



# **Politics of Exclusion of Host Communities: A Study of the Management of Natural Resources in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality, Delta State of Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The environmental impact of oil extraction activities has significantly complicated the socio-political landscape of the Niger Delta. Over the past few decades, oil spills, gas flaring, and other forms of environmental degradation have devastated the local ecology, making traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing increasingly unsustainable. The exclusionary politics in the Niger Delta cannot be solely attributed to the Nigerian state. International oil companies (IOCS) have also been implicated in marginalizing host communities. These companies often prioritize their relationships with the federal government, neglecting meaningful engagement with the local population. The study examined the Politics of exclusion of host communities and the management of natural resources in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in the Delta State of Nigeria. This study employed the cross-sectional research design to gather detailed and factual information about the variables under consideration. The data collected from the research instrument (questionnaire) were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study discovered that host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality were excluded in the management of natural resources. The study recommended that the Federal Government and Multinational Oil Companies should adhere to existing policies and laws governing the conduct of natural resources management and involve the host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in the decision making and Management of the natural resources.

**KEYWORDS:** Politics of Exclusion, Natural Resources Management, Environment,

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Niger Delta region in Nigeria holds significant strategic importance due to its abundant reserves of oil and gas, which form the foundation of Nigeria's economy. Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956, the region has been the primary source of the country's foreign exchange earnings, contributing over 90% of export revenues and nearly 70% of government income (Alabi & Inokoba, 2023). Despite this, the local communities in the Niger Delta have largely remained marginalized, impoverished, and excluded from the political and economic processes that govern the management and distribution of the wealth generated from their land. This paradox has led to increasing discontent, and over the years, the region has experienced social unrest, environmental degradation, and violent conflict. The marginalization of host communities from resource management in the Niger Delta is deeply ingrained in historical, political, and economic factors. Since the colonial era, successive Nigerian governments have maintained centralized control over oil resources, ensuring that the benefits of oil extraction primarily accrue to the federal government and international oil companies (IOCs), while leaving the local population with minimal benefits from the substantial wealth extracted from their land (Onwuka & Uzoigwe, 2022). This centralized control was further entrenched through legal frameworks such as the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978, which effectively transferred ownership of all land and natural resources to the state, thereby depriving the Niger Delta communities of any legal or economic stake in the wealth generated from their environment (Agah & Ikenga, 2007, Nwankwo & Udoh, 2022). The environmental impact of oil extraction activities has significantly complicated the socio-political landscape of the Niger Delta. Over the past few decades, oil spills, gas flaring, and other forms of environmental degradation have had a devastating effect on the local ecology, making traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing increasingly unsustainable (Ikenga, 2012, Ibeanu et al., 2023). Recent reports indicate that environmental pollution in the Niger Delta has reached crisis levels, with millions of barrels of oil spilled into the creeks and rivers, resulting in the destruction of farmlands and the contamination of water sources (Amadi & Obi, 2022). This environmental degradation has worsened the economic hardship faced by the host communities, many of whom have had to rely on compensation and corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects from oil companies, which are often insufficient and poorly managed.

Despite the Niger Delta's significant contribution to the nation's wealth, the region continues to grapple with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. Recent studies reveal that over 70% of the population in the area lives below the poverty line, facing limited access to essential infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Ezekiel & Ojo, 2022). This stark inequality has fueled resentment among the local population, leading to peaceful protests and the emergence of armed resistance groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which advocate

for a greater share of oil revenues and control over their land's resources (Omotsho & Aliyu, 2023). These groups have resorted to tactics like oil bunkering, sabotage of oil infrastructure, and kidnapping of oil workers, further exacerbating the region's security challenges.

The Nigerian government has made various attempts to address the grievances of the Niger Delta communities through the establishment of special development agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA). However, these institutions have faced widespread criticism for corruption, mismanagement, and lack of accountability. Recent reports have exposed the loss of billions of dollars earmarked for the region's development to corruption, while crucial projects remain incomplete or abandoned (Duru & Iwu, 2023). Consequently, these efforts have failed to address the underlying causes of conflict and underdevelopment in the region, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion and discontent.

The exclusionary politics in the Niger Delta cannot be solely attributed to the Nigerian state. International oil companies (IOCs) have also been implicated in marginalizing host communities. These companies often prioritize their relationships with the federal government, neglecting meaningful engagement with the local population. While some IOCs have initiated corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs aimed at providing social amenities and creating job opportunities, these efforts are often perceived as inadequate and tokenistic (Owolabi, 2023). Furthermore, many CSR projects are designed without proper consultation with the communities, leading to their failure or irrelevance to the actual needs of the people. This has deepened the sense of alienation and exclusion felt by the host communities.

In recent years, the global energy transition and the push for more sustainable development have added a new dimension to the Niger Delta crisis. As the world moves towards cleaner energy sources, there is increasing concern that the Niger Delta, already impoverished by decades of oil exploitation, could be further marginalized in a post-oil economy. Scholars have argued that without deliberate efforts to invest in the region's human capital and diversify its economy, the Niger Delta may fall victim to what has been termed the "resource curse," where regions rich in natural resources experience slower development and higher levels of conflict than less endowed regions (Ikejiaku & Ogbonna, 2024). This highlights the urgent need for a re-evaluation of the governance structures surrounding resource management in the Niger Delta, with a focus on inclusion, environmental sustainability, and equitable distribution of wealth.

