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“Enhancing B2Com relationship quality: A research study investigating the oil producing company to host community relationship in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria”

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ABSTRACT

The rapid and continuous deterioration of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria in the last four decades has been a major source of concern for the government and practitioners. Hence, the region has been the subject of continuous conflicts and violence between the host communities and the oil producing companies. Despite the effort of the government and practitioners, none have looked at the relationship elements and/or the quality of relationship between these two key stakeholders within the context of the Nigeria oil and gas industry.

This research study makes a new contribution to the field of relationship marketing in the area of relationship quality by providing a detailed understanding of relationship elements, and determinants and dimensions of relationship quality. The research study focuses on the oil producing company to host community relationship in the Niger delta region of Nigeria, which was investigated in detail. A qualitative approach was adopted as it is considered appropriate for the research focus, which was to investigate and assess the understanding of different community actors in respect to the quality of relationship between the oil producing companies and host communities in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. In addition, explore how these actors described both the relationship elements and relationship quality constructs, and related this to their understanding of the relationship between the oil producing company and host community. Semi-structured interviews, as the primary method of data collection were conducted with different community actors. The literature review, as the secondary method of data collection were primarily used as a tool to double check and validate the interview findings. Sixteen community actors provided their views and opinions of the relationship between the oil producing companies with the host communities in the region.

This research study extended the application of relationship quality frameworks that were conducted in a developed economic environment such as the United Kingdom and United States of America to a developing economic environment such as Nigeria through the replication of these

frameworks and re-testing their constructs and propositions in order to develop a detailed and comprehensive framework of relationship quality in the context of a business-to-community (B2Com) relationship in a unique commercial context. In addition, this research study uncovered the importance of mutual goal and culture of the community people in addition to pre-identified constructs (i.e. mutual benefit, communication, control mutuality) as the key determinants of relationship quality for the oil producing company when engaging the host community in the relationship building process. This research study also explored the research on dimensions of relationship quality subjecting its main constructs (i.e. trust, satisfaction and commitment) to a rigorous qualitative test. Doing this, the finding further emphasised some consensus between these dimensions of relationship quality. In addition, the developed framework highlighted the importance of including the relationship elements (i.e. actor bonds, resource ties and activity links) when assessing the quality of the relationship between business and its community.

In conclusion, this research document recommendations (such as, the local community forming a complete and harmonious whole when relating with external bodies, the need for international oil and gas companies in Nigeria to gain adequate and appropriate insight and understanding into the role(s) played by each of the actors within the Niger Delta community, and the importance of oil and gas practitioners developing and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship in the region) for various stakeholders within the NOGI.

Keywords: *stakeholder, community, relationship, relationship quality, relationship quality construct, relationship marketing, Niger Delta, Nigeria, Oil and Gas company, Oil industry.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XVIII
LIST OF TABLES	XX
GLOSSARY	XXI
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to research	1
1.3 Management of relationships	6
1.4 Why Niger Delta	8
1.5 Research Problem	9
1.6 Research questions	10
1.7 Research aims	10
1.8 Research objectives	10
1.9 Novelty of the research	11
1.10 Research process	11
1.11 Research findings and recommendations	12
1.12 Thesis structure	13

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF NIGERIAN OIL AND GAS SECTOR AND STAKEHOLDER SENSE-MAKING	15
2.0 Introduction	15
2.1 Global Oil and Gas Sector	15
2.1.1 Global Energy Mix Projections	16
2.2 An overview of Nigeria	16
2.2.1 Nigerian Energy Mix Policy Issues and Context	18
2.2.1.1. Operational Issues in Nigeria	19
2.2.1.2 Startegic Issues in Nigeria	19
2.2.2 Policy Issues Relating to Oil and Gas in Nigeria	20
2.2.2.1 Issues and Themes Emerging	21
2.3 Nature of the Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry (NOGI)	21
2.3.1 Pre-Independence: The colonial era	22
2.3.2 Post-Independence	24
2.4 Oil and Gas sectors and their associated activities within NOGI	25
2.4.1 Upstream sector	26
2.4.2 Midstream sector	27
2.4.3 Downstream sector	27
2.5 The Nigerian economy and the impact of Oil and Gas	28
2.5.1 Economic impacts	39
2.5.2 Social impacts	30

2.5.3	Political impacts	31
2.5.4	Environmental impacts	32
2.5.5	Security impacts	33
2.6	A case study of Angola	34
2.7	An overview of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria and the current situation	37
2.7.1	Environmental issues	38
2.7.2	Militia activities	49
2.7.3	Complexity in relationship among Stakeholders	40
2.8	Who is a stakeholder?	41
2.8.1	Stakeholder salience and attributes	45
2.8.1.1	Stakeholder power and influence	47
2.8.1.2	Stakeholder legitimacy	48
2.8.1.3	Stakeholder urgency	49
2.8.1.4	Stakeholder proximity	49
2.9	Potential key stakeholders in the NOGI	50
2.9.1	The Nigerian government and its involvement in the NOGI	51
2.9.1.1	Joint venture contract	52
2.9.1.2	Production sharing contract	55
2.9.1.3	Service contract	56
2.9.1.4	Marginal field concession	57

2.9.2	Oil and Gas producing company	57
2.9.2.1	International oil and gas producing company	57
2.9.2.2	Local oil and gas producing company	58
2.9.3	The community and its attributes	58
2.9.3.1.	Membership	60
2.9.3.2	Influence	61
2.9.3.3	Integration and fulfilment of needs	61
2.9.3.4	Shared emotional connection	62
2.9.4	Types of community in the NDRN	62
2.10	Relationship(s) structure among key stakeholders in the NOGI	64
2.11	Attempted solutions to the reoccurring issues within the NDRN	66
2.11.1	Proposed strategies	66
2.11.1.1	Corporate Community Relations	67
2.11.1.2	Corporate Social Responsibility	67
2.11.1.3	Conflict Resolution	79
2.11.1.4	Negotiation	70
2.11.1.5	Public Relations	71
2.11.1.6	Corporate Philanthropy	72
2.11.1.7	Leadership	74
2.11.2	Recorded achievements	75
2.11.2.1	Capacity building	75

2.11.2.2	Social and basic infrastructures	76
2.11.2.3	Healthcare	76
2.11.2.4	Education	76
2.11.2.5	Empowerment	77
2.11.3	Need for improvement	77
2.12	Chapter summary	78
CHAPTER THREE: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK		79
3.1	Introduction	79
3.2	What is a Relationship?	80
3.2.1	Types of relationship	81
3.2.1.1	Exchange relationship	82
3.2.1.2	Communal relationship	82
3.3	Relationship elements	85
3.3.1	Activity Links	86
3.3.2	Actor Bonds	88
3.3.3	Resource Ties	90
3.4	Relationship quality and its context of study	91
3.5	Relationship quality constructs	95
3.5.1	Determinants of relationship quality	95
3.5.1.1	Communication and its importance	96
3.5.1.2	Mutual benefit and its importance	99

3.5.1.3	Control mutuality and its importance	102
3.5.2	Dimensions of relationship quality	104
3.5.2.1	Trust and its importance	104
3.5.2.2	Satisfaction and its importance	109
3.5.2.3	Commitment and its importance	112
3.6	Previously developed theoretical frameworks	118
3.7	Theoretical framework for the current research study	121
3.8	Development of propositions	124
3.8.1	Relationship elements	124
3.8.2	Determinants of relationship quality	126
3.8.3	Dimensions of relationship quality	128
3.9	Summary of research study propositions and theoretical framework	130
3.10	Chapter summary	132
	CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	134
4.1	Introduction	134
4.2	Methodology	134
4.3	Method of data collection	141
4.3.1	Telephone interviews	144
4.3.2	Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	145
4.4	Sample selection method	148

4.4.1	Sample size	150
4.5	Pilot Study	152
4.6	Reliability and validity	153
4.7	Handling data	154
4.7.1	Data recording and transcribing	155
4.7.2	Data analysis	156
4.7.2.1	Unit of analysis	157
4.7.2.2	Inductive and deductive method	158
4.8	Measures of constructs	160
5.8.1	Mutual goals	161
4.8.2	Communication	161
4.8.3	Control mutuality	161
4.8.4	Trust	162
4.8.5	Satisfaction	163
4.8.6	Commitment	163
4.9	Ethical considerations	164
4.9.1	Prior to the data collection and analysis	164
4.9.2	During the data collection and analysis	165
4.10	Chapter summary	166
	CHAPTER FIVE: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS	167
5.1	Introduction	167

5.2	Data collection	167
5.3	Data analysis	170
5.4	Findings	172
5.4.1	Relationship elements	172
5.4.1.1	Activity links	172
5.4.1.2	Resource Ties	178
5.4.1.3	Actor Bonds	182
5.4.2	Determinants of relationship quality	185
5.4.2.1	Mutual Benefit	185
5.4.2.2	Communication	188
5.4.2.3	Control Mutuality	193
5.4.3	Dimensions of relationship quality	195
5.4.3.1	Trust	195
5.4.3.2	Satisfaction	200
5.4.3.3	Commitment	203
5.4.4	Emerged themes	207
5.4.4.1	Culture	207
5.4.4.2	Mutual goal	208
5.5	Chapter summary	209

CHAPTER SIX: FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT, DISCUSSION AND VALIDATION	210
6.1 Introduction	210
6.2 Relationship elements	210
6.2.1 Activity links	211
6.2.2 Resource Ties	212
6.2.3 Actor Bonds	213
6.3 Determinants of relationship quality	214
6.3.1 Mutual benefit	214
6.3.2 Communication	216
6.3.3 Control mutuality	219
6.4 Dimensions of relationship quality	220
6.4.1 Trust	220
6.4.2 Satisfaction	222
6.4.3 Commitment	224
6.5 Emerged constructs	225
6.5.1 Culture	225
6.5.2 Mutual goal	228
6.6 Developed theoretical framework revisited	230
6.7 Validating the propositions	232

6.7.1 Propositions validation based on the opinion and views of the research participants	232
6.7.2 Propositions validation based on the opinion and views of practitioners	235
6.8 Chapter summary	239
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	241
7.1 Introduction	241
7.2 Research aim and objectives revisited	241
7.3 Research contribution	243
7.4 Limitations and direction for future research	245
7.5 Research recommendations and conclusion	247
7.5.1 Local community	247
7.5.2 International oil and gas companies in Nigeria	247
7.5.3 The national government	248
7.5.4 Practitioners	248
REFERENCES	249
APPENDICES	326

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Summary of Definitions of Relationship Marketing	326
Appendix 2	Summary of Definitions of Relationship Quality	332
Appendix 3	Relationship Quality Dimensions	334
Appendix 4	Relationship Quality Constructs	336
Appendix 5	Interview schedule	343
Appendix 6	RGU research ethics and guidelines	345
Appendix 7	Consent form/request for interview participation	346

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Research study basic conceptual framework	7
Figure 1.2	Map of Niger Delta of Nigeria	8
Figure 1.3	Structure for the research study	14
Figure 2.1	The Nigeria map	17
Figure 2.2	Map of oil producing states in Nigeria	23
Figure 2.3	Sectors and their associated activities within the NOGI	26
Figure 2.4	Angola oil and gas sectors	35
Figure 2.5	The Angolan oil and gas governance structure	36
Figure 2.6	Crude oil pipeline attacks	38
Figure 2.7	Potential key stakeholders in the NOGI	51
Figure 2.8	Structure of the Nigerian government participation in NOGI	52
Figure 2.9	Structure of the Nigerian government regulation	53
Figure 2.10	Types of community and actors	63
Figure 2.11	NOGI key stakeholder relationship structure	65
Figure 3.1	Research domains that form the theoretical framework	118
Figure 3.2	De Ruyter <i>et al's</i> (2001) relationship quality framework	119
Figure 3.3	Vieira <i>et al's</i> (2008) relationship quality framework	120
Figure 3.4	Athanasopoulou's (2009) relationship quality framework	121
Figure 3.5	Research study theoretical framework	124

Figure 3.6	Developed theoretical framework showing relationship among various constructs	131
Figure 4.1	Inshore and offshore activities by state	150
Figure 4.2	The inductive reasoning process	159
Figure 4.3	The deductive reasoning process	160
Figure 5.1	Data analysis process	171
Figure 5.2	Key resource ties	119
Figure 6.1	Final structural model of a B2Com relationship quality framework	231

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	List of security impacts	33
Table 2.2	Summary of Definition of a Stakeholder	42
Table 2.3	Stakeholder attributes	46
Table 2.4	Existing JVC within the NOGI	54
Table 3.1	A comparison of Transaction and Relational Exchange Relationships	84
Table 3.2	Determinants of relationship quality	96
Table 4.1	Strengths and weaknesses of positivism and interpretivist schools of thought	137
Table 4.2	Main features of a qualitative research study	138
Table 4.3	Advantages and disadvantages of research instruments	142
Table 4.4	Advantage and disadvantages of semi-structured interview	146
Table 4.5	Sampling techniques and their advantages and disadvantages	149
Table 4.6	Details of interviews held	151
Table 5.1	Description of interviewees	169
Table 6.1	Result of propositions validation based on research participants' responses	233
Table 6.2	Details of oil and gas practitioners	237

GLOSARY OF TERMS

AOGC	Angolan oil and gas companies
AOGI	Angolan oil and gas industry
AOMA	Areas of operation merit award
BBL	Barrels
B2B	Business to business
B2C	Business to customer
B2Com	Business to community
CA	Concession agreements
CAs	Concession agreement
C2B	Customer to business
CCR	Corporate Community Relations
CDC	Community development council
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DPR	Department of Petroleum Resources
EP	Exploration and Production
ERA	Environmental right action
GDP	Gross domestic product
GMoU	Global Memorandum of Understanding
HC	Host community
IMF	International monetary fund

JOA	Joint Operating Agreement
JV	Joint Venture
MFC	Marginal Field Concession
NDRN	Niger delta region of Nigeria
NNPC	Nigeria National Petroleum Company
NMA	National merit award
NOGI	Nigeria oil and gas industry
OPC	Oil producing company
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PSAs	Production sharing agreements
PSC	Production Sharing Contract
RGU	Robert Gordon University
RQ 1	Research question one
RQ 2	Research question two
RQ 3	Research question three
RQ 4	Research question four
SC	Service Contract
SDN	Stakeholder democracy network

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction and context for this research study. It commences with a background to the need for this research study, which investigates the relationship quality phenomenon. Subsequently, the research questions, aims and objectives, novelty of the research, description of the research methodology, research contribution, and the thesis structure are introduced.

1.2 Background to research

Nigeria is a major producer of crude oil in Africa and highly dependent on crude oil as a major source of her income (Akins, 1973; Beckman, 1982; Khan, 1994; Ellis, 2003; Watts, 2004; Ross, 2012; Kadafa, 2012; Esfahani *et al.*, 2014; Arezki and Blanchard, 2015; Ikein, 2016). Ross (2003), Adenugba and Dipo (2013), Rhodes and Suleiman (2013), and Ikein (2016) noted that Nigeria has consistently earned over 90% of her revenue from crude oil since commercial production commenced in the 1970s. In addition, Ikelegbe (2001), Eweje (2006), and Omofonmwan and Odia (2009) argued that a larger percentage of the exploration and production (EP) activities within the Nigerian oil and gas industry (NOGI) take place in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NDRN). Hence, making the NDRN a region to be reckoned with (Frynas, 2001).

The rapid and continuous deterioration of the NDRN has been widely noted by scholars and practitioners (Puyate and Rim-Rukeh, 2008; Giraud and Renouard, 2010; Renouard, 2010; Renouard and Lado, 2012; Ubani and Onyejekwe, 2013). This decline is evidenced by poverty among the communities in the region (Nriagu *et al.*, 2016), poorly planned and managed coastal and community development (Ubani and Onyejekwe, 2013), and a poor educational system (Osaghae *et al.*, 2007; Omofonmwan and Odia, 2009; Onemolease and Alakpa, 2009; Nyengidiki and Allagoa,

2011). In addition, the region is facing worsened environmental conditions (Ikporukpo, 1983; Watts, 2001; Puyate and Rim-Rukeh, 2008), increases in social inequality (Renouard, 2011), water pollution, reductions in wildlife and fisheries, soil degradation (Chokor, 2004), and generally worsened economies and health condition in the region (Giraud and Renouard, 2010; Renouard and Lado, 2012; Adelabu, 2012). Kadafa (2012), Ite *et al* (2013), and Ebegbulem *et al* (2013) acknowledged that outcomes are attributable to the EP of crude oil in the region and by association, the presence of Oil Producing Company (OPC). Hence, the region has been the subject of continuous conflicts and violence between NDRN communities and the OPC (Aghedo, 2013; Obi, 2014).

Among the different types of community in the NDRN, the Host Community (HC) is the most highly affected. This is because the HC serve as the host for OPC's EP operations and activities. Elum *et al* (2016, p. 12880) referred to HC as "the places (on land) or communities where oil wells are sited". The effects of OPC presence on the HC is evidenced in the adverse environmental effects on forest, soils and water bodies in HC in the NDRN (Worgu, 2000). Likewise, Eweje (2006) asserted that the commencement of OPC's EP activities led to the emergence of environmental problems in the HC. Apata (2010) added that OPC presence resulted in HC led to the beginning of a continuous environmental degradation that has resulted in a culminating poverty, which is depriving the HC of its resource benefits. Equally, Idemudia and Osayande (2016) noted that the HC has experienced undermined human development due to OPC presence. Olobaniyi and Omo-Irabor (2016) stated that the HC has experienced decline in health and environmental conditions since the presence of the OPC while Elum *et al* (2016) concluded that HC has experienced disastrous and persistent gas flaring on its agricultural produce.

Scholars (see for e.g. Idemudia, 2014a; Aghedo and Osumah, 2014; Osaghae, 2015) have also likened the NDRN to a war zone since the 1990's due to the continuous conflict between the OPC and HC. This standpoint necessitates the need to assess the relationship between the OPC and HC (Idemudia, 2014b). Idemudia (2014a) stated that the OPC and HC

relationship began to deteriorate into conflict and violence in the 1980's. Idemudia (2007) asserted that the HC perceived their relationship with the OPC as "negative" because they (the HC) believe they are considered as an obstacle by the OPC to the successful exploration and production of crude oil in the region. Therefore, OPC are regarded as increasingly viewing the HC as a risk to be managed (Idemudia, 2014a). likewise, the conflict has been attributed to the centralisation of oil and gas revenue by the Nigeria federal government (Idemudia, 2013; Takon *et al.*, 2014; Porter and Watts, 2016) and the lack of recognition of the community as a key stakeholder within the NOGI (Felix and Ogbor, 2014; De Vita *et al.*, 2015;). In addition, Elum *et al* (2016, p. 12881) asserted that the "HC are relegated to the background in decision making as it affects oil exploration and exploitation in their territory"

Researchers have asserted that the OPC's standpoint of viewing the HC as a risk to be managed has resulted in the OPC focusing on giving more charitable donations to the HC rather than building a positive relationship with the communities in the NDRN (Amadi and Abdullah, 2012; Nwankwo, 2015; Gonzalez, 2016). Arguably, the key for any OPC to building a positive relationship with the HC lies in their genuine involvement with the HC as opposed to being a good employer or making charitable contributions (Humphrey, 2000). Despite the effort of various parties to provide solutions to the reoccurring issues in the region, none have looked at the relationship elements and/or the quality of relationship between these two key stakeholders within the context of the Nigeria oil and gas industry. Hence the need to consider the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC (Idemudia, 2014a), which Crosby *et al* (1990) referred to as the probability of continued future interchange between relationship parties.

The theory of relationship quality (RQ) has its origins in the field of marketing (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Relationship quality has been examined and tested in various research contexts (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Storbacka *et al.*, 1994; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Geyskens and Steenkamp, 1995; Bejou *et al.*, 1996; Hennig-Thurau and Klee 1997; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Walter *et al.*, 2003; Lages *et al.*,

2005). For example, Athanasopoulou (2006) examined the quality of relationship between corporate customers and financial service providers within the leasing services, Park and Deitz (2006) examined manufacturers and their salespeople within the automobile industry, while Huang and Chiu (2006) examined the tourists and their host. Hence, the emergence of various definitions of relationship quality which allow for its different interpretations. Crosby *et al* (1990) referred to relationship quality as the ability of a relationship partner (i.e. customer) to rely on the confidence and integrity of another partner's future performance based on previously satisfactory performance (i.e. service provider). Likewise, Jarvelin and Lehtinen (1996) define relationship quality as the overall perception of relationship partners on how well the relationship meets their desires, predictions, expectations and goals. This standpoint suggests that relationship quality describes the overall depth of a relationship (Johnson, 1999). However, despite the various definitions of relationship quality suggested, scholars have agreed that relationship quality is a higher-order construct composed of several key but related components reflecting the overall nature of relationships (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998).

Scholars have endeavoured to assess the nature, determinants, and dimensions of relationship quality (Hassebrauck and Fehr, 2002). In the process, they have identified various relationship quality constructs which are important to achieving a successful relationship (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Bejou *et al.*, 1996; Smith, 1998; Hennig-Thurau 2000). Reasons for this adoption of the RQ concept are manifold ranging from highly a competitive environment characterised by rapidly changing customer needs (Athanasopoulou 2006), maintaining and increasing profit (e.g., Webster 1992; Slater and Narver 1994), improving employee attitudes (Jaworski and Kohli 1993), and aiming for a more customer oriented sales forces (Siguaw *et al.*, 1994). However, trust, satisfaction and commitment are the key constructs, in which relationship quality is typically assessed (Hewett *et al.*, 2002; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Vieira *et al* (2008) asserted that these constructs have been employed as either a dimension or a determinant of relationship quality and as such, there is little or no consensus as to a single model for a RQ

construct. This has further given rise to a high level of ambiguity about relationship quality determinants and dimensions, thus the call for a clear explanation (for e.g., Huntley 2006; Iven and Pardo 2007).

Hakansson and Snehota (1995) emphasise the importance of assessing the elements of a relationship in order to determine the values involved in a relationship and its outcomes. Resulting in Holmlund and Tornroos (1997), and Palmatier *et al* (2006) respective argument that business levels of relationship development and relationship quality context are the major causes of this ambiguity. Likewise, Skarmeas and Robson, (2008) argued the need to understand relationship quality determinants because it enhances the working relationship among partners, while Rod *et al* (1999) stated that considering the influence of relationship quality dimensions on relationship partners is imperative. Ulaga and Eggert (2006) concluded that relationship partners could focus on improving and/or enhancing the quality of their relationship when facing the risk of separation in a commercial context.

Given the unending conflicts and violence in the NDRN, and calls from both scholars and practitioners to improve and/or enhance the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC, assessment and analysis of the OPC and HC relationship is required. Researchers have initiated several research projects in the past and different strategies have been suggested in order to attempt to improve and/or enhance the OPC's relationship with the HC. These strategies include; corporate community relations (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Idemudia, 2009), corporate social responsibility (Ite, 2004; Frynas, 2005; Amaeshi *et al.*, 2006; Idemudia, 2010), conflict resolution (Ibeanu, 2000; Zalik, 2004; Omotola, 2006), negotiation (Ikelegbe, 2001; Ukiwo, 2007), public relations (Frynas, 2001; Ite, 2004; Omotola, 2006), corporate philanthropy (Zalik, 2004; Frynas, 2005; Omoje, 2006; George and Kuye, 2012), and leadership theory (Ikelegbe, 2001).

However, the focus within these strategies has consistently been on the application of a solution rather than on fully analysing the problem. There is therefore a lack of research evident assessing and exploring, in detail, the

OPC relationship with the HC. This research study seeks to address this through assessing and analysing the OPC and HC relationship over the 50 years since was first discovered in the NDRN. This research study also critically assesses the relevance of current relationship quality frameworks within the field of marketing to the NDRN problem. Both of these aspects need to be explored in order to have a detailed knowledge of both the past and current relationship situation between the OPC and HC. In addition, this research study will contribute to identifying, and having a better understanding of, the relationship's elements, and quality constructs (i.e. determinants and dimensions), so as to guide the development of a bespoke framework solely focused on enhancing the relationship quality between the OPC and HC.

1.3 Management of relationships

Effective management of relationships is critical for business success (Wilson, 1995; Smith, 1998). Scholars in the marketing field of study have argued that keeping an existing partner (i.e. the customer) is cheaper and easier than attracting a new partner (Reichheld 1996; Curasi & Kennedy 2002; Athanasopoulou, 2009). As a result, organisations should attempt to establish and maintain a long-term relationship with their various partners (e.g. customers). Likewise, it has been argued that the essence of organisations involving and engaging the key members of their public is to build mutually beneficial relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Broom *et al.*, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Huang, 2001; Jahansoozi, 2007). Whilst Vieira *et al* (2008) concluded that partners are bound to enjoy competitive advantage when they maintain a closely related relationship. Therefore, it is important to explore and understand what represents each partner's value within a relationship.

Nevertheless, it is worth stating that the intention in using marketing research for this current study is not to sell to the HC, but to adopt marketing research in fully understanding and analysing the current situation between the OPC and HC in the NDRN. Existing research studies

in the field of marketing are either focused on relationship elements, determinants of relationship quality or dimensions of relationship quality. However, this current study combine these three areas in developing the conceptual framework. Figure 1.1 reveals the basic conceptual framework for this research study, which focuses on three main areas: relationship elements, determinants of relationship quality and dimensions of relationship quality

- Relationship elements provide meaning as to the kind of relationship or existing relationship between OPC and HC (Ford *et al.*, 1998; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995).
- Determinants of relationship quality consist of the key constructs necessary for enhancing the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC (Crosby *et al.*, 1990)
- Dimensions of relationship quality focus on the mains constructs that serve as measures of relationship quality (Athanasopoulou, 2009).

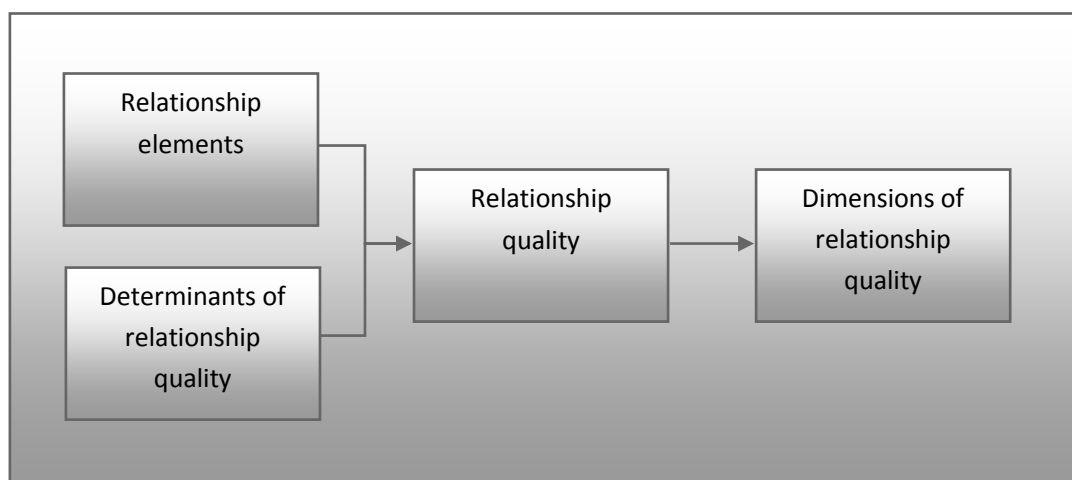


Figure 1.1: Research study basic conceptual framework (Author generated)

The fundamental assumption is that both the OPC and HC desire a stable, mutually beneficial and long-term relationship, in which both parties will stay away from any activity that threatens or puts the relationship at risk (Waller, 2004). Hence, this current study perceives relationship quality as a process that requires an input i.e. relationship elements and determinants

of relationship quality (also referred to as antecedents) and produces outcomes which serve as an indicator that provide information on the level or state of the quality of relationship (also referred to as dimensions of relationship quality).

1.4 Why the Niger Delta Region (NDR)

Taking into consideration the need to explore and understand the quality of relationship between the secondary stakeholders (i.e. the Nigerian government and HC) and oil producing companies in Nigeria in order to integrate their interests, this research study considers it imperative to focus on the NDR where over 95% of the OPC operations and activities is being carried out (Daminabo and Frank, 2015; Olajide, 2015). This is consistent with Abam's (2016) assertion that continuous production of crude oil and refining activities take place in the NDR. Figure 1.2 present the nine states within the NDR.

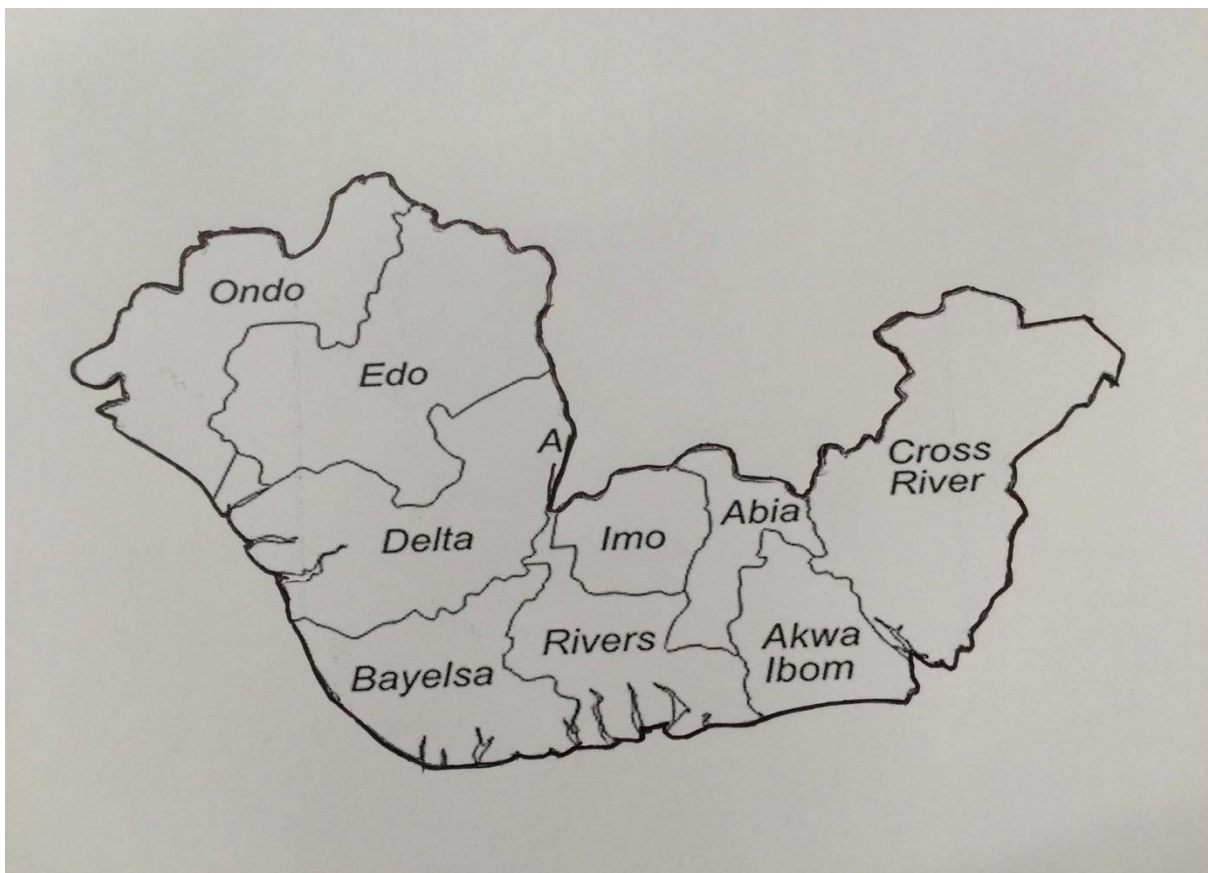


Figure 1.2: Map of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (Author generated)

Venter (2016) argued that the OPC is confronted with an increasing scale of security threats within the region, while Aderogba (2016) concluded that activities of the militant groups such as vandalism of oil and gas installations, kidnappings and bunkering has increased over the years. In addition, the nine states within the region bear the impacts of the OPC operations and activities. Obisike (2015) argued that oil and gas exploration has altered the ecology of the NDR and thus the region lacks good farmlands. Likewise, Owolabi and Okonkwo (2015) added that the activities and operations of the oil OPC has destroyed marine life and totally paralysed fishing and farming activities in the region, while Okonta and Douglas (2003), Opukri and Ibaba (2008), Gbarato *et al* (2015) concluded that the Niger Delta environment has suffered degradation such as gas flaring, oil spillages, construction activities, and land-take as a result of the activities of the OPC.

1.5 Resaerch problem

This research study was initially focused on how, when stakeholder management and risk management put together, they can help provide solutions to the current issues within the NOGI. However, upon the review of the literature, it is evident that various strategies proposed by researchers have failed in this context because none has attempted to explore and understand the quality of relationship between various stakeholders existing and/or operating within the NOGI. Therefore, the need to assess and understand the various relationship quality constructs became crucial. Even though there are three key stakeholders (i.e. the Nigerian government, OPC and HC) operating within the NOGI and given the complexity of their relationship, this research study limits its scope to studying the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC only within NOGI; the government stakeholder is not directly part of this research. Hence, the focus is on the soft aspect of the OPC and HC relationship i.e. human interactions and engagement, while the hard side i.e. the main operations and activities the OPC activities are not considered in detail within this research study. Therefore, only limited discussion and/or analysis that relates to OPC core activities and operations is presented.

Furthermore, given the nature of the type of relationship between the two stakeholders i.e. business-to-community relationship (B2Com), this research study explores the opinion and views of community actors; there are no known previous study that have ventured into this area. As a result, this research study posited that it would be possible to build upon the field of marketing in order to propose a theoretical framework for this kind of relationship type. However, effort was made to justify each construct that makes up the theoretical framework developed.

1.6 Research questions

To this end, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the community perceptions of their relationship with the OPC?
2. What are the key *elements* of OPC and HC relationship?
3. What are the key *determinants* of relationship quality toward which the OPC could direct its effort?
4. What are the key *dimensions* of relationship quality toward which the OPC could direct its effort?

1.7 Research aim

The aim of this research was to propose a framework to help maximise the potential integration of secondary stakeholders and oil producing companies in Nigeria. The resulting framework comprises soft relationship determinants that could be used to enhance the integration of secondary stakeholders and primary stakeholders.

