

Modular Refinery Policy and Sustainable Peace and Development in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: The Niger-Delta region of Nigeria has been turbulent for decades until recently. Harmful explorations by the multinational oil companies and alleged government negligence were said to be parts of the reasons for the tempestuous agitations in the area. Intermittent kidnapping of oil workers and illegal bunkering are major sources of financing violent outings in the region.

Objective: This study sought to interrogate the peace-building mechanism inherent in the modular refinery policy.

Methodology: This study adopted the qualitative research approach for data collection and analysis. The unstructured interview was conducted among randomly selected stakeholders. The respondents were selected from among the community heads, youths, ex-militants, players in the oil and gas industry and a few members of the academic community in the Niger-Delta.

Results: It was found that the modular refinery policy of the federal government enabled the participation of the people from the region in the governance of the oil industry, which has been one of the main causes of violent agitations. The study also revealed that the policy ensures the ease of access and adequate provision of social services to the people. Finally, it was found that the policy has ensured trust-building and social cohesion between the people and the government. These peace-building mechanisms are necessary for peaceful coexistence in the region.

Conclusion: A people-centred-policy-oriented administration has the potential to reduce incidences of violent tendencies in the Niger-Delta region now and in the future.

Unique Contribution: The study explains the peacebuilding mechanisms inherent in the modular refinery policy of the government of Nigeria.

Key Recommendation: The government should continue to explore ways of strengthening the policy through the Bank of Industry to assist those who invest in modular refineries in getting access to funding. This should be made a key part of the policy in order to ensure its success.

Keywords: Modular Refinery, Violent Agitations, Illegal bunkering, Niger-Delta

Introduction

Agitations for development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have remained an essential subject of heated debate for a long time (Orie, 2016). Records show that the nationalists from the area enlisted with their counterparts from other parts of Nigeria to struggle for independence. They did that in expectation of good governance that bothers on the development of their communities and empowerment of their people. It was alleged that there

is little or nothing to show for such a patriotic struggle by the heroes of the region (Orie, 2016). The earlier agitations in the Niger Delta region were devoid of violence and other forms of criminalities. The earlier bloodless agitations resulted in the famous 1958 Willinks recommendation, declaring the region a Special Area of Development (Orie, 2016; Adetunberu & Bello 2018).

The alleged non-response of the successive governments with some palliative measures and the democratic freedom in Nigeria's political space is believed to have motivated the Niger-Delta agitators to apply the violent strategy. Olaniyan and Bello (2020) opine that if the State had adhered to its primary duties of providing for the welfare of the people and for their protection in line with democratic norms, the people may not have resorted to violent means in pressing home their demands. However, violence according to Adetunberu and Bello (2018), is not a useful instrument for negotiating needs. However, it has become the standard instrument people have adopted globally to drive agitations. For instance, the Arab Spring, which was meant to be a peaceful agitation, eventually metamorphosed into violence that brought down some of the governments in the Middle East and some North African States to their knees (Manfreda, 2018). Other examples include the violent agitations in Hong Kong, Ecuador, Haiti, Chile, Lebanon, Catalonia, and even the United States of America where citizens have been ferocious in their demand for change in recent times.

In the case of Nigeria, the Niger Delta agitations have caused political and socio-economic casualties. Burdin (2009) and Dialoke and Edeja (2017) briefly traced the history of the agitations in the Niger-Delta to 1966 when Isaac Adaka Boro led a struggle for the development of the Niger-Delta region through an uprising by his Delta Volunteer Service (DVS) against the Federal Government. Dialoke and Edeja (2017) further reported that the Federal Government responded with force and Adaka Boro's civilian coup was crushed. This was believed to be part of the reasons that motivated the people of the region to resort to violent agitation. Unfortunately, the struggle has led to the loss of many prominent sons and daughters of the region, notably among them was Ken Saro-Wiwa whom the Government accused of inciting the public who allegedly killed four elders in Ogoni land. However, several other reports suggest other contrary reasons (Asinobi, 2016). Saro-Wiwa was executed along with eight others. Ever since his death, the violent nature of the agitations in the Niger-Delta region refused to abate. It became fiercer immediately after the return of civilian rule in 1999. However, there is relative peace in the region at the moment.

Between the oil boom era and 2015, Nigeria's economy has been mainly dependent on oil at the expense of other sources of economic growth (Adetunberu & Bello, 2018). The combination of dependence on oil and lack of good governance in the region was also believed to have triggered more violence against oil facilities. Some of the effects of those attacks on the Nigeria economy, among others, include:

1. Consistent reduction in power generation and distribution (Adetula, 2016; Dialoke & Edeja, 2017);
2. Environmental degradation because of pollution (Ukiwo, 2007; Watt, 2007; Oluwaniyi, 2011; Adetula, 2016; Dialoke & Edeja, 2017);
3. Political instability and hybrid insecurity (Adetula, 2016; Dialoke & Edeja, 2017);
4. The economic downturn (Ukiwo, 2007; Watt, 2007; Oluwaniyi, 2011; Adetula, 2016; Dialoke & Edeja, 2017); and
5. Disunity etc.

