

**SILENCED BY DEPENDENCY:  
TRANSACTIONAL REPRESSION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN OIL HOST  
COMMUNITIES OF THE NIGER DELTA,  
NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

The relationship between oil multinational corporations and host communities in the Niger Delta has long been characterized by environmental degradation, economic dependency, and persistent social tensions. While several studies have examined the ecological and developmental consequences of oil exploration, limited attention has been given to the subtle mechanisms through which dependency suppresses resistance and normalizes environmental suffering within host communities. This

paper examines the phenomenon of transactional repression and its role in sustaining environmental injustice in oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The paper argues that the dependence of local populations on oil companies for employment opportunities, community development projects, scholarships, contracts, and other corporate social responsibility benefits often compels community members to suppress grievances, minimize protests, and tolerate environmental degradation despite its adverse effects on health, livelihoods, and social wellbeing. Anchored on political economy, Michel Foucault's theory of power, and Environmental Justice Theory, the paper adopts qualitative conceptual approach using documentary evidence and empirical insights from previous studies on oil host communities in the Niger Delta. The analysis suggests that transactional relationships between corporations and host communities create patterns of silence, fear, negotiated loyalty, and internalized repression that weaken collective resistance against environmental exploitation. The paper further demonstrates that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through institutional power and state complicity but also through socioeconomic dependency that conditions compliance. The paper concludes that sustainable development and environmental justice in oil-producing communities require the reduction of dependency structures, strengthening of community autonomy, transparent governance, and inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes.

**Keywords:** Transactional Repression; Environmental Injustice; Oil Host Communities; Dependency; Corporate Power.

## **Introduction**

The discovery and exploitation of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria transformed the area into the economic backbone of the Nigerian state, generating enormous revenues that have sustained national development for decades. Despite its strategic economic importance, the region remains characterized by widespread poverty, environmental degradation, infrastructural deficits, unemployment, and persistent social unrest. The paradox of immense natural wealth existing alongside severe underdevelopment has attracted considerable scholarly attention within Environmental Sociology, Industrial Sociology, political economy, and development studies. Scholars have consistently argued that oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta have produced severe ecological consequences including oil spills, gas flaring, land degradation, water contamination, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, and loss of traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing (Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Obi, 2010; UNEP, 2011).

Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta has increasingly become a major issue of environmental justice due to the unequal distribution of ecological risks and developmental benefits between multinational oil corporations and local host communities. Studies have shown that communities located within oil-producing

areas disproportionately bear the environmental and health burdens associated with oil extraction while receiving limited socioeconomic benefits in return (Watts, 2008; Ako, 2012). This condition reflects what environmental justice scholars describe as environmental inequality, where vulnerable populations experience systematic exposure to environmental hazards due to political and economic marginalization. In many oil-bearing communities, polluted rivers, devastated farmlands, acid rain, and contaminated drinking water have significantly undermined public health and human security (UNEP, 2011; Ojatorotu & Gilbert, 2010).

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that environmental governance challenges, ecological insecurity, and livelihood vulnerability remain persistent realities within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta despite decades of intervention efforts (Adekola & Mitchell, 2022). Existing studies also suggest that weak regulatory enforcement, poor remediation practices, and unequal access to environmental protection continue to reinforce social vulnerability and developmental inequality within host communities (Akinola, 2023).

However, beyond the visible environmental impacts lies another complex sociological reality that has received relatively limited scholarly attention: the culture of silence and suppressed resistance within oil host communities. Although community members often experience the direct consequences of environmental degradation, many remain reluctant to openly challenge multinational corporations or state institutions responsible for environmental harm. This silence is not

necessarily an indication of satisfaction or acceptance but may reflect deeper structures of dependency, fear, and negotiated survival. The present paper conceptualizes this phenomenon as transactional repression, referring to the suppression of grievances, emotions, resistance, and collective dissent due to dependence on economic, political, or social benefits controlled by dominant institutions.

