

**FAITH AMID EXTRACTION: A HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF ANGLICAN
ENGAGEMENT WITH ENVIROMENTAL AND COMMUNITY CRISIS IN IZOMBE,
IMO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study reconstructed the historical and theological engagement of the Anglican Church in Izombe, Imo State, within the context of prolonged environmental degradation resulting from oil extraction in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Oil exploration activities across the Niger Delta have generated severe ecological damage, including oil spills, gas flaring, soil infertility, and water contamination, leading to socio-economic dislocation and communal unrest (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009; Onuoha, 2008). Despite extensive scholarship on environmental degradation and conflict in the region, the role of local faith institutions remains under-examined. Using a qualitative historical methodology, this study drew on archival church records, oral histories, semi-structured interviews with clergy and laity, and community-based narratives to reconstruct the Anglican Church's evolving response to environmental and social disruption in Izombe. The research was framed by liberation theology and Christian environmental ethics, emphasizing stewardship, justice, and community resilience (Gutiérrez, 1988; Nash, 1990). Findings indicated that the Anglican Church has functioned as a moral voice, pastoral refuge, and community development actor, though its advocacy has often been constrained by political pressures and institutional limitations. The study contributes to scholarship on religion and ecology by foregrounding the agency of local churches in contexts of extractive capitalism. It argued that faith communities, while not primary political actors, play a critical role in shaping environmental consciousness, social solidarity, and grassroots responses to ecological crisis in oil-producing communities.

Keywords: Anglican Church; Environmental degradation; Oil extraction; Niger Delta; Faith-based environmental engagement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Niger Delta in 1956 marked a turning point in Nigeria's economic history. Since then, petroleum extraction has generated enormous national revenue, yet it has simultaneously produced profound ecological degradation and socio-economic dislocation in host communities. Oil-producing communities in southern Nigeria have experienced oil spills, gas flaring, water contamination, soil infertility, and biodiversity loss, all of which have significantly affected agriculture, fishing, and traditional livelihoods (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009; Onuoha, 2008). While much attention has focused on states such as Rivers and Bayelsa, communities in Imo State particularly Izombe have also faced sustained environmental and communal crises linked to extractive activities. The Niger Delta, which comprises several oil-producing states including Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Akwa Ibom, and parts of Imo State, remains one of the most environmentally degraded regions in the world due to prolonged petroleum extraction. Estimates suggest that millions of barrels of crude oil have been spilled across the region over decades of exploration and production, contaminating rivers, mangroves, and farmlands (Farmer, 2019). These ecological disruptions have directly affected the livelihoods of rural communities whose economies historically depended on fishing, farming, and forest resources.

The resulting loss of economic sustainability has contributed to social conflict, youth militancy, community protests, and strained relations between host communities, multinational oil corporations, and the Nigerian state. Izombe, located in Imo State within the Niger Delta basin, has witnessed oil-related environmental challenges that have disrupted community health, economic stability, and social cohesion. Reports of polluted water sources, declining crop yields, and periodic community unrest illustrate the multi-dimensional impact of extraction activities. Beyond environmental damage, oil exploration has intensified socio-political tensions, youth militancy, and disputes over compensation and resource control. Despite hosting petroleum infrastructure and contributing to national revenue, Izombe remains characterized by underdevelopment, infrastructural deficits, and environmental concerns associated with oil extraction. Community leaders have repeatedly lamented the lack of basic amenities such as roads, electricity, and social infrastructure despite the community's status as an oil-bearing area (EnviroNews Nigeria, 2025). Such disparities have reinforced the perception that oil wealth benefits external actors multinational corporations and the federal government while local communities bear the environmental costs. Environmental degradation associated with oil production has also intensified local grievances in Izombe. Community protests have occasionally emerged in response to perceived neglect by oil companies and government agencies. For example, youth groups in the community have accused oil firms operating in the area of environmental pollution, inadequate community development, and failure to conduct proper environmental impact assessments before resuming operations (Daily Trust, 2019).

These grievances illustrate broader structural tensions that characterize the political ecology of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. Amid these complex socio-environmental challenges, religious institutions have played an important role in shaping community responses to environmental

crises. Christianity, particularly Anglicanism, is deeply rooted in southeastern Nigeria, where churches function not only as spiritual institutions but also as social, moral, and political actors within local communities. Churches often serve as centers for moral discourse, social mobilization, education, and advocacy. Consequently, the response of Christian institutions to environmental degradation has become an important dimension of contemporary theological and historical scholarship. In many parts of the Niger Delta, Christian leaders have increasingly framed environmental degradation as a moral and theological issue rather than merely a technical or economic problem. Eco-theological perspectives emphasize that the Christian doctrine of creation implies a moral responsibility for environmental stewardship. According to Idialu (2021), ecological destruction in the Niger Delta reflects both human greed and systemic injustice, and the church has a responsibility to promote environmental awareness, justice, and protection of the natural world. Such perspectives draw upon biblical teachings that emphasize humanity's responsibility to care for the earth as part of God's creation. Beyond theological reflection, churches have also been involved in advocacy for environmental justice and human rights in oil-producing regions.

Clergy and church organizations have participated in public campaigns, community mediation efforts, and advocacy initiatives aimed at addressing environmental injustices in the Niger Delta. For instance, religious leaders have urged churches to take a more active role in defending communities affected by pollution, emphasizing that Christian ministry must engage issues of human rights and environmental justice (Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice, 2025). This emerging form of faith-based environmental activism reflects the growing intersection between religion, environmental ethics, and social justice. Christian theological traditions particularly Anglican ecclesiology emphasize stewardship of creation, justice, and

pastoral care. Globally, the Anglican Communion has increasingly addressed environmental ethics and ecological justice. However, the extent to which these theological commitments translate into concrete engagement within local oil-producing communities remains underexplored. This study therefore situates the Anglican Church in Izombe within the broader discourse on faith-based environmental engagement, seeking to reconstruct historically how the Church has responded to the environmental and community crisis associated with oil extraction. Within the Anglican tradition specifically, the Church has historically maintained a strong presence in southeastern Nigeria through dioceses, parishes, schools, and mission institutions. The Anglican Church in Nigeria has played a major role in shaping moral discourse and community leadership in many rural communities. Its influence extends beyond religious life into education, healthcare, social welfare, and community development initiatives. As a result, Anglican clergy and lay leaders often occupy important positions in local community structures. However, despite the church's social influence, the extent and nature of Anglican engagement with environmental crises in specific oil-producing communities remain underexplored in historical scholarship.

While broader studies have examined religion and environmental justice in the Niger Delta, there is limited research focusing specifically on the historical role of Anglican institutions within particular communities such as Izombe. Most existing literature addresses environmental degradation, political activism, or corporate responsibility rather than the historical agency of local churches. This research therefore seeks to address this gap by reconstructing the historical engagement of the Anglican Church with the environmental and community crisis in Izombe from a church historical perspective. Church history, as a discipline, examines how Christian institutions and leaders respond to social challenges within particular historical contexts.

Through archival records, oral histories, parish documents, and community narratives, a church historical approach can illuminate how faith communities interpret and respond to environmental crises over time. The study is particularly important because environmental crises often reshape religious practice, theology, and community relations. In contexts of ecological disaster and socio-economic marginalization, churches frequently become spaces for moral reflection, community solidarity, and advocacy for justice. Understanding how the Anglican Church in Izombe has historically engaged issues such as environmental degradation, community conflict, and corporate accountability will contribute to broader discussions about religion and environmental justice in Africa.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the emerging field of African eco-theology, which seeks to interpret environmental challenges through theological and ethical frameworks rooted in African Christian experience. By examining the lived experiences of Anglican communities in an oil-producing environment, this research provides insight into how theological ideas about stewardship, justice, and creation care are interpreted within local contexts. Finally, this research is significant because it bridges three interdisciplinary fields: church history, environmental studies, and African religious studies. By reconstructing the historical interaction between the Anglican Church and the environmental crisis in Izombe, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how faith communities navigate the tensions between economic development, environmental sustainability, and social justice in resource-rich regions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Oil extraction in the Niger Delta has generated extensive academic literature examining environmental degradation, corporate responsibility, resource control conflicts, and state failure. Scholars have documented oil spills, gas flaring, deforestation, and aquatic ecosystem destruction, linking these to poverty, health crises, and social instability (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009; Onuoha, 2008). Despite this growing body of scholarship, significant gaps remain in understanding how local institutions mediate these crises at the grassroots level. One such underexplored institution is the Church. Despite decades of oil production in Nigeria's Niger Delta, the region continues to experience severe environmental degradation and socio-economic inequality. Communities located in oil-producing areas frequently suffer from polluted water systems, contaminated farmlands, declining fisheries, and increased health risks associated with petroleum extraction. These environmental challenges have generated persistent tensions between host communities, multinational oil corporations, and government authorities. Scholars have widely documented the ecological devastation and socio-economic marginalization associated with oil extraction in the Niger Delta (Idialu, 2021).

Environmental degradation in the region has been linked to a range of structural factors including weak regulatory enforcement, inadequate environmental monitoring, corporate negligence, and political corruption. Oil spills, gas flaring, and pipeline leakages continue to contaminate ecosystems and disrupt local livelihoods. The consequences of these environmental hazards extend beyond ecological damage to include poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and social instability within host communities. Within this broader regional context, Izombe community in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State represents a microcosm of the environmental and developmental challenges associated with oil extraction.

Although the community hosts oil facilities and contributes to Nigeria's petroleum economy, it remains underdeveloped and affected by environmental concerns related to oil production. Community members have repeatedly expressed frustration over environmental pollution, lack of infrastructure, and perceived neglect by oil companies and government authorities (Daily Trust, 2019; EnviroNews Nigeria, 2025). The resulting tensions have occasionally manifested in protests, community disputes, and youth agitation directed at oil companies operating in the area. These conflicts reflect a broader pattern observed throughout the Niger Delta, where resource extraction often produces social instability rather than local development. Scholars have described this phenomenon as the "resource curse," where communities rich in natural resources experience environmental damage and economic marginalization instead of prosperity. While much of the existing literature on the Niger Delta focuses on environmental science, political economy, and conflict studies, relatively little attention has been given to the role of religious institutions in shaping community responses to environmental crises. This gap is particularly significant given the central role that churches play in Nigerian society. In many rural communities, churches function as key institutions for social organization, moral guidance, and community leadership.

Some scholars have begun to explore the relationship between Christianity and environmental responsibility within the framework of eco-theology. According to Idialu (2021), the church has a theological obligation to promote environmental stewardship and advocate for policies that protect both people and the natural environment. Eco-theological scholarship emphasizes that environmental degradation is not merely a technical problem but also a moral issue that requires ethical reflection and social action. Similarly, recent faith-based advocacy initiatives have called on churches to become more actively involved in addressing environmental injustices in the

Niger Delta. Religious leaders have urged Christian communities to reclaim their prophetic role by defending human rights and confronting ecological destruction in oil-producing areas (Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice, 2025). These developments suggest that churches may serve as important actors in environmental advocacy and community empowerment. Religious institutions, particularly the Anglican Church, occupy a central place in community life in southeastern Nigeria. Churches function not only as worship centers but also as sites of education, socialization, moral formation, and conflict mediation. Historically, the Anglican Church has contributed to community development through schools, healthcare services, and social advocacy. However, the degree to which the Church in Izombe has engaged specifically with environmental degradation linked to oil extraction remains insufficiently documented.

Existing research on religion and ecology tends to focus on global theological discourse, denominational statements, or high-profile environmental activism. Less attention has been paid to localized historical reconstructions of how parish-level churches respond to ecological crises in extractive economies. In the Niger Delta context, scholarship has largely emphasized militant resistance, political mobilization, and corporate-state-community relations. Consequently, the role of faith communities as mediators, advocates, or moral interpreters of environmental suffering is often overlooked. However, despite these emerging discussions, there remains a significant gap in historical scholarship concerning how specific church institutions have engaged environmental crises at the local level. In particular, the historical role of the Anglican Church in addressing environmental and social challenges in Izombe has not been systematically studied. Existing literature tends to focus on broader regional dynamics rather than localized church-community interactions. Most importantly, the Anglican Church is one of the most

influential Christian traditions in southeastern Nigeria, yet its historical engagement with environmental justice issues has received limited scholarly attention. Studies of Nigerian church history often focus on missionary expansion, theological development, or church growth rather than environmental activism or community advocacy. Furthermore, the Anglican Church's engagement may be constrained by structural and contextual factors. These include political sensitivities surrounding oil revenue, fear of confrontation with powerful actors, internal ecclesiastical priorities, and resource limitations. It remains unclear whether the Church's response in Izombe has been primarily pastoral (providing spiritual comfort), developmental (offering social services), prophetic (public advocacy), or accommodative (maintaining neutrality).