It should be noted that the Nigerian Government has been responding to the agitations through different strategies, which include:

1. Use of force;
2. Creation of state institutions like Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Niger-Delta Ministry, and others;
3. The release of 13% derivation to the Niger-Delta States;
4. Dialogue;
5. Amnesty for surrendered militants; and
6. Pipeline security contract for militants and others.

However, in 2015, the attacks by Niger-Delta Avengers on oil facilities and illegal bunkering by the suspected agitators aggravated and resulted in an economic recession in Nigeria. (Adebayo, 2016; Maclean, 2016). The Government in response to the crises, muted the idea of the modular refinery to curtail the general insecurity and specifically stem the menace of oil stealing from the vandalised pipelines which the perpetrators discretely refine and sell within and outside Nigeria (*Vanguard*, 2017; Adeyemo, 2018). It is assumed that the Modular Refinery policy will assist in reducing illegal bunkering and will also contribute to the reduction in the attacks carried out by militants in the region. It is also believed that it will reduce the importation of refined oil in the long run and contribute immensely to the economic growth and development of the region and Nigeria in general (Mamudu et al., 2019).

A modular refinery is a processing system whose parts or equipment are constructed in modules designed to be transported quickly and efficiently to anywhere in the world and it comes in a variety of sizes with refining capacities that range from 500 to 20,000 barrels per day (Mamudu et al 2019). In other words, it is a conventional refinery constructed fragmentally or simply a big refinery in miniature form (Brown et al, 2003). It is a process that has a long history in the global energy market. While it is very expensive to establish a regular refinery, it is cheaper and takes a short time to install a modular refinery (Brown et al, 2003).

Several studies have interrogated the violent activities of the Niger-Delta militants on one hand and modular refineries on the other (Alao et al., 2019; Ibeanu, 2020). However, no in-depth study has interrogated the role modular refinery policy could play in the quest for peace in the Niger-Delta region. Therefore, this study focuses on the linkage between the modular refinery policy, the reduction in illegal bunkering, and the reduction in the violent attacks against oil installations by militants from the region.

Conceptualising Peace and Development

Peace and development are fundamental concepts that play a crucial role in shaping societies, nations, and the global community (United Nations, 2009; World Bank, 2011; United Nations 2020). While they are distinct concepts, they are intrinsically intertwined, with each influencing and supporting the other. This overview aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concepts of peace and development, exploring their definitions, relationships, and importance in contemporary society.

Peace can generally be defined as a state of harmony characterized by the absence of violence, conflict, and tension (Ki-Zerbo, 1990; United Nations 2020). It encompasses both internal and external peace, including peace within individuals, communities, and nations, as well as peace between nations. Development, on the other hand, refers to the process of societal progress and improvement in areas such as economic growth, social well-being, political stability, and environmental sustainability (World Bank, 2011). The concept of development focuses on

addressing poverty, inequality, and inadequacies in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and other essential aspects of society (World Bank, 2011).

The relationship between peace and development is a symbiotic one. Peace provides a stable environment necessary for development to thrive, while development addresses the root causes of conflict and contributes to the sustainability of peace (Ki-Zerbo, 1990; United Nations, 2009; World Bank, 2011; United Nations 2020). Peaceful societies are more likely to achieve sustainable development as resources can be effectively allocated towards improving living standards, education, healthcare, and infrastructure. On the other hand, development initiatives that prioritize social justice, equality, and inclusive growth contribute to reducing socioeconomic disparities that often give rise to conflicts and unrest.

The interconnectedness between peace and development can be observed through various dimensions. Economically, the absence of armed conflicts and violence further encourages investment, trade, and economic growth, leading to the development of infrastructure, job creation, and poverty reduction. Socially, peaceful environments promote inclusion, respect for human rights, and equitable distribution of resources, enhancing social cohesion and well-being. Politically, peaceful societies are more likely to uphold democratic principles, good governance, and the rule of law, creating an environment conducive to development (World Bank, 2011).

The concepts of peace and development have gained significant importance in contemporary society due to a multitude of global challenges. Conflicts, violence, terrorism, violent agitations, social unrest, natural disasters, climate change, and economic inequality threaten the stability and progress of nations (World Bank, 2011; United Nations 2020). Achieving peace and sustainable development has become a shared global objective, with international organizations, governments, civil society, and individuals working together to address these challenges.

Peacebuilding efforts, such as conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation, are essential for stabilizing conflict-affected regions and fostering development. Development initiatives, on the other hand, must be undertaken with a holistic approach, integrating social, economic, and environmental considerations to ensure long-term sustainability and equitable benefit for all individuals and communities.

