Communication Strategies in Resolving Environmental Conflicts between Shell and Her Host Communities (Ogoni Land)

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ABSTRACT

The environmental conflicts between Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and the Ogoni villages in Rivers State, Nigeria, are the result of decades of environmental deterioration, socioeconomic inequality, and poor corporate-community relations. This research investigated Shell's communication tactics for resolving these issues and evaluated how far Shell has gone in promoting peace and sustainable development. Data were gathered using a questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions with Shell personnel, community leaders, and Ogoni inhabitants. Taro Yamane's technique was used to choose a sample of around 400 responders from a population of more than 2,000,000. The questionnaire and interview schedule were employed as research instruments for data collection in this study. This study used a purposive sample strategy, and the data acquired was analyzed quantitatively using frequency tables. The study found that while Shell used communication strategies/campaigns, CSR activities, and stakeholder interactions, these efforts were hampered by a lack of openness, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity, which perpetuated distrust and conflict. The report advocated, among other things, participatory communication and trust-building activities to strengthen corporate-community interactions and support long-term development in Ogoni Land.
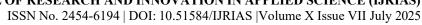
Keywords: Environmental Conflict, Communication Strategies, Shell, Corporate-Community Relations, Participatory Communication.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Communication is frequently at the heart of organizational conflict, since it is critical in interactions between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders. Conflict is prone to emerge in the absence of mutual understanding. Although effective communication can provide significant benefits to organizations by facilitating efficient and clear information flow, it has the potential to foster divergent perspectives among stakeholders. This discrepancy might lead to disagreements.

The Niger Delta area of Nigeria, which is home to vast oil deposits, has long been a battleground for environmental and socioeconomic disputes, notably between international businesses like Shell and indigenous populations like the Ogoni people. Oil production, while a source of national wealth, has caused major environmental damage, sparking debates about resource control and environmental management (Boele, Fabig, & Wheeler, 2001). The Ogoni people, whose country is rich in oil resources, have suffered the brunt of environmental devastation, including as oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation, creating significant disruptions to their agricultural and fishing livelihoods (Subi & Amodu, 2020).

Despite Shell's long-standing presence in the region, the company's community relations strategy has been criticized for failing to appropriately address the environmental and social implications of its activities (Ngwu et al., 2020). Inequitable resource distribution, a lack of effective environmental remediation, and political marginalization have exacerbated tensions, prompting groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) to seek justice and responsibility (Frynas, 2000).

Effective communication methods are critical for resolving such issues because they promote conversation, transparency, and the participation of local voices in decision-making processes. Scholars say that communication should be used not merely to manage public relations, but also to foster meaningful, long-term connections (Nwagbara & Brown, 2020). This research looks at how Shell has used communication tactics in Ogoni Land, assessing their success in reducing conflict and encouraging peaceful cohabitation between the corporation and the host population. Understanding these tactics is critical, especially in light of increasing requests for oil production in the region, since it reveals how corporate-community interactions may be improved to support sustainable development (Boele et al., 2001; Ngwu et al., 2020). As this research will demonstrate, addressing environmental disputes necessitates a comprehensive communication strategy that promotes mutual respect, transparency, and active participation with impacted communities in order to assure both environmental and social justice.

Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta area, particularly Ogoni Land, has suffered from decades of environmental deterioration as a result of oil extraction by international businesses, most notably Shell, which has had a presence in Nigeria since the 1950s. Despite the wealth provided by the Shell Oil Company, these Ogoni villages have received little benefit and have suffered economically and socially. Shell's efforts to interact with the Ogoni people have been condemned as inadequate, lacking openness and inclusion, and failing to address the underlying causes of the disputes.

With increasing requests for oil production in the region, it is critical to investigate how Shell's communication tactics might be enhanced to promote trust, settle disagreements, and provide a long-term framework for collaboration between the firm and local populations. The problem with this study stemmed from the fact that the people of Ogoni are facing land devaluation and damage to their natural resources, which has resulted in persistent unrest and crime due to corrupt ineffective governance, degradation of their natural resources, and other serious environmental damages caused by oil drilling.