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## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout history, the Nigerian government has exerted exclusive control over the oil wealth produced in the Niger Delta through a series of legal frameworks that have effectively stripped local communities of their rights to directly benefit from the resources in their environment. Key laws such as the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978 have concentrated ownership of land and minerals in the hands of the federal government, disempowering local communities from influencing the management of their natural resources (Okocha & Ede, 2023). This legal and institutional framework has perpetuated a system in which oil revenue is predominantly funneled to the central government, with little reaching the local communities, further deepening the sense of marginalization.

The neglect of host communities is exacerbated by the environmental devastation caused by decades of oil exploration and production activities. Oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation have severely impacted the ecosystem of the Niger Delta, undermining traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing, and driving many deeper into poverty (Akintunde et al., 2022). Studies indicate that from 2007 to 2021, over 40 million litres of oil were spilled into the waters and farmlands of the Niger Delta, further damaging the already fragile environment (Aluko & Thomas, 2022). Despite this, the responsible oil companies have shown little accountability, and efforts to remedy the situation have been grossly inadequate, leaving the affected communities to bear the burden of environmental damage with little compensation. This has led to a deep sense of disenfranchisement and powerlessness among the host communities. Even though their land is the source of significant national wealth, they are often excluded from discussions on resource management and spending. Many community members have expressed frustration over the lack of meaningful involvement in the oil industry, which they perceive as being dominated by elites in partnership with foreign oil companies. This exclusionary governance structure, combined with the lack of development in the region, has resulted in heightened tensions and frequent conflicts between local communities, the government, and oil companies (Ezigbo & Nnadi, 2023).

The Nigerian government has made several efforts to address these issues, including the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2008. However, these initiatives have largely been unsuccessful in resolving the underlying grievances. While these institutions were intended to allocate development funds to the region, they have been plagued by allegations of corruption, inefficiency, and mismanagement. Recent investigations into the NDDC revealed that significant funds earmarked for development projects in the Niger Delta were either misused or diverted, leaving the local population without essential infrastructure and services (Obiora & Okorie, 2022). Consequently, these institutions have failed to address the sense of exclusion and disenfranchisement experienced by the communities, contributing to the perpetuation of poverty and underdevelopment.

The exclusion of host communities extends beyond economic and environmental concerns, encompassing significant social and political implications. Over time, this has resulted in a growing sense of political alienation, leading to protests, civil disobedience, and, in extreme cases, the emergence of militant groups. One of the most prominent groups is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which emerged in the early 2000s. MEND's activities, such as attacks on oil installations and the kidnapping of oil workers, have been driven by demands for greater control over the region's resources and a more equitable share of the oil wealth (Idemudia & Adebayo, 2023). The rise of such militant groups underscores how the exclusion of host communities has contributed to insecurity and instability in the region.

The exclusionary policies have hindered efforts toward sustainable development in the region. A significant issue is the lack of local input in development initiatives, resulting in projects that do not effectively address the genuine needs of the communities. Development efforts, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs implemented by International Oil Companies (IOCs), are often perceived as superficial or poorly targeted, failing to have a meaningful impact on the lives of the people (Ojo & Ekanem, 2023). The discrepancy between the top-down approach of these initiatives and the actual needs of the communities has deepened the distrust between the people, the government, and the oil companies.

This study aims to address the issue of the exclusion of host communities from the management and benefits of their natural resources in the Niger Delta. It seeks to explore how this exclusion has contributed to the ongoing environmental, socio-economic, and political crises in the region. The study seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to resource governance in the Niger Delta.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The general objective of this study is to examine the politics of exclusion of host communities in the management of natural resources and its impact on Ndokwa ethnic nationality. The specific Objectives are to:

- i. Clarify the concept of politics of exclusion in natural resource management, including the power dynamics, institutional processes, and social structures that marginalize host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality.
- ii. Critically evaluate existing policies, laws, and regulations that systematically exclude host communities from decision-making processes and benefits related to natural resource management in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality.

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## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The study is guided by the following research hypotheses:

H01: There is no significant relationship between power dynamics, institutional processes, and social structures in perpetuating the politics of exclusion in natural resource management.

H02: Existing policies, laws, and regulations do not systematically exclude host communities from decision-making processes and benefits related to natural resource management.

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## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Politics of Exclusion**

Exclusion is the act of denying someone or something the opportunity to participate in an activity or enter a place. In contrast, inclusion is characterized by fair representation, access to, and equitable outcomes from public services across diverse ethnic and religious groups (Mir et al., 2018). Exclusion, on the other hand, is a multifaceted process, often involving one group seeking to assert privilege over another by creating divisions and designating one group as more deserving of resources than the other (Mason et al., 2001). Discrimination based on social identity, such as ethnicity and religion, can lead to people being marginalized. Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon that can manifest at both the collective and individual levels, encompassing economic, social, and cultural dimensions of life. It encompasses material deprivation, limited access to social rights, inadequate social participation, and a lack of cultural and normative integration. It doesn't just refer to the process of being socially excluded (dynamic) but also denotes the state of being socially excluded (static). The risk factors operate at the individual level, within formal and informal organizations and social settings, and at the broader societal level (Jehoel-Gijsbers and Vrooman, 2007; Mir et al., 2020).

The significance of social exclusion and the challenges faced by many minority ethnic and religious communities are deeply rooted in Sustainable Development Goal 10, which advocates for gender equality, human rights, universal access to public services, poverty reduction, and the elimination of inequalities leading to social exclusion. While there are various human rights laws in place (UNICEF and Women, 2013), they do not specifically address the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities, which may contribute to the lack of attention to their civil and political rights within human rights initiatives. Recognizing this deficiency, particularly within the Sustainable Development Goals (MDG), has raised awareness about the need to address discrimination in the post-MDG framework (Ortiz et al., 2010).

