
Psychosocial factors and psychological well-being in Ilaje oil-producing community, Niger-Delta region of Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Activities of major oil companies in the Niger-Delta region have caused many serious forms of oil-generated environmental degradation and pollution, which has had a ripple effect on the well-being of residents in the region. Interventions to improve well-being have proven largely unsuccessful, as psychosocial aspects were completely disregarded. This study investigated the influence of self-efficacy and social support on the psychological well-being of residents in Ilaje oil-producing community in the Niger-Delta region of Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A questionnaire consisting of personal data information, social support scale (SSS), self-efficacy scale (SES) and Ryff's psychological well-being scale (RPWBS) were used for data collection. The participants consisted of 86 (57.7%) males and 63 (42.3%) females. The results indicated that participants' self-efficacy had no significant influence on their psychological well-being. Social support contributes significantly to psychological well-being. The study concluded that social support determined the psychological well-being of residents in the study area. The study has practical implications for policy-makers in the oil and gas industry to design intervention strategies that could boost the well-being of residents in oil-producing communities of the Niger-Delta region, Nigeria.

Keywords: social support; self-efficacy; oil-producing; Ilaje community; Niger-Delta; psychological well-being.

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1 Introduction

Promoting health and well-being is one of the 17 sustainable development goals on the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This has made psychological well-being a pressing issue requiring global attention from stakeholders and policy-makers, especially in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Residents of the Niger-Delta region have been suffering from the negative environmental consequences of oil exploration at the cost of their well-being (Tawari and Abowei, 2012). The degradation of land, rising sea level and life-threatening oil spills, gas flares and environmental pollution have tragic implications for the well-being of Ilaje residents in the Niger-Delta (Babatunde, 2010).

The Niger-Delta region includes all nine oil-producing states in Nigeria, which comprises Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and River States (UNDP, 2006). The Human Development Index score, which is a measure of well-being that encompasses the longevity and decent standard of living, remains at a low value in the Niger-Delta region (UNDP, 2006). The general perception of Niger-Delta people is that government is only interested in the economic gain of crude oil without caring much for their well-being and welfare. This has led to cases of unprecedented restiveness, conflicts, militancy and a general state of hopelessness in the region. Surprisingly, most studies conducted in the Niger-Delta region have focussed more on ecological, socio-physical and economic considerations in the region, with the human dimension of well-being falling by the wayside.

According to Keyes and Magyar-Moe (2003), well-being is the

“State of successful performance throughout the life course which integrates physical, psychical, cognitive and socio-emotional functions that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's community, thereby fulfilling social relationships and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems.”

Psychological well-being is therefore the general evaluation of one's quality of life (Diener et al., 2009). The concept has been conceptualised as three components: cognitive appraisal that one's life has been good (life satisfaction); experiencing high levels of positive emotions and relatively low levels of negative emotions (Diener et al., 2009). According to the Niger-Delta Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2006), the Niger-Delta region suffers under administrative neglect, inadequate social infrastructure and services, high unemployment rate, abject poverty and a variety of conflicts. This is due to inequalities in the allocation of resources from oil and gas produced coupled with environmental degradation of the Niger-Delta environment caused by oil spills and gas flares. This situation continues

to seriously affect human development condition since environmental quality and sustainability are fundamental to overall well-being and development.

The Nigerian oil industry has been a blessing and a curse. Although crude oil has been Nigeria's major source of foreign revenue over the years, oil exploration and production have devastating effects on the ecosystem of the host communities in form of pollution and environmental degradation. Oil exploration and production have become serious threats to the maintenance and sustenance of the coastal communities because the activities of major multinational oil companies in the Niger-Delta have been wreaking havoc on the environment. Despite the enormous revenue allocated to various states and local government of oil-producing areas in Nigeria through a derivative sharing formula, residents in the communities are cut out of this equation due to corruption, mismanagement and development agendas that exclude the people factor. Communities still lack access to clean water, good healthcare and quality social amenities.