1.8 Research objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the nature and quality of the relationship between secondary stakeholders, and oil producing companies in Nigeria.
2. Review challenges and strategies for improving integration of secondary stakeholders, and oil producing companies in Nigeria.

3. Identify key determinants of relationship quality toward which oil producing companies could use to build and sustain a mutual stakeholder sense-making relationship.
4. Determine the impact of current relationship quality frameworks in improving and enhancing integration of secondary stakeholders , and oil producing companies in Nigeria.
5. Propose a framework to help maximise the potential integration of secondary stakeholders and oil producing companies in Nigeria.

1.9 Novelty of the research

Research studies on relationship quality have been limited to business-to-business (B2B), business-to-customer (B2C), customer-to-business (C2B), and interpersonal relationships. This could be due to the fact that the concept originated from marketing, in which scholars and reseachers focus was on commercial related relationship types. This current study ventures into a new relationship type i.e. business-to-community (B2Com) relationship by exploring and understanding the quality of relationship oil producing companies (OPC) and their host communities (HC) within the Niger Delta of Nigeria context.

1.10 Research process

Given the aims of this research study, the interpretivist research stance is considered appropriate because it perceives that people, world, and institutions are fundamentally different from actual science (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Bryman and Bell, 2004; Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). Hence, the world is just as the way people see it (Cavana *et al.*, 2001), and should be described in a meaningful way for research participants (Saunders, 2003). Building upon existing studies (Athanasopoulou, 2009); a qualitative approach to data collection was adopted. This is because the qualitative approach to data collection focuses on understanding and explaining the beliefs, experience and behaviour of research participants in a particular context. Data were collected from different communities using semi-structured interviews. This method gives room for flexibility during the

interview process by allowing the interviewer the opportunity to explore any unexpected themes that emerge during the interview.

Different key sub-groups of stakeholders (e.g. youth leaders, women's group, chiefs, community people, community contractor, family representative) within the communities in NDRN were interviewed. Considering the security challenges in the region (i.e. high rate of kidnapping and insecurity), selective sampling was taken on board in approaching research participants. Selective sampling aims at actors within the community who are deemed to have privileged and important information about the OPC and HC relationship as a result of either or both of their position and/or their direct involvement in the relations and/or negotiation process of their communities with the OPC. This is consistent with Sandelowski *et al* (1992, p. 302) asserting that selective sampling involves a "decision made prior to beginning a study to sample subjects according to a preconceived, but reasonable initial set of criteria".

Data were analysed using content analysis as this method is suitable and consistent with the interpretative philosophical strand adopted for this research study. In addition, it permits the researcher to understand and explore people's views and opinions on the quality of relationship (Golicic and Mentzer, 2005). Furthermore, it avails the researcher the opportunity to test and utilise the theoretical framework developed.

1.11 Research findings and recommendations

This research study extends current relationship quality theory by developing a detail and comprehensive theoretical framework that identifies the key relationship elements and relationship quality constructs (i.e. determinants and dimensions) in the context of a business-to-community relationship (B2Com) within the oil and gas setting, and ascertain the connections between the constructs. Existing research studies on relationship quality are limited to considering interpersonal relationships (i.e. relationship between individuals), business-to-business relationships (B2B), business-to-customer relationships (B2C) and customer-to-business relationships (C2B). However, this research study has developed a holistic

framework, in a unique partly commercial context. The framework has explore the interrelationships between the various constructs and how they work together to affect relationship success. The framework will provide practitioners within the NOGI with valuable and usable information for improving and/or enhancing the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. In addition, it will increase the understanding of various actors within the NOGI regarding the constructs of relationship quality.

1.12 Structure of the thesis

Figure 1.3 provides a detailed structure for this research study. The current chapter summarises the research background, along with the research study aims and questions. It also provides a structure for the study. Chapter 2 explores in detail the *contextual background* to the study by assessing and evaluating literature on the research study setting with specific focus on the NDRN within the NOGI context.

Chapter 3 examines the *theoretical background* for the study. It considers literature within the marketing discipline with specific focus on relationship quality. Subsequently, it considers relationship elements and the various constructs of relationship quality. In addition, it assesses and evaluates different *theoretical frameworks* in order to develop the theoretical framework and its related research propositions.

Chapter 4 examines the *methodology* employed for this research study. It commences with a discussion of the philosophical stand underpinning this research. It then presents the data collection method, relevant ethical considerations and a discussion of the data analysis techniques employed.

Chapter 5 presents the *qualitative research findings* of the semi-structured interview.

Chapter 6 presents the *discussion* of the various findings that emerges from the data analysis, and the current research *framework development*.

Chapter 7 presents the *conclusion* and the *recommendations* from this research study.

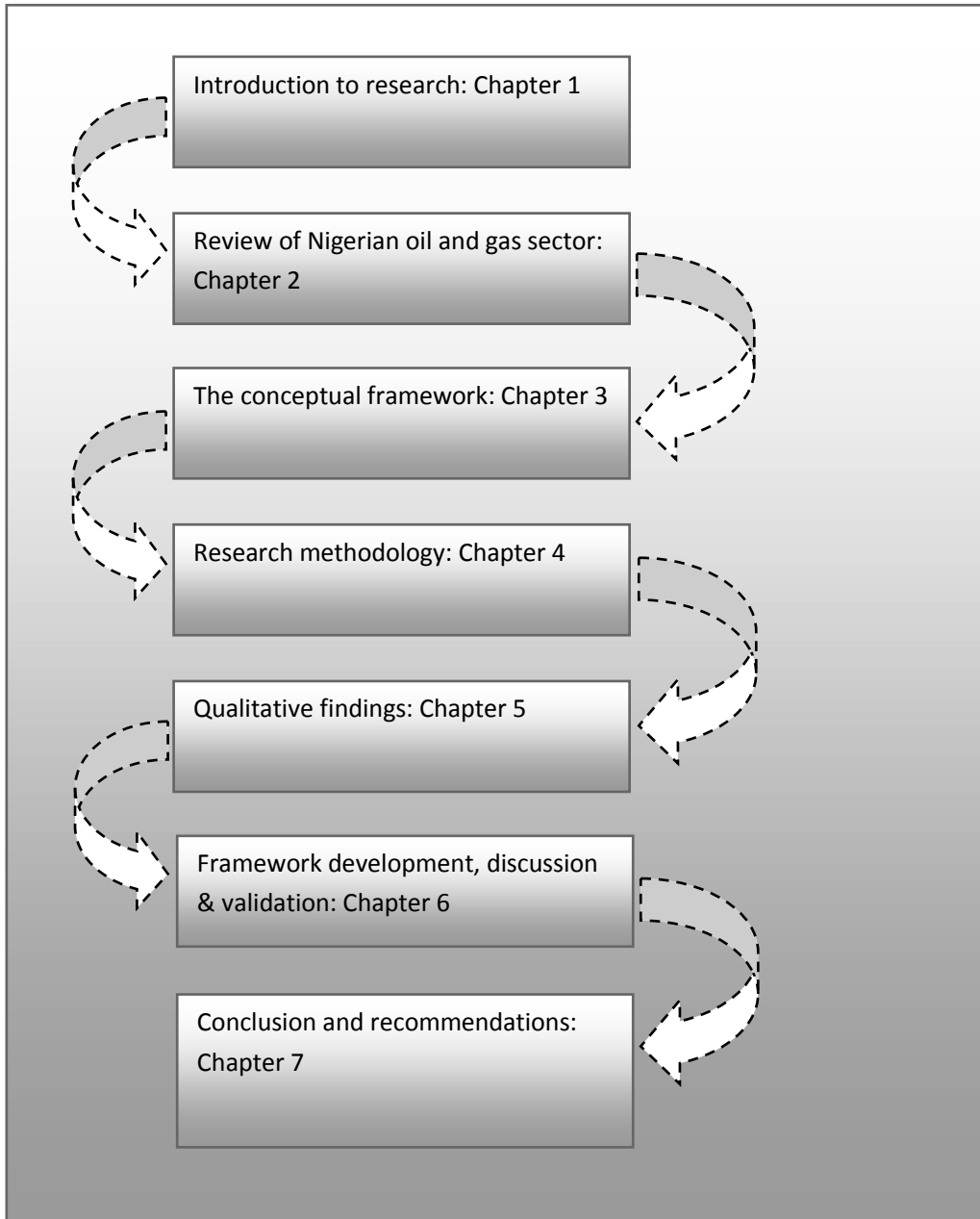


Figure 1.3: Structure for the research study (Author generated)

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF NIGERIAN OIL AND GAS SECTOR AND STAKEHOLDER SENSE-MAKING

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on providing an insight into the geographical area and contextual environment for this study. As a result, the chapter begins by giving an overview of the global oil and gas sector, global energy mix projections, Nigeria as an independent country, its location within the West African region, the nature of the Nigerian oil and gas industry (NOGI), Nigerian energy mix policy issues and context, and policy issues in Nigeria. The various sectors and activities via which oil-producing companies carry out their operations are also analysed. In addition, this chapter reviews the impact of the discovery of oil and gas on the economy of Nigeria and the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NDRN) where over 95% of Nigeria's oil and gas activities take place. Finally, this chapter presents the key stakeholders within the NOGI, various management strategies employed by the OPCs in the past and the current situation in the NDRN in order to give a basis for this study.

2.1 Global Oil and Gas Sector

The Oil and Gas industry is experiencing radical change. The falling price of oil and gas might be a boon for consumers, but this poses increasing challenges across the value chain – from large multinationals through to downstream, midstream and oilfield services. Dynamic changes to production sources, financing, regulations, supply chain and data management are impacting every aspect of production, distribution and refining around the world. These dynamics are subject to many factors, the principal of which are the balance of supply and demand, macroeconomic and geopolitical situation. Hence, many companies are struggling to reassess their core business and diversify in this rapidly evolving landscape.

2.1.1 Global Energy Mix Projections

In 2014, the global energy demand increased but at a slower rate than in 2013 (1.1% compared to 2.5%) to reach 13700 Mtoe. In non-OECD countries, energy demand rose by 2.3%, whereas in OECD countries it decreased by 0.7% and remained approximately stable in 2015 (International Energy Agency, 2016). Likewise, the World Energy Outlook (2016) asserted that due to the major transformations in the global energy system that will take place over the next decades i.e. up until 2040, natural gas and renewables are crucial in meeting the world energy. This projection was based on a detailed analysis of the pledges made for the Paris Agreement on climate change (International Energy Outlook, 2016), which suggests that:

1. The era of fossil fuels appears far from over and underscores the challenge of reaching more ambitious climate goals.
2. Natural gas continues to expand its role while the shares of coal and oil fall back.
3. Risks to energy security also evolve. This is because concerns related to oil and gas supply remain – and are reinforced by record falls in investment levels. In addition, the report shows that another year of lower upstream oil investment would create a significant risk of a shortfall in new conventional supply.

However, in the longer-term, investment in oil and gas remain essential to meet demand and replace declining production. This is because the global oil demand continues to grow until 2040, mostly because of the lack of easy alternatives to oil in road freight, aviation and petrochemicals (WEO, 2016). Hence, it becomes imperative for individual countries to improve on performance.

2.2. An overview of Nigeria

Nigeria is situated within the Sub-Sahara African region. It shares borders with Niger and Chad to the north, Republic of Benin to the west, Gulf of Guinea to the south and Cameroon to the East and covers a total of 923769 sq. km (MEFRN, 2003). Prior to 1960, Nigeria was a British colony

(Geary, 2013). Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960 and became a fully republic country in 1963 (Head *et al.*, 2010). The country has thirty-six independent states and a federal capital territory. Nine states make up the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NDRN) where nearly 95% of all the oil and gas activities take place (Daminabo and Frank, 2015; Olajide, 2015). Nigeria is made up of three main ethnic groups; these are the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa (CIA, 2012). Nigeria has a population of about 178 million people (OPEC, 2015), thus making her the most populated Black Country. Figure 2.1 shows the various states in Nigeria. Nigeria is referred to as the giant of Africa. This is because of her dominance in crude oil exportation among the African countries. Nigeria is endowed with the largest gas reserves in the world and seventh largest crude oil exporter in the continent (Watts, 2008; World Bank 2012; Falode and Udomboso, 2016; Agbonifo, 2016). The Nigerian government has consistently earned over 90% of her revenue from crude oil since the 1970s (Ihua *et al.*, 2009; Akpan, 2009; Ross, 2003). This suggests that Nigeria is solely dependent on oil for her survival (Okafor *et al.*, 2016; Ikein, 2016).

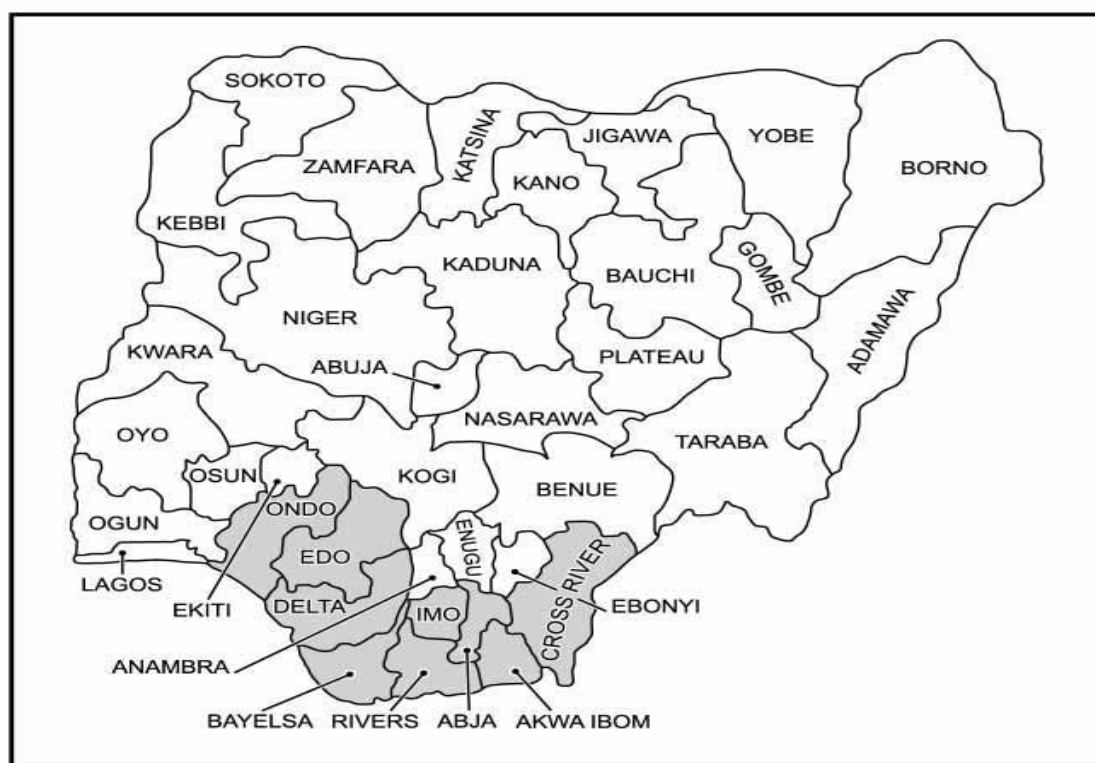


Figure 2.1: Nigeria map; NDRN States shaded (Maps of the World, 2016)

2.2.1 Nigerian Energy Mix Policy Issues and Context

The government of various countries around the globe often seek ways of improving and sustaining their energy availability. Hermann (2001), and Ajayi *et al* (2011) stated that the interdependence between a country's energy availability, its demand, supply, and utilisation has been one of the major factors that control national development. The Nigerian energy policy document, which project the country's energy future came to effect in 2003. This further led to the development of the Renewable Energy Master Plan (REMP) in 2005. REMP focused on exploring and understanding the energy situation of the country in order to proffer solution(s) that will improve the energy policy. Hence, the emergence of the vision 20:2020 energy agenda for the country, which was released in 2009. It contains the ideology of the government at improving the economy from the present Gross Domestic Product growth rate of less than 10% to 13%. The objectives of the policy are:

1. To ensure the development of the nation's energy resources, with diversified energy resources option, for the achievement of national energy security and an efficient energy delivery system with an optimal energy resources mix.
2. To guarantee increased contribution of energy productive activities and to national income.
3. To guarantee adequate, reliable and sustainable supply of energy at appropriate costs and in an environmentally friendly manner, to the various sectors of the economy, for national development.
4. To guarantee an efficient and cost effective consumption pattern of energy resources.
5. To accelerate the process of acquisition and diffusion of technology and managerial expertise in the energy sector and indigenous participation in energy sector industries, for stability and self-reliance.
6. To promote increased investments and development of the energy sector industries with substantial private sector participation.

7. To ensure a comprehensive, integrated and well informed energy sector plans and programs for effective development.
8. To foster international co-operation in energy trade and projects development in both the African region and the world at large.
9. To successfully use the nation's abundant energy resources to promote international co-operation.

Even though the vision statement is stated as - By 2020, the energy sector will be the major engine of the nation's sustainable social, economic and industrial growth, delivering affordable and constant energy supply efficiently to other sectors of the economy (Ajayi, 2010), the Nigerian energy mix policy suffers from both operational and strategic issues.

2.2.1.1 Operational Issues in Nigeria

Energy is the mainstay of Nigeria's economic growth and development. It plays a significant role in the nation's international diplomacy and it serves as a tradable commodity for earning the national income, which is used to support government development programs. It also serves as an input into the production of goods and services in the nation's industry, transport, agriculture, health and education sectors, as well as an instrument for politics, security and diplomacy. However, inadequate government motivation and support from the stakeholders within the energy sector have been a major hindrance to the success of the energy mix policy. This is because the various actors within the sector are not properly involved in the formulation of the policy.

2.2.1.2 Strategic Issues in Nigeria

The National Energy policy for Nigeria is the one released by the Energy Commission of Nigeria April, 2003. The policy document covers the development, exploitation and supply of all the Nation's energy resources. It also covers key energy utilisation sectors; energy related issues such as environment, energy efficiency and energy financing and Energy Policy implementation. It includes strategies for system artic exploitation of the energy resources, the development and effective use of man power, supply

of rural energy needs, efficient energy technology and use, energy security, energy financing and private sector participation. However, the existing policies in the energy sector have been those of individual energy sub-sectors such as electricity, oil and gas, and solid minerals. These have been developed from limited perspectives of each of the sub-sectors and had resulted in some cases to conflicting policies and programs, to the detriment of the country's energy policy as a whole.

2.2.2 Policy issues relating to oil and gas in Nigeria

The Nigerian Oil and Gas policy covers all aspects of the oil and gas industry from upstream to downstream distribution within the country. It is the product of a five-year effort to reform the NOGI. The content of the policy is outline below:

1. The nation shall engage intensively in crude oil exploration and development with a view to increasing the reserve base to the highest level possible.
2. Emphasis shall be placed on internal self-sufficiency in, and export of, petroleum products.
3. The nation shall encourage indigenous and foreign companies to fully participate in both upstream and downstream activities of the oil industry.
4. The nation shall encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly oil exploration and exploitation methods.
5. The nation shall progressively deregulate and privatise the oil industry.
6. To attract increased private sector capital inflow to the oil industry.

The main difficulty that investors and various stakeholders within the industry have is the risk associated with uncertainty. Hence, it is the government responsibility to ensure that they continue to provide acceptable policies and regulatory environments.

2.2.2.1 Issues and themes emerging

The policy is aimed at ensuring the highest benefit for Nigeria by providing a review of existing operating contracts, agreements, and memoranda of understanding governing the activities and operations within the industry with a view of maximizing the nation's gain. However, the following issues were not addressed:

1. Issues of health and safety and environmental responsibilities of all stakeholders.
2. Lack of mutually beneficial relationship among the host communities, oil and gas operators, and the government.
3. Unattractive fiscal systems.
4. Lack of sincere local content development drive

2.3. Nature of the Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry (NOGI)

Oil was first discovered in Nigeria in 1956, in a community called Oloibiri, in Bayelsa State within the NDRN whilst oil exportation commenced in 1958. The industry currently produces an average of 2.5 million bbl per day. Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) statistics evidence the country has a proven crude oil reserve of 28.2 billion barrels, the majority of which are located in the NDRN. Nine out of the thirty-six independent states comprising Nigeria are located within the NDRN. Nigeria became a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in July 1971. The main purpose being to safeguard her interests in the international oil market while OPEC exists to regulate member countries' annual production in order to influence oil prices in the international market (Ogwo, 2016; Edomah *et al.*, 2016; Colgan, 2014; Takon *et al.*, 2014; Khan, 1994).

The Nigerian oil and gas industry is the main stay of the economy because it accounts for over 75% of the Federal government gross revenue, over 40% of the Nigerian economy GDP and about 95% of its foreign exchange earnings. In order to sustain the industry, the Federal government of Nigeria formulate a regulatory framework and appropriate policies to attract foreign investors and encourage continuous oil and gas production

within the economy. However, despite Nigeria's endowment with oil and natural gas, the financial benefits do not reflect in the life of the Nigeria people (Elum *et al.*, 2016; Watts, 2016; Kwaghe, 2015; Idemudia, 2014; Vincent and Kenneth, 2014; Frynas, 2001). In addition, Falode and Udomboso (2016), and Agbonifo (2016) asserted that more than 85% of the gas in the NDRN is being flared. Hence, gas flaring significantly and negatively impact on the Nigerian crude oil revenue (Yinusa *et al.*, 2016).

Prior to 2015, crude oil exploration and production activities occur majorly in nine states (i.e. Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers). However, Lagos and Anambra have recently joined the league of oil producing states (Oil and Gas, 2016; Okpamen, 2015). Figure 2.2 reveals the current map of oil producing states in Nigeria. The subsequent section presents the nature of the NOGI under the following sub-headings: pre-independence (the colonial era) and post-independence era.

2.3.1. Pre-Independence: The colonial era

Nigeria first began oil and gas exploration activities in 1908 during the colonial government era (Kadafa, 2012). The colonial government issued a royal charter to the British Colonial Petroleum and the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation to commence exploration activities in the Western part of Nigeria with specific focus on Araromi area. However, the operation was terminated in 1914 because of the First World War. During this period, the British colonial government amalgamated Nigeria i.e. united the different regions together (Nicolson, 1969). Shell D'Arcy (now known as Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria) made a second attempt at crude oil exploration in 1937. This attempt was abruptly stopped by the commencement of the Second World War. However, exploration activities resumed in 1947 and oil was first discover in commercial quantity in 1956 at Oloibiri in Bayelsa state. Daily production during this period was 5100 bbl.

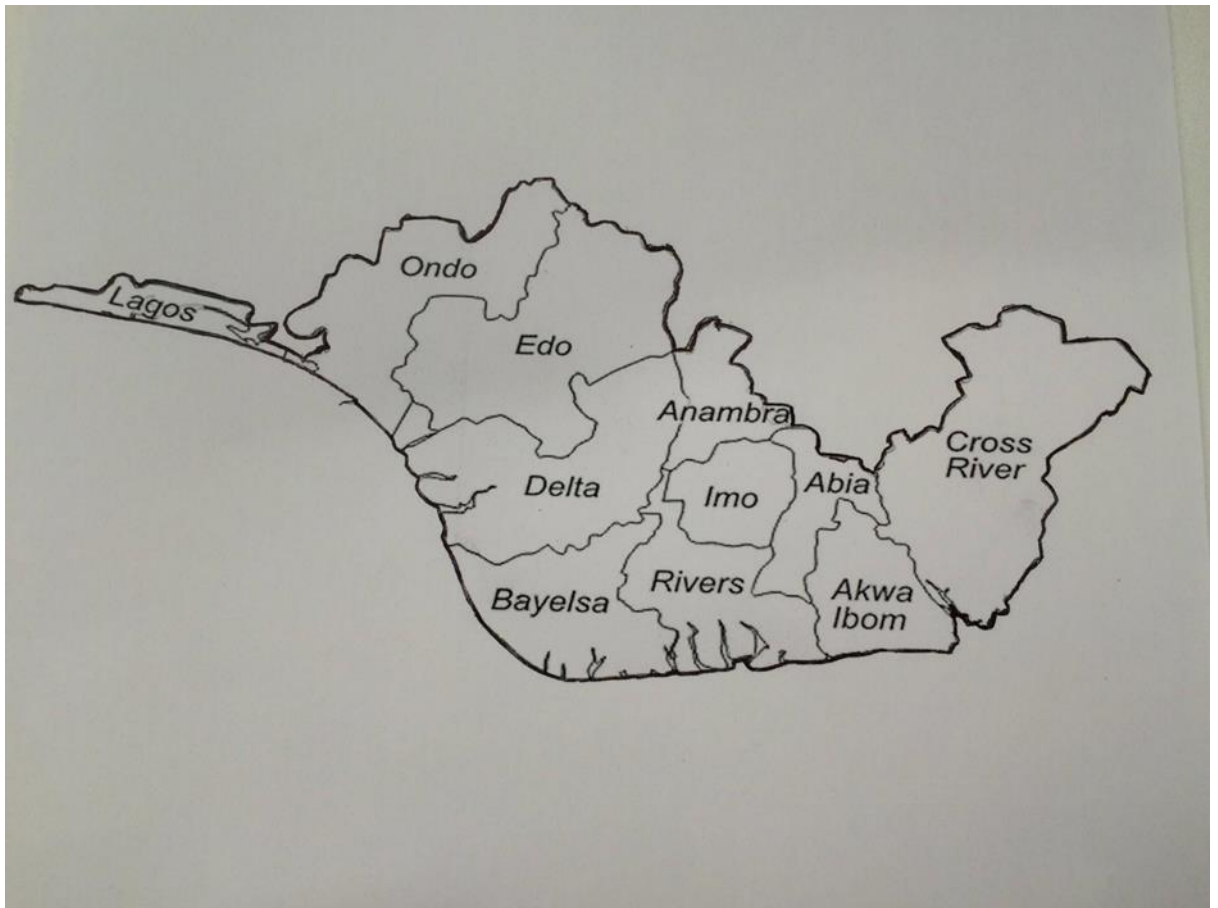


Figure 2.2: Map of oil producing states in Nigeria (Author generated)

The colonial era was dominated by the Colonial government rules and regulations, which were aimed at achieving specific policy and infrastructural targets (Aghalino, 2000). Decision making during this era was predominantly done by the Colonial government with the regional colonial governors acting and being responsible for the different regions (i.e. eastern, northern, Lagos and western) that made up Nigeria during the colonial era (Edomah *et al.*, 2016). Traditional rulers are responsible for the governance at the local community level subject to the overall control of the colonial government (Deji, 2013). However, Keulder (2000) and Edomah *et al* (2016) asserted that the influence the Colonial government has in the affairs of the local community led to a cooperative and cordial relationship between the two parties. It could be concluded that both the communities and Shell D'Arcy, which had the sole right for crude oil exploration and production activities, share a good working relationship

because there is no evidence (i.e. conflicts, violence, oil spillages and gas flaring) recorded that suggests otherwise.

2.3.2. Post-Independence

Subsequent to Nigeria gaining her independence in 1960, the first indigenous government aimed to boost the performance of the Nigeria oil and gas industry. This was achieved by encouraging and giving exploration licences to more foreign investors (for e.g. Chevron (formerly Amoseas), Texaco (formerly Tenneco), Elf (formerly Afrap), Agip and Mobil) to encourage competition as opposed to the monopoly status enjoyed by Shell (Odularu, 2008). By 1970 crude oil production rose to over 2.4 million bbl. per day, thereby putting Nigeria among the top oil producing countries in the world at that time (Watts, 2004). The Nigeria oil and gas industry experienced a turnaround in 1969 when the Petroleum Act was enacted (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). The act vested in the Nigerian government full ownership and control of all petroleum resources within its territory as opposed to the collection of lease rentals, royalties and taxes from companies operating within the industry. This was because of the resolution made by the United Nations on permanent sovereignty over natural resources.

In 1971, Nigeria became a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) due to her outstanding contribution in the exploration and production of crude oil for exporting. During this period, the Nigerian government established the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (now NNPC) with the sole aim of carrying on the oil and gas business on behalf of the Federal government through the acquisition of a controlling interest (i.e. 50% and above) in all oil and gas companies operating in Nigeria (Obi, 1993). This initiative was prompted by an OPEC resolution persuading all its member states to acquire a controlling interest in all foreign investment within their oil and gas industry.

2.4. Oil and Gas sectors and their associated activities within NOGI

Figure 2.3 shows the three major sectors with their respective associated activities within the NOGI. The operations and activities of the OPC within this industry are governed by these three sectors. In addition, the performance of these activities are within the capacity and power of the OPC and Nigerian government respectively, making the OPC and the Nigeria government the two key stakeholders within the NOGI (Idemudia, 2009). However, Orubu *et al* (2004) asserted that it is imperative to recognise community involvement within the NOGI. This is because a larger percentage of the NOGI activities are performed within the communities situated in the Niger Delta region (Omofonmwan and Odiá, 2009; Eweje, 2006; Frynas, 2001; Ikelegbe, 2001). Nannen (2004) concluded that the non-inclusion of the HC as a key stakeholder is a major cause of the growing restiveness in the NDRN since 1956, which has ultimately resulted in a crisis.

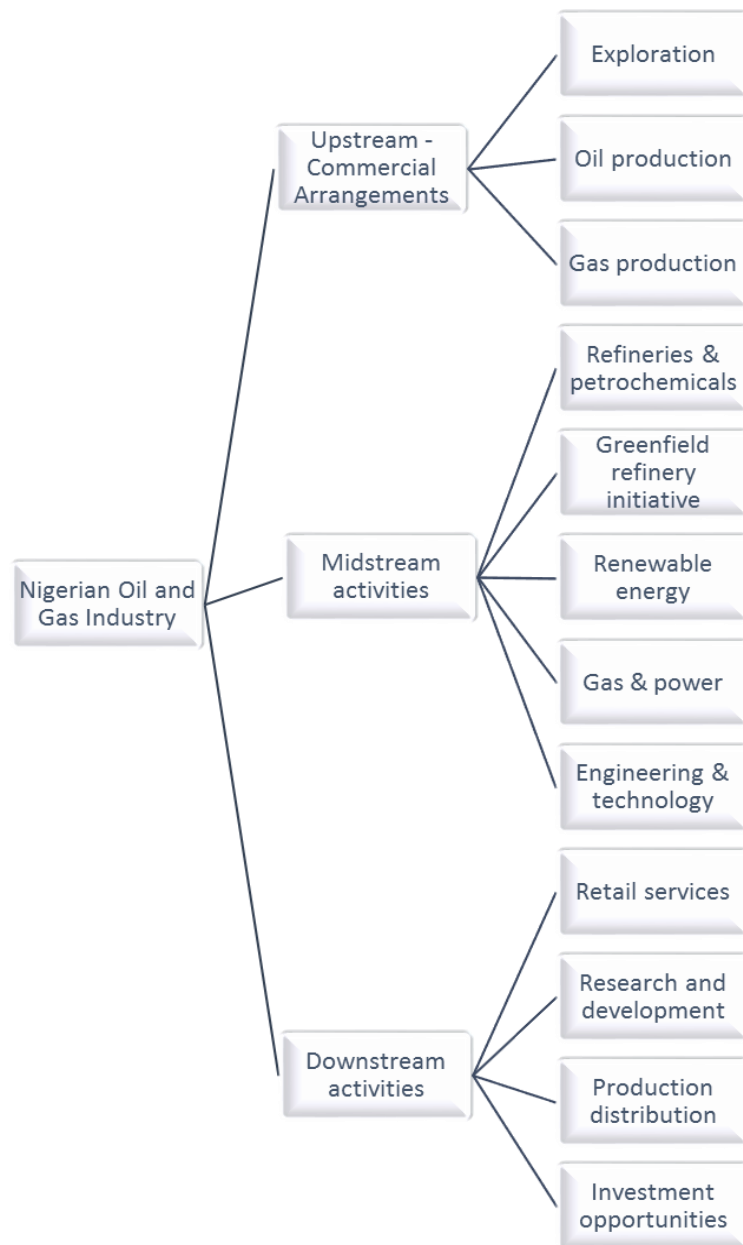


Figure 2.3: Sectors and their associated activities within the NOGI (author generated)

2.4.1. Upstream sector

The Nigerian upstream sector comprises: licence acquisition by oil producing companies from the Nigerian government, pre-drilling exploration, exploration and development drilling, production, and abandonment and restoration (NNPC, 2014). This sector searches for and recovers crude oil and natural gas underwater and/or underground and brings it to the surface for production. Arguably, it could be viewed that the

Nigerian government and the OPC are the key or main stakeholders operating in this sector. However, community involvement cannot be denied because it would be a major challenge for OPC to carry out its operations without the consent of community, despite getting the Nigerian government approval. This is consistent with Musa *et al* (2013, p. 112) assertion that “the upstream sector of the oil and gas industry of Nigeria presently lies wholly in the Niger Delta region”. At present, the recent discoveries in Lagos and Anambra states are not sufficiently developed to change this assertion.

2.4.2. Midstream sector

This sector focuses on how refined petroleum products and/or crude oil is transported or transferred (by rail, trucks, pipeline or oil tankers), stored and marketed. This sector ensures safe and appropriate movement of crude oil from point of production to refineries and subsequently to the marketers. As in the upstream sector, community consent is also required in order to allow the laying, and ensuring safety, of the oil pipelines passing through the community. Hence, the Nigerian government, OPC, including the community should be collectively viewed as the key or main players in this sector.

2.4.3. Downstream sector

The downstream sector focus on the refining of crude oil and/or natural gas recovered from the underwater and/or underground through the upstream activities. Products like liquefied petroleum gas, diesel oil, fertilizers, petroleum coke, jet fuel, gasoline, antifreeze, pesticides, rubbers, plastics and synthetic rubber, to mention a few are derived during the refining process of crude oil and/or natural gas. Nigeria has four refineries; three of which are located in Niger Delta region of Nigeria (i.e. Rivers - 2, and Delta -1) and the fourth refinery is located in Kaduna. Arguably, considering the numbers of refineries located in the Niger Delta region, the community could also be termed as a key or major player in this sector along with the Nigerian government and the OPC.

2.5. The Nigerian economy and the impact of Oil and Gas

The influence and contribution of the petroleum industry on the Nigerian economy since the discovery of crude oil in a commercial quantity resulted in the neglect of other sectors such as manufacturing and agricultural (Akinlo, 2012; Ogen, 2007). Evidence suggested that the total income obtainable from the sale of crude oil as a proportion of foreign exchange earnings intensified from 2.6% to 57.9% in 1969, to 94.5% in 1974, and greater than 97% in the 1980s. Crude oil and natural gas production, which has been ongoing for over five decades, account for over 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange incomes, represent over 85% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) and contribute more than 80% of government revenues (Watts, 2004; Iwayemi and Fowowe, 2011; Frynas, 2000).

