BURDEN OR BOON THROUGH WEST AFRICAN EXTRACTIVES? EXPLICATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RESOURCE CURSE AND CANCEROUS DEMOCRACY THEORIES

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Community Development, Community Participation, Extractive Sector, Paradox of plenty, Solid Minerals, West Africa, Local Content Policies, Poverty

Abstract

Research Problem: *Ensuring community engagement (CE) and community development (CD) through extractive sector activities in West Africa has not been effective due to resource curse and cancerous democracy problems. This research therefore interrogates the critical problems militating against CE and CD through West African Countries' extractive sector.*
Methods/Theory: *The study employed documentary research and triangulation of resource curse and cancerous democracy theories.*
Results: *Corruption; trust deficit, religious and ethnic diversity; and low level education were among the critical problems.*
Conclusion: West Africa's problem is the paradox of plenty wherein huge

resource wealth failed to culminate into various forms of development for countries in the sub-region via robust CE due to allied challenges militating against the role of West African countries' ES in CE and development that are undemocratic in nature.

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *The first study to apply the novel Cancerous Democracy Theory to the analysis of CE and development in the West African extractive sector; a synthesis of how corruption, trust deficit, ethnic fragmentation, and low education interact to perpetuate the resource curse and undermine community engagement.*

Recommendation: *Public policy focus in West Africa's extractive sector must mandatorily go beyond resource extraction and move toward resource governance and wealth redistribution devoid of ethnic undertone; corporate social responsibility should be mandatory, with a defined proportion of extractive revenues allocated to education and vocational training in host communities.*

Section 1: Introduction

Extractive sector (ES) in West Africa (WA) is a significant channel for effective community engagement (CE) and community development (CD). The reason is that natural resources have the ability to engender growth, development, as well as poverty reduction (World Bank, 2021) in countries where CE is successfully adopted. However, in countries rich in mineral resources like Nigeria, it has become a curse or paradox (Chioke, 2025; Di John, 2010) as a result of government corruption (Fernando 2022) and other resource curse and cancerous democracy related problems. Studies examined the resource curse (Di John, 2010; Fernando, 2022), CE and CD via the extractive sector (Kemp, 2010; Ojo & Ako, 2021), but neglected the integrated analysis of how resource curse and cancerous democracy jointly undermine CE and development through the ES, particularly in WA. Therefore, exploring CE and development in the sub-region vis-à-vis the operations of extractive industries requires going beyond corporate social responsibility to analysing the complex paradox of plenty and political/institutional issues on ground.

In many countries, the sector in-charge of removing those resources from their natural domain is, 'extractive sector'. Globally, extractive sector plays economic role in sixty three countries, many of which face challenges like weak governance and resource dependency (World Bank, 2021). Yet conflict regarding mining has remained a nagging issue negating CE and CD through extractive industries because of government failure. For instance, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea experienced conflicts which are closely associated with exploitation of natural resources (Rjoub, et al, 2021). Government failures characterized by horizontal and vertical inequalities in countries across Africa produced democratic paralyses (Chirot, 1977) which seems to be worst in West African countries where resource curse and undemocratic elements triumphed over democratic practices to introduce several governance issues negating CD through CE.

Numerous mining organisation now employ community practitioners to interact with local people and enhance CD at the operational level (Kemp, 2010). Expectedly, countries where democracy is ideally explored engage community members in problem solving CD programmes. Therefore, National League of Cities (NLC) (2011) perceived democratic governance as governing the community in deliberative, participatory, inclusive and collaborative ways. Regrettably, CD through CE is poorly implemented with

the ES maintaining undue silence in the scheme of things. For example, Ojo and Ako (2021) confirmed that CD in Nigeria suffered historical neglect that overtly undermined its scope and development rate. This depicts the difference between developed and underdeveloped countries, which to a great extent lies on the knowledge, understanding and attitudinal dispositions of those saddled with the responsibility to engage the local area in CD plans with the extractive industry playing a reasonable part in that regard.