Without systematic historical and empirical analysis, assessments of the Church's role remain speculative. Another dimension of the problem concerns theological praxis. Anglican theology affirms stewardship of creation and social justice, yet the translation of doctrine into practice in environmentally distressed communities requires examination. Has the Church incorporated environmental themes into preaching, teaching, and liturgy? Has it organized community sensitization programs on ecological responsibility? Has it collaborated with civil society organizations or governmental agencies? Or has it remained largely silent on oil-related environmental issues? This gap in scholarship raises several important questions. How has the Anglican Church in Izombe responded to environmental degradation associated with oil extraction? To what extent has the church engaged issues of environmental justice, community development, or corporate accountability? What theological perspectives have shaped the church's response to ecological crises? And how have Anglican clergy and lay members interpreted the relationship between faith, environmental stewardship, and social justice?

Another problem lies in the absence of documented historical narratives that capture the lived experiences of church communities within oil-producing environments. Many accounts of the Niger Delta crisis are framed primarily through political or economic lenses, leaving the religious dimension underrepresented. Yet religion plays a central role in shaping the moral frameworks through which communities interpret environmental suffering and social injustice.

Without a systematic historical reconstruction of Anglican engagement in Izombe, it remains difficult to assess the church's contribution to community resilience, environmental awareness, or social advocacy. This lack of documentation also limits the development of contextually relevant eco-theological perspectives that draw upon local Christian experiences. The problem this study addressed was thus twofold. First, there was a scholarly gap concerning the historical and empirical analysis of the Anglican Church's engagement with oil-induced environmental crises in Izombe. Second, there was a practical gap in understanding how faith institutions can effectively contribute to environmental justice and community resilience within extractive contexts. Without such analysis, theological commitments to stewardship and justice risk remaining abstract ideals disconnected from lived realities. This study addressed this gap by reconstructing the historical interaction between the Anglican Church and the environmental challenges associated with oil extraction in Izombe. By examining archival materials, oral testimonies, and church records, the research will provide a nuanced understanding of how Anglican communities have interpreted and responded to environmental crises over time. Additionally, the absence of documented oral histories and archival records risks erasing community memory of the Church's involvement. As older clergy and lay leaders retire or pass on, valuable experiential knowledge may be lost. A historical reconstruction is therefore necessary to preserve institutional memory and critically evaluate patterns of engagement over

time. Through this investigation, the study aims to contribute to three areas of scholarship: church history, environmental justice studies, and African eco-theology. It will also provide insights into how faith-based institutions can contribute to community resilience and environmental stewardship in resource-rich but environmentally vulnerable regions.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this work were to:

1. trace the presence and development of the Anglican Church in Izombe, Imo State;
2. examine the environmental and socio-economic impacts of oil extraction on the Izombe community;
3. analyze the nature and extent of the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental and community crises;
4. assess theological motivations underlying the Church's response to ecological degradation;
5. evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of the Church's interventions in promoting environmental justice and community resilience.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How did the Anglican Church become established and develop in Izombe, Imo State?
2. What environmental and socio-economic challenges has oil extraction created in Izombe?
3. In what ways has the Anglican Church engaged with the environmental and community crisis?

4. What theological and ecclesiological principles inform the Church's response to ecological degradation?
5. How effective have the Church's interventions been in addressing environmental degradation and social instability?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study examined the historical engagement of the Anglican Church with the environmental and socio-economic crisis generated by oil exploration and extraction in Izombe, a community located in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The research adopted a church historical approach to reconstruct the role played by Anglican ecclesiastical structures, clergy, and laity in responding to the ecological degradation, social conflict, and economic dislocation associated with petroleum exploitation in the area. The study was geographically limited to Izombe and its surrounding oil-producing communities in Oguta Local Government Area. Izombe has experienced persistent environmental challenges such as oil spills, gas flaring, land degradation, water contamination, and declining agricultural productivity conditions widely documented across the Niger Delta (Obi, 2014; Watts, 2008). These environmental disruptions have also generated socio-economic instability, including youth militancy, poverty, and public health crises (Ojatorotu & Okeke-Uzodike, 2006). Within this context, churches have often emerged as key moral voices and social institutions mediating between communities, corporations, and the state (Kalu, 2008).

Chronologically, the study focused primarily on the period from the early 1970s to 2023. The early 1970s mark the expansion of commercial oil production in many parts of the Niger Delta following Nigeria's post-civil war oil boom (Watts, 2008). This period also corresponded with the growing presence and institutional consolidation of the Anglican Church in rural Imo State. The study traced how Anglican parishes, diocesan leadership, and church-based organizations have interpreted and responded to environmental degradation, community grievances, and corporate practices associated with oil extraction over this period. Thematically, the research investigated three major dimensions of Anglican engagement: 1 Prophetic and Ethical Response: The study analyzed sermons, pastoral letters, synod resolutions, and church publications to examine how Anglican leaders articulated theological and moral critiques of environmental injustice and exploitation in Izombe. Christian ecological ethics and social teachings often frame environmental degradation as both a moral and spiritual crisis (Conradie, 2011). 2 Community Mediation and Advocacy: The research explored the role of Anglican clergy and lay leaders in mediating conflicts between oil companies, government agencies, and local communities. Churches in the Niger Delta have frequently acted as intermediaries advocating for peace, environmental accountability, and community development (Ikelegbe, 2013). 3 Social and Humanitarian Interventions: The study also examined church-led initiatives aimed at alleviating the socio-economic consequences of environmental degradation. These may include educational programs, relief efforts following oil spills, youth empowerment initiatives, and advocacy for sustainable livelihoods.

Methodologically, the research employed historical reconstruction using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include parish records, diocesan archives, church synod proceedings, pastoral letters, oral histories from clergy and community elders, and local church

documents. Secondary sources include scholarly works on Niger Delta environmental politics, African Christianity, and ecological theology. While the study acknowledged the broader involvement of other Christian denominations and religious actors in the Niger Delta, its analytical focus remains specifically on the Anglican Church, particularly the diocesan structures overseeing Izombe. The study does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of all religious responses to the Niger Delta crisis but rather seeks to contribute to scholarship by illuminating the historical role of one major ecclesiastical tradition in shaping community responses to environmental injustice. By situating Anglican engagement within the broader context of environmental degradation, resource politics, and Christian social ethics, this study contributes to three scholarly fields: church history, African Christianity, and religion and ecology. It also provides historical insight into how faith communities negotiate moral responsibility and social engagement within extractive economies.

1.6 Significance of the Study

First, this study contributes to scholarship on religion and ecology by foregrounding the role of a local Anglican community within an oil-producing region. While global discussions on environmental theology are expanding, localized empirical studies remain limited. By examining Izombe as a case study, this research bridges the gap between abstract theological discourse and lived environmental realities. It demonstrates how faith traditions are interpreted and enacted within contexts of ecological crisis. The work enriches church historiography in southeastern Nigeria. Much historical writing on the Anglican Church has concentrated on missionary expansion, ecclesiastical structures, and educational achievements. Less attention has been

devoted to the Church's engagement with environmental justice and extractive economies. By reconstructing historical responses in Izombe, this research expands the scope of Anglican historical studies to include ecological and socio-political dimensions.

The research offers practical relevance for faith leaders and policymakers. Understanding how the Anglican Church has responded to environmental degradation provides insights into strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for more effective engagement. Policymakers and civil society actors may benefit from recognizing religious institutions as potential partners in environmental education, conflict mediation, and community mobilization. The study contributes to broader discussions on sustainable development in the Niger Delta. Environmental degradation is not solely a technical or economic issue; it is also moral, cultural, and spiritual. By analyzing how religious narratives shape community resilience and environmental awareness, the study highlights the importance of integrating ethical and faith-based perspectives into development strategies. Finally, this thesis preserves community memory and amplifies local voices. Through oral histories and archival reconstruction, it documents experiences that might otherwise remain unrecorded. In doing so, it affirms the agency of local faith communities in confronting ecological injustice and contributes to ongoing efforts toward environmental sustainability, social justice, and theological praxis in oil-producing regions.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

For conceptual clarity, the following key terms are operationally defined as they are used in this study.

1 Anglican Church

The Anglican Church refers to Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, particularly diocesan and parish structures operating within Imo State. It includes clergy, bishops, synods, lay organizations, and affiliated ministries that collectively shape ecclesiastical engagement with social issues (Kalu, 2008).

2 Environmental Crisis

Environmental crisis refers to the ecological degradation associated with oil exploration and production in Izombe, including oil spills, gas flaring, soil contamination, deforestation, and water pollution that negatively affect human health, agriculture, and local ecosystems (UNEP, 2011; Watts, 2008).

3 Community Crisis

Community crisis denotes the social, economic, and political disruptions experienced by local populations as a consequence of oil extraction. These include unemployment, youth militancy, displacement, weakened traditional institutions, and conflicts between communities, corporations, and the state (Obi, 2014).

4 Church Historical Reconstruction

Church historical reconstruction refers to the scholarly process of interpreting historical records, oral testimonies, and ecclesiastical documents to reconstruct the role and actions of the church within a particular historical context. It involves analyzing both institutional and grassroots church activities within broader socio-political developments.

5 Faith-Based Engagement

Faith-based engagement refers to actions taken by religious institutions or leaders motivated by theological beliefs, moral teachings, or pastoral responsibilities aimed at addressing social, environmental, or political challenges (Conradie, 2011).

6 Oil Extraction

Oil extraction refers to the industrial processes of exploration, drilling, production, and transportation of petroleum resources carried out by multinational oil companies and the Nigerian state within the Niger Delta region (Watts, 2008).

7 Niger Delta

The Niger Delta is the oil-rich region in southern Nigeria characterized by extensive petroleum production and significant environmental degradation. It is widely studied as a major site of resource conflict and ecological injustice (Ikelegbe, 2013).

8 Ecological Justice

Ecological justice refers to ethical and theological perspectives that advocate fairness in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, emphasizing the protection of ecosystems and the rights of communities affected by environmental exploitation (Conradie, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Environmental Crisis

The concept of environmental crisis refers to a situation in which environmental degradation reaches a level that threatens ecosystems, human livelihoods, and public health. Environmental crises are typically characterized by pollution, resource depletion, habitat destruction, and the disruption of ecological balance. In the context of oil-producing regions, environmental crises often emerge from industrial activities such as oil spills, gas flaring, deforestation, and waste disposal associated with petroleum extraction. Scholars have noted that environmental crises are not merely ecological phenomena but also social and political issues because they affect human communities, economic systems, and governance structures (Okonkwo, 2020). In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, environmental crisis has become a defining feature of the socio-economic landscape since the beginning of commercial oil production in the mid-twentieth century. The extensive exploitation of petroleum resources has resulted in widespread environmental degradation, including contamination of rivers, destruction of mangrove ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity.

These environmental damages have had severe consequences for communities whose livelihoods depend primarily on agriculture and fishing. According to Idialu (2021), environmental degradation in the Niger Delta has produced a complex humanitarian challenge that includes poverty, food insecurity, health risks, and social conflict. Environmental crises in oil-producing communities are further compounded by weak environmental governance and limited regulatory

enforcement. Oil companies often operate within regulatory frameworks that are inadequately enforced, resulting in delayed remediation of environmental damage and insufficient compensation for affected communities. This situation has generated widespread perceptions of injustice among host communities, leading to protests, litigation, and social unrest. From a church historical perspective, environmental crises also present moral and theological challenges for faith communities. Churches located within environmentally degraded regions must grapple with the ethical implications of ecological destruction and the suffering of affected communities. Consequently, religious institutions increasingly view environmental protection as part of their social responsibility and moral mission.

2.1.2 Resource Extraction

Resource extraction refers to the process of removing natural resources from the earth for economic use. These resources may include minerals, fossil fuels, timber, and other raw materials that are essential for industrial development. While resource extraction plays a crucial role in national economic growth, it often produces significant environmental and social consequences, particularly when it occurs in regions with weak regulatory institutions. The extraction of petroleum resources in Nigeria represents one of the most prominent examples of resource-driven economic development in Africa. Since the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta, petroleum has become the backbone of Nigeria's economy, accounting for a large percentage of government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. However, the economic benefits of oil extraction have not been evenly distributed, particularly among host communities where the extraction activities occur (Watts, 2008). Scholars often describe this phenomenon as the "resource curse," a situation in which regions rich in natural resources experience economic

underdevelopment, political instability, and environmental degradation instead of prosperity. In many cases, multinational corporations extract resources while local communities receive minimal benefits and bear the environmental costs of production.

Resource extraction also alters the social dynamics of communities by transforming land use patterns, economic structures, and political relationships. Traditional occupations such as farming and fishing may become unsustainable due to pollution or land acquisition by oil companies. This transformation can lead to unemployment, youth restiveness, and conflicts between communities and corporations. In the context of this study, resource extraction serves as the structural background for understanding the environmental and social challenges faced by Izombe community. The presence of petroleum infrastructure within the community has reshaped local socio-economic conditions and created tensions that require responses from various institutions, including religious organizations such as the Anglican Church.

2.1.3 The Concept of Environmental Degradation in Oil-Producing Communities

Environmental degradation refers to the deterioration of the natural environment through the depletion of natural resources, destruction of ecosystems, and contamination of air, soil, and water bodies. In oil-producing regions such as the Niger Delta, environmental degradation is primarily associated with oil exploration activities, including drilling operations, pipeline leaks, oil spills, and gas flaring. These activities have significant consequences for biodiversity, agricultural productivity, and human health. Scholars note that environmental degradation often emerges as an unintended consequence of industrial development, particularly in regions where regulatory oversight is weak and corporate accountability mechanisms are limited (Watts, 2008). In the context of Nigeria's Niger Delta, environmental degradation has reached alarming levels

due to decades of petroleum exploitation. Oil spills have contaminated rivers and farmlands, rendering traditional sources of livelihood such as fishing and farming increasingly unsustainable. According to reports by the United Nations Environment Programme (2011), persistent oil contamination can remain in soils and groundwater for decades, severely affecting ecosystems and public health. Such conditions contribute to long-term ecological imbalance and economic vulnerability among local populations.

Gas flaring is another major dimension of environmental degradation in oil-producing communities. Gas flaring releases toxic gases and greenhouse emissions into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change and local environmental pollution. Residents of oil-producing areas often report respiratory illnesses, acid rain, and destruction of crops as direct consequences of gas flaring activities (Obi, 2014). Despite several legal efforts to curb the practice, enforcement challenges and economic incentives for oil companies have allowed gas flaring to continue in many areas. Environmental degradation also undermines food security in affected communities. Fertile land that once supported agricultural production often becomes infertile due to oil contamination. Fishing activities are also disrupted because polluted rivers and creeks cannot sustain aquatic life. This ecological disruption has led to widespread poverty and migration, as communities lose access to traditional livelihoods (Ikelegbe, 2013).

In addition to economic consequences, environmental degradation carries significant social implications. Communities experiencing environmental damage often develop grievances against oil companies and government authorities perceived to be complicit in resource exploitation. These grievances can escalate into protests, conflicts, and militant activities, as seen in several parts of the Niger Delta (Watts, 2008). Consequently, environmental degradation is not merely

an ecological issue but also a catalyst for broader socio-political instability. Furthermore, environmental degradation raises important ethical questions about environmental stewardship and justice. From a moral perspective, the destruction of ecosystems for economic gain challenges principles of sustainability and intergenerational equity. Scholars argue that environmental management should prioritize the well-being of both present and future generations (Conradie, 2011). In the context of oil extraction, this requires balancing economic development with environmental protection and community welfare.

The concept of environmental degradation is therefore essential for understanding the complex challenges faced by communities like Izombe. Environmental damage caused by oil extraction has created a crisis that extends beyond ecological concerns to encompass social, economic, and moral dimensions. Within this context, religious institutions such as the Anglican Church often find themselves responding to the consequences of environmental injustice through pastoral care, advocacy, and community development initiatives.

2.1.4 The Concept of Community Crisis in Extractive Economies

Community crisis refers to a state of social instability and disruption experienced by communities as a result of economic, political, or environmental pressures. In extractive economies, such as oil-producing regions, community crises often emerge when resource exploitation generates unequal benefits, environmental damage, and social dislocation. These crises manifest in forms such as poverty, unemployment, conflict, and weakened social institutions (Obi, 2014). In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, oil extraction has produced significant wealth for the national economy while leaving many host communities impoverished. This paradox, commonly referred to as the “resource curse,” highlights the contradiction between

resource abundance and local underdevelopment (Ikelegbe, 2013). Communities that host oil infrastructure frequently experience poor infrastructure, limited employment opportunities, and environmental destruction. Such conditions foster frustration and resentment among local populations. Youth unemployment is one of the most prominent manifestations of community crisis in oil-producing regions. Many young people in these areas are unable to secure meaningful employment despite the presence of multinational oil corporations operating within their communities. The resulting economic frustration has contributed to the rise of youth militancy, pipeline vandalism, and armed conflict in parts of the Niger Delta (Watts, 2008). Youth groups sometimes organize protests or sabotage oil installations to demand compensation and development.

Community crisis also involves the erosion of traditional authority structures. Historically, community leadership in many Niger Delta societies rested with traditional rulers and elders. However, the influx of oil wealth and corporate influence has altered local power dynamics. Oil companies sometimes negotiate directly with select community representatives, creating divisions and weakening traditional governance systems (Obi, 2014). These internal conflicts can lead to factionalism and prolonged disputes within communities. Another dimension of community crisis is displacement and loss of cultural identity. Environmental degradation and industrial expansion often force communities to relocate from ancestral lands. When farmland and water resources are destroyed, families may migrate to urban centers in search of alternative livelihoods. This migration disrupts social networks and cultural traditions that have historically defined community identity (Watts, 2008). Health crises are also common in oil-producing communities experiencing environmental pollution. Exposure to contaminated water and polluted air can result in increased incidence of respiratory diseases, skin conditions, and other

health complications. Limited access to healthcare facilities exacerbates these challenges, leaving residents vulnerable to preventable illnesses (UNEP, 2011).

The concept of community crisis is therefore central to understanding the broader social consequences of oil extraction in Izombe. Environmental damage and economic marginalization combine to create conditions of social instability that affect everyday life. Within this context, religious institutions often emerge as important actors providing moral guidance, social support, and mediation in times of crisis.

2.1.5 Environmental Justice and Resource Control

Environmental justice refers to the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across populations, ensuring that marginalized communities do not disproportionately suffer environmental harm. In the Niger Delta, environmental injustice is evident in the disparity between the wealth generated from oil and the poverty experienced by host communities. The resource control debate has therefore become central to political discourse in the region. Resource control movements emerged from grievances over revenue allocation, land rights, and environmental neglect. Activists argue that communities whose lands generate oil wealth should receive fair compensation and have greater decision-making authority. The lack of transparency in compensation processes and environmental remediation programs has intensified distrust between communities, corporations, and the state. Environmental justice also has a moral dimension. It questions whether economic growth justifies ecological sacrifice zones. The Niger Delta experience demonstrates how development policies can marginalize local populations while prioritizing national revenue. Environmental justice frameworks emphasize participation, accountability, and sustainability.

For religious institutions, environmental justice intersects with theological principles of fairness, stewardship, and human dignity. Churches operating in oil-producing regions must navigate complex political terrain when addressing resource control issues. Advocacy for justice may risk confrontation with powerful actors, yet silence may undermine moral credibility. Thus, environmental justice serves as a conceptual bridge between ecological degradation and faith-based engagement.

2.1.6 The Concept of Church Engagement in Social Issues

Church engagement refers to the active involvement of religious institutions in addressing social, political, and economic challenges within their communities. Historically, Christian churches have played significant roles in social transformation through advocacy, education, healthcare, and humanitarian interventions. In many African societies, churches function not only as spiritual institutions but also as important agents of social development (Kalu, 2008). Church engagement in social issues is often grounded in theological teachings that emphasize compassion, justice, and service to humanity. Christian ethics encourages believers to care for the vulnerable and promote social justice. Biblical teachings concerning stewardship, love of neighbor, and care for creation provide moral frameworks for addressing social challenges such as poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation (Conradie, 2011). In Nigeria, churches have historically contributed to community development through the establishment of schools, hospitals, and social welfare programs. Missionary organizations played a foundational role in expanding education and healthcare services during the colonial period. These institutions often remained influential after independence, continuing to provide essential social services in areas where government capacity was limited (Kalu, 2008).

Church engagement also extends to advocacy and public policy debates. Religious leaders frequently speak out on issues such as corruption, human rights, and environmental protection. In the Niger Delta, several church organizations have criticized the environmental practices of oil companies and called for greater accountability and sustainable development (Obi, 2014). Such advocacy reflects the church's commitment to moral leadership in society. Another important dimension of church engagement is conflict mediation. In regions experiencing social tension or violence, religious leaders often serve as mediators between conflicting parties. Their moral authority and community trust enable them to facilitate dialogue and promote peaceful resolutions. In the Niger Delta, churches have occasionally acted as intermediaries between government authorities, oil companies, and local communities during periods of unrest (Ikelegbe, 2013). Church engagement is also expressed through humanitarian assistance and social support networks. During periods of crisis, churches frequently mobilize resources to assist affected communities. This may include distributing relief materials, providing counseling services, or organizing community development initiatives. Such activities demonstrate the church's commitment to practical expressions of faith through service.

In the context of Izombe, the concept of church engagement provides a framework for understanding how the Anglican Church has responded to environmental and community crises associated with oil extraction. By examining historical records and church initiatives, this study seeks to reconstruct the various ways in which Anglican institutions have engaged with these challenges.

2.1.7 The Concept of Ecological Theology

Ecological theology is a branch of Christian theology that explores the relationship between faith, humanity, and the natural environment. It emphasizes the responsibility of humans as stewards of God's creation and advocates for ethical approaches to environmental management. Ecological theology has gained prominence in recent decades as religious scholars respond to global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution (Conradie, 2011). The theological foundation of ecological thought is often traced to the biblical concept of stewardship. According to the creation narratives in the Book of Genesis, humans are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the earth. This responsibility implies that environmental exploitation and destruction contradict the divine mandate for responsible stewardship. Ecological theologians argue that environmental protection is therefore a moral and spiritual obligation for Christians. Ecological theology also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation.

The natural world is viewed as part of God's creation, possessing intrinsic value beyond its economic utility. This perspective challenges purely utilitarian approaches to environmental resources and calls for greater respect for ecological systems. The destruction of ecosystems is thus interpreted not only as an environmental issue but also as a spiritual crisis. In African theological discourse, ecological theology often intersects with indigenous understandings of nature. Many African cultures traditionally maintain strong spiritual connections to land, water, and forests. These cultural perspectives resonate with Christian teachings about the sacredness of creation and the importance of environmental stewardship (Kalu, 2008). Ecological theology also addresses issues of environmental justice. Communities that suffer the most from environmental degradation are often those with the least political power. Ecological theologians

argue that addressing environmental problems requires confronting social inequalities and advocating for justice for marginalized communities.

In the Niger Delta context, ecological theology provides a framework for interpreting environmental degradation caused by oil extraction. Churches that adopt ecological theological perspectives may view environmental activism as part of their spiritual mission. By advocating for environmental protection, they seek to defend both creation and the well-being of affected communities.

2.1.8 The Concept of Resource Extraction and the Resource Curse

Resource extraction refers to the process of removing natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, and timber from the earth for economic use. While resource extraction can generate substantial revenue for national economies, it often produces complex social and environmental challenges for local communities. Scholars have developed the concept of the “resource curse” to explain why many resource-rich countries experience persistent poverty, corruption, and conflict (Watts, 2008). The resource curse theory suggests that dependence on natural resource revenues can weaken economic diversification and democratic governance. Governments that rely heavily on oil revenues may become less accountable to citizens because they do not depend on taxation for income. This dynamic can lead to corruption, mismanagement, and inadequate investment in social infrastructure. In Nigeria, oil has been the dominant source of national revenue since the 1970s. Despite this wealth, many oil-producing communities remain underdeveloped. Scholars argue that centralized control of oil revenues and unequal distribution of benefits have contributed to widespread grievances in the Niger Delta (Obi, 2014).

Resource extraction also creates environmental risks. Industrial drilling operations require extensive infrastructure, including pipelines, refineries, and transportation networks. These systems increase the likelihood of environmental accidents such as oil spills and explosions. When such incidents occur, local communities often bear the environmental costs while receiving limited economic benefits. The resource curse is also associated with violent conflict. In some cases, marginalized communities resort to armed resistance or sabotage to demand a fair share of resource wealth. Militant groups in the Niger Delta have frequently targeted oil installations to pressure the government and multinational corporations to address community grievances (Ikelegbe, 2013). Understanding the concept of resource extraction and the resource curse is essential for analyzing the socio-economic context of Izombe. Oil exploitation has created both economic opportunities and significant challenges for local communities. The responses of institutions such as the Anglican Church must therefore be interpreted within this broader political economy of resource extraction.