Despite the substantial inflow from oil revenues, the Nigerian economy seems to be passing through an era of "natural resource curse" (Robinson *et al.*, 2006) or the "crude oil curse" (Ross, 2012) due to mismanagement of crude oil and natural gas resources that has degenerated into complex interactions among industry stakeholders, environmental degradation, political challenges, economic challenges, and social challenges. In addition, the Nigerian economy is experiencing what researchers refer to as Dutch disease; the decline in a nation's economic sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing as a result of its increased activities in the exploitation of natural resources such as crude oil. Arguably, a nation's desire for increased revenue through the exploitation of natural resources will result in either or both of the following:

1. An inflation in the value of its local currency which will often result in making exports less competitive
2. A neglect or under-development of other sectors due to too much economic emphasis on a single sector.

Nigeria could be assumed to be vulnerable to Dutch disease. This is because the economy of the country is solely dependent on the exploitation and production of crude oil, resulting in a neglect or under-development of the other sectors. The impacts of crude oil exploitation and production

activities will be discussed further under the following sub-headings; economic, social, political, environmental and security impact.

2.5.1 Economic impacts

The extraction, production/refining and export of oil and gas has brought about both economic advantages and disadvantages to the NDRN and Nigeria's economy as a whole. Oil and gas activities have effectively turned the country into a mono economy. Prior to and shortly after independence, agricultural produce such as groundnut, rubber, palm products and cotton contributed over 64% of total Nigerian exports. However, the focus of the Nigerian government on other sectors outside the oil and gas sector started to diminish when oil was discovered in a commercial quantity (Izuchukwu, 2011). For example, the percentage of total agricultural products exported reduced from about 64% in 1960 to 19% in 2000. The stability of the Nigerian economy is directly linked to the world energy market (Iwayemi and Fowowe, 2011). This suggests that any slightly upward or downward movement in the price of oil and gas in the world energy market affects the Nigerian economy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has emphasised the need for Nigeria's government to diversify into other sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture through market reforms and public investments (Ehie and Muogboh, 2016; Sola and Joachim, 2016; Adenugba and Dipo, 2013; Riman *et al.*, 2013; Ross, 2003).

In addition, prior to the discovery of oil and gas, the people of the Niger delta region were known for their specialty in trading, collection and processing of palm fruits, fishing, farming, and hunting. However, the emergence of oil and gas activity in the region led to the loss of livelihood of local inhabitants (UNDP, 2006). For example, the persistent occurrence of oil spillages in the region resulted in the joblessness of the anglers, who now find it difficult to provide for their families. In addition, oil and gas activities in the region have caused loss of plantations and partial disappearance of mangrove forest, thus resulting in loss of livelihood of farmers in the region (Ibeanu, 2000). Mmom and Arokoyu (2010, p. 28) referred to a mangrove forest as "a source of fuel wood, stake pole

production, fish traps, boat carving, fishing, platforms as well as shoreline protection”, which is rich in both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity. Hence, a key component of the traditional rural livelihood (Omo-Irabor *et al.*, 2011). Bisong (2001) argued that the impact of human activities on the mangrove forest prior to the discovery of crude oil was insignificant. This was attributed to low population density, subsistence agriculture and use of rudimentary technology during the period. However, the present day mangrove forest has witnessed complete depletion due to crude oil exploration and production activities, which involves the use of sophisticated technology (Mmom and Arokoyu, 2010).

2.5.2 Social impacts

For Nigerian society, oil and gas activities have given rise to occupational shifts; a situation whereby everyone (i.e. citizens of Nigeria) abandon sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing in pursuit of securing a white-collar job within the oil and gas industry. In addition, the interest of various community inhabitants within the NDRN in “traditional” community social-cultural values has diminished because of their exposure to oil and gas activities in the region (Nwilo and Badejo, 2005). This has contributed to inter and intra communal conflicts within the region (Idemudia and Osayande, 2016; Omeje, 2005). It is also evident that the emergence of oil and gas activities gave rise to an increase in poverty levels within the Nigerian economy (World Bank, 2010). Bribery and corruption has become the order of the day among the key stakeholders within the NOGI (Cragg, 2016; Flinn, 2016; Okeke and Aniche, 2013; Al-Kasim *et al.*, 2013). This has further caused instability within the region’s traditional institutions as traditional rulers who are not in tune with oil politics face removal from office (Watts, 2004).

Furthermore, the exploration and production of crude oil is a major factor responsible for the high inequality rate in the region (Ross, 2003). This could be because of unequal distribution of income among the working people. Canagarajan *et al* (1997) noted that between 1985 and 1992, the poor people became poorer while the standard of living of the rich

improved. Bevan *et al.*, (1999) concluded that the level of poverty was probably higher in 1992 than it was in the 1950s because per capita consumption was lower. Elum (2014) added that re-occurrence of oil spillage in the NDRN had significantly distorted federal government expenditure to the detriment of social welfare. In addition, Dick (2016) stated that the emergence of armed insurgency in the NDRN contributed to the devastating social implications for both the infrastructure and human element in the region.

2.5.3 Political impacts

Since 1990, the NDRN has experienced considerable political violence (Ross, 2003). Crude oil exploration and production in the NDRN has given rise to ethnic clashes, violence and corruption (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). It has fostered competition among various communities within the region, in which each community competes for resources in order to maximise the benefits available from the Nigerian government. Hence, as the urge of the communities for power increases, the government gradually loses its power (Zalik, 2004). Therefore, the sense of identity (i.e. majority-minority) could be perceived to be undergoing change within the various communities in the region (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). Furthermore, people holding power and strategic positions accumulate revenue from crude oil exploration and production for personal use, as opposed to the development of the region (Obi, 2001).

Arguably, the inability of the government to realise the expected development in the region, despite the revenue generated there has led to community antagonism against the government. Watts (2004) asserted that government dependency on crude oil revenue has resulted in the government enacting certain laws and decrees that are unfavourable to the communities in the region. Hence, the government's lapses in ensuring and providing developmental benefits within the region contribute to a sense of neglect of the communities within the NDRN. Omeje (2005) added that the political factor is the root cause of violence and conflicts in the NDRN, which is evidenced in environmental factors such as air pollution and the

poverty level in the region. Dick (2016, p. 188) concluded that “the emergence of militancy in the region comes as a result of lack of political will to protect the ecosystem from the consequences of oil exploration”.

2.5.4 Environmental impacts

The communities within the NDRN depend on the region’s environmental resources for social and economic sustenance. However, oil and gas activities within the region in the last five decades have deprived the inhabitants from enjoying the benefits of the diverse ecological zones (i.e. mangrove swamp, costal island, rain forest and fresh water zones) within the region (Kadafa, 2012; Abam, 2001). It has caused environmental depletion and degradation within the region. Oil spillage and gas flaring has become the order of the day (Ukeje, 2001), thus resulting in the loss of livelihood, destruction of agricultural lands, damage to shelter, increased poverty level, contamination of drinking water sources and decreased life expectancy resulting from accidents and/or injuries leading to death (Eregha and Irughe, 2009). It was argued that “there is a strong feeling in the region that the degree and rate of degradation are pushing the delta towards ecological disaster” (The Development Program 2006). In support of this argument, the Environmental Program (2011) reported that it would take about 30 years, with an estimated cost of over \$30 billion to be spent in the first 5 years, to restore the damage and degradation caused by oil and gas activities in Ogoniland alone where oil and gas was first discovered in Nigeria.

Elum *et al* (2016) stated that crude oil exploitation and production in the NDRN has significantly increase the rate of environmental degradation in the region and hence, contributing to loss of livelihood as a result of lack of access to rivers for fishing activities and farm lands for agricultural produce. Likewise, Nriagu *et al* (2016) added that the environmental impact of crude oil exploration and production has contributed significantly to the deteriorating health of the local communities in the NDRN. Even though various stakeholders within the industry are under obligation by law to comply with safety and environmental standards when carrying out their

operations, lack of technical know-how on the part of the OPC, compromise by and corruption of industry regulators, and lack of adequate and appropriate punishment for perpetrators on the part of the judicial body have worked against compliance (Iheriohanma, 2016; Ite et al., 2016; Odumosu, 2016).

This untenable situation has resulted in the evolution of different environmental human rights organisations, such as Environmental Right Action (ERA) and Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN), that exist to act so as to check and balance the Nigerian government and OPC on economic, social and environmental issues (Idemudia, 2016b).

2.5.5 Security impacts

Conflict in the NDRN “has assumed a radical dimension since the 1990s” (Omeje, 2006). This has given rise to frequent violent protests by militias to obstruct and subvert the operations and activities of the OPC in the region (Karl, 1997). Ross (2003) noted that the significant revenue generated from the NDRN has contributed to the persistent violence and conflicts perpetrated in the region as the militias long for power and resources control. Hence, the emergence of security threats in the region (Watts, 2004), which has consistently led to activities such as kidnapping of OPC staff, killing of security operatives, and causing destruction and damage to OPC installations. Table 2.1 summarise the different security impacts that have emerged from exploration and production activity in the NDRN.

Table 2.1: List of security impacts (summarised from Doukas *et al.*, 2011)

SECURITY IMPACTS	DESCRIPTION
Violence and conflicts	Civil.
Political instability	Strikes, protests and regime change.
Terrorist attacks	Emergence of the militias, attacks on OPC facilities, and sabotages.
Accidents	Leakages, oil spillage, tanker sinking, explosions.
Weather conditions	Interruption to crude oil supply.

2.6. A case study of Angola

Angola could be classified among the nations in Africa that is experiencing either or both of “resource curse” or “Dutch disease”. This could be attributed to the fact that crude oil exploration and production activities contribute over 95% of exports and 45% of the nation’s GDP (OPEC, 2016). Hence, Angola’s economic growth rate is dependent on the nation’s oil and gas industry. Angola is known as the second largest oil producer in Africa with a population of over 25.7 million and is located in the southern part of Africa (OPEC, 2016). Angola gained independence in 1975 from Portugal, and oil was first discovered onshore in 1955, while offshore discovery was made in the late 1960s. However, Angola’s oil and gas industry is dominated by the upstream sector, in which crude oil and natural gas exploration and production takes place.

Little attention is given to the downstream sector where refining and distribution of crude oil takes place (see figure 2.4). Crude oil became the nation’s leading export by 1975 when Angola got her independence, while much of the natural gas is vented or flared (Teka, 2011). Angola’s national oil company, Sonangol, which came into existence in 1976 to regulate and administer the oil and gas industry by partnering with various international oil companies through Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) and Concession Agreements (CAs) as a result of its controlling and access to extraction rights. Total (France), ChevronTexaco and ExxonMobil (USA), Shell (UK/ Dutch), BP (UK), and Agip/Eni Oil Company (Italy) are the main international/multi-national oil and gas companies operating in Angola (Teka, 2011). Angola became a member of OPEC in 2007 because of her steady increase in crude oil exploration and production activities (OPEC, 2016). However, Silva and Torres (2012, p. 1) asserted that “Angola remains a third world country with about one third of its population still depending on subsistence agriculture”.

Law no. 13/76 of the Angolan Petroleum Activity Law grants the Angolan State the mining/extraction rights and sole ownership of hydrocarbon/natural resources. Hence, the state is granted a bargaining

advantage with oil servicing companies and oil producing companies. The Angolan State subsequently assigns Sonangol, Angola’s national oil company, the extracting rights under the supervision of the Ministry of Petroleum as shown in figure 2.5. The Council of ministers represents the highest decision-making body, while the petroleum ministry functions as the regulatory body for the oil and gas industry with the task of formulating and enforcing the nation’s tax regime. Taxes due on oil and gas activities are remitted to the Finance ministry through the Central bank. This structure suggests that adequate and appropriate check and balance mechanisms are put in place for governance accountability and transparency purposes. However, Aguilar (2003) and KPMG (2008) have argued that the existence of fiscal connections among the various stakeholders within the Angolan oil and gas governance structure imply the existence of institutional conflict in respect to oil tax collection. Notable within the Angolan oil and gas governance structure is the non-inclusion of the community. This could be attributed majorly to the fact that crude oil exploration and production activities mainly takes place offshore, hence little or no impact is felt by the community. Therefore, the community is assumed not to be recognised as a key stakeholder within the Angolan oil and gas industry. This suggests a dissimilarity between the communities within the Angolan oil and gas industry and that of the NDRN.

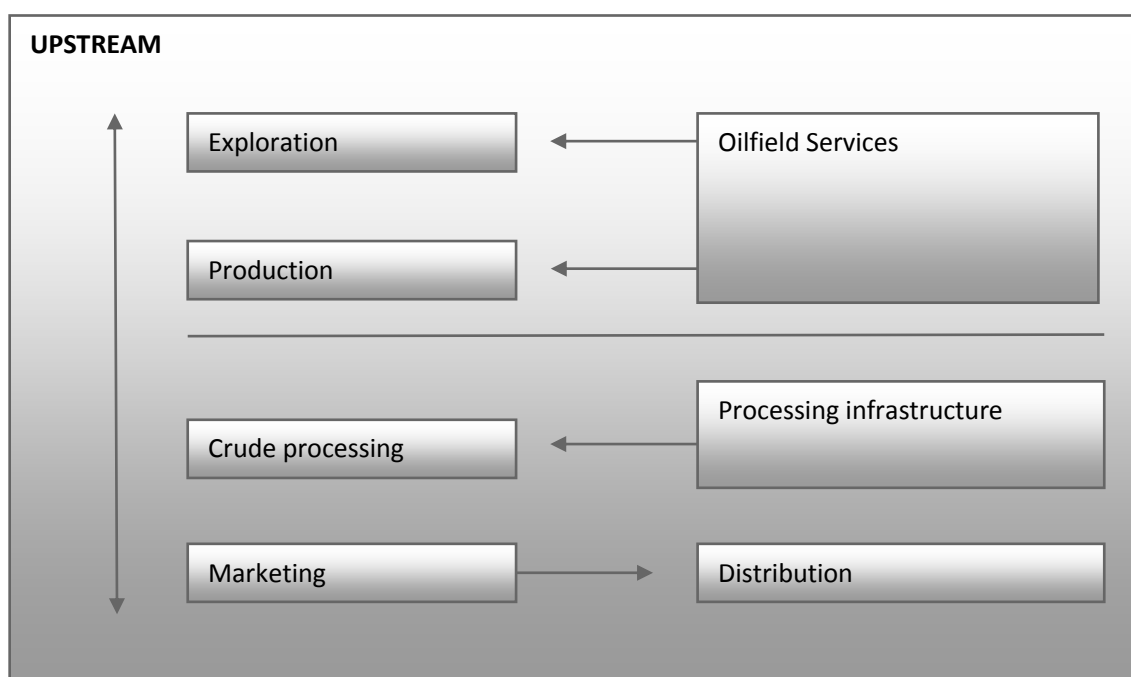


Figure 2.4: Angola oil and gas sectors (Teka, 2011)

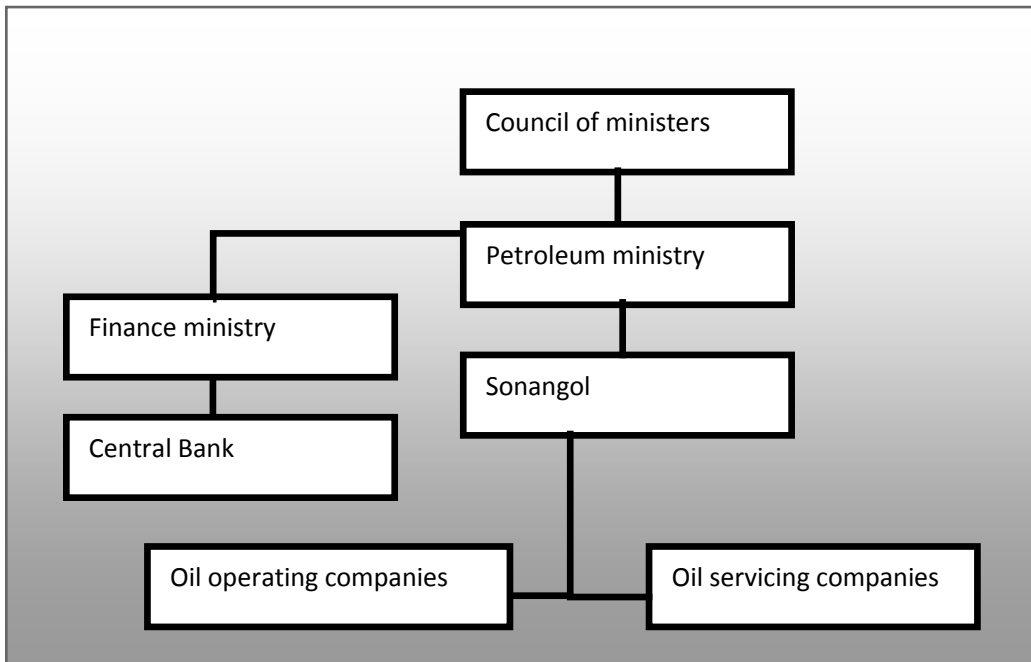


Figure 2.5: The Angolan oil and gas governance structure (Teka, 2011)

Le Billon (2001) asserted that projects implemented by the Angolan oil and gas companies (AOGC) operating within the Angolan oil and gas industry (AOGI) often lack community inputs. This is because a majority of these projects do not address pertinent issues such as human rights and transparency issues. For example, the AOGC in most cases gets away with negligence regarding mitigating against the impacts of environmental pollution. Although the increase in environmental pollution in Angola has been blamed on both the Angolan state and AOGC. The Angolan state has been perceived to have failed in its role and responsibility of ensuring that crude oil exploitation and production is carried out by the AOGC in a sustainable manner. Community, within the context of the AOGI, is also referred to as the “local people”. It is worth stating that little or no research has been carried out on the relationship between the AOGC and the community in which they operate. Hence, it would be difficult to ascertain the relationship quality between the two parties. However, Le Billon (2001, p. 61) asserted that the AOGC “employs fewer than 10,000 nationals, and there are very few local contractors”, while Ovadia (2012) concluded that there is a need to promote domestic participation and involvement within the AOGI.

2.7 An overview of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (NDRN) and the current situation

The NDRN is referred to as the largest wetland both in Africa and in the world (Eweje, 2007). It covers 112,111km square of land and is located in the south on the coastal region of Nigeria (NDDC, 2004). There are 606 oil fields in the region out of which 355 are on-shore while the remaining 251 are offshore (NNPC, 2016). The region has an estimated population of 35 million inhabitants with roughly 75% of the people living in rural areas (NDDC, 2010). The region's critical importance to the Nigerian economy is not reflected in the prosperity of the population; there is a high level of poverty evidenced in the region. Wurthmann (2006) asserted that over \$600 billion worth of oil revenue has been generated from the region since the 1960s, yet the NDRN suffers from "administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict" (UNDP, 2006). This has further degenerated into frequent conflicts and violence between *communities* within the NDRN and the OPCs operating in the region (Oyefusi, 2013). Idemudia (2010) concluded that under-development contributed to the emergence of violence and conflicts in the region. All these factors have put the OPC under pressure to meet the needs of the community people. Eweje (2007) argued that the pressure experienced by OPCs in the region was because of the Nigerian government's inefficiency in performing its responsibilities towards the development of the region. Hence the need to consider the current challenging situation in the region.

Maintaining a stable society is an important aspect of the economic development of any nation (Olson, 2008). Currently, the NOGI is experiencing re-occurring conflicts and violence, and a persistent rise in oil theft and oil bunkering, which Asun (2009) asserted as hard and difficult to evaluate i.e. putting monetary value on. This could be attributed to poor or inadequate data available for evaluation. Asun (2009) defined oil bunkering as the act of stealing crude oil, while Oriola (2016) referred to oil bunkering as hacking or breaking into OPC pipelines to steal crude oil. Oil related conflicts in the Niger Delta Region have assumed alarming dimensions. Efu-

Efeotor (1995) referred to the then-current relationship situation between OPC and their HC as a “state of war” resulting in frequent disagreements leading to loss of properties and lives. Idemudia and Ite, (2006) iterated further that the incidence of violent conflict between the OPCs and their HCs was “alarming” during 2000 and 2005. This has since further degenerated into a crisis situation that involves the government of Nigeria (Oshwofasa *et al.*, 2012). It is worth stating that other categories of community like the transit community, terminal community and impacted community are also affected by the activities and operations of the OPC (see section 2.9.4). However, the most severe and significant impacts are felt by the HC due to the nature of onshore activities and operations being carried out by the OPC within the community. Hence, the HC becomes the main focus of this research study.

2.7.1 Environmental issues

The region has recorded several incidents of oil pipeline attack resulting from the activities of the militias and some community people. This has developed into the OPCs shutting down in the short term, their activities and operations in the region. The NNPC statistics on crude oil pipeline incidence because of vandalism are presented in figure 2.6.

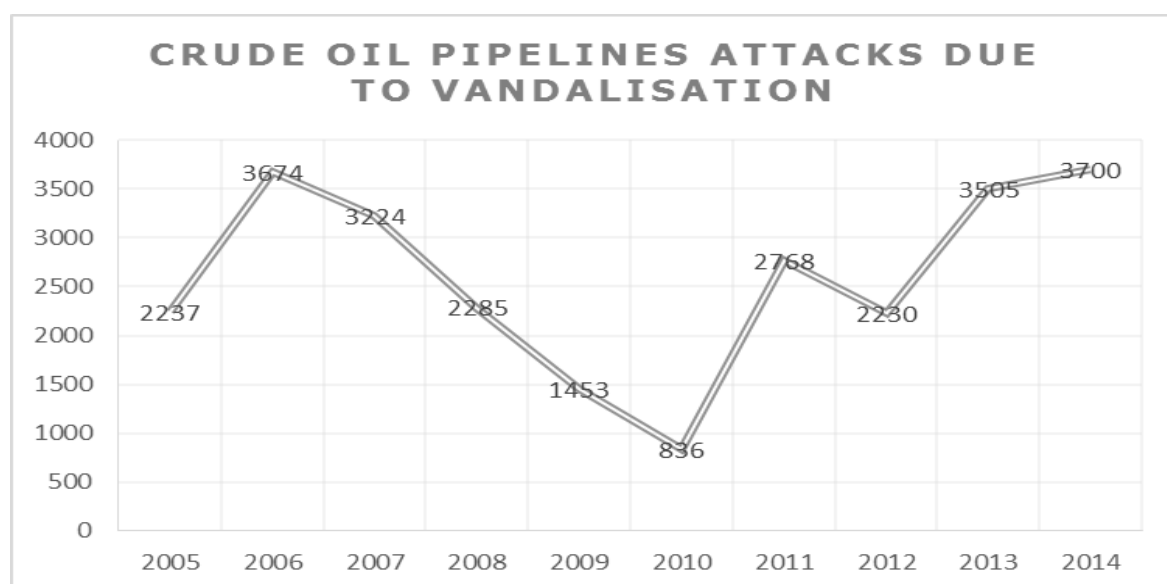


Figure 2.6: Crude oil pipeline attacks 2005 to 2014 (NNPC, 2015)

Considering the increasing trend of crude oil pipelines vandalism and the militia activities on the increase in the last 4 years, it is obvious that the current economic, political and environmental situation in the region is not fully conducive for OPC to carry out their operations and activities (Paki and Ebienfa, 2011; Omotola, 2006). This suggests that OPC must employ or embrace strategy(s) that will help reduce or eliminate the causes of violence and conflicts in the region (Idemudia, 2009). In achieving this aim, there is a need for OPC to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with their HC (Goddard, 2005). This will require a collaborative effort where both the OPC and HC will work together in making decisions that affect them in order to reach a mutual agreement. However, the stakeholder environment in the NDRN is a complex one.

2.7.2 Militia activities

Militias consist of groups of armed people who share the same ideology or beliefs and at regular intervals attack OPC and oil pipelines within the NDRN (Oyefusi, 2007). These groups comprise of indigenes of various communities within the NDRN (Obi, 2000), and are identified with the disruption to crude oil exploration and production operations and activities in the region, which often result in a fluctuation of daily crude oil production (Duquet, 2009). Watts (2008) asserted that government has seen significant reduction in its revenue and the industry has experienced instability since the emergence of the militias. Idemudia (2010) added that militias' activities have resulted in declining OPC's revenue also. Their initial aim and objective was to fight for the right and entitlements of the Niger delta communities. However, their level of influence upon the region due to their various activities has seen them achieve commendable attention from both the OPCs and the Nigerian government (Asuni, 2009; Fagbadebo, 2007). This has also resulted in the militia groups agitating for a major portion of the oil related reserves and revenues that accrues from the region for their personal use as opposed to the use of the communities in the region (Obi, 2010).

The impact of the militia activities over the NOGI is of great significance.

For example, Tantua and Kamruzzaman (2016) noted that between 2006 and 2009, the militia activities resulted in over 119 hostage taking and 300 deaths of OPC staff in the NDRN alone. During this period also, there was a significant decrease in the daily crude oil production from 2.6 million bb/d to just 700,000 bb/d (Oluwanyi, 2010). Likewise, Akhemonkhan *et al* (2012) added that the emergence of militia groups resulted in serial bombing, armed robbery, hostage-taking, and cold-blooded killings in the region. This had contributed to the increase in federal government and OPC spending on security within the NDRN (Umar and Bakar, 2016). Hence, resulting in the Nigerian government effort in bringing the militia groups to the negotiating table through the amnesty program, which offers an informal payment to militia groups in the NDRN (Tantua and Kamruzzaman, 2016). Despite making such payment, the significant impact of the militia activities is still on the increase (Okonofua, 2016). Hence, the question of whether the militia groups are under the influence or motivated by greed (Tantua and Kamruzzaman, 2016; Okonofua, 2016; Cuvelier *et al.*, 2014; Sutcliffe, 2012; Watts, 2007)

2.7.3 Complexity in relationship among Stakeholders

Complexity within this context is referred to as a situation where the various stakeholders within the NOGI operate and/or exist independently of one another (Vandekerckhove and Dentchev, 2005; Rowley 1997; Freeman and Evan 1990). Hence, establishing a common ground among the stakeholders becomes an issue. Chen (1976) defined a relationship as an association that exists between individuals and/or individuals and organisations. Simmons and Munch (1996) argued further that there must be a linkage between two or more entities in order to conclude the existence of a relationship. This suggests that relationships are often interpersonal. However, the present situation in the NDRN reveals that there is complexity in relationships among the various stakeholders, as opposed to the various stakeholders forming an association or linkage with one another. The emergence of complexity in relationships among the various stakeholders within this region has given rise to each respective stakeholder focusing on achieving its interests and goals independent of the

other stakeholders, and irrespective of the impact or consequences of this on other stakeholders. There is therefore a need to identify and understand the potential stakeholders within the NOGI.

2.8 Who is a stakeholder?

Stakeholder as a concept has several definitions (Mitchell *et al* 1997). Therefore, giving a generally acceptable description or definition of who is a stakeholder has remained a major issue for scholars (Phillips and Reichart, 1998). Various scholars (Starik, 1994; Freeman and Reed, 1983) have referred to a stakeholder as an interest group, claimant, influencer and constituent. However, for the purpose of this study, it becomes essential to define who a stakeholder is in order to carry out an effective identification of the key stakeholders within the NOGI (Fassin, 2009).

Freeman (1984, p. 46) referred to a stakeholder as “any group, organisation or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives”. This definition suggests an interdependent relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders (Hillman and Keim 2001) and that the achievement of these objectives are subject to cooperation and support from the stakeholders (Minoja 2012). However, there is disagreement as to whether stakeholders should either (or both) be considered as an entity affected by an organisation objective, or restricted to those that are crucial for the achievement of organisation objectives (Friedman and Miles, 2006). In addition, Schiller *et al.* (2013) argued that this definition widens further an organisation’s stakeholder composition to include other entities that may be affected by the organisation’s actions, while Cummings and Patel (2009) listed the employees, customers, shareholders, community and suppliers as the most essential stakeholders who can influence the achievement of an organisation’s objectives.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) define a stakeholder as any individual or group whose interest has at least some fundamental value based on its legitimate interest in the organisation. Likewise, Henriques and Sadorsky (1999), Berman *et al* (1999) and Agle *et al* (1999) argued that taking into

account the interest of different stakeholders is important. They however concluded that organisations tend to consider only those stakeholders whose interest(s) the organisation think are important. In the same manner, Diallo and Thuillier (2005) and Olander and Landin (2005) argued in favour of the inclusion of stakeholders' demands and interests in managerial decision making being a prerequisite to achieving success. Of significant concern in respect to this standpoint is determining what constitutes a legitimate interest of a stakeholder. Table 2.2 reveals suggested definitions of who a stakeholder is.

Table 2.2: Summary of Definition of a Stakeholder (Summarised from the literature)

DEFINITIONS	REFERENCES
Those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist.	Stanford, 1963; Bowie, 1988.
Are depending on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm is depending for its existence.	Rhenman, 1964; Ahlstedt and Jahnukainen, 1971.
Can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.	Freeman and Reed, 1983; Freeman, 1984; Freeman and Gilbert, 1987; Freeman, 1988; Brenner, 1995, PMI, 1996; Freeman, 2002; Andersen, 2005; Sutterfield <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Edum-Fotwe and Price, 2009.
Who have an interest and/or a stake in the outcome of the project.	Cleland, 1985; Cleland, 1986; Savage <i>et al.</i> , 1991; Wright, 1997; McElroy and Mills, 2000; APM, 2000; PMI, 2001; PMI, 2004; Boddy and Paton, 2004; Bourne and Walker, 2006; El-Gohary <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Javed <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Olander, 2007; Walker <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Couillard <i>et al.</i> , 2009.
Claimants who have a claim on the firm.	Cornell and Shapiro, 1987; Cleland, 1989; Freeman and Evan, 1991; Hill and Jones, 1992; Clarkson, 1995; Langtry, 2009.
Groups to whom the corporation is responsible.	Alkhafaji, 1989.
Are those that gain or lose because of perceived success in project implementation.	Dinsmore, 1990.
In relationship with an organization.	Thompson <i>et al.</i> , 1991; Hill and Jones, 1992.
Constituents who have a legitimate claim on the firm.	Hill and Jones, 1992; Brenner and Cochran, 1993; Donaldson and Preston, 1995.

Have one or more of the kinds of stakes in business.	Carroll, 1993; Starik, 1994; Carroll and Buchholtz, 2011.
Interact with and give meaning and definition to the corporation.	Wicks <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Nasi, 1995.
Are placed at risk because of a firm's activities.	Clarkson, 1994.

Furthermore, Phillips and Reichart (2000) argued that only humans (i.e. people) who are capable of interacting with one another should be referred to as a potential stakeholder. Mitchell *et al* (1997) opposed this standpoint because they asserted that a non-human stakeholder, such as the natural environment, exerts its influence using other stakeholders. However, Phillips and Reichart (2000) perspective is deemed important in the context of this study because of their emphasis on interaction among stakeholders, although the natural environment could be viewed as a potential stakeholder represented by those people within it. Hence, the emergence of stakeholder by proxy, which Soukhanov (1984, p. 948) referred to as "the state, quality or fact of being near or next in space, time or order" to an organisation. This further suggests that a lack of interaction among stakeholders will result in misunderstandings and inability of an organisation to carry out its activities and operations effectively (Nasi, 1995). It could also be argued that this perspective on the definition of who a stakeholder is emphasises the importance the role of humans and their interactions towards the fulfilment (or otherwise) of an organisation's objectives.

Some scholars define a stakeholder as an individual or group whose support is crucial to the existence of an organisation (Bowie, 1988). Freeman and Reed (1983) stated that any organisation that falls within this category should be viewed as dependent on identified individuals or groups for its survival. Contrary to this standpoint, Rhenman (1964) argued that individuals or groups depend on the organisation for their survival. However, the importance of these views to this study is the consistent emphasis on a dependency "relationship" among stakeholders. This further suggests the need for an organisation and its stakeholders to rely on one another for continual survival. In addition, this standpoint raises the issue of reciprocity among stakeholders, which involves stakeholders putting

effort together in knowledge sharing and value creation activities (Harrison *et al.*, 2010; Bosse *et al.*, 2009).

Similarly, a stakeholder is viewed as an individual or group who is placed at risk or accepts certain risk because of its involvement in an organisation's operations or activities (Clarkson, 1994). This suggests that an individual or group should be exposed to some risk before they can be referred to as a stakeholder. This is because a stakeholder must have a stake in an organisation, which is of value, either financial or human capital (Clarkson, 1994). However, the stakeholder stake from this author's standpoint does not essentially signify financial commitment. Freeman (1984) often referred to a stake as "interest" while Carroll (1996) considered a stake as either a share or an interest in an endeavour. It is worth noting that all these scholars agreed that a stake must involve an element of risk and be of value to its holder. However, Wolfe and Putler (2002) and Rowley (1997) concluded that the definition of a stake remains a point of argument for scholars.

Among these definitions of stakeholders summarised in table 2.2, it can be concluded that a stakeholder is an individual, group of individuals or organisation that has any of the following attributes; i) influence, ii) interest. However, Mitchell *et al* (1997) argued that these attributes will actually or potentially exclude some stakeholders. They therefore suggested that stakeholder identification should be based on the possession of any or all of the following attributes; stakeholder power to influence the firm, stakeholder legitimacy, and/or stakeholder claim of urgency. Embracing a stakeholder theory therefore indicates that partners have a legitimate claim, a stake or an interest in one another, or the power to influence. Hence, an organisation and its stakeholders can be seen to get involved appropriately (Polonsky, 1999). However, Phillips (2003) proposed that stakeholders (e.g. customers, employees and shareholders) who have a direct relationship with an organisation can easily withdraw their input, while stakeholders (e.g. non-governmental organisations and the community) whose input is indirect to the organisation will often employ

force. Therefore, exploring the attributes of a stakeholder is deemed essential for this study.

