists of an intriguing story angle to entice journalists to write and talk about your brand. Agencies and professionals in the field usually have a list of media contacts they can share a press release with.
- b. **Press conferences:** Larger companies whose actions make a sizable shift in the market or are of substantial interest to customers hold press conferences to discuss their decisions and goals. Press conferences are a media event that allows journalists to ask important questions. It's an effective PR tactic to show transparency and disseminate information quickly.
- c. **Events:** From small trade shows to large launch parties, events are a dynamic PR tactic to connect with customers and potential partners in person. Events also generate buzz with their influential attendees and exciting photo opportunities. They capture marketable moments that you can share on social media and press releases.
- d. **Partnerships:** Partnerships are a PR tactic that allows you to grow your audience by leveraging on someone else's following. It's important to choose partnerships carefully, as your partner's values and reputation can impact your own. Most brands with a similar target market will partner with each other to achieve a shared goal.
- e. **Letter to the editor:** If building support for a cause or issue is part of your organization's goals, a letter to the editor of your local newspaper can be highly effective. It exemplifies your values to your customers, showing them that there is much more to your brand than just generating sales.

f. **Pop-up stores:** Pop-up stores not only help you access new customers, but they are also interesting PR angles you can promote to gain more coverage for your brand. The interactive event is an opportunity to try out creative tactics that you might not otherwise do on your online or in your retail store. This makes for marketable stories that you can share on other platforms too.

g. **Publicity Stunt:** A publicity stunt is an artificially created event or story that captures people's attention. Its unusual nature sparks discussion about a brand and its activities. Publicity stunts are a PR tactic professionals use to generate hype about an upcoming event, such as a new partnership or marketing campaign

Social and Environmental Sustainability

Sustainability and sustainable development have been considered within the accounting literature in the context of social and environmental sustainability reporting (hereafter “sustainability reporting” or SR). This has arisen because accounting for sustainable development shares some of the concerns of SR and both consider the same range of issues, namely the social and environmental impacts of corporate activity (Bebbington, 2001). What is the function of sustainability reporting? Sustainability reporting helps organizations to set goals, measure performance, and manage change in order to make their operations more sustainable. A sustainability report conveys disclosures on an organization's impacts be they positive or negative on the environment, society and the economy. In doing so, sustainability reporting makes abstract issues tangible and concrete, thereby assisting in understanding and managing the effects of sustainability developments on the organization's activities and strategy (Global Reporting Initiative, 2013c).

SR examines the areas where accounting affects its functional environment and seeks to develop accounting tools to assess these effects. As we have seen in the previous section, the concept of sustainability has gained wider acceptance, there has been a worldwide trend toward greater use of sustainability reports. Over the last decades, companies have paid growing interest towards environmental and social issues and there has been substantial growth in the research attention being devoted to social and environmental accounting topics (Bagnoli, 2004; Barth & Wolff, 2009; Deegan et al., 2002; Elkington, 1999; Epstein, 2007; Kolk, 2008; Laine, 2010; Manetti & Toccafondi, 2011; Thorne, Mahoney, & Manetti, 2014). It is the emergence of large-scale business organizations in the last third of the nineteenth century within Europe and the United States that gave rise to concerns about corporate social responsibility (Epstein, 2007). The development of social and environmental accounting and reporting over the last 40 years has resulted in a wide range of actual and potential accounts of organisational interactions with society and the natural environment: such accounts can be understood as narratives of events articulating, with varying degrees of thoroughness and misdirection, the relationships of the organisation with its ‘stakeholders and its immediate substantive environment (Gray, 2010). While the focus in the early 1990s was on environmental reporting and this was joined by growing interest in social reporting from about the mid-1990s, the principal focus in the latest years is on either triple bottom line reporting or sustainability reporting (Gray & Milne, 2002). It is important to note that these two latter concepts, despite appearances, are not synonyms. Although in practice there is a lot of confusion on the use of

terms as “sustainability report” and “social and environmental report” - and even “social, environmental and sustainability report”, on a theoretical level much literature argues that is important to highlight the specific features of each concept. On the first hand, as stated in section 1.3.2, the concept of Triple Bottom refers to the notion that organisations that are beginning to think about issues related to sustainable development need to work away from a single, only financial bottom line and to a recognition that organisations also have both social and environmental performances, or social and environmental bottom lines (Gray, 2010; Gray & Milne, 2002). The merit of Triple Bottom Line is that promoted the idea that for full accountability, an organisation needed to produce, alongside its financial statements, a full set of both social and environmental disclosures (Gray, 2010; Gray & Milne, 2002).

Pollution and Ecological Destruction of the Niger Delta

Ecosystem is a community of living organisms that exist with the nonliving components of their environment that share the benefits in the environment such as air, food, water and soil (Hatcher, 1990). These biotic and abiotic components are connected together through nutrient cycles and energy flows (Odum, 1971). Humans operate within ecosystems and their cumulative effects are large enough to influence external factors like climate, as the ecosystems provide a variety of goods and services upon which people depend (Schoener, 2009). Human can pollute and destroy the ecosystem through the overuse of the available natural resources (Jones, Lawton & Shachak, 1994).

Pollution is simply the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment that could alter the normal occurrences or distort the orderliness in the system. Pollution was also defined by the European Union 1996 Council Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) as “the direct or indirect introduction as a result of human activity, of substances, vibrations, hits or noise into the air, water or land which may be harmful to human health or the quality of the environment, result in damage to material property, or impair or interfere with amenities and other legitimate uses of the environment” (Fagbeja et al., 2008). The pollution of the environment overtime usually leads to the total destruction of the entire ecosystem (Bodo, 2019). Ecological destruction is happening everyday as it is reported that 25% of our coral reefs have disappeared and it is expected that 60% more will be gone in 30 years (Gimah and Bodo, 2019a; Gimah and Bodo, 2019b). This is as a result of acidification of the oceans through water pollution and illegal fishing. Quest for development has necessitated to intense deforestation leading to the burning and cutting down of more than 4.6 million hectares of forest (Bodo and Gimah, 2018; Gimah and Bodo, 2019a; Gimah and Bodo, 2019b). The case of Niger Delta ecosystem is even more pathetic as the people are not knowledgeable on the consequences and implications of destroying their environment (Bodo, 2018; Gimah and Bodo, 2019a) as oil exploitation has led to massive habitat loss (Gimah and Bodo, 2019b).

Oil Exploration and Exploitation

Shell British Petroleum (now Royal Dutch Shell) first discovered crude oil in 1956 at Oloibiri, a village in the Niger Delta, and as already mentioned commercial production began in 1958. Today, there are 606 oil fields

in the Niger Delta region, out of which 360 are on-shore and 246 are offshore (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2005). Nigeria is at present the largest oil producer in Africa and the sixth largest in the world, averaging 2.7 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2006. Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on earnings from the oil sector, which provides 20% of GDP, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 65% of budgetary revenues (CIA World Fact Book, 2005).

Nigeria's state-held refineries (Port Harcourt 1 and 11, Warri, and Kaduna) have a combined capacity of 438,750 bbl/d, but problems including sabotage, fire, poor management and lack of regular maintenance contribute to low current capacity of around 214,000 bbl/d, according to World Markets Research Center. Plans for several small, independently owned refineries are also being developed with the Nigerian government planning for three new refineries to come on stream by 2008 (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2005).

Oil and Gas Reserves in Nigerian Niger Delta

Oil and Gas Journal (2005) estimates Nigeria's proven oil reserve at 35.2 billion barrels. The Nigerian government plans to expand its proven reserves to 40 billion barrels by 2010 (Nwilo and Badejo 2005). In February 2005, Nigeria announced the award of five oil blocks in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ), shared by Nigeria and neighbouring Sao Tome and Principe (STP). The JDZ reportedly holds reserves of 11 billion barrels and could potentially yield up to 3 million bbl/d in the next 2-3 years. Development is also occurring in the waters surrounding the JDZ (Nigeria Country Analysis Brief, 2005). Oil and Gas Journal (2005) further stated that Nigeria has an estimated 176 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of proven natural gas reserves in 2005, giving the country one of the top ten natural gas endowments in the world and the largest endowment in Africa (see figure 2 below).