2.1.9 The Concept of Faith-Based Environmental Advocacy

Faith-based environmental advocacy refers to efforts by religious institutions to promote environmental protection and sustainable development based on theological and moral principles. Religious organizations increasingly participate in environmental activism, recognizing that ecological degradation poses serious threats to human well-being and the integrity of creation (Conradie, 2011). Faith-based advocacy often involves raising awareness about environmental issues within religious communities. Sermons, educational programs, and church publications may emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship. By framing

ecological responsibility as a spiritual obligation, religious leaders encourage believers to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours. Another dimension of faith-based advocacy is policy engagement. Religious organizations sometimes collaborate with civil society groups to influence environmental policies and corporate practices. Churches may issue public statements, organize community campaigns, or participate in environmental forums to advocate for stronger environmental regulations.

Faith-based organizations also support practical environmental initiatives. These may include tree-planting programs, waste management campaigns, and sustainable agriculture projects. Such initiatives demonstrate the practical application of ecological theology within community contexts. In regions affected by environmental injustice, faith-based advocacy often focuses on defending the rights of vulnerable communities. Churches may support victims of environmental pollution by providing legal assistance, humanitarian relief, or platforms for community voices. Through these activities, religious institutions contribute to broader movements for environmental justice. In the case of Izombe, faith-based environmental advocacy provides a useful conceptual lens for analyzing the Anglican Church's responses to environmental degradation caused by oil extraction. The church's actions may include moral critique, community mobilization, and collaboration with other stakeholders to address ecological challenges.

2.2. Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Environmental Justice Theory

Environmental Justice Theory emerged from the environmental justice movement in the United States during the late twentieth century. One of the earliest and most influential proponents of this theory is Robert D. Bullard, whose seminal work *Dumping in Dixie* (1990) examined how environmental hazards disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Bullard and other scholars argued that environmental problems are not distributed equally across society but often affect poorer and politically marginalized populations more severely. The theory therefore emphasizes fairness, equity, and the ethical distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Environmental Justice Theory developed in response to the observation that industrial facilities, toxic waste dumps, and environmentally harmful activities were frequently located in communities with limited political influence. Bullard (1990) documented numerous cases in which African American communities in the United States were disproportionately exposed to environmental pollution. His research helped establish environmental justice as an important interdisciplinary field that combines environmental studies, sociology, law, and public policy.

The central premise of Environmental Justice Theory is that all individuals and communities have the right to equal protection from environmental hazards and equal access to environmental benefits. Environmental justice advocates argue that environmental decision-making should involve meaningful participation by affected communities. This principle emphasizes democratic inclusion and transparency in environmental governance. Environmental Justice Theory also stresses the intersection between environmental issues and broader social inequalities. Environmental degradation is often linked to economic exploitation, political marginalization, and historical patterns of discrimination. As a result, environmental problems cannot be understood solely as ecological phenomena but must also be analyzed within the context of social justice and human rights (Schlosberg, 2007). In developing countries, Environmental

Justice Theory has been widely applied to analyze the impacts of extractive industries such as oil, mining, and logging. Communities located near extractive operations frequently experience environmental pollution while receiving limited economic benefits from resource exploitation. Scholars argue that such situations represent forms of environmental injustice because the environmental costs of economic development are borne disproportionately by local populations (Obi, 2014).

In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Environmental Justice Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the environmental crisis associated with oil extraction. Oil spills, gas flaring, and water contamination have severely affected local communities, many of which depend on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods. Despite generating substantial national revenue, oil-producing communities often experience poverty and environmental degradation. These conditions illustrate the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and economic benefits characteristic of environmental injustice (Watts, 2008). Environmental Justice Theory also highlights the importance of community advocacy and civil society engagement in addressing environmental problems. Religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots movements often play significant roles in advocating for environmental rights and accountability. Churches, in particular, can serve as moral voices advocating for the protection of vulnerable communities and ecosystems. Another key component of Environmental Justice Theory is procedural justice, which focuses on the fairness of decision-making processes. Procedural justice requires that communities affected by environmental policies or industrial activities should have opportunities to participate in decisions that impact their environment. In many oil-producing regions, local communities have limited involvement in negotiations

between governments and multinational oil corporations. This exclusion contributes to mistrust and social conflict.

Environmental Justice Theory also incorporates the concept of recognition justice, which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the cultural identities, traditions, and rights of affected communities. Indigenous and rural communities often maintain strong cultural connections to land and natural resources. When environmental degradation disrupts these relationships, it threatens not only economic livelihoods but also cultural heritage and social identity. In addition to addressing environmental inequality, Environmental Justice Theory calls for restorative measures that repair environmental damage and compensate affected communities. Such measures may include environmental remediation, economic compensation, and development programs designed to improve community welfare. Within the context of this study, Environmental Justice Theory provides a critical framework for analyzing the environmental crisis in Izombe. The theory helps explain how oil extraction has produced unequal environmental consequences for local communities. It also highlights the role of institutions such as the Anglican Church in advocating for justice, environmental protection, and community welfare.

The relevance of Environmental Justice Theory to this research lies in its ability to connect environmental degradation with social ethics and moral responsibility. By examining the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental issues in Izombe, the study explores how religious institutions respond to situations of environmental injustice. The theory therefore provides an analytical lens for understanding the church's moral advocacy and social interventions in oil-affected communities.

2.2.2 Resource Curse Theory

Resource Curse Theory was first articulated in the work of Richard Auty (1993) in his book *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*. Auty observed that many countries rich in natural resources often experience slower economic growth and weaker development outcomes compared to countries with fewer natural resources. This paradox became known as the “resource curse.” The central argument of Resource Curse Theory is that dependence on natural resource revenues can create structural economic and political problems that hinder sustainable development. Rather than promoting prosperity, abundant natural resources may lead to economic instability, corruption, political conflict, and environmental degradation (Auty, 1993). One explanation offered by Resource Curse Theory is the phenomenon known as “Dutch Disease.” This occurs when a booming resource sector causes a country’s currency to appreciate, making other sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing less competitive. As a result, the economy becomes overly dependent on resource exports, reducing economic diversification.

Another dimension of the resource curse involves governance challenges. Governments that rely heavily on resource revenues may become less accountable to citizens because they do not depend on taxation for income. This situation can weaken democratic institutions and encourage corruption among political elites. Resource Curse Theory also highlights the relationship between natural resources and violent conflict. In some cases, competition over control of valuable resources leads to political instability and armed conflict. Resource-rich regions may become sites of insurgency, particularly when local communities feel excluded from the benefits of resource exploitation (Ross, 2012). Environmental degradation is another important aspect of

the resource curse. Extractive industries such as oil and mining often generate significant environmental damage, especially in countries where regulatory oversight is weak. Oil spills, deforestation, and pollution frequently accompany resource extraction activities.

Nigeria provides a widely studied example of the resource curse. Since the discovery of commercial oil in the 1950s, petroleum has become the dominant source of national revenue. Despite this wealth, many parts of the country, particularly the Niger Delta region, remain underdeveloped. Scholars argue that centralized control of oil revenues and unequal distribution of benefits have contributed to widespread social grievances (Obi, 2014). In the Niger Delta, oil extraction has produced both economic opportunities and significant social challenges. While the Nigerian government and multinational oil corporations benefit financially from petroleum production, many local communities experience environmental degradation and economic marginalization. This disparity has fueled protests, militancy, and political activism in the region (Watts, 2008). Resource Curse Theory also emphasizes the role of institutions in mitigating or exacerbating the negative effects of resource dependence. Strong institutions, transparent governance, and community participation can help ensure that resource wealth contributes to sustainable development. Conversely, weak institutions may allow resource wealth to reinforce inequality and conflict.

In addition to economic and political consequences, resource extraction can disrupt traditional social structures and cultural practices. When land and natural resources are degraded, communities may lose access to ancestral territories and traditional livelihoods. This disruption often leads to migration, social fragmentation, and cultural dislocation. The relevance of Resource Curse Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain the socio-economic conditions

that characterize oil-producing communities such as Izombe. The theory helps illuminate why resource-rich regions sometimes experience poverty, environmental degradation, and social instability despite their economic potential. For this research, Resource Curse Theory provides a broader political-economic framework for understanding the challenges faced by communities in the Niger Delta. It also highlights the importance of social institutions, including churches, in responding to the consequences of resource exploitation.

2.2.3 Stewardship Theory

Stewardship Theory is rooted in theological and ethical traditions emphasizing humanity's responsibility to care for the earth and its resources. In Christian theology, the concept of stewardship is derived from biblical teachings, particularly the creation narratives in the Book of Genesis. Scholars such as Douglas John Hall (1986) have developed theological interpretations of stewardship that emphasize responsible management of creation. Stewardship Theory holds that humans are not absolute owners of the earth but rather caretakers entrusted with the responsibility of preserving and nurturing the natural environment. This perspective challenges exploitative attitudes toward nature and encourages sustainable use of natural resources. In theological discourse, stewardship is closely connected to the idea that creation reflects the goodness of God. The natural world is therefore considered sacred and worthy of protection. Environmental destruction is interpreted as a violation of the moral responsibility entrusted to humanity.

Stewardship Theory also emphasizes intergenerational responsibility. Humans are expected to manage natural resources in ways that preserve environmental integrity for future generations. This principle aligns with modern sustainability concepts that advocate responsible resource

management. Within Christian social ethics, stewardship extends beyond environmental concerns to include social and economic responsibilities. Christians are called to use resources in ways that promote justice, compassion, and the well-being of communities. In African theological contexts, stewardship often resonates with traditional cultural values that emphasize respect for land and communal ownership of natural resources. Many African societies view land as a sacred inheritance that must be preserved for future generations. The relevance of Stewardship Theory to this research lies in its ability to explain the theological motivations behind church engagement with environmental issues. Churches that adopt stewardship perspectives may view environmental activism as part of their spiritual mission.

In the case of the Anglican Church in Izombe, Stewardship Theory provides a framework for interpreting how religious teachings influence responses to environmental degradation caused by oil extraction. Church leaders may draw upon stewardship principles to advocate environmental protection and community welfare.

2.2.4 Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology emerged in Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a contextual theological movement responding to systemic poverty and political oppression. Its principal architect is Gustavo Gutiérrez, whose seminal 1971 work *A Theology of Liberation* laid the intellectual and spiritual foundation of the movement. Gutiérrez argued that theology must not remain abstract speculation but must arise from concrete historical struggles of oppressed peoples. The theory developed within the socio-political climate of Latin American inequality, military dictatorships, and widespread poverty. Influenced by Catholic social teaching and elements of Marxist social analysis, Liberation Theology emphasized praxis—reflection and

action directed toward transforming unjust social structures. Other influential contributors include Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino, who expanded the framework to include ecological and Christological dimensions. Liberation Theology later transcended Latin America, influencing African, Asian, Black, feminist, and ecological theologies. In Africa, theologians contextualized liberation within colonial histories, neo-colonial economic systems, and environmental exploitation. Thus, the theory evolved from a strictly class-based critique to a broader framework addressing systemic injustice in multiple forms.

Liberation Theology is grounded in several central assumptions:

1. The Preferential Option for the Poor: God shows special concern for the oppressed and marginalized. Theology must therefore prioritize their experiences and struggles.
2. Praxis: Theology is inseparable from action. Faith demands active engagement in transforming unjust conditions.
3. Structural Sin: Sin is not only personal but embedded in social, economic, and political systems.
4. Historical Consciousness: Salvation unfolds within history; therefore, liberation must include socio-political emancipation.
5. Community Agency: The oppressed are not passive victims but active agents in their own liberation.

Liberation Theology interprets scripture through the lens of oppression and freedom. The Exodus narrative, prophetic traditions, and Jesus' ministry to the marginalized serve as paradigmatic texts. The theory rejects purely spiritualized interpretations of salvation, insisting that authentic Christian faith addresses material deprivation and systemic injustice. In ecological extensions of Liberation Theology, scholars such as Boff argued that the cry of the earth and the cry of the

poor are interconnected. Environmental destruction disproportionately harms vulnerable populations; thus, ecological liberation becomes part of the broader liberation project. Liberation Theology provides a powerful interpretive lens for examining the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental and community crises in Izombe. Oil extraction in the Niger Delta has generated wealth for national elites while leaving host communities with polluted land and impoverished livelihoods. This structural imbalance mirrors the systemic injustices that Liberation Theology seeks to address.