In conclusion, the concepts of peace and development are deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing (Korf, 2018). A peaceful environment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, while development initiatives contribute to the creation and maintenance of peace (Paris, 2017). With the pressing global challenges faced today, it is crucial to recognize the interconnectedness between peace and development and prioritize efforts that promote both concepts simultaneously (Korf, 2018). By doing so, societies can strive towards creating a more just, inclusive, and prosperous world for current and future generations.

The Policy on Modular Refinery in Nigeria

The story of the modular refinery policy will not be complete if not traced to the various steps taken by the Government to reposition the refining business in Nigeria. As earlier stated, Nigeria's petroleum industry has been bedevilled with numerous challenges that seem getting out of control for a long time. Nigeria has four refineries that were built between 1965 and 1989 with capacities ranging from sixty thousand (60,000) to hundred thousand (100, 000) barrels per day as shown in the table below. The refineries suffered from inadequate maintenance from inception. The record shows that the initial capacity of the first two refineries

which was well enough for local demand declined resulting in Nigeria importing refined petroleum products from Cameroon, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast (Tella, 2023).

Table 1: History of Refineries in Nigeria

Time	Location	Capacity
1 1965	Alesa Eleme, Port Harcourt	60,000
2 1978	Warri	100,000
3 1980	Kaduna	100,000
4 1989	Alesa Eleme, Port Harcourt	100,000

Source: Tella Sheriffdeen, Punch Newspaper.

However, the situation improved with the establishment of more refineries in Warri and Kaduna, which increased the capacity to over four hundred thousand barrels per day when the local demand was then slightly above two hundred thousand (200,000) barrels per day. The situation with the refineries in Nigeria was also complicated by the endemic corruption in the petroleum industry (Oyesola, 2023). The provisions made for turnaround maintenance of the refineries were mismanaged. The refineries became redundant over time. The situation has degenerated to the extent that the largest part of the domestic needs of refined petroleum products are imported from outside Nigeria by NNPC and private oil marketers.

Apart from corruption in the Nigerian oil industry, one major factor hampering the sector as earlier stated is the vandalism of oil infrastructure by violent agitators and oil theft. Thousands of illegal refineries sprang up in the region established by the militants and their collaborators (Mamudu, et al., 2019). They source oil through vandalism and stealing (Mamudu, et al., 2019). These issues have created more concerns for the Government than the corruption bedeviling the sector. In response to these, the Government applied several measures without success. The idea of modular refinery policy was then muted as a policy of the State.

Table 2: Some of the Upcoming Modular Refineries in Nigeria

S/N O	Name	Location	Plant Configurati on	License Granted (Date)	Project Description	Capacit y (BPSD)
1	Waltersmith Refining & Petrochemica l Company Limited	Ibigwe, Imo State	Topping plant	Approval to Construct (March 2017)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene, diesel, and low-pour fuel oil.	5,000

2	Clairgold Oil & Gas	Koko, Delta State	Hydro-skimming plant	Approval to Construct (March 2017)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene, diesel, and low-pour fuel oil.	20,000
3	Niger-Delta Petroleum Resources	Ogbele, Rivers's State	Hydro skimming plant	Approval to Relocate/Construct 5,000 Bpsd Atmospheric Distillation Unit. (Feb. 2017)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene (DPK), diesel (AGO), Marine diesel, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	10,000
4	Dee Jone	New Port Extension, Calabar Port, Cross Rivers State	Topping plant	Approval to Construct/Relocate (ATC) (June 2016)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene (DPK), diesel (AGO), and low-pour fuel oil (LPFO).	6,000
5	Energia Limited	Kwale, Delta State	Hydro-skimming plan	License to Establish (LTE) (August 2015)	A modular plant capable of producing LPG, gasoline (PMS), kerosene (DPK), diesel (AGO), and low-pour	20,000

					fuel oil (LPFO).	
6	Southfield Petrochemical & Refinery Ltd.	Owanoba, Edo State	Hydro-skimming plant	License to Establish (LTE) (August 2016)	A modular plant capable of producing Gasoline, LPG, kerosene (DPK), diesel (AGO), and low-pour fuel oil (LPFO).	20,000
7	Starex Petroleum Refinery Ltd	Onne Oil & Gas Free Trade Zone	Conversion cracking plan	Approval to Construct (2004)	Conventional plant capable of producing transportation fuels PMS, HHK, AGO; and heating oil LPFO.	100,000
8	RG Shinjin Petrochemicals Limited	Koko, Delta State	Hydro-skimming plant	Approval to Construct (Sept. 2017)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene, diesel, and low-pour fuel oil.	10,000
9	OPAC Refineries	Umuseti, Delta	Topping plant	Approval to Construct (Mar. 2018)	A modular plant capable of producing naphtha, kerosene, diesel, and low-pour fuel oil.	7,000

Source: Department of Petroleum Resources

Peace and Development in the Niger-Delta Region

The constitutional provision for the attainment of good governance, democracy, and social justice, for all citizens' welfare is provided for under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, which can be found in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution as amended. Particularly, Section 14 sub-section 1 states that: "The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice". While sub-section 2 says "It is hereby, accordingly, declared that: (a) sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority. (b) the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018).