This study, therefore, sought to investigate the communication strategies employed by Shell in Ogoni Land, as well as to evaluate how Shell has been able to deploy these communication strategies aimed at fostering goodwill among the people of Ogoni in Rivers State, Nigeria, in order to operate peacefully within their community. The aim and task of this study project is to determine how well SPDC has used communication tactics to foster goodwill among the Ogoni people.
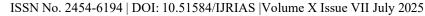
Aim and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate Shell's communication strategies for managing environmental conflicts with Ogoni communities, as well as to assess the extent to which SPDC has been able to use communication strategies to build goodwill with the Ogoni people and foster positive corporate-community relations. The objectives were to examine Shell's relationship with Ogoni communities, identify communication strategies used to resolve environmental conflicts, and assess the impact of these strategies on overall development and peace in Ogoni land.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this research effort:

1. What is the current relationship between Shell and her host communities (Ogoni communities)?

2. What are the communication strategies used by Shell in resolving environmental conflicts in Ogoni land?

3. To what extent has Shell's communication strategies contributed to the overall development and in fostering peace in Ogoni land?

Significance of the Study

This work is important both theoretically and practically since it examines communication tactics for resolving environmental problems between Shell and the Ogoni people in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study adds to the expanding body of information about conflict resolution and corporate-community ties. It demonstrates how communication frameworks may affect stakeholder participation, develop understanding, and handle grievances in extremely complex and volatile environments such as the Niger Delta. The study also enriches academic discourse by offering a better understanding of the relationship between communication techniques, environmental justice, and sustainable development.

On a practical level, the study has implications for multinational enterprises, the government and its agencies/bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders. Shell believes that the findings might help to establish more effective, honest, and inclusive communication techniques to rebuild trust and heal ties with the Ogoni people. For policymakers, the study emphasizes the need of regulatory frameworks that promote community engagement and corporate responsibility in resource management.

Furthermore, the study is an important resource for community-based groups and environmental activists looking to understand the importance of communication in conflict resolution. By identifying best practices and lessons gained, the report makes concrete suggestions to encourage discussion, build mutual respect, and create long-term peace between Shell and the Ogoni people. Finally, the findings have the potential to inspire long-term approaches to corporate-community partnerships, not just in Ogoni Land, but also in other areas experiencing comparable environmental and socioeconomic difficulties.

Conceptual Review

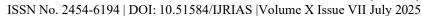The following concepts were reviewed conceptually:

Understanding Environmental Conflicts: Nature and Characteristics

Environmental conflicts, particularly in resource-rich areas such as Nigeria's Niger Delta, have risen over the years as a result of the negative environmental effect of resource exploitation and a lack of equitable resource sharing. The Ogoni people have long suffered serious environmental harm from Shell's oil activities, which include oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation (Boele et al., 2001). These activities have irreversibly damaged ecosystems and local livelihoods, particularly farming and fishing, which are the community's principal sources of revenue (Subi & Amodu, 2020).

At the heart of these disputes is the struggle for control and distribution of oil resources. While Nigeria is one of the world's top oil producers, the Ogoni people have received little profit from the sector, despite the fact that their land contributes significantly to the country's riches. The inability to fairly compensate the local community for the environmental and economic consequences of oil production has fostered discontent and played a fundamental role in the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, Shell's refusal to participate in open and inclusive talks with the community has heightened tensions, leaving the Ogoni people feeling economically and politically isolated (Ngwu et al., 2020).

The regulatory system in Nigeria has also contributed to the dispute, with lax enforcement of environmental regulations allowing Shell and other firms to operate with minimal responsibility. As a result, local communities suffer the burden of pollution, with insufficient government intervention to mitigate the impact (Akinyemi & Jebudu, 2019). Furthermore, the suppression of demonstrations, such as the infamous killing of Ogoni leaders like Ken Saro-Wiwa, has widened political differences, undercutting any hope for peaceful resolution (Boele et al., 2001).

The environmental conflicts between Shell and the Ogoni people emphasize larger concerns such as environmental deterioration, economic inequity, and sociopolitical marginalization. These tensions are exacerbated by insufficient governance and inadequate corporate-community communication efforts. Thus,
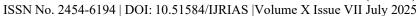
addressing such disputes necessitates a multifaceted strategy that involves enhancing corporate communication techniques, reinforcing environmental rules, and ensuring that local populations are fairly compensated and actively participate in decision-making processes. Addressing these concerns can assist to establish a long-term framework for oil production that benefits both the environment and local populations (Subi & Amodu, 2020; Nwagbara & Brown, 2020).