2.8.1 Stakeholder salience and attributes

Mitchell *et al* (1997, p. 854) defined stakeholder salience as “the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims”. Likewise, Bundy *et al* (2013, p. 353) defined stakeholder salience “as the degree to which a stakeholder issue resonates with and is prioritized by management”, Boesso and Kumar (2016) concluded that stakeholder salience focus on the extent to which management give priority to the various stakeholder’s claim. These definitions suggest that stakeholder salience focus on a manager’s ability to interpretation how a potential issue will affect an organisation as it attempts to achieve its objectives (Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Thomas *et al.*, 1993; Bundy *et al.*, 2013). Mitchell *et al.*, (1997, p. 873) suggested that "Stakeholder salience will be positively related to the cumulative number of stakeholder attributes—power, legitimacy, and urgency—perceived by managers to be present", while Harrison and Freeman (1999) concluded that stakeholder attributes significantly increase stakeholder salience. This suggests that stakeholder attributes help to define the salience of a stakeholder. Hence, an understanding of stakeholder salience has significant effect in using stakeholder attributes such as influence and power, urgency, and legitimacy, which help in the process of identifying key or relevant stakeholders (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997; Magness, 2008)

In the process of maintaining a generally acceptable definition of who a stakeholder is, scholars have come up with different attributes of a stakeholder (Fassin, 2009; Mitchell *et al*, 1997) while Jonker and Foster, (2002) refer to these attributes as elements of stakeholders. Scholars alike (see for example; Driscoll and Starik, 2004; Agle *et al*, 1999; Mitchell *et al*, 1997) have concluded that having a clear understanding of the attributes or elements of stakeholders is important in determining what or who a stakeholder is. This is because these attributes or elements place the stakeholders in a position that can help them determine to either neglect or

claim their stake or interest in an organisation (Neville *et al*, 2004). However, Agle *et al* (1999) argued that the possession of a stake or interest in an organisation is only effective and/or meaningful when stakeholders use the stake or interest to increase their salience. This is consistent with Mitchell *et al* (1997), Agle *et al* (1999), and Mitchell *et al*'s (2011) define of stakeholder salience as the degree to which an organisation gives priority to the competing claims of the organisation's stakeholders.

Table 2.3 reveals the various attributes or elements that scholars have refer to since the pronouncement of stakeholder theory within management discipline (Clarkson 1995; Achterkamp & Vos, 2008).

Table 2.3: Stakeholder attributes (Summarised from the literature)

Author(s)	Stakeholder Attributes	Attributes Definition
Garcia-Sanchez <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Cormier and Magnan, 2003; Choi, 1999; Mitchell <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Roberts, 1992; Freeman, 1984; Pfeffer, 1981; Dahl, 1957; Weber, 1947	Stakeholder Power and influence	The degree to which a stakeholder can get its will done by others.
Mitchell <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Grimble and Wellard 1997; Eden and Ackermann 1998; Varvasovszky and Brugha 2000; Chevalier and Buckles 2008; Jepsen and Eskerod 2009; Neville, Bell and Whitwell 2011	Stakeholder Legitimacy	The degree to which the actions and inactions of a stakeholder are accepted by society.
Mitchell <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Neville <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Jonker and Foster, 2002; Mitchell <i>et al.</i> , 1997	Stakeholder Urgency	The degree to which stakeholder claims call for urgent action.

Neville <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Driscoll and Starik, 2004; Soukhanov, 1984;	Stakeholder Proximity	The degree of closeness between stakeholders: physical, psychological and otherwise.
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2.8.1.1 Stakeholder power and influence

Power is a relational attribute of a stakeholder (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997; Freeman, 1984). Power could be defined as the ability to act so as to, implement ones will, or desire irrespective of the resistance or opposition of others (Weber, 1947). Also, stakeholder power is considered to be influence exerted on an organisation by different stakeholder groups (Garcia-Sanchez *et al.*, 2013; Cormier and Magnan, 2003; Choi, 1999; Roberts, 1992) while Freeman (1984) defines stakeholder power as the ability of the stakeholder groups to influence organisation performance and corporate strategy. Stakeholder power becomes more visible if they have access to resources that are essential for the survival of an organisation. For example, host communities in possession of land and property needed for crude oil extraction. According to Etzioni (1964), stakeholders can establish their power through three sources: (i) utilitarian, (ii) coercive, and (iii) normative, while other scholars conclude that stakeholders' could exert their power through financial or material incentives, and violence or physical force (Mitchell *et al* 1997). Arguably, an organisation's response to their stakeholders' needs depends on the intensity of their demand(s). Hence, the demand of a stakeholder becomes increasingly important to address as the stakeholder's level of power increases (Roberts, 1992).

On the other hand, influence is referred to as a situation where a party to the relationship has what it takes to compel other parties in the relationship to act even when the other parties would not ordinarily comply (Pfeffer and Pfeffer, 1981). Hence, stakeholder influence exists when a stakeholder compels an organisation or other stakeholders to behave in ways that the organisation or other stakeholders would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957). McAdam *et al* (2016) define stakeholder influence as the ability of a

stakeholder to engage with other stakeholders and consequently impact on the activities of the other stakeholders. These views suggest that a party to a relationship has the ability to bring about its desires within the relationship by influencing the other relationship parties. Mintzberg (1983) argued that influence is the equivalent of power. Roome and Wijen (2006) concluded that influence is a materialisation of power. Hence, power becomes insignificant when it is not exercised. Balta *et al* (2015) added that the importance of a stakeholder influence is often derived from power, while Hou (2016, p. 217-218) concluded that "the capability of a stakeholder to influence decision making depends on not their own action, but also how other stakeholders perceive this stakeholder's influence".

2.8.1.2 Stakeholder legitimacy

Stakeholder legitimacy is often used interchangeably with stakeholder power. Weber (1947) noted that stakeholder legitimacy and stakeholder power are separate concepts while Mitchell *et al* (1997) argued that not all legitimate organisation stakeholders are necessarily able to exercise power in a relationship. Suchman (1995, p. 574) defined stakeholder legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions". Arguably, this definition contains what could be referred to as legitimacy. Phillips (2003) asserted that legitimacy is imperative in determining the status of any stakeholder.

Mitchell *et al* (1997) identified two types of stakeholder legitimacy as *normative* and *derivative*. Stakeholders with normative legitimacy have a direct relationship with an organisation, while stakeholders with derivative legitimacy have an indirect relationship with an organisation. A clear distinction between the two types of legitimacy is that stakeholders with normative legitimacy are recognised by the organisation, while derivative legitimacy stakeholders are not recognised. However, both types of stakeholder legitimacy still affect the organisation. Mitchell *et al* (1997) concluded that stakeholders with derivative legitimacy often resort to violence in achieving their goals. Furthermore, Jonker and Foster (2002)

asserted that due attention should be given to legitimacy and power in order to determine stakeholder salience. Phillips (2003) argued that legitimacy is meant to be a part of power, while Mitchell *et al* (1997, p. 859) conclude, "Power and legitimacy are different, sometimes overlapping dimensions, and each can exist without the other". Hence, the two concepts should not be considered in isolation.

2.8.1.3 Stakeholder Urgency

"Is the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention" (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997, p. 867). They added that a stakeholder's claim could only be referred to as urgent if it is critical and has an element of time sensitivity. Critical means the extent to which a stakeholder considers its claim to be important, while time sensitivity is the degree to which postponement in responding to a stakeholder claim by management is unacceptable. This suggests that a claim that is not critical and lacks time sensitivity could be considered non-urgent by an organisation. Likewise, Jonker and Foster (2002, p. 191) define criticality as "being used in the sense of being a significant, momentous, serious issue or even a defining moment". They argued that criticality should be considered an attribute on its own, as opposed to being considered as a part element of urgency. This is because some stakeholder issues are more important than others. Hence, there is a need for prioritise stakeholder issues. Arguably, the two elements (i.e. criticality and time sensitivity) of stakeholder urgency identified by Mitchell *et al* (1997, p. 867) suggests some level of subjectivity to urgency as a concept. It therefore becomes the responsibility of a stakeholder to demonstrate to an organisation that its claim is both critical and time sensitive. Such a standpoint poses a challenge to a stakeholder seeking to establish urgency.

2.8.1.4 Stakeholder Proximity

Soukhanov (1984, p. 948) referred to stakeholder proximity as "the state, quality or fact of being near or next in space, time or order" to an organisation. Driscoll and Starik (2004) claim that the closeness between an organisation and people sharing an environment makes the people

worthy of the organisation's attention, thus creating a sense of recognition and interaction. They argued further that stakeholder proximity is not just about locations or the environment, rather it also takes into consideration some degree of commonality shared by relationship parties in respect to an idea, issues, approaches, activities and actions. Hence, the concept of cultural proximity, which contribute in identifying the position of a stakeholder come to play come (Crescenzi *et al.*, 2016). Neville *et al* (2011) concur with the significance of a stakeholder's proximity in determining their salience, but nevertheless contend that stakeholder proximity should be treated as part of both legitimacy and power as opposed to being seen as an attribute on its own. Driscoll and Starik (2004, p. 63) concluded that "the greater the proximity, the greater the likelihood of the development of stakeholder relationships".

Building on these foregoing, this study will focus on identifying the potential key stakeholders within the NOGI.

2.9 Potential key stakeholders in the NOGI

Scholars (e.g. Chika *et al*, 2014; Manowong and Ogunlana, 2010) have argued that managing stakeholders effectively begins with the stakeholder identification process. Therefore, stakeholder identification is a fundamental task for an organisation's success (Ballejos and Montagna, 2008; Friedman, 2002; Freeman, 1984). Hence, stakeholder identification underpins successful stakeholder management (Chapleo and Simms, 2010). Frooman (1999) proposed that stakeholder identification should answer the question of "who are they". Yang (2014, p. 839) defines stakeholder identification as the "development of a list of stakeholders", while Wolfe and Putler (2002, p. 77) view stakeholder identification as "a matter of determining which stakeholders are salient". Reed (2009) concluded that stakeholder identification is an iterative process. Achterkamp and Vos (2006) asserted that stakeholder identification problems have given rise to the emergence of the development of different theoretical classifications. Figure 2.7 reveals the potential key stakeholders in the NOGI. The inclusion of these stakeholder groups is because of their evident interest and the attributes

they possess (Stenseke, 2009). These key stakeholders will be assessed in more detail subsequently.

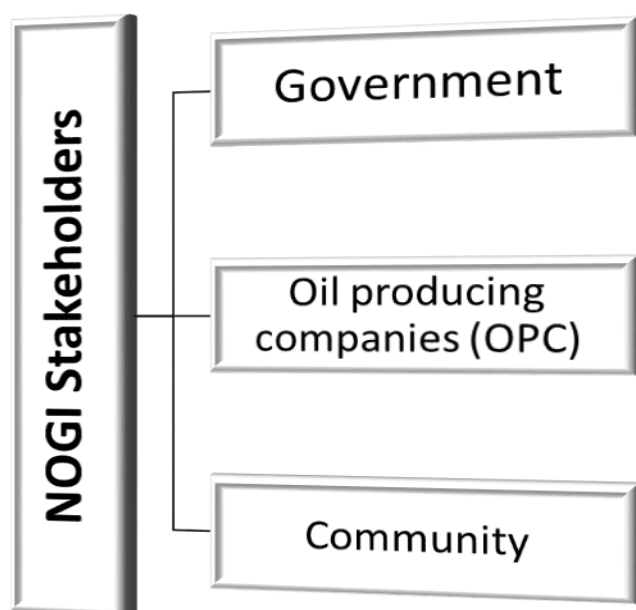


Figure 2.7: Potential key stakeholders in the NOGI (Author generated)

2.9.1 The Nigerian government and its involvement in the NOGI

Government participation within the oil and gas industry comes in two ways:

1. Through participation in the exploration and production of crude oil, the NNPC on behalf of the Nigerian government carry out activities and operations relating to crude oil exploration and production through the following arrangements; joint venture contract, production-sharing contract, service contract and marginal field concession as shown in figure 2.8.
2. Through regulation of the NOGI, via various agencies established by the government as shown in figure 2.9.

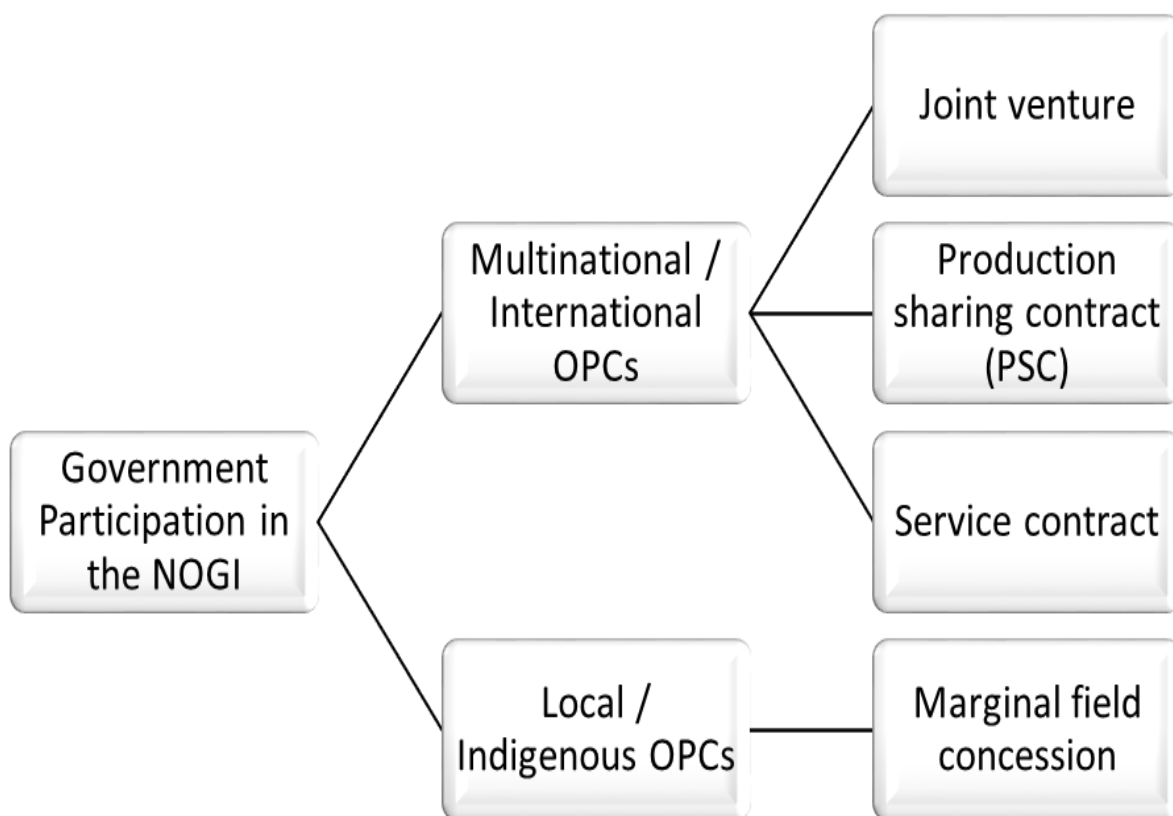


Figure 2.8: Structure of Nigerian government participation in NOGI (Author generated)

2.9.1.1 Joint venture contract (JVC)

This is a business contract agreement whereby the NNPC (a representative of the Nigerian government) acquire a stake or interest in multinational/international oil producing companies. Table 2.4 reveals the stake or interest of the Nigerian government through existing JVC, in respective multinational/international oil producing companies. Whilst the JVC opportune both the Nigerian government and the multinational or international OPCs to actively participate in the activities and operations of the joint business, they also share, in proportion to their respective stakes, the cost associated with the business operations and development. As a result, the Nigerian government is entitled to a share of the loss or profit made from the joint business in addition to the taxes and royalties paid by multinational or international OPCs.

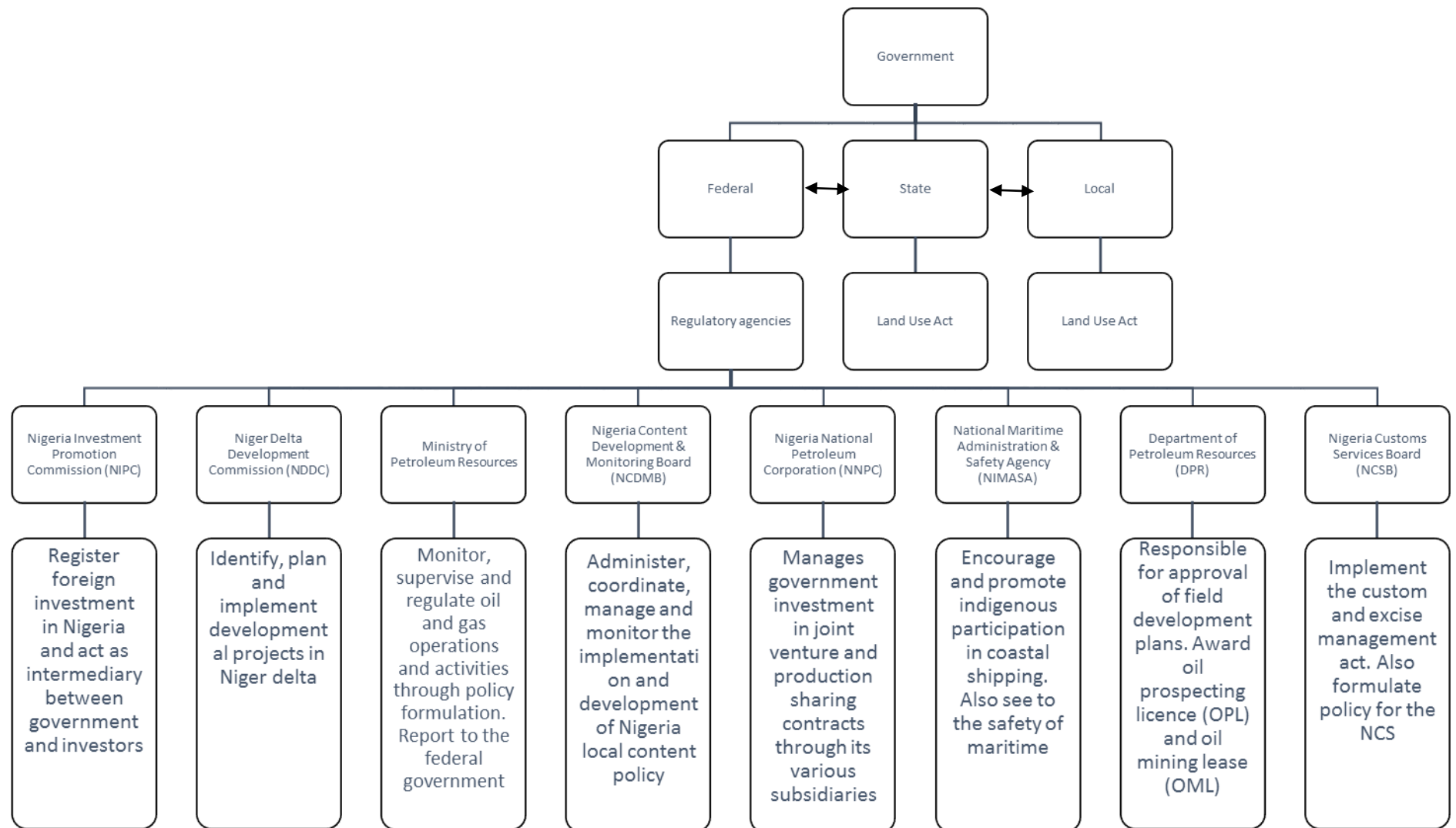


Figure 2.9: Structure of the Nigerian government regulation
(Author generated)

This contractual agreement operates within the scope of the Joint Operating Agreement (JOA).

Table 2.4: Existing JVC contracts within the NOGI (Summarised from NNPC, 2016 and Idemudia and Ite, 2006)

Multinational/ international OPC	Percentage (%) share of stake
Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd	The joint venture accounts for more than forty percent of Nigeria’s total oil production from more than eighty oil fields, which operate largely onshore on dry land or in the mangrove swamp (NNPC, 2016). The joint venture is composed of NNPC (Nigeria, 55%), Shell (Dutch/British, 30%), ELF (France, 10%), Agip (Italy, 5%).
Mobil Producing Nigeria Ltd.	A joint venture between NNPC (60 percent) and Mobil (40 percent) operating in shallow water off Akwa Ibom state in the south-eastern delta (NNPC, 2016).
Chevron Nigeria Limited	A joint venture between NNPC (Nigeria, 60%), and Chevron (USA, 40%), which is recognised as the second largest producer with oil fields located in the Warri region west of the Niger River and offshore in shallow water (NNPC, 2016).
Nigeria Agip Oil Company	A joint venture operated by Agip and owned by NNPC (60 percent), Agip (20 percent) and Phillips Petroleum (20 percent) operating small onshore fields (NNPC, 2016).
Elf Petroleum Limited	A joint venture between NNPC (60 percent) and Elf (40 percent) operating both onshore and offshore fields (NNPC, 2016).
Texaco Overseas (Nigeria) Petroleum Company	A joint venture operated by Texaco and owned by NNPC (60 percent), Texaco (20 percent) and Chevron (20 percent) operating five offshore fields (NNPC, 2016)

This contractual agreement operates within the scope of the Joint Operating Agreement (JOA). The JOA dictates the legal terms and conditions in a joint venture business. Its content as highlighted by the NNPC are as stated below; The JVC explains and specifies the level of participation of each party to the contract in running the affairs of the joint venture business.

1. The JVC sets out the party’s obligations and interest.
2. The JVC determines asset and production facilities ownership.

2.9.1.2 Production sharing contract (PSC)

This was first used in 1966 in Indonesia (Bindemann, 1999). PSC within the NOGI came into existence due to the need for the Nigerian government to have access to how effectively and efficiently her interests are managed by the OPC. Under the PSC, the Nigerian government as the owner of the crude oil engages a multinational or international OPC as a contractor or an agent to provide financial and technical services for the exploration of crude oil and development activities. The Nigerian government is represented by the NNPC who negotiate with the multinational or international OPC. The multinational or international OPC is entitled to an agreed share of the crude oil produced as a form of reward for its service and risk taken.

A PSC gives the Nigerian government the opportunity to exercise control over OPC and increase her revenue from crude oil and natural gas resources (Asante, 1979). In Nigeria, PSC is used to manage and regulate the relationship between OPCs and the Nigerian government. In addition, this arrangement has helped the Nigerian government in reducing her cash obligations and commitment towards the upstream sector. The main features of PSC are:

1. OPC will bear the total cost and risk involved in petroleum activities and operations (i.e. the process of exploring and producing crude oil and natural gas), and as well make available technical expertise required in carrying out such activities and operations.
2. OPC's reimbursement and/or compensation for item 1 is subject to successful sufficient production of petroleum products in commercial quantity to accommodate OPC's operating cost and any cost associated with borrowings or bank loans (i.e. interest). The reimbursement is capped to a maximum of 40% of the yearly crude oil production while any outstanding cost (i.e. operating and loan interest) for any particular year is carried forward until it is fully recovered.

3. Subsequent to the allocation of 40% of the total revenue to OPC's operating cost, 55% of the remaining 60% will be made to the OPC towards the payment of petroleum profit tax.
4. The remaining 5% is regarded as the profit on oil. Of this 5%, NNPC who is a government representative is entitled to 65% while the OPC receive 35%. However, if the daily crude oil production exceeds 50,000 bbl/d, the sharing formula for the remaining 5% shall be 70% for NNPC and 30% for OPC.
5. OPC carries out its activities and work programs in accordance to the terms and conditions of the contract. In addition, the OPC implement educational and training programmes for Nigerians in relation to its petroleum activities and operations.

This arrangement has helped the Nigerian government in reducing her cash obligations and commitment towards the upstream sector. More so, it is worth noting that only item 5 of the features of PSC listed above identify the need to consider the human element (i.e. the communities) within the NDRN. Hence, it is of great relevance to the current research study.

2.9.1.3 Service contract

Service contract "became more widely popular in the late 1960s when Iran and Iraq in particular concluded several such agreements" (Bindemann, 1999, p. 10). Like the JVC, it is another contract method that gives the Nigerian government the opportunity to participate and acquiring rights in the NOGI. Service contract is a method that covers the lapses that might be experienced when using the production-sharing contract. The service contract could be for technical assistance or pure service, and/or risk service agreement. A technical assistance or pure service agreement is an agreed contract of work between the Nigerian government and a contractor (i.e. OPC). All risks involved with this kind of agreement will be incurred by the government, while the contractor (i.e. OPC) carries out specific agreed service and is subsequently paid off. However, in a risk service agreement, all risks involved are borne by the contractor (i.e. OPC), and it also makes available any financial resources and/or technical expertise required in

getting the job done, while the Nigerian government retains the ownership of the concession covered by the agreement and any crude oil produced.

2.9.1.4. Marginal field concession

The emergence of the marginal field concession agreement is solely to increase the capacity and participation of indigenous or local oil producing companies in the NOGI. Ayodele and Frimpong (2003) define a marginal field as any oil field that is unattended to over a period of 10 years and has reserves that is booked and reported annually to the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR). The DPR, acting on behalf or as an agency of the Nigerian government, is responsible for regulating the activities of the NOGI. In addition, the agency issues guidelines for participation of indigenous or local OPCs to acquire and operate Marginal Oil Fields. This the Nigerian government believes will bring about technology transfer, increase the country's oil reserve, and provide employment opportunities for the locals within the industry (Otombosoba & Dosunmu, 2016; Giwa-Osagie and Ehigiato, 2015).

2.9.2 Oil and Gas producing company

The oil and gas producing company comprise of both multinational/international and indigenous/local oil producing companies.

2.9.2.1 Multinational/international

The multinational/international oil companies consist of Brass Exploration, Esso Exploration & Production, Agip Exploration, Nigeria Agip Oil, Phillips Oil Company, and Star Deep Water Petroleum. The multinational/international companies account for over 95% of total oil production in Nigeria. Their major participation in the NOGI comes in the form of either joint venture business, production sharing contract (PSC), or service contracts as explained above.

2.9.2.2 Indigenous/local

The indigenous/local oil producing companies consist of Addax Petroleum Exploration, Addax Petroleum Development, Agip Energy & Natural Resources, Chevron Nigeria, Conoco Petroleum Nigeria, Conoco Energy Nigeria, Elf Petroleum Nigeria, Hardy Oil Nigeria, Mobil Producing Nigeria, and Nexen Petroleum Nigeria. In addition, Petroleo Brasileiro Nigeria, Shell Nigeria Exploration & Production, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, Statoil Nigeria, Syntroleum Nigeria, Texaco Nigeria Outer Shelf, Texaco Overseas (Nigeria) Petroleum (Topcon), and Total Upstream Nigeria operate as indigenous/local oil producing companies. Indigenous/local companies on the other hand operate under the indigenous concession programme, which is aimed at retaining ownership and control of indigenous concessions and to encourage the growth of local expertise. For example, the Nigerian government in 2003 awarded 24 of the discovered 116 marginal field operating licenses to 30 local or indigenous companies (Otombosoba and Dosunmu, 2016; Giwa-Osagie and Ehigiato, 2015). However, it is worth stating that most of the oilfields operated under the indigenous concession programme are those oilfields relinquished and/or abandoned by international/ multinational OPCs because of their depleted oil reserve capacity, typically below daily average production of about 10,000 barrels per day (Business day, 2013; Ayodele and Frimpong 2003). This has been of immense contribution to the creation of jobs and development of local expertise. Scholars (e.g. Otombosoba and Dosunmu, 2016; Akinpelu and Omole, 2009) have also asserted that the performance of local/indigenous companies in the last three decades is commendable.

2.9.3 The Community and its attributes

The term *community* has been defined by different fields of study to connote different meaning. It explains issues of belonging and identity, inclusion and exclusion, difference and similarity, time and place, and processes such as modernisation (Delanty, 2003; Silk, 1999; Crow and Allen, 1994; Cater and Jones, 1989; Bell and Newby, 1971). Likewise, Silk (1999, p. 6) stated that *community* encapsulates "common needs and

goals, a sense of the common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action". This standpoint emphasises on the communality of the term. In addition, Crow and Allen (1994, p. 1) focused on the relational aspect of community and concluded that it offers "a convenient shorthand term for the broad realm of local social arrangements beyond the private sphere of home and family but more familiar to us than the impersonal institutions of the wider society". Arguably, it can be perceived that there are various ways in which community as a concept can be approached. Some of which are based upon; the geographical approach (e.g. Mackenzie and Dalby, 2003), the social system approach which explains social binding between groups or institution (e.g. Gandy, 2002; Allen and Hamnett, 1995), and the communion approach which focus on common practices, beliefs or identity (e.g. Radcliffe, 1999; Lave, 2003).

According to the English oxford dictionary (1993, p. 455), a community is "a body of individuals who have a sense of common identity". Going by the literature, a community is seen to comprise of members with multiple interests and players (see for example Mulrennan *et al.*, 2012 and Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). While some members may be willing to interact and work in partnership with external players, others might show no interest by distancing and analysing their community involvement with such external players. In addition, community members may not have equal access to external players and information made available. Kapoor (2002) and Ansell *et al* (2012) claims that some community do not allow specific group of people (i.e. the young people) to speak in public when there is a presence of external players in the community. This they argued further in most cases is contrary to the objective of participatory projects where the project under implementation requires input from the public or all players within the community. This suggests that an act of collaboration between a community and an external player does not necessarily mean all community members are involved. Ansell *et al* (2012) concluded that external players operating within a community through collaborative projects should give attention to the community members as a whole, as opposed to giving attention to dominant people within the community alone. This suggests that attention should also be directed to quite people

in the community. Furthermore, Mulrennan *et al* (2012) and Koster *et al* (2012) added that it is important to pay attention to community members who are not involved in a project in order to be aware of their feedback and evaluation.

Gusfield (1975), and French and Saward (1975) differentiate between two main approaches to community. First, community is considered as a geographical or territorial location of a community neighbourhood, city or town. Second, community is referred to as a relational paradigm involved with the quality of character of human relationship. Kruckeberg and Starck (1988, p.23) in support of the former assertion define community as "the city or area where the organisation is physically located". Durheim (1964) and Anderson (1983) however argued that contemporary society builds community around cohesion, skills and interest as opposed to locality. Wiesenfeld (1996), Robinson (2014), and Farrance *et al* (2016) in line with their argument termed community as homogenous groups characterised by emotional bond. This suggest that communities emerge with the passage of time through a dynamic process of definition.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggest four elements that members of a community have in common. These are membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

2.9.3.1 Membership

This is perceived as a feeling of belonging and/or a sense of relatedness to a particular member i.e. community (Buss and Portnoy, 1967; Aronson and Mills, 1959). This standpoint suggests that there are people who can be termed as members, and there are people who cannot be referred to as members of a community. Hence, the creation of a boundary that differentiates people (Backman and Secord, 1959). Scholars (e.g. Wood, 1971; Bean, 1972) added that a boundary avails members with a feeling of intimacy and emotional safety. A boundary is perceived a key aspect in defining membership because of the different measures through which people create a boundary. Boundaries can be established using dress code, language and culture of people (McMillan and Chavis, 1986), in order to

differentiate themselves from other groups (Perucci, 1963). McMillan and Chavis (1986) concluded that a boundary establishes social distances between members and non-members. Therefore, a boundary implies who is “in” and who is “out”.

2.9.3.2 Influence

Influence is perceived from two approaches. One approach is when members of a group deem it important to be able to influence the group action or activities (Zander and Cohen, 1955; Solomon, 1960; Peterson and Martens, 1972). The second approach focuses on the ability of the group to exert influence on its members (Kelley and Woodruff, 1956; Kelley and Volkart, 1952). McMillan and Chavis (1986) added that group influence of the members, and/or member influence on the group, operate concurrently. Hence, there is the need for uniformity and conformity among group members. Conformity is validating the group’s view (Cartwright and Zander, 1960; Newcomb, 1961), while uniformity suggests integration among group members. Therefore, both conformity and uniformity of behaviour implies that “a group is operating to consensually validate its members as well as to create group norms” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 6).

2.9.3.3 Integration and fulfilment of needs

This attribute suggests that participation in the group should be rewarding for its members in order to achieve a sense of togetherness (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). In addition, this attribute suggests interpersonal attraction among group members (Zander and Havelin, 1960; Hester *et al.*, 1976). McMillan and Chavis (1986) added that attraction among group members could result from either the skill possessed by a member and/or reward that a member tends to benefit from the group. Scholars have concluded that shared value is an essential part of integration and fulfilment of needs (Cohen, 1976). Hence, groups create for members an atmosphere that satisfies and meets their needs (Doolittle and MacDonald, 1978).

2.9.3.4 Shared emotional connection

This attribute originates from a shared history which members of a group are identified with McMillan and Chavis (1986). Allan and Allan (1971), and Wilson and Miller (1961) added that frequent interaction among members of a group results in their close contact. Likewise, Cook (1969) argued that group members could develop a bond with one another as a result of their positive experience. Hence, shared emotional connection encourages cohesion.

2.9.4 Types of community in the NDRN

The communities under consideration for this research study are restricted to those within the NDRN. These communities are considered a key stakeholder because of their influence and impact (e.g. economic impacts) within the NDRN. Figure 2.10 reveals the four different categories of community within the Nigerian oil and gas context. These are;

1. The **Host** community, which is also refer to as the producing communities. The host or producing communities are communities in which OPCs implement onshore activities such as exploration and production (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Agim, 1997).
2. The **Transit** community are referred to as communities where OPC pipelines pass through or communities through which crude oil produced and transported (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Agim, 1997).
3. The **Terminal** community are the communities where offshore terminal facilities are located due to OPC exploration taking place offshore (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Agim, 1997).
4. The **Impacted** community are communities who are affected by OPC operations due to their close proximity to OPC facilities (Idemudia and Ite, 2006; Agim, 1997).

In line with Mitchell *et al*'s (1997) standpoint on who is a stakeholder, all the aforementioned different categories of community can be perceived as *legitimate* stakeholders. Furthermore, in each of the different categories of community identified are different sub-groups of stakeholders as shown in

figure 2.10. These sub-groups of stakeholders are various actors who represent their respective interest(s), which in turn affect the community, OPCs, the Nigerian government, and NOGI at large. The point of attraction of the NOGI lies in the composition of the various sub-groups of stakeholders within the community. Therefore, deciding which of the sub-groups attention should be directed to during decision-making becomes an issue for other stakeholder groups within the industry. In order to capture the concerns of all these sub-groups and effectively manage their interest while avoiding conflicts among them (Robinson 2005), it becomes imperative to consider the definition of a community.

