CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND HUMAN SECURITY: AN EVALUATION OF SHELL'S CSR INITIATIVES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES OF RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study evaluates the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on human security in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study integrates quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess whether CSR interventions by Shell effectively mitigate environmental degradation, economic insecurity, and social instability. This study anchored in human security theory, which emphasizes a people-centered approach to security, the study interrogates CSR's role beyond community development projects to its impact on economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and conflict resolution. The findings reveal that while Shell's CSR programs provide infrastructure, education, and healthcare, they fail to address core human security concerns. Weak stakeholder engagement and governance structures limit transparency and community participation, leading to elite capture of CSR benefits. Additionally, environmental degradation persists despite Shell's sustainability commitments, and CSR-based economic empowerment programs remain unsustainable, failing to curb youth unemployment and militancy. The study recommends restructuring CSR interventions to incorporate holistic human security strategies and strengthening regulatory frameworks to enforce corporate accountability. This research contributes to the literature by shifting the focus from corporate philanthropy to structural governance solutions. Unlike previous studies that document CSR activities, this study critically examines their effectiveness in promoting human security and highlights the need for policy-driven CSR reforms to achieve sustainable peace and development in oil-producing regions.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a fundamental aspect of corporate governance, influencing the relationship between multinational corporations (MNCs) and their host communities. Globally, corporations are increasingly expected to contribute positively to social and environmental sustainability beyond profit-making. CSR encompasses economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, ensuring that businesses operate in ways that benefit society (Carroll & Shabana 2019). International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank have emphasized CSR as a mechanism for promoting human security, particularly in conflict-prone regions. For instance, the United Nations Global Compact provides guidelines for businesses to align strategies with human rights, labour, environmental, and anti-corruption principles, ensuring sustainable development (UNGC, 2022). In conflict-affected areas like the Middle East and Latin America, companies such as BP and Chevron have integrated CSR into their business models to mitigate community grievances and promote stability (Frynas, 2021).

Across Africa, CSR has gained prominence due to the continent's extensive natural resource wealth and the presence of multinational corporations, particularly in the extractive industries. However, the relationship between corporations and host communities has been characterized by socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and governance challenges. While some corporations have adopted CSR practices to foster development, others have been accused of exacerbating conflicts through exploitative practices (Idemudia, 2020). In countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Angola, and South Africa, the extraction of minerals and oil has triggered socio-political instability due to inadequate corporate governance and weak state institutions (Omeje, 2022). In Angola, for instance, oil companies have invested in social projects, but allegations of corruption and environmental harm persist, undermining trust between corporations and local populations (Luiz & Stewart, 2021). Similarly, in South Africa, mining companies such as Anglo-Americans have implemented CSR initiatives to improve education and healthcare. Nevertheless, community dissatisfaction remains high due to persistent inequality and environmental damage (Hamann, 2022).

Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer, has experienced significant challenges in managing the relationship between multinational oil corporations and local communities, particularly in the Niger Delta region. The discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956 marked the beginning of extensive oil exploration, dominated by companies such as Shell, Chevron, and ExxonMobil (Watts, 2021). Despite contributing over 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, the oil industry has been linked to environmental degradation, socio-economic disparities, and community unrest (Nwoke, 2023). CSR initiatives in Nigeria have been implemented to address these challenges, but their effectiveness remains debated. According to Ebegbulem et al. (2022), oil companies have introduced community development programs, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects. However, inadequate stakeholder engagement and weak regulatory frameworks have often resulted in mistrust and conflict. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and other activist groups have consistently criticized Shell and other oil companies for failing to fulfil their CSR obligations and for perpetuating environmental pollution (Ojo, 2023). This has contributed to tensions between corporations, the government, and local communities, leading to recurring incidents of oil facility vandalism, kidnapping of expatriates, and militancy.

Rivers State, located in the heart of the Niger Delta, has been a focal point for oil exploration and CSR controversies. As one of the major oil-producing states, Rivers State hosts several multinational oil companies, with Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) being a dominant player. The state has witnessed significant environmental and socio-economic challenges due to oil extraction activities. Oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation have led to declining agricultural productivity and health hazards, exacerbating poverty and insecurity (Okonkwo & Uche, 2023). The failure of past CSR initiatives to adequately address these issues has fueled community grievances and conflicts. A study by Oruwari and Owei (2022) found that despite Shell's investment in local development projects, many communities perceive these efforts as insufficient, primarily due to a lack of consultation and transparency. The situation has been further complicated by the rise of militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers, who argue that oil companies have failed to equitably distribute the benefits of resource extraction (Ikelegbe, 2023).