Communication as a Tool for Conflict Resolution

1. Effective communication is an essential method for resolving issues between oil companies and their host communities. When groups feel disenfranchised or their environment is threatened, clear, open, and honest communication can help change hostile relationships into cooperative ones (Ngwu et al., 2020). Here are some tools for dispute resolution:

2. **Dialogue**: Dialogue is one of the most powerful tools in conflict resolution, facilitating a two-way exchange of ideas. In conflict zones like Ogoni Land, misunderstandings and assumptions often fuel animosity. Local communities may perceive oil companies and the government as indifferent to their suffering, while corporations may see local protests as disruptive. Dialogue creates an opportunity to articulate grievances in a respectful environment, reducing tension and building empathy (Boele et al., 2001). Over time, dialogue can shift the focus from "them vs. us" to a mindset of collaboration, ultimately fostering mutual benefits (Luo & Lu, 2020).

3. **Transparency: Clear communication is essential for conflict resolution, especially** when parties suspect hidden objectives or neglect. Much of the tension in Ogoni Land derives from the notion that the government and oil firms have not been transparent about the environmental consequences of their actions. This lack of openness fuels distrust. Governments and firms may demonstrate responsibility by providing data on environmental assessments, cleaning progress, and community development resources (Haider 2010). Transparency reduces the "black box" effect and fosters trust, resulting in a more collaborative atmosphere (Wang & Wu, 2020).

4. Inclusivity: Including all impacted groups in conflict resolution is crucial for long-term success. The local population in Ogoni Land has always been excluded from decision-making processes, fueling animosity and injustice (Oxfam, 2005). Decisions are made more equitable when all stakeholders are included, including local communities, environmental specialists, government officials, and oil firms. Inclusivity promotes justice and guarantees that all concerns are taken into account in decision-making, increasing the likelihood that solutions will be supported by all parties involved (Subi & Amodu, 2021).

5. **Transforming Relationships**: When communication is used successfully, relationships may be transformed from combative to cooperative. Decades of hostility among local populations, governments, and oil firms have resulted in deep splits in Ogoni Land. However, by stressing communication tactics such as conversation, openness, and inclusion, these antagonistic relationships may be restored as collaborative partnerships (Duursma, 2014). Over time, these altered connections lay the groundwork for more productive interactions centered on common goals such as environmental remediation and economic growth (Rawat & Mahajan, 2022).

6. **Addressing Grievances**: Grievances that are not addressed might lead to long-term conflict. Local populations in Ogoni Land have long felt overlooked, with complaints about environmental deterioration, a lack of economic rewards, and political isolation. Effective communication tactics, such as open discourse and inclusion, allow these issues to be expressed, recognized, and remedied. Corporations and governments may collaborate to find feasible solutions by understanding the community's goal for sustainable development and environmental justice (Bercovitch and Jackson, 2009).

7. **Fostering Trust**: Trust is a critical component of long-term conflict resolution, and it may be developed via good communication. In Ogoni Land, a lack of trust among communities, governments, and oil firms has hampered conflict resolution efforts. However, trust may be reestablished via consistent efforts in

communication, openness, and inclusion. When communities witness tangible results, such as environmental cleanups, community development initiatives, and policy changes, they gain confidence that their issues are being addressed seriously (Duursma, 2014; Haider, 2010). Trust-building is a slow process, yet it is critical for long-term peace and collaboration (Luo and Lu, 2020). Trust can rise when local populations realize that oil corporations and the government are actively working to improve the situation, such as cleaning up environmental damage or investing in local development initiatives. As trust grows, it becomes simpler to handle complicated issues, negotiate equitable solutions, and foster a more peaceful, cooperative relationship.

Effective communication is crucial in settling long-standing problems on Ogoni Land. Dialogue, transparency, and inclusion are critical components of a communication strategy that may alter hostile relationships, resolve complaints, and build trust. Prioritizing these communication principles allows all parties involved— corporations, governments, and local communities—to work toward a more fair and peaceful settlement of the problem, with everyone's concerns acknowledged and addressed. Relationships that were previously hostile and suspicious may be converted into partnerships based on mutual respect and a shared commitment to sustainable development thanks to excellent communication.