The government has established various agencies to improve the standard of living in the Niger-Delta region. For instance, The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established in 2000 under Act No. 6, Laws of Federation of Nigeria as an intervention agency in the Niger-Delta region. Efforts by the NDDC towards capacity building to better the lives of people from the Niger-Delta includes scholarships awarded to students whose field of studies are aimed at the development of the Niger-Delta Region. Also, at state level, Ondo State Government established the Ondo State Oil-Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC) in 2001 as an interventionist agency to cater for the development of oil-producing areas of the state. Despite these efforts, the living condition of residents is still deteriorating and youth restiveness and violence, militancy, frustration and emotional trauma are still the order of the day. The contribution of psychosocial factors in determining psychological well-being of residents in the Niger-Delta cannot be underestimated. Recent studies on well-being have shown that, along with the high level of oil exploration and environmental pollution in the coastal area of the Niger-Delta region, residents lack basic social amenities and poverty is widespread (Adebowale et al., 2008; Tawari and Abowei, 2012). However, these studies rarely address how psychosocial factors (i.e., self-efficacy and social support) could influence the psychological well-being of a population in the Niger-Delta region. This study intends to fill this gap in literature. Research has shown that self-efficacy plays a significant role in producing health outcomes (Bandura, 2001). Studies have established that there is a positive association between self-efficacy and well-being, with reduced levels of stress as one of the benefits (Rottman et al., 2010).

Bandura (1994) posits that self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura (1994) describes these beliefs as determinants of how people think and behave in social situations. Also, Bandura (2001) said that the belief in an individual's personal competence provides the basis for motivation, well-being, self-fulfilment and expectation of results.

Evidence abounds in literature that social support helps people survive, feel better and cope with their problems more effectively (Balogun, 1994; Cohen and Wills, 1985). Social support is essential to an individual's life. In the context of the present study, social support is defined as receiving affect, affirmation and aid from others (Bee, 1996). This, according to Balogun (2004), indicates the importance of significant others in

man-environment interactions. Social support consists of social resources that individuals perceive to be available or that are actually offered to them which could help protect against psychological problems. Research has shown that deficits in social support are related to many psychological problems such as depression, loneliness and anxiety (Eskin, 2003). Studies have also shown that people with emotional social support have an increased quality of life (Ilevbare et al., 2016). Furthermore, in an empirical study conducted in Calabar Metropolis, a non-dominated oil-producing area in Nigeria, it was revealed that family and social support significantly impact on the health and well-being of the people (Agbor et al., 2017).

The primary objective of this study is to advance literature by further investigating studies to understand some of the psychosocial factors (i.e., self-efficacy and social support) associated with psychological well-being of residents in the oil-producing community of Ilaje, in the Niger-Delta region of Ondo State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the study hypothesised that residents' self-efficacy and social support system would have a significant influence on their psychological well-being.

2 Context

The study was conducted in the Ilaje community of Ondo State, in the locations of *Awoye*, *Opoekaba* and *Obierewoye*. These locations have oil exploration activities going on either onshore or offshore. The Ilaje land is bound by the Ijebus to the West, the Ikale to the North and the Itsekiri to the East. More than 90% of the study area is covered by water in the form of creeks, rivers, canals and lagoons. Being a riverine area by nature, the primary occupations are fishing, canoe-making and lumbering. All of these occupations have been affected by oil spills and other adverse side-effects of oil production. Due to the proximity of the area to the Atlantic Ocean, the water is salty.

3 Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to gather information from a representative sample of the target population. The method was expected to investigate the influence of social support and self-efficacy on the psychological well-being of residents of the oil-producing community of Ilaje, in the Ondo State.

3.1 Participants

The participants consisted of residents of the coastal area of Ilaje community, Ondo State, Niger-Delta region. One hundred and forty-nine participants took part in this study: 86 (57.7%) male and 63 (42.3%) female residents of the Ilaje community. They were purposively selected from three locations within the oil-producing communities in Ilaje: *Awoye*, *Opoekaba* and *Obierewoye*. These locations represent the most dominant oil-producing villages in the Ilaje community. The ages of participants ranged from 16 to 65 years. In addition, 104 (69.8%) had never been married, while 45 (30.2%) were married.

3.2 *Instruments*

3.2.1 *Personal data*

This section comprised information relating to socio-demographic variables of the participants such as gender, age, religion, marital status and ethnicity.