In the Niger Delta, multinational oil corporations frequently provide employment opportunities, scholarship schemes, skill acquisition programmes, contracts, community development projects, and corporate social responsibility initiatives to host communities. While these interventions are often presented as developmental partnerships, they may simultaneously function as mechanisms of social control and negotiated compliance. Community members who benefit directly or indirectly from these opportunities may avoid criticizing environmental practices or participating in protests for fear of losing access to economic privileges and social benefits. Consequently, dependency relationships may reinforce silence even in the face of environmental suffering, social dislocation, and declining health conditions.

This situation reflects broader sociological debates on power, domination, and symbolic control. Michel Foucault argues that modern systems of power operate not merely through force but through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that shape behaviour, normalize compliance, and regulate resistance. Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence explains how

dominated groups may unconsciously internalize structures of domination and perceive unequal social arrangements as natural or unavoidable. Within the context of oil host communities, transactional repression may therefore operate through internalized dependency, fear of exclusion, and negotiated adaptation to environmental exploitation.

The persistence of environmental injustice in the Niger Delta has also been linked to structural inequalities embedded within global capitalism and resource extraction systems. Political economy scholars maintain that multinational corporations, often in collaboration with state actors, prioritize resource accumulation and profit maximization over environmental sustainability and community wellbeing (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Contemporary studies further argue that extractive capitalism in resource-rich African regions frequently reproduces dependency, environmental inequality, and community vulnerability through unequal governance structures and externally driven development priorities (Oriola & Knight, 2022). This has produced what some scholars describe as petro-violence, ecological dispossession, and resource control conflicts within the region. Yet, while violent conflicts and protests in the Niger Delta have been extensively studied, less attention has been paid to everyday silence, negotiated accommodation, and subtle repression that characterize many community-corporate relations.

Furthermore, contemporary corporate social responsibility frameworks in the oil sector often emphasize development partnerships, stakeholder

engagement, and peace-building initiatives. Although such programmes may contribute to local development in certain contexts, critics argue that they sometimes function as strategies for managing resistance and maintaining operational stability rather than addressing the structural roots of environmental injustice (Idemudia, 2014). In this sense, corporate interventions may simultaneously alleviate and reproduce dependency conditions that discourage sustained environmental activism within host communities.

The sociological significance of this paper lies in its attempt to bridge discussions on environmental injustice with the emerging concept of transactional repression in resource-dependent communities. By examining how economic dependency shapes environmental silence and negotiated compliance in oil-producing areas, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on corporate power, environmental governance, and community agency in the Niger Delta. The paper specifically focuses on oil host communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, an area significantly affected by oil exploration activities and longstanding community-company relations.

This paper introduces transactional repression as a sociological framework for understanding how dependency relationships suppress environmental resistance and normalize ecological suffering within extractive communities.

Ultimately, the paper argues that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through

ecological destruction and institutional failures but also through subtle social processes that suppress resistance and normalize environmental suffering. Understanding these processes is essential for developing more inclusive approaches to environmental governance, sustainable development, and community empowerment in oil-producing regions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite decades of oil exploration and enormous petroleum wealth, many communities in the Niger Delta continue to experience severe environmental degradation, poverty, and declining living conditions. Oil spills, gas flaring, polluted water sources, and destruction of farmlands have negatively affected the health and livelihoods of residents in oil-producing communities. Although these environmental problems persist, many host communities often remain silent or show limited resistance against multinational oil corporations responsible for environmental harm.