Communication Strategies for Environmental Conflict Resolution

Effective communication is crucial to resolving environmental conflicts, as the stakes frequently include not only economic interests, but also the lives, cultures, and well-being of impacted populations. In regions like Ogoni Land, where natural resource development has caused serious environmental degradation and social unrest, communication tactics can assist bridge the gap between businesses, governments, and local populations. Communication can help to resolve conflicts by facilitating meaningful discourse, establishing mutual understanding, and encouraging transparency. The following are the communication strategies:

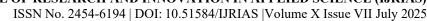## 1. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Stakeholder involvement is critical for inclusive conflict resolution because it ensures that all impacted parties are consulted, including local populations, government representatives, oil firms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and environmental activists. Okoh (2005) defines successful engagement as actively listening to stakeholders' issues and providing opportunities for their voices to affect decision-making processes. Public discussions, community forums, and collaborative gatherings may all assist to guarantee that environmental concerns, such as oil spills and deforestation, are recognized and handled.

Subi and Amodu (2021) contend that stakeholder involvement promotes mutual respect by moving beyond one-way communication. For example, when communities feel truly heard, they are more likely to trust companies and governments.

According to Boele et al. (2001), successful stakeholder involvement requires addressing power inequalities that are common in corporate-community partnerships. They point out that the removal of local voices in decision-making processes has traditionally exacerbated tensions in Ogoni Land, since people see oil firms and governments as unresponsive to their demands. Engagement techniques may change hostile relationships into cooperative ones by incorporating stakeholders at all stages of decision-making, from issue identification to solution implementation.

2. Transparency and Information Sharing

Transparency is a critical component of effective conflict resolution, especially in addressing the distrust that frequently characterizes corporate-community ties in locations like Ogoni Land. Okoh (2005) emphasizes that a lack of clear and honest communication has traditionally exacerbated tensions in the Niger Delta, since locals perceive firms of hiding information concerning environmental deterioration and rehabilitation efforts. Transparency ensures that stakeholders have access to accurate, timely, and relevant information, allowing them to make educated decisions and build confidence.

According to Ekberg and Pinto (2021), Shell's communication techniques throughout the Nigeria campaign in the late 1990s were frequently criticized for being reactive rather than proactive. They propose that openly releasing data on environmental monitoring, cleaning efforts, and compensation procedures can help to counter negative narratives and demonstrate corporate responsibility. Similarly, Boele et al. (2001) underline the significance of openness in countering the "black box" effect, which occurs when decisions are taken behind closed doors without community participation. For example, fully discussing the status of oil spill cleanups or the allocation of community development funding can reassure stakeholders that genuine efforts are being made to remediate. Transparency may help firms, institutions, organizations and governments decrease mistrust, restore damaged relationships, and pave the way for meaningful collaboration.

3. Building Local Capacity for Environmental Governance

Improving local capacity is critical to enabling communities to actively engage in environmental governance. Okoh (2005) highlights the need of teaching people on environmental laws and resource management so that they may hold businesses accountable and campaign for their rights. Similarly, Boele et al. (2001) argue that enhancing local governance institutions promotes ownership and enhances decision-making by equipping communities with the skills necessary to successfully engage with stakeholders.

Furthermore, Jack and Eke (2018) found that local institutions operate as safety nets, providing resources and catalyzing collective action to improve adaptive capacity in the Niger Delta. Local communities may help to resolve conflicts and ensure that development projects reflect their needs and beliefs by giving training in areas such as environmental monitoring and sustainable practices.

4. Media and Public Advocacy

The media is critical in environmental dispute resolution, particularly in high-profile cases such as the Ogoni case. Okoh (2005) underlines that the media serves as a platform for communities to vent their problems, hence raising awareness about issues such as environmental degradation and human rights violations. The media's broad coverage of the Ogoni demonstrations exposed the inequities experienced by the indigenous populace, putting worldwide pressure on Shell and the Nigerian government to act.

According to Boele et al. (2001), media exposure may increase public support, amplify community voices, and hold businesses accountable for their environmental effect. Public campaigns may spark a worldwide conversation, making environmental challenges harder to ignore.

Ekberg and Pinto (2021) emphasize how Shell's efforts to mold its public image through media campaigns eventually failed to suppress local discontent, demonstrating the need of genuine contact with impacted communities in regaining confidence. In Ogoni Land, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) successfully used the media to generate international pressure, resulting in governmental reforms. As a result, media and public activism not only aid to escalate crises, but also provide a platform for impacted populations to influence both national and international actors.

Furthermore, a research by Alemoh and Gambo (2014) demonstrates that the media may act as peacemakers by supporting nonviolent settlements and creating agendas for peaceful cooperation. Their research focuses on the role of Nigerian newspapers in pushing for peaceful solutions during the Bakassi Peninsula crisis, proving the media's ability to positively impact conflict resolution. Furthermore, Aondover et al. (2024) highlight how the media may aid in dispute resolution and promote peaceful cohabitation among indigenous groups. Their research shows that the media plays an important role in conflict resolution by offering forums for communication and understanding, which is critical in environments like Ogoni Land.

Theoretical Review

Conflict resolution requires effective communication, especially in corporate-community confrontations like those in Ogoni Land. Several communication theories provide useful insights into conflict management and

resolution. These ideas give frameworks for structuring discourse, engaging stakeholders, and achieving long-term solutions. The theories that inspired this investigation were as follows:

1. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984):

Stakeholder theory is one of the most important communication theories in the context of corporate-community conflict. This philosophy holds that corporations and organizations must consider the interests and concerns of all people impacted by their activities, not just shareholders. In the context of the Ogoni dispute, international firms like as Shell must consider the local populations' environmental and socioeconomic concerns, as well as their cultural legacy and land rights. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the need of including all impacted groups in decision-making rather than excluding or marginalizing them (Freeman, 1984). In Ogoni Land, this entails bringing local communities into the discourse about resource extraction and ensuring that their perspectives are heard and respected throughout the planning and implementation processes.

Conflict Transformation Theory (Lederach, 1995):

Conflict Transformation Theory focuses on altering the structures, relationships, and situations that contribute to conflict. According to this view, conflict is a chance for change that may lead to long-term peace and understanding, rather than a problem to be handled by negotiations. The struggle over oil production in Ogoni Land stems from profound sociopolitical and economic inequities. According to Conflict Transformation Theory, resolving this conflict requires addressing the underlying power relations. This may be accomplished through communication that recognizes the community's past complaints and integrates their viewpoints into the solution process. It highlights the importance of communication that goes beyond surface-level negotiations to address fundamental themes of justice, equality, and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

Dialogic Theory (Kent and Taylor, 1998):

Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) established the Dialogic Theory of Public Relations, which emphasizes the necessity of developing connections between companies and their audiences. Initially aimed at using the internet (or Web) for connection development, the concepts of this theory have now been utilized in a broader sense. Kent and Taylor (1998) define dialogic communication as both a technique and a product that enables interactive communication between an organization and its stakeholders.

According to Kent and Taylor, the dialogic engagement method may help companies build, modify, and alter connections with their audiences. This means that organizations must be willing to engage with the public in an honest and ethical manner in order to develop effective communication channels. Taylor and Kent (2014) define engagement as an ideograph, meaning it is both palpable, ambiguous, and transitory. Engagement is still considered as a commitment that piques people's interest and keeps them focused, as well as an interaction process (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Taylor and Kent (2014) promote a dialogic approach to engagement, seeing it as an essential component of discourse. They propose that via involvement, organizations and their constituents may make decisions that generate social capital. According to Taylor and Kent (2014), engagement is both an attitude that shapes encounters and a mechanism that controls how these interactions play out. Kent (2008) goes on to say that conversation will grow via research, be enlarged by more theorizing, and confirmed when companies see the importance of implementing a dialogic approach into their connections with their audiences. When these factors come together, dialogic public relations may reach its full potential.

Empirical Review

Ngwu et al. (2020) conducted a critical analysis of Shell B.P. Company's community interactions and conflict management tactics in Ogoni Land, Nigeria. It emphasizes the company's previous failure to properly handle environmental degradation and local concerns, focusing on Shell's reactive rather than proactive approach to conflict resolution. Using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews, the study discovered that Shell Company's

failure to select appropriate community relations strategies resulted in a hostile relationship with the Ogoni people, who felt exploited and believed that the company could not do enough to help them overcome extreme poverty, economic hardship, and environmental pollution caused by their operations.