Flowing from these constitutional provisions, it can be argued convincingly that good governance, social justice, peace, and development are adequately guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution. Therefore, it is the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive, or judicial powers, to conform, to observe and apply the provisions of this Chapter of the Constitution. Hence, the policy on modular refineries was conceived for the purpose of providing employment opportunities for the inhabitants of the region.

In the Sun editorial of April 18, 2017, it was reported that "the policy on modular refineries is one of the outside-the-box strategies many stakeholders have been advocating to boost peace and development efforts in the Niger-Delta". Though the amnesty programme has not been totally stopped, the modular refineries policy is widely believed to have strengthened the programme and immensely contributed to the peace being experienced in the region.

Modular Refinery Policy and B. F. Skinner's Incentive Theory of Motivation

The State has always overseen oil administration in Nigeria since its discovery. The private sector has played a minimal role in terms of policy and administration of the industry. The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) oversees the administration of the sector under the supervision of the Ministry of Petroleum headed by a minister. Also, the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) supervises the operational activities of the sector. The Nigerian oil industry is facing numerous challenges ranging from poorly managed refineries, subsidy issues, corruption, and vandalism of oil infrastructures by militants from the region. In response to the various challenges confronting the oil sector, most especially the ones related to oil refining, several licenses were issued for the establishment of private refineries but unfortunately, none could go ahead for obvious reasons except the recently inaugurated Dangote refinery in Lagos and the ongoing BUA refinery in Akwa-Ibom State. However, confronting the various challenges in the Niger-Delta region, which include insecurity, youth unemployment; the issue of alleged marginalisation, and other serious problems faced by the dwellers of the region motivated the Federal Government's policy permitting the establishment of modular refineries by private individuals and converting the illegal refineries to functional modular refineries, which many consider a welcome step at the right time. As earlier stated, the policy is meant to legitimise most of the illegal refineries in the region; stop the vandalism of oil infrastructures and get the people of the region directly involved in the governance of the sector. This all-inclusive peaceful approach to governance of the oil sector is better explained using the Incentive Theory of Motivation by B. F. Skinner of 1938 (Indeed, 2023).

Justifying the establishment of Modular refineries by the Federal Government, Baru, the former Group Managing Director of NNPC, according to Adeyemo (2018) said:

The creation of modular refineries stands as a central strategy of the Buhari administration aimed at addressing unrest in the Niger Delta region, which holds a significant share of Nigeria's crude oil resources. The government's objective is to employ these modular refineries to halt unauthorized crude oil refining activities, fostering job opportunities and economic prosperity for Niger Delta residents... As time progresses, the aspiration to shift Nigeria's status from a net exporter of crude oil to a net exporter of refined petroleum products is anticipated to materialize.

Specifically, the strategic decision to come up with the modular refinery policy is a direct response to the violent agitations in the region and it's also meant to stop the attacks on oil pipelines and hijack of crude oil, which was either sold to international collaborators or refined to sell into Nigeria market (Umana, 2018). In the long run, the policy is also meant to reduce or totally stop the importation of refined petroleum products from other countries to strengthen the Nigerian economy. The modular refinery policy is also a way of including the Niger-Deltans in the administration of oil in Nigeria as one of the peace-building strategies. Economic incentives, as explained by the Incentive Theory of Motivation can play a positive role in the process of peacebuilding (Press-Barnathan, 2006). Liberalising ownership of refineries in favour of willing Niger Delta people and other Nigerians is a form of economic incentive meant to create peace in Nigeria. On the other hand, it is a response to the yearnings of the people of the region and such a response showcases the beauties of democracy. Before now, many mini refineries were operated illegally, and crude oil was sourced through stealing by perpetrators as captured by Mamudu, et al. (2019):

In a determined attempt to completely eliminate the presence of unauthorized refineries, a comprehensive operation known as a bubble burst was executed within the Niger Delta region spanning from January to December 2012, led by the Joint Task Force. The outcome of this initiative led to the dismantling of 4,349 illegal refineries, 1,215 Cotonou boats, 187 tanker trucks, 178 fuel storage sites, and 5,574 surface tanks. Additionally, in 1945 individuals involved in illicit oil bunkering were apprehended. Paradoxically, the situation's irony lies in the fact that the more the Government invests efforts and resources to quell these activities, the more they proliferate, emerging like rapidly growing mushrooms (Mamudu et al, 2019).

The former Vice-President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo in his contribution to the benefits of modular refinery policy in Nigeria pointed out two major advantages; to include peace and economic development in the Niger-Delta region and Nigeria in general as quoted below:

Modular refineries have the potential to guarantee the independence of petroleum product supply, simultaneously discouraging the operation of unauthorized refineries and mitigating oil-related pollution. The speaker emphasizes that the Buhari administration holds a steadfast dedication to advancing the development of privately funded modular refineries. This strategy aims to enhance domestic refining capabilities, generate employment opportunities as economic incentives, and foster tranquillity and harmony within the Niger-Delta region (*Vanguard*, 2017).

Responding to challenges in a 'win-win' for all requires the application of democratic principles, one of which is listening to the people's demands. The motive behind the policy on modular refineries explains the beauty of democracy. Responding to the delicate situation using a peaceful strategy devoid of violence and ensuring all parties are satisfied at least to some extent, where peace is the product is a clear incentivised motivation for progress in any society. According to Indeed (2023), the Incentive Theory of Motivation (ITM) is a behavioural proposition suggesting that people are motivated by a drive for incentive and reinforcement.

The ITM explains that people behave in a way they believe will result in a reward and make them avoid actions that may entail punishment as manifested in the government response to oil theft and vandalism in the Niger Delta region. The policy on modular refineries has the intention of motivating local communities to eschew violence and embrace peace through their involvement in the governance of the oil sector. This is easier in a democratic setting. Buttressing this argument, Olaniyan and Bello (2020) believe that democratic behaviour is prone to peaceful coexistence. This could be possible only when the government, which has the authority to make decisions over the people, responds to the yearnings and aspirations of the people through the provision of incentives as contained in the policy on modular refineries in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the major reason for the agitations in the Niger Delta region is for the people's welfare, which is the primary purpose of Government according to section 14 subsection 2 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended which states that:

(a) The ownership of sovereignty rests with the Nigerian populace, from whom the government draws its powers and legitimacy through this Constitution; (b) the foremost objective of the government shall be the protection and well-being of the citizens; and (c) the involvement of the people in their governance shall be guaranteed in alignment with the stipulations outlined in this Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018).

With the level of challenges in the Niger Delta, it became necessary for the Government of Nigeria to find an alternative solution that will give a sense of belonging to the people. The amnesty programme, which is dependent on the continuous dolling of free money to everyone in the region; or the pipeline security contract to the violent agitators were meant not to be sustainable and enduring. The policy for the establishment of modular refineries in the Niger Delta region, which has the potential of creating many employments, is a fulfilment of section 14(2)a, b, and c of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended. However, the Theory of Motivation could be applied differently. It could occur in the form of positive incentives or negative incentives. Unlike other motivational proposals, the Incentive Theory of Motivation is pushed by external forces. Most of the other related theories are based on intrinsic energies. The people in the Niger-Delta are being motivated by the policy on modular refineries.

Meanwhile, not all incentives motivate equally on similar issues in different places. For instance, there are still many former agitators not motivated by the government's policy on modular refineries (Indeed, 2023). In the same way, the reception of incentive motivation could also manifest differently. For instance, Franzoi (2015) in his book titled 'A Dictionary of Experience, explains that a child may welcome his parents' praises while alone with them, which may change when his friends come in to avoid their teasing. However, the policy of the Nigerian government on modular refinery and the emerging impacts is better explained by the Incentive Theory of Motivation.

Methodology

Study Area

The Niger Delta region is characterized by its intricate network of river channels, creeks, swamps, and mangrove forests, forming one of Africa's largest wetland ecosystems (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2013). The region comprises nine states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, Abia, and Rivers with a combined population of about thirty-one (31) million people and about 41 ethnic groups. The Niger Delta is also known

for its rich biodiversity, especially in the mangrove forests that provide habitat and breeding grounds for various fish and bird species (International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2010). According to Niger Delta Environmental Survey (2011), the region is facing environmental challenges due to oil exploration and extraction activities, resulting in oil spills and degradation of ecosystems. Diverse ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, such as the Ijaw, Itsekhiri, and Ogoni, have distinct socio-cultural dynamics and face various challenges related to oil activities (Ibeanu, 2003). It is worthy of note that Niger Delta contributes significantly to Nigeria's oil production, playing a substantial role in the country's economic development (Akpomovie, 2015). The region has witnessed recurring conflicts related to oil-related grievances, highlighting the importance of studying conflict dynamics and resolution in the area (Dudley, 2018). Research in the Niger Delta can explore sustainable development strategies, including resource management and community engagement (Effiom, 2017).

Research Design

The ethnographical qualitative research approach was employed for this study. The researchers observed and documented the situations faced by the people in the Niger Delta in respect of challenges caused by oil exploration. The researchers conducted interviews to complement what was observed and documented. This process was done by proxy through research assistants. The researchers also used the data collected from secondary sources to complement the primary data collected in the field.

