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Factors influencing Household Wellbeing in oil and non-oil Producing Rural Communities of Selected States in Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the factors that influence household wellbeing in oil and non-oil producing communities of selected states in Niger Delta. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 454 respondents for the study. Structured interview schedule was used to collect data on respondents' and the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regressions at* $\alpha_{0.05}$*. The study found out that the factors influencing household wellbeing were similar for both, except for livelihood activities in oil producing communities and access to livelihood resources being implicated in non-oil producing communities. The study recommends the need for government and relevant stakeholders to improve access to livelihood resources by rural households because of the significant and positive impact of these resources on wellbeing of rural households.*

Keywords: *Niger delta, Oil producing communities, Household wellbeing*

I. Introduction

The Niger Delta region is a geographically contiguous area currently cutting across 10 states in southern Nigeria namely; Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers states. It has 185 Local Government Areas (LGAs) divided into more than 2,000 communities (Tamuno, 2000; Chinweze and Abiola-Oloke, 2009). Also, the Niger Delta has various minority ethnic groups with a population of over 40 million people accounting about 23% of Nigeria's total population (National Population Commission, 2006). This high population density makes the area one of the highest populated areas in the world, with 265 people per square kilometer (Balouga, 2009; Nyananyo, 2007). To a large extent, the ecology, geographical location and the natural resources of the Niger Delta region conferred on the people of the region the traditional occupation of agriculture (fishing and farming). Although the Niger Delta region is rich in natural resources, it is perhaps the most environmentally fragile part of Nigeria (Aina, 2007). The reality of the socioeconomic situation especially in oil bearing communities is a paradox of poverty amidst plenty. The collapse of the rural agrarian economy in the Niger Delta and the deprivation of their traditional occupations coupled with the absence of alternative employment have inevitably led to the entrenchment of poverty among the people of the Niger Delta (Aluko, 2004). The National Bureau of Statistics (2005) puts the poverty levels in the Niger Delta at 54%, the UNDP (2006) however argues that the poverty rate based on self-assessment is much higher than 54% and puts it at 74.8%. Their report further argues that a realistic assessment of poverty should include access to basic services such as health care, education and good water, and it also encompasses the issues of discrimination, neglect, the lack of a voice and poor wellbeing.

In essence, it can be said that the wellbeing of people is dependent on exploration of environmental resources and these exploration activities continue to disclose multifaceted implications in spite of improvement in technology adopted in carrying them out. The economic benefit from the Niger Delta has been so overwhelming that until recently the adverse socio-economic effect environmental degradation and ecological devastation on oil bearing communities were overshadowed (Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES), 1997). It is therefore against this background that this study sought to investigate the factors that influence households wellbeing in oil bearing communities who feel the direct impact of oil exploration activities on their farmlands, creeks, streams and environment and that of households in other communities whose farmlands, creeks and streams are not directly affected.

II. Methodology

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. Abia and Akwa Ibom States were purposively selected being the least and highest oil producing states respectively. The states were stratified into oil and non-oil producing local government areas (LGAs) and 30% of LGAs in each stratum was randomly selected to give Ibeno and Ibesikpo Asutan in Akwa Ibom as well as Ukwa West and Ikwuano in Abia States respectively. Using proportionate sampling technique, 20% of oil producing communities (OPC) and 10% of non oil producing communities (NOPC) were randomly sampled from selected LGAs. Heads of households

(125 and 125) and (94 and 110) in OPC and NOPC of Akwa Ibom and Abia States respectively were systematically chosen to give 454 respondents. Structured interview schedule was used to collect data on respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and factors that determine wellbeing. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regressions at $\alpha_{0.05}$.

III. Results and Discussions

Respondents' socioeconomic characteristics

The respondents' socio-economic characteristics considered in the study were age, household size, marital status, sex, religion and ethnicity. Other characteristics were: head of household, estimated monthly income and educational qualification.

Age of respondents

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 5.1 shows the mean age of respondents to be 42 years across respondent categories. The results also showed the mean age of respondents in oil producing communities to be 44 year and that of respondents in non oil producing communities was 40 years. This suggests that there is a predominance of mature and productive respondents in the study area. Since majority of the respondents fall within the middle age, it is an indication that they are within the active working age of the communities. This result implies the level of maturity and readiness of respondents to bear risks and cater for their households' wellbeing. The result is consistent with the findings by Udofia (2005) and Rathmen et al (2002) who observed that the farmers are in the active age range of 30-50 years.

Sex of respondents

Overall, the respondents for the study consisted of 54.8% male and 45.3% female in oil producing communities as well as 60.0% male and 40.0% female in non oil producing communities as shown in the Table 5.1. The implication of this is that both sexes contribute to household wellbeing as head of households. Traditionally in the Niger Delta region, women are viewed as the subordinate sex, however prevailing conditions of death, separation, migration of males and economic hardship has made quite a number of households to be headed by women. Research has shown an increase in female headed households both in developed and developing countries (Bumpass & Riley, 1995) in Buvinic (1991)). It might also be due to momentous change in household structures as control over resources has shifted gradually away from men to women (Silberschmidt, 1999; 2001). This position is supported by Bigombe and Gilbert (2012) who documented that with rampant unemployment and dwindling resources, men's central roles as breadwinners has been redefined making it impossible for most men to fulfil these roles.Therefore data should be disaggregated by sex and gender issues mainstreamed into policies and programmes. Specific programmes could thus be targeted at women and other vulnerable groups in order to avoid their continual marginalization or their opinions not being heard due to the patriarchal system of our society.

Ethnic groups of respondents

The analysis of results as presented in Table 5.1 showed that in the overall, 69.9% of respondents were indigenes while 30.1% were non indigenes in oil producing communities. In non oil producing communities, the higher percentage (88.8%) of respondents were indigenes and 11.2% non indigenes in the study area. Although there is a higher degree of ethnic diversity in oil producing communities due to the influx of people in response to oil extraction activities, the result is a confirmation that majority of the respondents residing in the study area were indigenes of Ibibio or Igbo origin. The implication of this is that as indigenes, the respondents might have more access to land, forest and other natural and human amenities available in their environment. This result is in tandem with Smith and Silva (2011) who posited that identification with a larger collective can provide a sense of belonging and social support, a sense of strength, competence and self acceptance when negotiating complex environmental contingencies.

Marital status of respondents

Table 5.1 shows that majority of the respondents in oil producing communities (79.0%) and (82.6%) in non oil producing communities were married. The incidences of divorce (2.7%) and (2.6%) and widowhood (7.3%) and (4.7%) were very low in oil and non oil producing communities. This indicates a high level of homogeneity in the distribution of marital status of household across the communities due to similarities in cultural practices. The fact that majority of the respondents in both oil and non oil producing communities were married is an indication that they are responsible and mature adults who are ready to contribute to their household wellbeing. Also it was recorded from the FGDs conducted that most of the marriages were monogamous in both the oil and non-oil producing communities.

" for this our place, our men no dey marry more than one wife, though some fit pursue the first one make them come marry another one but that kind thing no common. The people wen marry two wife no plenty for here. Marriage is very important to us here." (FGD female participant Ukwa West)

This result shows that among the respondents across all communities, the institution of marriage is held in high esteem and leads to a high level of emotional and psychological wellbeing. This is supported Fakoyode, *et al* (2011) which states that over 80% of rural households are married.

Religion of the respondents

The results of the study showed that ninety eight percent of the respondents in oil producing communities were christians, while a majority (98.3%) were also christians in non oil producing communities of the study area as shown in the Table 5.1. The finding is a true representation of religious inclination of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta. This result confirms the findings of Hassan (2010) that majority of Niger Delta people are christians with the region being dominated by different denominations of churches. Therefore, the implication of this result is that there can hardly be any form of religious uprising because majority of the population in the region have the same religious inclination. It is also an indication that most respondents are actively involved in religious organizations as reported by Ademola (2010) in a similar study in southwestern Nigeria.

Educational qualification of respondents

The result showed no clear difference in the qualification of respondents as majority (89.0%) of the respondents had one form or another of education in both oil and non oil producing communities of the study area. This result to some extent is similar to the findings of Oyesola et al (2011) and Oladeji (2010) asserting that majority of rural workforce had secondary education The results thus revealed that a larger percentage of the respondents have one form of education or the other and this can expose them to information that will improve their household wellbeing and development. This finding corroborates Babatude, *et al.,* (2008) who reported that the education of a household head had a positive influence on the wellbeing of most rural households in Nigeria.

Household size of respondents

The results showed no difference in the mean household size (6) of respondents in both oil and non oil producing communities as majority (52.58%) While a large household size implies a sufficient supply of household labor for livelihood activities as supported by the findings of Ironkwe, Ekwe, Okoye and Chukwu (2009) who reported that most rural families in Nigeria have large household sizes between 6 to 10 persons, a large household size could mean over dependency on household resources resulting in a negative effect on the wellbeing of the household.

Estimated monthly income of respondents

The analysis of results as shown in Table 5.1 indicated that the estimated monthly income of households for 41.3% of respondents in oil producing communities was between N 21, 000 to N 40, 000, while 40.6% of their counterparts in non oil producing communities also earned the same amount monthly. The low income level suggests that a greater percentage of households in the study area find it difficult to meet their daily household obligations. As such savings and investments become impossible leading to a cumulative effect of un-sustainability of households and low level of wellbeing. This result is consistent with (Etim, 2010) who reported that rural household's income was notoriously subject to seasonal variability especially in Nigeria.

Table 1: Respondents socio-economic characteristics

Variables	Oil producing		Non oil producing	
	F	%	F	%
Age				
<30	25	10.3	32	14.1
31-40	97	42.2	77	34.8
41-50	61	26.5	65	29.2
51-60	39	16.1	39	19.1
>60	13	5.6	6	3.0
Sex				
Male	120	54.8	141	60.0
Female	99	45.3	94	40.0
Ethnic group				
Indigenes	153	69.9	209	88.8
Non indigenes	66	30.1	26	11.2
Marital status				
Married	173	79.0	194	82.6

Others	46	21.0	41	17.4
Religion				
Christianity	215	98.0	231	98.3
Others	4	2.0	4	1.7
Education				
No formal	24	11.0	25	10.6
Primary	71	32.4	80	34.1
Secondary	73	33.3	67	28.5
Tertiary	30	13.7	54	23.0
Vocational	21	9.6	9	3.8
Household size				
1-4	75	31.8	62	27.5
5-8	113	48.1	123	57.1
9-12	33	14.3	30	13.3
13-17	8	3.2	2	1.1
>17	6	2.8	2	1.1
Estimated income ,000				
<20				
21-40	69	29.4	61	27.9
41-60	97	44.3	89	40.6
>60	42	17.9	53	24.2
	27	11.5	16	7.3

Result of linear regression estimation on factors influencing household wellbeing of respondents in the study area.

Independent variables were regressed with wellbeing to ascertain their contribution to household wellbeing. Table 2 shows the overall results of the regression analysis and reveals that sex (β =-0.163, p = 0.047), household size (β =-0.221, p = 0.024), religion (β =0.169, p =0.025), estimated monthly income (β = 0.337, p = 0.000), education (β =0.165, p = 0.040), livelihood activities (β =0.270 , p = 0.026) and constraints (β = -0.327, p = 0.023) contributed significantly to the wellbeing of households in oil producing communities of the study area. The result show that while there is a positive (direct) relationship between religion, income, education and livelihood activities, sex, household size and constraints were inversely related to household wellbeing. The results mean that any change in any of these factors could result in a change in the wellbeing of households, the analysis indicated R^2 value of 0.53 implying that the independent variables can explain 53.2% of the household wellbeing in oil producing communities.

In non oil producing communities of the study area, the regression table shows that household size (β = -0.222, p = 0.019), religion (β =0.170, p = 0.010), estimated monthly income (β =0.311, p = 0.047), education (β =0.154, p = 0.021), livelihood resources (β =0.316, p = 0.025) and constraints (β = -0.417, p = 0.000) significantly influenced level of wellbeing. Similarly, religion, income, education and livelihood resources had a direct relationship here while household size and constraint were inversely related. The R^2 value obtained was 0.545. The implication of this R^2 value is that the independent variables in the non oil producing communities contributed 55% to the wellbeing of households in the area.

Table 5.2. Regression analysis on the factors influencing wellbeing of households

Overall Oil producing				Overall Non oil producing		
Variables	Standardized beta	t-ratio	p-value	Standardized beta	t-ratio	p-value
Constant		8.780	0.000		14.198	0.000
Age	0.078	0.864	0.389	-0.019	-0.274	0.784
Sex	-0.163	-2.005	0.047	0.031	0.461	0.645
Household size	-0.221	-2.195	0.024	-0.222	-2.367	0.019
Marital status	0.139	1.797	0.074	0.099	1.477	0.141
Religion	0.169	2.258	0.025	0.170	2.608	0.010
Estimated monthly income	0.337	3.875	0.000	0.311	2.162	0.047
Education	0.165	2.827	0.040	0.154	2.334	0.021
Livelihood resources	0.128	1.371	0.172	0.316	2.541	0.025
Livelihood activities	0.270	2.251	0.026	-0.089	-1.175	0.241
Intervention	-0.129	-1.595	0.113	-0.021	-.257	0.798
Constraints	-0.327	-3.297	0.023	-0.417	-5.135	0.000

Oil producing communities: R= 0.713, R^2= 0.525, Adjusted R= 0.571, Std error = 9.86914, $\alpha_{-0.05,}$
Non oil producing communities: R= 0.723, R^2= 0.545, Adjusted R= 0.621, Std error= 10.97565, $\alpha_{-0.05}$

IV. Summary/Conclusion

The study concluded that most of the respondents were in their economically active and productive years. Respondents were predominantly married indigenes. Majority of respondents in the study area earned a monthly income that was barely sufficient for their relatively large household size hence a high dependency

ratio. Regression analysis showed that sex, household size, estimated monthly income, education, livelihood activities and constraints contributed significantly to the wellbeing of households in oil producing communities. In non oil producing communities, household size, religion, estimated monthly income, education, livelihood resources and constraints significantly influenced level of wellbeing

V. Recommendation

The study revealed that respondents with higher level of educational attainment had a high level of wellbeing. Efforts should therefore be made for schools to be properly equipped and skill acquisition centres built in the communities for improved wellbeing. The study identified factors influencing the wellbeing of households in oil and non oil communities which are veritable tools for program planning and policy formulation therefore efforts to improve household wellbeing in the study area should focus on improving agricultural activities as it was discovered that these activities were still the dominant livelihood activities in the communities. These farm activities form the base for household food supply, capital for other livelihood activities and overall wellbeing.

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