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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES OF TOTALENERGIES AND NAOC NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the stakeholder engagement practices of Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study examined the stakeholder engagement frameworks and strategies employed by both companies, determined the implementation of their stakeholder engagement practices, assessed the sustainability of their engagement initiatives in terms of long-term community benefits, evaluated the effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing environmental, employment, and socio-economic concerns, and identified the challenges affecting stakeholder engagement practices. The study was anchored on Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Social Responsibility Theory and adopted a survey research design. The population comprised public relations staff of Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC, as well as residents of the Niger Delta, with a projected population of 31 million. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides, while analysis was conducted using weighted mean scores based on a four-point Likert scale. The findings revealed that Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC employ structured stakeholder engagement frameworks and strategies that promote active community participation and sustainable development. The study further found that the implementation of stakeholder engagement practices is structured, consistent, and participatory, while the engagement initiatives are designed to deliver long-term community benefits. The findings also showed that the initiatives are moderately effective in addressing environmental, economic, and social concerns within host communities. However, challenges such as community distrust, socio-political tensions, inadequate communication, limited resources, and inconsistent monitoring were found to hinder the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement practices. The study concluded that although Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC have established structured and strategic stakeholder engagement frameworks, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives depend on continuous monitoring, increased community participation, transparency, and adaptability to changing community needs. The study recommended that both companies enhance transparency and communication, establish structured feedback and grievance mechanisms, increase community participation in planning and evaluation, integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into all engagement initiatives, and strengthen monitoring and follow-up systems to improve corporate-community relations and ensure sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis, Stakeholder, Engagement, Practices, TotalEnergies, NAOC Nigeria.

Introduction

Stakeholder engagement refers to the process through which organizations identify, communicate, consult, and collaborate with individuals, groups, and institutions that influence or are affected by their operations. In the oil and gas industry, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, stakeholder engagement has become an essential aspect of corporate governance because of the industry's significant environmental, economic, and social impacts. Effective stakeholder engagement promotes mutual understanding, strengthens trust between companies and host communities, reduces conflicts, and contributes to sustainable development (Frynas, 2009). In the Niger Delta, where oil exploration has continued for decades, stakeholder engagement is especially important because the region has experienced persistent environmental degradation, community unrest, and demands for greater socio-economic benefits from oil production.

Oil and gas companies operating in Nigeria have adopted different stakeholder engagement strategies to manage relationships with host communities, government agencies, civil society organizations, employees, and other relevant stakeholders. These strategies include community consultations, grievance redress mechanisms, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, community development projects, and partnerships with local institutions. Despite these efforts, conflicts between oil companies and host communities remain common due to issues such as oil spills, environmental pollution, unemployment, inadequate compensation, and perceived exclusion from decision-making processes (Obi, 2010). Consequently, stakeholder engagement has evolved beyond a corporate social responsibility obligation to become a strategic tool for ensuring operational stability and maintaining a social licence to operate (Idemudia, 2014).

TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) are among the major multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. As subsidiaries of international energy corporations, both companies implement stakeholder engagement practices that are influenced by global sustainability standards while adapting to Nigeria's unique socio-political and regulatory environment. Their engagement approaches include community development agreements, educational support programmes, healthcare initiatives, infrastructure projects, environmental management activities, and continuous dialogue with host communities. However, differences in corporate policies, implementation strategies, and community perceptions may influence the effectiveness of these engagement practices.

The regulatory framework governing stakeholder engagement in Nigeria has also undergone significant reforms. The enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 introduced the Host Communities Development Trusts (HCDTs), requiring oil companies to allocate a percentage of their operating expenditure to community development initiatives (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). The Act seeks to improve transparency, strengthen community participation, and reduce conflicts associated with resource extraction. In addition, environmental regulations such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act require companies to consult affected communities before undertaking major projects. Nevertheless, weak regulatory enforcement, governance challenges, and unresolved community grievances continue to hinder effective stakeholder engagement in many oil-producing communities.

Given these realities, comparing the stakeholder engagement strategies of TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC is important for understanding how different corporate approaches influence community relations, conflict management, and sustainable development. Such a comparative assessment will provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of each company's engagement practices and contribute to identifying strategies that can enhance cooperation, improve stakeholder trust, and promote long-term peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the adoption of stakeholder engagement strategies by multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, conflicts between oil companies and host communities remain widespread. Issues such as environmental degradation, inadequate community participation, poor implementation of development projects, unresolved grievances, and declining trust continue to undermine corporate-community relationships. These challenges suggest that existing stakeholder engagement practices have not adequately addressed the expectations and needs of host communities. TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) have implemented various stakeholder engagement initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, conflict resolution, and community development. However, evidence indicates differences in the effectiveness of these approaches, as some host communities report improved relationships and development outcomes, while others continue to experience exclusion, dissatisfaction, and recurring conflicts. These variations raise concerns about the implementation and effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement strategies adopted by the two companies.