The question has been, how sustainable are the mining of these natural resources in the Niger Delta region? This study recommends that the exploitation of these resources be carried out sustainably in such a manner that the environment is well protected by using clean technologies, with net economic gains by the oil companies, and the local communities where these activities take place get better treatment by way of human and infrastructural development opportunities.

Valuation of Contaminated Environment in the Niger Delta

Jackson (2001) posited that the literature available on the valuation concepts and methods for valuing the effects of environmental contamination on real estate relates to income-producing, commercial and industrial real estate and that only very few empirical studies of contaminated real estate exist. The available literature has focused on how existing appraisal methods can be adapted to estimate the impact of contamination on value. Within the Niger Delta context, there is a dearth of literature on the subject of valuation of contaminated/polluted properties, despite the widespread pollution from oil spillages. Attempts to value any polluted land have adopted methods prescribed for the compulsory acquisition of land in Nigeria, see Ogedengbe (2007) and Otegbulu (2009).

The Niger Delta

The Niger Delta with an estimated area of about $70,000\text{km}^2$ is one of the World's largest deltas. It is located in the Central part of Southern Nigeria between above latitude $5^{\circ}33'49''\text{N}$ and $6^{\circ}31'38''\text{E}$ in the North. Its Western boundary is given as Benin $5^{\circ}44'11''\text{N}$ and $5^{\circ}03'49''\text{E}$ and its Eastern boundary is Imo River $4^{\circ}27'16''\text{N}$ and $7^{\circ}35'27''\text{E}$. The Niger Delta is located along the Atlantic coast which forms the southern boundary of Nigeria, and it is the entrance of Rivers Niger and Benue into the ocean through a web of rivers, creeks, and estuaries. It is the largest wetland in Africa and the third largest in the world, with about 2370 square kilometres of rivers, creeks and estuaries. Its vegetation is predominantly of the forest type with 8600 square kilometres of swamp forest and about

1900 square kilometres of mangrove forests (Alagoa, 2005). The region situated in the southern part of Nigeria, is bordered in the east by the Republic of Cameroun and in the south, by the Atlantic Ocean. Within Nigeria, the region is defined both geographically and politically. The later, being for revenue sharing purposes. The geographic Niger Delta includes the littoral States of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta Cross River and Akwa Ibom and has an area of about 67,284 square kilometres with a combined population of 16,331,000 persons. The political Niger Delta includes these and in addition, Abia, Edo, Imo, and Ondo states, with a total area of 112,110 square kilometres of land as at 2006. The region represents about 12% of Nigeria's total surface area (NDDC, 2006).

The region has a lot of gas reserves which when sufficiently harnessed, could yield income far in excess of crude oil incomes. There are about 606 oil fields in the Niger Delta, of which 360 are on-shore and 246 are offshore (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005). Most of the new oil fields are deep water fields developed and being developed offshore. Figure 2.2 shows the States now known as the Niger Delta (the Political Niger Delta States) while Table 2.1 shows the respective states and their land areas and populations and Table 2.2 shows the Geographical Niger Delta States. The region is dominated by the Ijaw ethnic group. Other groups in the Western Delta include; the Isoko, Itsekiri, Kwale and Urhobo. In the eastern delta are groups like the Ekpeye, Andoni, Ikwerre, Ndoni and the Ogoni. The Niger Delta region with its natural endowments of oil and gas which drives the international economy is poverty ridden as a result of political marginalization, economic pauperization and environmental degradation occasioned by its small soil and oil company activities in the region and long years of reflect by the Federal Government of Nigeria. (Akpan, 2007).