This silence is frequently linked to dependency on oil companies for employment opportunities, contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, and community development projects. Such dependency may discourage open criticism and suppress collective resistance, thereby reinforcing environmental injustice and unequal power relations within oil-producing communities. While existing studies have focused mainly on militancy, conflict, and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, limited attention has been given to how dependency produces transactional repression and

environmental silence within host communities. This paper therefore examines how dependency relationships contribute to transactional repression and sustain environmental injustice in oil host communities of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this paper is to examine transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine how dependency on oil companies influences environmental silence among host communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area;
2. Investigate the relationship between corporate benefits and the suppression of resistance against environmental degradation;
3. Explore how transactional repression contributes to the persistence of environmental injustice in oil-producing communities

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

**Transactional Repression:** Transactional repression refers to the suppression of grievances, resistance, criticism, or collective action because individuals or communities depend on powerful institutions for

economic, political, or social benefits. In oil host communities, transactional repression occurs when residents tolerate environmental degradation or avoid protesting against multinational oil corporations because they depend on employment opportunities, contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, youth empowerment programmes, and community development projects. This form of repression differs from direct violence or overt coercion. It is subtle, negotiated, and embedded within everyday survival relations. Community members may remain silent not because they are satisfied with environmental conditions, but because resistance may threaten their access to corporate-controlled opportunities. Silence therefore becomes a survival strategy shaped by unequal socioeconomic relations.

The concept is linked to broader sociological debates on power and domination. Michel Foucault argued that power does not operate only through force but also through disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour and normalize compliance (Foucault, 1977). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu explained through the concept of symbolic violence that disadvantaged groups may unconsciously internalize unequal social arrangements and perceive them as natural or unavoidable (Bourdieu, 1991). In oil-producing communities, dependency may therefore produce internalized silence, negotiated loyalty, and suppressed resistance.

**Environmental Injustice:** Environmental injustice refers to the unequal distribution of environmental risks, hazards, and burdens across different social groups. It

occurs when poor, marginalized, or politically weak communities suffer greater exposure to pollution, ecological destruction, and health risks while powerful actors benefit from environmentally harmful activities. Environmental justice scholars emphasize fairness in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens as well as inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes.

In the Niger Delta, environmental injustice is reflected in oil spills, gas flaring, contaminated water sources, destruction of farmlands, declining fish stocks, and public health challenges associated with petroleum extraction. Host communities often bear the ecological and social costs of oil production while multinational corporations and political elites enjoy the economic benefits. This unequal relationship reinforces poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion within oil-producing communities.

The environmental assessment conducted by UNEP (2011) in Ogoni land revealed severe contamination of soil and groundwater resulting from decades of oil pollution. Similarly, Amnesty International (2011) reported that many Niger Delta communities continue to experience environmental pollution, destruction of livelihoods, and inadequate environmental remediation despite the enormous wealth generated from petroleum extraction.

**Dependency and Corporate Power:** Dependency in oil host communities refers to the reliance of residents on oil companies for survival opportunities and

development benefits. In many communities, multinational oil corporations provide scholarships, employment opportunities, compensation payments, youth empowerment programmes, contracts, infrastructural projects, and healthcare interventions. While these benefits may appear developmental, they may simultaneously reinforce unequal power relations between corporations and host communities.

Corporate power becomes stronger where the state fails to provide basic infrastructure, social welfare, employment opportunities, and environmental protection. Under such conditions, oil companies increasingly function as alternative providers of development, thereby increasing community dependence on them. This dependence may weaken the ability of residents to openly criticize environmental practices or sustain resistance against ecological exploitation.

Political economy scholars argue that multinational corporations in resource-rich regions often exercise significant influence over local economic, political, and social structures (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Contemporary studies further argue that extractive capitalism in resource-rich African regions frequently reproduces dependency, environmental inequality, and community vulnerability through unequal governance structures and externally driven development priorities (Oriola & Knight, 2022). Through control of opportunities and resources, corporations may shape community leadership, influence social relations, and manage resistance within host communities. Dependency

therefore becomes both an economic condition and a subtle mechanism of social control.

**Oil Exploration and Environmental Injustice in the Niger Delta:** The Niger Delta is the major oil-producing region of Nigeria and has remained central to the country's economy for decades. Despite generating substantial petroleum revenue, the region continues to experience poverty, infrastructural neglect, unemployment, and environmental degradation. This contradiction has often been described as the resource curse, where resource-rich regions remain socially marginalized and environmentally devastated.

Oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta have produced serious environmental consequences including oil spills, gas flaring, soil contamination, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. These environmental conditions have weakened traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing, thereby increasing poverty and social insecurity among host communities.

Okonta and Douglas (2003) argued that multinational oil corporations have contributed significantly to environmental destruction while many host communities continue to experience poverty and neglect. Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) also observed that oil exploitation intensified social instability, environmental degradation, and livelihood insecurity within the Niger Delta. Similarly, UNEP (2011) documented extensive ecological damage in Ogoni land and emphasized the need for large-scale environmental remediation.

Recent studies further indicate that environmental governance challenges, ecological insecurity, and weak institutional regulation continue to sustain environmental injustice within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta (Adekola & Mitchell, 2022; Akinola, 2023). Consequently, environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained by the unequal distribution of environmental costs and economic benefits. While oil corporations and the Nigerian state benefit economically from petroleum extraction, host communities continue to bear the burden of pollution, ecological decline, and public health risks.

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Dependency:** Corporate social responsibility has become one of the major approaches through which multinational oil corporations relate with host communities in the Niger Delta. CSR programmes commonly include scholarship schemes, employment opportunities, youth empowerment initiatives, road construction, healthcare interventions, water projects, and community development programmes. These initiatives are often presented as evidence of corporate commitment to sustainable development and peaceful community relations.

However, scholars have questioned the effectiveness and underlying motivations of CSR activities within the Niger Delta. Frynas (2005) argued that CSR initiatives by multinational oil corporations frequently produce limited developmental outcomes because they fail to address deeper structural inequalities and environmental injustices. Similarly, Idemudia (2014) maintained that CSR in many African extractive communities is often

shaped by corporate interests, conflict management objectives, and operational stability concerns rather than genuine empowerment.

CSR may therefore perform contradictory functions within oil-producing communities. While it may provide short-term socioeconomic benefits, it may also reinforce dependency and discourage environmental criticism. Beneficiaries of contracts, scholarships, compensation payments, or empowerment schemes may become reluctant to openly challenge oil corporations for fear of exclusion from future opportunities. In this way, CSR may become a subtle mechanism of transactional repression.

### **Environmental Silence and Suppressed Resistance:**

Environmental silence refers to the inability or unwillingness of affected populations to openly challenge environmental harm despite experiencing its consequences. Within oil host communities, silence may emerge from fear, poverty, dependency, weak institutional protection, political pressure, or internal community divisions.

This paper conceptualizes environmental silence as a product of transactional repression because silence is often linked to survival-based relationships between corporations and host communities. Residents may suppress grievances because protest could threaten their economic survival or exclude them from corporate benefits. Community leaders may also avoid confrontation if they receive contracts, allowances, or recognition from oil corporations.

Environmental silence should therefore not be interpreted as satisfaction or acceptance of environmental conditions. Rather, it reflects unequal survival conditions within which many host communities negotiate existence. Silence becomes a form of adaptation to corporate power, state neglect, and economic vulnerability.

**Power Relations and Corporate Control:** Power relations between multinational oil corporations and host communities in the Niger Delta are deeply unequal. Oil corporations possess financial resources, political influence, legal capacity, security support, and institutional connections that often exceed the capacities of local communities. Host communities, by contrast, frequently experience poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and weak access to justice.

This imbalance allows corporations to influence local governance structures, shape community leadership, and regulate access to opportunities. Through selective distribution of contracts, compensation payments, scholarships, and employment opportunities, corporations may reward cooperative individuals or groups while excluding critics. Such practices may create internal divisions and weaken collective resistance within communities.

Watts (2004) described oil power in the Niger Delta as a form of govern mentality through which corporations and state institutions regulate social relations surrounding petroleum extraction. In this context, power is exercised not only through armed security or state

repression but also through patronage, compensation, development projects, and selective access to opportunities. Transactional repression therefore explains how environmental injustice is sustained through negotiated dependency and controlled access to economic benefits.

