

ENVIRONMENTAL RELEVANCE IN INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN THE NIGER DELTA: THE STUDY OF NKORO AND OSONI RELATIONS 1800-2015.

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Abstract

Every human society interacts basically for interest which often could be economically motivated. Therefore, there is usually synergy between the environment and intergroup relations. However, this paper is titled environmental relevance in intergroup relation in the Niger Delta: the study of Nkoro and Ogoni relations 1800-2015 examines the environmental determinants in Nkoro and Ogoni relations. The paper adopted the interdisciplinary approach which entails a combination of primary and secondary data. The paper holds that the environmental impact of Nkoro and Ogoni relations could be considered from the different ecological economic activities of the duo. The paper further maintained that ecologically, the Nkoro people are primary producers of marine foods like fish 'Nsam' (periwinkle), 'fungo' (oyster), 'Ngba' (cluster) while the Ogoni were producers of farm products like yam, garri, (Cassava Flake), pepper, plantain amongst others. In the light of the above,

the Nkoro and Ogoni people interact to exchange their produced items with their environmentally limited items with each other. The work maintains that, the economic benefits shared by the two groups propelled them to establish an age long market called Nyaba Fi by the Nkoro people and teera-ue by the Ogoni people at a favourable geographical location which happens to be the boundary between the duo through the administration of traditional oath of love, peace and unity in 1664. The work concludes that environmental factors cannot be taken away from any intergroup relations hence the recommendation that, societies should endeavour to interact within well established institutions.

Keywords: Environmental Relevance, Intergroup Relations, Niger Delta, Nkoro and Ogoni.

Introduction

There is a synergy between environment and intergroup relations. Every human society interacts basically for the purpose of their interests which could be economically motivated. However, the economic needs could be championed by the environmental location of one society which could not be found in the other geographical locations and as such forcing the two or more groups to interact with each other. Intergroup relations frame the way society define themselves and others, the way societies behave, and the way in which societies treat and think about others, and how they treat and think about themselves (Michael & Dominic, 2001). It should be noted that the mantra, catchphrase or level of affiliation a group offers to another group determines amongst others, its co-existence, peace, trade, and development which are the basic elements to growth and sustainable economy and is deposited in environment. Therefore, intergroup relations could be considered as a programme practiced by both individual interactions that involve members from different ethnic groups to interact with each other groups (Sherif, 1966). In this regards maintained that, an intergroup relation ranges between tolerance and intolerance. The tolerant form of intergroup relations is pluralism, such that, no distinction is made between minority and majority groups, but instead, there is level playing ground amongst the groups.

In the case of Nkoro and Ogoni relations, geographical location (environment) could be the major factor that fostered the relationship. Nkoro, belong to the coastal or salt water territories in the Eastern Niger Delta fringe which soil does not support farming activities. Based on that, the Nkoro are pre-dominantly fisher folks and producers of river foods; an economy that is determined by the environment. It is a well established fact that no society can live independently without interaction or support from her neighbours for economic survival. It is against this background that Nkoro kingdom was forced by the environmental determinant factors to interact with her Ogoni neighbours. The Ogonis are hinterland neighbours who environmental favours farming based on that, the both groups interact for the purpose of exchanging their environmental products like fish, sea foods, like 'Nsem' (periwinkle), 'fungo' (oyster), 'Ngba' (cluster) for farm produce like yam, Garri, (Cassava Flake), pepper, plantain amongst others from the Ogoni people. In the light of the above, the researcher chooses to explore on the environmental impacts on the relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people.

Explication of Key Words

Environmental Relevance: the term environmental relevance can be better understood when the two words are separately discussed before bringing them into one word, hence the concept environment can be defined as everything that makes up human surroundings, which gives human the comfort to survive on earth. Amongst the article in the surrounding that aids human existence includes the air humans breathe, the water that covers most of the earth's surface, the plants and animals around humans, and other variables. The index dictionary defines environment as the totality of the physical, social, and cultural elements that maneuvers the reality of development of an organism or assemblage of organisms in the human surrounding. Aina (1991) considers the term environment as the overall external physical and genetic surround in which man and other creatures live. Similarly, Jimoh, (2000), envisaged environment as a structure where living creatures intermingle with the physical elements. Meanwhile, environmental relevance refers to the importance of human surrounding called the environment in supporting intergroup relations in the areas under review.