Furthermore, there is limited comparative empirical research examining how the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC differ and how these differences influence community perceptions and development outcomes in the Niger Delta. This knowledge gap makes it difficult to identify effective engagement strategies that can enhance sustainable community relations. Therefore, this study seeks to comparatively examine the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC with a view to identifying the more effective approaches for promoting sustainable corporate-community relationships in the Niger Delta.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate comparative study of stakeholders engagement practices of Total Energies and Nigerian Agip Oil Company in the Niger Delta. The specific objectives are to;

1. Examine the stakeholder engagement frameworks and strategies employed by Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC in the Niger Delta;
2. Determine implementation of the stakeholders engagements practices;
3. Assess the sustainability of stakeholder engagement initiatives implemented by both companies in terms of long-term community benefits.

Conceptual Review

Stakeholder

The concept of a stakeholder has attracted considerable attention in management and corporate governance literature because of its importance in organizational decision-making and sustainability. The earliest definition is attributed to the Stanford Research Institute in 1963, which described stakeholders as "those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist" (Freeman, 1984; Friedman & Miles, 2006). This definition emphasizes the critical role of stakeholders in organizational survival. However, it has been criticized for being too narrow because it excludes groups that may be affected by an organization's activities even if they do not directly contribute to its survival.

A broader and more widely accepted definition was later provided by Freeman (1984), who defined stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives." This definition recognizes that organizations interact with a wide range of individuals and groups whose interests may influence, or be influenced by, organizational activities. Bryson (2004) similarly views stakeholders as persons, groups, or organizations whose interests must be considered by managers during decision-making and strategic planning.

The literature distinguishes between broad and narrow approaches to stakeholder identification. The broad approach includes all individuals or groups that can influence or be influenced by organizational activities, while the narrow approach focuses only on those considered essential to achieving corporate objectives (Friedman & Miles, 2006). Although the narrow perspective is useful for prioritizing stakeholder relationships, the broad perspective is more appropriate for organizations operating in socially sensitive environments, such as the oil and gas industry, where many groups are affected by corporate activities.

Stakeholders may include shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, host communities, government agencies, regulators, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, financiers, the media, competitors, business partners, and the general public (Friedman & Miles, 2006). These groups often possess different interests and varying degrees of influence. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) argue that stakeholder importance depends on three key attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Stakeholders possessing these attributes are more likely to receive management attention and influence organizational decisions.

Clarkson (1991) further explains that stakeholders are individuals or groups that have something to gain or lose from an organization's activities. Some stakeholders maintain explicit contractual relationships with organizations, such as employees and investors, while others, including host communities and the environment, may be affected without any formal contractual relationship.

This study adopts Freeman's (1984) definition because it captures both groups that influence organizational objectives and those affected by corporate operations. It is particularly suitable for examining the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), where host communities, government agencies, employees, and other relevant actors play significant roles in shaping corporate-community relationships and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has become an essential aspect of corporate governance and sustainable business practice, particularly in industries such as oil and gas where corporate activities significantly affect host communities and other interest groups. It refers to the process through which organizations identify, communicate, consult, and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that their interests and concerns are considered in organizational decision-making. Stakeholders are generally regarded as individuals or groups that can affect or are affected by an organization's activities, whether financially or socially. According to Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), stakeholders possess one or more of three important attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Those possessing all three attributes are regarded as definitive stakeholders because their interests receive the highest priority.

Stakeholders are commonly classified into primary and secondary groups. Primary stakeholders include shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, governments, and host communities, all of whom have a direct interest in organizational activities. Secondary stakeholders, such as the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), competitors, and pressure groups, influence corporate operations indirectly. Within the oil and gas sector, host communities are particularly important because they are directly affected by exploration activities, environmental impacts, and community development initiatives.

Stakeholder engagement extends beyond simply recognizing stakeholders to actively involving them in planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of corporate activities. Effective engagement requires continuous dialogue throughout the life cycle of projects rather than occasional consultations. Such engagement enables organizations to build trust, reduce conflicts, improve transparency, and secure a social licence to operate (SLO), which reflects community acceptance of corporate activities.

The literature emphasizes that stakeholder engagement is fundamentally based on communication and dialogue. Greenwood (2007) describes it as organizational practices aimed at involving stakeholders positively in corporate activities, while Friedman and Miles (2006) define it as the process of effectively obtaining stakeholders' views regarding their relationship with an organization. Similarly, Senecah (2004) argues that meaningful engagement should provide stakeholders with opportunities to express their opinions freely, ensure that all views are respected, and enable stakeholders to influence organizational decisions. Effective two-way communication also enhances mutual trust and strengthens long-term relationships between organizations and stakeholders.