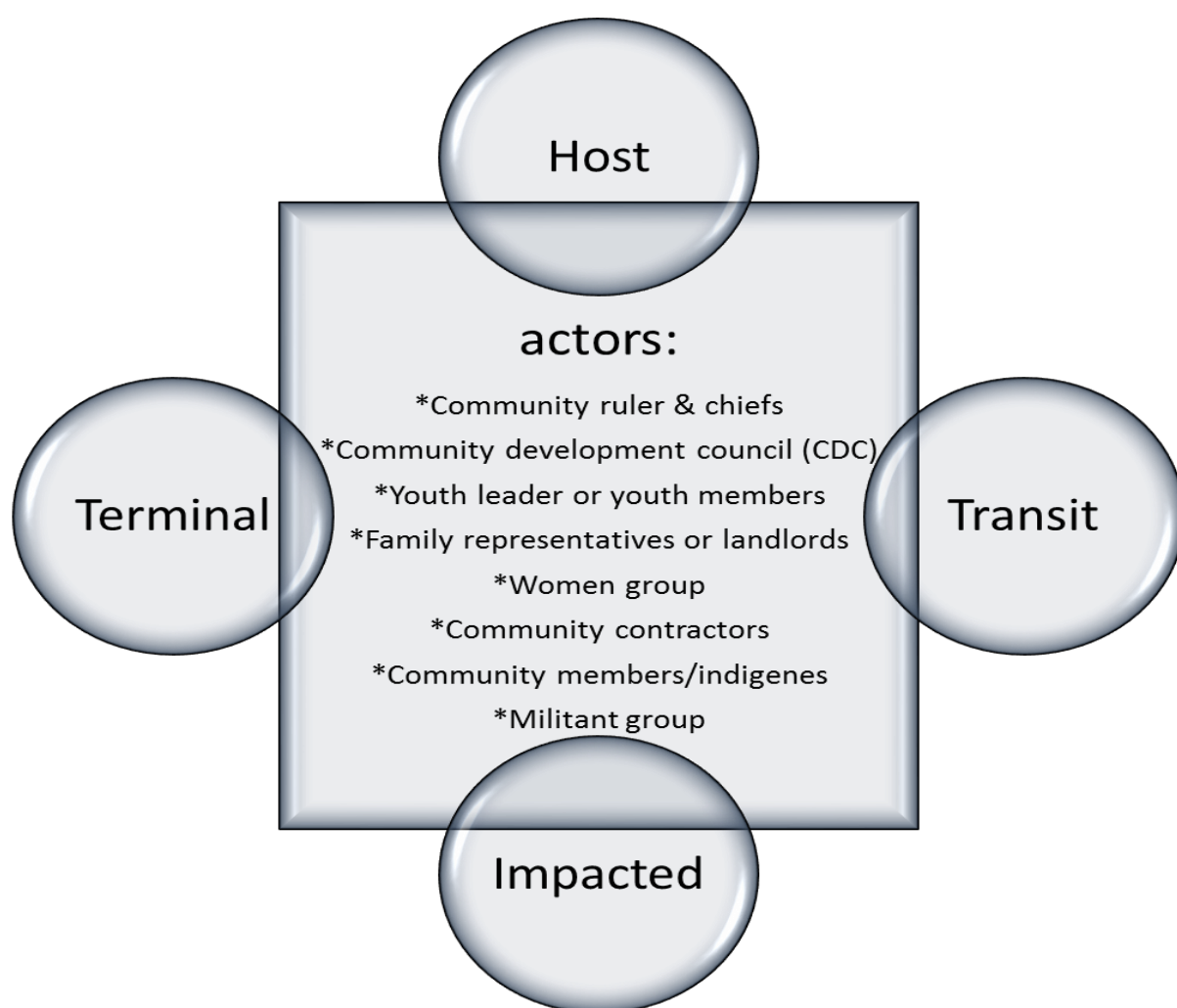


Figure 2.10: Types of community and actors (Author generated)

2.10 Relationship(s) structure among key stakeholders in the NOGI

Chen (1976) defined a relationship as the involvement or association between two or more entities. Likewise, Simmons and Munch (1996, p. 92) referred to a relationship as a "joined chain". This suggests the need for a linkage or connection between parties before a relationship could be considered being operational. Freeman (1984) stated that a relationship is a direct association between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders. Hill and Jones (1992) added that a relationship is like a network consisting of separate contracts between an organisation and its various stakeholder groups. Williamson and Winter (1991) contend that organisations do not just engage in direct relationships but also engage in indirect relationships; hence, they view parties in a relationship to be dependent on one another as opposed to being independent of each other. Arguably, these definitions suggest there are different perspectives as to what the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders should be and what it actually is.

Figure 2.11 suggests the nature of the existing relationship between the potential key stakeholders within the NOGI. The relationships between these stakeholder groups are interlinked and dependent. Rowley (1997) argued that interdependent interactions exist between stakeholders in a relationship. This is because various stakeholder claims must be assessed in order to determine how they affect an organisation's strategic goal, hence the need for prioritisation of such claims. Poplawska *et al* (2015), and Bourne (2016) concluded that this process would lead to an effective result for the various stakeholder groups.

Arguably, the development of interaction issues among various stakeholders within the NOGI could be linked to the lack of a proper and adequate understanding of the different relationships that exist within the industry (Freeman and McVea, 2001). Jahansoozi (2006) noted that proper understanding of these relationships are of great benefit and importance to the survival of any organisation. Evidenced from the current situation in the

region, these stakeholders operate independently of one another, hence focusing on their respective interest as opposed to harmonising into a collective interest. As a result, stakeholders within the industry have experienced strained relationships with one another, with the oil producing companies and their host communities experiencing the worst and/or extreme relationship (Wheeler *et al.*, 2002). Hence, the current situation calls for a more comprehensive understanding of the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC.

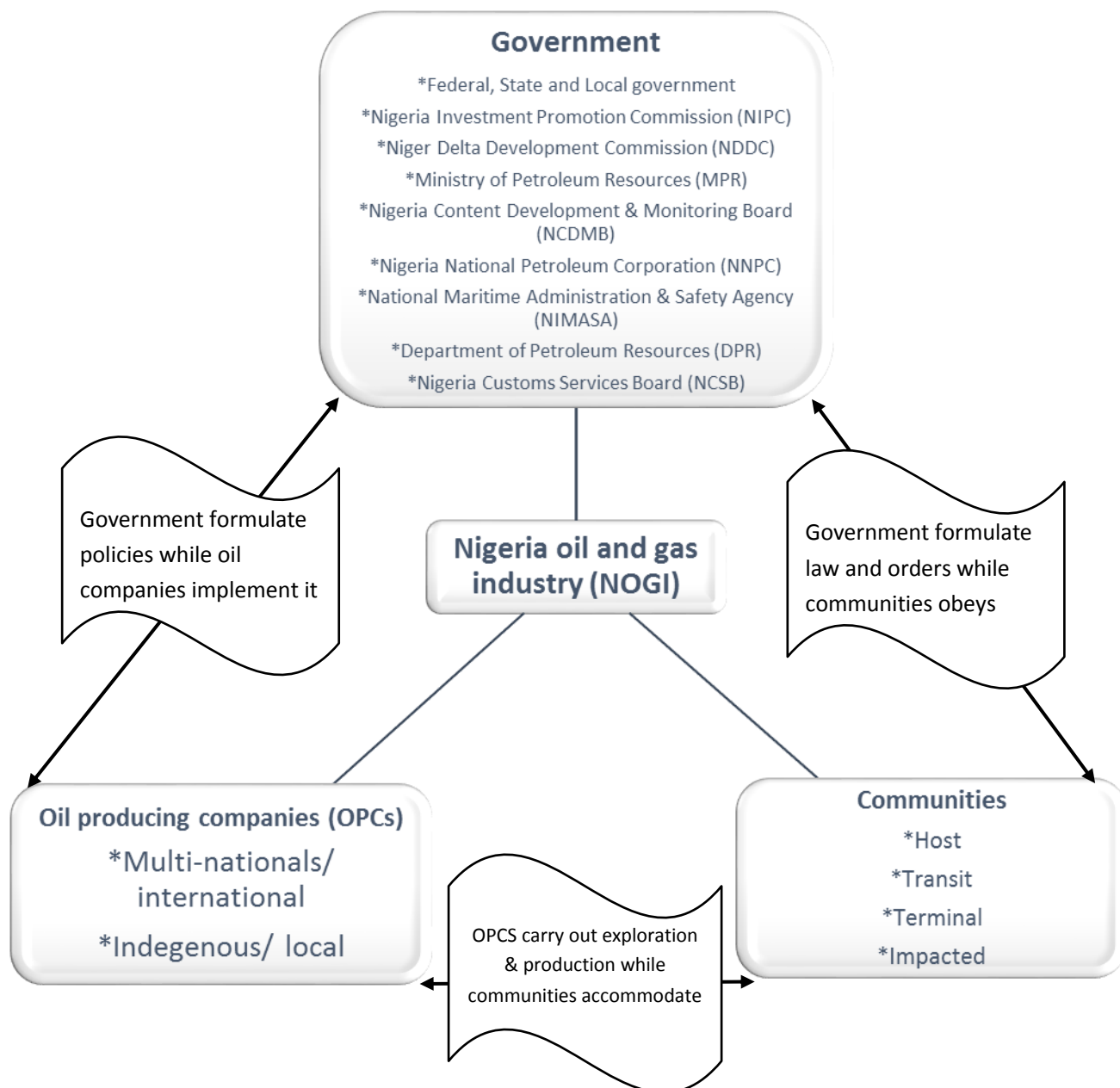


Figure 2.11: NOGI key stakeholder relationship structure (Author generated)

2.11 Attempted solutions to the reoccurring issues within the NOGI

Considering the various conflicts and violence in the NDRN in the last four decades, scholars have suggested different strategies that the oil producing companies and the Nigerian government have put to use in order to improve the quality of relationship(s) among the various key stakeholders within the industry. However, this section focuses on the strategies that have so far been taken on board by the oil producing companies in order to improve their relationship quality with the host communities. This is because limiting this research work to the relationship between oil producing companies and the host communities will provide a better understanding of what is posited to represent a community to business (C2B) as opposed to B2B relationship (Enemaku, 2001; Oso and Ayankojo, 2001; Frynas, 2005).

2.11.1 Proposed strategies

Idemudia (2009) identified the following strategies: **corporate community relations, corporate social responsibility, conflict resolution, negotiation, public relations, corporate philanthropy, and leadership** to have been applied within the NDRN in attempts to improve the relationship between oil producing companies and their host communities. However, in spite of the adoption of these strategies, the recurrent violence and conflicts between the OPCs and their HCs persisted. This resulted in Goddard (2005) concluding that finding a means of contributing to community development through building a mutually beneficial relationship between the OPCs and their HCs still remains a key challenge. In light of this assertion, it becomes imperative to review literature on the previously attempted strategies in order to identify the likely or potential reason(s) why they are not working and to make clear the boundary of the research area.

2.11.1.1 Corporate Community Relations (CCR)

CCR is defined as “a management function charged with interacting with local communities” (Altman, 1998, p. 46). Arguably, CCR involves various activities that boost an organisation’s interaction with its local communities. Waddock and Boyle (1995) referred to community relations as a means that integrates community interest with that of a company, as opposed to a shield between a company and its community. Burke (1999) argued further that a community relation is a strategic part of business thinking and action; how a company will operate in a community is defined by the community expectations and perceptions. Enemaku (2001), and Oso and Ayankajo (2001) in a similar way concluded that community relations is a reciprocal relationship between a corporate entity and the community in which it operates. However, having critiqued literature on corporate community relations, this research considers these perspectives to be of lesser relevance to the specific NDRN environment than to other environments. This is because the concept does not advocate working together in a collaborative effort between OPC and their HC in order to reach a mutual agreement. As such, Altman (1998) and Humphreys (2000) advocated that the fundamental success to corporate community relations is sincere engagement and participation by all parties involved. Likewise, Ledingham (2001) concluded that community relations should focus on the mutuality of a relationship.

2.11.1.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The definition of CSR varies in the literature (Carroll, 1999; Dahlsrud, 2008) and there is still no overall agreement on what make up CSR activities or its definition. Heald (1957) asserted that corporate social responsibility emerged because of organisations seeking to embark on activities and operations that will be considered as socially responsible by its stakeholders. Wood (1991) added that corporate social responsibility gives an avenue for an interwoven relationship between the society and the organisation as opposed to each being referred to as distinct entities, while Cannon (1992) concluded that the development of corporate social

responsibility can be linked to an organisation's involvement with its stakeholders (e.g. the government and society). However, Hopkins (2003) asserted that CSR is concerned with treating the stakeholders of the firm ethically or in a responsible manner. "Ethically" or "responsible" are deemed to be treating stakeholders in a manner acceptable in civilized societies. However, the standard of measure in determining the level of 'acceptable' is unknown. Therefore, the wider aim of CSR is considered as creating a higher standard of living while preserving the profitability of the corporation (Dahlsrud, 2008).

Corporate social responsibility is also considered as comprising activities performed by organisations to its stakeholders that are beyond legal and economic obligations (Matten and Crane, 2005; Waddock, 2004). Arguably, CSR as a concept assumes that organisations engage in activities, which are mandatory obligations, and beyond their financial interests (McWilliams *et al.* 2006; Windsor 2006; Carroll 1979). This is consistent with Waddock's (2004, p. 9) assertion that corporate social responsibility entails "strategies and operating practices a company develops in operationalising its relationships with and impacts on stakeholders and the natural environment". In addition, corporate social responsibility involves different programs and policies which reveal an organisation's relationships with its stakeholders. Baughn and McIntosh (2007) concluded that corporate social responsibility focuses on different aspects such as; workplace safety, community development and human rights protection. Consequently, Wanderley *et al* (2008) perceive corporate social responsibility as a concept in which organisations are responsible for the good of the society.

Cannon (1992, p. 33) stated, "Business only contributes fully to a society if it is efficient, profitable and socially responsible". This suggests that organisations are socially responsible if they stand to benefit from such actions or activities (Bagnoli and Watts, 2003; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; Baron, 2001). Some of the other benefits obtainable by organisations that engage in corporate social responsibility are; employee retention and image or reputation building. This research draws on the literature to conclude that CSR is more of a legal requirement for

businesses to adhere to rather than advocating collaborative effort between businesses and the society. Some also viewed it as essentially being another form of public relations.

2.11.1.3 Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an essential characteristic of any social relationship and/or human society. Conflict comes to play when parties to a relationship (for e.g. individuals or groups) perceived that their interests and/or goals are being opposed or challenged by the interests and/or goals of the other relationship party(s) (Rubin, 1994; Mitchell, 1981). Borys and Jemison (1989) asserted that parties to a relationship should be prepared for a certain level of conflict, however resolving such conflict should also be their priority, while Deutsch (1969) and Assael (1969) concluded that the impact of conflict resolution on any relationship could be either destructive or productive. Hence, conflict resolution can either have a positive and/or negative outcome. Deutsch *et al* (2011) referred to productive impact as the one that produces a positive outcome, which often-times results in satisfaction between relationship partners, while a destructive impact leads to dissatisfaction between relationship partners and in most cases results in material losses. Thus, the manner in which relationship partners resolve conflict has implications for relationship success.

Some scholars (see for e.g. Deutsch, 1973; Burton, 1990; Fisher, 1990; Kriesberg, 1992) define conflict resolution as a political process via which the differences in interests and goals perceived by parties to a relationship are resolved. This suggests that conflict resolution explains how parties to a relationship can eliminate perceived interests and goal incompatibility. In addition, conflict resolution refers to a psychological process, which requires a relationship party to change its beliefs in respect to its interest and goals in order to suit the interests and goals of the other relationship party (Burton, 1990; Kriesberg, 1992; Ross, 1993; Bercovitch, 1996; Kelman, 1997; Fisher, 1997; Worchel, 1999). Plowman *et al* (2001) argued that understanding how resolution strategies work is essential in resolving

conflict quickly. This suggests the need for organisations to be proactive and work towards scenario planning (White, 2001; Stroh, 1999).

Conflict resolution literature also emphasises the importance of trust, openness and mutual understanding as key elements in ensuring an appropriate working relationship among parties in a relationship (Fisher and Brown, 1988). Ramsbotham *et al* (2011) concluded that the main target of conflict resolution is to transform potential and/or actual violence into a peaceful and friendly processes of political and social change. This study concludes that conflict resolution is a mediation process that comes to play subsequent to the occurrence of misunderstanding between relationship parties as opposed to a process of ensuring mutual understanding between relationship parties right from the onset of their relationship.

2.11.1.4 Negotiation

Negotiation is an essential form of social interaction. It is widely useful when there are no previously established procedures to solving an issue, or whenever conflict emerges between people that requires a settlement (Lewicki and Litterer, 1985). Negotiation is defined as a medium through which two or more parties make a joint decision (Carnevale and Isen, 1986; Pruitt, 1991). Also, Ury and Fisher (1981, p. 33) describe negotiation as a "process of communicating back and forth for the purpose of reaching a joint decision". These definitions suggest that negotiation involves forming or reaching a joint agreement that will benefit the parties involved under certain terms and conditions. In addition, some scholars (e.g. Harsanyi, 1956; Ury and Fisher, 1981; Raiffa, 1982; Kraus, 2001) refer to negotiation as a process whereby parties communicate and compromise in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Arguably, parties can be perceived to possess a common goal of ensuring cooperation. In addition, negotiation is important among relationship partners in ensuring successful interaction towards accomplishment of objectives.

Follett (1940) asserted that a successful negotiation requires reaching an integrative solution from the people involved. Thompson (1990) added that an effective negotiation should ensure that a mutual agreement is reach

between people involved. Even though Raiffa (1982) argued that the achievement of a mutual agreement situation between people relies on the negotiation agreement itself. An integrative solution is when incompatible goals and interests are reconciled in order to achieve a joint benefit (Walton & McKersie, 1965; Pruitt, 1991), while joint benefit refers to the collective gain of the parties in the final agreement. Based on the foregoing, it is obvious that negotiation takes place between two or more people in order to achieve an objective that they cannot, or prefer not to, achieve on their own. However, despite these people aiming towards achieving the same objective this does not signify mutual understanding between them.

2.11.1.5 Public Relations

Public relations is one of the most recognized discipline and dates back to the beginning of the 20th century (Cutlip, 1995; Sitrick and Mayer, 1998). Many organisations took on board public relations staff in order to develop relationships with their stakeholders such as customers. Dilenschneider (1996) referred to public relations as the art of influence. Also, Crable and Vibbert (1986, p. 5) defined it as a "multiphased function of communication management that is involved in researching, analysing, affecting, and re-evaluating the relationships between an organization and any aspect of its environment". Likewise, Grunig & Hunt (1984) describe public relations as how practitioners should behave or how the public should be affected. These definitions suggest that public relations influences beliefs and values, explains acceptable behaviour and identifies desired outcomes.

Lovell (1982) emphasised that the focus of public relations is to promote an organisation's goodwill, while McElreath (1993) and Lesly (1988) stress that public relations is a management function with the sole purpose of understanding and facilitating relationships between an organization and its environment. Likewise, Newsom *et al* (1989, p. 6) referred to public relations as "the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization and the

public interest". These definitions suggest that public relations put the organisation in a position to persuade its ecosystem while there is no reciprocal persuasion from its environment, thus putting the organisation in a position to dominate over its environment.

However, Ledingham (2003, p. 184) defined public relations as the "effective and efficient management of organization–public relationships, based on common interests and shared goals, over time, to engender mutual understanding and mutual benefit". In addition, Falconi (2010, p. 5) concluded that public relations in "the 21st century focuses on building relationships with stakeholders by listening to their needs and expectations, thereby improving both organizational reputation as well as organizational decision-making". Despite that, there is an aspect of public relations that takes into consideration the attitudes and actions of the environment in which an organisation operates, this study concludes that public relations focus more on organisational image building or reputation than on striking a mutual understanding between the organisation and its environment.

2.11.1.6 Corporate Philanthropy

Corporate philanthropy as a concept has received commendable attention from different scholars (e.g. Schwartz, 1966; Fremont-Smith, 1972; Levy and Shatto, 1978; Useem and Kutner, 1986; Haley, 1991; Useem, 1991, 1993; Burlingame and Kaufman, 1995; Bockelman, 2000). Some scholars (e.g. Fry *et al.*, 1982; Navarro, 1988; Useem, 1993) have considered corporate philanthropy as a way in which corporate organisations can gain a close tie with their stakeholders (e.g. customer), while others have referred to corporate philanthropy as a way of corporate giving (Galaskiewicz and Wasserman, 1989; Galaskiewicz and Burt, 1991). Traditionally, it was argued that firms exist solely for meeting stakeholders' interests, which they do while increasing their economic returns (Friedman, 1970; Bremmer, 1994). In support of this standpoint, Lehman and Johnson (1970) regarded corporate philanthropy as a charitable giving of an organisation's resources to its stakeholders below market price. This implies that corporate philanthropy, as a way of giving entails giving of

monetary or gift contributions for charitable or social cause (e.g. health care, culture, education and disaster relief) by corporations (Seifert *et al.*, 2004; Godfrey, 2005; Wang *et al.* 2008). Arguably, these standpoints suggest that corporate philanthropy focuses more on building the image of an organisation with its stakeholders as opposed to ensuring mutual working relationships with various organisation stakeholders, hence corporate philanthropy could be referred to as an advertisement tool for corporate organisations (Seifert *et al.*, 2004). However, there is disagreement among scholars as to whether corporate philanthropy is meant to promote the image of an organisation with the public or increase its profit (Bock *et al.*, 1984).

Furthermore, Aldrich & Fiol (1994, p. 648) stated that "corporate philanthropy helps a firm achieve socio-political legitimacy, which is obtained when the general public, including key stakeholders or government officials, accept a firm as appropriate and right in terms of existing norms and laws". Sharfman (1994) added that organisations make use of corporate philanthropy in order to create their presence in support of community and social services. This standpoint can be linked to a viewpoint regarding corporate philanthropy as a discretionary responsibility for an organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997; O'Neil *et al.*, 1989; Aupperle *et al.*, 1985), which influences the image of an organisation in the eye of its various stakeholders (Saiia *et al.* 2003; Himmelstein 1997; Smith 1994). Jones (1994) and Wartick and Wood (1998) referred to discretionary responsibility as an organisation's ability to decide on its free will how its resources will be allocated for social or charitable purposes. This suggests that corporate philanthropy is a voluntary giving, as opposed to an obligatory giving, and that it reveals the ability of an organisation to respond to "needs" in its environment.

Amidst the various perspectives on the definition of corporate philanthropy, scholars suggest its benefits as; "for the purpose of securing rewards and reducing penalties from significant external publics" (Neiheisel, 1994, p. 42), and enhance brand image and promote an organisation's products' (File & Prince, 1998). In addition, corporate philanthropy "helps firms gain

social legitimacy or approval from the public, including their key stakeholders, which helps them obtain cooperation and support from stakeholders including employees, suppliers, customers, and residents of a collocated community” (Wang and Qian 2011, p. 1160), and mitigate the risks of reputational losses (Fombrun *et al* 2000; Williams & Barrett, 2000; Godfrey, 2005). However, some scholars concluded that corporate philanthropy has a negative impact on corporate financial performance due to the nature of expenditure extended on corporate philanthropy operations and activities (Friedman, 1970).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that corporate organisations are perceived as public institutions responsible for some social good (Boatright 2000). A philanthropy-based organisation is focused on abetting public problems (e.g., crime, illiteracy, poverty, environmental pollution and unemployment) in order to improve the quality of life and societal welfare (Jamali *et al.*, 2008). As such, corporations exist to serve the society and promote social advancement (Carroll, 2009). This research therefore posits that corporate philanthropy represents acts of charity which opportune an organisation to gain legitimacy within its environment as opposed to reaching a mutual agreement between the society/community and itself.

2.11.1.7 Leadership

The term leadership has been consistently used in management discussions and is often used interchangeably with ‘management’. House *et al.* (1999, p. 184) defines leadership as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization” while Drucker (2006) defined a leader as someone who has followers. Yukl (2002, pg. 3) concluded that “most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation”. In short, leadership is governed by the process of influence that focuses on inspiring people towards a common goal through personal motivation. It is not the focus of this work

to open a definitional discussion of leadership, as the current situation in the Niger Delta Region requires a mutual collaboration between OPC and the Host Communities rather than OPC making effort to influence and motivate or “lead” their HC.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the commonly used strategies do not aim at establishing a mutual understanding situation between the OPC and HC. None of the strategies suggested have made an attempt to explore and understand the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. Rather, these strategies have focused on solving the after-effect resulting from the conflicts and violence between the two parties. Therefore, digging into the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC as a form of understanding the constructs of relationship quality between the two parties is suggested to be of great advantage in further helping the OPC in preventing future conflicts and violence, as opposed to looking for remedies after their occurrence. However, the various strategies mentioned above have had some limited success in several areas.

2.11.2 Recorded achievements

The various strategies mentioned in section 2.11.1, which the OPC has explored within the NDRN with the main purpose of promoting a mutual relationship with the HC, has achieved the following successes:

2.11.2.1 Capacity building

This is essential in the process of facilitating community development among the various communities within the NDRN. Capacity building is focused on the ability of the OPCs to ensure and encourage the development of the human factor within the NDRN. Labonte (1999) asserted that developmental efforts could only be maintained, sustained and made permanent through the encouragement of capacity building. Arguably, capacity building can be viewed as people having the right skills and attitude needed in order to perform appropriately on their job. Ojo (2009) concluded that OPCs have encouraged capacity building within the NDRN. This they have achieved by providing both unskilled and skilled jobs,

training and expertise of various kinds and levels to the community inhabitants within the region.

2.11.2.2 Social and basic infrastructures

Ojo (2009) noted that OPCs in their small way of contributing to the community have focused on making available social and basic infrastructures to the communities within the NDRN. He concluded that OPC have made available infrastructures and amenities such as water, roads, electricity and community halls. Sunjka and Jacob (2013) added that the provision of social amenities such as good roads, electricity and good water in the NDRN received significant attention from the OPC since 2009. However, of great concern is how and who will be responsible for the maintenance of the social amenities provided to the community by the OPC.

2.11.2.3 Healthcare

Idemudia (2009) emphasised on the effort of OPC towards the provision of health centres and equipment within the region. OPC have been said to include in their community development plans the need to facilitate good health care among the various communities within the region. In addition, Ojo (2009) stressed that OPC is working in partnership with the government in ensuring and curbing the spread of diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea within the region. For example, a study was conducted on 600 participants selected within different communities in the NDRN to assess disease symptoms in order to determine and/or profer a solution (Nriagu *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, Gonzalez (2016) asserted that SPDC's significant contributions and investments in immunization and malaria programmes are invaluable.

2.11.2.4 Education

Eweje (2007) asserted that this is an important area of focus for the OPCs. He noted that in the process of encouraging and ensuring that the community people are well educated, OPC have invested in recruiting

competent teachers, building schools within the region, providing modern day equipment, and awarding scholarships to members of the communities who will like to further their education beyond the college level (Idemudia, 2009; Ojo, 2009). For example, Amadi and Abdullah (2012, p. 63) stated that “SPDC, in partnership with NNPC, Total and Agip runs an annual scholarship programme, to support undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The scholarship is of two categories, namely National Merit Award (NMA) and Areas of Operation Merit Award (AOMA). While the former is open to the larger Nigerian undergraduates, the latter is exclusively for students from communities in which the SPDC operates”.

2.11.2.5 Empowerment

Eweje (2007), and Gonzalez (2016) stated that OPCs have empowered the community people in different ways, such as training the community women in the process of learning hairdressing and sewing, which is aimed at encouraging entrepreneurial ability among the community women. In addition, Idemudia (2009) added that community men are encouraged to learn carpentry as well. All these can be referred to as skills acquisition for the community people, hence a means of empowering the people towards adding economic value to their communities. Likewise, Anthony and Pratt (2016) asserted that OPC has invested in different community empowerment programmes through CSR. Tobor and Muzorewa (2016) concluded that the main objective of empowering the community people is to give them the opportunity to address their peculiar needs, issues and problems.

2.11.3 Need for improvement

Agim (1997) asserted that an understanding of the relationship perspective between the OPC and HC could result in harmonious relationship between the two parties. Zandvliet and Pedro (2002) added that the relationship between the OPC and HC is informed by a number of perceptions which the two parties should be aware of and address. Adomokai and Sheate (2004) stated further that there is a need to encourage a satisfactory or more desirable relations between the OPC and HC in the area of decision-making

process on issues pertaining to the NDRN. This suggests that HC should be allowed to make contributions and also participate actively in decision making process. They added that a satisfactory relations between the two parties will improve and foster positive changes which could eliminate conflict and violence between the OPC and HC within the region. This is consistent with Idemudia and Ite's (2006) assertion that an understanding of the relationship between the OPC and HC could encourage community empowerment and foster harmonious relationship between the parties. Nzeadibe *et al* (2015) concluded that understanding stakeholder relationships in the NDRN could facilitate successful project execution. Hence, all the aforementioned assertions suggest the need to explore and understand what a relationship is.

2.12 Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of Nigeria, the Nigeria oil and gas industry, and the Niger delta region of Nigeria. In addition, this chapter has reviewed the stakeholder literature along with different strategies employed by the OPCs in the process of promoting mutual relationship with their HCs. Despite the deficiency of reaching a consensus on who is a stakeholder on the part of scholars within the field, the stakeholder literature reviewed gave an insight into who can be referred to as a stakeholder and the stakeholder attributes that could be considered in the stakeholder identification process.

Building on the contextual background, chapter 3 will explore and analyse the literature on relationship quality.

Chapter 3

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The concept of *relationship* emerges from the field of relationship marketing (Christopher *et al.*, 1991; Gummesson, 1995; Buttle, 1996), which is focused on “attracting, maintaining and, in multi service organisations, enhancing customer relationships” (Berry 1983, p. 25). Likewise, Gronroos (1994, p. 355) added that relationship marketing is about “establishing, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. This is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises”. This suggests that relationship marketing can be termed as a process by which parties to a relationship obtain what they desire by creating and exchanging value with one another (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). This standpoint views relationship marketing as transactional in nature.

However, contrarily to this standpoint, some scholars (e.g. Christopher *et al.*, 1991; Rust *et al.*, 2004) have argued that the focus within the relationship marketing paradigm has shifted completely from a transactional paradigm to a relationship paradigm. The relationship paradigm focuses on having a long-term orientation that will result in a win-win situation among relationship parties, while the transactional paradigm is merely a one-off exchange between relationship parties. Berry (1983) further define relationship marketing as a marketing strategy that takes into consideration every activity required by a firm to create, maintain, and develop its customer relations. Appendix 1 reveals the paradigm shift in the definition of relationship marketing from transactional to relational.

Furthermore, this chapter builds on the existing studies to develop and present the proposed framework for the current research study and its associated propositions. The framework draws on research from

relationship quality theories after thorough assessment and evaluation of relevant empirical literature. Hence, the development of a descriptive and theoretical representation of the research study. The research study framework provides an explanation of the connections and/or interrelationships between the constructs identified. These connections and/or interrelations are the outcome of the various propositions proposed by previous research studies (Sekaran & Bougie 2010).

3.2 What is a Relationship?

There is no consensus among scholars of a single definition on what a relationship really is; the concept has varying definitions in different disciplines.

Hinde (1979, 1981) cited in Blumstein & Kollock (1988, p. 468) within the **social psychology** discipline define a relationship as "a series of related interactions, each affected by past episodes, and in turn affecting future interactions". This definition considered *relationship* to be symbiotic in nature because the behaviour of people or groups within the relationship affects each other. Likewise, Hakansson and Snehota (1995, p. 25) define a relationship as "a mutually oriented interaction between two reciprocally committed parties". They regard mutual orientation and commitment as an essential aspect of the interactions between relationship parties. In addition, it could be argued that the presence of mutual orientation and commitment connotes dependency between them, such that the existence of one party depends on the survival of the other party.

Within the **communication** discipline, a relationship is referred to as a link existing between two or more people with a mutual purpose over a period of time (Coombs, 2001). Relationship in this respect is considered a two-way route where parties involved need to be aware of each other and their respective interaction.

Ledingham and Bruning (1998, p. 62) within the **public relations** discipline define a relationship as being the "state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact

the economic, social, political, and/or cultural wellbeing of the other entity". Broom *et al* (2000) added that a relationship is as a series comprising interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between the parties involved. They claim that there exist different properties between the people involved and the relationship itself. This leads to a distinction between the attributes, perception and identities of the people involved in the relationship. Ledingham (2003, p. 190) asserted that an effective theory of *relationship* should encourage collaboration because "effectively managing organizational-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics".

However, it is worth stating that a significant body of research and literature on relationship adopts the standpoint of the organisation and thus incorporates some level of corporate biasness in it. From this point of view, people who are not in support of the organisation's objectives are pictured adversely and the organisation is required to please them. Hallahan (2004, p. 775) concluded that relationship involves "routinized, sustained patterns of behaviour by individuals related to their involvement with an organisation ... and thus are part of a total organisational-public relationship". Even though all these scholars have different approaches to the definition of a relationship, they all seem to view relationship as a form of interaction, which often arises between two or more parties because of the outcome interdependence.

3.2.1 Types of relationship

The evaluation of types of relationship is important in order to assess the relationship that exists among relationship parties. It provides and describes the features of a relationship and the expected relationship outcomes (Grunig, 2002). The types of relationships will be discussed under the following subheadings: exchange or discrete transaction relationship and communal or relational exchange relationship.

3.2.1.1 Exchange relationship

In an exchange relationship, one relationship party provides benefit to another in return for something that is of comparable value (Grunig, 2002). The comparable value provided could be a future expectation or something for immediate exchange. This suggests that relationship parties are only willing to give benefits to one another because there is a benefit of comparable value to receive in return. This type of relationship is also referred to as a **discrete transaction** relationship. Macneil (1980, p. 60), asserts that “the archetype of discrete transaction is manifested by money on one side and an easily measured commodity on the other”. Discrete transaction relationships are characterised by narrow content and limited communications. For example, a purchase of unleaded gasoline made by a passing customer at a filling station. In addition, a party receiving a benefit in an exchange relationship must have incurred an obligation in the past or should be ready to return a favour in the future (Hung, 2005). Hence, there is an uncertain time component dimension in this relationship. Exchange relationship is the foundation on which relationship marketing as a concept was formed (Grunig, 2002). However, an exchange relationship is not suitable for all organisation’s stakeholders. For example, the public (i.e. the community) expect more benefit from an organisation compared to what the organisation will benefit from that public.