### **Host Communities**

Host communities are indigenous or local populations residing in areas where natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, or forests are extracted or exploited (Akpomuvie, 2022). These communities have deep historical, cultural, and spiritual ties to the land and resources, and their livelihoods are significantly impacted by the extraction activities (Omeje, 2022). They often face challenges including environmental degradation, displacement, cultural erasure, and economic exploitation, which perpetuate historical injustices and reinforce existing power dynamics (Escobar, 2022). Despite being directly affected by the extraction activities, host communities are often marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes related to natural resource management (Andreasson, 2022). This exclusion can result in loss of land, water pollution, health problems, and decreased economic opportunities, ultimately undermining the well-being and resilience of host communities (Baxter, 2023). Research has also shown that host communities' participation in natural resource management is crucial for ensuring sustainable development, environmental justice, and social equity (Martinez-Alier, 2022).

However, existing policy frameworks and institutional arrangements often prioritize corporate interests over community needs, exacerbating conflicts and social unrest (Okoli, 2023). Studies have emphasized the importance of community-led initiatives, participatory governance, and benefit-sharing arrangements to address the social and environmental impacts of natural resource extraction (Fraser, 2022). Moreover, recognizing and respecting Indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and resources is essential for promoting social justice and environmental sustainability (UNDRIP, 2022). Recent research highlights the need for transformative policies and practices that prioritize host communities' interests, well-being, and self-determination (Bebbington, 2024).

### **NdoKwa Nationality**

The Ndokwa people are an ethnic group situated in the western part of Delta State, Nigeria. They predominantly reside in the local government areas of Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, and parts of Ukwuani (Ovwasu, 2020). Historically, the Ndokwa people have a rich cultural heritage, with their roots tracing back to the ancient Benin Empire (Ekeh, 2020). Their language, also known as Ndokwa, belongs to the Igbo language family (Onwuejeogwu, 2020). The Ndokwa people have encountered substantial challenges, particularly regarding environmental degradation and economic exploitation due to oil exploration and extraction activities in their region (Okonta, 2020). This has resulted in widespread poverty, unemployment, and social unrest.

Research indicates that the Ndokwa people have been marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes related to natural resource management, despite being directly affected by extraction activities (Akpomuvie, 2022). This exclusion has led to land loss, water pollution, health issues, and decreased economic opportunities (Omeje, 2022). Efforts have been made to promote sustainable development and environmental justice in the Ndokwa region. For instance, community-led initiatives and participatory governance have been advocated for. Additionally, recognizing and respecting Indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and resources is essential for promoting social justice and environmental sustainability (UNDRIP, 2022). Recent studies have emphasized the importance of transformative policies and practices that prioritize the Ndokwa people's interests, well-being, and self-determination. This includes addressing issues related to environmental degradation, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation.

### **Oil Exploration and its Resultant Effects on the Environment, Land, Water, and Air**

The Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality environment has become increasingly vulnerable due to oil exploration activities in the region. Vulnerability encompasses a range of conditions and processes arising from physical, social, economic, and environmental factors, which collectively determine a community's susceptibility to the impact of hazards (Schmidt-Thome and Jarva, 2003). Assessing vulnerability due to environmental degradation involves identifying all potential physical, social, economic, and environmental factors affecting the Niger Delta, stemming from both natural and human-induced changes, such as the exploitation of natural resources, urbanization, industrial development, and afforestation, among others. These adverse trends not only expose the delicate ecosystem of the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality to harsh climate variability but also deepen the nationality's vulnerability to natural disasters. Disasters are sudden events resulting in a large number of casualties, injuries, or significant economic losses (Satter-Thwaite, 2003:80). Since the mid-1980s, when oil notably displaced traditional economic activities in the Niger Delta, the region has witnessed substantial urbanization, with implications for environmental resilience. The emergence of oil cities and related employment opportunities has led to mass migration, urban sprawl, inadequate housing, traffic congestion, and increased human and industrial pressure on an already delicate situation. Moreover, the region's natural terrain and hydrology have exposed it to persistent environmental issues, including flooding, siltation, occlusion, erosion, and shortages of land for development (UNDP, 2006:74). The local residents of the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality have been enduring these hazardous conditions for many years and have devised coping mechanisms, although often with limited effectiveness. Consequently, it is anticipated that the frequency and severity of these challenges will be further compounded by the impacts of global warming. The activities related to oil exploration, which are primarily responsible for the environmental degradation of the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality, comprise:

- **Gas Flaring**

Gas flaring and venting, a significant source of global warming, is one of the most urgent environmental concerns associated with oil exploration and exploitation in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality. During oil production, gas is released as a by-product, known as associated gas. Approximately 75 percent of this associated gas is flared, making Nigeria the highest gas-flaring country globally (Tell Magazine, February 23, 1998: 15).

The Nigerian legislation of 1969 mandated oil companies to establish facilities to utilize associated gas within five years of commencing production. The 1970 legislation imposed a deadline of October 1979 to April 1980 for companies to develop gas utilization projects or face fines (SPDC, 1993). However, a November 2007 report by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) revealed that gas flaring continues in Nigeria (Ugwuaren, 2008:11). Most Oil Host Communities (OHCs) in the Niger Delta endure continuous gas flares, often reaching temperatures of 13,000 to 14,000 degrees Celsius. These gas flares produce 35 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and 12 million tons of methane, making the oil industry in Nigeria a significant contributor to global warming (Bassey, 2001). Despite well-known health risks, the environmental and health impacts of gas flaring on the people of the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality persist.