Shell has implemented various CSR programmes aimed at improving human security and sustainable development in Rivers State in response to these challenges. The Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) model introduced by Shell seeks to involve communities in decision-making processes and enhance corporate-community relations (Akinwale, 2023). Under this framework, Shell has funded projects in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains contested.

Existing literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Nigeria's oil sector primarily focuses on its economic and environmental impacts, often overlooking the specific role of CSR in addressing human security challenges in conflict-affected communities. While studies such as Idemudia (2020) and Omeje (2022) analyze CSR's role in mitigating conflicts, they provide limited empirical evidence on its direct impact on human security in Rivers State. Additionally, previous research has not sufficiently examined the effectiveness of the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) model in fostering corporate-community relations. This study fills this gap by assessing Shell's CSR initiatives in Rivers State through the lens of human security, incorporating stakeholder perspectives on their effectiveness. Unlike prior studies that focus on broad CSR frameworks, this research provides a localized analysis, evaluating community engagement, project sustainability, and conflict resolution outcomes. By doing so, it contributes new insights into how CSR can be leveraged to enhance stability in resource-rich but conflict-prone regions.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

A significant gap remains in evaluating the direct impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on human security in conflict-affected communities, despite extensive scholarship on CSR in Nigeria's oil sector. Most studies focus on CSR as a tool for corporate image-building (Idemudia, 2020) or its role in mitigating environmental degradation (Omeje, 2022). However, little empirical research critically examines how CSR interventions influence broader human security dimensions, including economic stability, environmental protection, community resilience, and governance structures. In Rivers State, where Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) has been a dominant player, CSR projects have been implemented to address social and economic disparities. Yet, evidence suggests that these interventions have failed to resolve long-standing grievances, particularly among marginalized communities affected by oil extraction activities.

The Niger Delta, including Rivers State, experiences high levels of socio-economic deprivation despite generating over 75% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (NBS, 2023). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, poverty levels in the region remain at 42%, with unemployment rates exceeding 35%, particularly among the youth, who constitute a significant portion of the population. Environmental degradation resulting from oil spills and gas flaring has devastated livelihoods, reducing agricultural productivity by 60% and contaminating water sources (Nwoke, 2023). Shell's CSR initiatives, such as the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU), have sought to improve education, healthcare, and infrastructure. However, their effectiveness remains debatable due to a lack of participatory engagement, transparency issues, and poor monitoring frameworks (Ojo, 2023). Many community members perceive these projects as inadequate, reinforcing tensions between corporations, local populations, and the government.

A critical problem lies in the disconnect between CSR strategies and human security outcomes. Previous studies (Akinwale, 2023; Ikelegbe, 2023) have examined corporate interventions without systematically assessing their long-term impact on conflict dynamics, economic well-being, and environmental sustainability. This study addresses this gap by evaluating how Shell's CSR initiatives in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State contribute to or undermine human security. By employing empirical analysis, it assesses the extent to which CSR programs alleviate socio-economic vulnerabilities and foster sustainable peace. The findings will provide policymakers, corporate entities, and civil society organizations with actionable insights for reforming CSR frameworks, ensuring corporate accountability, and promoting inclusive development. Given the persistent unrest in the Niger Delta, an evidence-based approach to CSR evaluation is crucial for mitigating conflict, enhancing community trust, and fostering long-term stability in oil-producing regions.

1.3 Conceptual Clarifications

i. Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a corporation's obligation to operate ethically and contribute to economic, social, and environmental sustainability beyond profit-making. Traditionally viewed through Carroll's (1991) four-tier model—economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities—CSR has evolved into a strategic tool for corporate governance and conflict management, particularly in resource-rich but volatile regions. Contemporary discourse critiques conventional CSR approaches for being largely symbolic, arguing for a shift towards a rights-based and community-driven model (Amaeshi et al., 2021). In conflict-prone areas like the Niger Delta, CSR must extend beyond token philanthropy to address systemic inequalities, environmental degradation, and governance failures. The effectiveness of CSR depends on stakeholder engagement, transparency, and responsiveness to local socio-political realities. This study re-evaluates CSR's role in promoting human security, arguing for a paradigm shift from corporate-driven initiatives to participatory, community-centered development frameworks. According to Visser (2006), CSR in developing countries follows a distinct trajectory shaped by socio-economic and institutional contexts, where philanthropic activities dominate over regulatory compliance and ethical considerations.