### **Empirical Review**

Several empirical studies have examined the environmental, social, and political consequences of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Existing evidence consistently shows that oil-producing communities experience severe environmental degradation, livelihood disruption, weak infrastructural development, and unequal access to the economic benefits generated from petroleum extraction.

One of the most comprehensive empirical investigations on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta was conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2011) in Ogoni land. The report revealed extensive contamination of soil, groundwater, rivers, and vegetation caused by decades of oil exploration and repeated oil spills. UNEP found that several communities were exposed to hydrocarbon contamination far above acceptable international standards, while many residents relied on polluted water sources for drinking and domestic use. The report further demonstrated that environmental degradation had significantly affected fishing, farming, food security, and public health within affected communities.

Similarly, Amnesty International (2011) documented widespread environmental pollution and livelihood destruction in oil-producing communities across the Niger Delta. The report showed that many oil spills remained poorly managed and inadequately remediated despite their devastating effects on local populations. Communities studied by Amnesty International reported declining agricultural productivity, destruction of aquatic ecosystems, contaminated farmlands, and increasing socioeconomic hardship linked to environmental pollution. The report also emphasized that weak environmental governance and poor regulatory enforcement contributed significantly to the persistence of environmental injustice within the region.

Empirical studies by Okonta and Douglas (2003) further demonstrated that oil extraction activities in the Niger Delta intensified poverty, social exclusion, and ecological destruction despite the enormous wealth generated from petroleum resources. Their study showed that many host communities lacked basic social infrastructure such as clean water, electricity, healthcare facilities, and accessible roads even while multinational corporations continued extensive extraction activities within their environments. The study argued that unequal distribution of oil wealth reinforced resentment, distrust, and perceptions of exploitation among local populations.

Research by Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) also established a strong relationship between oil exploitation, environmental degradation, and social conflict in the Niger Delta. Their findings revealed that destruction of traditional livelihoods such as fishing and

farming contributed significantly to youth unemployment, insecurity, and community instability. The study additionally observed that environmental degradation weakened local economic systems and intensified frustrations against both oil corporations and the Nigerian state.

Watts (2004; 2008) provided important empirical insights into the political economy of oil extraction and resistance in the Niger Delta. His studies demonstrated that oil exploration produced complex forms of environmental dispossession, corporate domination, and social inequality within host communities. Watts further argued that while some communities engaged in violent resistance and militancy, many others adopted negotiated accommodation strategies shaped by poverty, fear, dependency, and unequal access to opportunities controlled by oil corporations.

Empirical evidence on corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta also reveals contradictions between development claims and community realities. Frynas (2005) found that CSR initiatives implemented by multinational oil corporations often produced limited developmental outcomes because they focused primarily on conflict reduction and corporate legitimacy rather than long-term structural transformation. Similarly, Idemudia (2014) observed that CSR programmes in many African extractive communities were frequently shaped by corporate interests and operational stability concerns. Scholarship schemes, youth empowerment programmes, contracts, and community projects often benefited selected individuals or groups while broader

structural problems such as unemployment, environmental pollution, and underdevelopment remained unresolved.

Recent studies continue to show that environmental insecurity and ecological vulnerability remain major concerns within the Niger Delta despite years of intervention efforts. Adekola and Mitchell (2022) observed that environmental degradation within the Niger Delta wetlands threatens ecosystem sustainability, food security, local livelihoods, and human wellbeing. Their study emphasized that communities dependent on natural resources remain particularly vulnerable to the long-term consequences of environmental pollution and ecological decline.

Similarly, Akinola (2023) found that oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta continue to experience weak environmental accountability, inadequate remediation, and persistent livelihood insecurity despite evolving environmental governance frameworks. The study further argued that ineffective regulatory institutions and unequal power relations between corporations and host communities continue to sustain environmental vulnerability and social marginalization within the region.