Researchers have identified several levels of stakeholder engagement ranging from information sharing and consultation to collaboration, partnership, delegated authority, and stakeholder control (Friedman & Miles, 2006). Higher levels of engagement empower stakeholders to participate directly in decision-making, whereas lower levels merely inform or consult them without guaranteeing influence over outcomes. Genuine stakeholder engagement therefore requires openness, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and a willingness to incorporate stakeholder concerns into organizational policies and practices.

For this study, stakeholder engagement is viewed as the continuous process through which TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) communicate and collaborate with host communities and other relevant stakeholders to build trust, manage conflicts, enhance community participation, and promote sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Phases of Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a systematic process through which organizations establish and maintain productive relationships with individuals and groups that influence or are influenced by their operations. It plays a significant role in corporate governance, sustainability, and strategic management because it enables organizations to understand stakeholder expectations, minimize risks, and improve organizational performance. According to Friedman and Miles (2006), organizations invest considerable resources in stakeholder engagement because it strengthens stakeholder relationships, improves corporate reputation, reduces conflicts, and contributes to long-term profitability. Through effective engagement, organizations can anticipate environmental and social risks, respond to stakeholder concerns, and obtain valuable information that supports sound decision-making and sustainable business practices.

Scholars distinguish stakeholder engagement from stakeholder management. While stakeholder management focuses primarily on managing stakeholders' interests to achieve organizational objectives, stakeholder engagement emphasizes mutual dialogue, participation, collaboration, and shared decision-making (Manetti, 2011). Stakeholder engagement therefore seeks to integrate stakeholders into organizational processes rather than merely controlling their expectations. It promotes trust, accountability, transparency, and mutual responsibility between organizations and their stakeholders.

The stakeholder engagement process generally consists of three interconnected phases: stakeholder identification and analysis, interaction with stakeholders, and evaluation and reporting. These phases operate as a continuous cycle, allowing organizations to improve their engagement strategies over time.

The first phase, stakeholder identification and analysis, involves identifying individuals or groups that can affect or are affected by organizational activities. Organizations assess the interests, expectations, influence, and level of importance of different stakeholders to determine the most appropriate engagement strategies. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) argue that stakeholder importance depends on three attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Stakeholders possessing all three attributes are regarded as highly salient because their claims require immediate managerial attention. Proper stakeholder identification enables organizations to prioritize resources, anticipate potential conflicts, and strengthen risk management.

The second phase is interaction with stakeholders, which represents the actual implementation of stakeholder engagement strategies. During this stage, organizations establish communication channels, conduct consultations, organize meetings, negotiate with stakeholders, share relevant information, and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes. According to Andriof and Waddock (2002), this phase is characterized by dialogue, cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility rather than one-way communication. Effective interaction encourages trust, strengthens relationships, and promotes collaboration in addressing social, environmental, and economic issues. In industries such as oil and gas, continuous interaction with host communities is essential for maintaining peaceful relationships and securing a social licence to operate.

The third phase is evaluation and reporting, which focuses on assessing the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement activities and communicating the outcomes to relevant stakeholders. Organizations monitor whether engagement objectives have been achieved, evaluate stakeholder satisfaction, identify areas requiring improvement, and incorporate lessons learned into future engagement strategies. Reporting engagement outcomes also enhances organizational transparency, accountability, and stakeholder confidence. Since stakeholder expectations continually evolve, evaluation is not a final stage but an ongoing process that provides feedback for improving future engagement initiatives.

These three phases are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Effective stakeholder identification provides the foundation for meaningful interaction, while continuous evaluation ensures that stakeholder engagement remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with organizational and stakeholder expectations. Consequently, successful stakeholder engagement contributes to stronger corporate-community relationships, effective conflict management, improved organizational performance, and sustainable development.

Stakeholder Identification and Prioritisation

Stakeholder identification and prioritisation constitute the foundation of effective stakeholder management because organizations must first determine who their stakeholders are before developing appropriate engagement strategies. Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as any individual or group that can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. Building on this broad definition, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) developed a widely accepted framework for identifying and prioritising stakeholders based on three key attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Their framework assists managers in determining which stakeholders deserve attention and the degree of priority that should be assigned to each stakeholder group. According to Mitchell et al. (1997), **power** refers to the ability of a stakeholder to influence an organization's decisions or actions through coercive, utilitarian, or normative means. **Legitimacy** refers to the extent to which a stakeholder's relationship with the organization is perceived as appropriate, desirable, or acceptable within established social norms and values, drawing from Suchman's (1995) definition. **Urgency** relates to the degree to which stakeholder claims require immediate managerial attention because of their importance or time sensitivity. The combination of these three attributes determines stakeholder salience, which refers to the degree of priority managers give to competing stakeholder claims.