Despite some community development attempts, these tactics have been criticized for failing to provide openness and meaningful involvement with the Ogoni people. The report advocates for a more inclusive, dialogic approach, as well as better openness, accountability, and direct connection with local populations, in order to avoid further violence in the face of requests to resume oil production in the region. Itu and Atiye (2023) researched Shell Petroleum Development Company's (SPDC) community relations strategies (CRS) and their influence on sustainable development in Nigeria's Bayelsa state. The authors use the Marginality and Mattering Theory to determine how SPDC's operations influence host communities. The findings indicate that SPDC's activities have led to environmental pollution, oil spills, unemployment, and destruction of farmland, negatively impacting sustainable development.

Furthermore, the study finds that SPDC's development programs, such as scholarships, health facility building, and infrastructure projects, are frequently underfunded, causing problems with host communities. The authors urge that the SPDC and the government execute capacity-building initiatives, ensure broad community participation in need identification, and promote peace and harmony in host communities.

METHODOLOGY

Assessing the extent to which SPDC has been able to implement communication techniques to create and sustain goodwill with her host communities in the Ogoni villages of Rivers State, Nigeria, requires the use of proper research methodology. This part described the research strategy, plan, or method that the researcher has agreed to use in resolving the problem that has developed in this field of study.

The study utilized a descriptive research approach to look at Shell's communication tactics for resolving environmental problems with Ogoni villages, as well as how these strategies were used to build and maintain goodwill with the people of Ogoni Land.

The researcher chose this approach to obtain primary data on SPDC communication tactics for generating and maintaining goodwill with her host communities.

This investigation needed knowledge about the Ogoni people's overall population. According to the 2006 census, Ogoni has a total population of about 832,000 people, which is expected to increase to more than 2 million people by 2024. Using Taro Yamane's technique, a sample size of around 400 was estimated from the population. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose a small number of respondents from the sample through interviews and focus group discussions. The responders included Shell representatives, community leaders, and Ogoni Land people.

Oral interviews with this set of respondents provided primary data, whereas secondary data came from textbooks, journals, newspapers, and magazines. The primary data, which were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire with both open and closed-ended questions, interview guides, and focus group discussions, were validated through expert judgment by two Communication and Media studies experts who reviewed the questionnaire's content. The contributions of these Communication and Media professionals were crucial in ensuring that the measuring devices passed the validity test.

The researcher's research expertise also allowed him to determine whether the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure, and a pilot study was conducted to ensure reliability by pre-testing the questionnaire on 20 purposively selected Ogoni indigenes living in Rivers State. The exercise was repeated after two weeks, and the pretests produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85. Quantitative data were evaluated using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were explored thematically to discover recurrent patterns and insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information gathered from respondents was compiled, displayed in tables, and analyzed using basic percentages as a statistical technique. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire given in line with the sample size, 394 were properly filled and returned, while 6 were not returned due to improper filling. This increased the death rate to 1.5 percent. This researcher used a correctly completed questionnaire for this study, as demonstrated below.

Research Question One: What is the current relationship between Shell and her host communities (Ogoni communities)?

Table 1: Current Relationship between SPDC and her Communities (Ogoniland)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Cordial	92	23.4%
Very Cordial	64	16.2%
Strained	149	37.8%
Very strained	44	11.2%
Cannot say	45	11.4%
Total	394	100%

Source: Field Work, 2025.

Presented on Table 1 above is the data on the current relationship of SPDC and her host community, the Ogoni land. An analysis of the data presented revealed that 92 or 23.4% of the respondents described the relationship between their communities and Shell as cordial; 64 (or 16.2%) agreed that the relationship is very cordial; 149 or 37.8% said that the relationship was strained; 44 or 11.2% described the relationship as very strained, while 45 or 11.4% could not give an answer.

The analysis above goes to prove that there is no cordial relationship between Shell and her host communities (Ogoni Land)

Research Question Two: What are the communication strategies used by Shell in resolving environmental conflicts in Ogoni land?

Table Two: Communication strategies used by Shell in resolving environmental conflicts in Ogoni land

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Community Engagement Forums	100	25.4%
Environmental Cleanup Updates	80	20.3%
Compensation for Damages	60	15.2%
Collaborative Development Projects	70	17.8%

Partnership with Local Leaders	40	10.2%
Use of Media Campaigns	44	11.1%
Total	394	100%

Source: Field Work, 2025.