The Systems Theory

Systems Theory is an interdisciplinary framework that views complex entities as cohesive systems comprised of interrelated parts. It emphasizes the relationships and interactions between these parts, rather than focusing solely on individual components. The theory originated in the early to mid-20th century and has been applied across various fields, including biology, engineering, sociology, and management. The foundational concepts of Systems Theory were significantly advanced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, an Austrian biologist, who is often

credited with its development in the 1940s. Bertalanffy introduced the idea of "general systems theory" in his 1968 book, "General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications." He sought to establish a common framework that could be utilized across diverse disciplines to better understand the complexity of various systems.

At its core, Systems Theory posits that a system is more than just the sum of its parts; rather, the interactions and relationships among the parts are critical to understanding the system as a whole. This perspective is particularly useful in analyzing social, ecological, and organizational systems. Bertalanffy's work highlighted that systems have boundaries, inputs, outputs, and feedback loops, all of which play essential roles in the functioning of the system.

A system is comprised of four aspects. The first type is items, which are also the system's components, elements, or variables. Depending on the nature of the system, these can be physical, abstract, or both. Second, a system is made up of attributes, which are the characteristics or properties of the system and its objects. Third, a system's objects had internal relationships with one another. Fourth, systems exist in their surroundings. A system, then, is a collection of items that interact with one another in a given context to generate a bigger pattern that is distinct from any of the pieces. The basic systems-interactive approach of the organizational analysis incorporates continuous stages of input, throughput (processing), and output, demonstrating the concept of openness/closeness. Wholeness refers to the interdependence of the various elements that constitute the system. This means that individual parts of a system contribute to the existence of the organization. This theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes the adaptive and proactive behaviour of organisations that should be based upon systems theory conceptual pillars to promote and manage man-made disasters so as to encourage sustainable and long-lasting performance.

Environmental Justice Theory

Environmental Justice Theory was not propounded by a single individual but rather evolved from grassroots movements and scholarly contributions that highlighted systemic environmental inequalities. The concept gained significant traction in the early 1980s, with a landmark study and subsequent activism that catalyzed the movement. Robert D. Bullard (1990) often regarded as the "father of environmental justice," Robert (1990) played a pivotal role in articulating the framework of Environmental Justice. His work, particularly the publication of "Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality" in 1990, systematically documented how African-American communities in the Southern United States were disproportionately affected by environmental hazards. Bullard's research provided empirical evidence of environmental racism and laid the groundwork for the Environmental Justice movement. In 1982, civil rights leader Benjamin (1987) coined the term "environmental racism" during the protests against the siting of a hazardous waste landfill in Warren County, North Carolina. This event, where a predominantly African-American community protested against the dumping of toxic waste in their area, is often cited as the beginning of the Environmental Justice

movement. Chavis's advocacy highlighted the intersection of civil rights and environmental health, bringing national attention to the issue.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Theory is a critical framework that addresses the intersection of environmental issues and social inequality, emphasizing the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across different socio-economic and demographic groups (Clinton, 1994). The theory highlights how marginalized communities, particularly low-income groups and ethnic minorities, disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental hazards, such as pollution and toxic waste, while often having less access to environmental goods, like clean air and water. This framework emerged in response to growing evidence that environmental problems were not just ecological or technical issues but were deeply intertwined with social justice concerns.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Theory is highly relevant to public relations (PR) techniques used in the remediation of anthropogenic (human-caused) disasters, particularly in regions like the Niger Delta States. This area is marked by extensive environmental degradation due to activities such as oil extraction, leading to significant social, economic, and ecological impacts on local communities. The theory provides a critical framework for understanding and addressing the complex interplay between human activities and environmental impacts in the Niger Delta. By integrating EJ principles into public relations techniques, multinationals can enhance their remediation efforts, build trust with local communities, and contribute to a more just and sustainable future for the region. Effective PR strategies should prioritize equity, transparency, and community participation, ensuring that the voices of affected communities are heard and that their rights and well-being are respected in the remediation process.

Empirical Review

Rajans (2012) carried out a study entitled: **public relations techniques adopted by total energies Nigerian limited in remediation of environment disasters in Niger Delta state**. The objective was to find out the special ways the public relations department of total energies Nigeria limited in solving the problems of man-made environmental disasters. The study employees of very research design with purposive technique to derive a sample of 400 respondents from a population of 31.2 million people. Questionnaire was used as instruments for data gathering. Define things of the study review that the public relations department of total energies Nigerian limited apply the following public relations techniques such as transparent communication, building trust and engaging with stakeholders. The findings of the study show that the public relations department of the company gold beyond media coverage to resonate with the target audience based on the current public relations trends. The study concluded that the public relations department of total energy Nigeria limited applies the following public relation techniques such as transparent communication, building trust and engaging with stakeholders. The study also concluded that the public relations department of the company goes beyond media coverage to resonate with the target audience based on the current public relations trends. The study therefore, recommended that companies and order organizations should apply public relations techniques in their day-to-day activities so as to enhance productivity and established mutual relationship between them and their host community. The study also recommended that the public relations department of companies and organizations should god beyond media coverage to resonate with target audience

Olayinka and Ogbonna (2013) Environmental Remediation of oil spillage in Niger Delta Region

The impacts of oil spills are not limited to the direct effect on the ecosystem; it goes a long way to affect the social welfare, aggravates poverty, population displacement, social conflict, production reduction and also affects the profit margin of the companies involved. This study is aimed at providing a review and comparison of the remediation techniques currently in use and suggest the most suitable methods of oil spill cleanup and remediation in Nigeria Niger Delta region based on certain criteria and to also suggest ways of mitigating oil spill occurrences in this region. In the course of this research study, data collection was on primary and secondary data. For the primary data, a structured questionnaire was drafted and used for survey relating to the research study to rank and evaluate different perspectives of stakeholders on various remediation techniques that are in consideration. For the Secondary Data, the study was carried out with a literature study to gain an overview of the different remediation methods for PHCs contaminated soils. Finally using specific criteria including cost efficiency, operation and maintenance of the technique, environmental friendliness, time frame of achieving remedial objectives, health concerns, and applicability of the techniques were used to make an evaluation design for the different remediation techniques for hydrocarbons contaminated soils. The results from these studies show that single remedial action cannot be used for cleanup but the Thermal desorption and Remediation by Enhanced Natural Attenuation (RENA) was the best placed technique ranking highest under the different criteria of the evaluation design and the sample survey of the remediation techniques considered. More so, In-situ Vittrification is the most cost effective techniques with little or no disturbance of site.

Kingsley et al. (2021) Environmental implications of petroleum spillages in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

The issue of environmental pollution has been recognized as a typical example of an anthropogenic activity that constitutes a global challenge coupled with the influence of climate change. This has constituted several hazards which include bioaccumulation of toxic substances, pollution of the aquatic environment, and high rate of dilapidation of soil structure and texture, health hazards, high level of imbalance in the ecosystem and a high level of toxicity in humans and the environment. Despite the intervention of governments, industries, researchers and relevant stakeholders, these problems remain paramount in most regions. Therefore, given the aforementioned, it is essential to identify sustainable remediation techniques, innovative knowledge on remediation strategies and clean up techniques that could help in the mitigation of all these highlighted challenges. Moreover, several studies have revealed the deleterious influence of petroleum or oil spillages resulting in irreparable environmental dilapidation and other potential hazards to human health, agriculture, climate system, and the ecosystem in general. From the systematic analysis of the evidence-based, meta-data-based review and other reviewed literature, it is noticeable that there is scant holistic review study that will incorporate all these aforementioned environmental implications resulting from the activities of petroleum resources in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NDRN) in just a single study.