Under the guise of resource curse, countries in WA continue to grapple with a paradox where enormous extractive revenues are paradoxically burdened with the burden of corruption, ethnic divisions, and socio-economic stagnation instead of shared growth and development for the host communities and the country at large. Consequently, translating mineral wealth into sustainable local development through local content policies remains significantly hindered by deep-seated distrust, widespread educational deficits and other key issues that could be seen through the perspective of cancerous democracy theory (CDT). There is lack of systematic analysis of the critical problems militating against CE and CD through West African extractive sector. While scholars such as Di John (2010), Fernando (2022), and Ojo and Ako (2021) have examined the resource curse and CE, no study systematically analysed how resource curse and cancerous democracy interact to undermine CE and development through the ES. This study fills that gap by interrogating the critical problems militating against CE and CD through West African Countries' extractive sector, underpinning the analysis on the fundamental ideas of resource curse theory (RCT) and CDT.

Section 2: Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualising Community Engagement and Community Development

African countries have numberless potentials and WA as the hub of this paper is a home of enormous human and material resources, yet it condones abject penury indicating manifest presence of resource curse and cancerous democracy. It is worrisome that the abundant mineral and human resources have not been adequately harnessed and engaged respectively at the sub-regional level to promote CD. Given the global shift from New Public Management (NPM) to New Public Governance (NPG), there is an increased reiteration of citizen/stakeholder participation in processes of development of nation-states (Shoniwa, 2022). Consequently, studies on CE, CD and associated terms abound (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1997, 2011; Dang, 2018; Loeurt, 2016; Ojo & Ako, 2021). Due to much emphasis on stakeholder participation and/or CE in the world developmental process; there exists a corresponding problem of definition. Supportively, CE is differently defined and adopted for different purposes (Brunton, et al, 2017). To derive a working definition, the conceptual review first focused on previous related studies/ideas by different scholars and organisations.

CE as opined by Swainston & Summerbell (2008) deals with "involving communities in decision-making and planning, design, governance and delivery of services." Involvement to some scholars comprises consultation, collaboration, or community control, with the provision of information alone not considered sufficient level of engagement (Boote, et al, 2002). CE taxonomies should also include information-giving (Wilcox, 1994). CE happens where a

need is identified for a particular community (Brunton, et al, 2017). CE entails:

The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (CDC, 1997).

To foster CE, extractive industries in WA should build trust by creating better communication that would foster lasting collaborations in host communities. Typically, CE involves building coalitions. Coalition as explicated by Cohen et al (2002) is a union of people as well as organisations working together to influence the outcomes of specific problem. Simply stated, community coalition means an organized arranged that enables everyone to work together towards a common objective (Ghaffari, et al, 2021). The aims of coalition may range from disseminating information and resources to advocating for specific policy changes (Cohen, et al, 2002). It is significant to form a coalition because it increases the efficacy of interventional programs (Ghaffari, et al, 2021). Coalitions help the engagement process in a number of ways: maximizing the influence of the people and organisations, creating new collective resources, and reducing the duplication of efforts (CDC, 2011).

CE is often confused with community participation. However, there is a distinction that exists between the two. Community engagement means engaging the community members to attain sustainable results. It is an engaged community that undergoes participation. In other words, the absence of CE leads to a corresponding retrogression in the participation of community members in development processes. Again, CE is a form of formal politics because it is regulated by official rules that are expressly coded and understood. Community participation to a great extent is organic politics as the way/manner of involvement is implicitly stated. Community participation is a spontaneous activity by community members as it erupts by virtue of daily concerns. Importantly, "Organic politics is regulated by norms that are implicitly stated and broadly understood. This is in contrast to formal politics, which is regulated by strict rules of order imposed by trained moderators or officials (Barker, Paget & Battle, 2008, pp.12-13)."

Development is complex (Abuiyada, 2018; Chioke, 2020; Coccia, 2019) and thus encompasses various aspects of human life. It is about the improvement in the quality of life and this improvement could be socio-economic or political (Udenta, 2007). Community development is a holistic process for solving societal needs. Kenny (2007) noted that CD is a comprehensive approach rooted in the tenets of inclusion, empowerment, human rights, social justice, self-determination and collective action. Ultimately, CD is centred on enhancing standard of living of community members via their active involvement (Chioke, 2022) in decision-making.