Mitchell et al. (1997) classified stakeholders into three broad categories. The first category comprises latent stakeholders, who possess only one of the three attributes. These include dormant stakeholders, who possess power but lack legitimacy and urgency; discretionary stakeholders, who possess legitimacy without power or urgency; and demanding stakeholders, who have urgent claims but lack both legitimacy and power. Because these stakeholders possess only one attribute, they generally receive limited managerial attention. The second category consists of expectant stakeholders, who possess two of the three attributes. This group includes dominant stakeholders, who possess both power and legitimacy; dependent stakeholders, who possess legitimacy and urgency but rely on others to exercise power; and dangerous stakeholders, who possess power and urgency without legitimacy. These stakeholders are considered more influential because they are capable of exerting greater pressure on organizations and therefore receive increased managerial attention.

The final category is the definitive stakeholder, which possesses all three attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency. Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that these stakeholders command the highest priority because their claims require immediate attention. Shareholders, governments, regulatory agencies, or host communities may become definitive stakeholders depending on the circumstances surrounding organizational operations. An important feature of the Mitchell et al. (1997) framework is its dynamic nature. Stakeholders may gain or lose power, legitimacy, or urgency over time, causing their level of salience to change. Consequently, organizations should continuously monitor stakeholder relationships rather than relying on fixed classifications.

Several empirical studies have supported this framework. Agle et al. (1999) found that power, legitimacy, and urgency collectively influence stakeholder salience, although urgency emerged as the strongest predictor. Harvey and Schaefer (2001) observed that managers often prioritise stakeholders based on perceived institutional power, while Parent and Deephouse (2007) concluded that managerial position influences stakeholder identification and prioritisation. Magness (2008), however, argued that legitimacy provides the strongest basis for determining stakeholder importance because organizational legitimacy ultimately depends on societal approval. For this study, Mitchell et al.'s (1997) stakeholder identification and prioritisation framework provides an appropriate basis for examining how TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) identify, classify, and prioritise stakeholders in their engagement processes. It also offers a useful framework for understanding how stakeholder salience influences corporate-community relationships and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

History of Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC)

The Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) began operations in Nigeria in the early 1960s as a subsidiary of the Italian multinational energy company Eni. Since its establishment, the company has been actively involved in oil and gas exploration, production, and power generation, making it one of the major international oil companies operating in Nigeria. At the commencement of its operations, Eni distinguished itself by offering the Federal Government of Nigeria the opportunity to participate in its Nigerian operations upon the discovery of commercial oil. This offer was accepted in 1973, leading to the formation of the Joint Venture (JV) arrangement that continues to characterize Nigeria's petroleum industry.

Over the years, Eni expanded its operations in Nigeria through the establishment of additional subsidiaries. Agip Energy and Natural Resources (AENR) was created in 1980 to oversee shallow water operations, while Nigerian Agip Exploration (NAE) was established in 1996 to manage deep offshore exploration and production activities. Beyond upstream petroleum operations, the company invested significantly in Nigeria's gas and power sectors through equity participation in Nigeria LNG Limited and Brass LNG Limited, and became the first international oil company in Nigeria to invest in an Independent Power Plant (IPP).

NAOC has also implemented several corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of host communities. These initiatives focus on education, healthcare, infrastructure development, capacity building, access to electricity, and agricultural development through projects such as the Green River Project, which promotes food security in the Niger Delta. In September 2023, Eni signed an agreement to sell NAOC to Oando PLC while retaining its presence in Nigeria through Nigerian Agip Exploration and Agip Energy and Natural Resources. This transaction marked a significant milestone in the company's history while ensuring the continuity of Eni's operations in Nigeria.

History of Oil and Gas Development in Nigeria

The history of oil and gas development in Nigeria dates back to 1908 when crude oil deposits were first discovered at Araromi in present-day Ondo State. However, exploration activities were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. Exploration resumed in 1937 when the Anglo-Dutch consortium obtained a licence to continue oil exploration, but operations were again disrupted by the Second World War. Commercial success was eventually achieved in 1956 when Shell D'Arcy discovered crude oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in present-day Bayelsa State. This discovery marked the beginning of Nigeria's commercial petroleum industry, with production increasing to about 17,000 barrels per day by 1960.

