



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS' WELLBEING IN SELECTED STATES OF THE NIGER DELTA ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The wellbeing of a household is determined by the level of utility accessed by individual members of that household. This study examined the level of household wellbeing in rural communities of selected Niger Delta states. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. A total of 454 respondents were selected from the four sampled local government areas of Akwa Ibom (Ibena and Ibesikpo Asutan) and Abia state (Ukwa west and Ikwuano) oil and non oil communities. Quantitative data was collected using interview schedule, while qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. About 37.4 (OPC) and 26.8% (NOPC) households always had access to material living conditions, while access to quality of life were 46.6 (OPC) and 38.9% (NOPC). Most severe constraint faced by households in OPC was poor access to poverty alleviation programmes (422), and unavailability of credit in NOPC (483). The result also indicated that majority of the households in both communities had low levels of wellbeing and consequently fell below the community poverty line. The study recommends that efforts to improve household wellbeing in the study area should focus on improving agricultural activities as it was discovered that these activities were still the dominant livelihood activities in the communities. These farm activities form the base for household food supply, capital for other livelihood activities and overall wellbeing.

Keywords: Household well-being, Oil producing communities, Poverty

INTRODUCTION

The wellbeing of a household is determined by the level of utility reached by individual members of that household. This level of utility is a function of goods and services that they consume and their perception of what is considered useful to them. Ravallion (2000) noted that households generally favour adequate food, improved access to education, health care, housing and clean water amongst others. Wellbeing is generally viewed as a description of the state of people's life situation (McGillivray 2007). It is said to be a judgment about satisfaction with one's overall life or with certain domains, or the extent to which life has meaning or purpose or having what you need for life to be good. The basic assumption of any approach to well-being analysis is that there are important dimensions of well-being that economic resources are not able to capture.

In essence, it can be said that the wellbeing of people is dependent on exploration of environmental resources and these exploration activities continue to disclose multifaceted implications in spite of improvement in technology adopted in carrying them out. The discovery and exploration of crude oil and natural gas deposits in Nigeria in the past fifty (50) years has immeasurably increased the wealth of the nation but not without its overwhelming environmental impacts. The industry has brought economic benefits to the multinational corporations and the Nigerian government, but has brought on the indigenous people of the Niger Delta environmental problems, ecological degradation, health hazards and poverty (Hassan, Olawoye and Nnadozie, 2002).

The exploration of oil in the Niger delta region can be said to be ambivalent in nature. On one hand it had beneficial effects, creating job opportunities, educational and infrastructure development in some areas and on the other hand brought devastation and loss of agricultural biodiversity and livelihood corroborating the report of the World Bank in 2005 that although the Niger Delta region had the agricultural potential to feed the whole of West Africa, unfortunately the extraction and production of oil has endangered the local communities. This loss of livelihood of course has major implications for the level of wellbeing of the household and in fact that of the community at large.

Decades of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region is also reported to have caused deterioration of economic, social and political structures in the region. Social tension, conflict and kidnapping have become a flourishing business with severe implication for fishing and farming which are a daily part of the lives of the Niger Delta people as well as for future development prospects in the region (United States Energy Information Administration, 2010; Agyei, Gordon and Addei, 2012).

It is against this backdrop that this study examined the following objectives:

1. Identify the socioeconomic characteristics of households in oil and non-oil producing rural communities of the Niger Delta
2. Determine the level of wellbeing of households in oil and non-oil producing rural communities of the area.

Hypotheses of the study, stated in null form, are as follows;



1. There is no significant relationship between selected socioeconomic characteristics of households in rural communities of the Niger Delta and their level of wellbeing
2. There is no significant difference in the level of wellbeing of households in oil and non-oil producing rural communities of the Niger Delta.

METHODOLOGY

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. Abia and Akwa Ibom States were purposively selected being the least and highest oil producing states respectively. The states were stratified into oil and non-oil producing local government areas (LGAs) and 30% of LGAs in each stratum was randomly selected to give Ibeno and Ibesikpo Asutan in Akwa Ibom as well as Ukwa West and Ikwuano in Abia States respectively. Using proportionate sampling technique, 20% of oil producing communities and 10% of non oil producing communities were randomly sampled from selected LGAs. Heads of households were systematically chosen to give 454 respondents (219 and 235 households from oil and non oil communities respectively). Structured interview schedule was used to collect data on respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and wellbeing. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation and t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondents' socioeconomic characteristics

The respondents' socioeconomic characteristics considered in the study were: age, household size, marital status, sex, estimated monthly income and educational qualification.