Sampling

Stratified random sampling was applied in selecting the respondents for this study. This is so because the various categories of the respondents differ in characteristics. We interviewed ten respondents from each of the following groups of respondents: repentant Niger Delta militants, community leaders, public servants from the Ministry of Petroleum, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPCL), and Niger Delta Development Commission, management members of modular refineries, and security personnel in Bayelsa, Abia and Ondo States. A total of fifty respondents were interviewed over a period of four years.

Instrument and Data Collection

An unstructured interview guide was designed for this study to elicit responses from the interviewee. The interview questions were grouped under each of the five identified sources of peacebuilding inherent in the Modular Refinery Policy that have the substance for ensuring lasting peace in the Niger Delta region. These include economic stability and employment opportunities, local community development, environmental sustainability, stakeholder participation and conflict resolution, and capacity building and skill development. These mechanisms were identified during the period of this study between 2019 and 2023. The interview was conducted in English language and was transcribed in English. The respondents were aware of the details of the interview, and they consented before the interview was conducted. The instrument for data collected was validated by an expert before it was used for this study.

Data Analysis

The interview was transcribed and proofread. Five issues were identified for discussion from the findings as factors that enhanced peacebuilding. The data was analysed using excerpt, paraphrasing, direct quotation, and historical rendition. The data shows how the five issues identified encouraged peace in the Niger Delta.

Findings

The objective of this study is to interrogate the peace-building mechanism inherent in the modular refinery policy. We discussed the findings under each sub-heading for adequacy and clarity.

Table 3: Sociodemographic Backgrounds of the Respondents

S/N	Demography	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Youths (20-40 years)	31	62%
		Elderly (41 years and above)	19	38%
2	Gender	Male	39	78%
		Female	11	22%
3	Education	Educated	34	68%
		Uneducated	16	32%
4	Religion	Islam	7	14%
		Christianity	43	86%

The sociodemographic distribution of the respondents is presented in the table above. It comprises youths and the elderly, male and female, educated and uneducated, Muslims and Christians. Most of the respondents are youth covering 62% of the total respondents. 78% of male respondents were interviewed, and most of them are educated, while 86% of them are Christians.

Economic Stability and Employment Opportunities

Our findings established that modular refinery can create local employment opportunities, particularly in regions affected by petroleum crises and agitations like the Niger Delta. Respondents unanimously agreed that any employment opportunity as represented in the Modular Refinery Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria, will motivate peacebuilding. They added that the provision of jobs for the local population particularly the youths, will address economic grievances, reduce unemployment rates, and alleviate poverty. Economic stability and access to decent livelihoods often contribute to peaceful conditions as indicated by the majority of the respondents. In line with the majority position of the respondents, these are the words of a key informant and a community leader from Ekeromo in Bayelsa State:

The oil is a natural gift to our people and as you can see, it is on our land. These resources is enjoyed by all Nigerians and even foreign nationals. However, it is sad that our people bear the pains of exploration from water pollution to land degradation and most painful, growing unemployment for our youths. That is why we were so happy when the government of President Buhari pronounced the policy on modular refineries. It is our belief that encouraging the local people to participate in the governance of the oil industry will create Economic Stability and Employment Opportunities for our people and it will ease the tension in the region.

This is the opinion of all the respondents interviewed on this subject from the three States where samples were drawn, except a retired professor from Ondo State who believed the Modular Refinery Policy is not enough to ease the tension in the area. He believed the government must

insist that multinational companies deliver on their social responsibilities to the people. They needed to play the game according to the rules. These are his words:

The challenge with Nigeria is that those in government connive with the multinational oil companies to reap the people. There are clear business rules expected to be respected by the stakeholders in the oil industry, which are being boycotted for selfish reasons. I personally do not believe until a modular refinery policy is enacted the people can enjoy their natural gift. While I am not against the policy, at least it is an additional advantage, the Modular Refinery Policy will fail if the same attitude of those in government does not change. This country is blessed particularly the Niger Delta region

Local Community Development

The majority of the respondents aligned with the fact that the Modular Refinery Policies of the FGN will develop the local communities. The respondents suggested that this can be achieved through initiatives aimed at providing social infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other social amenities. They agreed that providing the amenities will ensure peacebuilding in the Niger Delta because those are some of the issues of contention leading to the various violent agitations in the region. They added that investing in local community development will help to address social grievances, improve living conditions, and foster a sense of inclusiveness and belonging, all of which contribute to peacebuilding. In the words of a respondent, who was a youth leader and a stakeholder in one of the Ondo State riverine communities as follows:

Development is local, when the local communities are developed, the cities will have peace. The violence in the creek is a response to the lack of development in the local communities. The only way for peace is for development to reach the grassroots and I believe the Modular Refinery Policy will provide the opportunity if well executed.

Another respondent from Abia state who was a retired public servant stated that:

The main problem in the business of exploration is the negligence of the local communities. Those who will cause problems for the government are living in the local communities. With the Modular Refinery Policy, some of those who will establish it will come from these local communities. It will not be difficult for them to develop their communities. This will help in the peacebuilding process.