3.2.2 *Self-efficacy scale*

This consists of ten items that measure optimistic self-belief to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life. The scale was originally developed for the German population by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1992), with the first version containing 20 items which Schwarzer and Jerusalem reduced to ten items in 1995. Responses ranged from 1 (it is not true) to 4 (it is always true). Higher scores indicate a higher perception of self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.76 to 0.90. Schwarzer et al. (2005) reported a reliability of 0.82 for the scale. Taiwo (2004) also reported a reliability of 0.87 for the Nigerian sample, making it suitable for present use. In this study, a high internal consistency Cronbach's alpha between 0.79 and 0.93 was reported.

3.2.3 *Social support scale*

This scale, developed by Zimet et al. (1988), consists of 12 items. It measures an individual's perception of how much outside social support he or she receives and has been tested on people from different age groups and cultural backgrounds and found to be a reliable and valid instrument. Response options ranged from strongly disagree (SD) = 1 to strongly agree (SA) = 5. Most investigations have revealed the social support scale (SSS) to be a three-factor construct which demonstrates good to excellent internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Cronbach's alpha between .79 and .93).

3.2.4 *Psychological well-being scale*

The scale, developed by Ryff (1989), consists of 54 items arranged as a series of statements reflecting the dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Response options ranged from SD = 1 to SA = 5. Summation of scores gives a composite score for the scale. The internal consistency coefficient of between 0.86 and 0.93 was reported for the scale. The scale was revalidated with internal consistency reliability ranging from 0.92 to 0.96 for present use.

3.3 *Procedures*

The study made use of sample selected from residents of the Ilaje community of Ondo State. The locations in Ilaje used for the study were *Awoye*, *Opoekaba* and *Obierewoye*. Data collection took three months. Participants were visited at their residential homes during which they were told about the purpose of the study. Their consent to participate in the study was sought. Participants who agree to take part in the study were personally interviewed by the researcher by means of a structured questionnaire. During administration, some of the participants in the study could not answer the items in the questionnaire immediately. As a result, return visits had to

be arranged with the assistance of research assistants. Out of the 160 questionnaires administered, 149 were returned and found usable for statistical analyses, accounting for a 93% return rate. The IBM-SPSS version 20.0 was used to analyse the data.

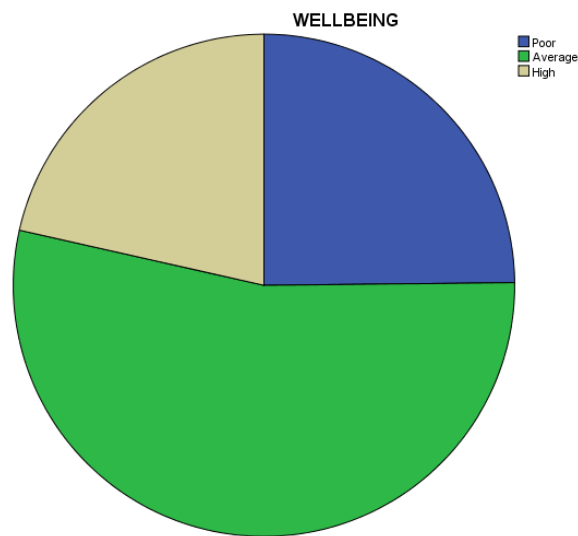
3.4 Ethical issues

Informed consent was obtained and appropriate measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Also, participants could request feedback on the results.

4 Results

Figure 1 depicts that 24.8% of the participants self-reported poor psychological well-being, while 53.7% of the total participants scored average on their psychological well-being – implying that they are moderate on their psychological well-being. Furthermore, 21.5% of respondents sampled reported high levels of psychological well-being.

Figure 1 Showing the level of self-reported psychological well-being of participants in the study area (see online version for colours)



4.1 Hypotheses

Hypothesis one Participant's self-efficacy will have a significant influence on their psychological well-being.

Hypothesis two Participant's social support will have a significant influence on their psychological well-being.

Multiple regression analysis in Table 1 indicates that social support contributes significantly to psychological well-being ($\beta = 1.25$, $t = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that

participants that reported higher social support enjoyed better psychological well-being than those with lower social support. Furthermore, using multiple regression analysis, self-efficacy had no significant influence on psychological well-being ($\beta = -.09$, $t = -.25$, *pns*). While other variables such as marital status ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -.75$, *pns*), religion ($\beta = .10$, $t = .86$, *pns*), age ($\beta = -.01$, $t = -1.57$, *pns*), gender ($\beta = -.16$, $t = -1.29$, *pns*) and ethnicity ($\beta = -.07$, $t = -1.14$, *pns*) did not make a statistically significant contribution to psychological well-being.

Table 1 Multiple regression analysis predicting psychological well-being from self-efficacy, social support, marital status, religion, age, gender and ethnicity (N = 149)

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Psychological wellbeing	Self-efficacy	-.09	.35	-.25	NS			
	Social support	1.25	.40	3.15	< .05	.48	18.07	< .05
	Marital status	-.14	.19	-.75	> .05			
	Religion	.10	.12	.86				
	Age	-.01	.01	-1.57				
	Gender	-.16	.13	-1.29				
	Ethnicity	-.07	.06	-1.14				

5 Discussions and conclusions

The study considered the psychosocial factors (i.e., self-efficacy and social support) associated with psychological well-being of residents in the oil-producing community, Ilaje, in Ondo State in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Overall, the results of the present study suggest that the self-efficacy of participants in the study area did not contribute significantly to their psychological well-being. This indicates that participants with personal competence and optimistic belief enjoyed the same level of psychological well-being than those with lower competence. Participants with high self-efficacy chose to perform more challenging and difficult tasks, which improved their psychological well-being and happiness; those with low self-efficacy suffer from depression, anxiety and helplessness. This finding is in contrast with studies of Rottman et al. (2010). These researchers found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and well-being. The findings of this study also contradict the works of Siddiqui (2015) which revealed a significant relationship between self-efficacy and most of the dimensions of psychological well-being.

The findings of this study suggest that participants' social support contributes significantly to report improved levels of psychological well-being. This suggests that participants who reported high social support enjoy better psychological well-being than those with low social support. The findings were consistent with the work of Balogun (1994) and Cohen and Wills (1985), which established that social support helps people survive, feel better and better cope with their problems as well as having beneficial effects on their health. Similarly, the results confirm the findings of Ilevbare et al. (2016) that higher levels of social support are associated with a higher quality of life. Furthermore, the findings affirmed the studies of Agbor et al. (2017) which established

that social support has a significant relationship with the health and well-being of individuals in Calabar, Nigeria. This outcome could be attributed to the fact that, during periods of distress, the category of participants that reported better psychological well-being received adequate assistance from significant others to cope with major life stressors in the oil-producing environment. This finding implies that providing effective social support networks for residents in oil-producing communities could boost their sense of psychological well-being. It is therefore, pertinent for stakeholders and government to provide social infrastructure (e.g., recreation centres) and conflict-free environments in oil-producing communities. Families, social groups and friends can relax and share their experiences together, thereby promoting health by protecting residents in the oil community from adverse effects of environmental stressors. In this regard, the NDDC and OSOPADEC should focus on more people-oriented projects and create counselling centres where psychologists and other helping professionals could counsel residents of this region who need physical and psychological assistance.

In conclusion, the present study represents a preliminary attempt to explore how psychosocial variables such as self-efficacy and social support determine psychological well-being. These findings suggest that social support and self-efficacy play an important role in helping residents in the oil-producing community of Ilaje to overcome hindrances to their psychological well-being. Findings suggest how these psychosocial variables could improve psychological well-being in the oil-producing community of Ilaje in the Niger-Delta region of Ondo State. Policy-makers would have to take personal attributes into consideration when designing intervention strategies that could improve the psychological well-being of residents in the Niger-Delta region. Further research is needed to investigate other psychological factors such as personality types, resilience, gender differences and coping strategies responsible for better psychological well-being in the entire Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. However, future studies in the oil-producing communities should focus on the possible positive and negative interaction between social support and psychological well-being as suggested by Peggy (1985) and Karen (2000).

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