In spite of the extensive literature on the resource curse and community engagement in West Africa, there is limited empirical research that systematically examines how corruption, trust deficit, ethnic fragmentation, and low education interact to perpetuate the resource curse and undermine community engagement and development through the ES. Existing studies often focus on single factors or specific countries, without providing an integrated analysis for West Africa. This study fills that gap by synthesizing the cancerous democratic theory with resource curse theory in examining the challenges that have hindered CE and CD in WA. To show how the present

study's focus on the interaction between resource curse and cancerous democracy is distinct from previous work, we add that: While Kemp (2010) examines mining and community development and Ojo and Ako (2021) examine citizen participation and community development, these studies do not specifically analyse how the resource curse and cancerous democracy interact to undermine CE and CD in WA.

2.2 Solid Minerals in West African Communities, Operators, and Policies

Mineral resources management in the mining industry has attracted great attention from the masses and government of countries richly endowed with solid minerals (Koroma, Wang & Koroma, 2016). Resultantly, mining has remained the focus of development strategy in Sierra Leone (Koroma, et al, 2016) and Nigeria since independence. In Nigeria, there are solid mineral in different states of the federation. For instance, Zamfara State is replete with several mineral resources especially gold. In Zamfara State, gold deposits are mostly found in Anka, Binnin Yauri, Birnin Gwari-Kwaga, Gurmana, Maru, Tsohon, Okolom-Dogondaji, and also near Iperindo in Osun State (Abdulrahman, Ahmed and Everisto, 2022). The challenge has been absence of CD through CE spearheaded by extractive industry. This has thus led to extreme poverty in the state. Corroborating this, Yunana, Ishaya and Usman (2026) argued that Zamfara has high rate of poverty in Nigeria. Likewise, multidimensional poverty index of November 2022 revealed that 78% of Zamfara people are poor (Mohammed, 2023). This may be because Zamfara State has no legally recognized industry positioned to harness the gold deposits in the state (Abdulrahman, et al 2022). As such, illegal gold mining in the state has remained consistent and persistent. This implies that these communities where gold deposits are found in Zamfara and even Osun State are not engaged and thus lack development.

Nigeria is also blessed with other resources like oil and gas which abound in Southsouth (Niger Delta) and Southeast geopolitical zones. While that of the Southsouth contributes to the national purse, oil traced to States in Southeast is largely underexplored leading to extreme poverty and deprivation – salient indicators of the dual theoretical frameworks of this paper. So, Abdulrahman, et al (2022) rightly contended that the management of ES can either alleviate or exacerbate poverty. Unlike the gold in Zamfara that contributes no meaningful quota to the national coffers; the oil and gas sector in Southsouth is a significant contributor to the country's GDP. This is partly because a result of the presence of several operators in oil and gas sector. Prominent among them is Chevron that "operates under joint-venture arrangement with Nigerian Petroleum Corporation for onshore and offshore assets in Niger Delta with 40% interest in eight concessions in the onshore (Chevron Nigeria, n.d)." On the policy framework for the sector, Nigeria Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 provides useful regulatory and governance template for the petroleum industry which the operators are to key into. Despite the expected gains of PIA, it has its pains. On the pains, Oyewale, Okediya and Afimia (2023) revealed that PIA introduced complex dispute within Nigeria's petroleum sector because of jurisdictional ambiguities between Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission thus highlighting the need for regulatory clarity in the industry.