The deadlines for ending gas flaring in Nigeria have been repeatedly extended, as the government has struggled to enforce the regulations effectively without implementing gas utilization projects. Oil companies' lobbying efforts led to limited exemptions granted in 1985, allowing continued gas flaring in certain cases. The cost of flaring gas has often outweighed the fines imposed, making it more economical for companies to continue flaring and pay the fines rather than invest in gas utilization (Human Rights Watch, July 1995: 70). In January 1998, fines for gas flaring were increased from N0.5 to N10 (US \$11) per 1,000 standard cubic feet (SCF) of gas. Despite the Nigerian government's warnings that the practice would not be tolerated beyond the agreed deadline, gas flaring has continued unabated. The federal government extended the deadline from December 31, 2007, to December 31, 2008, in response to pressure from oil conglomerates, allegedly lobbying for further extensions to 2010. Currently, the fine for gas flaring is N20 per 1,000

SCF. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), gas flaring has been reduced, with approximately 65 percent still being flared, and fines continue to be paid (CBN, 1998: 141). As of the research conducted from December 2010 to early 2011, gas flaring by oil companies remains a frequent issue at various oil fields in the Delta State of the Niger Delta

- **Oil spillage:** The occurrence of oil spills, whether accidental, natural, or deliberate, involves the discharge of crude oil or oil products onto various terrestrial and aquatic environments during the drilling and transportation of oil by multinational companies. The issue of oil spills is a significant environmental concern in the Niger Delta region. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, there have been over 4,000 oil spills, resulting in the release of more than two million barrels of crude oil in the Niger Delta since 1960 (Nwilo and Badejo, 2001, Ipogah & Ikenga, 2023). Specifically, between 1970 and 1988, there were 1,600 recorded cases of oil spills, leading to the release of over 1.678 million barrels of oil into the environment. Additionally, there were 45 reported cases of oil spills in 1993. Oil spills can occur both onshore and offshore as a consequence of various factors. The most common causes of oil spills in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality are equipment failure, accidents, deliberate human action, natural hazards, and other factors. Equipment failure, including overloading, manufacturing defects, and aging equipment, can lead to the leakage of oil into the environment. Accidents during oil production, such as oil well blow-outs, also contribute to oil spills. Deliberate human action, often referred to as vandalization, involves tampering with oil field facilities, particularly pipelines, by inhabitants of oil-bearing communities and intruders. Natural hazards like floods, lightning, and soil erosion can also cause oil spills. Additionally, activities such as loading and unloading petroleum products and cleaning storage tanks can result in oil spills. These spills have had various negative effects on the environment, including biological, ecological, and marine habitat impacts, as well as effects on shorelines, wetlands, and mangroves. (Susu, Abowei Onyeme, 1997: 25 – 31).

The detrimental impact of oil spills is that any natural habitat coming into contact with spilled oil suffers significant damage. This has led to the destruction of much of the natural resources in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality. Tombofa (2005) noted that the adverse effects of crude oil production are linked to primary sources such as oil spills, oil blowouts, and gas flaring. Below is a table presenting oil spill data for the years 1976–1986, followed by a projected forecast of oil spills using moving averages for the years 1987–2000.

- **Deforestation:** Another destructive effect of oil exploration on the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality environment is deforestation. Increased accessibility to forests due to illegal logging, along with oil extraction and expanded investments in the gas sector, has accelerated deforestation in the area. Massive exploration drilling and the construction of pipelines for oil and gas transportation have led to the clearing of forests for pipeline routes, flow stations, and other oil facilities. This exacerbates the damage to the already fragile ecosystem of the region. The loss of forest and coral relief contributes to the region's vulnerability to natural disasters and global climate change. As these forest ecosystems are depleted, the rate of CO<sub>2</sub> absorption decreases, further worsening the environmental conditions for the Oil Host Communities (OHCs) in Utagba-Ogbe (Susu, Abowei, Onyeme in Oil Spills in the Marine Environment).

### Oil Producing Communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality

The following are oil-producing communities with infrastructural deficits in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta State:

- The neglect of infrastructure in the Ndokwa ethnic Nationality of Nigeria is evident in the Beneku and Okpai communities in Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State. Despite contributing nearly 20% of the crude oil production in Delta State, these villages have not seen significant improvements in infrastructure or other areas. Beneku community is home to around 21 oil wells operated by Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC) Limited, and around 40 oil wells are owned by Sterling Oil Exploration and Energy Production Company Limited (SEEPCO). Similarly, Okpai community has approximately 50 oil wells operated by SEEPCO and 31 oil wells operated by NAOC. Despite the substantial oil activity, both communities still lack social and infrastructural development, facing political neglect, social obscurity, and developmental neglect. These communities have suffered from misrepresentation and environmental pollution, negatively impacting their land and resources. Despite the years of oil operations, there have been no significant developmental improvements. According to a management staff engineer from NAOC/SEEPCO, "We have explored oil in Angola, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria. But I have never seen oil-rich villages as completely impoverished as Beneku and Okpai." The oil-producing host communities in Ndokwa East, including Aboh, Afor, Onuogbokor, Igbuku, Onuaboh, and Abalagada, have similarly faced neglect.
- The neglect of infrastructure in selected oil-producing host communities within the Ndokwa West Local Government Area is evident in areas such as Umusadege Ogbe, Ogbeani, and Umuseti Ogbe, all located in the Utagba Ogbe clan. These areas are home to numerous multinational oil companies, including MIDWESTERN Oil and Gas Ltd, Sterling Global, and OPAC Refinery. Despite the presence of these companies, there remains a significant lack of infrastructural development. Similarly, in the Ukwuani Local Government Area within the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality, infrastructural neglect is apparent in communities such as Akoku and Ebedei. Despite the operation of Platform Petroleum Ltd in the area with significant gas production, these communities have seen limited infrastructural development..