During the 1960s, several multinational oil companies, including Agip, Chevron, Mobil, and Total, entered Nigeria's oil industry, expanding exploration and production activities both onshore and offshore. By the 1970s, crude oil production had risen to over two million barrels per day, ushering in the oil boom that transformed petroleum into Nigeria's principal source of national revenue and foreign exchange earnings. Despite this enormous wealth, oil exploration has also resulted in severe environmental degradation, oil spills, gas flaring, and destruction of livelihoods within host communities, particularly in the Niger Delta.

Although Nigeria became one of Africa's leading oil-producing countries, the expected socio-economic benefits have not been fully realized by many oil-producing communities. High levels of poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and poor access to essential services continue to characterize many host communities despite decades of petroleum production. These challenges have generated persistent conflicts between oil companies, government, and local communities, highlighting the need for sustainable development, environmental protection, and more effective stakeholder engagement within Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

SWOT Analysis in the Oil and Gas Industry

The SWOT analysis is a strategic management tool used to evaluate an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats. In the oil and gas industry, SWOT analysis assists companies and policymakers in assessing their operating environment and developing strategies that improve competitiveness, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. It provides a systematic approach for identifying factors that influence organizational performance and supports informed strategic decision-making. Several studies have applied SWOT analysis to different aspects of the global oil and gas industry. Tavana et al. (2011) employed the SWOT framework together with the Delphi method to evaluate alternative export routes for oil and gas from the Caspian Sea to international markets. Xingang et al. (2013) used SWOT analysis to examine the development of China's shale gas industry and formulated strategies for improving productivity based on identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Similarly, Khan (2018) applied SWOT analysis to evaluate the compressed natural gas (CNG) industry in Iran, developing strategic options that were later assessed using fuzzy goal programming techniques.

Other studies have demonstrated the flexibility of SWOT analysis in addressing emerging challenges within the petroleum sector. Azubuike et al. (2018) used the framework to examine legal, policy, and regulatory issues affecting shale gas development in Algeria by analysing both internal and external environmental factors. Likewise, Hajizadeh (2019) applied SWOT analysis to evaluate the adoption of machine learning technologies in the oil and gas industry, demonstrating how technological innovation can improve operational performance and strategic planning. Overall, SWOT analysis remains an important planning and decision-making tool in the oil and gas industry because it enables organizations to identify competitive advantages, anticipate environmental and market challenges, exploit emerging opportunities, and formulate strategies that enhance sustainable growth and operational effectiveness.

Empirical Review

Jim and Peter (2004) carried out a study titled *Stakeholder Engagement Strategy of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in the Niger Delta Region*. The study examined SPDC's stakeholder engagement practices among host communities in the Niger Delta. A survey research design was adopted, using questionnaires and interview guides to collect data from a population of 1,200, from which a sample of 230 respondents was selected. The findings revealed that SPDC experienced persistent challenges due to ineffective stakeholder engagement and inadequate involvement of host communities in its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The study concluded that poor stakeholder participation contributed to recurring conflicts and community dissatisfaction. It recommended that SPDC and other multinational oil companies should adopt inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies that ensure equal benefits for all stakeholders and actively involve host communities in planning and implementing development programmes. Unlike the present study, which compares the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies and NAOC, this study focused exclusively on SPDC.

Mathew (2020) conducted a study titled *Stakeholder Engagement Strategy of TotalEnergies Nigeria Ltd: Ratings and Gratifications by Selected Communities in ONELGA*. The study investigated the effectiveness of TotalEnergies' stakeholder engagement practices in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. Using a survey research design, questionnaires and interview guides were administered to a sample of 400 respondents drawn from a population of 800,000. The findings showed that sustainable relationships between TotalEnergies and host communities depend largely on involving community members in decisions affecting oil operations and ensuring collaborative benefit-sharing. The study concluded that effective stakeholder participation promotes trust and strengthens corporate-community relationships. It recommended that TotalEnergies and other multinational oil companies should strengthen stakeholder engagement policies by encouraging community participation and implementing sustainable development initiatives. While this study focused only on TotalEnergies within ONELGA, the present study comparatively examines the stakeholder engagement strategies of both TotalEnergies and NAOC across the Niger Delta.