In Table 2 above, 100 respondents, representing 25.4% of the respondents said that Shell employs Community Engagement Forums as strategy in resolving conflicts; 80 or 20.3% were of the opinion that Environmental Cleanup Updates formed a strategy adopted by SPDC; 60 representing 15.2% agreed that compensation for damages was one of Shell's communication strategies; 70 or 17.8% believed that Collaborative development project was also one of the strategies. A few of the respondents 40 or 10.2% affirmed that SPDC partners with Local Leaders as one of their communication strategies in resolving conflicts with her host communities, while 44 respondents or 11.1% did not give any answer.

The implication of the above analysis is that Shell used diverse strategies in resolving conflicts with her host communities in Ogoni Land.

Research Question Three: To what extent has Shell's communication strategies contributed to the overall development and in fostering peace in Ogoni land? The answers to this research question are indicated on Table 3, below.

Table 3: The extent to which Shell's communication strategies contributed to the overall development and in fostering peace in Ogoni Land.

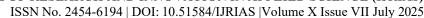| Item	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all	224	56.9%
Yes	62	15.7%
To a little extent	108	27.4%
Total	394	100%

Source: Field Work, 2025

The Table above shows that a total of 224 respondents representing 56.9% affirmed that SPDC has not yet addressed the key needs of the people of Ogoni, such as the provision of pipe-borne water, electricity, good roads, adequate health care, improved farming system,, etc.; 62b or 15.7% claimed that the Multi-national Company has done well in terms of developing the Ogoni Land; 108 representing 27.4% believed that Shell has contributed to the development of the Ogoni Land. The replies of the majority of respondents constitute a damning indictment on Shell for her failure to contribute to the development of her host communities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What is the current relationship between Shell and Ogoni communities?

The study found that Shell's relationship with the Ogoni communities is marked by chronic distrust and tense exchanges. Most respondents stated that Shell's history of environmental devastation and unmet promises had instilled distrust among the Ogoni people. Community leaders have noted that Shell's activities are frequently viewed as exploitative rather than constructive. For example, participants said that Shell's community development projects frequently fail to address people's genuine needs, deepening the divide between the firm and the community.

It should also be noted that the relationship between Shell and the Ogoni people of Ogoniland has been tense and contentious since the 1990s. In the early 1990s, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, accused Shell of creating environmental devastation and ignoring the Ogoni community's needs. The Nigerian military administration responded with a crackdown, culminating in the killing of Saro-Wiwa and eight other campaigners in 1995, which brought international criticism.

In the years after, Shell has faced many lawsuits claiming participation in human rights violations. In 2009, the business agreed to a $15.5 million settlement in a US court complaint, admitting any wrongdoing.
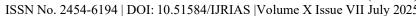
Environmental problems have persisted. A 2011 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) investigation found widespread oil contamination in Ogoniland, impacting soil, water supplies, and local populations' health. Despite calls for a thorough clean-up, progress has been slow. Recent reports indicate that the Nigerian organization in charge of the cleaning, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (Hyprep), has been inefficient, with claims of mismanagement and corruption.

As of January 2025, Shell's relationship with the Ogoni people remains fragile. While Shell has divested several onshore assets in Nigeria, questions remain regarding the environmental impact and the effectiveness of restoration measures. The Ogoni people continue to push for environmental justice and responsibility.

Research Question 2: What communication strategies have been used by Shell?

The findings also show that Shell addresses issues using a combination of public relations efforts, community involvement initiatives, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. However, these tactics are frequently applied top-down, with little involvement from the community. Shell has held stakeholder discussions and town hall sessions, although many respondents believed these were more symbolic than productive.Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) uses the following communication tactics to address problems with its host community on Ogoni land:

1. Community Engagement Forums: Shell hosts meetings, workshops, and conversations with community people to address concerns, development goals, and conflict resolution tactics. The goal was to promote mutual understanding and trust between Shell and the community. Shell and her host community use this method to hold town hall meetings, focus group talks, and roundtable dialogues. This forum provides a direct conduit for community members to express their issues while also allowing Shell to discuss its work publicly.

2. Shell's next strategy is Environmental Clean-up Updates, in which the company updates the community on progress in clean-up and remediation efforts, particularly in light of the UNEP report on Ogoniland's environmental degradation, with the goal of demonstrating a commitment to addressing environmental concerns while also improving health and safety. Examples include reports on cleaning accomplishments, farmland restoration, and water supplies. This promotes openness and reassures the community about tangible environmental restoration efforts.

3. Shell provides monetary and material compensation to individuals and communities affected by oil spills and environmental harm. The goal behind this is to address particular issues about lost livelihoods and environmental impact. Shell achieves this through direct payments, the distribution of agricultural implements, and assistance for small enterprises. Shell lessens stress by accepting responsibility for harm, while disagreements over appropriateness frequently emerge.

4. Collaborative Development Projects: Shell invests in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment programs to benefit the community. This fosters goodwill by demonstrating apparent changes in living situations. The: Examples include the construction of schools, healthcare facilities, roadways, and water systems. These clearly indicate Shell's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which helps to reestablish confidence.

5. Collaboration with Local Leaders: Shell works with traditional leaders, community chiefs, and key stakeholders to mediate issues and distribute information, with the goal of utilizing existing power structures to

obtain community acceptance and settle disputes. This is seen in their engagement of chiefs to negotiate land access or resolve oil spill problems. The technique, however, might be problematic if perceived as prejudiced or corrupt.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The major findings of this study are hereunder summarized

The environmental problems between Shell and the Ogoni people highlight the critical need for effective communication tactics to resolve the long-standing difficulties between multinational businesses and local populations. Long-standing challenges of environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and social inequities have not only caused environmental devastation, but have also sparked a profound sense of distrust and animosity among all parties concerned. Shell's failure to engage meaningfully with the Ogoni people via transparent, inclusive, and proactive communication has escalated the conflict, leaving behind a legacy of neglect, environmental devastation, and socioeconomic disparities. This study found that Shell had strained relationships with her host communities. Shell's efforts have neither improved the living conditions of the Ogoni people in Rivers State, nor have they successfully contributed to the general development of the Ogoni villages.

Conclusions

The study determined that Shell does not adequately handle Social Responsibility functions to improve the well-being of host communities. As a result, their efforts to establish and control the company image have failed. This result is consistent with Okafor's statement that much more has to be done to ensure that the unheard people of the Niger Delta's oil-producing areas benefit directly from the oil wealth generated in their backyards. This study also revealed that Shell, as a global corporation operating in volatile areas in Rivers State (Niger- Delta), Nigeria, has not properly used communication tactics to establish and sustain goodwill and corporate image for itself. Secondly, Shell and other stakeholders should engage in a critical analysis of power dynamics, marginalization, and adopt the role of communication in social justice which may be refer to as "Human Rights and Ethics Lens for Equality" as resolution strategy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency:**

Shell should adopt a more inclusive and transparent approach to engagement with the Ogoni people. This can involve:

Establishing community advisory boards composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups, including women, youth, and traditional leaders.
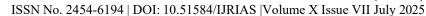
Providing regular, detailed updates on remediation efforts and development projects through accessible channels like town hall meetings, newsletters, and local radio broadcasts.

Ensuring community members are actively involved in decision-making processes related to environmental and development projects.

2. **Enhance the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies:**

To address conflicts and foster better relationships, Shell should refine its communication strategies by:

Implementing conflict-sensitive communication training for its representatives to ensure cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to community grievances.

Utilizing local languages and culturally relevant communication methods to reach all segments of the population effectively. Partnering with independent mediators or NGOs to facilitate transparent dialogues and conflict resolution efforts, ensuring objectivity and fairness.

3. **Commit to Sustainable Development and Long-Term Peacebuilding:**

Shell should prioritize initiatives that directly address the underlying causes of tension and promote sustainable development:

Accelerate environmental cleanup efforts in Ogoniland, ensuring timely implementation of UNEP recommendations, and regularly assess and share progress with the community. Invest in long-term socio-economic programmes, such as vocational training, education, and infrastructure development, to create sustainable livelihoods and reduce dependence on oil-related activities.

Establish a robust grievance redress mechanism that is easily accessible, impartial, and capable of resolving disputes fairly and swiftly to rebuild trust and foster lasting peace. These recommendations, if adhered to would collectively address the strained relationship, improve communication strategies, and contribute to sustainable development and peace in Ogoniland.

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