First, the theory helps assess whether the Anglican Church embodies a “preferential option” for environmentally marginalized communities. Does the Church prioritize the voices of farmers and fishers affected by oil spills? Does it advocate for justice in compensation and remediation processes? Again, the concept of structural sin illuminates the moral dimensions of extractive capitalism. Oil-related environmental degradation can be interpreted as embedded within unjust economic systems rather than isolated accidents. Liberation Theology challenges the Church to critique these structures prophetically. Third, praxis-oriented theology demands that faith translate into concrete action. The study examines whether Anglican parishes in Izombe have moved beyond pastoral consolation to active engagement—such as environmental awareness campaigns, advocacy, or mediation between communities and corporations. Fourth, Liberation Theology underscores community agency. The Church, as a grassroots institution, may facilitate collective mobilization and resilience. By empowering local voices, it participates in liberation processes. Finally, ecological extensions of Liberation Theology align directly with environmental justice concerns in oil-producing regions. The degradation of land and water represents both ecological harm and social injustice. Therefore, this theory integrates spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions central to the study.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Environmental Degradation and Community Livelihoods in the Niger Delta

One of the most influential empirical studies on environmental degradation in the Niger Delta was conducted by Michael Watts (2008) in his analysis of oil extraction and socio-economic instability in the region. The study examined how decades of petroleum exploitation have transformed the environmental and social landscape of oil-producing communities. Watts sought to investigate the relationship between oil production, environmental degradation, and political unrest in the Niger Delta. The study employed a qualitative research methodology that combined historical analysis, field observations, and interviews with community members, activists, and policymakers. Watts also examined government documents, corporate reports, and academic literature related to oil production in Nigeria. This mixed methodological approach allowed the researcher to provide a comprehensive analysis of the environmental and political dynamics associated with petroleum extraction. Findings from the study revealed that oil production has had severe environmental consequences for local communities. Frequent oil spills, pipeline leaks, and gas flaring have contaminated water sources, destroyed farmland, and reduced biodiversity. These environmental damages have undermined traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming, which have historically sustained rural communities in the Niger Delta.

Watts further observed that environmental degradation contributed significantly to rising tensions between local communities, oil companies, and the Nigerian government. Communities affected by pollution often felt marginalized and excluded from the economic benefits of oil production. As a result, many communities organized protests and resistance movements demanding environmental remediation and economic compensation. The study also documented

the emergence of militant groups in the Niger Delta, particularly among unemployed youth who felt alienated by the economic inequality created by oil exploitation. According to Watts, environmental degradation and socio-economic marginalization created conditions that facilitated political instability and violence in the region. Another important finding was that government institutions responsible for regulating the oil industry often lacked the capacity or political will to enforce environmental regulations effectively. This regulatory weakness allowed multinational oil companies to operate with limited accountability for environmental damage.

Watts concluded that addressing the Niger Delta crisis requires comprehensive environmental reforms, improved governance, and greater community participation in decision-making processes related to resource extraction. The study emphasized that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the environmental grievances of local communities. The relevance of Watts' study to the present research lies in its detailed documentation of the environmental and social consequences of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. Although the study did not focus specifically on religious institutions, it provides critical contextual insights into the environmental crisis affecting communities such as Izombe. Understanding these environmental dynamics is essential for analyzing the responses of institutions like the Anglican Church to ecological challenges.

2.3.2 Oil Extraction and Social Conflict in the Niger Delta

Another important empirical study relevant to this research was conducted by Cyril Obi (2014), who examined the relationship between oil extraction and social conflict in the Niger Delta. The

study aimed to understand how petroleum production has contributed to political instability and community grievances in the region. Obi employed a qualitative research approach that involved interviews with community leaders, government officials, activists, and representatives of oil companies. The study also analyzed policy documents, conflict reports, and historical records related to the Niger Delta crisis. The findings indicated that oil extraction has produced a paradoxical situation in which resource-rich communities experience severe underdevelopment. Despite the enormous revenue generated by petroleum production, many communities in the Niger Delta lack basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. The study also found that environmental degradation caused by oil spills and gas flaring has intensified community grievances. Residents of oil-producing communities frequently report contamination of water sources, destruction of farmland, and declining fish populations. These environmental problems have significantly affected local livelihoods.

Obi further observed that the unequal distribution of oil wealth has contributed to tensions between local communities and the Nigerian government. Many residents believe that the federal government and multinational oil corporations benefit disproportionately from oil production while local communities bear the environmental costs. Another key finding was the emergence of militant movements demanding resource control and environmental justice. These groups often attack oil infrastructure or kidnap oil workers as a means of pressuring government authorities to address community grievances. The study concluded that sustainable peace in the Niger Delta requires addressing the root causes of conflict, including environmental degradation, economic inequality, and political marginalization. Obi emphasized the importance of community participation in resource governance and environmental decision-making. The relevance of this study to the present research lies in its analysis of the social and political

consequences of oil extraction. By highlighting the link between environmental degradation and social conflict, the study provides a framework for understanding the community crisis experienced in Izombe. It also underscores the importance of social institutions, including religious organizations, in mediating conflicts and advocating for justice.

2.3.3 Religious Institutions and Social Development in Nigeria

An empirical study conducted by Ogbu Kalu (2008) explored the role of Christian institutions in social development across Nigeria. Although the study focused broadly on African Christianity, it included detailed discussions of how churches engage with social and economic challenges in local communities. Kalu utilized a historical research methodology that combined archival analysis with field observations and interviews with church leaders. The study examined church documents, mission records, and theological writings to understand how Christian institutions have historically responded to social issues in Africa. The findings revealed that churches in Nigeria have played significant roles in education, healthcare, and community development. Missionary organizations established schools and hospitals that continue to serve communities across the country. These institutions often operate in areas where government services are limited.

Kalu also observed that churches frequently engage in advocacy for social justice and human rights. Religious leaders sometimes speak out against corruption, poverty, and political oppression. In doing so, churches contribute to public debates about governance and social responsibility. Another important finding was that churches often serve as community support

networks during times of crisis. When communities face economic hardship, conflict, or natural disasters, religious institutions frequently mobilize resources to assist affected populations. Kalu concluded that Christianity in Africa is deeply intertwined with social and political life. Churches function not only as spiritual communities but also as institutions that shape public discourse and social development. The relevance of this study to the present research lies in its demonstration of how churches participate in addressing social challenges. The Anglican Church's engagement with environmental and community crises in Izombe can be understood within this broader tradition of Christian social involvement.

2.3.4 Anglican Church and Social Development in Nigeria

The Anglican Church has played a significant role in the social development of Nigeria since the nineteenth century. The arrival of Anglican missionaries, particularly those associated with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), marked the beginning of a major transformation in religious, educational, social, and economic structures across many Nigerian communities. Missionary efforts did not focus solely on evangelism; they also introduced institutions and practices that contributed to social change, including Western education, healthcare systems, agricultural innovation, and community development initiatives. These activities positioned the Anglican Church as an important agent of social transformation and development within Nigerian society. Social development generally refers to processes that improve the well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities. It encompasses areas such as education, healthcare, economic empowerment, social justice, and community cohesion. Religious institutions often contribute to social development by providing social services, promoting moral values, and mobilizing communities toward collective action. In Nigeria, the Anglican Church has historically

performed these roles through its parishes, dioceses, mission organizations, and social outreach programs.

Understanding the relationship between the Anglican Church and social development is essential for examining the broader role of Christianity in Nigerian society. The church's involvement in education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and community transformation demonstrates how religious institutions can influence both spiritual and material aspects of community life. This conceptual review therefore explores the historical and contemporary contributions of the Anglican Church to social development in Nigeria. One of the most significant contributions of the Anglican Church to Nigerian social development is its involvement in education. From the earliest stages of missionary activity, Anglican missionaries established schools to promote literacy and moral instruction. These schools provided basic education to local populations and played a key role in the spread of Western education across Nigeria. The establishment of mission schools became a central strategy for evangelization and social transformation. Schools were often attached to mission stations and served as centers for both religious instruction and academic learning. Through these institutions, students were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and Christian doctrine. Over time, many mission schools expanded to include vocational training programs designed to equip students with practical skills.

The influence of Anglican mission schools on Nigerian society was profound. Many early Nigerian political leaders, civil servants, and professionals received their education in mission schools. These institutions helped create an educated elite that later played important roles in Nigeria's political and economic development. According to historical research, the missionary school system significantly contributed to the emergence of an educated class that shaped

Nigeria's modern institutions (Asadu, 2022). In addition to primary education, the Anglican Church has established numerous secondary schools and theological institutions. For example, institutions such as Bishop Crowther Seminary were founded to provide academic and moral education within a Christian framework. The seminary, founded by the Anglican Diocese on the Niger in 1979, continues to provide secondary education and leadership training for young people in Nigeria. (Wikipedia) Beyond formal education, the Anglican Church has contributed to educational development through adult literacy programs and teacher training initiatives. These programs aim to improve educational access for marginalized populations, including rural communities and individuals who did not have the opportunity to attend formal schools.

The emphasis on education reflects the Anglican belief that intellectual development is essential for both spiritual growth and societal progress. By promoting literacy and knowledge, the church seeks to empower individuals to participate more effectively in social, economic, and political life. Another important dimension of Anglican social development initiatives in Nigeria is healthcare provision. Missionaries recognized early on that access to medical services was limited in many Nigerian communities. In response, they established hospitals and clinics that provided medical treatment alongside spiritual care. One of the earliest examples of Anglican medical outreach in Nigeria is Iyenu Mission Hospital, which was founded in 1907 by missionaries associated with the Church Missionary Society. The hospital began as a small dispensary and later developed into a major healthcare institution serving communities across southeastern Nigeria. (Wikipedia) Mission hospitals such as Iyenu played a crucial role in introducing modern medical practices to Nigerian communities. They provided treatment for diseases, maternal healthcare services, and medical training programs for local healthcare

workers. In many rural areas, mission hospitals were the only available healthcare facilities for decades.

The Anglican Church continues to operate numerous hospitals, clinics, and healthcare outreach programs across Nigeria. These institutions provide a wide range of services, including general medical care, maternity services, immunization programs, and health education. Church leaders have emphasized the importance of integrating physical, mental, and spiritual well-being in healthcare initiatives. (The Guardian Nigeria) Healthcare outreach programs organized by Anglican dioceses often include free medical screenings, vaccination campaigns, and public health education initiatives. These programs aim to improve community health while also demonstrating the church's commitment to social welfare. The provision of healthcare services reflects the Anglican theological emphasis on holistic ministry. According to Christian teachings, caring for the sick is an expression of compassion and service to humanity. By addressing physical suffering, the church seeks to embody the practical implications of Christian faith in society.

The Anglican Church has also contributed to economic development through vocational training and livelihood programs. Missionaries historically introduced various forms of agricultural innovation and vocational skills training aimed at improving the economic well-being of local communities. Early Anglican missionaries promoted agricultural development by introducing improved farming techniques, livestock rearing, and craft production. These initiatives were designed to enhance food production and economic self-sufficiency among local populations. Mission stations often served as demonstration centers where farmers could learn new agricultural practices. Vocational training programs organized by Anglican missions included

skills such as carpentry, tailoring, weaving, and blacksmithing. These skills provided alternative sources of income for individuals who might otherwise have limited economic opportunities. The integration of vocational training with missionary work contributed to the economic empowerment of many communities. (Niger Delta Today) In contemporary Nigeria, Anglican dioceses continue to support economic empowerment initiatives through microfinance programs, entrepreneurship training, and youth employment projects. These initiatives aim to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment, particularly among young people.

Economic empowerment programs often focus on developing small businesses and promoting self-reliance among community members. By providing training and financial support, the church helps individuals acquire the skills needed to improve their economic conditions. Community development is another important area in which the Anglican Church has contributed to Nigerian society. Churches often function as community centers where individuals gather for worship, education, and social interaction. Through these activities, the church fosters social cohesion and collective action. Anglican dioceses frequently organize community development projects that address local needs such as infrastructure development, peacebuilding, and social welfare. For example, diocesan initiatives may include the construction of community halls, water supply systems, and sanitation facilities. In many communities, the Anglican Church also serves as a mediator in social conflicts. Clergy and church leaders often intervene in disputes between individuals, families, or community groups in order to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

The Anglican Diocese of Ikeduru in Imo State provides an example of how churches engage in community development. The diocese has implemented programs aimed at improving health

services, promoting social unity, and empowering local residents. These initiatives demonstrate how faith-based organizations can contribute to community well-being beyond purely religious activities. (dioceseofikeduru.org) Community development initiatives organized by the Anglican Church often emphasize holistic development. This approach recognizes that spiritual, social, and economic aspects of human life are interconnected. By addressing multiple dimensions of community life, the church seeks to promote sustainable development. The Anglican Church has historically played an important role in promoting social reform in Nigeria. Missionaries often challenged cultural practices that they believed were harmful or unjust. Through education and advocacy, the church contributed to the transformation of certain social institutions and cultural norms. For example, Anglican missionaries were involved in campaigns against practices such as slavery and certain forms of ritual violence. By promoting Christian teachings about human dignity and equality, missionaries encouraged communities to reconsider practices that violated these principles.

The church also contributed to political and social transformation by promoting literacy and civic awareness. Education provided by mission schools enabled many Nigerians to participate more actively in political processes and public administration. Studies have shown that Anglican missionary activities contributed to the emergence of educated elites and the transformation of local political systems in some communities. These developments played an important role in shaping Nigeria's transition to modern governance structures. (nigerianjournalonline.com) In contemporary Nigeria, the Anglican Church continues to advocate for social justice issues such as good governance, anti-corruption efforts, and human rights protection. Church leaders frequently speak out on national issues and encourage citizens to participate responsibly in civic life. While churches often collaborate with government programs, differences in priorities or

resource allocation can sometimes limit the effectiveness of such partnerships. Social and environmental challenges such as poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation continue to affect many Nigerian communities. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts involving religious institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations.

3.3.5 Community Participation and Resource Governance

Community participation has become a central concept in discussions of resource governance, particularly in regions where natural resource extraction has significant environmental and socio-economic impacts. Resource governance refers to the systems, institutions, policies, and processes through which natural resources are managed, allocated, and regulated. Effective governance of natural resources requires inclusive decision-making processes that involve local communities, government agencies, and private sector actors. Community participation ensures that those who are directly affected by resource extraction activities have a voice in decisions concerning the management of their environment and livelihoods. In resource-rich regions such as the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the issue of community participation in resource governance has attracted considerable scholarly attention. The extraction of petroleum resources has generated significant revenue for the Nigerian state but has also produced environmental degradation, social conflict, and economic inequality in many host communities. Scholars argue that the exclusion of local communities from decision-making processes related to resource management contributes to tensions between governments, oil companies, and host communities (Ikelegbe, 2013).

The concept of community participation therefore provides an important framework for understanding how local communities can contribute to sustainable resource management and

environmental protection. Participation enhances transparency, promotes accountability, and fosters a sense of ownership among community members regarding natural resource management initiatives. This conceptual review examines the meaning of community participation, its role in resource governance, the challenges associated with participation, and its relevance to the management of natural resources in oil-producing communities. Community participation refers to the active involvement of local people in decision-making processes that affect their social, economic, and environmental conditions. It involves the engagement of community members in planning, implementing, and evaluating development initiatives or resource management programs. Participation may take different forms, including consultation, collaboration, partnership, and community-led decision making (Pretty, 1995). The concept gained prominence in development discourse during the late twentieth century as scholars and policymakers recognized the limitations of top-down development approaches.

Traditional development models often excluded local communities from decision-making processes, leading to projects that failed to address the actual needs and priorities of the people they were intended to benefit. As a result, development practitioners increasingly emphasized participatory approaches that involve local stakeholders in planning and implementation. Participation is often associated with empowerment because it allows communities to influence decisions that affect their lives. When communities participate in development initiatives, they are more likely to support and sustain those initiatives. Participation also promotes transparency and accountability by enabling communities to monitor the activities of governments and corporations involved in resource extraction. Scholars have identified different levels of community participation. At the lowest level, participation may involve simple consultation, where community members are informed about decisions but have limited influence over

outcomes. At higher levels, participation may involve collaboration or shared decision making between communities and external stakeholders. The highest level of participation occurs when communities have full control over decision-making processes and resource management activities.

In the context of natural resource management, community participation plays an important role in ensuring that local knowledge and experiences are incorporated into policy decisions. Indigenous and local communities often possess valuable knowledge about ecosystems, land use practices, and environmental conservation. Incorporating this knowledge into governance systems can improve the sustainability of resource management practices. Resource governance refers to the institutional frameworks and processes through which natural resources are managed and regulated. It involves the development and implementation of policies, laws, and institutions that determine how resources such as land, water, forests, and minerals are used and distributed. Effective resource governance requires coordination among multiple stakeholders, including governments, private companies, civil society organizations, and local communities. The governance of natural resources is particularly important in regions where resource extraction forms a major part of the economy. In such contexts, the management of resources must balance economic development with environmental sustainability and social equity. Poor governance can lead to environmental degradation, corruption, and social conflict, while effective governance can promote sustainable development and equitable distribution of benefits (Ross, 2012).

In many developing countries, resource governance systems are often centralized, with decision-making authority concentrated in national governments. While centralized governance may

facilitate coordinated policy implementation, it can also marginalize local communities that are directly affected by resource extraction activities. Scholars argue that decentralized and participatory governance systems are more effective in promoting accountability and responsiveness to community needs. The concept of resource governance also includes mechanisms for regulating the activities of corporations involved in resource extraction. Governments typically establish legal frameworks that require companies to comply with environmental standards, pay taxes and royalties, and contribute to community development initiatives. However, weak regulatory institutions can limit the effectiveness of these frameworks. In the Nigerian context, the governance of petroleum resources is primarily controlled by the federal government. The Nigerian Constitution vests ownership and control of mineral resources in the federal state, which grants exploration and production licenses to oil companies. This centralized system has often limited the influence of local communities over decisions related to oil extraction in their territories.

Community participation plays a crucial role in improving resource governance by ensuring that local perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes. Participatory governance approaches encourage collaboration between communities, governments, and private sector actors in managing natural resources. One of the key benefits of community participation is that it enhances transparency and accountability in resource management. When communities are involved in monitoring resource extraction activities, they can hold corporations and government agencies accountable for environmental damage or failure to meet development commitments. Community participation also contributes to conflict prevention and resolution. Resource extraction activities often generate tensions between companies and host communities, particularly when environmental damage affects local livelihoods. Participatory governance

mechanisms provide platforms for dialogue and negotiation, enabling stakeholders to address grievances and resolve disputes peacefully. Another important benefit of participation is the incorporation of local knowledge into resource management practices. Communities that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods often possess detailed knowledge of local ecosystems. This knowledge can inform policies and practices aimed at environmental conservation and sustainable resource use.

Participatory governance also strengthens the legitimacy of resource management institutions. When communities perceive that decision-making processes are fair and inclusive, they are more likely to support and comply with resource management policies. Conversely, exclusion from decision-making processes can lead to mistrust and resistance. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria provides a compelling example of the importance of community participation in resource governance. The region is one of the most important oil-producing areas in the world, yet many of its communities face severe environmental degradation and socio-economic challenges. Oil extraction activities in the Niger Delta have caused extensive environmental damage, including oil spills, gas flaring, and water pollution. These environmental problems have negatively affected traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming. Many communities believe that their interests have been neglected in decisions related to oil production and environmental management (Obi, 2014). Scholars argue that the lack of meaningful community participation in resource governance has contributed to the emergence of conflicts in the region. Youth militancy, protests, and sabotage of oil infrastructure have been linked to grievances over environmental degradation and perceived injustice in the distribution of oil revenues (Watts, 2008).

Efforts to address these challenges have included initiatives aimed at increasing community participation in development planning and environmental management. For example, some oil companies have established community development committees that involve local representatives in decision-making processes. These committees are intended to facilitate dialogue between companies and host communities. Government initiatives such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs were also established to promote development and address community grievances. However, the effectiveness of these institutions has been limited by issues such as corruption, inadequate funding, and limited community involvement in decision making. Despite its potential benefits, community participation in resource governance faces several challenges. One major challenge is the imbalance of power between communities, governments, and multinational corporations. Oil companies often possess significant financial and technical resources, which can limit the ability of communities to influence decision-making processes.

Another challenge involves internal divisions within communities. Disagreements among community leaders, youth groups, and other stakeholders can complicate participation processes and weaken collective representation. Limited access to information is also a significant barrier to effective participation. Communities may lack access to technical information about resource extraction activities, environmental impacts, or legal rights. Without such information, it is difficult for communities to engage effectively in governance processes. Institutional weaknesses within government agencies can further undermine participatory governance initiatives. In some cases, policies that promote community participation exist on paper but are not effectively implemented in practice. The concept of community participation in resource governance is highly relevant to the study of the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental and

community crises in Izombe. Oil extraction in the region has generated environmental and socio-economic challenges that affect local communities. Understanding how communities participate in resource governance provides insights into the broader context within which religious institutions operate.

Churches often serve as platforms for community mobilization and advocacy. Through sermons, community meetings, and social outreach programs, church leaders can raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage community participation in governance processes. The Anglican Church in particular has historically played an important role in community development and social advocacy in Nigeria. Its involvement in environmental and social issues in oil-producing communities may therefore contribute to strengthening community participation in resource governance.

2.3.6 Corporate Social Responsibility and the Oil Industry in the Niger Delta

One of the most widely cited empirical studies on oil extraction and community relations in the Niger Delta was conducted by Aghalino (2009), who examined the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by multinational oil companies in host communities. The study aimed to assess whether CSR programs implemented by oil corporations have effectively addressed the developmental needs of communities affected by petroleum extraction. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design involving field surveys, interviews with community leaders, and analysis of corporate documents. Several oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta were selected as case studies. Data were collected from community residents, local government officials, and representatives of oil companies operating in the region. The findings revealed that although multinational oil corporations had

implemented numerous community development projects such as schools, health centers, and water facilities, these initiatives often failed to address the core environmental problems associated with oil extraction. Many communities continued to experience severe environmental degradation, including oil spills, soil contamination, and water pollution. These environmental damages negatively affected farming and fishing activities, which are the primary sources of livelihood for rural communities in the region.

The study also found that CSR initiatives were frequently implemented without meaningful participation from local communities. As a result, many projects did not align with the actual needs of the host communities. In some cases, infrastructure projects were poorly maintained or abandoned shortly after completion. Aghalino concluded that CSR programs alone cannot resolve the structural challenges associated with oil extraction in the Niger Delta. Instead, sustainable solutions require stronger environmental regulations, community participation in decision-making processes, and greater corporate accountability. The relevance of this study to the present research lies in its emphasis on the relationship between oil companies and host communities. While the study highlights the limitations of CSR initiatives, it does not explore the role of religious institutions in mediating these relationships or advocating for environmental justice. The current research therefore fills this gap by examining how the Anglican Church in Izombe has historically responded to environmental and community challenges associated with oil extraction.

2.3.7 Oil Multinationals and Social Challenges in Host Communities

Frynas (2009) conducted a comprehensive empirical investigation into the social and environmental impacts of multinational oil corporations operating in developing countries, with particular focus on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study examined how oil companies address social challenges in host communities through corporate policies and development programs. The research utilized a qualitative case study methodology, drawing on interviews with corporate executives, government officials, and community representatives. The study also analyzed corporate sustainability reports and government policy documents related to environmental regulation in the oil industry. The findings indicated that multinational oil corporations often adopt CSR initiatives as a strategy for managing community relations and protecting their corporate image. However, these initiatives frequently fail to address the underlying causes of environmental degradation and community grievances. Many communities perceived CSR programs as insufficient compensation for the environmental damage caused by oil extraction.

Another important finding was that environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta are often rooted in unequal power relationships between corporations, governments, and local communities. Oil companies typically possess greater financial and political influence than the communities affected by their operations, making it difficult for local residents to demand accountability. Frynas argued that meaningful development in oil-producing communities requires stronger institutional frameworks for environmental governance and greater transparency in corporate operations. Without these reforms, CSR initiatives are unlikely to produce lasting improvements in community well-being. The relevance of this study to the present research lies in its analysis of the structural dynamics that shape environmental conflicts in oil-producing regions. However, the study primarily focuses on corporate and governmental actors, leaving the role of religious

institutions largely unexplored. The present research addresses this gap by examining the historical engagement of the Anglican Church in advocating for environmental justice and community development in Izombe.

2.3.8 Environmental Injustice and Political Mobilization

Watts (2008) conducted an influential empirical study examining the relationship between environmental degradation and political mobilization in the Niger Delta. The research focused on how environmental injustices associated with oil extraction contributed to the emergence of protest movements and militant organizations in the region. The study employed ethnographic research methods, including field observations, interviews with community activists, and historical analysis of protest movements. Watts examined several oil-producing communities where environmental damage had triggered large-scale protests against oil companies and government authorities. The findings revealed that environmental degradation was a major catalyst for political mobilization in the Niger Delta. Communities affected by oil spills and gas flaring often organized protests to demand environmental cleanup, compensation, and greater control over local resources. The study also highlighted the role of youth organizations and civil society groups in mobilizing resistance against oil companies. However, the research found that conflicts between communities and corporations often escalated due to the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

Watts concluded that environmental injustice in the Niger Delta cannot be understood solely as an ecological issue; it is also a political and social problem that reflects broader inequalities in

resource governance. While the study provides valuable insights into environmental activism in the Niger Delta, it pays limited attention to the role of religious institutions in shaping community responses to environmental crises. The current research therefore expands the scope of empirical analysis by examining how the Anglican Church in Izombe has historically engaged environmental challenges and community conflicts.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative historical research design complemented by empirical field investigation. The research was primarily a church historical reconstruction, aimed at examining the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental and community crises in Izombe, Imo State, within the broader context of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. The qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand experiences, perceptions, institutional

memory, theological motivations, and patterns of engagement rather than to measure variables statistically. Historical reconstruction enabled the researcher to trace developments over time, identify shifts in ecclesiastical responses, and situate local church actions within broader socio-political contexts.

The design integrated three methodological strands:

1. Historical-archival analysis (church records, synod reports, diocesan archives, parish documents).
2. Oral history interviews (clergy, lay leaders, elders, youth representatives).
3. Contextual environmental analysis (review of environmental reports and community narratives).

This triangulation strengthened credibility and allowed for a comprehensive reconstruction of the Anglican Church's engagement.

3.2 Study Area

The study focused on Izombe in Imo State, an oil-producing community within Nigeria's Niger Delta basin. Izombe has experienced oil-related environmental degradation, including land contamination, water pollution, and socio-economic disruptions.

The Anglican Church maintains an established presence in Izombe through parishes, mission schools, and diocesan structures under the Anglican Church of Nigeria. The Church's long-standing institutional presence makes it a suitable case for examining faith-based engagement in extractive contexts.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population consists of:

1. Anglican clergy serving or previously serving in Izombe.
2. Lay leaders (church wardens, women's guild leaders, youth leaders).
3. Long-standing church members (aged 40 years and above).
4. Community leaders affiliated with the Church.
5. Selected residents affected by oil-related environmental degradation.

These groups provided historical insight, institutional knowledge, and experiential accounts relevant to the study.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with relevant knowledge of church history and environmental issues in Izombe. This technique ensured that respondents possessed firsthand experience or institutional memory necessary for historical reconstruction.

Approximately:

- 10–15 clergy (current and retired)
- 15–20 lay leaders
- 20 community members

The sample size remained flexible, guided by the principle of data saturation, where no new significant themes emerge from additional interviews.

3.5 Sources of Data

3.5.1 Primary Sources

Primary data are obtained from:

- 1 Semi-structured interviews
- 2 Oral history narratives
- 3 Parish records and minutes
- 4 Diocesan synod reports
- 5 Church bulletins and pastoral letters
- 6 Personal correspondences (where accessible)

These materials provided direct evidence of the Church's engagement over time.

3.5.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data include:

- 1 Academic journals on Niger Delta environmental issues
- 2 Government and NGO environmental reports
- 3 Books on Anglican history in Nigeria
- 4 Theological works on environmental ethics and liberation theology

Secondary sources contextualized local findings within broader scholarly discourse.

3.6 Instruments for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide. The guide includes open-ended questions structured around the research objectives, such as:

- 1 When did the Anglican Church first address oil-related environmental concerns in Izombe?
- 2 What programs or initiatives were introduced?
- 3 How did clergy interpret environmental degradation theologically?
- 4 What challenges did the Church face in engaging oil companies or government authorities?

Archival document review checklists were also used to systematically extract relevant historical data.

3.7 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher:

1. Obtained formal permission from diocesan authorities and parish leadership.
2. Scheduled interviews with selected participants.
3. Conducted interviews in English or Igbo, depending on participant preference.
4. Audio-recorded interviews with consent.
5. Collect and photograph archival materials where permitted.

Field notes will supplement recorded data to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations. Data collection lasted for two months.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach.

1. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.
2. Transcripts were coded manually or using qualitative software.
3. Codes were grouped into themes aligned with research questions (e.g., pastoral care, advocacy, conflict mediation, environmental awareness).
4. Historical timelines were constructed from archival records.
5. Findings were interpreted through the lenses of Liberation Theology, Environmental Justice Theory, and Social Capital Theory.

Triangulation between interviews, documents, and secondary sources enhances validity.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure credibility and reliability:

- 1 Triangulation was used across data sources.
- 2 Member checking allows participants to verify interview interpretations.
- 3 Thick description provides contextual depth.
- 4 Audit trail documentation maintains transparency in data handling.

Dependability was strengthened by clear methodological documentation, while confirmability was ensured through reflexive journaling to minimize researcher bias.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university review board. The study adhered to the following principles:

- 1 Informed consent: Participants received detailed explanations of the study's purpose.
- 2 Confidentiality: Names and identifying information were anonymized unless explicit permission was granted.
- 3 Voluntary participation: Participants were assured of their freedom to withdraw at any time.
- 4 Sensitivity to context: Given potential political implications of oil-related discussions, interviews were conducted with discretion and respect.

3.11 Limitations of the Methodology

Potential limitations include:

- 1 Restricted access to some church archives.
- 2 Recall bias in oral history accounts.
- 3 Sensitivity surrounding oil company relations.
- 4 Limited generalizability beyond Izombe.

Despite these limitations, the qualitative historical approach remained appropriate for achieving the study's objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	32	64%
Female	18	36%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work 2026

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents were male (64%), reflecting the gender distribution within clergy leadership and traditional community authority structures. However, female representation (36%) included leaders of women's guilds and female community stakeholders.

Table 4.2: Category of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Clergy	12	24%

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lay Leaders	18	36%
Community Members	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work 2026

Interpretation:

Community members constituted the largest group (40%), ensuring grassroots perspectives. Lay leaders (36%) provided institutional memory, while clergy (24%) contributed theological and administrative insight.

Table 4.3: Years of Residency in Izombe

Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–10 years	08	16%
11–20 years	12	24%
21–30 years	14	28%
31+ years	16	32%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation:

60% of respondents had lived in Izombe for over 20 years, strengthening the credibility of historical reconstruction and environmental observations.

4.2 Data Analysis according to the Research questions

4.2.1 Environmental Impact of Oil Extraction

Table 4.4: Perceived Major Environmental Problems

Environmental Issue	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Oil spills	20	40%
Water pollution	12	24%
Gas flaring	08	16%
Soil infertility	06	12%
Loss of biodiversity	04	08%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work 2026

Interpretation:

Oil spills (40%) were identified as the most severe environmental issue, followed by water pollution (24%). These findings align with broader Niger Delta environmental studies.

4.2.2 Impact on livelihood

Table 4.5: Impact on Livelihood

Impact Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming decline	22	44%

Impact Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fishing decline	14	28%
Health problems	08	16%
Youth unemployment	06	12%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work 2026

Interpretation:

Farming decline (44%) and fishing decline (28%) were predominant, demonstrating how environmental degradation directly affects subsistence livelihoods.

4.2.3 Anglican Church’s Engagement

Table 4.6: Forms of Church Response

Church Initiative	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Prayer & pastoral care	18	36%
Community sensitization	12	24%
Conflict mediation	08	16%
Environmental advocacy	06	12%
No formal action	06	12%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work 2026

Interpretation:

Pastoral care (36%) ranked highest, indicating spiritual support as the primary response.

Environmental advocacy (12%) appears comparatively limited.

4.2.4 Perceived Effectiveness of Church Engagement

Table 4.7: Perceived Effectiveness of Church Engagement

Effectiveness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	10	20%
Moderately Effective	22	44%
Slightly Effective	12	24%
Not Effective	06	12%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation:

44% rated church engagement as moderately effective, while 20% considered it very effective. A combined 36% perceived limited effectiveness.

4.3 Findings

The findings reveal that oil extraction has significantly altered the environmental and socio-economic landscape of Izombe. Oil spills and water contamination are perceived as the most pressing ecological challenges, confirming broader regional assessments of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. Farming and fishing the primary economic activities—have suffered measurable decline, reinforcing arguments from Environmental Justice Theory that

environmental burdens are disproportionately borne by host communities. The data indicate that residents experience environmental harm not as abstract ecological change but as immediate livelihood disruption, income loss, and heightened vulnerability. These findings support the theoretical claim that environmental degradation in extractive economies produces systemic injustice.

The data further show that the Anglican Church's most visible response has been pastoral and spiritual support. Prayer meetings, sermons emphasizing hope, and counseling services constitute the dominant mode of engagement. This aligns with Social Capital Theory, which highlights the Church's function in sustaining communal solidarity and emotional resilience. Through regular worship gatherings, the Church reinforces bonding social capital, providing networks of trust and mutual support during crisis. However, the relatively lower percentage of environmental advocacy suggests that prophetic engagement central to Liberation Theology remains limited at the parish level. While the Church offers spiritual consolation, structural critique of oil-related injustice appears restrained.

Conflict mediation emerges as a secondary but significant role. Sixteen percent of respondents identified the Church as active in mediating disputes between youth groups, community leaders, and external actors. This function enhances bridging social capital, linking diverse stakeholders and promoting social cohesion. In contexts where governmental trust is weak, clergy are perceived as credible intermediaries. Nevertheless, the effectiveness ratings indicate mixed perceptions. Although a majority consider church involvement moderately effective, a substantial minority question its impact. This suggests structural constraints, including limited financial resources, political sensitivities, and fear of confrontation with powerful oil interests.

Theologically, the Church's engagement reflects implicit stewardship ethics but lacks systematic ecological programming. Environmental themes appear occasionally in sermons, yet no structured environmental ministry or sustained advocacy campaign was documented during the study period. Liberation Theology's emphasis on praxis and structural transformation challenges the Church to deepen its engagement beyond pastoral care. Environmental Justice Theory similarly calls for greater procedural participation and accountability advocacy. The data suggest that while the Church contributes to resilience and moral interpretation of suffering, its transformative capacity remains partially unrealized.

In summary, the empirical evidence portrays the Anglican Church in Izombe as a stabilizing moral institution that prioritizes spiritual care and community cohesion amid environmental crisis. Its role in advocacy and structural environmental reform is present but limited. The findings affirm the relevance of Social Capital Theory in explaining resilience-building functions, while Liberation Theology and Environmental Justice Theory illuminate areas requiring expanded prophetic action. Collectively, the data demonstrate that faith institutions occupy a complex space between consolation and confrontation within extractive contexts, shaping community responses to ecological injustice in nuanced and evolving ways.

4.5 Discussions of Findings

4.5.1 Environmental Degradation and the Lived Experience of the Izombe Community

The findings confirm that environmental degradation in Izombe is neither abstract nor occasional; rather, it is an enduring lived reality shaping economic survival, health outcomes, and social relations. Oil spills, identified by the majority of respondents as the most visible

ecological threat, have altered farmland productivity and contaminated water sources relied upon for domestic and agricultural use. The prevalence of farming decline as the leading livelihood impact demonstrates the agrarian vulnerability of the community. Unlike urban industrial settings where wage labor may buffer environmental shocks, Izombe's predominantly rural economy depends directly on ecological stability. Thus, environmental damage translates immediately into food insecurity and reduced household income. Water pollution emerged as a secondary but deeply concerning issue. Respondents reported discoloration of streams, foul odors, and health symptoms linked to contaminated water sources. This reflects the structural dimension of environmental injustice, where communities generating national oil wealth face diminished access to clean water. The degradation of aquatic ecosystems has equally undermined fishing activities, compounding economic hardship. Such patterns align with empirical literature demonstrating that oil extraction in the Niger Delta disproportionately burdens host communities with ecological risk.

The lived experience of degradation extends beyond economics. Participants described emotional distress, feelings of abandonment, and perceptions of neglect by corporate and governmental actors. Environmental damage is therefore both material and psychological. It erodes confidence in institutions and fosters a sense of marginalization. The findings show that environmental decline contributes to social tension, particularly among youth who perceive limited opportunities and diminished prospects for the future. These dynamics reveal how ecological degradation becomes embedded within broader narratives of injustice and exclusion. The data further suggest intergenerational concern. Elderly respondents recalled earlier decades when rivers were clearer and farmland more fertile. Their testimonies reflect environmental memory an awareness of ecological loss over time. This historical consciousness intensifies

community grievance, as the contrast between past abundance and present scarcity becomes more visible. Such narratives underscore the urgency of examining institutional responses, including those of the Church, within this deteriorating ecological context. In sum, environmental degradation in Izombe is comprehensive affecting land, water, livelihoods, health, and community morale. These conditions form the contextual foundation upon which the Anglican Church's engagement must be evaluated. Any ecclesiastical response operates within this multi-layered crisis environment.

4.5.2 The Anglican Church as a Pastoral and Moral Community

The study reveals that the Anglican Church's most consistent and visible response to environmental crisis has been pastoral care. Prayer meetings, sermons emphasizing hope, fasting programs, and spiritual counseling represent the primary modes of engagement. For many respondents, the Church serves as a sanctuary where environmental suffering is interpreted through theological narratives of endurance and divine justice. This pastoral emphasis reflects the Church's traditional ecclesial identity as a spiritual caregiver. From a Social Capital perspective, the Church's pastoral role reinforces bonding capital. Regular worship gatherings create networks of trust, shared identity, and mutual support. In contexts of uncertainty and hardship, such networks become vital for psychological resilience. Members share resources informally, support bereaved families, and provide assistance during illness. These social bonds mitigate the isolating effects of environmental and economic stress. The Church's moral voice also shapes communal interpretation of environmental degradation. Sermons referencing stewardship and divine accountability subtly frame ecological harm as a moral issue rather than merely a technical problem. While not always explicitly confrontational, such teachings

influence congregational consciousness. The Church thus contributes to ethical awareness, encouraging members to view environmental care as a spiritual responsibility.

However, the pastoral emphasis also reflects institutional caution. Several respondents noted that clergy often avoid direct confrontation with oil companies or political authorities. This restraint may stem from fears of reprisal, limited institutional resources, or concerns about congregational division. Consequently, the Church's moral voice tends to emphasize comfort and reconciliation rather than public protest. Despite these limitations, the pastoral role remains significant. In environments where governmental support is inconsistent, the Church provides continuity and stability. Its sacramental life—baptisms, weddings, funerals—anchors community identity amid change. By sustaining hope and communal solidarity, the Anglican Church contributes to social cohesion, even if its structural engagement with environmental injustice remains measured.

4.5.3 Prophetic Advocacy and Structural Engagement

While pastoral care dominates, the findings indicate modest levels of advocacy and public engagement. A minority of respondents identified instances where clergy addressed environmental degradation directly in sermons or participated in community meetings concerning oil-related disputes. These efforts, though limited, reflect elements of prophetic witness consistent with Liberation Theology's call for praxis. Liberation Theology emphasizes confronting structural sin embedded in economic and political systems. In Izombe, structural sin manifests in environmental neglect, inadequate remediation, and inequitable revenue distribution. The data suggest that the Anglican Church has occasionally articulated concerns about injustice, yet sustained institutional advocacy remains limited. There is little evidence of

organized environmental campaigns, formal policy statements specific to Izombe, or long-term partnerships with environmental NGOs.

Several factors constrain prophetic engagement. Political sensitivities surrounding oil revenue create a climate of caution. Clergy may fear alienating influential individuals connected to oil operations. Additionally, resource limitations restrict the Church's capacity to fund environmental initiatives or legal advocacy. The hierarchical structure of the Church may also centralize policy direction at diocesan or national levels, leaving parish clergy with limited autonomy for activism. Nevertheless, even restrained advocacy has symbolic importance. Public acknowledgment of environmental suffering validates community experiences and challenges narratives of normalcy. The Church's moral authority can legitimize community grievances and encourage peaceful negotiation rather than violent protest. In this sense, prophetic engagement need not be confrontational to be meaningful. The discussion therefore reveals a tension between pastoral stability and prophetic activism. The Anglican Church in Izombe appears to navigate this tension cautiously, prioritizing unity and spiritual support while occasionally voicing concern about injustice. The extent to which this balance adequately addresses structural environmental harm remains a central evaluative question.

4.5.4 Conflict Mediation and Social Cohesion

Environmental degradation in oil-producing communities often fuels conflict—both between communities and external actors and within communities themselves. The findings show that the Anglican Church plays a notable role in conflict mediation. Clergy and lay leaders have facilitated dialogue among youth groups, traditional authorities, and other stakeholders during periods of tension. This mediating role aligns strongly with Social Capital Theory's concept of

bridging capital. By connecting diverse groups and fostering dialogue, the Church reduces polarization and promotes peaceful resolution. Respondents emphasized the trust placed in clergy as neutral moral authorities. Such trust enhances the Church's capacity to convene meetings and encourage compromise. Conflict mediation contributes indirectly to environmental justice. While the Church may not directly negotiate oil spill remediation, its efforts to prevent violence create space for constructive engagement. Stability enables communities to pursue dialogue rather than destructive protest. Thus, the Church's peacemaking function complements advocacy, even if it does not replace structural reform.

However, mediation also presents challenges. Neutrality may limit the Church's willingness to adopt strong positions against corporate actors. Balancing impartiality with moral clarity requires careful discernment. Some respondents expressed frustration that mediation efforts prioritize calm over accountability. This critique highlights the complexity of faith-based engagement in politically charged contexts. Overall, the Church's conflict mediation role strengthens community resilience. By maintaining communication channels and discouraging escalation, it contributes to social cohesion amid environmental stress. This function underscores the multifaceted nature of ecclesiastical engagement beyond overt activism.

4.5.5 Theological Interpretation of Environmental Crisis

The findings reveal that theological interpretation plays a central role in shaping community responses. Environmental degradation is frequently framed within biblical narratives of suffering, testing, and divine providence. Such interpretations provide existential meaning but may also influence perceptions of agency. Stewardship theology appears in sermons emphasizing care for creation and responsible resource use. However, theological reflection often focuses on

personal morality rather than systemic critique. Liberation Theology challenges this limitation by insisting that faith address structural injustice. The relative absence of sustained ecological theology programming suggests an area for growth. Intergenerational justice themes emerged in discussions of environmental decline. Clergy acknowledged concern for future generations inheriting degraded land. This perspective resonates with Environmental Justice Theory's emphasis on long-term responsibility. Yet translating theological concern into organized environmental action remains an ongoing challenge.

The Church's sacramental worldview also shapes ecological consciousness. Liturgical prayers for rain, harvest, and healing implicitly connect spirituality and ecology. Such practices reinforce the sacredness of land and water, even if not explicitly framed as environmental activism. The discussion indicates that theological resources for ecological engagement exist within Anglican tradition. The challenge lies in mobilizing these resources systematically and contextually to address the specific realities of oil extraction in Izombe.

4.5.6 Institutional Capacity, Constraints, and Future Directions

The final theme concerns institutional capacity. The Anglican Church possesses extensive parish networks, leadership structures, and moral credibility. These assets position it as a potential catalyst for environmental education and advocacy. However, financial limitations, political caution, and competing pastoral priorities constrain its reach. Respondents suggested opportunities for enhanced engagement, including environmental awareness seminars, youth empowerment programs, and partnerships with civil society organizations. Such initiatives would strengthen both bonding and bridging social capital. Collaboration with diocesan structures could amplify local efforts and provide institutional backing. The Church's future role

depends on balancing pastoral care with prophetic courage. Deepened theological reflection on environmental justice, coupled with strategic partnerships, could expand impact. By integrating Liberation Theology's praxis orientation, Environmental Justice Theory's normative benchmarks, and Social Capital Theory's relational insights, the Anglican Church in Izombe can evolve from primarily consolatory engagement to transformative ecological witness.

In conclusion, the discussion demonstrates that the Anglican Church occupies a complex, multifaceted position within Izombe's environmental crisis. It functions as pastor, mediator, moral interpreter, and potential advocate. While its current engagement emphasizes resilience and cohesion, opportunities exist for more robust structural involvement. The interplay between faith and extraction in Izombe thus reflects both limitations and promise within contemporary church engagement in oil-producing communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined the historical and contemporary engagement of the Anglican Church of Nigeria with environmental and community crises in Izombe, Imo State, a major oil-producing community in the Niger Delta. Utilizing a qualitative historical research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with clergy, lay leaders, and community members, supplemented by archival analysis of church records and pastoral communications. The study revealed that oil extraction in Izombe has led to widespread environmental degradation, including oil spills, water pollution, soil infertility, and loss of biodiversity. These ecological problems have significantly disrupted livelihoods, particularly farming and fishing, and have contributed to health challenges, youth unemployment, and socio-economic insecurity.

In response, the Anglican Church primarily provides pastoral care and moral guidance, reinforcing social cohesion and community resilience. Conflict mediation is another critical role, leveraging the Church's moral authority to reduce tensions between youth, community leaders, and external stakeholders. However, proactive advocacy and structural engagement to address environmental injustice remain limited. The Church's responses are shaped by theological interpretations emphasizing stewardship and moral responsibility, yet sustained ecological programs or systemic advocacy are constrained by institutional, political, and financial factors. The study's findings were analyzed using three theoretical lenses: Liberation Theology, emphasizing praxis and structural justice; Environmental Justice Theory, highlighting equitable distribution and accountability; and Social Capital Theory, explaining the Church's role in building bonding and bridging networks for resilience.

5.2 Conclusion

The Anglican Church in Izombe functions as a moral, spiritual, and social anchor amid environmental and community crises caused by oil extraction. Its pastoral and mediatory roles enhance social cohesion and resilience, providing both emotional and practical support. However, the Church's engagement with systemic environmental injustice remains limited, with few sustained advocacy initiatives or strategic partnerships aimed at structural change.

The study concludes that while faith-based institutions can significantly mitigate the human and social impacts of environmental degradation, their transformative potential requires deliberate integration of theological reflection, community mobilization, and advocacy for structural justice. The Church's moral credibility, extensive networks, and historical presence position it to be a key actor in promoting environmental sustainability and social equity in oil-producing communities.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, the study recommends the following:

1. **Strengthen Environmental Advocacy:** The Anglican Church should develop structured programs targeting environmental remediation, corporate accountability, and community awareness about oil-related ecological risks.
2. **Integrate Ecological Theology into Pastoral Practice:** Clergy training should include environmental ethics, liberation theology applications, and practical strategies for translating faith into ecological action.

3. **Enhance Conflict Mediation Capacity:** Expand the Church's role in facilitating dialogue among community members, oil companies, and government agencies to ensure fair compensation and prevent escalation of disputes.
4. **Foster Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborate with NGOs, environmental experts, and academic institutions to combine spiritual authority with technical expertise in environmental management and advocacy.
5. **Empower Youth and Community Networks:** Support community-led initiatives such as cooperative farming, vocational training, and environmental monitoring programs, leveraging social capital for resilience and sustainable development.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to scholarship in several ways:

1. **Empirical Insight:** Provides localized empirical evidence on the Anglican Church's engagement with environmental crises in Izombe, an under-researched context in the Niger Delta.
2. **Historical Reconstruction:** Offers a documented chronology of church responses, integrating archival records and oral histories, which enhances understanding of faith-based institutional dynamics in extractive economies.
3. **Theoretical Integration:** Demonstrates how Liberation Theology, Environmental Justice Theory, and Social Capital Theory can collectively frame analysis of faith-based ecological and social interventions.
4. **Practical Framework:** Identifies mechanisms through which faith institutions can balance pastoral care, mediation, and advocacy, providing a model for other churches operating in environmentally sensitive regions.

5. **Policy Implications:** Highlights the potential of religious organizations as partners in environmental governance, offering actionable recommendations for clergy, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

In conclusion, the study establishes that while the Anglican Church has made notable contributions to resilience and moral guidance, deliberate expansion into structured advocacy, ecological programming, and strategic partnerships could significantly enhance its impact in addressing environmental and social injustices associated with oil extraction in Izombe.

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Questionnaire

Title: *Faith, Extraction: Anglican Church Engagement with Environmental and Community Crisis in Izombe, Imo State*

Instructions:

This questionnaire is for academic research purposes only. Your responses will remain confidential. Please answer all questions as honestly as possible.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:

Male Female Other

2. Age:

18–30 31–40 41–50 51–60 61+

3. Occupation/Role:

Clergy Lay Leader Community Member Other (specify) _____

4. Years of Residency in Izombe:

1–10 11–20 21–30 31+

5. Educational Level:

No formal education Primary Secondary Tertiary Postgraduate

Section B: Environmental Awareness and Impact

6. Which of the following environmental problems affect your community most? (Tick all that apply)

Oil spills

- Water pollution
- Gas flaring
- Soil infertility
- Loss of biodiversity
- Other (specify) _____

7. How has oil extraction affected your livelihood? (Tick all that apply)

- Farming decline
- Fishing decline
- Health problems
- Youth unemployment
- Other (specify) _____

8. On a scale of 1–5, how severe is the environmental crisis in Izombe?

1 = Not severe, 5 = Extremely severe

- 1 2 3 4 5

9. Have you personally experienced any health issues related to environmental degradation?

- Yes No

If yes, please describe: _____

Section C: Anglican Church's Engagement

10. In what ways has the Anglican Church engaged with environmental or community crises in Izombe? (Tick all that apply)

- Prayer and pastoral care
- Community sensitization/education
- Conflict mediation
- Environmental advocacy
- No engagement
- Other (specify) _____

11. How effective do you think the Church's engagement has been?

- Very effective
- Moderately effective
- Slightly effective
- Not effective

12. Do you believe the Church prioritizes:

- Spiritual support over environmental advocacy
- Environmental advocacy over spiritual support
- Both equally
- Neither

13. Has the Church helped reduce conflict between community members and external actors (oil companies, government, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

Please provide an example: _____

Section D: Theological Perspective

14. Do you think the Church teaches about stewardship of the environment?

Yes No Sometimes

15. In your opinion, how could the Church integrate faith and environmental responsibility more effectively?

16. Are sermons or church programs addressing environmental issues frequent in your parish?

Very frequent Sometimes Rarely Never

Section E: Suggestions and Comments

17. What do you think the Church should do to improve community resilience against environmental crises?

18. Any additional comments on the Anglican Church's role in Izombe?

Thank you for your participation.