3.2.1.2 Communal relationship

In a communal relationship, relationship parties “are willing to provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they believe they might not get anything in return” (Grunig, 2002). This relationship type is viewed as a departure from the discrete transaction relationship, which suggests that the parties involved have no expectation of an exchange of benefits but merely provide benefits in a philanthropic manner (Clark & Mils, 1993). Communal relationship is also referred to as a **relational exchange** relationship (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). Macneil (1978) asserted that in a relational exchange relationship, transactions transpire over time such that a transaction’s history is viewed

in order to promote anticipation into the future. Going by this standpoint, Ganesan (1994) asserted that communal or relational relationship has a long-term relationship orientation. An organisation often engages in a communal or relational exchange relationship with different stakeholders such as the community and their employees in order to add value to itself. Communal relationships with different stakeholders are important if an organisation wants to contribute to its community and to be socially responsible. Participants often derive personal satisfactions, which in most cases result in social exchange. This is because participants' duties occur over a period. Dwyer *et al* (1987, p. 13) differentiate discrete transaction relationships from relational exchange relationships using 12 key features of a contract as shown in table 3.1.

This is not to say that discrete transaction or exchange relationships should be discarded. Goldberg (1979) claims that when relationship parties engage in a transaction or exchange relationship, three main issues emerge: i) how participants make choices from available options, ii) what possible outcomes will emerge from the selected participant option, and iii) how do outcomes depend on the structure of available options i.e. competition. Goldberg (1979, p. 95) concluded that it "is an extremely useful analytic construct and should properly be viewed as a special case a subclass of exchange...in many contexts explicit recognition of relational elements adds heat but sheds no light". This standpoint is of the opinion that transaction or exchange relationships should not be perceived as bad for an organization. Rather, researchers should recognise that often times, relationships begin with an exchange relationship and subsequently develop into relational or communal relationships as time passes by. Contrary to this, Grunig (2002) argued that organisations could need to start a relationship from a communal relationship in order to arrive at an exchange relationship. Nevertheless, Grunig (2002) asserted that an organisation's measure of relationship success with its various stakeholders will relate to its level of communal or relational relationship with such stakeholders. Ganesan (1994) concluded that long-term relationships place an organisation in a sustainable competitive position, promote cooperation,

allow mutual dependency among parties involved, and encourage goal and risk sharing.

Table 3.1: A comparison of Transaction and Relational Exchange Relationships (Adapted from Dwyer *et al.*, 1987)

	Discrete Transaction	Relational Exchange
Contractual Elements		
Timing of exchange (commencement, duration, and termination of exchange)	Distinct beginning, short duration, and sharp ending by performance	Commencement traces to previous agreements; exchange is longer in duration, reflecting an ongoing process
Number of parties (entities taking part in some aspect of the exchange process)	Two parties	Often more than two parties involved in the process and governance of exchange
Obligations (three aspects: sources of content, sources of obligation, and specificity)	Content comes from offers and simple claims, obligations come from beliefs and customs (external enforcement), standardized obligations	Content and sources of obligations are promises made in the relation plus customs and laws; obligations are customized, detailed, and administered within the relation
Expectations for relations (especially concerned with conflicts of interest, the prospects of unity, and potential trouble)	Conflicts of interest (goals) and little unity are expected, but no future trouble is anticipated because cash payment upon instantaneous performance precludes future interdependence	Anticipated conflicts of interest and future trouble are counterbalanced by trust and efforts at unity
Non-contractual Elements		
Primary personal relations (social interaction and communication)	Minimal personal relationships; ritual-like communications predominate	Important personal, noneconomic satisfactions derived; both formal and informal communications are used
Contractual solidarity (regulation of exchange behaviour to ensure performance)	Governed by social norms, rules, etiquette, and prospects for self-gain	Increased emphasis on legal and self-regulation; psychological satisfactions cause internal adjustments
Transferability (the ability to transfer rights, obligations, and satisfactions to other parties)	Complete transferability; it matters not who fulfils contractual obligation	Limited transferability; exchange is heavily dependent on the identity of the parties

Cooperation (especially joint efforts at performance and planning)	No joint efforts	Joint efforts related to both performance and planning over time; adjustment over time is endemic
Planning (the process and mechanisms for coping with change and conflicts)	Primary focus on the substance of exchange; no future is anticipated	Significant focus on the process of exchange; detailed planning for the future exchange within new environments and to satisfy changing goals; tacit and explicit assumptions abound
Measurement and specificity (calculation and reckoning of exchange)	Little attention to measurement and specifications; performance is obvious	Significant attention to measuring, specifying, and quantifying all aspects of performance, including future benefits
Power (the ability to impose one's will on others)	Power may be exercised when promises are made until promises are executed	Increased interdependence increases the importance of judicious application of power in the exchange
Division of benefits and burdens (the extent of sharing of benefits and burdens)	Sharp division of benefits and burdens into parcels; exclusive allocation to parties	Likely to include some sharing of benefits and burdens and adjustments to both shared and parcelled benefits and burdens over time

3.3 Relationship Elements

It is worth stating that there are limited research studies on relationship elements. Hence, the field has been dominated by few researchers. Medlin *et al* (2005), Hakansson and Snehota (1995), and Hakansson and Blankenburg and Johanson (1992) demonstrated through a robust framework the properties of a relationship using network analysis, in which actors are seen to be performing activities and/or control resources. They suggest that relationships can only be meaningful when considered in respect of three elements i.e. actor bonds, activity links, and resource ties. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) stated that a partner relationship involves three crucial aspects of activity links, resource ties and actor bonds. Halinen *et al* (1999) added that actor bonds, activity links and resource ties bind relationship partners together, thus giving rise to interdependence and

stability between them. Ford *et al* (1998) argued further that the presence of these properties in any relationship could result in:

1. Transactional relationship: this relationship type does not involve any integration between relationship partners. Hence, a partner's offering is undifferentiated from that of others.
2. Facilitative relationship: this relationship type takes into consideration a relationship partner's position to acquire relatively undifferentiated products at lowest cost. The relationship partners are willing to invest in resources ties and activity links in order to increase the cost benefits of the relationship.
3. Integrative relationship: in this relationship type, a partner expects benefits beyond those of lower costs and what is being offered. The relationship partners' consistently work together for a mutual purpose.

Ford *et al* (2008) concluded that activity links, actor bonds, and resource ties are critical to relationship partners' strategy and capability development.

3.3.1 Activity Links

Hakansson and Snehota (1995) argued that defining *activity* poses some difficulties because there is no given generally accepted activity unit. They define an activity "as a sequence of acts directed towards a purpose" (p. 52). The sequencing of acts suggests that activities can be separated in various ways. They noted further that activities could be viewed as internal or external for easy categorisation. Internal are activities peculiar to a partner, while external are activities involving other partners in a relationship. From the economist standpoint, activities are either viewed in isolation (Porter, 1985), or jointly (Alchian and Demsetz, 1972). Likewise, organisation theory offers a standpoint that is focused on interlocking of activities (Weick, 1969). He argued that activities occur naturally such that the development of an activity is influenced by how other activities are performed. This suggests that activities emerge over time.

Various activities are performed by partners in a relationship. The type of activities performed depends on the kind of transaction(s) that transpire between relationship partners. For example, in a buying and selling relationship, activities such as product development, purchasing and selling, and information processing occur between the partners. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) placed emphasis on the importance of activity links in any relationship, stating that it helps explain the concept of 'doing right things' and 'doing things right'. They asserted further that relationships are affected by the way the partners perform their respective activities. Gummesson (2011) stated that activity links include activities of an administrative, technical and marketing type. Likewise, Hakansson and Snehota (1995, p. 26) categorised activities into "technical, administrative, commercial and other activities of a company that can be connected in different ways to those of another company as a relationship develops".

Furthermore, activity links embrace the interdependence of activities between relationship partners. This suggests that the activities of a partner affect the activities of the other partners in the same relationship. Hence, activity links have important consequences on relationship rate and quality development. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) argued that activity links between partners often require adjustment, reallocation and adaptation of activities between them. This suggests that relationship activities are not implemented in isolation, rather they depend on the activities of other relationship partners. By means of activity links, the partners in a relationship can establish what they can do, and how they can relate to each other. Hence, activity links permit effective interaction and collaboration among relationship partners.

Activity links are also referred to as a form of coordination which could be attained by "mutual adjustments of activities i.e. adaptations" (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995). Hakansson (1988) defined mutual activity as activity performed together by partners within a relationship, while Turnbull and Valla (1986) conclude that adaptation between relationship partners requires a high level of cooperation. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) identify the following benefits of activity links to a relationship:

1. It integrates a single activity of a relationship partner into a wider pattern.
2. It brings about economic gain for a relationship. This is achieved through efficiency among relationship partners.
3. It makes possible activity reallocation among relationship partners.

3.3.2 Actor Bonds

Actor bonds are fostered by interaction and connection through economic, psychological, physical and emotional attachments that bind relationship parties together in a relational exchange (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Turner, 1970). Actor bonds have been conceptualised to involve social, financial and structural bonding (Armstrong and Kotler, 2000; Smith 1998; Williams *et al.*, 1998; Berry, 1995; Wilson, 1995; Berry and Parasuraman 1991). Social bonding places emphasis on the importance of relationship partners understanding one another's needs and staying in touch in order to sustain the relationship (Berry, 1995). This is consistent with Smith's (1998) claim that social bonding comprises personal connections centred on friendship and interpersonal interactions. Lawler and Yoon (1993) concluded that social bonding encourages relationship partners in the continuity of a relationship. Financial bonding represents the economic ties that serves as a motivation between relationship partners to carry on a relationship (Smith, 1998; Sharp and Sharp 1997), while structural bonding comes to play as a result of each relationship partner's decision to achieve something through the other partner (Han, 1998). Peltier and Westfall (2000) concluded that structural bonding confers on relationship partners a long-term competitive advantage position.

Medlin (2002, p. 2) defined the *actor* as "an individual who commands some resources and activities of a firm", while a *bond* is said to arise in a relationship when "two actors mutually acquire meaning in their reciprocal acts and interpretations (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995, p. 197). These definitions suggest the importance of the people (i.e. individuals or organisation) within a relationship, which suggests that without people, a relationship cannot exist. Medlin and Quester (1999) stated that actor

bonds connect two or more actors and influence their view of interaction. From this standpoint, bonds between relationship partners become important as they shape the identities of the partners. However, Skaates (2000) noted that relationship partners' identity is not merely the characteristics or features of a partner, rather it has to do with the act of interpretation by another partner. Arguably, bonds between partners may change their perception about the way they see and interpret the relationship. Bonds between partners emerge when they exhibit towards one another some interest and attention (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Medlin and Quester, 1999). This standpoint further asserts that no actor can exist by itself, rather actors need to depend on each other for survival. Hence, the need for integration between relationship partners. This is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota's (1995, p. 194) assertion that actor bonds "explore how the individual's capacity to recognize, communicate, learn, teach and develop is transferred to a collective level".

Scholars (e.g. Han, 1992; Mummalaneni and Wilson, 1991; Williams *et al.*, 1998) have demonstrated that bonds contribute to a higher level of communication between relationship partners. Hence, allowing an expression of trustworthy intentions by the partners. Likewise, Rodriguez and Wilson (2002) argued that bonds encourage relationship continuation, which relationship partners achieve through trust. Hakansson and Snehota (1995, p. 264) stated that "actor bonds are important for the development of a company's capabilities, not least because they are a prerequisite of access to the counterparts, their resources and activities and thus a condition for effective learning and capability development". This suggests that actor bonds create a necessary competency avenue and opportunity for relationship partners to achieve anticipated or desired objectives. In summary, actor bonds describe an interdependent relationship process, which involves the formation of each relationship partners' identity in relation to one another through interaction, and the development of mutual trust and commitment. In addition, the development of bonds between relationship partners requires time.

3.3.3 Resource Ties

Relationships consist of different resources. Relationships represent an avenue via which partners have access to diverse resources that can be used and exploited. Hence, a relationship has an effect on how partners utilise their resources. Zolkiewski (2001) categorised the different resources available to relationship partners as; people, finance, materials, knowledge and expertise, while Hakansson and Snehota (1995) group the various relationship resources as knowledge, material, technological and other intangibles of two or more partners. These resources are essential for the sustainability of each partner's activities.

Resource ties as a concept describe a number of relationship areas such as having a knowledge and awareness of a partner's resources. In a relationship, resource ties occur when partners become aware of and interact about, their respective resources (Holmen *et al.*, 2005). Arguably, resource ties involve a process of learning, in which a relationship partner for example has appropriate knowledge into which resources the other partner has access. Welch and Wilkinson (2002) stated that relationship partners develop resource ties in the process of accessing and exchanging each other's resources. Likewise, Yamagishi *et al* (1988) argued that resource ties facilitate exchanges and create positive connections between relationship partners, as opposed to competing for available resources.

Hakansson and Snehota (1995) had a slightly different opinion to the aforementioned perspective. They argued that resource ties are not just about accessing or acquiring resources, but also involve combining or bringing together the resources of relationship partners. Hence, this will result in various resource ties between the partners. Grant (1991, p. 95) added that "resource ties account for what a company will be capable of doing; at the same time, they reflect what a company has been accustomed to do. It can therefore be concluded that resource ties are not only a means to accessible resource, but also allow interaction, learn how and for what purpose various resources can be put to use between

relationship partners. Hence, resource ties are important in a relationship for resource development.

Scholars have suggested that resource ties give rise to mutual adaptation and coordination of resource between relationship partners, and eliminate the risk of relationship partners exhibiting opportunistic behaviour (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Moller and Wilson, 1995). In addition, resource ties enable efficient use and development of relationship resources, lower relationship administrative costs, and the creation and sharing of knowledge (Kalwani and Narayandas, 1995; Turnbull *et al.*, 1996; Spencer *et al.*, 1996; Welch and Wilkinson, 2002). Furthermore, Hakansson and Snehota (1995) stated that resource ties allow relationship partners to adapt their resources towards one another in different ways. Holmen *et al* (2005) added that resource ties give rise to ideas on how relationship partners can use their resources in a new combination. This suggests that when relationship partners have the appropriate knowledge and interaction with one another about their respective resources, there is bound to be an adaptation of resources between them. Hence, Hakansson and Snehota (1995, p.136) concluded that "as resource ties develop between two companies they become mutually and increasingly interdependent".

3.4 Relationship quality and its context of study

Relationship quality as a concept results from research and theory in the field of relationship marketing (e.g. Dwyer *et al.* 1987; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Gronroos, 2000; Gummesson, 1987; Gummesson, 2000), which the main focus of is to strengthen and make stronger existing relationships (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). Crosby *et al* (1990), and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) stated that relationship quality provides an assessment of the strength of a relationship. These definitions suggest that relationship quality focuses on the assessment and evaluation of how well or satisfied relationship partners are in the fulfilment of their expectations or needs. Hakansson (1982) added that during the evaluation process of a relationship, it is imperative to take into consideration the relationship

partners behaviour and their ability to meet one another's needs, while Jap *et al.* (1999) contemplated that relationship quality assessment focuses on different aspects (e.g. future expectations, and process and attitudinal variables). The last-mentioned definition implies that relationships consist of various processes where by one process serves as a prerequisite to the other (Jap and Anderson, 2007; Dwyer *et al.* 1987) and that relationship requires frequent assessment (Eggert *et al.* 2006). Johnson (1999, p. 6) asserts that relationship quality is "the overall depth and climate of the inter-firm relationship", while Huntley (2006, p. 706) concluded that relationship quality is the "degree to which buyers are satisfied over time with the overall relationship".

In addition, some scholars provide a context based relationship quality definition, which focuses on relationship parties' interactions. For example, Lagace *et al.* (1991) define relationship quality as the level of interaction between relationship parties (i.e. the physician and the pharmaceutical sales person). In a different context, Moorman *et al.* (1992, p. 316) viewed relationship quality as "the degree to which users view user-researcher interactions as productive". Holmlund (2001, p. 15) provides a working definition that views relationship quality as "the joint cognitive evaluation of business interactions by key individuals in the dyad, comparatively with potential alternative interactions". These context based definitions also suggest that relationship quality focuses on relationship evaluation which is focused on either relationship partners' interaction over a period of time (Boles *et al.* 1997; Holmlund, 2001) or the outcome of relationship partners' interaction (Moorman *et al.*, 1992). These definitions suggest that relationship parties are required to establish a working relationship, which will allow adequate and appropriate information and/or other resources sharing.

Furthermore, relationship quality has been defined in relation to the exchange of intangible rewards among relationship parties. For example, Levitt (1986, p. 302) referred to relationship quality as "a bundle of intangible value which augments products and results in an expected interchange between buyers and sellers". Likewise, Crosby *et al.* (1990)

asserted that relationship quality is a higher order construct composed of satisfaction and trust among relationship parties. Relationship quality from this standpoint connotes that a party to a relationship could receive its reward by gaining the trust and satisfaction of another party to the relationship. In addition, Bejou *et al* (1996, p. 137) defined relationship quality as when "the customer is able to rely on the salesperson's integrity and has confidence in the salesperson's future performance because the level of past performance has been consistently satisfactory". In this last definition, integrity and performance are regarded as intangible rewards. However, there is an element of time i.e. these rewards tend to materialise over time into the future. Crosby *et al* (1990, p. 76) concluded that "relationship quality contributes to a lasting bond by offering assurance that the salesperson will continue to meet the customer's expectations (satisfaction) and not knowingly distort information or otherwise subvert the customer's interests (trust)."

Also evidenced from research, (e.g. Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Storbacka *et al.*, 1994; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Bejou *et al.*, 1996; Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Walter *et al.*, 2003; Lages *et al.*, 2005) relationship quality has also been discussed within other fields outside relationship marketing. Fynes *et al* (2005b) within the supply chain discipline define relationship quality as the extent to which parties in a relationship are involved in a long-term and active relationship. This is similar to Golicic and Mentzer's (2005) definition of relationship quality as the strength or degree of closeness of relationship parties within a relationship. It is obvious that relationship quality is an important feature in developing a successful relationship (Rauyrueen and Miller 2007; Palmatier *et al.*, 2006; Woo and Ennew 2004). Hence, relationship quality has become a key aspect within the relationship marketing discipline (Smith, 1998; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2001; Gummesson, 2002).

Building on the foregoing, it is clear that relationship quality as a concept lacks a common definition (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002; Palmatier *et al.* 2006). Dwyer and Oh (1987), Dorsch *et al* (1998), Crosby *et al* (1990), Robert *et al* (2003), and Woo and Ennew (2004) concluded that

relationship quality is usually defined as a higher-order construct consisting of several distinct but related components. Therefore, this study proposes that relationship quality constructs can be categorised into two as the *determinants* of relationship quality constructs (i.e. mutual benefit, control mutuality and communication) and the *dimensions* of relationship quality constructs (i.e. trust, satisfaction and commitment). The selection of these constructs has been based on the literature and their suitability to a relational exchange type of relationship. Appendix 2 further reveals in detail the various definitions of relationship quality.

Evidence suggests that relationship quality, its dimensions and determinants have been studied, developed and empirically tested within the confine of different research context (Wong *et al.*, 2005; Vieira *et al.*, 2008). These research context ranges from interpersonal relationships (i.e. relationship between individuals), business-to-business relationships (B2B), business-to-customer relationships (B2C), and customer to business relationships (C2B).

Interpersonal relationship is the relationship between two or more individuals, customers, or consumers. For example, relationship between couple i.e. husband and wife (Zimmerman and Robert, 2012). Also, a relationship between different customers through online auctions such as Amazon, eBay and Gumtree can be classified under this relationship type.

A **B2B** relationship is perceived as a working relationship between two or more firms (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987, Anderson and Narus, 1990; Ganesan, 1994; Chumpitaz and Papparoidamis, 2007). It also involves one business making a commercial deal or transaction with another (Gummesson, 2004). For example, manufacturers in business markets relationship with their suppliers (Johnson and Selnes, 2004; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), and an automobile manufacturer relationship with a dealer (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987).

A **B2C** relationship describe the relationship between a business and its final consumer. For example, an automobile retailer and its customers (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), a financial institution and its customers

(Zineldin, 1995; Bejou *et al* 1996; Lang and Colgate, 2003; Papassapa and Miller, 2007), and an hotel and its guests (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998).

A **C2B** relationship describes the relationship between an individual customer and a business entity (Law *et al.*, 2003). This is opposite to B2C relationship model. For example, the relationship between a patient and his/her surgery (Griswold, 2003), and an individual (i.e. customer or consumer) making an online call to a call centre (Wong *et al.*, 2005).

3.5 Relationship quality constructs

Despite the growing body of literature on relationship quality constructs, scholars have argued that there exists a high level of uncertainty as to which of the relationship quality constructs can be categorised as *determinant* or *dimension* (Vieira *et al.*, 2008; Rauyruen and Miller, 2007; Ivens and Pardo, 2007; Huntley, 2006). However, a review of relevant literature suggests that trust, satisfaction and commitment are the main constructs of relationship quality (Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Dwyer and Oh, 1987). This has streamlined the focus of the majority of the empirical research conducted on relationship quality to trust, satisfaction and commitment, thus giving little or no attention to a large number of other constructs (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Relationship quality is usually defined as a higher-order construct consisting of several distinct but related components (Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Smith, 1998a; Van Bruggen *et al.*, 2005; Ulaga and Eggert 2006; Papassapa and Miller, 2007). These constructs are also referred to as components, which are categorised either as determinants of relationship quality or dimensions of relationship quality (Athanasopoulou, 2009). This is because there is no consensus among scholars as to the constructs of relationship quality. See appendix 4 for a detailed and comprehensive list of various relationship quality constructs.

3.5.1 Determinants of relationship quality

The lack of agreement as to the constructs that makes up the determinants of relationship quality could be linked to the context, perspective and

research settings in which various studies have been carried out (Vieira *et al.*, 2008). Determinants of relationship quality are referred to as precursors of relationship quality (Vieira *et al.*, 2008). Table 3.2 lists authors who have cited mutual benefit, communication and control mutuality as the most frequently used constructs as determinants of relationship quality.

Table 3.2: Determinants of relationship quality (Summarised from the literature)

CONSTRUCT	AUTHORS
Mutual benefit	Huntley, 2006; Parson, 2002; Vieira, 2001; Boles <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Smith, 1998; Lagace <i>et al.</i> , 1991; Crosby <i>et al.</i> , 1990
Communication	Ndubisi, 2006; Athanasopoulou, 2006; Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005; Sanzo <i>et al.</i> , 2003; de Ruyeter <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Vieira, 2001; Goodman and Dion, 2001; Selnes, 1998; Smith, 1998; Leuthesser, 1997; Menon <i>et al.</i> , 1996; Kumar <i>et al.</i> , 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994
Control mutuality	Kent and Taylor, 2002; Hon and Grunig, 1999; Stafford and Canary, 1991; Rusbult, 1983

3.5.1.1 Communication and its importance

Habermas (1987) asserted that all relationships require appropriate communication (also referred to as dialogue) between relationship partners to encourage deeper understanding of one another's position. Communication lapses have been considered a major cause of misunderstanding and disagreement among relationship partners (Mohr and Nevin, 1990; Lages *et al.*, 2005). This is because communication represents a human activity through which relationships are created and developed. Even though communication often depends upon all sorts of information; it is not identical to receiving or sending information. Ury and Fisher (1991) argued that misinterpreting and misunderstanding information being communicated is a major cause of communication breakdown among relationship partners. As a result, effective communication relies on relationship partners having the appropriate

understanding of the information being communicated. This is consistent with Duncan and Moriarty's (1998) assertion that communication must be a two-way information exchange in order for the parties involved to achieve shared understanding.

Anderson and Narus (1990, p. 44) define communication "as the formal as well as informal sharing of meaningful and timely information between firms". Formal communication between relationship partners is often routine in nature, through formal meetings or written form, while informal communication tends to be personal (Ruekert and Walker, 1987). In addition, communication has been defined as the degree to which the parties in a relationship exchange and share unrestricted information as they work towards achieving a successful relationship outcome (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Selnes, 1998). Likewise, Lages *et al* (2005) referred to communication as the extent to which relationship partners willingly or freely share useful information that will enhance the relationship. In other words, openly shared information between relationship partners is useful in achieving a successful relationship. This is consistent with LaBahn and Harich's (1997) assertion that when relationship partners exchange open and simple communication, they will be able to manage their relationship successfully during unavoidable and difficult situations. Furthermore, Cannon and Perreault Jr (1999) added that a relationship is bound to be unsuccessful when communication between relationship partners is impacted. Thus, communication is referred to as the glue that sustains and upholds any relationship and the quality of such a relationship (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). Therefore, appropriate and adequate information sharing between relationship partners will result in the proper understanding of one another's plan, and the need to make changes to pre-planned course of actions and strategies if need be.

Mohr and Nevin (1990, p. 36) also describe communication as the glue that holds together a channel of distribution". This definition emphasises the importance of communication in holding together parties to a relationship. Likewise, Cannon and Homburg (2001) referred to communication as the amount of information sharing in a relationship, in which the extent to

which relationship partners openly share information that will be beneficial to the relationship comes into consideration. Farace *et al* (1977) added that the frequency or amount of information shared between relationship partners refers to how often relationship partners communicate. In addition to sharing proper and appropriate information between relationship partners, Lages *et al* (2005) added that the ability of a relationship partner to understand the information shared with another partner is an important aspect of the communication process. Therefore, frequent communication and sufficient understanding of information could be considered as a prerequisite for building and developing a relationship. Ahamed and Skallerud 2013 concluded that adequate and appropriate communication results in healthy trust, satisfaction and commitment.

Communication has been considered as a facilitating tool in the process of sharing proper and adequate information between relationship partners. As a result, it is an important determinant when describing relationship quality (Ahamed and Skallerud, 2013). MacKenzie (1992) asserts that communication is an important aspect that should be taken into account when evaluating or assessing relationships. Based on these perspectives, communication can be perceived as a determinant of relationship quality. Scholars (see for e.g. Scheer and Stern, 1992; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Anderson and Weitz, 1989) have asserted that there is a linkage between communication and relationship quality.

Communication is an essential aspect of any relationship (Mohr and Sohi, 1996; Perrien and Ricard, 1995). Weick (1987, p. 99) asserted that, "Communication is the essence of organisations" while Bleeke and Ernst (1993, p. 14) argued that, "the most carefully designed relationship will crumble without good, frequent communication". This is because communication is viewed as the most essential element of a successful exchange. LaBahn and Harich (1997) argued further that communication impacts on performance and the level of conflict. Frequent communication among relationship partners demands both financial resources and time. Calantone and Schatzel (2000) added that communication linkages are crucial and beneficial to achieving a strong relationship and improving

organisation performance. However, Etgar (1979) concluded that ineffective communication often results in conflict due to dissatisfaction and misinterpretation.

Furthermore, Etgar (1979) asserted that communication is important in solving disputes and conflicts among relationship partners. Hence, it helps in aligning expectations and perceptions (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Dwyer *et al* (1987), and Anderson and Narus (1990) added that improved communication could result in relationship partners resolving a disagreement effectively. Likewise, Cannon and Homburg (2001) asserted that effective communication between partners gives room for planning strategies that will benefit the relationship. Ural (2009) argued that shared understanding creates higher performance between relationship partners. Bleeke and Ernst, 1993, p. 14) noted that “the most carefully designed relationship will crumble without good, frequent communication”, while Etgar (1979) concluded that inefficient communication could result in conflict because of misinterpretation of information. In addition, Walton and McKelsie (1965) noted that clear communication helps relationship partners in achieving and monitoring relationship agreements and subsequently preventing misunderstandings. Ross (1977) added that communication encourages consistency between relationship partners, which in turn leads to partners’ confidence in the relationship. Daft and Lengel (1986) stated that communication reduces the ambiguity and uncertainty in a relationship. Zineldin and Jonsson (2000) concluded that communication impacts on satisfaction, commitment and trust.

3.5.1.2 Mutual benefit and its importance

Scholars have described two approaches to the understanding of mutual benefit (Jackson & Nelson, 2004), which are benefit for business purposes and benefit for the society. Benefit for business purposes refers to an organisation’s economic profitability, in which maximising shareholders’ returns is the main focus, while benefit for the society is the positive impact felt by non-shareholders (for e.g. employees, business partners, communities, regulatory bodies etc.) as a result of an organisation’s

operation and business activities (Freeman, 1984; Freeman & Philips, 2002; Jackson & Nelson, 2004). Freeman (1984) asserted that how organisations manage the issue of benefit is of great concern for the non-shareholders who are external to the organisation. Arguably, it can be said that mutual benefit is an integration of an organisation's self-interest (i.e. profit making) and the interest of other stakeholders'. Some scholars have referred to this kind of integration as "enlightened self-interest" (Aram, 1989; Besser & Miller, 2004) because it suggests how the societal interest (i.e. the interest of stakeholders) influences an organisation's self-interest.

Furthermore, scholars have linked mutually beneficial relationships to cooperation between relationship partners, in which the focus is the determination of how relationship partners structure their goals and their interactive pattern in order to achieve the desired outcome (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Deutsch, 1973). Thibaut and Kelley (1959) stated that each partner in a mutually beneficial relationship has an expectation that involve the exchange of resources that are either rewards or costs. Ledingham *et al* (1999) asserted that mutual benefit is achieved when relationship partners' reward is equal to or greater than the resources (i.e. money, time, or effort) invested. Hon and Grunig (1999) added that "the most productive relationships are those that benefit both parties in the relationship" (p. 11), because "one party has consequences on another party" (p. 12). This suggests the need for the acknowledgement of relationship parties and their willingness to act together in an agreed and acceptable manner. Ledingham *et al* (1999) concluded that a relationship must be effective and sustaining in order to be referred to as mutually beneficial. Hence, mutuality of benefit between relationship partners should extend throughout the relationship life cycle.

More so, mutual benefit has been referred to as a way of creating and maintaining equilibrium between relationship partners' interests (Grunig, 1993; Ledingham and Bruning, 1998; Ledingham and Bruning, 2001). Broom *et al* (2000, p. 91) noted that, "relationships consist of the transactions that involve the exchange of resources between organizations ... and lead to mutual benefit, as well as mutual achievement". In addition,

Ledingham (2003) explained that mutual benefit takes effect when a relationship is effectively managed based on shared goals and a common interest.

Zineldin (1998) stated that mutual benefit between relationship partners' results in relationship integration. Ford (1993) added that mutual benefit could produce an atmosphere of trust, flexibility and openness, which are essentials for realising strategic directions (Stacey, 1993b). Anderson and Narus (1990) asserted that mutual benefit between relationship partners results in relationship continuity. Svensson (2002) emphasised the importance of mutual benefit as an avenue for dependency among relationship partners. In a similar manner, Bruning & Ledingham (2000) and Ledingham (2001a) argued that mutual benefit could add value to an organization's products and services by stabilising its market share, while Ledingham (2003) concluded that mutual benefit could generate political, societal, and economic gain for relationship partners.

Furthermore, Andrews (2002) stated that mutual benefit results in the willingness of relationship partners to interact and share a common interest. Liu *et al* (2004) added that mutual benefit strengthens the tie between relationship partners. These standpoints suggest that mutual benefit allows cooperation and dependency between relationship partners as opposed to acting independently or competing with one another. Johnson *et al* (1983) argued further that mutual benefit facilitates appropriate communication and effective coordination among diverse people, such that they can easily reduce biasness and overcome hostility. Tjosvold (1991) added that mutual benefit allows relationship partners to integrate their perceptions and explore each other's view. Arguably, relationship partners will be prepared to collaborate and avoid future conflicts. Hence, they will be confident in working together. Liu *et al* (2004) concluded that a mutually beneficial relationship gives room for resourcefulness and effectiveness among relationship parties.

3.5.1.3 Control Mutuality and its importance

Scholars have considered control mutuality to be the notion of power sharing in a relationship, where relationship partners unanimously decide and agree upon their ability to influence the power balance (Men, 2011; Plowman *et al* (2001). L'Etang (1996, p. 121) added that "by openly recognizing where the power lies in the relationship it facilitates achieving the desired relational outcome". This standpoint suggests that domineering behaviour among relationship partners is not encouraged in a control mutuality situation. Control mutuality is defined as "the degree to which partners agree about which of them should decide relational goals and behavioural routines" (Stafford and Canary, 1991. p. 224). Likewise, Hon and Grunig (1999, p. 19) stated that control mutuality is "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another". These definitions suggest that relationship partners should be able to influence and have some control over one another, as opposed to one party in the relationship dominating the other party (Jahansoozi, 2007). Kent and Taylor (2001) suggests that *control mutuality* acknowledges that relationship partners are tied together such that the partners share collaborative or inclusive orientation. However, Hon and Grunig (1999) asserted that some imbalance is natural.

Control mutuality refers to the degree in which relationship partners agree and cooperatively make relational decisions (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Canary & Spitzberg, 1989; Kelley, 2013). Morton *et al* (1976) asserted that both partners must reach a conclusion on who has the potential influence in the relationship. This suggests that relationship partners' consensus or agreement in respect of control matters will likely affect the relationship outcome. Courtright *et al* (1979) argued that relationship partners will experience dissatisfaction when they attempt to manage control independently, as opposed to managing control dependently or mutually, which will result in relational satisfaction between the partners. Likewise, Falbo and Peplau (1980) noted that the desire for autonomy by a relationship partner leads to unilateral behaviours such as withdrawal, while a situation of mutual understanding or dependency or cooperation

between relationship partners results in attitudes such as the desire to bargain, reason, or persuade. These definitions further support a two-way communication approach between relationship partners.

Ki and Hon (2007, p. 421) further refer to control mutuality as “the decision making process and the extent to which the opinion of each party is reflected in the final decision”. Likewise, Briones *et al* (2011) referred to control mutuality as the interactivity occurring between relationship partners, in which partners identify with one another and share similar beliefs, values, and interests. These definitions suggest that neither partner in a relationship has control over the other. Hence, both partners trust one another and are committed to getting things. “The bottom line is that they are satisfied with the relationship” (Hon and Grunig, 1999, p. 24). Habermas (1987) concluded that when a relationship experiences power unbalanced due to resources access, there tends to be communication breakdown. It could be concluded that the presence of control mutuality among relationship parties may result in their satisfaction and agreement with the decision making process in the relationship. In addition, control mutuality focuses on the perception of power balance in a relationship, as opposed to which party has more power over the other.