### The Politics of Oil Exploitation and Reactions from Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality Oil Selected Communities.

The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta in the late 1950s led to a significant transformation of Nigeria's economy, turning it into a state heavily dependent on oil. Although oil revenues now play a crucial role in the national income, local communities in oil-producing areas such as Ndokwa have not benefited from the wealth generated by their resources. Instead, the federal government, multinational oil companies, and political elites have reaped the rewards, leaving local populations to bear the costs of environmental degradation, socio-economic dislocation, and political marginalization (Watts, 2004). This

disparity has been the root cause of unrest in many oil-producing communities, including Ndokwa, where long-standing grievances over resource control, environmental justice, and political exclusion have come to a head.

The Ndokwa communities have experienced firsthand the environmental destruction caused by oil extraction activities. Oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation have significantly impacted local ecosystems, rendering vast tracts of agricultural land unusable and polluting water sources. These environmental impacts have had devastating consequences on the livelihoods of the local population, many of whom rely on farming and fishing. According to Okonta and Douglas (2001), the environmental policies of both the Nigerian government and multinational oil corporations prioritize profit maximization, often at the expense of environmental protection and community welfare. The Ndokwa people, like many other communities in the Niger Delta, have expressed frustration over the lack of adequate compensation for environmental damage, a situation exacerbated by their exclusion from meaningful participation in environmental governance.

The politics surrounding oil exploitation in Ndokwa reflects broader national policies that centralize control over natural resources in the hands of the federal government. According to Nigeria's legal framework, all oil resources are considered federal assets, meaning that the government in Abuja controls their management and revenue distribution. This centralization has excluded local communities from having any formal control over the resources found in their territories. For the Ndokwa people, this exclusion is particularly painful, as it has denied them not only the economic benefits of oil wealth but also the ability to manage their lands and resources (Obi, 2009). The concentration of power in the hands of the federal government and multinational oil companies has created a sense of alienation and injustice among the Ndokwa people, who view themselves as the rightful custodians of the land and its resources.

The exclusionary nature of oil politics has also been compounded by the failure of the Nigerian government and oil companies to deliver on promises of development. Ndokwa communities, like other oil-producing areas, have seen little improvement in their standard of living despite the billions of dollars generated from oil extraction. Infrastructural development, such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, has been grossly inadequate. The failure of development efforts has further fueled grievances among the Ndokwa people, who feel that they have been exploited for their resources without receiving any tangible benefits in return. As Eweje (2006) highlights, the social contract between the state and oil-producing communities has broken down, with local populations increasingly viewing the state and multinational corporations as extractive forces rather than development partners.

In response to these grievances, the Ndokwa people, like other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, have employed various forms of resistance. This includes local protests, demands for compensation, and calls for increased political representation as reactions to the perceived injustice of oil exploitation. When these peaceful measures have not yielded results, some groups within the Ndokwa area have resorted to more radical forms of protest, such as sabotage of oil infrastructure and, in extreme cases, militancy. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which gained prominence in the early 2000s, serves as an example of the militant movements that have emerged in response to the politics of oil exploitation in the region (Watts, 2008). While MEND did not originate in Ndokwa, its influence has had a significant impact on the Niger Delta, inspiring other local groups to take up arms in the struggle for resource control and greater political autonomy.

The reactions of the Ndokwa people to oil exploitation have also been influenced by a broader national and international context. In recent years, there has been an increased awareness of the environmental and human rights violations associated with oil extraction in the Niger Delta. International organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented the environmental destruction and socio-economic injustices faced by local communities in the region. This international attention has helped to exert pressure on the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies to address the grievances of oil-producing communities, although progress has been slow. Local activists and leaders in Ndokwa have utilized this international support to demand more accountability from the state and corporate actors involved in oil extraction (Amnesty International, 2020).

The political landscape in Nigeria has become more complex with recent developments, impacting the dynamics of oil exploitation and resistance in Ndokwa. The passage of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021, aimed at reforming the governance of Nigeria's oil and gas sector, has evoked mixed reactions from Niger Delta communities. Although the Act pledges to decentralize some aspects of resource management and provide greater benefits to host communities, many activists argue that it falls short in addressing the root causes of exclusion and marginalization. Critics argue that the PIA maintains centralized control of oil revenues by the federal government and grants excessive power to oil companies in determining the distribution of community benefits (Musa & Bala-Gbogbo, 2021). In Ndokwa, skepticism abounds regarding whether the PIA will bring about meaningful changes on the ground, with many residents continuing to demand more radical reforms, including greater local autonomy over resource management.

In the face of these persistent challenges, the Ndokwa people have remained engaged in both formal and informal forms of resistance. Local leaders have increasingly advocated for more inclusive governance structures that afford host communities a greater say in how their resources are managed. This encompasses calls for community-based environmental protection measures, equitable revenue-sharing agreements, and increased political representation at the state and federal levels. Ndokwa activists have also endeavored to strengthen alliances with other Niger Delta communities in the broader struggle for resource control and environmental justice. The politics surrounding oil exploitation in Ndokwa is characterized by exclusionary governance, environmental degradation, and socio-economic marginalization. The responses of Ndokwa communities, which vary from peaceful demonstrations to militant resistance, underscore deep-seated grievances stemming from the lack of control and benefits derived from their resources. The centralized control of oil resources by the Nigerian government and the dominance of multinational corporations have left local communities feeling disconnected from both their land and their means of living. Despite recent legal reforms such as the Petroleum Industry Act, which offer a glimmer of hope for change, the Ndokwa people remain doubtful about whether these reforms will effectively address the long-standing structural inequalities that have defined the politics of oil in Nigeria.