Furthermore, a former militant who is now an entrepreneur empowered through the Amnesty Programme in Rivers State echoed the thoughts of the majority of the respondents:

What the people want is not much and multiplying refineries through the Modular Refinery Policy will greatly help in providing those needs. For instance, the local communities are suffering from a lack of quality and adequate medical centres, well-equipped schools, good roads, water supply, electricity, and others. These amenities will make life liveable for rural dwellers. It will also distract them from violent agitations. It is truly a motivation for peacebuilding.

It is the majority opinion that taking development to the local communities will enhance the peacebuilding process in the Niger Delta region.

Environmental Sustainability

All the respondents believed that traditional oil refineries often have detrimental environmental impacts, which in most cases lead to discontent and conflicts with local communities. However,

they also suggested that modular refineries should be designed with advanced technologies that minimize pollution and adhere to strict environmental regulations. In their opinion, this has not been the case with the oil giants in Nigeria which is one of the reasons why the people of Niger Delta embarked on agitations. They proposed that by integrating sustainable practices and promoting ecological conservation, modular refinery policies can address environmental concerns, reduce conflicts over resource exploitation, and contribute to peacebuilding.

A university lecturer who has been conversant with the environmental challenges faced by the people of the region states that:

The environmental pollution in the Niger Delta is monumental and it is a very serious challenge. I am aware that the extent of environmental impact in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is significant and has been a matter of concern for several decades. The region has experienced extensive pollution and degradation due to oil exploration and production activities. I am strongly suggesting that the Modular Refinery Policy should incorporate some ways of minimizing the environmental impact of oil exploration. This, in my view, will end the agitations in the region.

Another respondent who was party to a conflict resolution committee on environmental crisis maintained as follows:

Oil spills are a major issue in the Niger Delta, resulting from reactionary pipeline vandalism, equipment failure, and poor maintenance practices. These spills contaminate water bodies, agricultural lands, and forests, causing significant damage to the local ecosystem and impacting the livelihoods of communities reliant on fishing and farming. The government policy on modular refineries is an opportunity to mitigate these problems. This is because the government will insist on the reduction of environmental impact when the refineries are being built. This will allow the people to farm, fish and do other activities that will impact positively on the lives of the people. In the end, this will bring about peace in the region.

A key informant from Ondo State agreed with this position, however, he is looking at it from another perspective as follows:

While it is true that multinational oil companies have been engaged in the business of polluting the environment, however, it is not only the companies, but the people too are also culpable. The attitude of the people to the environment is not encouraging. Nevertheless, it is believed that the modular refinery companies being community-based companies, will assist in the orientation of the people in respect of environmental challenges and causes. With this, there will not be a need for agitation.

Stakeholders Participation and Conflict Resolution

All the respondents suggested that modular refinery policies can promote stakeholder participation and dialogue among key actors, such as the government, local communities, and oil companies. They posited that it will be easy to establish platforms for engagement, consultation, and conflict resolution with the modular refineries and will help in addressing grievances, building trust, and ensuring that the concerns of all parties are heard and addressed with minimal bureaucracy associated with the multinational oil companies. This inclusive approach according to the respondents will promote peaceful coexistence and reduce the likelihood of violent agitation in the region. For instance, two respondents that were

interviewed together, one a community chief and the other a retired security chief were quoted as follows:

The non-inclusion of stakeholders in the administration of the oil industry is one of the causes of violent agitations in the Niger Delta region. When community stakeholders are included in the administration processes of the oil business, the level of conflict will be reduced.

A stakeholder from the Ministry of Petroleum suggested as follows:

When stakeholders actively participate in the conflict resolution process, they gain a deeper understanding of the conflict's root causes and underlying issues. This understanding helps them empathize with others' perspectives, identify common interests, and find mutually acceptable solutions. Engaging stakeholders ensures that a wide range of perspectives and interests are considered during conflict resolution. This diversity fosters creativity, innovation, and the exploration of alternative solutions that might otherwise be overlooked. By incorporating different viewpoints, stakeholders can collectively generate more inclusive and sustainable resolutions. The Ministry of Petroleum will continue to encourage the inclusion of stakeholders to strengthen the peacebuilding process in the Niger Delta region.

All the respondents agreed with this position. Some even noted that it is a serious problem leading to crises in the region.

Capacity Building and Skill Development.

The respondents believed that implementing modular refinery policies creates opportunities for local communities to acquire technical skills and expertise. Training programmes and support for skill development can empower individuals in the region, improve employability, and foster entrepreneurship. The respondents suggested that by equipping residents with valuable skills, the policies enable them to actively participate in the oil industry, reducing the perception of exclusion and inequality, and contributing to a peaceful environment. In reference to a few respondents, a key respondent who owns an oil company has this to say:

Through the provision of capacity-building programmes focused on conflict resolution skills, individuals and communities in the oil crisis region can develop the necessary abilities to effectively manage and resolve conflicts. These skills include negotiation, mediation, communication, and problem-solving techniques. These skills empower stakeholders to address conflicts peacefully and find mutually acceptable solutions. I train my workers to have these skills. I believe it should be incorporated into the modular refinery policy for the companies. It will help in the peacebuilding process.