In the interim, it is alleged that there is hardly a permanent and tangible solution to these petroleum spillage issues and their impacts on the region; albeit, awareness will be fundamental for its mitigation. Hence, this review study will attempt to fill this gap by holistically reviewing the selected environmental implications of petroleum spillages in the NDRN drawn from 219 evidence and metadata-based reviews and other articles. Furthermore, the relevant legal frameworks that could guild in protecting against environmental issues and petroleum spillages, are discussed in this study. In conclusion, the study cautiously provides a way forward by submitting that effective research and development measures ranging from public health assessments of

petroleum contamination to an all-embracing application of bioremediation technology should frequently be carried out as a matter of urgency with resilient adaptation, mollification and management of these menaces.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised of two streams, first the public relations department of the selected multinational companies and secondly, the population of their host communities in the Niger Delta. The total population of the study for the first stream was 3,825,499. The population of the second stream was 25. A census and Taro Yamane Sampling size determination formula was used to arrive at sample size of 400 for the study. Purposive sampling technique and the proportionate sampling technique were used for the study, and the data obtained from the instruments were analyzed using the four-point Likert scale.

Table 1 Public Relations Techniques and the Remediation of Man-made Disasters in Their Areas of Operations

S/N	COMPANIES	RESPOSNES	S A 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
1	SPDC	Community engagement, corporate social responsibility	14 56	7 21	3 6	1 1	25 84	3.82	Agree
2.	Total Energies	Media relations, stakeholder collaboration, and conflict resolution programs	15 60	8 24	1 2	1 1	25 87	3.48	Agree
3	Nigeria Agip Oil Company	Sustainability reporting capacity building, oil company environmental remediation and transparency efforts	16 64	6 18	2 4	1 1	25 87	3.48	Agree

Criterion Mean 2.5

Data in the table show that the three companies employed public relation techniques in the style and manner shown above to address anthropogenic disasters in Niger Delta.

Table 2: Public Relations Techniques and Conventional Practices

S/N	COMPANIES	RESPOSNES	S A 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
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1	Nigeria Agip Oil Company	Community Development Project, host community agreement and local employment initiatives establish open communication channels	15 60	9 27	1 2	0 0	25 89	3.56	Agree
2.	SPDC	Global (Memorandum of understanding (GMoU), Health outreach programmes collaboration, empathy	21 84	2 6	1 2	1 1	25 93	3.72	Agree
3	Total Energies	Youth empowerment programmes, environmental sustainability campaigns, inclusive stakeholder engagement and transparency	11 44	7 21	4 8	3 3	25 76	3.04	Agree

Criterion Mean = 2.5

Data in table 2 above show that the three multinational companies employed Public Relations Techniques that fall with the frame of best practices. Data also revealed that the companies successfully engaged local community's remediation efforts in the Niger Delta

Table 3: Public Relations Techniques and Goal Accomplishment by Companies under Review

S/N	COMPANIES	RESPOSNES	S A 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
1	Agip	Agip oil company has employed effective public relations strategies in managing hos communities clear communication, traditional press engagement, industry event participation content create creation	12 48	16 30	2 4	1 1	25 83	3.32	Agree
2.	SPDC	Community employment, development programme reputation management stakeholders collaboration	14 56	5 15	4 8	2 2	25 81	3.24	Agree
3	Total Energies	Reputation management, facilitating effective communication, compensation programme, media management and transparency	17 68	7 21	1 3	0 0	25 92	3.68	Agree