Sierra Leone is rich in minerals like rutile, diamonds, gold, bauxites, and iron ore (International Trade Administration, 2021) and are keenly mined in various locations. For instance, gold was discovered in the rocks of

Southern Kangari hills (Thompson, 2010), Sula Mountains, Koinadugu, Tonkolili and Bo Districts (Sierra Leone Ministry of Natural Resources, 2010); bauxites are located between Moyamba and Mano, Krim-Kpaka deposits in Pujehun District, Kamakwie and Makumre deposits in northern Sierra Leone, Freetown Peninsular, and the road from Falaba to Waia in northern Sierra Leone; diamonds are found around the drainage areas of rivers in Kono, Kenema and Bo Districts with 1700 artisanal mining licenses in operation; rutile is in the gravels of Lanti river south of Gbangbama region; while iron ore was discovered in Marampa area, Toma and Makalawa (Sierra Leone Ministry of Natural Resources, 2010). In Sierra Leone, there are mining companies such as Tonkolili Iron Ore and London Mining/Timis Mining Corp. In 2007, Sierra-Leone's mining industry generated 4.5% of the GDP (OECD, 2009). In 2018, it contributed 0.7% to country's GDP, 65% export earning, and 3% to employment (International Trade Administration, 2021).

Mining is one of the major factors fueling instability in Sierra-Leone and has accounted for the country's civil war (Wikipedia, 2023). The profits from diamond are reaped by corrupt officials and private companies (Federico, 2007). The implication is that the masses are not benefiting from the proceeds and government income given significant sabotage. In 2004, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) reported that the central cause of the civil war had been the endemic greed, corruption and nepotism of political elites (Barria & Roper, 2010). To prevent further occurrence, proper management and accountability method for handling the mining industry and mineral resources has to be developed and utilized. Imperatively, this can be achieved when the sector explores possible means of actively engaging host communities. It must also be stated that the sector witnessed the reduction of iron ore prices. However, despite the reduction of iron ore prices, the economy recovered in 2016 by its 6.3% growth as the implemented supportive economic policies and the resumption of mining in 2016 had earlier halted (Investing in Sierra Leone, n.d).

Resuscitating her economy, Koroma et al (2016) informed that, Sierra Leone utilized a host of natural resource governance strategies, which includes the EG agenda for the mining sector and to be licensed, extractive industries must conduct an EIA; make adequate proposals to mitigate and/or manage impacts; public disclosure of the details of potential impacts; and present a community development action plan. The question is, are these governance strategies proactive? This paper strongly upholds that it has not greatly affected the people and the country in several fronts. For example, poverty still looms large in the country with negative implications for the well-being of the masses. Evidencing this, the new poverty assessment for Sierra Leone points that the country faces many challenges in improving citizens' welfare (World Bank, 2022) and as such, the poor in Sierra Leone are faced with deprivation. This implies that policies concerning effective management of mining industry for the citizens' well-being should be done alongside a broader focus on CD through CE by the ES.

Section 3: Materials and Methods

Literature on CE, CD and associated phenomena were reviewed through documentary research. Essentially, documentary research permits the investigator to explore documented sources. This method rigorously examined existing public information and scholarly literature to interrogate the cardinal driver of this research. Thus, documentary evidence in form of journals, newspapers, textbooks, online materials and experience of the researcher were eminent sources of data. Documents were assessed for veracity and relevance to the

geographical scope, making sure that only peer-reviewed literature and authoritative online/institutional sources were incorporated. Generated data for this paper was content analyzed and thematically presented. Why? Theme analysis makes it easier for one to analyze data as it makes data understandable when summarizing essential concepts of a retrieved large data set (Braun & Clarke, 2020). This procedure entails: examining the data by reading and rereading them to become familiar with information and build some preliminary ideas about the data; coding the data; and developing findings in form of themes from the codes (Clark & Creswell, 2015). Themes were further divided into important categories for examination (Shehu & Aliu, 2026). These themes as they appeared in this study include corruption, lack of trust, ethnic fragmentation, and low level education. RCT and CDT were the analytical frameworks adopted to synthesize the coded data.

While publication date range (e.g., 2000–2026), geographic focus (West Africa), and broad thematic relevance to community engagement, community development, and the extractive sector were the data inclusion criteria; publications done from 1996 and below and those not published in English language were excluded. Sources were identified through academic databases, institutional reports, and online sources. However, table 1 presents summary of data sources:

Table 1: Summary of Data Sources

Source Type	**Examples**	**Number of Sources**	**Contribution to Analysis**
Academic literature	Auko (2003), Di John (2010), Fernando (2022), Kemp (2010), Ojo & Ako (2021), Chioke (2024, 2025), etc	25	Provided theoretical and empirical context for the resource curse, cancerous democracy, community engagement, and community development
Institutional reports	World Bank (2021, 2022), OECD (2009), EITI reports	8	Provided empirical data on extractive sector governance and development outcomes
Policy documents	Nigeria Petroleum Industry Act (2021), Sierra Leone minerals governance strategies	4	Provided legal and policy frameworks for the extractive sector

Source: Authors' compilation (2026).

There are limitations of the methodology. These include: reliance on secondary sources, lack of statistical generalisability, and potential for interpretive bias. However, measures were taken to ensure that these do not substantially affect the study's quality. Surmounting reliance on secondary sources, we systematically evaluated each source for authority (institutional/author(s) credibility) and currency of the work. Rather than claiming statistical generalizability of the study across broader populations in WA, we focused on analytical generalization, which involves identifying and examining underlying theoretical frameworks and/or systemic patterns that may apply to similar contexts beyond the study location. Interpretive bias was checked by actively searching studies and

alternative theories that contradict the key emerging narrative or thesis.

Section 4: Theoretical Framework

This paper triangulates the following theories for the analysis of the study:

Resource curse theory

Resource curse theory refers to the paradox that nations and areas rich in natural resources, particularly point-source non-renewable resources like fuels and minerals, tend to have worse development outcomes and less economic growth than countries with fewer natural resources (Onyenekenwa 2011). Huge natural resources in underdeveloped countries in most cases do not lead to developmental outcomes (Chioke, 2025; Di John 2010; Fernando 2022; Ndubuisi-okolo & Anigbuogu 2019) in Africa and possibly beyond.

In discussions concerning the economic issues facing low- and middle-income nations worldwide in the 1950s and 1960s, the notion that resources might be more of an economic curse than a blessing emerged (Ross, 1999). Resource curse refers to the general notion that mineral and fuel abundance in less developed countries (LDCs) tends to generate negative developmental outcomes, including poor economic performance, growth collapses, high levels of corruption, ineffective governance, and greater political violence (Di John 2010). Consequently, natural resources are considered more of a curse than a gift in the majority of poor countries (Di John 2010, 1). Countries that have abundant natural resources do have little economic growth and development (Chioke, 2025) given critical factors undermining CD through CE initiatives by the ES sector and other vibrant sectors of the economy in most underdeveloped countries in WA and beyond.

Cancerous Democracy Theory

Cancerous Democratic Theory (CDT) was introduced by Stephen Chinedu Chioke in his research work titled, "Nigeria's democracy: A cancer in disguise." According to Chioke (2024) CDT was devised as a theoretical paradigm to examine systemic issues that have grown uncontrollably and currently balkanizing African/third-world countries' public life. CDT explains the behaviours of African politicians, public policy implementers, and their cronies which greatly antagonize the ideals of democracy (Chioke, 2024). Focusing on Nigeria, he presented the CDT paradigm for analyzing structural political pathologies in modern African governments. The pathologies in modern African governments are capable of undermining CE and CD through extractive sector.

CDT Assumptions

Chioke (2024, p.273) pointed out these assumptions which form the foundation of the theory:

1. Although modern political gladiators play an important role in the political leadership of third-world nations, their actions, inactions, and responses typically instill lawlessness in their mentees in the political and bureaucratic sectors as well as in the general public.

2. Modern political gladiators in third-world nations implement foreign and domestic policies that are detrimental to the transition from an underdeveloped or stagnant state to one that is problem-solving or sustainably developed.

3. Cronyism, patronage, and racial politics all play a role in the distribution of values and public positions.

4. It is more difficult to tame security concerns in areas where laws do not apply and have largely failed to govern the actions of political players and their agents.

5. Both ruling and non-ruling elites embrace the politics of self-glorification known as cult of personality, even in the face of a complete lack of specific ideas to guide the state as circumstances need.

6. The politically, socioeconomically, and technologically illiterate class is the driving force behind democracy.

7. Through manipulation, repression, propaganda, and suppression of dissent, the state focuses on political gladiators' ideas of what democracy ought to be rather than on global best practices or objective realities.

Simply put, the above assumptions depict the governance challenges in Nigeria and other African countries. These are troubles with CE and CD through the extractive sector in the West African sub-region.

Limitations of the Theories

The theories of this study have several limitation vis-à-vis the present study. For example, RCT could be criticised for being deterministic and for neglecting the role of agency and institutions. Imperatively, the study addresses this by analysing specific failures (cancerous democracy) that mediate the relationship between resource wealth and development outcomes in WA. In the other hand, CDT can be criticised for being too broad. The study addresses this by applying it to the specific context of the extractive sector, CE and CD.

Application of the theories

RCT which advocates that societies with many natural resources have poor development outcomes as a result of bad governance/management is applicable to this paper. Similarly, CDT is relevant to the issues raised in this paper. Extractive industries produced enormous wealth in countries in WA, enhancing the wellbeing of the local population. However, this was limited given resource curse and cancerous democratic issues inherent in Africa. RCT is useful for examining whether the extractive sector actually promoted sustainable CD despite the persistence of critical challenges. Another key relevance of resource curse lies in its explication of resource-driven or related critical challenges and conflicts in host communities that manifest in form of competition over resource ownership, revenue sharing/allocation, and environmental effects.

While revenue gotten from mining can to a great extent improve host communities' quality of life (Rufa'i, 2025), extraction profits in mineral-rich states do not greatly benefit the public (Africa Progress Panel, 2013; Di John 2010) due to undemocratic practices captured by cancerous democracy framework. Unfortunately, the corrupt political class weaponize state power to award huge extractive contracts to loyalist and family members, making the state apparatus a source of self-aggrandisement while host communities wallow in penury. Again, deliberate omission of civil society voices in Sierra Leone's Minerals Advisory Board (Sahla & Salomon, 2021) shows how WA's politicians in preventing public accountability sideline regulatory oversight in order to encourage corruption and mismanagement of ethnic diversity while.

When viewed from RCT and CDT, the foregoing issues create tensions between stakeholders (government, local communities, and multinational corporations), negating CE and CD at the grassroots and beyond. In examining why the extractive industries/sector could not cause substantial community development in WA, this paper focused on resource curse and cancerous democracy related problems. This study contributes to theory by integrating RCT and CDT to analyse the interaction between resource wealth, democratic dysfunction, and CE in WA. It also extends Cancerous Democratic Theory by

applying it to extractive sector governance and demonstrating how political pathologies undermine CD.

Section 5: Results and Presentation of Data

Investigating the critical challenges in the role of West African countries' ES for CE and CD, the following themes emerged.

Corruption: First, extant literature show that utilizing CE for effective CD in West African countries' ES suffers from the load of corruption (Desta, 2020). Corruption being multifaceted (Chioke, 2026) affects every aspect of the world (Naziru & Zaleha, 2017) and West Africa's ES is not an exception. Major problem in many extractive industries transparency initiative (EITI) implementing countries is corruption within the ES (Sahla & Salomon, 2021). Reports show that Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra-Leone ES is corrupt (Edidiong, 2021; Sahla & Salomon, 2021; Kaisa & Hervé 2019) and would find it difficult to engineer CD through CE. In contradistinction to legal provisions, there was absence of civil society representatives of Minerals Advisory Board of Sierra-Leone as shown by the country's 2017–2018 report (Sahla & Salomon, 2021). From the theoretical framework of this paper, corruption operates as the principal transmission belt of the resource curse in West Africa. Corruption hinders CE from effectively supporting long-term CD by using resource riches as a catalyst for elite enrichment rather than public investment. Thus, viewed from CDT, corrupt practices in the extractive sector hindering development are resultant effects of cancerous democracy operational in Africa.

Lack of trust and confidence: The fact that development programs are designed and executed without paying attention to the exact needs of the people at grassroots (Abuiyada, 2018) – top down planning creates serious loopholes in administering development at community levels. This system causes lack of patriotism and zeal to actively participate in CD plans through engagement of community members in some African states. Paradox of plenty informs that resource-rich regions of the world, especially in Africa and more precisely, WA suffer from a cruel irony: massive subterranean wealth unabatedly coexists with high surface-level poverty, poor infrastructure, and unfulfilled expectations. Extractive sectors and other agencies therefore find it difficult to contribute towards CD where these breed dearth of public trust. This is largely because political office holders are not who they should be (Achebe, 1983) – a step toward serious cancerous democracy. Imperatively, lack of trust and confidence in the process or in the other participants undermines any initiative (Linden, 2002) targeted towards administering grassroots development.

Ethnic Fragmentation and Mismanagement: WA is divided along ethnic and religious lines. For example, Adigbo (2017) said, the ethnic, religious, linguistic and regional diversity of Nigeria has been a constant source of societal tensions and/or conflicts. No meaningful engagement has materialized through the extractive industries in West African states like Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria because the sub-region is deeply enmeshed in ethnic diversity. The fact that communities are heterogeneous shows that CE activities will not produce similar results in different contexts (Musesengwa, and Chimbari 2017). CE would be easy where there is one widely used religion and language as the two breed unnecessary dichotomous stratifications which directly negate the essence of CE, health and other social outcomes that constitute indices of CD. Viewed from resource curse theory, ethnic and religious fragmentations that are manifest in Nigeria and African states (Aluko, 2003; Chioke, 2024; Mark, 1998) lead to conflict trap which can be deepened by low economic development in the affected sovereign states

(Margalef & Mueller, 2024) and resource competition because as argued by Wennmann (2011), natural resources lead to reoccurring cycles of armed conflict. These are indicators of resource curse in countries replete with huge mineral resources.

Low level education: Education ought to be an instrument of societal transformation (Chioke, et al, 2023) and CE for sustainable CD. However, quality education as an indicator of development is insufficient in countries like Nigeria given political behaviours and policies make it unaffordable – serious cancer in African democracy. A situation where West Africa is the greatest number of out-of-school children (White, 2021) makes it difficult for the ES to play its role as an agent of CE and CD. Nigeria has been unable to find adequate means of ensuring learning becomes attractive (Chioke, et al, 2023). This is clear as 2 out of 5 out-of-school children in Sub-Saharan Africa live in WA (White, 2021). This portends far reaching implication for the extractive industries CE and CD roles in WA. Therefore, low level education is another critical issue facing the role of West African states' ES in CE and development given the presence of undemocratic practices.

Section 6: Discussion of Findings

The finding that corruption is a major challenge supports RCT, which argues that abundant natural resource revenues tend to incentivize rent-seeking behaviour. The issue of corruption is evident in WA. Between 2015 and 2019, Nigeria earned N24.1 trillion from oil and gas sector, but ranked 161 out of 189 as seen in 2020 Human Development Report (Edidiong, 2021). The reason for these instances is the corrupt behaviours in the sector (Edidiong, 2021; Sahla & Salomon, 2021). Penitence of corruption in African countries (Chioke, 2024) especially the aforementioned ones aligns directly with the major claim of resource curse theory: that abundant natural resource revenues tend to incentivize rent-seeking behaviour. With the influence of corrupt political class and comprador bourgeoisie in the extractive industries, engaging think thanks for better implementation of CD programs has not been easy. The implication of corruption in CE and CD is not far-fetched.

When governments or extractive industries promise local development, infrastructure, and jobs, through CE initiatives, communities dwellers instead of treating these commitments as genuine efforts they see it as hollow rhetoric. This implies that there is a causal nexus between lack of trust/confidence and underdevelopment in oil-rich countries suffering resource curse. This is the predominant ordeal in South-South geopolitical zone, Nigeria known for its rich mineral and fossil fuel yet living in poverty (Edoumiekumo, et al, 2014; Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019) given the inability of oil companies to actively engage the local people in CD programs. In fact, it has been argued that the definitions, needs and communities' motivations provide the foundation to structure how CE is developed and delivered (Brunton, et al, 2017). So, where due consideration to various needs of the community people are not adequately considered by the sector involved; CE for CD suffers major setback, leading to paradox of plenty.

The finding (ethnic fragmentation) supports CDT, which explains how systemic political pathologies undermine democratic ideals. In West African countries that are ethnically and religiously fractured, diverse groups view state-managed resource wealth through a zero-sum lens. Thus, in viewing this from paradox of plenty, we observe that competition over resource rents worsens societal fractures, creating cyclical patterns of tension as well as armed conflict that eventually paralyze economic and social progress. Additionally,

CDT argues that political elites deliberately introduce and spread harmful practices like mismanagement of diversity. This therefore weakens CE and CD in most African countries with such experience.

Though mining increased in countries like Sierra Leone (Thompson, 2010), this has not raised the literacy rates given democracy/governance and resource curse related problem. Illiterates find it difficult to effectively participate in CD programs when engaged through existing sectors. The matter is even worse in West African rural areas where extractive industries are domiciled. UNESCO (2005) reported that rural dwellers are illiterates with low level education. Secondary education is the highest educational level of rural people with serious implications for the sustainability of CD project (Uche, et al, 2023) through CE especially in WA. The huge oil revenues in WA alongside poor human capital development (HCD) outcomes highlight the classic case of resource curse. Instead of being invested in critical public goods and inclusive CD, resource rents are captured by political elites indicating political corruption exacerbating resource curse (Fernando, 2022) and inability of the ES to engender CE and CD in WA. Theoretically, low-level education is both a sign and a reinforcing mechanism of resource curse. By denying educational systems the needed resource revenues, West African states starve the masses the technical and intellectual capital required to actively engage with extractive industries, ultimately locking the affected community(ies) out of true HCD.

Section 7: Conclusion and Recommendation

Given the challenges x-rayed so far, this paper agrees that CE as a tool for effective CD is yet to be properly deployed in ensuring a sustainably developed sub-region through the ES. When this occurs, CE will truly act as a catalyst for deepening democracy (Sally, n.d) in WA and improve the region's overall development. In conclusion, West Africa's problem is the paradox of plenty wherein huge resource wealth failed to culminate into various forms of development for countries in the sub-region via robust CE due to allied challenges militating against the role of West African countries' ES in community engagement and development that are undemocratic in nature. This is an indication that cancerous democracy subverts democratic dividends like participation, community development and so on in Africa.

The findings of this paper have significant policy implications that show its practical relevance for sustainable community engagement and development. Community engagement through extractive industry in WA cannot be successful under inadequate institutional structures, in form of corruption, lack of trust, sociocultural fragmentation, and educational deficiencies. Undoubtedly, the policy implications are unmistakable: strong legal frameworks, inclusive governance systems, institutional accountability, and investments in human resources are necessary for sustainable community development. Instead of transforming communities, solid minerals will continue to fuel conflict in the absence of systemic reform. Therefore, rather than being an option, corporate social responsibility should be mandatory that a defined proportion of extractive revenues should be allocated to education at all levels and vocational training in host communities, as a way of improving the status of education in West African countries suffering from resource curse and cancerous democracy. Conclusively, CE as a tool for effective CD is yet to be properly deployed in ensuring sustainably developed communities in WA given existing challenges generating resource curse and making it impossible for ES to proactively engage local dwellers for CD.

In line with the specific objective and finding, we recommended that:

Promote resource governance and wealth redistribution: Public policy focus in West Africa's extractive sector must mandatorily go beyond resource extraction and move toward resource governance and wealth redistribution devoid of ethnic undertone. Also, corporate social responsibility should be mandatory, with a defined proportion of extractive revenues allocated to education and vocational training in host communities.

The lesson derived from this paper is that development in WA through extractive sector remain a burden because of the interaction between resource curse and governance challenges. Despite the foregoing inputs, current investigation is limited in focus and methodology, thereby limiting generalizability of the findings beyond WA. For deeper understanding, future researches on this topical issue should attempt a cross sectional survey.

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