Although existing empirical literature has extensively examined oil pollution, conflict, CSR, militancy, environmental degradation, and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, limited studies have specifically examined how dependency relationships suppress environmental resistance and normalize silence within oil host

communities. Most empirical studies focus primarily on visible forms of protest, militancy, and resource-control struggles, with less attention given to subtle forms of repression embedded within everyday community-corporate relations.

This paper therefore extends existing literature by introducing transactional repression as a sociological explanation for how dependency on corporate-controlled opportunities may discourage environmental criticism, weaken collective resistance, and sustain environmental injustice within extractive communities of the Niger Delta.

### **Gap in Literature**

Existing studies on the Niger Delta have focused largely on environmental degradation, militancy, resource conflicts, corporate social responsibility, and underdevelopment within oil-producing communities (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010; Frynas, 2005). While these studies provide important insights into the ecological and political consequences of oil exploration, limited attention has been devoted to the subtle sociological processes through which dependency suppresses resistance and normalizes environmental silence within host communities.

Most empirical studies explain visible forms of resistance such as protests, militancy, and resource-control struggles, but fewer studies examine quieter forms of repression embedded within everyday community-corporate relations. Consequently, there is

insufficient conceptual attention to transactional repression as a mechanism through which host communities negotiate survival while enduring environmental injustice.

This paper addresses this gap by introducing transactional repression as a sociological framework for understanding how dependency relationships contribute to environmental silence, negotiated compliance, and suppressed resistance within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on Michel Foucault's theory of power and Environmental Justice Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide important sociological explanations for how dependency, corporate domination, and environmental inequality interact within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Foucault (1977) argues that power operates not only through physical force or direct coercion but also through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour, normalize compliance, and shape social conduct. According to him, modern systems of power function through control of opportunities, institutional influence, surveillance, and the production of acceptable forms of behaviour. Within oil host communities, multinational oil corporations exercise influence through employment opportunities, scholarships, compensation payments, contracts, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. These forms of economic and social influence

may discourage resistance and produce negotiated silence among residents who depend on corporate-controlled opportunities for survival.

The theory is particularly relevant to this paper because it explains how transactional repression may operate through dependency rather than overt violence. Community members may suppress grievances or avoid environmental protest because of fear of exclusion from economic benefits controlled by oil corporations. Consequently, power becomes embedded within everyday social relations and shapes how residents respond to environmental suffering and ecological injustice.

The paper also utilized the Environmental Justice Theory which emphasizes the unequal distribution of environmental risks and developmental benefits within society. The theory argues that politically and economically marginalized populations are often disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards while powerful actors enjoy greater economic gains and environmental protection (Bullard, 2018). In the Niger Delta, oil-producing communities experience oil spills, gas flaring, water contamination, destruction of farmlands, and declining public health conditions associated with petroleum extraction, while multinational corporations and political elites continue to benefit economically from oil production.

Environmental Justice Theory is relevant because it explains the structural inequalities that sustain environmental degradation and social marginalization

within extractive communities. The theory further highlights how weak political influence, poverty, and unequal power relations contribute to environmental injustice in oil host communities.

Together, these theories provide a sociological framework for understanding how corporate power, dependency, and unequal environmental relations produce transactional repression and environmental silence within oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopted a qualitative conceptual research design to examine transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, particularly in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area. The paper relied primarily on documentary and secondary sources including scholarly journal articles, books, policy documents, environmental reports, and previous studies relating to oil exploration, environmental governance, corporate social responsibility, dependency, and community resistance in the Niger Delta. Documentary materials were purposively selected based on relevance, credibility, and analytical contribution to discussions on oil exploration, environmental governance, corporate social responsibility, and environmental injustice in the Niger Delta (Frynas, 2005; Idemudia, 2014).