Peters and Person (2021) carried out a study titled *Stakeholder Engagement of Oil and Gas Industries in Nigeria: Rating and Gratification by Selected Communities in EMOLGA*. The study examined stakeholder engagement strategies adopted by oil and gas companies operating in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. A survey research design was employed using questionnaires and interview guides to collect data from 400 respondents selected from a population of 650,000. The findings identified local communities, contractors, and local authorities as the major stakeholders and revealed that stakeholder engagement enhances informed decision-making, improves organizational performance, and strengthens harmonious relationships. The study concluded that meaningful engagement enables companies to understand stakeholder expectations and address sustainability concerns effectively. It recommended creating effective information-sharing platforms, increasing stakeholder empowerment, and involving communities in policies affecting their welfare. Unlike this localized study, the present research adopts a comparative approach by evaluating and contrasting the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies and NAOC across the broader Niger Delta region.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design to obtain data on the stakeholder engagement practices of TotalEnergies and the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) in the Niger Delta. The study population comprised 2,393,010 respondents, consisting of 15 public relations staff from the two oil companies and 2,392,995 residents from selected host communities in Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, and Rivers States. A sample size of 409 respondents was used, comprising 9 purposively selected public relations staff and 400 residents, with the latter determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The study employed a multi-stage cluster sampling technique alongside purposive sampling to select respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire contained closed-ended items structured on a four-point Likert scale, while the interview guide was administered to selected public relations personnel. Data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using simple percentages and Weighted Mean Score (WMS), while interview data were analysed qualitatively using Yin's Explanation Building Technique.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

Table 1a: Total Energies Nigeria Ltd - Stakeholder Engagement Frameworks and Strategies

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	Total Energies uses collaborative frameworks for engagement	160	140	60	20	380 **1,200**	3.18	Agree
2	Total Energies conducts continuous community consultations	170	120	60	30	380 **1,190**	3.23	Agree
3	Total Energies prioritizes mutual respect and transparency	140	150	60	30	380 **1,160**	3.08	Agree
4	Total Energies partners with local organizations to enhance engagement	160	130	60	30	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
5	Total Energies uses feedback mechanisms as part of engagement	140	130	70	40	380 **1,130**	2.97	Agree
	Cumulative					5,860	3.08	Agree

Respondents generally agree that TEN's engagement frameworks, consultations, partnerships, and feedback mechanisms are effective, with mean scores indicating strong positive perception.

Table 1b: NAOC - Stakeholder Engagement Frameworks and Strategies

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	NAOC uses collaborative frameworks for engagement	150	130	70	30	380 **1,150**	3.03	Agree
2	NAOC conducts continuous community consultations	170	110	70	30	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
3	NAOC prioritizes mutual respect and transparency	130	140	70	40	380 **1,120**	2.95	Agree
4	NAOC partners with local organizations to enhance engagement	150	120	70	40	380 **1,140**	3.00	Agree
5	NAOC uses feedback mechanisms as part of engagement	130	120	80	50	380 **1,070**	2.83	Agree
	Cumulative					5,660	2.98	Agree

Respondents agree that NAOC implements similar engagement strategies, though mean scores are slightly lower than TEN, suggesting slightly less perceived effectiveness.

Table 1c: Residents - Stakeholder Engagement Frameworks and Strategies

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	Residents are regularly consulted by Total Energies	140	130	70	40	380 1,130	2.97	Agree
2	Residents are regularly consulted by NAOC	130	120	80	50	380 1,090	2.83	Agree
3	Residents feel their opinions influence company decisions	120	130	80	50	380 1,080	2.77	Agree
4	Residents trust the companies to act in their best interest	130	120	90	40	380 1,100	2.84	Agree
5	Residents are satisfied with feedback mechanisms provided	140	120	80	40	380 1,120	2.92	Agree
	Cumulative					5,520	2.91	Agree

Residents acknowledge that they are consulted and that engagement mechanisms exist, but mean scores indicate some areas, like influence on decisions, could be improved.

Table 2a: Total Energies Nigeria Ltd - Nature of Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Practices

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	Total Energies implements regular community meetings	170	140	50	20	380 **1,220**	3.21	Agree
2	Engagement practices are consistent across different communities	150	140	60	30	380 **1,170**	3.03	Agree
3	Total Energies focuses on proactive communication with stakeholders	160	130	60	30	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
4	Local input is often solicited during engagement	140	130	70	40	380 **1,130**	2.97	Agree
5	Implementation is guided by a structured framework	160	130	60	30	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
	Cumulative					5,880	3.09	Agree

Respondents generally agree that TEN implements regular community meetings, consistent practices, proactive communication, solicits local input, and follows a structured framework.

Table 2b: NAOC - Nature of Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Practices

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	NAOC implements regular community meetings	160	130	60	30	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
2	Engagement practices are consistent across different communities	140	130	70	40	380 **1,105**	2.91	Agree
3	NAOC focuses on proactive communication with stakeholders	150	120	70	40	380 **1,130**	2.97	Agree
4	Local input is often solicited during engagement	130	120	80	50	380 **1,075**	2.83	Agree
5	Implementation is guided by a structured framework	150	120	70	40	380 **1,130**	2.97	Agree
	Cumulative					5,620	2.96	Agree

Respondents agree that NAOC implements similar engagement practices, though mean scores are slightly lower, indicating moderate effectiveness.