ii. Concept of Human Security

Human security transcends traditional state-centric security paradigms by prioritizing individual and community well-being over military strength. Defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), it encompasses economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Unlike conventional security, which focuses on territorial integrity, human security emphasizes protection from threats such as poverty, environmental degradation, and socio-political instability. Critics argue that the concept remains too broad and lacks enforceability, making it difficult to operationalize (Acharya, 2021). However, in resource-rich but conflict-prone regions like the Niger Delta, human security provides a vital lens for assessing corporate interventions. CSR initiatives must be reoriented to address structural inequalities, environmental sustainability, and participatory governance rather than short-term welfare projects. This study advances the discourse by linking CSR effectiveness to sustainable human security outcomes, advocating for a rights-based approach that ensures corporate accountability in conflict-affected communities. According to Newman (2010), human security is a dynamic concept that evolves in response to global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of Shell's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their impact on human security in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State. The study population comprises the residents of Rivers State, Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2022), Rivers State has an estimated population of 7,476,743 people. To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane (1968) formula was applied. Where n represents the sample size, N is the population size (7,476,743), and e is the margin of error (0.05). Using this formula, the calculated sample size is 400 respondents. A probability and non-probability sampling approach is adopted. Stratified random sampling ensures fair representation from different local government areas (LGAs) with high oil exploration activities, while purposive sampling selects key informants such as community leaders, government officials, and Shell representatives. Primary data is collected using structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Secondary data is sourced from policy documents, reports, and existing literature. Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data is examined using thematic analysis to identify key trends in CSR effectiveness.

1.5 theoretical framework

This study adopted Human Security Theory, chiefly propounded by Mahbub ul Haq in 1994, with further contributions from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its

1994 Human Development Report. Haq, in his pioneering work, redefined the concept of security beyond traditional state-centred perspectives, which focused primarily on military threats. He argued that true security should prioritize individuals' well-being, encompassing various dimensions such as economic security, health, environmental sustainability, political stability, and protection from violence. Haq's vision emphasized that security should be viewed through a people-centred lens, where the focus is not merely on the absence of war but on ensuring individuals' safety, dignity, and access to basic needs.

The UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report further expanded on Haq's ideas by introducing the broader concept of human security, which includes seven interrelated components: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. This expanded framework allowed for a holistic understanding of security, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various social and economic factors that affect individuals' lives and well-being. This study applies Human Security Theory uniquely by examining how Shell's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives influence multiple dimensions of human security in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on economic and environmental security aspects of CSR in Nigeria's oil sector, this research adopts a holistic approach by evaluating Shell's interventions across all seven components outlined by the UNDP. While existing literature often discusses CSR's role in mitigating conflict or promoting development, few studies directly assess its effectiveness in addressing threats to personal and community security, such as violence, displacement, and political instability. By integrating human security dimensions into CSR evaluation, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how corporate interventions impact both immediate and long-term security concerns in volatile regions. This approach moves beyond corporate compliance or economic benefits, highlighting CSR as a critical tool for sustainable peacebuilding and social stability in the Niger Delta.

1.6 Nexus between CSR and Human Security in Oil-Producing Regions

The relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and human security in oil-producing regions has been widely examined, particularly in the context of economic, environmental, and social sustainability. According to Idemudia (2020), CSR initiatives in oil-rich regions are crucial for mitigating social conflicts and improving human security by addressing poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation. He argues that multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in extractive industries should engage in sustainable community development programs to ensure equitable resource distribution. However, his study critiques the inconsistent implementation of CSR policies, noting that many initiatives lack transparency and do not align with the actual needs of host communities. While Idemudia's findings provide valuable insights, they do not adequately account for the role of weak governance structures that often hinder effective CSR execution. This oversight raises concerns about whether corporate interventions can genuinely foster human security in regions with institutional inefficiencies.

In the study of Ebegbulem et al. (2022), CSR in Africa's oil-producing regions is explored through the lens of corporate-community relations. Their research highlights that while CSR programs have contributed to infrastructural development, education, and healthcare, they often fail to address deeper socio-political grievances that fuel conflict. The authors point out that corporations focus primarily on philanthropy rather than long-term economic empowerment, leading to dependency rather than self-sufficiency among local populations. Their study, however, does not sufficiently interrogate the structural inequalities that allow corporations to dictate CSR agendas without meaningful community participation. This gap suggests that CSR's potential to enhance human security is undermined by power imbalances between corporations and host communities, necessitating stronger regulatory oversight.