Age - Table 1 shows the mean age of respondents to be 42 years across respondent categories. The results also showed the mean age of respondents in oil producing communities to be 44 years and that of respondents in non oil producing communities was 40 years. This suggests that there is a predominance of mature and productive household heads in the study area. Since majority of the household heads fall within the middle age, it is an indication that they are within the active working age of the communities. This result implies the level of maturity and readiness of household heads to bear risks and cater for their households' wellbeing. The result is consistent with the findings by Udofia (2005) and Rathmen *et al* (2002) who observed that the farmers are in the active ages of between 30 and 50 years.

Sex - Overall, the respondents for the study consisted of 54.8% male and 45.3% female in oil producing communities as well as 60.0% male and 40.0% female in non oil producing

communities as shown in the Table 1. The implication of this is that both sexes contribute to household wellbeing as head of households. Traditionally in the Niger Delta region, women are viewed as the subordinate sex, however prevailing conditions of death, separation, migration of males and economic hardship has made quite a number of households to be headed by women. Research has shown an increase in female headed households both in developed and developing countries (Bumpass and Riley, 1995) in Buvinic (1991). It might also be due to momentous change in household structures as control over resources has shifted gradually away from men to women (Silberschmidt, 1999; 2001). This position is supported by Bigombe and Gilbert (2012) who documented that with rampant unemployment and dwindling resources, men's central roles as breadwinners has been redefined making it impossible for most men to fulfil these roles.

Therefore data should be disaggregated by sex and gender issues mainstreamed into policies and programmes. Specific programmes could thus be targeted at women and other vulnerable groups in order to avoid their continual marginalization or their opinions not being heard due to the patriarchal system of our society.

Marital status of respondents - Result in Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents in oil producing communities (79.0%) and (82.6%) in non oil producing communities were married. The incidences of divorce (2.7%) and (2.6%) and widowhood (7.3%) and (4.7%) were very low in oil and non oil producing communities. This indicates a high level of homogeneity in the distribution of marital status of household across the communities due to similarities in cultural practices.

The fact that majority of the household heads in both oil and non oil producing communities were married is an indication that they are responsible and mature adults who are ready to contribute to their household wellbeing.

This result shows that among the respondents across all communities, the institution of marriage is held in high esteem and leads to a high level of emotional and psychological wellbeing. This is supported Fakoyode *et al* (2011) which states that over 80% of rural households are married.

Educational qualification - The result showed no clear difference in the qualification of respondents as majority (89.0%) of the respondents had one form or another of education in both oil and non-oil producing communities of the study area. This result to some extent is similar to the findings of Oyesola *et al* 2012) and Oladeji (2010) asserting that majority of rural workforce had secondary education

The results thus revealed that a larger percentage of the respondents have one form of



education or the other and this can expose them to information that will improve their household wellbeing and development. This finding corroborates Babatude *et al.*, (2008) who reported that the education of a household head had a positive influence on the wellbeing of most rural households in Nigeria.

Household size - The results showed no difference in the mean household size (6) of respondents in both oil and non-oil producing communities as majority (52.58%) While a large household size implies a sufficient supply of household labour for livelihood activities as supported by the findings of Ironkwe, Ekwe, Okoye and Chukwu (2009) who reported that most rural families in Nigeria have large household sizes between 6 to 10 persons, a large household size could mean over dependency on household

resources resulting in a negative effect on the wellbeing of the household.

Estimated monthly income - Result in Table 1 indicated that the estimated monthly income of households for 41.3% of respondents in oil producing communities was between N 21, 000 to N 40, 000, while 40.6% of their counterparts in non-oil producing communities also earned the same amount monthly. The low-income level suggests that a greater percentage of households in the study area find it difficult to meet their daily household obligations. As such savings and investments become impossible leading to a cumulative effect of un-sustainability of households and low level of wellbeing. This result is consistent with (Etim, 2010) who reported that rural household's income was notoriously subject to seasonal variability especially in Nigeria.

Table 1: Respondents socioeconomic characteristics

| Variables | Oil producing | | Non-oil producing | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Age | | | | |
| <30 | 25 | 10.3 | 32 | 14.1 |
| 31-40 | 97 | 42.2 | 77 | 34.8 |
| 41-50 | 61 | 26.5 | 65 | 29.2 |
| 51-60 | 39 | 16.1 | 39 | 19.1 |
| >60 | 13 | 5.6 | 6 | 3.0 |
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 120 | 54.8 | 141 | 60.0 |
| Female | 99 | 45.3 | 94 | 40.0 |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Married | 173 | 79.0 | 194 | 82.6 |
| Others | 46 | 21.0 | 41 | 17.4 |
| Education | | | | |
| No formal | 24 | 11.0 | 25 | 10.6 |
| Primary | 71 | 32.4 | 80 | 34.1 |
| Secondary | 73 | 33.3 | 67 | 28.5 |
| Tertiary | 30 | 13.7 | 54 | 23.0 |
| Vocational | 21 | 9.6 | 9 | 3.8 |
| Household size | | | | |
| 1-4 | 75 | 31.8 | 62 | 27.5 |
| 5-8 | 113 | 48.1 | 123 | 57.1 |
| 9-12 | 33 | 14.3 | 30 | 13.3 |
| 13-17 | 8 | 3.2 | 2 | 1.1 |
| >17 | 6 | 2.8 | 2 | 1.1 |
| Estimated income (,000) | | | | |
| <20 | 69 | 29.4 | 61 | 27.9 |
| 21-40 | 97 | 44.3 | 89 | 40.6 |
| 41-60 | 42 | 17.9 | 53 | 24.2 |
| >60 | 27 | 11.5 | 16 | 7.3 |

Wellbeing

Material living conditions

Income and wealth: Table 2 indicated 62.8% and 59.6% sometimes experienced tough times and inability to save in oil and non-oil producing communities respectively. This result implies that although income and wealth is

important for household wellbeing, majority of households (19.4% and 28.4%) in the study area had difficulties meeting their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

Jobs and earnings: In terms of jobs and earnings the result was 37.8% and 30.2% for households in oil and non-oil producing



communities respectively. The fact that majority of households in the study area always experienced issues that suggested they could not afford what they want as at when they want it, is an indication that many household members of working age in both oil and non-oil producing communities are jobless with serious negative implications on their wellbeing.

Housing: For housing, majority (55.1%) of households indicated ‘Always Experienced to questions around the quality and type of housing materials used for construction in oil producing

communities. The percentage of households that indicated same was 51.8% in non-oil producing communities. This implies that housing and its facilities are more conducive in non-oil producing communities than in oil producing communities. Such dense living conditions are often a sign of inadequate water and sewage supply as was observed during the study during transect walks through the communities. This is in tandem with OECD (2013) who posited that overcrowded housing may have a negative impact on physical and mental wellbeing.

Table 2: Distribution of households’ material wellbeing based on oil and non-oil producing communities

| Material living conditions | Oil | Non-oil |
|----------------------------|------|---------|
| Income and wealth | | |
| Always | 19.4 | 28.4 |
| Sometime | 59.6 | 62.8 |
| Never | 13.1 | 8.2 |
| Jobs and earnings | | |
| Always | 37.8 | 30.2 |
| Sometimes | 44.4 | 52.9 |
| Never | 17.9 | 17.0 |
| Housing | | |
| Always | 55.1 | 51.8 |
| Sometimes | 35.1 | 35.0 |
| Never | 9.8 | 12.1 |

Quality of life

Quality of life represents the subjective aspect of the wellbeing of the respondents. It gives a picture of how the respondents feel about their lives. It is a self-reported or personal judgment about one’s life circumstances. Quality of life wellbeing domain takes into consideration several dimensions such as; health, work/life balance, education/skills and social connections. Others are civic engagement, environmental quality, personal security and life satisfaction.

Health status: the series of questions under this domain provides detailed information about self-reported healthcare and nutrition statistics of household members within the survey sample. The result shows little difference in the percentage (39.3%) and (31.7%) of respondents in oil and non-oil producing communities under the health dimension of wellbeing indicators. The implication of this finding is that irrespective of location, good health is one of the most important things to people with benefits such as increased productivity, wealth, reduced health care costs, good social relations and of course a longer life and wellbeing.

Work/life balance: The results of the survey as shown in Table 3 revealed that the percentage of respondents who indicated ‘Always Experienced’ under the work/life balance dimension was (45.6% v 40.2%) for oil and non-oil producing communities respectively. This overall result implies that a suitable balance between work

and daily living is a challenge that all household members face. There is always the balancing act and daily juggling of activities. Evidence suggests that long work hours impair personal health, increase stress and reduce overall wellbeing (Burke and Cooper 2008). This corroborates Marmot and Brunner (2005) and Auer and Elton (2010) that the amount and quality of leisure time is important for people’s overall wellbeing.

Education and skills: The results showed that the percentage of respondents who indicated ‘Always Experienced’ to the questions under education and skills was 51.1% in oil producing communities and 45.4% in non-oil producing communities. The implication of this result is that households in both communities place a high value on education and skills which they access even under unfavourable conditions for their wellbeing.