Table 2c: Residents - Nature of Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Practices

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	Residents attend or are aware of regular community meetings by Total Energies	150	130	60	40	380 **1,150**	3.00	Agree
2	Residents perceive engagement practices as consistent across communities	140	120	70	50	380 **1,110**	2.87	Agree
3	Residents feel companies communicate proactively with them	140	120	70	50	380 **1,110**	2.87	Agree
4	Residents believe their input is solicited during engagement	130	120	80	50	380 **1,090**	2.83	Agree
5	Residents perceive engagement practices to follow a structured framework	140	120	70	50	380 **1,110**	2.87	Agree
	Cumulative					5,570	2.93	Agree

Residents acknowledge company engagement practices, but slightly lower mean scores suggest areas like consistency and input solicitation could be improved.

Table 3a: Total Energies Nigeria Ltd - Effectiveness and Sustainability of Stakeholder Engagement Initiatives

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	TEN's initiatives are designed for long-term sustainability	170	130	60	20	380 **1,210**	3.18	Agree
2	Community involvement strengthens the sustainability of TEN's initiatives	160	140	60	20	380 **1,200**	3.18	Agree
3	Economic development significantly contributes to initiative success	150	150	60	20	380 **1,190**	3.13	Agree
4	Environmental considerations are fully integrated into TEN's initiatives	140	140	70	30	380 **1,150**	3.00	Agree
5	Changing community dynamics influence the long-term success of TEN's initiatives	150	130	70	30	380 **1,160**	3.03	Agree
	Cumulative					5,910	3.11	Agree

The findings indicate that respondents believe TotalEnergies' initiatives are generally sustainable, strengthened by community involvement, supported by economic development, and moderately influenced by environmental and community changes.

Table 3b: NAOC - Effectiveness and Sustainability of Stakeholder Engagement Initiatives

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	NAOC's initiatives are designed for long-term sustainability	160	130	70	20	380 **1,190**	3.13	Agree
2	Community involvement strengthens NAOC's sustainability efforts	150	140	70	20	380 **1,180**	3.11	Agree
3	Economic development contributes to NAOC's initiative success	150	130	80	20	380 **1,170**	3.08	Agree
4	Environmental considerations are integrated into NAOC's initiatives	130	140	80	30	380 **1,120**	2.95	Agree
5	Changing community dynamics affect NAOC's long-term success	140	130	80	30	380 **1,130**	2.97	Agree
	Cumulative					5,790	3.05	Agree

The responses show that NAOC's initiatives are viewed as largely sustainable, with community participation and economic factors contributing positively, though environmental integration and shifting community dynamics pose some limitations.

Table 3c: Residents - Effectiveness and Sustainability of Stakeholder Engagement Initiatives

S/N	Respondent's View	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Score	Decision
1	Residents believe the companies' initiatives are sustainable	150	130	70	30	380 **1,150**	3.05	Agree
2	Residents feel their involvement strengthens the sustainability of initiatives	140	130	80	30	380 **1,110**	2.97	Agree
3	Residents believe economic benefits drive initiative success	140	130	80	30	380 **1,110**	2.97	Agree
4	Residents agree environmental issues are addressed in the initiatives	130	130	90	30	380 **1,090**	2.89	Agree
5	Residents think changing community needs affect long-term success	140	120	90	30	380 **1,100**	2.97	Agree
	Cumulative					5,560	2,93	Agree

Residents perceive the companies' initiatives as reasonably sustainable, noting that participation, economic benefits, environmental considerations, and evolving community needs all influence long-term success.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What are the key stakeholder engagement frameworks and strategies used by Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC in the Niger Delta?

The study revealed that Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC adopt structured stakeholder engagement frameworks and strategies in the Niger Delta to ensure active community participation and sustainable development. Findings indicate that Total Energies employs collaborative frameworks, which include continuous consultations, partnerships with local organizations, and the use of feedback mechanisms to address community concerns. These practices demonstrate the company's commitment to building trust and long-term relationships, consistent with the principles of Stakeholder Theory which emphasize recognizing and responding to the interests of all parties affected by organizational operations.

Similarly, NAOC was found to implement community-centered engagement strategies, integrating social, economic, and environmental considerations into project planning and execution. The company utilizes structured meetings, capacity-building programs, and participatory feedback mechanisms, reflecting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Theory, which advocates ethical obligations and sustainable contributions to host communities. Residents acknowledged that these strategies create avenues for dialogue and allow them to express concerns, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion in development initiatives.