In order to emphasise the importance of control mutuality in achieving a positive relationship, the concept has been likened to reciprocity (Aldrich, 1972), mutual legitimacy (Bruning and Ledingham, 1999), power distribution (Ferguson, 1984), and empowerment (Moore, 2014). Morton *et al* (1976) argued that control mutuality is an essential construct that determines relationship viability and stability. Canary and Stafford (1992) added that control mutuality between relationship partners creates a sense of relational stability and independence. Hence, control mutuality could lead to a constructive way of achieving a mutually beneficial means to resolving conflict. In addition, Hon and Grunig (1999) noted that control mutuality between relationship partners could help build a long-term relationship. Ki and Hon (2007) concluded that control mutuality results in excellent relationship outcomes.

3.5.2 Dimensions of relationship quality

The constructs that makes up the dimension of relationship quality are not clearly distinguished or defined from one another. However, the main dimensions of relationship quality consistently identified and evaluated in the literature are trust, satisfaction and commitment (Vieira *et al.*, 2008; Athanasopoulou, 2009). Appendix 4 gives a detailed list of the various relationship quality constructs categorised as *dimensions* of relationship quality by scholars. However, the focus of this study will be on trust, satisfaction and commitment, which are the most mentioned and studied constructs by previous studies. These three constructs are also referred to as measures of relationship quality (Athanasopoulou, 2009). Other scholars (e.g. Kempeners, 1995; Crosby *et al.*, 1990) referred to trust, satisfaction and commitment as the relationship management building blocks. In addition, these three constructs were selected because they have been validated in different contexts and they form an area of convergence for studies on dimensions of relationship quality.

Scholars have also suggested that trust emerges from a relationship between partners (DeWulf *et al.*, 2001), of which partners experiencing high relationship quality exhibit satisfactory behaviour towards the performance of others (Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Crosby *et al.*, 1990), and also display higher commitment level (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998). These constructs are referred to as the building blocks of relationship quality. Dorsch *et al* (1998), Smith (1998), Hennig-Thurau *et al* (2002), Robert *et al* (2003), Ulaga and Eggert (2006), and Rauyruen and Miller (2007) referred to the three constructs as essential indicators of good relationship quality. Arguably, the three dimensions of relationship quality (i.e. trust, satisfaction and commitment) are not independent. Hence, there is a casual link between the dimensions of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997).

3.5.2.1 Trust and its importance

Trust as a concept has been mostly studied in dyad relationships (Doney and Cannon, 1997), and it plays a pivotal role in the process of building

and developing relationships. Dyad relationships are relationships that involve only two parties. Various scholars from different disciplines (e.g. marketing (Ganesan 1994; Moorman et al., 1993; Dwyer, Schurr. and Oh 1987), sociology (Strub and Priest 1976; Lewis and Weigeri 1985), psychology (Lindskold 1978; Lewicki and Bunker 1995), and economics (Williamson 1991; Dasgupta 1988)) have given some insight into what trust is.

Blois (1999) likened trust to relationship partners' interest in the relationship itself while Akrouf (2015) linked trust to relationship success. This implies that understanding the nature of trust and its application will be of immense benefit for relationship partners on how to build, develop and manage their relationships. Furthermore, trust is referred to as a belief (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Kumar *et al.*, 1995), or relationship partner's expectation (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987) among the social psychology scholars. Trust is also a behavioural intention (Moorman *et al.*, 1992). This is because a partner to a relationship is at risk of the other partner's choices due to uncertainty within the relationship. It could be concluded that trust is a key construct necessary in achieving a successful relationship (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). This is because relationship partners need assurance that their dealings and interactions with one another are confidential and safe. Berry (1995) stated that relationships are built on the foundation of trust. Furthermore, Gronroos (1990) and Dwyer *et al.* (1987) added that trust is an essential aspect that demands relationship partners' attention in the process of building and developing a quality relationship, while Hewett and Bearden (2001) concluded that trust is an important element which supports promises-making and promises-keeping.

Likewise, Kumar *et al* (1995) and Ganesan (1994) define trust as the perceived credibility and benevolence between relationship partners. This definition of trust places emphasis on the importance of one relationship partner's credibility to another, which Lindskold (1978) likens to the ability of one partner relying on the word or written statement of another partner. In addition, the term *benevolence* expresses the genuine interest a relationship partner has in the welfare of the other party and the extent to

which both parties will seek joint gain (Doney and Cannon, 1997). Arguably, this definition further suggests that when trust is established between relationship partners, they can perform reliably and effectively to the best interest of one another.

Rotter (1967, p. 651) viewed trust as "an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon". Likewise, trust is defined as "the firm's belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm, as well as not take unexpected actions that would result in negative outcomes for the firm" (Anderson and Narus 1986, p. 326). Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) added that trust exists "when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity". These definitions highlight the importance of *confidence* which suggests that trust emerges when relationship partners have a feeling that they can consider one another reliable and of high integrity. This is often associated with such qualities as competent, consistent, honest, responsible, fair, benevolent and helpful (Larzelere and Huston 1980; Dwyer and LaGace 1986; Rotter 1971; Altman and Taylor 1973). Also evidenced from these definitions is that trust is a behavioural intention focused on the assessment of relationship partners' personality traits (Chu and Shiu, 2009), behaviours and motives (Tian *et al.*, 2008). Moorman *et al* (1992 & 1993) argued that behavioural intention is an essential component of trust, thus resulting in the need for relationship *willingness*.

Drawing on the behavioural intention view, Moorman *et al* (1992, p. 315; 1993, p. 82) define trust as the "willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence". This definition suggests the need for relationship partners to believe in one another's trustworthiness and trusting behaviour. This is because a partner to a relationship must believe that the other partner in the relationship is trustworthy and could be relied upon in order for trust to exist (Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande, 1992; 1993). Likewise, Smith and Barclay (1997), and Andaleeb (1996) argued that trusting behaviours and trustworthiness are two separate but related components of trust. Trusting behaviour is defined as the willingness to

engage in a risk-taking behaviour (Moorman *et al.*, 1993; Ganesan, 1994; Andaleeb, 1996; Smith and Barclay, 1997), which could either be a party trusting the behaviours of another party or a party exhibiting behaviours that are trusting. Trustworthiness on the other hand suggests the sentiment; a belief or expectation about a relationship party's trustworthiness (Siguaw *et al.*, 1998; Smith and Barclay, 1997; Geyskens *et al.*, 1996; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Scheer and Stem, 1992; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Dwyer and Oh, 1985). These definitions suggest that relationship partners' confidence level and their willingness to one another is essential in order to achieve their desired level of trust. In contrast, Andaleeb (1995), Anderson and Weitz (1989), Morgan, and Hunt (1994) argued that trustworthiness is an adequate and necessary condition for trust to exist. Morgan and Hunt (1994) for example, consider trust as trustworthiness but advocate that trusting behaviours is a consequence of trustworthiness. Moorman *et al.* (1992) concluded that relationship partners' build confidence in one another based on their respective prior knowledge and experience which both originate from a combination of their psychological view (i.e. evaluation of one another) and sociological view (i.e. willingness to belief in one another).

Trust is also perceived as a complex construct, which involves reliability, integrity and confidence between relationship partners (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Gundlach and Murphy, 1993; Moorman *et al.*, 1992). This suggests that the existence of trust in a relationship allows relationship partners to depend on one another in order to achieve their goals (Deutsch, 1958). Based on this standpoint, Golembiewski and McConkie, (1975), and Schurr and Ozanne (1985) concluded that trust has a positive effect on behaviour and attitude. Arguably, it could be said that trust influences relationship partners' stability in a relationship. This is in line with Anderson and Weitz's (1989) research which found trust to have a positive effect on relationship partners' stability. However, Gronroos (1990) and Dwyer *et al.* (1987) concluded that relationship partners do not attain a level of trust automatically, rather partners work together to build trust through the process of making and keeping promises. Hence, it provides a common ground for relationship partners to provide solutions to their differences

(Sullivan and Peterson, 1982; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Also, it is relatively important in establishing stability between relationship partners (Anderson and Weitz, 1989).

Doney and Cannon (1997, p. 36) stated, "Trusting parties must be vulnerable to some extent for trust to become operational". Likewise, Deutsch (1962) defined trust as an action that increases the vulnerability of relationship partners. These definitions are consistent with Coleman's (1990, p. 100) definition of trust as a way of "placing resources at the disposal of another or transferring control over resources to another". This suggests that certain decisions made between relationship parties could produce uncertain results and as such, relationship parties must maintain their trust level (Schlenker *et al.*, 1973; Moorman *et al.*, 1992). In addition, this view also suggests that relationship partners must be ready to embrace uncertainty in order to establish trust, as trust will be unnecessary if the relationship partners have a detailed knowledge of the possible outcomes and/or can completely control the situation (Deutsch, 1958; Coleman, 1990).

Trust between relationship partners is imperative in developing and achieving a successful business or personal relationship (Rauyruen and Miller 2007; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Berry, 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman *et al.*, 1993; Anderson and Weitz, 1989; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Rauyruen and Miller (2007) ascertained that parties in the relationship should feel safe in their dealings with one another, with assurance that their interaction is confidential. Rempel *et al* (1985), and Halinen (1997) argued that trust emerges and develops over time before it can be established between partners, and more so trust needs to be frequently affirmed and rebuilt in order to take note of its fluctuation. Dorsch *et al* (1998) in support of this view added that trust between parties is developed over a period of time through interactions and in the process of making and keeping promises.

Researchers in different fields (e.g. marketing, economics, psychology and sociology) have classified trust as a complex construct (Doney and Cannon,

1997). Ganesan (1994) argued that trust is based on equity and social exchange theory. This suggests that trust requires an atmosphere of cooperation as opposed to competition between the parties in a relationship. Halinen (1997) noted that parties in a relationship should have a feeling of fair treatment. Emphasising on the essence of trust, Smyth *et al* (2010) argued that trust is important between parties in dealing with unforeseen or unplanned events within a relationship. It will help parties to come to terms on the way forward as opposed to such events resulting in conflict or violence. Halinen (2012) added that trust influences interactions between parties by giving room for honest and open discussions. Naude and Buttle (2000) concluded that trust is imperative for a successful relationship.

Previous empirical studies have classified trust as a key dimension in relationship quality literature (DeWulf *et al.*, 2001; Hennig-Thurau, 2001; Hausman, 2001; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Kumar *et al.*, 1995a; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). This is because relationship partners tend to exhibit trust towards one another when they are comfortable with the outcome of the relationship (Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Anderson and Weitz, 1990; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Mohr and Nevin, 1990; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; and Anderson and Narus, 1984). Hence, trust is perceived as an outcome of a quality relationship that brings about commitment between relationship partners. (e.g. Siguaw *et al.*, 1998; Andaleeb 1996; Geyskens *et al.*, 1996; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Anderson and Weitz, 1989).

In summary, trust can be viewed either as risk acceptance (Sheppard and Sherman, 1998), or belief in another party's behaviour (Dwyer and LaGace, 1986; Moorman *et al.*, 1992). All the aforementioned definitions and importance of trust suggest that trust represents an evaluative construct, thus a relationship quality dimension.

3.5.2.2 Satisfaction and its importance

Satisfaction among relationship partners is referred to as an affective state emerging from a total assessment or evaluation of a relationship (Gaski

and Nevin, 1985; Frazier *et al.*, 1989; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Skinner *et al.*, 1992; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Gassenheimer and Ramsey, 1994; Storbacka *et al.*, 1994; Smith and Barclay, 1997). Likewise, Westbrook (1981) defined satisfaction as an emotional condition a relationship party exhibits subsequent to the evaluation of its relationship with another party. Roberts *et al* (2003, p. 175) and Storbacka *et al* (1994, p. 25) added that satisfaction "is the customer's cognitive and affective evaluation based on their personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship". Thus, satisfaction depicts an appraisal and/or evaluation of a relationship by partners to the relationship based on their respective experience in relation to their dealings and transactions with one another (Anderson *et al.*, 1997).

Wilson (1995) describes satisfaction as a measure of the degree in which transactions between relationship partners meet the expected performance. Geyskens *et al* (1999) also defined satisfaction as a positive rational and emotional state resulting from the evaluation of the buyer's working relationship with the supplier. This suggests that relationship satisfaction summarises and evaluates relationship partners previous and present interactions and dealings to influence future relationship expectations and development (Roberts *et al.*, 2003; Cannon and Perreault, 1999). Likewise, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) noted that a firm will derive satisfaction from customers who are happy and perceive that they are being valued by the firm.

Anderson and Narus (1990) further define satisfaction as the fulfilment shared by relationship partners due to the achievement of their respective desired outcomes. Kumar *et al* (1992) explained that when a party to a relationship contributes towards the achievement of another party's goal achievement, the receiving party will be satisfied with its relationship with the other party. Hence, this standpoint suggests that when a relationship partner's goals are met or exceeded with the help of another relationship partner, satisfaction could be said to be in action (Anderson and Narus, 1990). Likewise, Churchill and Surprenant (1982), and Oliver (1980) define satisfaction as fulfilment of expectations based on the

confirmation/disconfirmation theory. They argue that relationship partners' satisfaction level is enhanced when they experience a positive disconfirmation, while negative disconfirmation will come to play when relationship partners are dissatisfied with one another. Also, Bowen and Shoemaker (1998, p. 14) stated that satisfaction "measures how well a customer's expectations are met by a given transaction. Richins (1983) concluded that relationship partners tend to remain in a relationship when they feel satisfied. Hence, a partner who receives what is expected is mostly likely to be satisfied.

Kotler (1994) emphasised on the importance of satisfaction as a means of ensuring a partner's retention in a relationship. Likewise, Oliver (1996), and Anderson and Sullivan (1993) added that satisfaction aids in determining the loyalty of relationship partners. In addition, Eriksson and Vaghult (2000) stated that as satisfaction increase, relationship partners tend to become more loyal to one another. These standpoints are consistent with Rust and Zahorik (1993), and Anderson and Fornell's (1994) assertion that satisfaction is a relevant factor in gaining the loyalty and retention of a customer. File *et al* (1994) added that satisfaction is one of the key drivers in generating a positive word-of-mouth behaviour from the customer. Rauyruen and Miller (2007) concluded that satisfaction between relationship partners' is essential in achieving a deep and long-lasting relationship.

Oliver (1997) claims that satisfaction is a post-choice assessment decision in relation to a specific purpose judgement and is mostly used as part of the disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver and Swan, 1989). Scholars now consider satisfaction as a product of affections, as opposed to previous assertions that satisfaction results solely from cognitive processes (Homburg and Giering, 2001; Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987). It is also argued that satisfaction focuses on the relationship partners' cumulative experience as opposed to a single dealing or individual transaction that takes place within the relationship (Anderson *et al.*, 1994; Bayus, 1992), thus supporting the fact that satisfaction is a key dimension of relationship quality. Hence, Dorsch *et al* (1998) concluded that satisfaction is a key

dimension of relationship quality because the more satisfied relationship partners are, the higher the quality of relationship they share with one another.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that one relationship partner cannot experience a good relationship with another relationship partner if he is not satisfied with the evaluation and assessment of the relationship. Also, scholars' have focused mainly on the cumulative assessment or evaluation of a relationship in order to determine relationship partner's level of satisfaction. In line with this view, Crosby *et al* (1990) noted that satisfaction provides a summary measure and/or evaluation of all past events between relationship partners in order to shape their future expectations. Hence, satisfaction should be considered essential in a relationship quality assessment (e.g. Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Jap and Ganesan 2000).

3.5.2.3 Commitment and its importance

Commitment is a central construct in relationship marketing (Pritchard *et al.*, 1999; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999), and also the most controversial construct because it has been repeatedly classified as a determinant rather than dimension of relationship quality (Wong and Sohal, 2002; Parson, 2002; Vieira, 2001; Storbacka *et al.*, 1994). However, scholars' (e.g. Rauyruen and Miller, 2007; Ivens and Pardo, 2007; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Ivens, 2004; Robert *et al.*, 2003; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002; Smith, 1998) started to categorise commitment as a dimension of relationship quality as opposed to a determinant following Morgan and Hunt's (1994) publication of 'The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing'. Since then, commitment as a concept has received commendable attention from different disciplines, in which scholars focus on the connections made among different people (Pritchard *et al.*, 1999). Hence, commitment is regarded as a dimension of relationship quality. Venetis and Ghauri (2004) noted that scholars have studied commitment from varying dimensions, namely; attitudes (Morgan and Hunt., 1992; Anderson and Weitz, 1992), behavioural (Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987), and

interdependence of outcomes (Ganesan, 1994). Oliver's (1997) classification of commitment was based on attitudinal dimension (i.e. commitment based on prior liking) and effect-based dimension (i.e. commitment resulting from adoration or love). This suggests the dimension acts on something, rather than results from something.

Commitment is generally regarded as a relationship-enhancing bond (Gilliland & Bello, 2002). Much like trust, scholars have regarded commitment as an important construct for successful long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). Moorman *et al.* (1992, p. 316) referred to commitment as "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship". Commitment is also defined as "an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners" (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987, p. 19). Dwyer *et al.* (1987) argued that when commitment is established between relationship partners, they make effort on improving the relationship as opposed to seeking new partners or dissolving the relationship. It has also been defined as "the belief that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Anderson & Weitz, (1992, p. 19) argued that commitment is the "desire to develop a stable relationship, a willingness to make short-term sacrifices to maintain the relationship and a confidence in the stability of the relationship". These definitions suggest that commitment develops over time and that relationship partners have a desire to maintain the relationship, thus implying a long-term orientation towards relationship continuity (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). This is also consistent with Kumar *et al.*'s (1995) definition of commitment as a relationship partner's intention to continue a relationship. These definitions suggest the need for relationship partners' to be consistent in their behaviours and also motivate one another in order to maintain a relationship they value.

Commitment has been linked to benefit sharing (Amaldoss *et al.*, 2000). According to Holm *et al.* (1999), Chetty and Eriksson (2002), and Berry and Parasuraman (1991), it was argued that a successful relationship relies on mutual commitment. Likewise, Wilson (1995) argued that the developing of a long-term relationship between relationship partners requires their

mutual commitment. Parsons (2002, p. 7) asserted that "commitment among partners is seen as essential for each party achieving its goals and maintaining relationships". These definitions suggest that commitment requires the enduring desire and effort of all parties to maintain a relationship. In addition, Moorman *et al.* (1992) argued that when relationship partners are committed to a Relationship, they tend to exhibit behaviour that results in a simple and straight forward process of solving potential misunderstandings in order to remain focused and united. This is consistent with Roberts *et al.*'s (2003) assertion that commitment between partners is important in solving relationship-inherent problems and the development of a long-term relationship. Also, Dwyer *et al.* (1987) stated that commitment relates to relationship bonding. This is because relationship partners are seen to rely and depend on each other for a successful relationship, as opposed to acting independently. Morgan and Hunt (1994) concluded that interaction (i.e. communication) is an essential part of commitment.

Furthermore, commitment has been defined in connection to each relationship party's strength and intention to continue a relationship. Morgan and Hunt (1994) referred to commitment as the desire of a relationship party to continue and strengthen the relationship. They argued that it provides relationship partners with an avenue for cooperation within the relationship, hence resulting in an overall stronger relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1992). These definitions suggest that relationship partners must put in any necessary effort that will ensure the success of the relationship. Fehr (1998) further defined commitment as each relationship partners' intention to pursue an activity or a course of action in order to uphold a relationship with one another. Farrelly and Quester (2005, p. 212) concluded that commitment "refers to an orientation characterised by specific intentions and behaviours purposefully activated to realise value for both parties over the long-term". These definitions suggest that the true meaning of commitment lies in the behaviour of relationship parties. Their desire to build, maintain and have confidence in the relationship.

In addition, commitment has been defined in relation to investment into the future. Farrelly and Quester (2005, p. 212) defined commitment "as a willingness of the parties in the sponsorship relationship to make short-term investments in an effort to realise long-term benefits from the relationship". This is in line with Scanzoni's (1979) assertion that commitment is thought to grow over the period in which resources are made available by relationship partners. likewise, Hallen *et al* (1991) stated that commitment manifests in various ways. However, a common manifestation is when relationship partners invest in a relationship. These definitions suggest the need for relationship partners to focus their effort on long-term relationship building. This is in line with Farrelly and Quester's (2005) assertion that commitment serves as an indicator for long-term strategic intention among relationship partners, and Ramaseshan *et al's* (2006, p. 66) argument that commitment has "a time orientation and develops at a later stage of the relationship after many satisfactory exchange episodes". Arguably, it could be concluded from the foregoing that commitment focus on "a desire to develop a stable relationship, a willingness to make short-term sacrifices to maintain the relationship, and a confidence in the stability of the relationship" (Anderson and Weitz, 1992, p. 19).

Scholars have suggested three categories of commitment; moral, calculative and affective commitment (Kumar *et al.*, 1994). Moral commitment focus on relationship partners' honesty, and the best path in maintaining the relationship. Calculative commitment is founded on economic terms, which de Ruyter *et al* (2001) considered as a negatively oriented type of motivation. They asserted that a firm's willingness to continue with a relationship is as a result of the firm's inability to get a replacement partner who will make available the same resources. This perspective to commitment considers the costs and benefits of a relationship. Affective commitment is motivated by emotional orientation. de Ruyter *et al* (2001, p. 272) defined it as "the extent to which customers like to maintain their relationship with their supplier". Likewise, Konovsky and Cropanzano (1991) referred to affective commitment as a positive feeling that a relationship partner has towards another partner. In addition,

Gundlach *et al* (1995) describe commitment as comprising of three components including attitudinal, instrumental and temporal components. They concluded that commitment comes to play when relationship partners invest in the relationship (Sargeant and Lee, 2004), and it takes a period of time.

Relationships that display high levels of commitment have been seen to be more stable and more valued, and to experience higher cooperation with less conflict between relationship partners (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006). Thus, commitment is a predictor of relationship partners' decision to continue with a relationship (Rusbult, 1983). Evidenced from the literature, commitment has been linked with increases in purchases (Verhoef *et al.*, 2002), creation of favourable future dealings (Pritchard *et al.*, 1999), and decreased turnover (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Others scholars perceived commitment to be an important construct because; it helps relationship partners in forming an attitude concerning the continuity of a relationship (Wetzels *et al.*, 1998; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987), it motivates relationship partners to stay in a relationship (Moorman *et al.*, 1992), is an important ingredient for a successful relationship (Hennig-Thurau *et al*, 2002), and it helps relationship partners in forming an intention as to maintaining a relationship (Fehr, 1998).

Scholars (e.g. Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Gundlach *et al* (1995), Perrien and Richard (1995), Morgan and Hunt (1994), and Berry and Parasuraman (1991)) have concluded that the presence of commitment is fundamental for a successful long-term relationship. Likewise, Andaleeb (1996) and Scheer and Stern (1994) concluded that bearing in mind that commitment is fundamental for a successful long-term relationship presents an organisation with the opportunity to understand a core aspect of its business success. Anderson and Narus (1990) added that commitment inspires relationship partners to work together in order to achieve a mutual goal.

Commitment has also been considered to represent a reference point in assessing relationship partners' view of the quality of a relationship

(Gundlach *et al.*, 1995). Scholars have considered commitment as a dimension of relationship quality (Palmatier, 2008; Ivens & Pardo, 2007; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006; Johnson *et al.*, 2004; Roberts *et al.*, 2003; Wong and Sohal, 2002; Parsons, 2002; Hewett *et al.*, 2002; Hausman, 2001; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2001; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997; Smith, 1998; Kumar *et al.*, 1995), while others referred to commitment as a relationship quality outcome (Bloemer *et al.*, 2002; Smith and Barclay, 1997; Andaleeb, 1996; Mohr *et al.*, 1996; Geyskens *et al.*, 1996; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). This is because commitment reflects relationship partners' feelings regarding the quality of the relationship. Thus, commitment can be seen as an important aspect and overall measure of relationship quality (Cook and Wall 1980).

Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997, p. 752) defined commitment "as a customer's long-term ongoing orientation toward a relationship grounded on both an emotional bond to the relationship (affective aspect) and on the conviction that remaining in the relationship will yield higher net benefits than terminating it (cognitive aspect)". Likewise, Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) stated that "parties identify commitment among exchange partners as key to achieving valuable outcomes for themselves". Arguably, these standpoints suggest that commitment is a measure of relationship quality among relationship parties. Scholars have also established a direct relationship between trust and commitment (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Doney and Cannon, 1997). Hence, this research study considers commitment as one of the important dimensions of relationship quality.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that commitment is a multidimensional concept which is complex to define. It involves a process of relationship partners coming together to adjust their expectations, operations, resources allocation approaches and communication approaches. Also, it could be argued that commitment places relationship partners in a position of vulnerability. Therefore, a relationship partner will search for trustworthy partners (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). As a result, Morgan and Hunt's (1994) definition of commitment will be taken on board for this study.

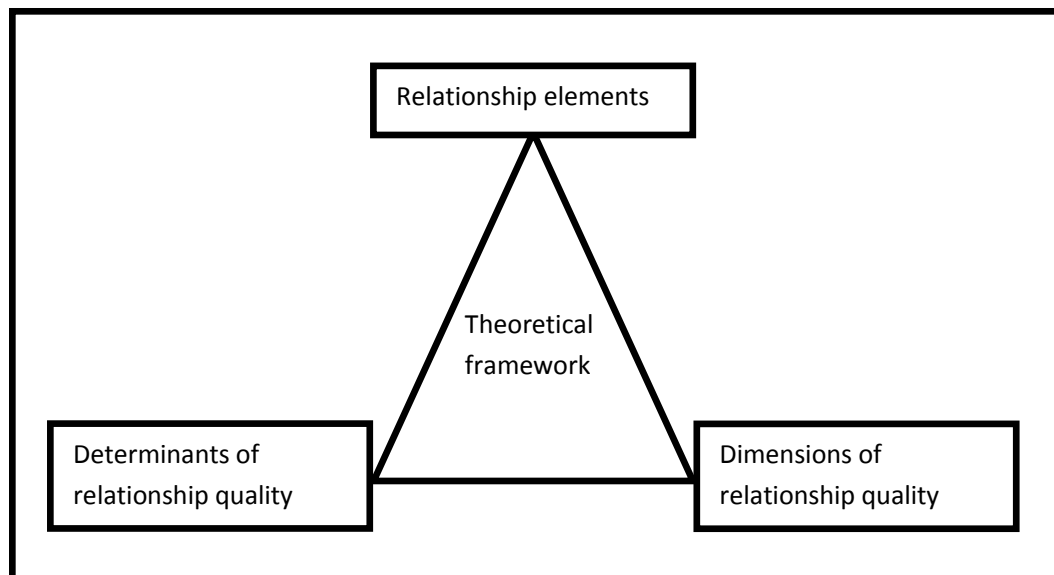


Figure 3.1: Research domains that form the theoretical framework (Author generated)

3.6 Previously developed theoretical frameworks

Some of the studies that informed the development of the current research study theoretical framework are presented below. This is consistent with Morgan and Hunt's (1994) suggestion that researchers should compare existing frameworks in order to propose a new framework. Figure 3.1 presents the main domains of research that make up the research study theoretical framework.

De Ruyter *et al* (2001), using a customer-supplier relationship approach, modelled simultaneously product characteristics, relationship characteristics, and market characteristics as the key critical areas of relationship specific investment, which are antecedents of trust, commitment, and intention of a customer to stay in a relationship as shown in figure 3.2. The assertion of this framework is consistent with Wilson and Jantrania's (1994), and Morgan and Hunt's (1994) suggestions that trust and commitment are core constructs of any relationship. Whilst this framework includes various constructs as antecedents, loyalty was the only relationship quality dimension that was taken into consideration. This framework is similar to Patterson and Spreng's (1997) framework, in which satisfaction and value were used to assess loyalty. However, De Ruyter *et*

al (2001) concluded that trust and commitment play an essential role in achieving a long-term relationship success.

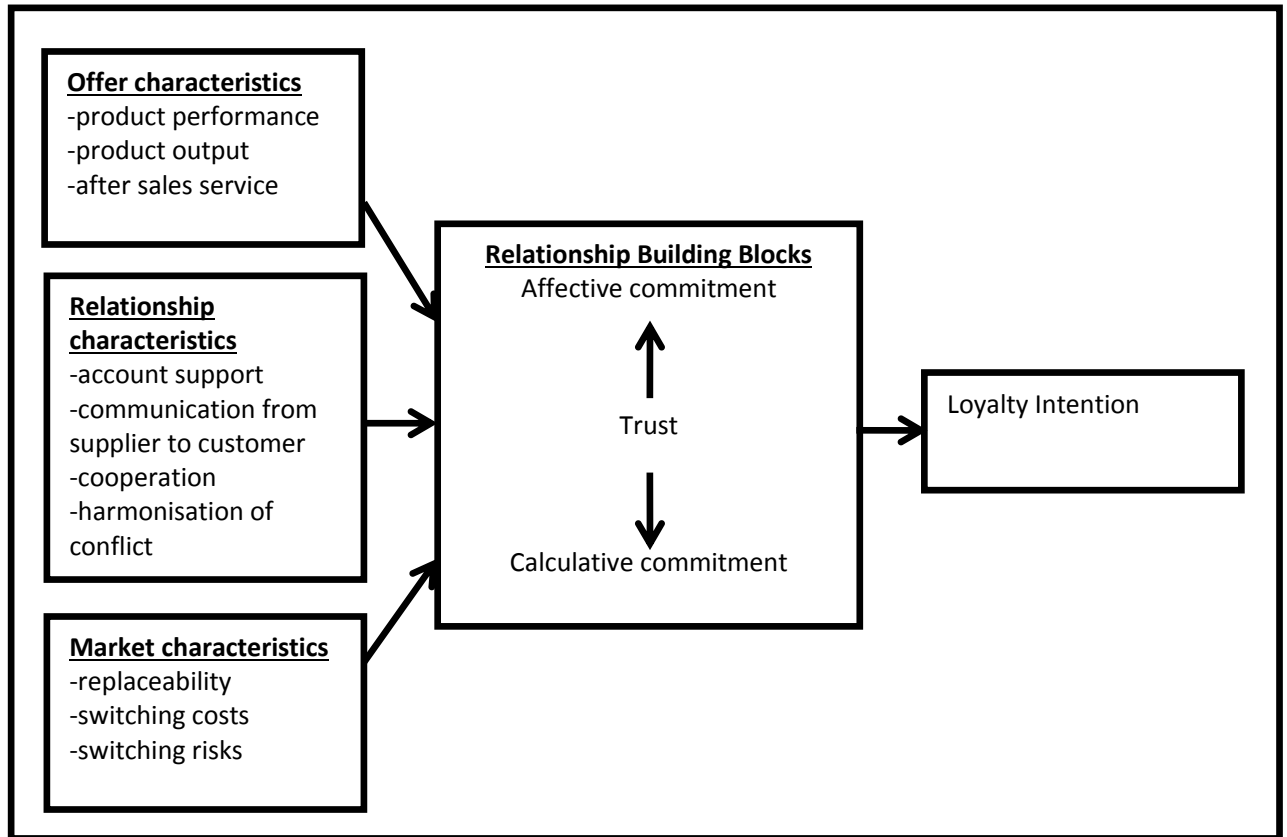


Figure 3.2: De Ruyter *et al's* (2001) relationship quality framework

Vieira *et al* (2008) developed a conceptual research combining the various research context, dimensions and determinants of relationship quality that cut across various research perspectives. This included the buyer's perspective, seller's perspective, and the dyadic perspective. The buyer's perspective describes how a customer perceives its relationship quality with another party i.e. the seller (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Likewise, the seller's perspective explains what an organisation understands or interprets relationship quality to be, while the dyadic perspective demonstrates a person-to-person relationship. The framework evidenced the importance of relationship quality as a means to improving business relationships. In addition, it emphasised how relationship quality can salvage a relationship characterised by uncertainty. Vieira *et al* (2008) synthesised the various

constructs to suggest that mutual goal, communication, domain expertise and relational value are the key determinants of relationship quality, while trust, satisfaction and commitment were identified as the core relationship quality dimensions as shown in figure 3.3. However, they concluded that these constructs can be augmented (i.e. added to or subtracted from) in order to suit the specific context and purpose of future research studies.

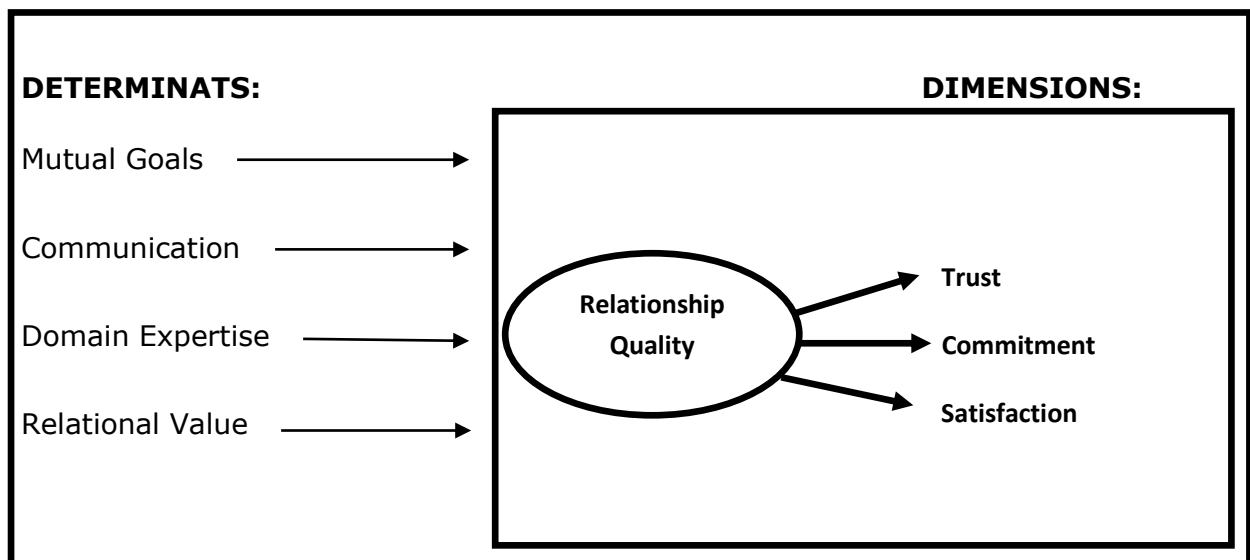


Figure 3.3: Vieira *et al's* (2008) relationship quality framework

Athanasopoulou (2009) carried out a thorough review of the literature on relationship quality and developed a framework as shown in figure 3.4 that can guide firms in developing the quality of relationship with their customers. Athanasopoulou (2009) took into consideration relationships in the retail settings and business-to-business (B2B) relationships in order to develop a comprehensive framework. This is consistent with Hennig-Thurau *et al's.*, (2002) relationship quality approach, in which relationship classification focused on long-term relational outcomes. The author acknowledged that there is no generally acceptable framework for determining relationship quality. Although existing literature shares an area of convergence as trust, satisfaction and commitment being considered as the major relationship quality dimensions. Hence, there is a need for

researchers to consider the context of the study in order to develop an appropriate framework (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Vieira *et al.*, 2008).

