

**THE PRICE OF NINE: IMPACT OF AN ANOMIE CULTURE IN
OGONI**

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Abstract

The fight for social and environmental justice led to the execution of nine community leaders in Ogoni, Nigeria in 1995. The Nigerian press rose against the backdrop of peaceful protest by the sacrificial nine in highlighting these events. As a result, the marginalization of the Ogoni minority group attracted local and global attention. This research explores the relationship between corporate crimes and environmental pollution using the Ogoni incident as a case study. This paper analyzes the Ogoni killing and catastrophe utilizing the anomie theory proposed by Emile Durkheim, and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "field", "habitus" and *doxa*. It attributes the murder of the nine Ogoni leaders to the breakdown of law and order in the corporate structural regime of

Shell Oil Company in Nigeria. Furthermore, the political administration of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which allowed the execution of the community leaders, is also analyzed using secondary data. The question this study tries to solve is how to manage issues of environmental justice and maintain oil and gas production in Nigeria and globally. The goal of this research is to ensure compliance in the oil and gas industry, protect the industry's interest from payment of substantial debt and money as compensation from oil spills, and ensure that communities retain their livelihood. We recommend that the industry needs preemptive measures and adequate plans, which can be achieved through the early implementation of laws to handle likely environmental effluence.

Keywords: Anomie, doxa, field, green criminology, habitus, Nigerian government, Ogoni, oil and gas, Shell.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of environmental pollution in Ogoni and its aftermath affects everyone in the community. Multinational organizations that were involved in the Ogoni disaster lost vast sums of money, and the Ogoni residents and their community were adversely affected by the oil spills. It goes without mention that the oil spills issue is essential to society.

Niger Delta is the oil-producing region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Ogoni is a small community in the Niger Delta region with a population of 850,000 (The Unrepresented Nations and People Organization UNPO, 2017). However, this community has suffered from the fog of oil pollution and verse irreparable damage to its surrounding environment. The people of Ogoni asserted that the exploration of oil in their community was damaging their ecosystem while its members lacked social amenities, suffered poverty, and lived in unemployment, etc. (Saro-Wiwa, 1995). Arising from this, Saro-Wiwa (1995) embarked on public awareness of the economic

discrimination borne by indigenes. He staged a 300,000 man (women and children inclusive) peaceful protest against Shell (Saro-Wiwa, 1995).

Through this medium of expression in Ogoni, international communication served as a significant source of information sharing. The twentieth century experienced this form of social awareness with Nigeria's Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Ken Saro-Wiwa: president of MOSOP, and eight other activists advocated for economic, and political control over environmental matters in their community (Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1990). However, this fight for economic justice was futile and flushed under the carpet. Instead, the Nigerian military junta executed Saro-Wiwa, and eight other activists were tried on treason charges (Sobomate, 2014). The grievance of Ogoni residents was because of the damage caused by oil and gas activities to their community. In light of this, there is a need to review oil and gas undertakings that result in degradation of the environment and possible deaths of citizens who oppose its application as seen in the Ogoni saga.

Oil and gas activities present a high risk of accidents, disasters, and deaths resulting from oil spills. The oil and gas industry ("Industry") over the years has experienced significant oil spills with adverse consequences. In the case of Ogoni, the Nigerian government by executing innocent lives failed its people. Likewise, this study explores the relationship between corporate actions and environmental pollution using Ogoni and Shell as a case study. This research will address these shortcomings and the real cause of the Ogoni saga. Importantly, it features the media's impact in Nigeria and outlines the reasons for the execution. To achieve this, we used Durkheim's anomie theory and Bourdieu's concepts of "field", "habitus" and *doxa* to illustrate the breakdown in the political and corporate structural regime in Nigeria

and Shell respectively. These systemic failures by these bodies are the cause of the disaster in Ogoni. Durkheim exemplified society using “social similitude” which is referred to as a social order where authoritarian law prevails. Similarly, Bourdieu (1977, 1990) used the concept of habitus to explain a prevailing set of structures that binds society and must be obeyed. The Nigerian society in the Ogoni situation is said to have played into these scholars’ analogies and this paper seeks to address this assertion with the corresponding event.