The politics surrounding oil exploitation in Nigeria is influenced by the complex interactions among multinational oil companies, the federal government, and local elites, including those from the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality. Unfortunately, this collaboration often leads to the neglect of oil-producing communities such as Beneku, Okpai, Utagba Ogbe, Aboh, Ebedei, and Emu Ebendo, resulting in persistent crises in these areas. This neglect reflects the instability caused by the disregard for local needs in the Nigerian oil industry, exemplifying the adage, "The top cannot be stable when the base is unstable." Therefore, any efforts to address the challenges faced by Utagba-Ogbe and other host communities in the Niger Delta that do not directly involve and benefit these communities are likely to be insufficient, merely addressing superficial issues without tackling the root causes (Oil Mineral Producing Areas Landlords Association of Nigeria – Ompalan, 2010). The ongoing struggle for resource control, environmental justice, and political inclusion in Ndokwa is part of a broader movement within the Niger Delta, one that continues to challenge the status quo and demand greater accountability from both the state and the oil industry.

### **The Politics of Exclusion of Host Communities in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta**

The exclusion of host communities in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta State from political processes has been a persistent issue, deeply ingrained in Nigeria's centralized approach to natural resource governance, uneven development, and socio-political marginalization. Ndokwa, situated in the Niger Delta region, is a significant oil-producing area, making a substantial contribution to Nigeria's petroleum economy. However, similar to many other oil-rich communities in the Niger Delta, the Ndokwa people have been largely marginalized in the management of their natural resources, resulting in widespread grievances, underdevelopment, and a complex web of conflicts. The politics of exclusion in Ndokwa is evident in various forms, including the marginalization of local communities in decision-making, unfair distribution of oil revenues, environmental degradation, and the absence of socio-economic benefits for the region's inhabitants.

One of the primary dimensions of exclusion in Ndokwa is the centralization of oil wealth by the Nigerian federal government. Nigeria's Constitution vests control of all oil and gas resources in the federal government, leaving little room for local ownership or control of the resources extracted from the lands of indigenous communities. This centralization has deprived Ndokwa communities of a direct say in how their resources are managed and how the benefits from oil production are distributed. Despite contributing significantly to Nigeria's overall economy, the Ndokwa region remains one of the least developed areas in Delta State. According to scholars like Etemike (2023), the exclusion of host communities from both economic and political decision-making has perpetuated a cycle of poverty, social unrest, and environmental neglect in Ndokwa. The region's underdevelopment, in contrast to the wealth generated from oil, highlights the imbalance in the distribution of oil revenues and the entrenched structures of power that perpetuate the marginalization of host communities.

The failure of oil companies and the government to involve Ndokwa communities in environmental governance further exacerbates the politics of exclusion. Oil exploration and extraction in the region have caused significant environmental damage, including oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation. These activities have led to the pollution of farmland, rivers, and the air, which in turn affects the livelihoods of the local population. Ndokwa communities, like others in the Niger Delta, rely heavily on agriculture and fishing, both of which have been severely impacted by the environmental degradation caused by oil activities. However, despite bearing the brunt of this damage, these communities are largely excluded from environmental decision-making processes. Multinational oil corporations, in collaboration with the federal government, make key decisions regarding oil extraction, environmental clean-up, and compensation without meaningful input from the affected communities (Oluwadare, 2022). The lack of consultation and participation in environmental governance has deepened the sense of alienation and resentment among the Ndokwa people, who feel that their lands and resources are being exploited without any regard for their well-being.

In addition to environmental marginalization, the Ndokwa people have been excluded from the economic benefits of oil production. The current revenue-sharing formula in Nigeria, which allocates a small percentage of oil revenues to the oil-producing states, fails to adequately address the developmental needs of host communities. The derivation principle, which stipulates that 13% of oil revenues should be returned to oil-producing states, is often poorly managed, with little trickling down to the grassroots level. As a result, the Ndokwa region continues to suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure, including roads, schools, healthcare facilities, and clean water. This disparity between the wealth generated from oil extraction and the poverty experienced by local communities has been a major source of contention. As Onwuemenyi (2022) points out, the economic exclusion of Ndokwa communities has not only contributed to underdevelopment but has also fuelled social unrest, with local youths increasingly frustrated by the lack of opportunities and the continued.

The political exclusion of Ndokwa communities is also evident in the broader governance structures of Nigeria. Despite their contributions to the nation's economy, the Ndokwa people remain politically marginalized both at the state and federal levels. Local leaders and representatives often lack the political power and influence necessary to advocate effectively for their communities in the corridors of power. This political exclusion is further exacerbated by the dominance of political elites in Abuja, who control key decisions regarding resource management, revenue distribution, and development policies. The Ndokwa communities' inability to meaningfully participate in governance has left them voiceless in decisions that directly impact their lives and livelihoods (Okechukwu, 2023). This political marginalization has fostered a sense of powerlessness among the Ndokwa people, who feel that their interests are consistently overlooked by both the government and the oil companies operating in their region.