Relevant documentary materials from organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme and

Amnesty International were critically reviewed and interpreted alongside sociological and political economy literature on oil extraction and environmental governance in Nigeria (UNEP, 2011; Amnesty International, 2011). The paper employed thematic and interpretive content analysis to identify major sociological themes relating to dependency, environmental silence, corporate influence, repression, and environmental injustice.

The paper is therefore conceptual and analytical in orientation, focusing on sociological interpretation, theoretical explanation, and critical analysis of existing literature rather than primary field-based data collection. The paper is intended as a conceptual contribution to Environmental Sociology and political ecology debates on power, dependency, and environmental injustice in extractive communities.

### **Discussion and Sociological Analysis**

The analysis suggests that dependency on multinational oil corporations significantly contributes to environmental silence within oil host communities in the Niger Delta. Existing literature indicates that residents who depend on oil companies for employment opportunities, scholarships, contracts, compensation payments, and community development projects often suppress grievances and avoid active resistance against environmental degradation (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2010). Within such unequal socioeconomic relations, silence becomes a survival strategy shaped by fear of exclusion from corporate-controlled opportunities and benefits.

Transactional repression therefore operates through negotiated dependency relations in which economic vulnerability weakens collective resistance against environmental exploitation.

This argument aligns with the theory of power advanced by Michel Foucault, who maintained that power operates not only through direct coercion but also through subtle disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour and normalize compliance (Foucault, 1977). In the context of oil host communities, corporate influence is exercised through selective access to contracts, employment opportunities, compensation payments, and development projects. These opportunities shape community behaviour and discourage opposition to environmental practices. Community members may therefore internalize silence because access to economic opportunities depends largely on maintaining favourable relationships with oil corporations. This analysis also reflects Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, which explains how dominated groups unconsciously internalize unequal social relations and perceive them as normal or unavoidable (Bourdieu, 1991).

The analysis further demonstrates that environmental injustice persists because oil-producing communities continue to bear the environmental and health consequences of oil extraction while receiving limited long-term developmental benefits. Existing studies on the Niger Delta consistently show that oil spills, gas flaring, contaminated water sources, destruction of farmlands, and declining public health conditions remain persistent realities within host communities (UNEP,

2011; Amnesty International, 2011). These environmental conditions have weakened traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing while simultaneously increasing poverty, livelihood insecurity, and social vulnerability within the region (Ojakorotu& Gilbert, 2010; Okonta& Douglas, 2003).

This argument supports Environmental Justice Theory, which maintains that socially and economically marginalized populations are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards while powerful actors benefit economically from environmentally harmful activities (Bullard, 2018). In the Niger Delta, multinational oil corporations and political elites continue to benefit from petroleum extraction while local communities experience the ecological costs associated with oil production. The unequal distribution of environmental risks and developmental benefits therefore reinforces structural inequality and environmental marginalization within oil host communities.

The analysis additionally suggests that corporate social responsibility initiatives may unintentionally reinforce dependency and negotiated silence within host communities. Although CSR programmes such as scholarships, youth empowerment schemes, employment opportunities, skill acquisition programmes, healthcare interventions, and infrastructural development projects provide certain socioeconomic benefits, they may simultaneously discourage environmental criticism. Beneficiaries may become reluctant to openly challenge corporate environmental practices because of fear of exclusion from future opportunities and benefits.

Existing literature therefore suggests that CSR may function both as a development strategy and as a subtle mechanism of social control within extractive communities (Frynas, 2005; Idemudia, 2014).

Recent environmental justice scholarship increasingly emphasizes that corporate accountability, participatory governance, and inclusive environmental decision-making are essential for addressing ecological marginalization and environmental inequality within extractive communities across the Global South (Temper et al., 2023). This suggests that sustainable environmental justice in the Niger Delta requires structural reforms capable of reducing dependency, strengthening community participation, and promoting transparent environmental governance.

This interpretation supports Idemudia's (2014) argument that CSR initiatives in the Niger Delta are frequently shaped by conflict-management objectives and operational stability rather than genuine structural transformation. Frynas (2005) similarly argued that CSR activities by multinational corporations in developing regions often fail to address the deeper roots of environmental injustice, underdevelopment, and inequality. Consequently, dependency relationships created through selective development benefits may weaken community resistance and normalize environmental suffering.

The analysis further indicates that environmental silence within oil-producing communities should not be interpreted as satisfaction or acceptance of

environmental conditions. Rather, silence often reflects fear, economic vulnerability, weak institutional protection, dependency on corporate-controlled opportunities, and lack of viable alternatives for survival. This perspective challenges dominant narratives that focus mainly on militancy, violent protest, and resource control conflicts in the Niger Delta while neglecting quieter forms of repression and negotiated accommodation (Watts, 2008; Obi, 2010).

The concept of transactional repression therefore contributes to sociological understanding of how environmental injustice is sustained through subtle social processes rather than overt force alone. Oil corporations exercise influence not only through economic power but also through their ability to regulate access to opportunities, shape local leadership structures, and influence community behaviour. These dynamics reveal that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is maintained through the interaction of corporate power, socioeconomic dependency, weak governance structures, and unequal environmental relations.

Overall, the paper argues that meaningful environmental justice in the Niger Delta cannot be achieved solely through environmental remediation or corporate development projects without addressing the broader structures of dependency, exclusion, and unequal power relations that shape community-corporate interactions in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area and other oil-producing communities.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined transactional repression and environmental injustice in oil host communities of the Niger Delta, with particular focus on Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area. The paper argued that environmental injustice in the region extends beyond ecological degradation to include subtle forms of dependency, social control, negotiated silence, and suppressed resistance within community-corporate relations. Existing literature and sociological analysis suggest that dependence on multinational oil corporations for employment opportunities, scholarships, contracts, compensation payments, and community development projects often discourages open criticism and weakens collective resistance against environmental degradation.

The paper further demonstrated that transactional repression operates through unequal power relations in which silence becomes a survival strategy for many members of oil-producing communities. Corporate social responsibility initiatives, although beneficial in certain respects, may unintentionally reinforce dependency and negotiated compliance within host communities. Consequently, environmental injustice in the Niger Delta is sustained not only through pollution, weak governance, and institutional failures but also through social and economic structures that normalize silence and limit community agency.

The paper therefore concludes that achieving sustainable environmental justice in oil-producing communities

requires more than environmental remediation and corporate development projects. There is a need for policies and interventions that strengthen community autonomy, reduce dependency, promote transparent environmental governance, and encourage inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes. Addressing the structural foundations of transactional repression is essential for promoting environmental accountability, social justice, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the sociological analysis and existing literature reviewed in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Multinational oil corporations should adopt more transparent and environmentally accountable operational practices in order to reduce pollution, environmental degradation, and public health risks within host communities.
2. Government agencies responsible for environmental regulation should strengthen monitoring mechanisms, enforcement capacity, and sanctions against environmental violations by oil companies operating in the Niger Delta.
3. Oil host communities should be economically empowered through sustainable livelihood programmes capable of reducing excessive dependence on oil-company-controlled opportunities and benefits.

4. Corporate social responsibility initiatives should focus more on long-term community empowerment, participatory development, and institutional sustainability rather than selective distribution of benefits that may reinforce dependency and environmental silence.
5. Civil society organizations and community-based groups should intensify environmental awareness campaigns and advocacy programmes aimed at strengthening environmental consciousness and community participation in environmental governance.
6. Mechanisms for inclusive dialogue, environmental accountability, and community participation should be strengthened to ensure that residents can express grievances without fear of exclusion, victimization, or loss of economic opportunities.
7. Further sociological and political ecology studies should explore transactional repression, environmental silence, and dependency relations in other extractive communities across Nigeria and Africa in order to deepen understanding of the hidden dimensions of environmental injustice.

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