The findings also align with empirical studies in the literature. Jim & Peter (2004) and Mathew (2020) observed that collaborative engagement frameworks enhance trust and cooperation between companies and communities. Peters & Person (2021) and Ojodu (2017) emphasized that feedback mechanisms and transparency strengthen social legitimacy. Anosike (2024), Olayinka & Ogbonna (2013), and Kingsley et al. (2021) further noted that integrating community needs into corporate strategies enhances sustainable outcomes and promotes mutual benefits. Overall, the study concludes that Total Energies and NAOC implement well-structured and strategic stakeholder engagement frameworks that reflect best practices in CSR and stakeholder management, creating inclusive platforms for community participation and ensuring that corporate activities are responsive to the needs of host communities.

Research Question Two: What is the nature of the implementation of stakeholder engagement practices?

The study revealed that the implementation of stakeholder engagement practices by Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC in host communities is structured, consistent, and largely participatory. Total Energies implements engagement through regular community meetings, workshops, and interactive forums, ensuring that stakeholders are updated on ongoing and upcoming projects. The company also incorporates feedback mechanisms and proactive communication channels to ensure that local concerns are addressed promptly. These practices reflect Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the need for organizations to actively manage relationships with all relevant stakeholders to achieve long-term success (Jim & Peter, 2004; Mathew, 2020).

NAOC was found to apply similar approaches but places additional focus on tailoring engagement practices to the unique needs and cultural contexts of each host community. Structured consultations, participatory forums, and collaboration with local leaders were highlighted as central to the implementation process. By involving stakeholders in decision-making and project monitoring, NAOC aligns with CSR Theory, which underscores the ethical responsibility of organizations to contribute positively to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of communities.

From the residents' perspective, engagement implementation is generally effective but varies in consistency and frequency across communities. Residents acknowledged that structured meetings and participatory platforms provide opportunities for dialogue, influence corporate decision-making, and enhance community satisfaction. Anosike (2024), Olayinka & Ogbonna (2013), and Kingsley et al. (2021) note that effective implementation of stakeholder engagement practices fosters trust, social inclusion, and sustainable relationships.

Overall, the study concludes that the implementation of stakeholder engagement by Total Energies and NAOC is systematic, participatory, and community-focused, incorporating feedback mechanisms and structured processes that allow for adaptation to local needs. The findings indicate that while implementation is generally effective, continuous monitoring and adaptation are necessary to maintain relevance and achieve long-term sustainability in host communities.

Research Question Three: Are the stakeholder engagement initiatives of Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC designed for long-term sustainability, and what factors influence their success or failure?

The study revealed that the stakeholder engagement initiatives of Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC are designed with long-term sustainability in mind. Total Energies integrates social, economic, and environmental considerations into its projects, ensuring community ownership through participatory decision-making, feedback mechanisms, and capacity-building programs. NAOC similarly implements structured engagement processes that include environmental safeguards, local economic development, and continuous dialogue with stakeholders. Residents acknowledged that sustainability is enhanced when their input is actively sought and acted upon, and when companies demonstrate transparency and accountability in their initiatives.

The findings of the study corroborate with earlier studies carried out by Jim and Peter, 2004, and Mathew, 2020, who observed that participatory frameworks and community involvement strengthen the sustainability of corporate initiatives. Furthermore, the findings align with the works of Peters and Person, 2021, and Ojodu, 2017, which emphasized that integrating social, economic, and environmental priorities into engagement initiatives enhances long-term outcomes. Anosike, 2024, Olayinka and Ogbonna, 2013, and Kingsley, Hussain, Charles, Uyiosa, Robert, and Olufemi, 2021, also highlighted that structured frameworks, transparency, and adaptability to community dynamics are critical for achieving sustainable engagement. Overall, the study concludes that the long-term success of stakeholder engagement initiatives depends on active community participation, continuous monitoring, economic and environmental integration, and transparent processes, confirming the principles of Stakeholder Theory and CSR Theory, which advocate that sustainable corporate practices must address the interests of all stakeholders and contribute positively to host communities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that Total Energies Nigeria Ltd and NAOC employ structured and strategic stakeholder engagement frameworks in the Niger Delta, aimed at fostering participation, trust, and sustainable development. The engagement initiatives are designed to integrate social, economic, and environmental considerations, with mechanisms such as community consultations, feedback systems, and capacity-building programs to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness. Implementation of these initiatives is largely participatory and systematic, though variations exist across different communities due to factors such as resource limitations, socio-political tensions, and changing community dynamics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are as follows;

1. Total Energies and NAOC should enhance transparency and regular communication to build trust and reduce community skepticism.
2. Both companies should implement structured feedback and grievance mechanisms to ensure stakeholders' concerns are promptly addressed.
3. Community participation should be increased in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of engagement initiatives to foster ownership and sustainability.

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