Similarly, Okonkwo & Uche (2023) examine the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in Nigeria's oil-producing communities, with a focus on the Niger Delta. They argue that while companies like Shell and Chevron have invested in social

infrastructure, their activities have exacerbated environmental degradation, thereby undermining the very human security concerns their CSR policies claim to address. They contend that CSR should be redefined to include environmental justice, ensuring that oil companies are held accountable for ecological destruction. While their study expands the discourse on CSR and environmental security, it falls short in assessing the long-term economic impacts of oil-induced environmental degradation, particularly concerning agricultural and fisheries livelihoods. This omission weakens their argument, as sustainable development in oil-producing regions requires a holistic approach that integrates both social and economic security dimensions.

In the study of Ikelegbe (2023), the role of CSR in mitigating conflict and promoting stability in Nigeria's oil-producing regions is analyzed. He asserts that while CSR has the potential to reduce communal grievances, its effectiveness is often limited by corporate insincerity and lack of government enforcement mechanisms. He critiques the practice of companies implementing CSR projects as public relations strategies rather than genuine community-driven initiatives. While his work rightly highlights the deficiencies in corporate commitments, it does not explore alternative CSR models that could ensure better engagement between oil companies and local stakeholders. This omission is critical, as a more participatory CSR framework could bridge the gap between corporate intentions and community expectations, ultimately enhancing human security outcomes.

According to Ojo (2023), CSR initiatives in Nigeria's oil sector have largely failed to address human security challenges due to their top-down approach. He argues that oil companies often impose CSR projects without proper consultation, leading to conflicts and community resistance. His study suggests that CSR should be embedded in broader governance reforms, ensuring that local populations are actively involved in decision-making processes. While his findings contribute to the understanding of CSR failures, they do not sufficiently engage with the legal and institutional frameworks that enable corporate negligence. This limitation underscores the need for policy reforms that align CSR practices with enforceable human security standards.

According to Akinwale (2023), CSR initiatives in Rivers State have been largely ineffective in addressing the socio-economic and environmental challenges caused by oil exploration. His study examines the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) introduced by Shell, arguing that while the model promotes community participation in CSR projects, its implementation has been marred by elite capture and lack of transparency. Akinwale critiques the GMoU for failing to reach marginalized groups within host communities, leading to discontent and continued agitation against oil companies. Although his study highlights the participatory framework of the GMoU, it does not critically assess how corporate and governmental interests influence its execution. This omission is significant, as political interference often determines the distribution and effectiveness of CSR benefits, ultimately shaping human security outcomes in Rivers State.

Similarly, in the study of Oruwari & Owei (2022), CSR interventions in Rivers State are assessed concerning their impact on local development and conflict resolution. They argue that while oil companies have invested in social infrastructure such as schools, roads, and healthcare facilities, these efforts have been insufficient in addressing the root causes of conflict, particularly unemployment and environmental degradation. Their research reveals that many CSR projects are poorly maintained due to weak corporate-community relations and lack of local ownership. They further assert that CSR should be integrated with sustainable livelihood programs to ensure long-term benefits for affected communities. However, their study does not adequately explore the role of government agencies in regulating CSR implementation, leaving a gap in understanding the broader governance dynamics that shape CSR effectiveness.

From the foregoing, it is evident that while CSR has the potential to enhance human security in oil-producing regions, its implementation is often fraught with inconsistencies, corporate opportunism, and weak regulatory oversight. The reviewed literature demonstrates that CSR must go beyond philanthropy to address systemic inequalities, environmental sustainability, and community participation. Without a shift towards a more inclusive and accountable CSR framework, the goal of achieving sustainable human security in Nigeria's oil-producing communities will remain

elusive.The literature on Rivers State aligns with broader CSR challenges in Nigeria's oil-producing regions, emphasizing the need for more inclusive, transparent, and sustainable corporate interventions. While CSR initiatives exist, their limited impact on human security underscores the necessity for regulatory reforms and stronger community engagement to ensure meaningful development in conflict-affected areas.Bottom of Form

1.7 Evaluating the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives on Human Security in Conflict-Affected Communities of Rivers State

To what extent do Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives enhance human security in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State? This study critically interrogates the relationship between CSR and human security, questioning whether multinational corporations, particularly Shell, have effectively addressed the socio-economic and environmental concerns of host communities. Theoretically, the study is anchored on human security theory, which argues that security should be people-centered, encompassing economic, environmental, and social dimensions (Haq, 1994; UNDP, 1994). By applying this lens, the study moves beyond traditional CSR assessments that focus solely on community development projects to examine whether these initiatives translate into tangible improvements in human security.