The Ogoni incident requires proper examination to prevent it from occurring again. In this present work, its intended goal is to address the issue. Relying on Durkheim’s anomie theory, we assert that most environmental contamination could be averted before it occurred given the appropriate mechanisms established in the socio-economic structure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

We apply the research of Émile Durkheim (1897) associated with the anomie theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) field and habitus to this study. The personal background of Durkheim is essential to understanding how his thesis relates to the subject of the Ogoni community. Subsequently, the anomie theory will give an understanding of the incidents that led to the Ogoni execution.

DURKHEIM’S ANOMIE THEORY & OGONI EXECUTION

Durkheim was born in 1858 into a poor Jewish family in a little French town Épinal (Peyre, 2017; Jones, 1986). He lost his father in his teenage years (Peyre, 2017), which made him develop an interest in religious philosophies until he gained entrance into a prestigious institution of higher learning. While at the university, his beliefs shifted to science and empirical studies to understand weak social norms in society. The

laxity in social standards as espoused by Durkheim is still relevant as exemplified by the Ogoni executions.

Durkheim was influenced by Auguste Comte (Bernard, Snipes, & Gerould, 2016) who is known as the father of sociology (Mutchnick, Martin, & Austin, 2009). Before Durkheim was 40, he became an appointed Professor in Bordeaux, Paris. His move to the city is significant because he lived in an agrarian society while growing up and this exposure to the urban lifestyle in a big city was different.

Furthermore, his son's death in World War 1 impacted him significantly and caused him to withdraw from society (Jones, 1986), thus resulting in his death a year afterward. All these played some role in his social thinking, and his principles laid the groundwork for his theoretical propositions such as anomie theory.

During the nineteenth century in France, modernization increased, as well as the suicide rate. Durkheim argued that technological advancement threatened social organizations thus leading to a high rate of deaths. Durkheim attributed this to an anomic society; that is, a condition with less regulation. According to Durkheim (1897), anomie refers to a state where behavior is not regulated by modernity thereby leading to a breakdown of social norms and rules. Thus, anomie is a result of the failure of social models and order between an individual and society. One of the contributions in his research is about the typology of a community, and how living in a mechanical or organic society (Mutchnick et al., 2009) may influence suicide. The mechanical or primitive society refers to altruism and a simple lifestyle with the ability to sacrifice for another (Mutchnick et al., 2009). In Durkheim's analysis, a humane society involves a process whereby people share common goals and live a communal life with less division of labor. This selfless way of life brings unity to the community and is prone to disengagement from suicidal encounters. On the other hand, the organic

society relies on the high division of labor, egoism, apathy, and anomie (Mutchnick et al., 2009). High division of labor characterizes the organic society. Subsequently, the division of labor leads to the specialization of individual talents, which makes people disconnected from society (Durkheim, 1893). Division of labor further replaced the mechanical bond that once existed in a traditional environment.

As society evolves from the rural to the new phase, the government enforced laws to regulate social conduct. Crime results in the government's in-action to restrict organizations' excesses in communities. Durkheim, therefore, recommended the need for social control to fill the separation between individuals and the system. Social factors like religion, values, and culture play a key role in society because their early impact can have a profound outcome. For example, parents can train their children early to eliminate bias from their mindset. Likewise, the organic world is the current day stance of economic pursuit. Organizations have established a stringent standard wherein the corporate structure emphasizes individual skills and the goal of profit-making. It becomes a situation of "survival of the fittest" (Spencer, 1884). This pressure is not only placed on individuals but also reflected in an organization's performance and deliverables.

Indeed, the people of Ogoni made several demands to the operating oil companies in the region, i.e., Shell, Chevron, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company of which Shell had the most significant share in the area (Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2018). These demands involved monetary damages of 10 billion dollars alongside royalties (Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2018). However, these companies ignored the requests of Ogoni, including Shell as the major operating organization in the community. The interest of Shell during the Ogoni incident was profit from the city through their exploration activities.

Thus, this failure to address its corporate structure, which was interfering with political and social arrangements in Ogoni led to a worse result than would have been if Shell had addressed the local demands. Shell's anticlimax for social control from their corporate structure, like Durkheim argued, enabled this disengagement between enforcement of rules and production. Ogoni residents can claim that this detachment was the cause of the protest because Shell ignored their issues, and the dispute would not have occurred. Accordingly, the corporate organization of Shell by not checking these excesses encouraged its escalation. This breakdown, afterward, led to the current disaster that claimed the lives of nine civil-community activists. Anomie is not just the presence of broken norms and values but unchecked lawlessness, which eventually results in a breakdown of rules. Undeniably, this demonstration was what led to the execution of the leaders despite the involvement of the international community.

Shell is not alone in this responsibility. Leaders of Ogoniland presented a "Bill of Rights" to the Nigerian Government demanding political autonomy (Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1990). In this document, the Ogoni people narrated the suffering they experienced as a community. The Ogoni "Bill of Rights" ranged from the abandonment of their communities as illustrated in the lack of infrastructural development, oil exploration resulting in the demise of their agricultural products and individuals. In the face of all the injustices, the Nigerian government failed to take any remedial action aimed at ensuring that the affairs of the people needed attention. The attitude of the government further led to Ken Saro-Wiwa's 300,000 peaceful people protest to express their displeasure about environmental contamination in Ogoni land (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 2018). The Nigerian military government construed the civil protest as an act of treason because it deemed all disruptions on oil production as such (Global

Nonviolent Action Database, 2018). As a result, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight leaders were arrested and eventually executed with utter impunity (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 2018). The breakdown of law and order in Nigeria's political regime involving series of a military takeover at the time culminated in an anomic condition leading to the loss of lives. Following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight activists, the world was outraged at the actions of the Nigerian government.

APPLICATION OF PIERRE BOURDIEU *HABITUS* AND FIELD TO OGONI SAGA

Nigeria is heavily endowed with different natural resources, with oil being its most dominating source of income. The British colonization of Nigeria and the centralization of the Nigerian leadership under a central government has been argued as the major reason for the marginalization of the Niger Delta people. That is the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria as one, with political and economic control of the nation being bestowed on the Hausa-Fulani political elite (Okonofua, 2013). Scholars have further advocated that the core rationale of the British colonization in Nigeria can be traced to economic reasons (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Okonofua, 2011; Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Sagay, 2008). The implication of this is that managing the economic power of the affairs of Nigeria is something that its citizens were not familiar with during the period of colonialism. Thus, even after gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1960, Nigeria was not politically and economically developed to handle the new wave of social change. This development has made scholars opine that Africa remains economically, politically, and culturally dependent on the West (Okonofua, 2013). For Nigeria, it meant that the country had not fully advanced in terms of creating and ensuring a fair distribution of wealth among its different ethnic groups. Had this been the case where each

region can autonomously manage its resources, there will be a reduction in culture clash. Thus, Nigeria during the Ogoni saga was in a dilemma where making strategic economic decisions that affected the oil and gas sector created great controversy. On one hand, were the Ogoni people who expressed their displeasure of marginalization, and on the other, a government that needed to uphold order and peace in society, and a multinational corporation (Shell) expected to ensure its continuity as a world player.

The political play of power in Nigeria's politics reinforces Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "habitus" and "field." Bourdieu (1977, 1990) stated that society is comprised of spaces designated as "fields." That is, every societal structure consists of a field, which is a certain space and playing ground controlled by selected individuals, institutions, or groups. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1977, 1990) used the concept of 'habitus' to explain how these fields are controlled and the elements/people in that field are deemed to obey such rules or be in default. Habitus has been explained to be the tools and rituals that define how the social world should act (Ngarachu, 2014). Additionally, Bourdieu (1999) stated that such "fields" are guided by certain essential rules from the perspective of those who dominate and control a state known as *doxa*.

In the Ogoni saga, the Nigeria military junta under the leadership of Late General Sani Abacha once again proved the powerful effect that *doxa* had on the economy. At the time of the execution of the Ogoni nine, the political structure of the country was familiar with a certain field of how the Nigerian society should be governed. Thus any opposition to this accustomed *doxa* (rules) amounted to illicit conduct that required punishment, as was the case of the execution of the Ogoni nine. Ken Saro-Wiwa spoke against the global corporate alliances of the then Nigerian military government and multinational bureaucracies such

as Shell and Chevron (Okonofua, 2013). This alliance was criticized through advocacy efforts that addressed the appropriation of Ogoni lands by the then Nigerian military junta and subsequent allocation to major oil conglomerates such as Shell (Saro-Wiwa, 1992).

With the return of democracy to the nation, ongoing efforts must be pursued towards ensuring equitable distribution of economic resources to help drive nascent economies such as Nigeria into maintaining its status as a world player in oil and gas issues.

LIFE AFTER THE EXECUTION OF THE OGONI NINE

The Ogoni community amongst other disadvantaged communities suffered numerous setbacks in their communities due to environmental contamination by wealthy foreign oil and gas companies. To date, the Ogoni people still suffer from various ecological degradation issues. Watts (2004) indicated that the unemployment rate in Ogoni was 85%, with few households having access to electricity, and only one physician available to 100,000 per person. In 2008, Vidal (2012) reported that Bodo Creek in Ogoni was affected by two oil spills for a total of 103,000 and 311,000 barrels, leaked by the Shell Oil Company. This environmental contamination led to displacement, loss of livelihood and employment in farming activities to the Ogoni residents. Activists like Saro-Wiwa fought vehemently to prevent several major oil companies like Shell from exploiting Nigerian oil reserves, and they struggled to eradicate oil pollution (Michalowski, 1998). Today, as we write, the Ogoni community has failed to return to normalcy.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF SHELL AFTER OGONI NINE

Human rights violations as demonstrated in Ogoni land by the Nigerian government and Shell undermine the foundation of a democratic society. Not only does it affect the rights of citizens, but it also causes a strain on corporations. Oil establishments like Shell expend a lot of money as compensation or settlement during oil spill cases. For example, Shell paid about \$15.5m as settlement of the lawsuit in the Ogoni killings (The Guardian, 2009). Shell's motive for doing so constitutes a progressive agenda towards focusing on the future of Ogoni (The Guardian, 2009).

Furthermore, according to the Polluter Pays Principle (PPP), the polluter bears the cost of pollution in the interest of the public (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011). Hence, communities expect adequate compensations resulting from the polluter's actions that cause the degradation of the environment, which may serve as a deserved punishment for polluters. In this case, corporations may suffer monetary loss arising from such environmental degradation. There is also a need for such businesses to ensure compliance in their operations. The critical question for these companies is to weigh the cost of a disaster alongside conducting operations in a compliant manner.

Despite the tragedy that occurred in Ogoni, Shell has taken some practical measures to help the youths in the Ogoni community. Shell's effective measures include programs through training to help entrepreneurs in the community (Shell, 2015), sponsorship through grants of startups for young entrepreneurs (Shell, 2016), raising awareness to youths in the community as to risks associated with oil sabotage (Shell, 2015), among other initiatives. We must underscore

that monetary compensation, while necessary, cannot equal the ecological damage in Ogoni. However, we must accentuate that the efforts by Shell to ensure the community members are utilizing their best resources are worthy of our approbations. The remedial acts by Shell to help Ogoni residents indicate a change in its corporate social responsibility to build the community. The critical emphasis for healing should focus on reform efforts for both affected communities like Ogoni and oil corporations like Shell.

IMPACT OF ANOMIE CULTURE IN INDUSTRY TO CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Criminal behavior extends beyond street violence, drugs, sexual assault, and so on. It encompasses unlawful acts committed in the workplace by a corporation. Thus, it is inadequate to discuss common criminality and ignore multinational crimes in oil spills and pollution cases. The presence of anomie in the industry is caused by corporate malfeasance, as evidenced by Shell's failure to remedy the initial demands of the Ogoni people. Issues like this have led to the development of green criminology.

Green criminology is a branch of criminology that considers the examination of corporate crimes against the environment (Lynch, Long, Stretesky, & Barrett, 2017; Potter, 2010). This unique field examines cases of environmental contamination caused by the neglect of corporate organizations. Ogoni's event is a classic example of this illustration. At the time of the incidents, Shell was more interested in its continuing operations; instead, it focused primarily on revenue accumulation. Governments and corporations must establish guidelines for the control and prevention of occupational conducts like oil spills, and responsible parties in violation of protocols should be held liable for their actions. Communities have the right to charge their governments

for flagrant disregard of responsible commercial department, as governments are accountable for maintaining the safety and security of their citizens.

The fight for environmental protection has led to the advancement of movements for environmental justice and environmental racism. Bullard and Johnson (2000) define environmental racism as “any environmental policy, practice or directive that differentially... affects individuals or communities based on race or color.” Ecological racism occurs when victims of environmental damage are of different ethnicity from those causing the damage (Potter, 2010). These authors (Potter, 2010; Bullard & Johnson, 2000) had noted in their studies of the United States rural communities that environmental racism does not only affect “people of color” but extends to low-income communities because these groups have the least resources to fight such pollution (Sherman, 2016). Using this analysis, Shell is a multinational organization with various operations all over the world. Its practices in Ogoni land may be discriminatory given the high poverty level of the residents and the exploitation of its resources.

Social movements fighting for environmental protection led to the concept of environmental justice which extends to the fair treatment of people’s rights in the environment regardless of age, race, or social status (the United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). There are economic benefits to be derived from an ecosystem (Baskin, 1997) before environmental incidents such as oil spills. These include agriculture, wildlife, tourism, fishing, subsistence living, etc. Oil spills have affected a lot of lives negatively, including both the companies and the victimized communities. The plague of pollution has destroyed the ecosystem of many communities like Ogoni. However, as stated earlier, the compensation is not enough, as destroyed neighborhoods cannot be placed back in the position they were before the environmental

contamination. Creating a safe environment from contamination and pollution is crucial. While it is true that oil and gas activities present a high risk of dangers, effective policies governing exigent circumstances must be adopted.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The publicity from Ogoni's execution succeeded in keeping the world informed about the atrocities (military killing of civil activists) in that community. This work examined issues that led to the breakdown of law and order in Ogoni and the subsequent execution of nine leaders who were involved in the fight for environmental justice in their community. Using Durkheim's anomie theory and Bourdieu's concepts of "field," "habitus," and "doxa," this work analyzed the Ogoni execution in a criminological context. Importantly, the political framework of the Nigerian government and Shell's corporate social responsibility were considered using Durkheim and Bourdieu's theories. This work sought to create awareness of the issues of environmental contamination in the Ogoni community, Nigeria, and to advocate preventive measures in ecological contamination situations. Like Lentz and Felleman (2003) presented, the international community in implementing policies has focused on a reactive approach to oil spills. Responsive strategies are only adopted after the oil spill has done its damages to the population and ecosystem. Thus, there is a critical need for the adoption of a proactive approach, that is, "prevention of spills – not mitigation of damage once a spill occurs" (Lentz & Felleman, 2003).

Compensation is often the result of oil spills and pollution. Nonetheless, compensation is not adequate to make up for the harm done to the environment because benefits from oil spills are short-lived. It is our concerted dictum that the preservation of the ecosystem is a better policy direction for governments and communities in respective oil

generating economies and environments. If towns, such as Ogoni, are preserved, they will flourish economically, and corporations will produce with maximum efficiency without disruptions.

Thus, since oil and gas activities are conducted on a large scale worldwide, this article recommends that the international body establish a uniform law review process into oil spill investigations. The action of the international community is vital because oil spill issues cut across national waters and boundaries, thereby, making this problem a global concern. Once laws are in place as to how oil spill investigations should be conducted, the severity of punishment for breaches outlined, parties would be more cautious in leading oil and gas activities. The involvement of the international body in this issue will ensure the protection of the human rights of affected communities of pollution.

Additionally, for complicated cases (unpreventable cases), huge sanctions should be enacted to deter the likelihood of reoccurrence. Sanctions could involve loss of license to conduct oil and gas exploration activities or criminal liabilities in negligent cases. Severe deterrent measures like these would enable organizations to employ extreme care in their businesses and operations. These actions articulated above will ensure compliance in the industry and protect disadvantaged communities like Ogoni who are victims of environmental contamination. Subsequently, once laws are in place for breaches of oil spills, parties would be more cautious in conducting oil and gas activities.

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