Social connections: Humans are social creatures, the frequency of our contact with other people and the quality of our personal relationships are therefore essential determinants of our wellbeing. Results from Table 3 under this dimension showed (42.3%) and (33.6%) for oil and non-oil producing communities. Perhaps this difference could be because households in oil producing communities form social groups which they use as pressure groups in their dealings with oil multinationals in the area.

The Discussions during the FGDs buttressed the findings that respondents in oil producing communities had more social groups



because they use these groups for collective bargaining with the multinationals and other government agencies.

"You cannot go as an individual to Shell. They will not even allow you in to their office not to talk of listening to you. But when we go as a group, they will attend to us because if they don't then we will take another action"
(Youth FGD Owaza community)

Civic Engagement: Table 3 showed that the percentage of 'Always Experienced' responses for households in oil and non-oil communities were; 51.7% and 38.7% respectively. The implication of this result is that civic engagement matters, as having a political voice in the society where people live allows them to have a say in political decisions that affect their lives and wellbeing. Similarly, good governance is needed to translate people's voice into policies that support their aspirations for a good life.

'Unfair and poor handling of royalties is an issue that has continued to breed communal clashes in our communities. A case in point is the recent communal clash at Umuokwor - Asa Community in 2011 that claimed lives and property worth millions of naira. So, we come together to form social groups through which we can make our grievances known' (In-depth interview with key informant in Ukwa west)

Environmental quality: The quality of the environment where people live and work is important but it also matters for people's health and wellbeing. The result of the study as shown in Table 3 revealed that 58.0% and 32.3% of households in oil and non-oil producing communities indicated 'Always experienced to the questions in this dimension. The result indicates a better quality of environment in the non-oil producing communities. This result agrees with the findings of Etuk (2012) that the quality of the natural environment in oil producing communities has been degraded and this degradation has an inverse relationship with the wellbeing of the people.

Personal security: In Table 3, it was shown that majority (53.6%) of respondents in oil producing communities ticked 'Always Experienced' to the items under personal security when compared to 40.6% of households in non-oil

producing communities. This difference could be attributed to the civic unrest and other conflicts prevalent in oil producing communities with consequent implication that households live in fear which affects their overall wellbeing. This result was corroborated during the FGDs when participants noted that;

"The presence of multinationals has brought about several vices to the oil producing communities. Kidnappings, robbery, prostitutions and destruction of properties are daily being perpetuated in our communities" what can we do but to pray to God to keep us safe".
(FGD women, Ibeno community)

The implication is that personal security is a core element of the wellbeing of individuals and households and one of the biggest impacts of insecurity on people's wellbeing appears to be through the feeling of vulnerability that it causes. The finding of Robert (2012) that personal security is important to wellbeing agrees with this result.

Overall life satisfaction: It is also important to consider how people feel about their lives and experiences. Table 3 showed the percentage response for life satisfaction as a measure of wellbeing was 55.0% and 44.8% in oil and non-oil producing communities respectively. This result implies that although respondents were satisfied in very few aspects of their lives, their responses to items on happiness and a brighter future shows their resilience and belief in the power of positive feelings despite their prevailing economic conditions.

Categorisation of households indicate that in oil producing communities, 51.6% of households had a low level of wellbeing, while 54.0% of households had a low level of wellbeing in non-oil producing communities. The result indicates a general low level of wellbeing across the study area which perhaps reflects the state of rural communities in Nigeria at large. In as much as measuring feelings can be subjective, it is nevertheless a useful complement to more objective data when comparing quality of life across communities. Subjective data provides a personal evaluation of individuals' health, education, income and personal fulfilment. It captures a reflective assessment of which life circumstances and conditions are important for wellbeing.

Table 5.13b: Distribution of households' quality of life wellbeing based on oil and non-oil producing communities

| Quality of life | Oil % | Non-oil % |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Health | | |
| Always | 39.3 | 35.7 |
| Sometimes | 39.7 | 39.2 |
| Never | 21.0 | 21.2 |
| Work/life balance | | |
| Always | 45.6 | 40.2 |
| Sometimes | 36.8 | 41.2 |
| Never | 16.6 | 18.7 |
| Education/skills | | |
| Always | 51.1 | 45.4 |
| Sometimes | 36.1 | 44.0 |
| Never | 9.1 | 11.0 |
| Social connections | | |
| Always | 42.3 | 33.6 |
| Sometimes | 41.8 | 50.0 |
| Never | 16.7 | 13.5 |
| Civic engagement | | |
| Always | 51.7 | 38.7 |
| Sometimes | 31.0 | 46.1 |
| Never | 14.3 | 15.2 |
| Environmental quality | | |
| Always | 58.0 | 32.3 |
| Sometimes | 32.2 | 43.6 |
| Never | 10.0 | 24.2 |
| Life satisfaction | | |
| Always | 55.0 | 44.8 |
| Sometimes | 33.0 | 43.4 |
| Never | 12.1 | 11.9 |
| High | 48.4 | 46.0 |
| low | 51.6 | 54.0 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1: This was a test of relationship between selected socioeconomic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, household size, educational attainment and estimated monthly income) of households in oil and non-oil producing rural communities and their wellbeing.

Relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of households and wellbeing

Results from the test of relationships between socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and wellbeing are presented in Table 4a. From the results, age of the respondents had no

role to play in the wellbeing of the entire household as it was not significantly related ($r=0.039$, $p>0.05$). The finding implies that wellbeing is not necessarily a function of how old a person is as any household member can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the household. The result also shows that the household size ($r=-0.144$, $p<0.05$) and estimated monthly income ($r=0.104$, $p<0.05$) were significantly related to household wellbeing. This implies that for households, the smaller the household size, the better their wellbeing as there would be less people to cater for by the household head.

Table 4a: Relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and household wellbeing

| Variables | Oil producing | | | Non-oil producing | | | Overall | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------|----|-------------------|-------|----|---------|-------|----|
| | r | p | D | r | p | d | r | p | D |
| Age | 0.105 | 0.121 | NS | -0.021 | 0.750 | NS | 0.039 | 0.411 | NS |
| Household size | 0.051 | 0.450 | NS | -0.152 | 0.020 | S | -0.144 | 0.015 | S |
| Estimated income | 0.258 | 0.000 | S | 0.031 | 0.045 | S | 0.104 | 0.032 | S |

r=correlation coefficient, p=significance level, D=decision

Table 4b shows the relationships between marital status, educational level and the wellbeing of the respondents. The table indicates a significant

relationship exists between the marital status ($\chi^2=13.12$) and their wellbeing. This result shows that among the respondents the institution of marriage



is held in high esteem and leads to a high level of emotional and psychological wellbeing. On educational level, there was a significant relationship with wellbeing ($\chi^2 = 15.25$, $P < 0.05$) implying that education and skills are necessary for improved wellbeing. The results also showed that

sex ($\chi^2 = 1.44$, $p > 0.05$) is not significantly related to wellbeing. The implication of this is that household members irrespective of sex are responsible and contribute to the sustenance and wellbeing of their households.

Table 4b: Relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and household wellbeing

| Variable | Oil producing | | | | Non oil producing | | | | Overall | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|----|-------|----|-------------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------|----|
| | χ^2 | df | p | D | χ^2 | df | p | D | χ^2 | df | p | D |
| Marital status | 12.35 | 3 | 0.006 | S | 15.33 | 4 | 0.002 | S | 13.12 | 4 | 0.004 | S |
| Sex | 2.65 | 1 | 0.103 | NS | 0.01 | 1 | 0.928 | NS | 1.44 | 1 | 0.230 | NS |
| Educational level | 16.68 | 3 | 0.008 | NS | 17.36 | 5 | 0.00 | S | 15.25 | 5 | 0.01 | S |

χ^2 = chi-square value, p = significance level, df = degree of freedom, D = decision

Hypothesis 2: This was about test of difference in the level of wellbeing of households in oil and non-oil producing rural communities of the study areas.

Test of differences in the level of wellbeing of households in oil and non-oil producing communities

The data was analysed for any difference in well-being between oil and non-oil producing communities of the study area using t-test. The result, as shown in Table 5, shows that there is no significant difference in the level of well-being for households in oil and non-oil producing communities ($t = 0.011$, $p = 0.991$).

Table 5: t-test showing differences in their well-being in the study area

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | df | p-value | Decision |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------|-----|---------|----------|
| Oil producing | 219 | 84.87 | 10.65 | 0.011 | 452 | 0.991 | NS |
| Non-oil Producing | 235 | 84.86 | 13.04 | | | | |

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that most of the respondents were in their economically active and productive years and earned a monthly income that was barely sufficient for their relatively large household size hence a high dependency ratio. The study also revealed that respondents with higher level of educational attainment had a high level of wellbeing. Efforts should therefore be made for schools to be properly equipped and skill acquisition centres built in the communities for improved wellbeing.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in level of wellbeing in oil and non-oil producing communities as majority of the households in both communities had a low level of wellbeing. There is therefore an urgent need to ensure proper monitoring of wellbeing in the study area. Material living conditions and quality of life are important dimensions of wellbeing that would help in identifying areas strengths and weaknesses of rural households. This may help in the design of intervention programmes for the benefit of both households and the environment.

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