Are CSR interventions in Rivers State structured to address the multi-dimensional nature of human security? Previous studies have largely concentrated on the developmental contributions of CSR in oil-producing regions without linking them explicitly to human security (Idemudia, 2020; Akinwale, 2023). Idemudia (2020) argues that while oil companies have introduced community development projects in the Niger Delta, these interventions often fail to alleviate long-term structural inequalities and environmental degradation. However, this study expands the argument by contending that CSR initiatives must be assessed not just in terms of physical infrastructure but also their contribution to economic stability, environmental justice, and conflict mitigation. This perspective aligns with the UNDP's expanded human security framework, which includes economic, environmental, and community security, providing a broader understanding of CSR effectiveness.

How do Shell's CSR initiatives in Rivers State compare with previous interventions in other oil-producing regions of Nigeria? According to Ebegbulem et al. (2022), CSR projects implemented by oil multinationals often suffer from poor stakeholder engagement, lack of transparency, and elite capture, rendering them ineffective in resolving conflicts. This study confirms these challenges but extends the discourse by highlighting Shell's Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) model, which theoretically enhances community participation in decision-making. However, empirical findings suggest that while the GMoU aims to foster inclusive development, it has been dominated by local elites and political actors, weakening its intended impact. This interrogation suggests that corporate CSR frameworks in conflict-prone areas must incorporate stronger governance mechanisms and independent oversight to ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

Does Shell's CSR framework mitigate environmental insecurity in Rivers State? The study of Oruwari and Owei (2022) asserts that oil companies have invested in infrastructure such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities but have done little to address environmental degradation, a core component of human security. The findings of this study resonate with this argument but provide additional empirical insights by demonstrating that oil spills, gas flaring, and land degradation remain persistent despite Shell's environmental CSR commitments. Reports from local communities indicate that many remediation efforts are superficial, with limited long-term sustainability. This suggests that corporate social responsibility must move beyond compensatory measures to actively prevent environmental degradation through stricter compliance with global best practices and enforcement of environmental laws.

Can CSR initiatives address the security challenges associated with oil-related conflicts? According to Ikelegbe (2023), militancy in the Niger Delta is driven by socio-economic grievances, including unemployment, marginalization, and lack of local ownership of oil resources. While CSR is often seen as a tool for conflict resolution, this study reveals that current corporate interventions do not adequately address the root causes of insecurity.

Shell's youth empowerment and skills acquisition programs have had limited reach, with many beneficiaries lacking sustainable employment after training. Furthermore, community perceptions of exclusion from oil revenues continue to fuel resentment, leading to ongoing agitations and occasional attacks on oil installations. This finding aligns with Akinwale's (2023) critique that CSR programs often fail due to a top-down implementation approach that does not fully engage grassroots community structures. The study suggests that a shift towards more inclusive, locally-driven economic initiatives is necessary to achieve lasting peace.

What are the broader implications of these findings for CSR governance and policy in Nigeria? While previous studies acknowledge the limitations of CSR in the Niger Delta, this study adds a stronger policy-oriented perspective, advocating for structural reforms in Nigeria's CSR regulatory framework. Unlike previous research that focuses solely on corporate responsibility, this study argues that government institutions play a critical role in shaping CSR outcomes. Weak enforcement of corporate obligations has allowed oil companies to operate with minimal accountability. The study thus calls for legislative amendments to the Land Use Act and Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to ensure mandatory CSR obligations with clear performance benchmarks.

This study deepens the discourse on CSR and human security by shifting the focus from corporate philanthropy to structural and governance-oriented solutions. While CSR initiatives in Rivers State have made some contributions to infrastructure and social welfare, they fall short in addressing environmental justice, economic inclusion, and conflict resolution. Unlike previous studies that primarily document CSR activities, this study critically interrogates their impact on human security, highlighting gaps in governance, transparency, and long-term sustainability. It ultimately argues that CSR, when properly implemented with community-driven governance structures, can serve as a transformative tool for sustainable peace and development in oil-producing regions.

1.8 Findings and Discussions

i. CSR initiatives and human security in Rivers State lack a comprehensive approach

The study reveals that while Shell and other oil multinationals have implemented CSR initiatives in Rivers State, these interventions fail to adequately address the multi-dimensional nature of human security. The findings highlight that CSR programs largely focus on community development projects such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare, but they do not effectively mitigate broader human security threats like environmental degradation, economic marginalization, and social instability.

ii. weak stakeholder engagement and governance undermine CSR effectiveness

Shell's Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) model was designed to foster participatory development in host communities. However, the study finds that the implementation of the GMoU is often controlled by local elites and political actors, reducing its intended impact. This supports Ebegbulem et al. (2022), who argue that poor governance structures and lack of transparency in CSR initiatives weaken their ability to resolve socio-economic grievances.

iii. environmental degradation persists despite CSR environmental commitments

One of the critical findings is that Shell's CSR initiatives have not significantly reduced environmental insecurity in Rivers State. Although the company has made commitments to environmental sustainability, oil spills, gas flaring, and land degradation continue to threaten community livelihoods. Oruwari and Owei (2022) contend that oil companies invest in infrastructure but neglect environmental protection, and the study corroborates this by providing empirical evidence of weak remediation efforts and lack of long-term sustainability in environmental CSR projects.

iv. CSR initiatives fail to address economic insecurity and unemployment

The study finds that economic insecurity remains a key driver of conflict in Rivers State, with CSR-based economic empowerment programs having limited long-term impact. Shell's youth empowerment and skills acquisition programmes, meant to reduce unemployment, do not create sustainable job opportunities for beneficiaries. Ikelegbe (2023) argues that youth militancy in the Niger Delta is fueled by unemployment and economic exclusion, and this study confirms that CSR interventions have not sufficiently alleviated these economic grievances.

v. v. CSR fails to mitigate security challenges in oil-producing communities

The study highlights that CSR efforts in Rivers State have not significantly contributed to conflict resolution. Community members continue to feel marginalized from oil wealth, fueling resentment and periodic hostilities against oil companies. Akinwale (2023) criticizes the top-down approach of CSR programmes, arguing that they lack grassroots engagement. This study extends that critique by showing that CSR initiatives do not effectively address the root causes of insecurity, such as resource control disputes, exclusion from oil revenues, and political disenfranchisement.

vi. weak regulatory frameworks allow oil companies to operate with minimal accountability

The study revealed that Nigeria's weak regulatory framework limits the effectiveness of CSR interventions. The study argues that the absence of mandatory CSR obligations and poor enforcement of corporate responsibilities allow oil multinationals to operate with minimal accountability. While previous studies focus on corporate responsibility, this study adds a policy dimension, advocating for legislative reforms in the Land Use Act and the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to introduce clear performance benchmarks for CSR initiatives.

1.9 conclusion

This study conceptually and theoretically interrogates the link between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and human security in conflict-affected communities of Rivers State through the lens of Human Security Theory (Haq, 1994; UNDP, 1994). The findings reveal that while Shell's CSR initiatives have made contributions to infrastructure and social services, they fail to comprehensively address environmental insecurity, economic exclusion, and governance deficiencies, which are fundamental to human security. Unlike previous studies (Idemudia, 2020; Akinwale, 2023), which emphasize CSR's developmental contributions, this study extends the discourse by arguing that CSR must be structurally embedded within governance mechanisms to ensure transparency and long-term impact. While it aligns with Ikelegbe (2023) on the persistence of socio-economic grievances, it challenges the assumption that CSR alone can mitigate oil-related conflicts. The study concludes that CSR frameworks must prioritize conflict-sensitive approaches, enforce environmental accountability, and integrate community-led economic initiatives for sustainable peace and development.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study recommended that:

i. Shell and other oil multinationals should restructure their CSR initiatives to address all dimensions of human security, including environmental sustainability, economic stability, and social cohesion.

ii. Shell's Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) model should be reformed to enhance transparency, accountability, and direct community participation

iii. The Nigerian government must enforce strict compliance with global environmental standards, ensuring that companies prioritize long-term ecological restoration efforts over compensatory interventions.

iv. CSR-based economic empowerment initiatives should shift from short-term skill acquisition programs to long-term, sustainable employment opportunities.

v. CSR efforts should incorporate community-based conflict resolution mechanisms that directly address grievances over resource control, revenue allocation, and social exclusion.

vi. The Nigerian government should amend the Land Use Act and Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to introduce mandatory CSR obligations with clear performance benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms.

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