Criterion Mean = 2.5

Table 3 above shows that the three multinational companies utilize Public Relations Techniques to accomplish their goals.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study showed that three companies employed public relation techniques to address anthropogenic disasters in Niger Delta. The findings of the study is in agreement with the earlier study carried out by Rajans (2012) whose study revealed that the public relations department of the company gold beyond media coverage to resonate with the target audience based on the current public relations trends. The findings of the study is also in agreement with the earlier study carried out by Olayinka and Ogbonna (2013) whose study revealed that single remedial action cannot be used for cleanup but the Thermal desorption and Remediation by Enhanced Natural Attenuation (RENA) was the best placed technique ranking highest under the different criteria of the evaluation design and the sample survey of the remediation techniques considered. The findings

of the study corroborate with the principles of The Systems Theory which states that the governance of the viable organizations then has to address and direct the system towards a final goal by transforming static structural relationships into dynamic interactions with other viable systems. The findings of the study also corroborate with the principles of Environmental Justice Theory which states that the theory highlights how marginalized communities, particularly low-income groups and ethnic minorities, disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental hazards, such as pollution and toxic waste, while often having less access to environmental goods, like clean air and water.

Findings of the study shows that the three multinational companies had best practice of public relations techniques which they successfully engaged local communities' remediation efforts in the Niger Delta. The findings of the study is in agreement with the earlier study carried out by Kingsley, Hussain, Charles, Uyiosa, Robert, and Olufemi (2021) whose study revealed that cautiously provides a way forward by submitting that effective research and development measures ranging from public health assessments of petroleum contamination to an all-embracing application of bioremediation technology should frequently be carried out as a matter of urgency with resilient adaptation, mollification and management of these menaces. The findings of the study also is in agreement with the earlier study carried out by Richard, Sylvester and Muhammad (2022) whose study revealed that waste dumps, gas flaring, and food processing units are sources of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and particulates released into the atmosphere. The findings of the study corroborate with the principles of Stakeholder Theory, which states that the foundation of stakeholder theory lies in its emphasis on the interconnectedness of stakeholders and the organization. The findings of the study also corroborate with the principles of the Systems Theory, which states that the governance of the viable organizations then has to address and direct the system towards a final goal by transforming static structural relationships into dynamic interactions with other viable systems.

Findings of the study shows that the three multinational companies utilize Public Relations techniques by way of goal accomplishment. Data showed that the companies under review at the very least have been able to forge a relationship with host communities, granting them access to the areas during disasters. The findings of the study is in disagreement with Amodu (2012) whose study revealed that community relations strategies adopted by the selected oil companies were not adequate in preventing and resolving conflicts in the Niger Delta. The findings of the study is however in agreement with the earlier study carried out by Rajans (2012) whose study revealed that the public relations department of Total Energy Nigeria Limited applies the following public relations techniques such as transparent communication, building trust and engaging with stakeholders, which accomplished organisational goals. The finding of the study corroborates with the principles of the Environmental Justice Theory, which states that the area has become a focal point for environmental justice advocacy, highlighting the disproportionate health impacts of industrial pollution on marginalized populations. The findings of study also corroborate with the principles of Stakeholder Theory, which states that the

traditional views of corporate governance often prioritize shareholders' interests, focusing on financial returns as the primary measure of success. In contrast, stakeholder theory challenges this notion by arguing that businesses must consider the interests and well-being of all parties affected by their actions.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the study reveal that SPDC, Total Energies, and NAOC each implemented public relations techniques tailored to address anthropogenic disasters in the Niger Delta, demonstrating that PR was a core instrument in their environmental management frameworks. The companies consistently aligned their approaches with best practices in public relations, which facilitated meaningful engagement with host communities and enhanced the legitimacy of their remediation efforts. Furthermore, the application of public relations techniques proved instrumental in advancing the companies' strategic goals, including reducing community unrest, improving corporate image, and sustaining operational continuity.

Recommendations

1. Oil companies in the Niger Delta should adopt more structured, transparent, and inclusive public relations techniques in the remediation of man-made disasters to ensure active participation and trust from host communities.
2. The companies should align their public relations strategies with internationally recognised best practices, integrating both proactive and reactive communication measures such as early warning systems, crisis preparedness, and rapid response mechanisms.
3. Regular evaluation of public relations strategies should be conducted to assess their effectiveness in achieving corporate goals such as conflict reduction, enhanced reputation, and environmental restoration.

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