Athanasopoulou (2009) modelled different relationship quality constructs into relationship quality antecedents, relationship quality dimensions and relationship quality consequences. These constructs stand as the main mediating factors that represent a connecting link between the nature of a relationship (i.e. characteristics or attributes) and relationship outcome (i.e. benefits).

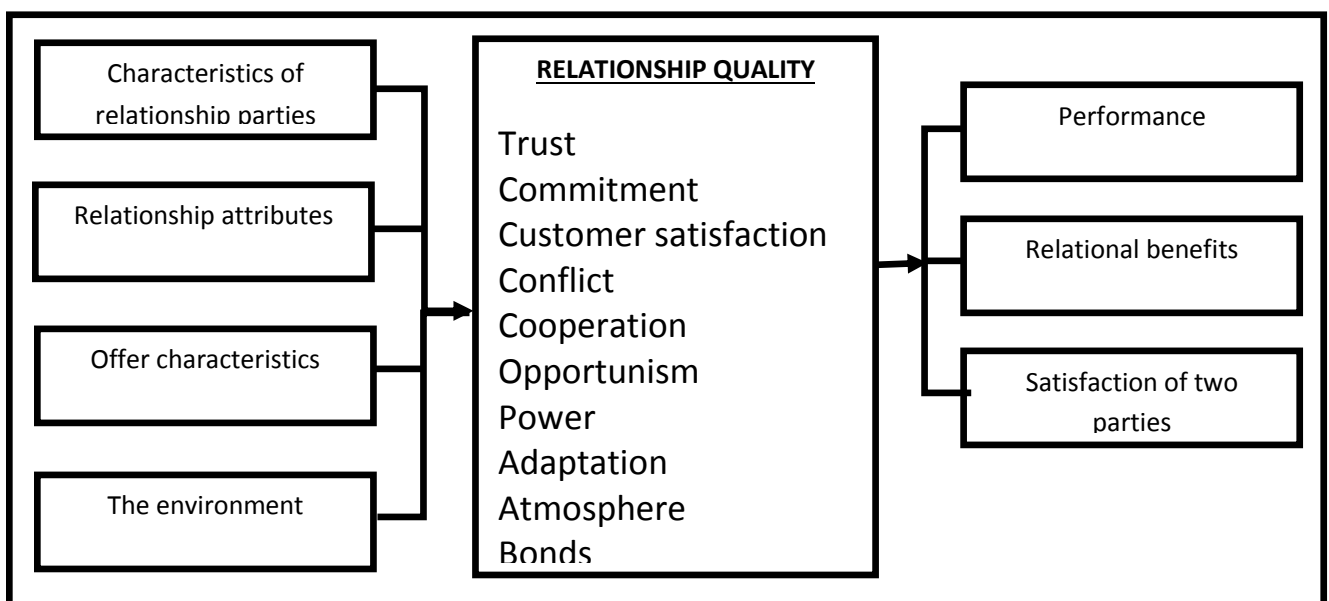


Figure 3.4: Athanasopoulou's (2009) relationship quality framework

3.7 Theoretical framework for the current research study

Roberts *et al.* (2003) defined relationship quality as a measure of the extent to which a partner will go to maintain its relationship with another partner. Hence, the focus is on the overall nature of the relationship as partners consider one another's needs essential for the success of the relationship (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, the theoretical framework for this research study takes into account the various constructs suggested by previous frameworks. The proposed framework combines the key constructs and approaches to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for the enhancement of a successful relationship between the

OPC and HC in the NDRN. This is consistent with Athanasopoulou's (2009, p. 583) assertion that researchers should build upon existing frameworks and "look at new types of relationships between parties that may not be individuals or business, or may not assume the traditional roles of buyer and seller". Several of these constructs were identified and classified as either relationship quality *determinants* or relationship quality *dimensions* (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Vieira *et al.*, 2008; Huntley, 2006; De Ruyter *et al.*, 2001; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997).

Previously developed theoretical frameworks overlook or ignore the aspect of relationship elements which scholars (see for e.g. Medlin *et al.*, 2005; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Hakansson and Johanson, 1992) considered essential in order to determine the type of relationship under study, and the level of interdependence between relationship partners (see section 3.3 for more details). Hence, the theoretical framework for this study incorporates relationship elements in addition to determinants of relationship quality and dimensions of relationship quality in order to address this shortcoming. Shown in figure 3.6 is the theoretical framework for this research study. This research study framework incorporates relationship elements and determinants of relationship quality as the antecedent of relationship quality, while dimensions of relationship quality is term as relationship quality indicator. In addition, the theoretical framework reveals that relationship quality should not be considered as an end in itself, rather as an interlink or connector for both the antecedent (i.e. relationship elements and determinants of relationship quality) and outcome (dimensions of relationship quality). This suggests that the proposed framework perceive relationship quality as a process that requires an input i.e. relationship elements and determinants of relationship quality (also referred to as antecedents) and produces outcomes which serve as an indicator that provide information on the level or state of the quality of relationship (also referred to as dimensions of relationship quality). This is consistent with Vieira *et al.*'s (2008) findings.

Furthermore, while there is no absolute consensus on relationship quality constructs conceptualisation, evidence suggests there is general agreement

among scholars that trust, satisfaction and commitment are referred to as the key dimensions of relationship quality (e.g. Roberts *et al.*, 2003; Hennig-Tharau *et al.*, 2002; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). This framework provides a deeper understanding of the relationship quality constructs, their interrelations and impacts on the relationship outcomes.

Consequently, this research study defines trust as the confidence the HC has in the OPC's integrity and reliability, which shares similarities with trustworthiness (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Satisfaction is defined as the HC overall evaluation of its relationship with the OPC. It is based on service and interaction that develops over the course of the partners relationship, and is thus cumulative as opposed to being transaction specific (De Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Anderson *et al.*, 1997). Commitment is referred to as the HC's persistent desire to continue their relationship with the OPC and the willingness to maintain the relationship (De Wulf *et al.*, 2001). This research study also considers these three constructs as essential indicators of good relationship quality (Rauyruen and Miller, 2007).

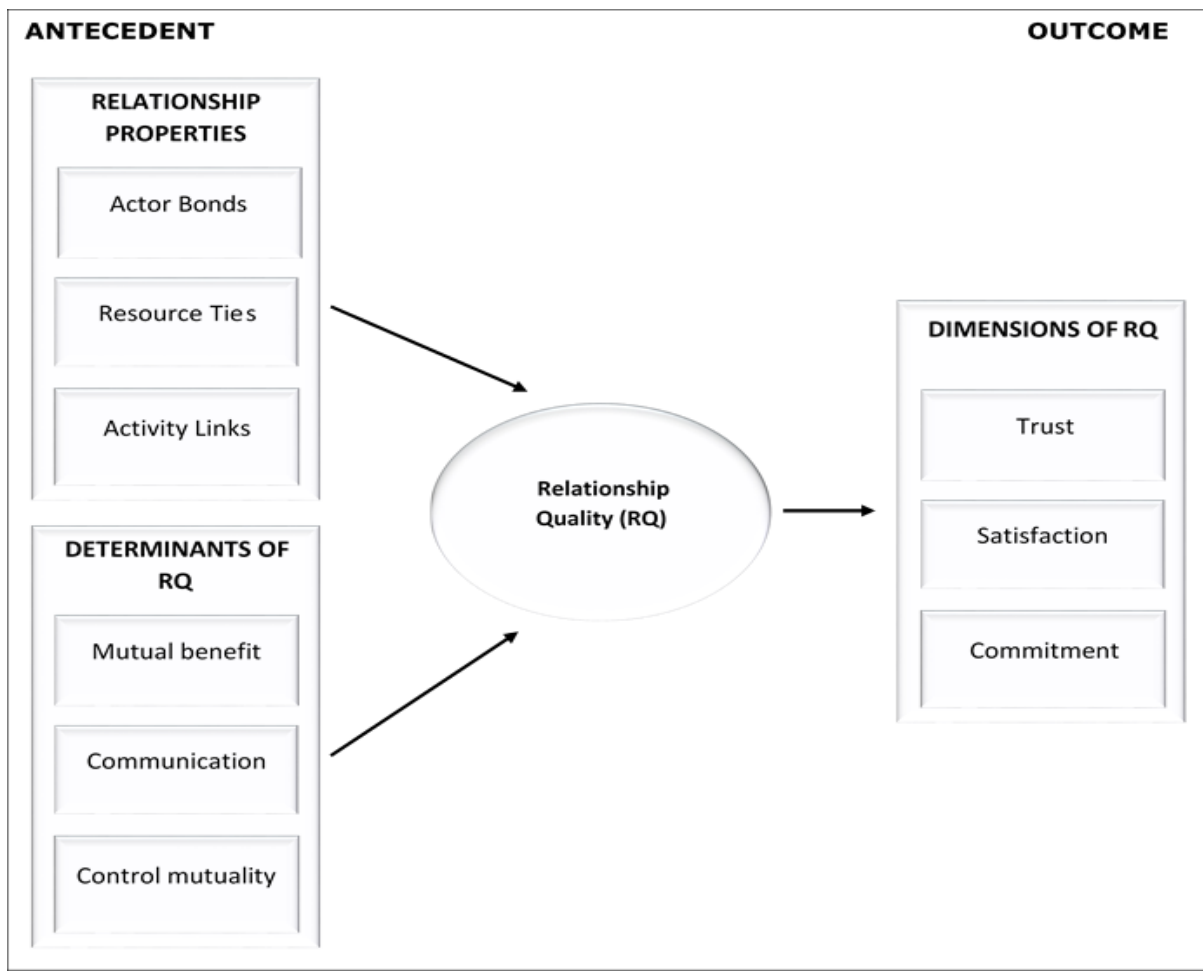


Figure 3.5: Research study theoretical framework for a B2Com relationship quality (Author generated)

3.8 Development of propositions

Building on the research theoretical framework developed as shown in figure 3.5, this section tend to establish or show the connections and/or relationships between the different components of the framework.

3.8.1 Relationship elements

Medlin (2002) asserted that activity links are inherent in achieving trust. Therefore, proposition 1 is:

P1: Activity links positively influence trust

The actor bonds construct is also described or characterised by the development of mutual trust and understanding (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995). Gruen *et al* (2000), and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) argued further that this bond only comes through trust development among relationship partners. This suggests that when relationship partners are trustworthy, there is likely going to be cooperation among them (Schurr and Ozanne, 1985). Further research carried out by Williams *et al.* (1998) revealed that this bond between relationship partners encourages frequent communication. Likewise, scholars (e.g. Mummalaneni and Wilson, 1991; Han, 1992; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Zineldin & Jonsson, 2000; and Gruen *et al.*, 2000) affirmed that this bond between relationship partners encourages and influences their level of commitment. In addition, Wilson and Mummalaneni (1986) and Mummalaneni and Wilson (1991) argued further that relationship partners show more commitment in maintaining a relationship when they have a strong personal relationship. They concluded that “close personal relationships between buyers and suppliers seem to have some, if not an absolute, effect on enhancing their commitment to the future continuance of their role relationships” (p. 58). Also, some scholars asserted that relationship “bonding” does not have positive effects on satisfaction (Geyskens, 1998; Gengler and Popkowsky, 1997). Hence, this research study proposes, based on the review of literature, that:

P2: Actor bonds positively influence trust

P3: Actor bonds positively influence communication

P4: Actor bonds positively influence commitment

P5: Actor bonds positively influence satisfaction

Medlin (2002) argued that resource ties are inherent to achieving trust. Therefore, it is further proposed that:

H6: Resource ties positively influence trust

3.8.2 Determinants of relationship quality

Mutual benefit has a positive influence on trust. Zabkar & Brencic (2004) argued that the presence of mutuality of benefit in a relationship results in trust which is essential in shaping each relationship partner's intentions and behaviours. Hence, affects a relationship success. This standpoint suggests that sharing appropriate mutual benefit between relationship partners brings about trust, which could help in reinforcing the partners' belief for the best interest of the relationship. Hence, reducing or eliminating conflict between relationship partners.

Likewise, Morgan & Hunt (1994) asserted that mutual benefit influences relationship commitment. They argued that relationship partners would be committed to each other when there is opportunity for greater benefits in the relationship. In addition, Cook (1977) argued that relationship partners will show more commitment to each other if they perceive that the relationship provides for each partner a reduction in their uncertainty, a form of mutual benefit. Therefore, it is further proposed that:

P7: Mutual benefit positively influences trust

P8: Mutual benefit positively influences commitment

Anderson *et al* (1987) argued that communication is positively related with trust. Likewise, Anderson and Narus (1990) examined the distributor and manufacturer relationship, and established that there is a direct relationship between communication and trust, thus making communication a significant predictor of trust. Likewise, Morgan and Hunt (1994) referred to communication as a major precursor of trust. Also, Aulakh *et al* (1996) concluded from their study on international partnerships that communication (also referred to as information exchange) results in higher trust between relationship partners. Selnes (1998) and Morgan and Hunt (1994) asserted that communication is a prerequisite for building trust. Likewise, Moorman *et al* (1993) noted that timely communication fosters trust among relationship partners. In addition, Morgan and Hunt (1994) concluded that timely, relevant and reliable communication results in

greater trust among relationship partners. Furthermore, Etgar (1979) stated that communication influences trust by way of resolving misunderstandings and disputes between relationship partners. Dwyer *et al* (1987), and Anderson and Narus (1990) argued that effective communication could result in trust between relationship parties, while Teas and Sibley (1980) concluded that communication enhances trust.

From a dealer-to-supplier relationship perspective, Mohr and Sohi (1995) investigated the flow of communication and its impact on each relationship partner's satisfaction. They concluded that communication flow is a strong predictor of satisfaction between relationship partners. Ural (2009) added that proper and adequate communication between relationship partners increases their satisfaction level. This is because information sharing is considered as a medium via which relationship partners build and develop a strong relationship. Selnes (1998) argued that communication is an important influence of satisfaction because it could result in a sharing of relationship partner's performance expectation and outcomes, which is also an aspect of trust.

Mohr and Nevin (1990) argued that communication has significant impact on commitment. Likewise, Zineldin and Jonsson, (2000) and Anderson and Weitz (1992) noted that communication is a prerequisite for commitment. Mohr *et al* (1996), Kim and Frazier (1997), and Moore (1998) considered communication as a determinant of commitment. Similarly, Skarmeas *et al* (2002), Kim and Oh (2002), Kim (2001), and Goodman and Dion (2001) referred to communication as a predictor of commitment. Dwyer *et al* (1987) concluded that communication is an important contributor to relationship commitment. Therefore, it is proposed that:

P9: Communication positively influences trust

P10: Communication positively influences satisfaction

P11: Communication positively influences commitment

Kelley (1979 and 2013) argued that when relationship partners agree on the level of control mutuality in a relationship, they tend to be satisfied and experience a stable relationship. Hence, it is proposed that:

P12: Control mutuality positively influences satisfaction

3.8.3 Dimensions of relationship quality

Trust is essential among relationship partners such that Spekman (1988, p. 79) suggested that trust is "the cornerstone of the strategic partnership". In support of this viewpoint, Hrebiniak (1974) argued that relationships based on trust are so highly valued by relationship partners that they will want to commit themselves to such relationships. Other scholars claimed that trust positively affects commitment (Ramsey and Sohi, 1997; Beatty *et al.*, 1996; Gundlach and Murphy, 1993). Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) and Doney and Cannon (1997) added that there is a positive path that flows from trust to commitment among relationship partners. As a result, relationship partners will only seek out trustworthy partners. McDonald (1981, p. 834), for example, used the social exchange theory to make clear this causal relationship using the principle of reciprocity, which argues that "mistrust breeds mistrust and as such would also serve to decrease commitment in the relationship and shift the transaction to one of more direct short-term exchanges".

Trust is also assumed to influence commitment because it reduces relationship partners' risk perception (Andaleeb, 1996). This creates among relationship partners the desire for continuity in a relationship. Achrol (1991) and Sargeant and Lee (2004) asserted that trust is a major determinant of commitment in any relationship. Likewise, Moorman *et al* (1992) argued that trust has a significant effect on relationship commitment. In addition, both trust and commitment develop over a period, such that understanding either of them requires a temporal perspective. When relationship partners trust one another, and have a high commitment level, it will be easier for them to handle unplanned and unforeseen circumstances that might affect their relationship. This is consistent with Morgan & Hunt's (1994) argument that trust and

commitment influence each other as they evolve, and in the process of synergistic evolution, both contribute to a successful relationship. Scholars (see for e.g. Palmatier, 2008; Leonidou *et al.*, 2006; Bejou *et al.*, 1996; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Crosby *et al.*, 1990) concluded that trust increases commitment.

Anderson and Narus (1990) reported that trust has a positive impact on satisfaction. Hennig-Thurau *et al* (2002) added that when relationship partners share a higher level of trust, they would be less concerned or worried about their level of interaction, which ultimately results in a greater level of satisfaction with each other. This suggests that relationship partners are more likely to be satisfied with one another when they can perceive, or sense, that they are dealing with one another with honesty. To this end, this study posits trust as a key determinant of commitment because when parties in a relationship trust each other, they are likely to have a positive connection with one another. This gives rise to the following propositions

P13: Trust positively influences satisfaction

P14: Trust positively influences commitment

Scholars (e.g. Szymanski and Henard, 2001; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Oliver, 1999) established a positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment. Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) asserted that satisfaction involves the fulfilment of the social needs of customers, which in most cases results in bond between relationship partners of an emotional kind that also constitute commitment. Hennig-Thurau *et al* (2002, p. 237) added, "a high level of satisfaction provides the customer with a repeated positive reinforcement, thus creating commitment-inducing emotional bonds". These standpoints suggest that when relationship partners are satisfied with their dealings and interactions with one another, they are more likely to create an attachment or bond with the sole aim of getting each other committed to the relationship. Ramaseshan *et al* (2006, p. 66) argued that commitment has "a time orientation and develops at a later

stage of the relationship after many satisfactory exchange episodes". Therefore, it is proposed that:

P15: Satisfaction will positively influence commitment.

3.9 Summary of the research study propositions and structural model of a B2Com relationship quality framework

In the previous two sections, the research study theoretical framework was developed and the research study propositions formulated. Building upon these two chapters, the research study formulated propositions are summarised as:

P1: Activity links positively influence trust

P2: Actor bonds positively influence trust

P3: Actor bonds positively influence communication

P4: Actor bonds positively influence commitment

P5: Actor bonds positively influence satisfaction

P6: Resource ties positively influence trust

P7: Mutual benefit positively influences trust

P8: Mutual benefit positively influence commitment

P9: Communication positively influences trust

P10: Communication positively influences satisfaction

P11: Communication positively influences commitment

P12: Control mutuality positively influences satisfaction

P13: Trust positively influences satisfaction

P14: Trust positively influences commitment

P15: Satisfaction will positively influence commitment

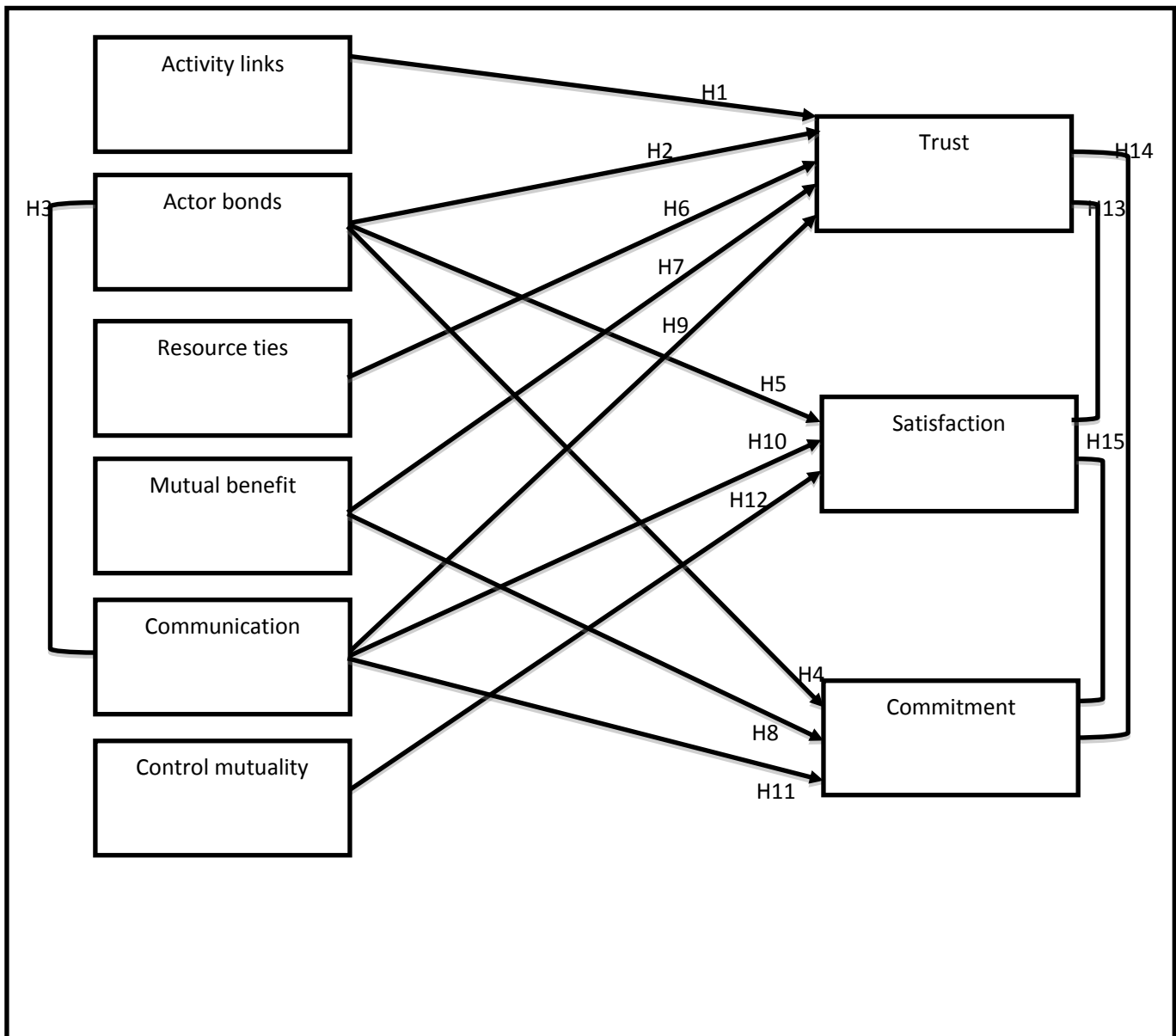


Figure 3.6: Developed theoretical framework showing relationship among various constructs (Author generated).

These propositions will be tested against the data collected for this research study through semi-structured interviews, and the opinion and views of experienced practitioners within the NOGI. Furthermore, figure 3.6 provides a structural model of the developed theoretical framework Showing the different connections and/or interrelationships between the

relationship elements and relationship quality constructs based on the propositions formulated.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has considered in detail the elements comprising a relationship, and the various constructs that make up the determinants of relationship quality and the dimensions of relationship quality within various disciplines and different research contexts. It commenced with an introduction of relationship marketing, pointing out that the focus within the relationship marketing paradigm has shifted completely from a transactional paradigm to a relationship paradigm (Christopher *et al.*, 1991; Ambler, 2004), which focuses on having a long-term orientation that will result in a win-win situation between relationship partners (Berry *et al.*, 1983). The definition and types of relationship were explored. Subsequently, relationship elements and the various constructs of relationship quality were discussed. The next chapter brings together relationship elements and the various constructs of relationship quality to develop a theoretical framework and propositions for this research study.

Furthermore, this chapter has explored the research study theoretical framework development. It started with the evaluation of previously developed theoretical frameworks within the relationship quality research area before proceeding to develop this research study theoretical framework. Relationship quality constructs in the area of interpersonal relationships (i.e. relationship between individuals), business-to-business relationships (B2B), business-to-customer relationships (B2C) and customer to business relationships (C2B) are taken into consideration.

Mullins and Kiley (2002) asserted that there is a link between literature review and methodology. Therefore, this chapter provided a detailed understanding of different research studies that has been carried out in this field, which could inform how issues such as the selection of the research methodology for this research study can be resolved. This is consistent with Boote and Beile's (2005, p. 3) assertion that "a researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field".

Hence, this chapter provided a detailed insight into the constructs and/or elements which this research study will focus on testing and validating.

The next chapter will present and justify the methodology and method used in conducting the empirical work for this research study.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Having developed and explained the theoretical framework that will be employed within this research study to analyse and evaluate the quality of the relationship between the OPC and HC in the NDRN, this chapter describes the methodological approach used for the purpose of this study. The chapter commences with the examination of the positivist and the interpretive stance of research. Subsequently, the data collection method will be presented before outlining the procedure for data analysis.

4.2 Methodology

Leedy & Ormrod (2001, p. 14) defined research methodology as “the general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project”. Scholars (e.g. Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Nigel 2001; Robson 2002; Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Yanchar *et al.*, 2005; Hamilton *et al.*, 2006; Gunzenhanser 2006; Mason 2006; Duranti 2006; Gysen *et al.*, 2006; Carter and Little 2007) have over the years deliberated on issues pertaining to research methodology and approaches. Hence, this research study is aware of the gap that exists between various research philosophy schools of thought in the literature (e.g. Remenyi *et al.*, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Silverman 2006; Neuman 2006; Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

To start with, research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge (Bajpai, 2011). This suggests that the researcher is bent on developing knowledge in a particular area when embarking on a research study. Therefore, establishing the research philosophy for a research study is imperative because it dictates important assumptions about the way in which the researcher view the world, and it underpins the study research strategy and methods. Hence, this study will examine the four major ways of thinking about research philosophy: phenomenology, epistemology, axiology, and ontology.

Phenomenology refers to the way in which we as humans make sense of the world around us (Saunders *et al.*, 2009), without allowing the interference of existing preconceptions (Scotland, 2012).

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) explained that **epistemology** “asks the question, what is the nature of the relationship between the would-be knower and what can be known”. Cohen *et al* (2007, p. 7) added that epistemology is concerned with “the nature and forms of knowledge”. Likewise, Saunders *et al* (2009) referred to epistemology as what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study. These definitions suggest that epistemology is what it means to know i.e. how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated.

Ontology is “the study of being” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). It is concerned with the nature of reality. Saunders *et al* (2009) asserted that ontology raises questions of the assumptions researchers have about the way the world operates and the commitment held to particular views. This suggests that ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words what is. Hence, researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work.

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgments about value (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Heron (1996) argues that our values are the guiding reason of all human action. This suggests that researchers articulate their values as a basis for making judgements about what research they are conducting and how they go about doing it.

Saunders *et al* (2009) asserted that it would be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that one research approach is ‘better’ than another as opposed to the fact that that they are ‘better’ at doing different things. Therefore, which is ‘better’ depends on the research question(s) the researcher is seeking to answer. Hence, this research study is conducted within the epistemology research domain. Saunders *et al* (2009) argued further that a researcher conducting a research within the epistemology research domain could embrace either positivist or interpretivist philosophical stances concerning methodology.

The positivist approach is often linked with the natural sciences (Saunders, 2003) and implementing a defined and fixed research plan, which is driven by theory (Clark, 2004). From an epistemological and philosophical perspective, the positivist focus is on objectivity and evidence in the search for truth (Easterby-Smith *et al* 2002; Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Easterby-Smith *et al* (2002), and Bahari (2012) noted that the positivist “believes” is that a social world exists externally to the researcher. Hence, its properties should be determined using objective methods as opposed to subjective inference through reflection, sensation or intuition. This standpoint emphasises that reality is objective and external, and the significance of knowledge is based on the observation of external reality. Saunders *et al* (2007) referred to positivist researcher as a “resource” researcher who attempt to predict and explain what happens in social world. As a result, knowledge becomes significant based on the researcher’s observation of this external reality (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bahari, 2012).

Contrary to the positivist perspective of acquiring knowledge through induction and/or direct observation, the interpretivist argues that people, the world, and institutions are fundamentally different from actual science (Bryman and Bell, 2004; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As a result, Bevir and Rhodes (2002) asserted that the interpretivist approach results from two premises, which are “people act on their beliefs and preference” (Bevir and Rhodes 2002, p. 4) and that “we cannot read-off people’s beliefs and preferences from objective facts about them such as their social class, race, or institutional position” (Bevir and Rhodes 2002, p. 5). Hence, the world is just as the way people see it (Cavana, 2001), and should be described in a meaningful way for research participants (Saunders, 2003). Cavana (2001) argued further that this standpoint could be achieved by engaging with the social actors involved in the research study. Saunders (2003) added that researchers would be able to have appropriate understanding of social actors’ subjective reality based upon their actions, motives and intentions. Table 4.1 present the strengths and weaknesses of the positivism and interpretivist philosophical stance.

Table 4.1: Strengths and weaknesses of positivism and interpretivist schools of thought (Adapted from Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002)

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Positivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wide coverage of the range of situations ➤ Fast and economical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inflexible and artificial ➤ Not effective in understanding processes
Interpretivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ability to understand people's meaning ➤ Adjusts to new ideas/issues as they emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Needs a great deal of time and resources ➤ Difficult analysis and interpretation ➤ Difficult to control pace, progress and endpoint

Hennink *et al* (2010) stated that the positivist and interpretivist are the fundamental paradigms of quantitative and qualitative research respectively. Hence, quantitative research is guided by the positivist paradigm, while qualitative research is inherent in the interpretivist assumptions. Marsh and Stocker (2010, p. 193) concluded, "a positivist looks for causal relationships, tends to prefer quantitative analysis and wants to produce objective and generalisable findings". However, an interpretivist is concerned with "understanding, not explanation, focuses on the meaning that actions have for agents, tends to use qualitative evidence and offers his/her results as one interpretation of the relationship between the social phenomena studied". Arguably, qualitative research is primarily an exploratory research, which is used to gain an understanding of opinions, underlying reasons, and motivations. Hence, it helps to develop propositions and/or ideas or provide an insight into a problem for potential quantitative study. However, quantitative research on the other hand is used to quantify a problem by way of gathering data that can be transformed into numerical data or statistics. Hence, it is used to quantify behaviours, opinions, attitudes, and other defined variables. Furthermore, qualitative research is used to uncover trends in opinion and thought, which could assist the researcher in obtaining a deeper understanding into

a problem, while quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in a research study. Therefore, in order to adequately explore and gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for the community attitude and behaviour, the qualitative method of data collection is considered appropriate for the current study.

In addition, resulting from Read and Marsh's (2002) suggestion that researchers should employ the most suitable method(s) that interest their research study, this research study took on board the interpretivist philosophical stance, which tends to use qualitative evidence. The justification for the selection of the qualitative method is because it allows the researcher to extensively deal with all aspects of the proposed study research questions. In addition, it allows the researcher's focus to be on the actual relationship experience with the aim of gaining a detailed information and understanding regarding research participants' individual assessment and evaluation of the relationship. Table 4.2 presents the main features of a qualitative and quantitative research study.

Table 4.2: Main features of a qualitative research study (Hennink *et al.*, 2010)

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Objective	To gain a detailed understanding of underlying reasons, belief, motivations	To quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest
Purpose	To understand why? How? What is the process? What are the influences or context?	To measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample.
Data	Data are words (called textual data)	Data are numeric or statistical
Study population	Small number of participants or interviewees, selected purposively (non-randomly). Referred to as participants or interviewees	Usually a large number of cases representing the population of interest. Randomly selected respondents
Data collection methods	In-depth interviews, observation, group discussions.	Structured techniques such as online questionnaires, on-street or telephone interviews.

Analysis	Analysis is interpretive.	Statistical data is usually in the form of tabulations (tabs). Findings are conclusive and usually descriptive in nature
Outcome	To develop an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs or actions.	Used to recommend a final course of action

The qualitative research method is viewed as a collection of different techniques, including focus groups interviews and individual interviews, which attempt to gain insight on and understanding of the experiences and practice of research participants within a research context (Devine, 2002). Spencer *et al* (2003) added that a qualitative research method seeks to provide a detailed and extensive understanding of people’s perspectives, experiences, and histories within a specific context i.e. the research participants’ settings or personal circumstances. This suggest that qualitative researchers attempt to assess things in their natural context and make sense out of it in that context. Likewise, Gummesson (2005, p. 312) stated that a qualitative research method “is primarily directed to understanding the complex and the elusive in a systemic perspective more than to establish unambiguous cause and effect relationships between single variables”. Arguably, qualitative research methods aim to investigate phenomenon by using methods that are sensitive to the social context under study. Hence, data collected through this medium is considered rich, detailed and complex (Gummesson, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 4) concluded that a qualitative research method “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world”.

Nevertheless, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) asserted that quantitative research methods focus on measuring and analysing the casual relationships between variables as opposed to processes. Brannen (1992, p. 5) added that quantitative research methods aim to “discover how many and what kind of people in the general or parent population have a particular characteristic which has been found to exist in the sample population”. Hence, qualitative research methods seek to employ techniques such as questionnaires, which call for adequate planning prior to data collection (Neuman, 2006).

Berg (2007) affirmed that flexibility is the main difference between qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods. Mack *et al* (2010) argued that qualitative research methods give room for flexibility in that they permit adaptation of the relations and interplay between research participants and the researcher, while the interaction between the research participants and the researcher is less formal when using quantitative research methods. Hennink *et al* (2010, p. 9) added that it allows researchers “to identify issues from the perspective of your study participants, and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour, events or objects”. Arguably, qualitative research methods allow the research participants to answer questions in a more detailed manner compared to the quantitative research methods. Hence, qualitative research methods support open-ended questions and probing in order for the researcher to ask “why” and “how” questions, and likewise the research participants can express their opinion and view (Hennink *et al.*, 2010; Mack *et al.*, 2010). However, Gummesson (2005, p. 325) concluded that “there is no need for the qualitative researchers to worry and feel forced to justify their research against a norm that has been set up by quantitative research; criticism can be raised against all methods and techniques. The crucial directive is awareness of strengths, weaknesses and relevance of what the researcher does”.

Furthermore, qualitative research uses the inductive reasoning approach, while quantitative research uses the deductive reasoning approach (Neuman, 2006; