

COMMUNITY RELATIONS STRATEGY AND MINIMIZATION OF HOST COMMUNITIES INDUCED CRISIS IN THE UPSTREAM OIL SECTOR IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

¹Ukaegbu, Michael Ibe, PhD., ²Windy S. Alikor and ³ Antonia Benson Onuegbu
^{1,2&3}Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Email: michaelibe22@gmail.com, windyalikor@gmail.com, btonia2000@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The epidemic of crisis between the upstream oil sector and their host communities in Rivers State, Nigeria is worrisome hence it needs urgent attention to minimize the negative impact of this scourge on the socio-economic life of the oil producing companies. The objectives of this study among others include: to ascertain the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State. Secondly, identify the kind of community relations strategy that can be engaged in the minimization of the crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State, etc. This study anchored on the "Iron Law of Responsibility" theory because of its relevance to the study and it adopted qualitative and quantitative research methods. Survey research was adopted as the research design for this study. The population of this study includes indigenes of Ibaa, Rumuekepe, Elele-Alimini, Aluu and Igwuruta communities while the sample size for the study is one hundred persons using systematic random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the major research instrument used in the data gathering. Consequently, the following findings were made among others: lack of corporate social responsibility programmes in the host communities is the cause of the perennial crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study also found that the major impact of the crisis on the upstream oil sector is the constant stoppage of the operation of the oil exploration and exploitation companies in the state under study. To this end, the study recommends for the adoption of proactive and people-participatory community relations strategies by the upstream oil companies. This study also advocates for a paradigm shift in the community relations strategies of the upstream oil companies. It is also the position of this study that the upstream oil companies should see corporate social responsibility programmes as a major recipe and catalyst for building and maintaining the friendship of the host communities to minimize the perennial crisis bedeviling them.

Keywords: Community Relations, Upstream Oil Sector, Gunboat Diplomacy and Militarization Community Relations Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization has its neighbour or community that has given her land for the healthy operation of the organization. Thus, the community plays host to such organization. In the event of industrial hazard or pollution, the host community becomes major sufferer of the quagmire. Therefore, any organization that worth its value and respects its corporate image and reputation must court and nurture the friendship of its host community to avoid crisis. This helps the organization to have hostility-free operation in its community of operation. The absence of this kind of friendship and relationship has created unwanted crisis between many organizations and their host communities hence disrupting the socio-economic activities in the society particularly in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hendrix and Hayes (2007) state that one of the most important publics or audiences an organization has is its community, the home of its offices and operations. Maintaining good relations with the community usually entails management and employees becoming involved in contributing to local organizations and activities. In addition, the organization may communicate with the community face-to-face nurture the relationship.

Hendrix and Hayes further state that solving community relations problems may follow the sequence of research, objectives, programming and evaluation of the programme or project carried out. A neighbourhood, town, city or state is obviously a human community. Like organizations, they require positive inter-relationship among all members of their immediate constituent in order to function smoothly and efficiently (Center & Jackson, 2007).

This is because a company, hospital, school or other organizations would have difficulty operating effectively in a community that is disrupted or inefficient, it is necessary for them to accept the responsibility of corporate citizenship. Therefore, mutual trust engendered by positive public community relations policy is essential in order for both the community and organizations to locate their function in a meaningful manner (Center & Jackson, 2007).

Evidently, lack of mutual relationship and goodwill between an organization and its immediate constituents is likely to breed suspicion and misunderstanding that may cause both parties pains and loss of man-hour including financial and material resources hence effective community relations becomes sacrosanct (Bob-Brown, 2019).

In recent times, we have witnessed series of crises snowballing into destruction of lives and properties occasioned by poor community relations activities of corporate organisations. Some of these cases are found between Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) vs. Umuechem in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State; Rumuekpe vs. SPDC in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State; Rumugurushi vs. SPDC in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State; Mgbu-Osimini-Rumueme vs. Agip Oil Limited in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State; Idu-Ekpeye Community vs. Agip Oil Limited in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State; Egi Kingdom vs. Total E & P in Ogba/Egba/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State; Bonny/Fenima youths vs. NLNG in Rivers State (Nigeria Liquid Gold Programme on Nigerian Info FM, 2021).

To avoid this kind of quagmire, corporate organizations must create a deliberate policy to build and sustain the friendship of their host communities to have a hostility-free operation. This is because hostility is counter-productive to the operation of corporate organizations. It hinders the socio-economic activities of organizations and retards the actualization of their set out objectives.

It is against this background, every organization that values its image and reputation must strive to have a symbiotic relationship with its host communities. This kind of relationship enhances corporate organizations' achievement of predetermined goals. For oil and gas companies to function optimally without hostility such mutual and beneficial relationship must exist with their host communities to ease exploration and exploitation of crude oil and gas often called the "black gold" of Nigeria.

This explains the reasons why there have been a cat and dog relationship between most multinational oil companies and their immediate constituents. This lion and lamb relationship on many occasions have resulted to crisis between the multinationals and their immediate constituents in Rivers State in particular and the Niger Delta at large.

This negative narrative in the relationship between the host communities and the organizations they play host to must be re-scripted and re-engineered in order to stimulate the socio-economic development of Nigerian. Corporate organizations must see their host communities as critical stakeholders in their operations to avoid anti-development attitudes and behaviour from their immediate constituents.

That is why effective and proactive community relations becomes imperative and sacrosanct to the sustainability and profitability of corporate organizations not just in Rivers State but Nigeria in general. According to Center and Jackson (2007), a neighbourhood, town, city or state is obviously a human community. Like organizations, they require positive interrelationship among all members of the host community to function smoothly and efficiently because organizations would have difficulty operating effectively in communities that are disrupted by crisis. It is necessary for them to accept the responsibility of corporate citizenship.

Center and Jackson further identify the following as the core objectives of community relations policies:

1. To create favourable attitude and behaviour among members of immediate constituents.
2. To change unfavourable attitude and behaviour among indigenes of host communities.
3. To modify unwanted attitude and behaviour among immediate constituents.
4. To reinforce existing behaviour and attitude among the host communities.

Ekwelie (2006) opines that the importance of host community hinges on its capacity to providing the operational land, worship centres, skilled and unskilled labour, recreational centres, female gender to reduce the boredom of the opposite sex after work among others.

Hendrix and Hayes (2007) observe that one of the most important publics an organization has is its immediate community, the home of its office and operational base. Maintaining good relationship with the community usually entails management and employees becoming involved in and contributing to their host community's socio-economic development in terms of corporate social responsibility and social investment.

Igben (2007) discussing the importance of the concept of host community in community relations sees the following as the reasons why the host communities are sacrosanct to the operation of an organization:

1. They serve as a source of local labour.
2. They serve as watchdog to organizational activities.
3. They serve as source of raw materials.
4. They accommodate industrial hazards.
5. They serve as a source of security to organizations.
6. They serve as consumers of the organization's products or services.
7. They serve as a representative of a larger community- local government, state or nation.

Seitel (2011) discussing the concept of community relations notes that in 21st century, most organizations: companies, hospitals, sports team, schools, etc., understand they have an obligation to their host communities including supporting nonprofit organizations. This goodwill in public relations is called community relations. This means that large and reputable organizations ought to have a department or unit called Public Relations that accommodates community relations.

For an organization to coexist peacefully in its community of operation, three skills are required according to Seitel (2007). They are:

- i. Determining what the community knows and thinks about the organization.
- ii. Informing the community of the organization's point of view.
- iii. Negotiating or mediating between the organization and the host community.

According to Nkwocha (2016), community is like a biological cord that ties an organization and its host community together for mutual benefit. It is a meeting point between organizations and their immediate neighbours. Its importance to the healthy operation of an organization cannot be

debated. It is a catalyst for building a sustainable and symbiotic relationships between organizations and their host communities.

If this branch or department exists in multinational oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State, why then has there been perennial crisis between most oil exploration and exploitation companies and their host communities leading to picketing of the companies, vandalization of companies facilities, hostage-taking of companies personnel, declaration of incommunicado against companies staff among others? What is missing in this relationship?

It is against this background, that this study seeks to explore the community relations strategy for minimization of host communities induced crisis in the operation of the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.

Statement of Problem

Community relations induced crisis is rising astronomically in Rivers State leading to stoppage of work and other socio-economic activities by the affected organizations such as Shell Petroleum Development Company, Agip Oil Company Limited, Total E and P Company Limited, etc. Sometimes, this man-made crisis leads to destruction of lives and properties of both parties in the crisis. Classical example of this type of crisis is the case of SPDC vs. Omuechem in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State where the Royal Highness of the community was killed in the crisis and his palace destroyed including other houses in the community while the company's oil facilities were destroyed.

However, studies have been carried hitherto on community relations practice in Rivers State without adequate attention to community relations strategy that can minimize the perennial community relations induced crisis between the upstream oil sector and its host communities. This vacuum created by the previous studies is what this study seeks to cover.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to explore the community relations strategy that can be adopted in minimization of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

1. Ascertain the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.
2. Appraise the impact of the crisis on the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.
3. Identify the community relations strategy that can be engaged in minimization of the crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What is the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State?
2. What is the impact of the crisis on the upstream oil sector in Rivers State?
3. What community relations strategies that can be engaged in the minimization of the crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on **Iron Law of Responsibility Theory** because of its relevance to this study. The iron law of responsibility theory was propounded by a German-born Italian sociologist, Robert Michels in 1911. He popularized the theory in his book titled "Political Parties." The theory holds that if an institution or organization fails to handle its mandate with a sense of social responsibility, the public will have no option than to take back such mandate or power bestowed

on such entity with brute force to liberate themselves from shackles of poverty and misgovernance or mismanagement of human, material, financial and information resources.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the reason why host communities have joined issues with corporate organizations operating in their localities is sequel to lack of social responsibility on the side of the organization.

Expected Roles of Community Relations in Organizations

Discussing the role of community relations in organizations, Igben (2007) states that community relations has the capacity for enthroning an atmosphere of mutual understanding, goodwill and acceptance that offers the enabling environment for organizations to make profit stress-free. Igben further outlines the following as some specific roles of community relations:

- I. Establishment of a two-way communication channel between an organization and its host community
2. Prevention of hostilities in host communities
3. Enhancement of quality of life of the host community
4. Encouragement of industrial harmony, conduct research on public perception, attitude and expectations of the host community.

Hendrix and Hayes (2007) see the role of community relations in the following perspectives:

- I. Sponsorship of special community events or projects
2. Participate in management and other personnel in volunteer community
3. Purchase of advertising in local media
4. Contribution of funds to community organizations or causes
4. Meeting with community leaders.

Seitel (2007) argues that the involvement of the organization, its management, and its other personnel in the affairs of the community is the most significant aspect of a community relations programme. According to Seitel, this kind of link to the community should be relatively smooth in community relations. He holds that community relations plays the following roles:

1. Determining what the community knows and thinks about the organization.
2. Informing the community of the organization's point of view on a topical issue.
2. Mediating between the organization and the community and its constituents should there be a significant discrepancy.
3. Correct misconception, misunderstanding, reply to criticism and remove any dissatisfaction that may exist among community neighbours.
4. Establish personal relationship between management and community leaders.
5. Contribution to the culture by providing funds, arts exhibition, concert, drama, festivals and promoting attendance at such affairs.
6. Support health programmes through contribution of funds and personnel services.

Objectives of Community Relations Policies in Organizations

Seitel (2007) states that organizations profit by written community relations policy that clearly defines the philosophy of management as it views its obligation to the community hence the following objectives are desired:

- 1 To tell the community about the operations of the firm: its products, services, support community projects or programmes.
2. To gain the favourable opinion of the community, particularly during strikes and periods of labour unrest by stating the company's position on the issue.

3. To inform employees and their families about company activities and development so that they can tell their friends and neighbours about the organization and favourably influence opinions of the organization.
4. To find out what residents think about the organization, why they like or dislike its policies and practices, and how much they know of its policy, operations and problems.
5. To cooperate with other local business in advancing economic and social welfare through joint community relations programmes.
6. To operate a profitable business in order to provide jobs and to pay competitive wages that increase the community purchasing power and strengthen its economy.
7. To assist the economy of the host community by purchasing operating supplies and equipment from local merchants and manufacturers whenever possible.

Hendrix and Hayes (2007) identify the following as some of the key objectives of community relations:

To increase community knowledge of the operations of the organization including its products and services.

To promote more favourable community opinion towards the organization.

To gain greater organizational support from community leaders.

To encourage more feed-back from the community leaders.

To be more responsive to community needs.

To create new community projects involving organizational personnel and resources.

To schedule meetings with host community leaders.

To foster a symbolic relationships between organizations and their host communities.

To contribute funds to community organizations or causes.

To purchase advertising space or airtime from local media.

Sponsorship of special community events or projects.

Center and Jackson (2007) argue that objectives of community relations aim to change attitude, change behaviour, modify behaviour and attitude, reinforce acceptable behaviour and attitude.

Alikor (2014) holds that community relations objectives include the following:

To achieve a peaceful working environment in organizations' communities of operations.

To inform the host communities about the modus operandi of the organizations, their products, services and management.

To build mutual trust between organizations and their host community.

To prevent man-made-crisis in organization's communities of operations.

To facilitate a hitch-free operations for organizations.

To create an atmosphere that will trigger profit-making for companies and public acceptability for non-profit making organizations.

To find out the impression about the operations or services of organizations.

To modify a negative idiosyncracies emanating from host community.

To reinforce an acceptable attitude from the host community for mutual benefit between organizations and their host communities.

To motivate a desire behaviour or attitude that will aid organizations to achieve their predetermined goals effectively and efficiently.

To attract customers and consumers for higher patronage of organizations' merchandise.

To develop paradigm for crisis or conflict prevention and management in organization.

From the foregoing, how has community relations practice in the upstream oil sector achieved the expectations of community relations objectives as conceptualized by the scholars whose work are reviewed in this study. Based on the above community relations objectives, to what level has organizations minimized community relations induced crisis in the oil extraction industry? This is the thrust of this study.

Consequences of Poor Community Relations

Igben (2007) pinpoints that a poor or lack of community relations policy can trigger conflict or crisis between organizations and their immediate constituents. It may lead to image and reputation damage of corporate organization. Alikor (2015) states that lack of community relations has often led to picketing and suspicion against organization, declaration of incommunicado against organization, stoppage of organization's operation, loss of revenue, hatred against company's personnel, etc.

Nkwocha (2016) reveals that poor community relations policy has the capacity to cause community or youth hostility and violence; negative media reportage; events mess-up; oil spillages; agitation for resource control; militancy; kidnapping; hostage-taking of oil and gas workers for ransom payment; intensive community agitations; youth restiveness; pipeline vandalism and industrial crisis.

Nkwoccha further opines that lack of community relations programmes and projects is a virus that destroys corporate reputation in the oil and gas industry.

Target Goals of Host communities of Corporate Organizations

Igben (2007); Seitel (2007); Center and Jackson (2007); Hendrix and Hayes (2007) are in consensus that host communities of organizations expect their neighbours (corporate organizations) to contribute to their welfare and development in the following areas or ways:

- To improve the standard of living of the host communities.
- To improve community relations practice and corporate social responsibility programmes and projects in their localities.
- To Protect their environment, land, sea and air-space in especially during oil and gas exploration and explanation.
- To organize remediation of polluted land and cleaning of rivers and streams to safe aquatic lives.
- To provide employment for indigenes of host communities.
- To respect the cultures and traditions of the host communities.
- To embark on capacity building or development programmes for indigenes of host communities.
- To stimulate peace and harmony through their community relations programmes.
- To encourage mutual relationship between host communities and organizations.
- To encourage community policing rather than militarization and gunboat diplomacy community relations approach in policing organizations' personnel and properties among other expectations.

Nkwocha (2016) states that host communities expect corporate organizations to create employment for the indigenes of the host communities; award contracts to indigenous contractors and entrepreneurs; provide micro credit facility for women and other vulnerable groups; grant scholarships to host communities indigenes; encourage sports development in host communities; embark on infrastructural development such as rehabilitation of roads in host communities;

building of schools; rural electrification of roads; building of schools; sinking of boreholes; provision of healthcare facilities and involvement in the promotion of host communities' socio-cultural and socio-economic activities among others.

How has the upstream oil sector in Rivers State met the above yearnings and aspirations of the host communities given the endemic community relations induced crisis rocking the industry? What kind of community relations strategy or strategies that can change the negative narrative for better? This is the problem this work seek to solve.

Crisis Management Paradigms

Crisis management has been one of the major roles a PR-man or woman is expected to carry out in an organization hence many scholars and Public Relations practitioners have conceptualized different paradigms or models for crisis management and prevention. In the light of this, Hendrix and Hayes (2007) advise that the **ROPE** model could help a public relations officer in managing any kind of crisis. In this model,

R stands for **Research**

O stands for **Objectives**

P stands for **Programming**

E stands for **Evaluation**

Nworgu (2007) writes that crisis management in public relations or community relations involves strategic steps such as :

Step 1: Appraisal of the situation

Step 2: Commenting on the issue

Step 3: Press communication

Step 4: Programmes and action

Step 5: Re-appraisal and evaluation

For Seitel (2011) tackling community relations problems and other crises in public relations practice involves the adoption of **5-step approach**.

Step 1: Identifies issue with which the organization must be concerned

Step 2: Analyses and delimits each issue with respect to its impact on constituent publics

Step 3: Displays the various strategies options available to the organization

Step 4: Implement an action plan to communicate the organization views and to influence perception on the issue; and

Step 5: Evaluate the programme in terms of reaching organizational goals

Martson (1964) cited in Alikor (2014) advises PR practitioners to adopt the R-A-C-E model in the management of issues or problems in public relations. In this model:

R stands for **Research**

A stands for **Action**

C stands for **Communication**

E stands for **Evaluation**

Jefkins (1985) states that the **six-step PR model** is suitable for crisis management in PR practice.

The model works in the following ways:

Step 1: Appreciation of the situation

Step 2: Defining of objectives

Step 3: Defining of publics

Step 4: Media selection and techniques

Step 5: Budget drawing

Step 6: Evaluation of Results

Black (1989) identifies the following steps:

Step 1. Defining the problem

Step 2. Drawing up a problem of action and budget

Step 3. Communicating and implementing of the programme of actions

Step 4. Evaluation of the programmes

But how far have PR practitioners especially in community relations adopted these paradigms for crisis prevention and management in host communities in Rivers State to eliminate crisis?

Clarification of Key Terms

Some key terms are defined according to their usage in the context of this paper to ease the understanding of some professional terminologies. Some of which are:

Community Relations

This is a deliberate plan of a corporate organization to create sustainable symbiotic relationship between an organization and its immediate constituents with the aim of eliminating hostility in its community of operations.

Upstream Oil Sector

This is an oil company that engages in oil exploitation and exploration including pipeline oil transportation and refining of crude oil e.g. Agip Oil Company Limited, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Port Harcourt Refining Company, etc.

Gunboat Diplomacy and Militarization Community Relations Strategies

These are community relations strategies in which an organization decides to connect to the armed security agents like the Police, Army, DSS, Navy, etc. who are combatant ready to arrest, shoot or kill any legitimate and illegitimate agitator for the interest of the organization rather than connecting with their host communities or immediate constituents for a peaceful and meaningful interaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative research methods because of their relevance to the study. The work adopted survey research design. The population of this study consists of indigenes of Ibaa community, Rumuekpe community and Elele-Alimini community in Emohua Local Government Area, and Aluu community and Igwuruta community in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. This work adopted systematic random sampling. The sample size for this study is one hundred persons. This study used questionnaire as its research instrument. One hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed but ninety-six copies were retrieved, and upon this, the actual data presentation and analysis were carried out.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State?

Table 1: Causes of Perennial Community Relations induced Crisis in Rivers State

| Options | Frequency Response | Percentage (%) |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| Lack of Implementation of Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) in Host Communities | 32 | 35 |
| Lack of Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes in Host Communities | 50 | 54 |
| Adoption of Divide-and-Rule Community Relations Strategy | 7 | 2 |
| Adoption of Gunboat Diplomacy/ Militarization Community Relations Strategy | 7 | 8 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

Source: 2022 Field Survey

The above table shows that 35% of the respondents opined that "lack of implementation of Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) in host communities" is the cause of the aforesaid crisis whereas 54% of the respondents averred that "lack of corporate social responsibility programmes" in host communities is the cause of the afore-mentioned crisis in Rivers State.

In the same vein, 2% of the respondents opined that the adoption of "divide-and-rule community relations strategy" by the upstream oil sector in Rivers State is the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in the state under study while 8% of the respondents said the adoption of "gunboat-diplomacy and militarization community relations strategy" is the cause of the perennial community relations induced crisis in Rivers State.

Sequel to the overall result of the data analysis here, the respondents that subscribed to "lack of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes in host communities" polled the highest respondents (50) and percentage (54%) hence has answered the research question one (1) of the study.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the crisis on the upstream oil sector in Rivers State?

Table 4.1.2 Impact of the Crisis on the Upstream Oil Sector in Rivers State

| Options | Frequency Response | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Reduction in Productivity | 20 | 21 |
| Endemic Image and Reputation Problem | 24 | 25 |
| Negative Media Reportage | 20 | 21 |
| Stoppage of Organizations' Operations | 32 | 34 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

Source: 2022 Field Survey

The table above shows that 21% of the respondents said the impact of the community relations induced crisis on the upstream oil sector in Rivers State is the "reduction in productivity level" of the oil industry while 25% of the respondents opined that the impact of the crisis on the upstream oil sector is the "endemic image and reputation problem" the industry is facing.

Similarly, 21% of the respondents averred that the impact of the crisis has been the "negative media reportage" the industry has been facing whereas 34% of the respondents submitted that "stoppage of organizations' operations" is the impact the crisis has impacted on the upstream oil sector in Rivers State.

From the overall result of the analysis, the respondents that subscribed to the "stoppage of organizations' operations" polled the highest respondents (32) and percentage (34%) hence has answered the research question two (2) of this study.

Research Question 3: What community relations strategy that can be engaged in the minimization of the crisis in the upstream oil sector in River State?

Table 4.1.3 Supposed Community Relations Strategy for Crisis Minimization in the upstream oil sector in Rivers State

| Options | Frequency Response | Percentage (%) |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Fire-brigade Community Relations Strategy | 11 | 12 |
| Reactive Community Relations Strategy | 25 | 26 |
| Proactive Community Relations Strategy | 30 | 31 |
| People-Participatory Community Relations Strategy | 30 | 31 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

Source: 2021 Field Survey

The above result of data analysis shows that 12% of the respondents suggested that the supposed community relations strategy suitable for the minimization of community relations induced crisis is “fire-brigade community relations strategy” while 26% of the respondents opted for “reactive community relations strategy”.

In the same vein, 31% of the respondents subscribed to “proactive community relations strategy” as the suitable community relations strategy for the minimization of community relations induced crisis in Rivers State and 31% of the respondents opted for people-participatory community relations strategy as the most effective strategy for minimization of the afore-mentioned crisis.

Sequel to the above result of data analysis, the respondents that subscribed to proactive community relations and people-participatory community relations polled the highest respondents (30) each and percentage (31%) each hence have answered the research question three (3) of this study.

Findings

1. Lack of Corporate Social Responsibility programmes has been the cause of perennial community relations induced crisis between the upstream oil sector and their immediate constituents or host communities in Rivers State.
2. Stoppage of upstream oil sector’s operations in various host communities has been the major negative impact of perennial community relations induced crisis in Rivers State.
3. Proactive and people-participatory community relations strategies are required for minimization of community relations induced crisis in the upstream oil sector especially Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that effective practice of community relations blended with corporate social responsibility programmes and proactive and people-participatory community relations strategies can re-engineer the sticky relationship between most upstream oil companies and their immediate constituents or host communities. Therefore, there should be a paradigm shift in the community relations strategies and techniques of the upstream oil sector in Rivers State to minimize the endemic crisis between the former and the latter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The upstream oil sector should re-engineer its community relations strategies such as gunboat diplomacy community relations strategy, divide-and- rule community relations strategy, fire-brigade community relations strategy and seasonal community relations strategy because of their crisis inducement potential.
2. The upstream oil sector should adopt proactive and people- participatory community relations strategies to make their host communities feel sense of belonging rather than the

present gunboat-diplomacy, militarization and divide-and-rule community relations strategies

3. The upstream oil sector should consider corporate social responsibility programmes as a catalyst and recipe for building and maintaining the friendship of their host communities.

REFERENCES

Alikor, W. S. (2014). *Mastery the dynamics of public relations: A dimensional approach*. Port Harcourt: Obindah Publishing and Printing Company.

Bobo-Brown, S. (2018). *Community relations and its impact on sustainability of multinationals in the Niger Delta*. Paper presented to the members of Nigerian Institute of Public Relations monthly capacity building programme, Rivers State Branch.

Center, A. H. & Jackson, J. (2007). *Public relations practices: Managerial case studies and problems (6thed.)*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.

Henderix, J. A. & Hayes, D. C. (2007). *Public relations cases (7thed.)*. Belmont: Holly J. Allen.

Igben, H. G. O. (2007). *Principles of community relations*. In D. Wilson (ed.). *Introduction to mass communication: Principles and practice*. Uyo: BSM Resources Nigeria Limited.

Jefkins, F. (1985). *Public relations (5th ed.)*. London: Prentice Hall and Parson Professional Limited.

Nkwocha, J. (2016). *Reputation management and branding with Nigerian case studies*. Port Harcourt: Biz Pages Publishing and Printing Company Limited.

Nigeria Info FM (2021). *Nigerian liquid gold programme on community relations*. A weekly programme.

Nworgu, K. O. (2007). *Public relations on specialized issues and topics*. Owerri: Ultimate Books.

Seitel, F. P. (2011). *The practice of public relations (11th ed.)*. New York: Pearson Education Incorporated.