Over the years, the exclusion of Ndokwa communities from decision-making processes has led to various forms of resistance, including protests, legal actions, and demands for greater autonomy over local resources. Local activists and community leaders have repeatedly called for more inclusive governance structures that would allow host communities to participate in the management of their natural resources and receive a fair share of the benefits. However, these calls have often been met with resistance from the government and the oil companies, who are reluctant to cede control over the lucrative oil industry. In some cases, these tensions have escalated into violent conflicts, with local youths taking up arms to demand greater control over

their resources and an end to environmental degradation (Ekpo, 2022). The militancy that has arisen in the Niger Delta, including among some Ndokwa groups, is a direct response to the politics of exclusion that has defined the region's relationship with the Nigerian state and

Recent developments in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, such as the passage of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021, have raised hopes that some of these long-standing issues may be addressed. The PIA introduces reforms aimed at decentralizing aspects of resource management and providing more benefits to host communities through the establishment of Host Community Development Trusts. These trusts are designed to ensure that a portion of the profits from oil extraction is directed towards local development projects in the communities where the oil is produced (Musa & Sule, 2022). While the Act has been lauded as a step towards more inclusive governance, its implementation has been met with scepticism among Ndokwa and other Niger Delta communities. Critics argue that the PIA does not go far enough in addressing the deep-rooted structural issues that have led to the exclusion of host communities. They contend that the Act still places too much power in the hands of oil companies and the federal government, leaving local communities with limited control over their resources.

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## Theoretical Framework

### The Frustration-Aggression Theory

The frustration-aggression theory, rooted in the work of Dollard et al. (1939), proposes that human frustration can lead to aggressive behavior. Dollard's research at the Yale Institute of Human Relations introduced this theory, positing that when individuals face obstacles—whether perceived or real—in achieving their goals, they may become aggressive. According to the theory, aggression is not driven by genuine hostility but rather by frustration. Several scholars have expanded on this concept, suggesting that frustration invariably precedes aggression (Lawson, 1965) and that aggressive behavior often arises from obstacles to success (van de Goor et al., 1996). The theory implies that aggression stems from an individual's perception of a hostile environment and a belief that their goals are hindered by others. This perspective highlights the adage "there is no smoke without fire" and the notion that "an angry man is a hungry man," where frustration can manifest as aggressive behavior when people perceive their goals as unattainable due to external factors (Malici, 2007).

The initial frustration-aggression hypothesis proposed by Dollard et al. in 1939 posits that aggression always results from frustration, and frustration invariably leads to aggression. Notably, their definition of "frustration" differs from common usage: it's seen as an external event impeding goal achievement, rather than an internal emotional state. This approach allows for a more objective examination of how such external frustrations might cause aggression, rather than relying solely on subjective emotional reports. This foundational concept has influenced subsequent revisions of the hypothesis, highlighting the connection between frustrating events and aggressive reactions in various contexts, such as in sports, everyday tasks, and children's behavior.

In their 1941 publication, Dollard and colleagues refined their initial 1939 hypothesis. They acknowledged that while frustration can lead to an inclination towards aggression, it does not always result in aggressive behavior. This revision recognized that frustration might also provoke other responses, challenging the earlier deterministic view that frustration inevitably leads to aggression and that aggression always stems from frustration.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis has evolved significantly since its initial proposal. Research has shown that frustration can influence not just aggression but also other psychological outcomes like prejudice (Grossarth-Maticek, Eysenck, & Vetter, 1989) and depression (Seligman, 1975). Early discussions highlighted that fear of punishment, driven by social norms, might also exacerbate aggression by adding another layer of frustration.

Morlan (1949) challenged the idea that aggression serves as a catharsis, arguing instead that expressing aggression could perpetuate a cycle of increased aggression. This view anticipated later research that found limited support for catharsis theory. Miller et al. (1941) acknowledged that while their original definition of frustration and aggression was a useful starting point, understanding the precise nature and conditions influencing the frustration-aggression link required further empirical investigation. Pastore (1950) added that the aggressive response to frustration depends on how individuals interpret the situation, underscoring the complexity of the relationship between frustration and aggression.

The frustration-aggression theory is relevant for understanding the aggression displayed by youths in the Niger Delta. According to Bushman and Huesmann (2010), aggression involves behaviors intended to harm others. In this context, the theory helps explain why the deprivation of natural resources, like oil and land, has led to violence. The frustration arising from the lack of benefits from their region's natural resources has driven the youths to aggression and violence against the Nigerian state. Afinotan and Ojokorotu (2009) support this view by emphasizing that the Niger Delta struggle is rooted in a quest for redress against neglect, marginalization, and environmental degradation, driven by frustration rather than secessionist aims.

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## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the cross-sectional research design to gather detailed and factual information about the variables under consideration. The cross-sectional survey allowed the collection of data based on the research model and hypotheses. Questionnaires were used to explore the causes of political exclusion in Ndokwa Land, making the study descriptive. The population of the study is estimated to be 510, 200 people. This population is made up of Ndokwa East LGA, Ndokwa West LGA, and UKwuani LGA. Below is the breakdown of the population of Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta State:

S/N	NDOKWA NATIONALITY	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
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1	Ndokwa East LGA	141, 500	27.73%
2	Ndokwa West LGA	205, 600	40.29%
3	Ukwuani LGA	163, 100	31.96%
	Total	510, 200	100%

Source: 2022 population projected)

The sample size of 1,010 respondents was determined by the Taro Yamane sample size derivation formula, including males and females, traditional rulers, youth leaders, youths, women leaders, chiefs, and both management and casual staff of the multinational oil companies in the Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire. The data collected from the research instrument (questionnaire) were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts, and numerical rankings to assess responses from the respondents and also Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses for significant relationships. It is a statistical formula used to compare variance across the means of different groups.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Results

This section of the study presents the analysis of results using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Out of 1,020 questionnaires distributed, 1,010 were retrieved, indicating a 99% retrieval rate and a 1% loss rate. The high percentage of returned questionnaires is considered adequate for data analysis.

S/N	Local Government Areas of Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality	Population	2%
1.	Ndokwa East	141,500	283
2.	Ndokwa West	205,600	411
3.	Ukwuani	163,100	326
	Total	510,200	1020

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria Estimate, 2022

The sample size of this study is 1,010. This was obtained using 0.2% of the population figure for each of the local government areas that make up Ndokwa ethnic nationality.

### Analysis of Socio-Demographic Features

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Sex of respondents	Male	750	74.3
	Female	260	25.7
	Total	1,010	100.0
Age of respondents	18-28	158	15.6
	29-39	494	48.9
	40 years and above	358	35.4
	Total	1,010	100.0
Position in the company	Human Resource Officer	150	14.9
	Manager	70	6.9
	Public Relation Officer	790	78.2
	Total	1,010	100.0
Position in the community	Traditional council member	439	43.5
	youths' leader	109	10.8

	Women leader	160	15.8
	Community Liaison Officer	302	29.9
	Total	1,010	100.0
Ethnic nationality	Ndokwa	921	91.2
	Others	89	8.8
	Total	1,010	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The socio-demographic data of the respondents has been able to show that the majority of the respondents that participated in the survey are males within the age range of 29-39 and 40 years and above who are mostly traditional council members and community liaison officers who work more with the public relation officers of the firms operating in the area. This could explain the level of exclusion of youths and women from interaction with company representatives in MOUs entered. The data therefore revealed that more of traditional council members and community liaison officers appointed by the traditional council relate more with the oil firms in the region, with the interest of younger members of the communities not captured as seen from the underrepresentation of the age of 18-28 years.

### Testing of Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between power dynamics, institutional processes, and social structures in perpetuating the politics of exclusion in natural resource management

Table 4.2: ANOVA Result for the Hypothesis 1

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.30	2	14.841	24.05	.000
Within Groups	103.144	1,007	3.21		
Total	134.445	1,009			

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2023

Results in Table 4.2 showed that the F-ratio calculated value is 24.05 and the probability score is 0.000. We can infer that the significance value is 0.000 (i.e.,  $p = .000$ ), which is below 0.05 and, therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in host communities' involvement in the management of natural resources and adequate management of natural resources in Ndokwa ethnic Nationality. This implies that communities' involvement in the management of natural resources and adequate management of natural resources vary from one community to the other, Hence the difference within the group.

Ho2: Existing policies, laws, and regulations do not systematically exclude host communities from decision-making processes and benefits related to natural resource management.

Table 4.3: ANOVA Result for Hypothesis 2

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.655	2	4.339	5.836	.093
Within Groups	165.621	1,087	2.451		
Total	173.276	1,089			

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2023

Results in Table 4.3 showed that the F-ratio calculated value is 5.836 and the probability score is 0.093. We can infer that the significance value is 0.095 (i.e.,  $p = .093$ ), which is below 0.05 and, therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in host communities involvement in the management of natural resources and community relations between host communities and oil firms in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality. This implies that, within the group of excluded communities in community involvement in the management of natural resources and community relations, some communities are more excluded than others.

### ***Discussion of Findings***

The first hypothesis tested revealed that There is significant relationship between power dynamics, institutional processes, and social structures in perpetuating the politics of exclusion in natural resource management These findings align with research by Osuntawa and Nwilo (2005), Okonta (2006), Sanya (2006), Frynas (2001), and Punch Newspaper (Feb. 2015), which highlight that much of the Ndokwa nation has been excluded from federal development plans such as those under the NDDC and state programs like OMPADEC. The region has been grossly neglected and sidelined. It has been argued that the Federal Government of Nigeria, in collaboration with oil firms, has established various boards and commissions to address the developmental challenges of the Niger Delta and specific oil-affected communities. However, these federal development programs have often served only as temporary measures and have failed to meet public expectations.

The administration of these interventionist schemes has deeply polarized the region into opposing camps, often driven by the narrow interests of a privileged elite. Issues such as sectionalism, favoritism, tribalism, bribery, embezzlement, and outright corruption have plagued these programs, exacerbating the region's problems rather than addressing them. Despite the Federal Government of Nigeria's efforts to establish development agencies for areas like Utagba-Ogbe in the Niger Delta, these measures have not been implemented effectively. Consequently, the Niger Delta continues to experience significant agitation for social and infrastructural development that aligns with the confirmed oil production ratios of each state in the region.

The second hypothesis tested showed that existing policies, laws, and regulations do not systematically exclude host communities from decision-making processes and benefits related to natural resource management. . Studies from literature also support the above findings of the research as the works of (Ravi and Squire, 2002) and (Ozughala, et al, 2001) argued that poverty has affected the people in the region based on its relative dimension that accounts for selective development and people in Ndokwa nation being subjected to abject lack. This level of neglect strips them of the ability to participate in the management of the resources as they are not involved in the first instance. Based on the analysis, the following major findings were observed:

- i. The study discovered that Federal Government and oil Firms operating in the Niger Delta do not involve host communities in the decision making and management of natural resources in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta state
- ii. The study found that laws governing the conduct and management of natural resource do not exclude the involvement of host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta state

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### **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that host communities are excluded in the management of natural resources and this has impacted the Ndokwa nation in ways that have affected the relationship between host communities and oil firms operating in the region. Also, the politics of exclusion has caused perennial conflict to be part and parcel of the engagement strategies employed in the area by the people to relate with the oil firms as they are sidelined by the government and the oil firms in development programs in the Niger Deltas region and Delta State in particular.

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analysis and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Federal Government and Multinational Oil Companies should involve the host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in the decision making and Management of the natural resources. This can be done through adherence to the memorandum of understanding entered and ensuring that production activities do not endanger human lives and animals
- ii. Federal Government and Oil Firms operating in the Niger Delta should adhere to existing policies and laws governing the conduct and management of natural resources since there provisions do not exclude host communities in Ndokwa Ethnic Nationality in Delta State.

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