Intergroup Relations: means a state of interconnectedness amongst groups in the society. It can also be regarded as the mutual dealings, connections, or communication amongst members of different societies for purpose of economic, social or political benefits.

Niger Delta

The Nkoro People: Nkoro Kingdom is located on the eastern fringe of the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Nkoro Kingdom is bordered to the North by Ogoni (Khana) Local Government Area, to the south and west by Andoni Local Government Area and to the east by Opobo Kingdom. According to Akins (2008), Nkoro kingdom is surrounded by Andoni, Ogoni and Opobo. He further maintained that the Northern part of the geography of Nkoro kingdom shares a common boundary with Ogoni, with the river running right in front of the Nyaba market, extending a network of creeks behind Aya-Ama I and II, Kpokpo-Kiri, Iwo-Ama and Suku-ama, all of Nkoro communities. Geographically, the ancient Nkoro kingdom covers over 2,000 km of both land and sea.

The Ogoni people: Oral tradition has it that the Ogoni people migrated from Ghana. This oral tradition affirmed that Ogoni Ancestors left their ancestral home of Ghana because of a brutal civil war that invaded the society and claimed many lives and properties. The date of the migration was not specified, but some tradition has claimed 15 B.C.E as the official date of the migration. However, it is recorded that the team was led by a woman warrior named Gbenekwaanwaa, and her followers, such as spirit intermediaries and medicine men, set out of Ghana and founded Ogoni land by means of the canoe. The site of Nama in present-day Khana Local Government Area was said to have been the first settlement of the Ogoni migrants; from there, they spread to other parts of areas covered as Ogoni territory (Saro, 1995). Geographically, the Ogoni people are primary neighbours to the Nkoro people as well as the Andoni and the Bonny at the coast while at the hinterland they are neighbours to the Akwa-Ibom, Etche, Okirika, Abia State, etc.

Brief History of Nyaba Market

Nkoro people had a long-standing trade relationship with the Ogoni people. The Ogoni people lived in the nearby Ogoniland region, that shares boundary with the Nkoro people, they were known for their production of

palm oil, Garri, plantain, yam etc. This different in environmental influenced economic occupation made the duo to establish a major trading partner amongst each other. The Nkoro people exchanges goods like fish, cray-fish, and other sea foods like Nsem, Ngba, Fungor and so on for palm oil Garri, plantain, yam and cassava. It is believed that this trade relationship existed for centuries, and played a major role in shaping the culture and economy of both the Nkoro and Ogoni people. According to Percy (2018) The peaceful co-existence with their Ogoni neighbour is traceable to the application of traditional justice system established between the periods of (1641-1699) by Amayana-Owoi Nyaba 1 of Nkoro and Yakara the leader of the Ogoni group. The traditional justice system was carried out through oath taking by the both ancestral fathers and the result of this oath taking was the establishment of a market where their citizens could exchange their sea produce for farm produce.

Fig 1: The market established under traditional justice system of oath taking





The market founded in 1641-1699 by both Nkoro and Ogoni leaders namely, Nyaba, Nkoro leader and Yakara, Ogoni leader. The oath taking has helped to sustain peace amongst the two groups from the date of its foundation till date. The picture shows the articles by the two groups.

Source: Field Work

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The Environment Determinant of Nkoro and Ogoni Relation Through Nyaba Market

According to Bapakaye (2023 oral source) The environment of Nkoro and Ogoni has a significant influence on the Nyaba market relocation between the duos. When Nkoro and Ogoni relationship drew to a point where the duo build trust on each other, they decided to immortalize the relationship to stand a test of time, hence the locate the environment where the Nyaba market now lays. However, various factors were considered before accepting the location. Amongst which the environmental conditions of the new location was seen favourable and adequate for the duo. First the environmental factor encompasses both natural and built surroundings, including climate, geography, natural resources, pollution levels, and sustainability practices. These factors influence the market relocation decisions by the groups.

Climate: Climate and geography play a crucial role in the relocation decisions of Nyaba market by the Nkoro and the Ogoni people. This is because the groups considered suitability of a location's climate for their peaceful commercial interactions. For example, Nkoro people are mariners that survives predominantly by marine foods while the Ogoni people are hinter-land people that survives predominantly by farm and forest foods, based on this factors, the two groups rely around each other for a specific

weather conditions that is suitable to the economy of the groups, by chosen or locating the Nyaba areas as the most favorable climates. This is because, the Nyaba location is the boundary between the Nkoro and the Ogoni people and as such could play host to Nkoro fisher folks or mariners at coast and play host to Ogoni farmers at the interior.

Geography: Geography also played a vital role in the Nyaba market relocation choices between Nkoro and the Ogoni people. This is because, the duo considered accessibility to transportation before accepting Nyaba market location for their commercial interactions. Geographically, the Nyaba environment is essential for businesses of the duo to thrive, because location enables the duo not to deficiency in their supply chains. In Proximity the location plays a center role has it stand as a boundary between the duos and as such, the suppliers and customers from the both side shares equal benefits. Additionally, the Nyaba market location could be considered a vulnerable location for peace-building and intergroup relations.

Accessibility to Food Resource: The accessibility of food resources also influences the Nyaba market relocation decisions between the Nkoro and the Ogoni people. The duo depends on each other for a specific food resource, for example Nkoro soil does not support farming agriculture even though the people sometimes involve in planting of vegetables for immediate family consumption while the Ogoni people also involve in petty fishing activities, but the fact is that, the larger farm foods needed in Nkoro largely came from the Ogoni land via the Nyaba market interaction, so the Ogoni large needs for marine foods came from the Nkoro people via the Nyaba market interaction and since the Nkoro people requires no additional transport fare rather than their normal sea transportation fare to access the Nyaba market so also the Ogoni people needs no additional transportation fare rather than their normal road transportation to access the Nyaba market, the accessibility to food resources by the duos were not reduced by transportation costs and as such ensuring a steady supply chain of foods by the group. This is also an environment factor that influences the Nyaba market location by the Nkoro and Ogoni people.

Security and Defense Sustainable Practices: Security and defense sustainable practices also provided the background in the acceptance of

Nyaba market location as a potential location for the duo to operate without fear of dominance and attack by one group. The Nyaba market environment is situated such that in case of any form of hostility, the duo can effectively and efficiently defend themselves without being trapped by the other. By this environment consideration, it is therefore not out of place to say that the Nkoro and Ogoni relation conducted effectively through commercial interaction via the Nyaba were very much aware or more conscious of their environmental impact and are increasingly prioritizing sustainable practices for their security and defense in their interaction.

In contrast, high level of insecurity and vulnerability by one group to the other can discourage one group from interacting with the other in the market location. The two groups knowing this, build a strict environmental consideration on security and defense before accepting Nyaba market location in their commercial interaction. Overall, the environmental influence on Nyaba market relocation is multifaceted and encompasses various factors mentioned. The climate, geography, accessibility to food resource, as well as security and defense sustainable practices were considered to ensure operational efficiency. This alignment with the environment sustained the goals of the relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people.

The Nyaba Market Influence on Intergroup Relations

Leelee (2023 oral source) Intergroup relations refer to the interactions, attitudes, and perceptions between different social groups, such as ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural groups. These relations can be influenced by various factors, including economic conditions, market dynamics, and consumer behavior. In this comprehensive response, we will explore how market influence affects intergroup relations from different perspectives.

Economic Equality and Cooperation: One way in which Nyaba market influence the intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni was through economic cooperation and equality. The Nyaba markets were driven by supply and demand dynamics by the two groups, which has resulted in equal distribution of resources and opportunities amongst the two social groups. This economic equality has led to social cooperation and block unnecessary tensions amongst the two social groups. Since none of the interacting groups have limited access to food resources in the market, as

well as other opportunities or capital for entrepreneurship, there is a sense of harmonious cooperation and inclusiveness in the market interaction. This has further perpetuated peace in the existing social relations amongst the duo and reinforces intergroup co operations. Economic equality in the market has also lead to elimination of unnecessary competition amongst the two social groups hence eradicating conflicts between duos.

Cultural Coordination and Identity Formation: The Nyaba market influence also plays a role in shaping the intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni through member's behavior toward their identity formation. Despite the fact that the two groups does not share same cultural identity and formation, the inter group relation via the market could influence the duo to relate in peace by creating acceptability in coordinating personal preferences, cultural values, and social norms such that it would interfere with the other. The two groups also uses the market as a strategic platform to freely borrow cultural symbols of each group to appeal to its members in times of misunderstanding. These tactics has truly helped the parties to reinforce peace building amongst them. This cultural coordination and identity formation of the groups has often align themselves with one another in associating with one another socially. However, this process of identity formation through cultural coordination has contributed to in positive intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni via shared interests, inclusive and eradication of all forms of social discrimination.

Cultural Exchange: The Nyaba market has influence the intergroup relations of Nkoro and Ogoni people through cultural exchange. Nyaba markets facilitate the movement of goods, services, and ideas across borders, leading to increased interaction between the two social groups. This interaction has fostered cultural exchange, understanding, and appreciation amongst the groups. However, the Nyaba market has also led to cultural harmonization of certain cultural products or practices between the two groups (Nkoro and Ogoni). This has resulted in the erosion of conflicts amongst them and foster their local traditions and values to spring up. Additionally, cultural exchange has influenced the economic inter-dependence of each other.

The Environmental Benefits of Nyaba Market in the Inter-group Relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people

Lekposi (2023 oral source) The Nyaba market plays significant role in encouraging intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people by creating opportunities for interaction, promoting diversity and inclusion, and fostering a sense of shared identity and common goals among two groups. However, this were achieved through various mechanisms such as economic integration, social initiatives, and cultural exchange programs.

Economic Integration: One way the Nyaba market has encourage intergroup relations of Nkoro and Ogoni is through economic integration. The Nyaba market created the solid ground for Nkoro and Ogoni groups to have the opportunity to engage in economic activities together, it also lead to increased interaction and understanding between them. This act has facilitated making of progressive policies by the two groups to promote equal access to food resources, opportunities, and business partnerships. The economic integration amongst the two groups has help to break down economic barriers and promote fair competition. the market also create a level playing field that encourages collaboration and cooperation among the two groups.

Social Initiatives: The Nyaba market has also support intergroup relations through social initiatives that aim to address social inequalities and promote inclusivity. The two groups have implement diversity and inclusion programs that actively recruit individuals from their ethnic backgrounds and provide equal opportunities for the two groups. The market also foster a diverse workforce amongst the groups, by creating an environment where people from the two groups feel valued and respected, leading to improved intergroup relations.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Furthermore, the Nyaba market also engage the two groups to operate in corporate social responsibility (CSR), activities that focus on supporting each groups and addressing social issues, supporting each other through partnership that promotes intergroup dialogue and understanding. By this, the two group could actively participate in initiatives that contribute to building bridges between the two groups and fostering positive relationships.

Cultural Exchange Programs: Another way the Nyaba market encourage the intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni is through cultural exchange programs. These programs provide opportunities for individuals from any of the group to learn about each other's cultures, traditions, and values. The Nyaba market also facilitates cultural exchange events, festivals that create platforms for dialogue and mutual understanding. This exposure to different cultures helps break down stereotypes and prejudices and promotes empathy and appreciation for amongst them.

The Functionality of Nyaba Market and its Environment in Peace Building between Nkoro and Ogoni

Fubara (2023) The Nyaba market is indeed a pillar of peace and unity in intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people. The concept of the market refers to the economic system where goods and services are exchanged between the two groups. It is a platform where the two cultures, or social groups come together to engage in mutually beneficial transactions. Despite the fact that the primary purpose of a market is economic exchange, in the case of Nyaba it also has the potential to foster peace and unity among different groups in several ways.

Economic Interdependence: One of the key ways in which the Nyaba market promotes peace and unity amongst the Nkoro and Ogoni people is through economic interdependence. The market provided the background for the two groups to engage in trade and commerce, they become reliant on each other for goods and services. This interdependence creates incentives for peaceful cooperation and discourages conflict. If one group disrupts the relationship by engaging in hostile actions, it will suffer economic consequences, leading to a mutual loss for all parties involved. Therefore, maintaining peaceful relations becomes essential for sustaining economic prosperity.

Bridging Social Divides: The Nyaba market acts as a bridge that brings Nkoro and Ogoni people people of different cultural backgrounds together. the market environment makes it possible for the two groups to interact with each other regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or culture. This interaction allows the duo to understand and appreciate their different cultures, breaking down stereotypes and prejudices. As they engage in transactions, they develop cultural relationships based on trust

and mutual respect. These relationships have extended beyond economic exchanges, fostering social cohesion and unity among the two groups.

Equal Opportunities: The Nyaba market provided equal opportunities for the social groups to participate and succeed based on their skills, talents, and efforts rather than their background or identity. Nyaba market fashioned the market such that competition is based on merit rather than discrimination or favoritism. This equal playing field encourages cooperation among the groups as they strive to achieve success through fair competition. It also promoting fairness and inclusivity, the market contributes to reducing social tensions and promoting unity amongst the two groups.

Addressing Underlying Socio-Economic Issues: the Nyaba market also indirectly contribute to peace and unity by addressing underlying socio-economic issues, the market also encourage economic growth through market activities and this help to improved living standards, reduced poverty, and increased access to good foods. These factors could be judged to be crucial for social stability and help in alleviating grievances that can often fuel intergroup conflicts.

Cultural Exchange:

The Nyaba market also serves as a platform for cultural exchange, which has contributed to peace and unity among the groups. Through trade and economic interactions, the two groups come into contact with each other's cultures, traditions, and values, this exposure helps break down stereotypes, prejudices, and misunderstandings that may exist between the groups. Cultural exchange fosters empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diversity. It allows individuals to recognize the commonalities they share with others while appreciating their differences. This process promotes tolerance and respect for different cultures, leading to enhanced intergroup relations.

Mutual Understanding:

The Nyaba market provides opportunities for dialogue and communication between Nkoro and Ogoni groups. As they engage in economic activities together, they have the chance to interact, exchange ideas, and understand each other's perspectives. This interaction helps

build trust and empathy among them. Through the Nyaba market interactions, the two groups learn to negotiate, compromise, and find common ground in the time of misunderstanding amongst their members. They develop skills in conflict resolution and problem-solving, which are essential for peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the market has also provide a platform for dialogue on broader societal issues, allowing the groups to address their concerns and find mutually acceptable solutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the market has play a crucial role in encouraging intergroup relations by creating opportunities for interaction, promoting diversity and inclusion, and fostering a sense of shared identity and common goals among interacting groups. Through economic integration, social initiatives, cultural exchange programs, and inclusive marketing strategies, the Nyaba market contribute to building a more inclusive and harmonious society between Nkoro and Ogoni people. The Nyaba market influence has a multifaceted impact on the intergroup relations between Nkoro and Ogoni people. The economic quality enjoyed by the two groups has created harmony and eradicate tensions between the two social groups (Nkoro and Ogoni). Cultural exchange and identity formation has also help the two groups to market their product in the market through shared cultural interest which has created reinforce positive contributions in the intergroup relations between the two groups. The cultural exchange also help to facilitate cultural harmonization in the markets as well as fostering understanding amongst the two groups in managing all form of social challenges related to cultural homogenization and economic exploitation.

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