Another respondent suggests that:

Capacity-building programmes can focus on skill development and entrepreneurship to enhance economic empowerment in the oil crisis region. By providing training on sustainable livelihoods, and job creation, individuals are given opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions. Economic stability and opportunities can reduce grievances and contribute to peacebuilding by addressing the underlying causes of conflict.

Discussion

In the context of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, several peace initiatives have been employed in the past, however, this study elicits responses from respondents, and they were unanimous on five peace-building mechanisms which they believed are inherent in the Modular Refinery Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria. This study realised that if these mechanisms are well articulated in the policy and well implemented, it will address the challenges faced in the region, particularly militancy and violent agitations.

In line with the suggestion of Paris (2017), this study found that the Modular Refinery Policy will provide economic stability and employment opportunities which is crucial to mitigate conflicts in the Niger Delta region. The establishment of modular refineries will definitely foster a business environment, attract other forms of investments, and promote sustainable economic growth for the local communities.

The study realised that the establishment of multiple modular refineries will ensure diversification of the economy, encourage entrepreneurship, improve infrastructure, effectively manage resources, and consequently engender peace in the Niger Delta. We found that creating employment opportunities, especially for the youth, is crucial to reducing poverty and social tensions. Job creation can be supported through skills development programmes and vocational training.

This study also found that promoting local community development is key to peacebuilding for several reasons. First, it fosters a sense of ownership and participation among community members, empowering them to take an active role in shaping their future. According to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall (1999), when individuals have a stake in their community's development, they are more likely to work towards maintaining peace. Additionally, local community development can address the root causes of conflict, which often stem from issues like poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services. By improving these conditions, as suggested by Lederach (1995), communities can reduce the factors that lead to conflict and violence. Moreover, community development can facilitate dialogue and reconciliation processes, as highlighted by Avruch (1998). When communities work together on projects, it promotes interactions and trust-building, bridging divides that may have contributed to conflicts. Promoting local community development also aligns with the principle of subsidiarity, a concept emphasized in the European Union (EU) (Hill, 2005). It asserts that decisions should be made at the most local level possible, allowing communities to have a say in their development and peace efforts, rather than relying on top-down approaches.

It was found that the Niger Delta region has faced severe environmental degradation due to oil exploration and related activities. Implementing environmental sustainability measures is crucial for peacebuilding in the region (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2011), which is inherent in Nigeria's Modular Refinery Policy. This can include stricter regulations on oil companies to prevent pollution and degradation, environmental remediation programmes to restore damaged ecosystems, and the promotion of renewable energy sources (Seiyaboh et al., 2017). This study also found that the Modular Refinery Policy will ensure the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes, particularly regarding environmental protection, which is essential to ensure sustainability, and crucial to peacebuilding (Ajake et al., 2020).

In addition, engaging all relevant stakeholders in the peace-building process is crucial to achieving long-lasting solutions (Ajake et al., 2020). This peacebuilding mechanism is embedded in the Modular Refinery Policy because the industries are in the local communities and some of them are owned by the communities. The stakeholders include government agencies, local communities, civil society organizations, and oil corporations. The structure of the modular refineries will make conflict resolution easy through dialogue platforms, mediation, and peace committees. These are expected to be established by the modular refineries in conjunction with the local communities to facilitate peaceful negotiations and address grievances. Encouraging inclusive participation and ensuring transparent governance processes in the oil industry will help to build trust among stakeholders and reduce the likelihood of violent conflicts.

Enhancing the capacities and skills of individuals and communities in the Niger Delta region is vital to promoting peace and development. The establishment of modular refineries will enhance the promotion of capacity and skills, particularly in the area of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Alao et al., 2019). Capacity building programmes by the modular refineries can focus on education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. Skills development initiatives should align with the needs of the local economy, empowering individuals and promoting a sense of self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper concludes that the government's decision to introduce the modular refinery policy is right at the right time. Involving the people in the exploration of resources and distribution of wealth is a veritable instrument of entrenching peace most especially in a crisis-ridden region like the Niger-Delta. This is because the people will feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. Therefore, the government is required to continue to explore ways of strengthening the policy by incorporating the five mechanisms identified in this study into the policy. We believe modular refineries will foster peace in the Niger Delta region.

In addition, the government should invest heavily in infrastructural facilities and create a conducive atmosphere capable of promoting the establishment of more modular refineries in the region in order to check the restiveness of the teeming youths for them to enjoy the desired and enduring peace that will lead to sustainable development.

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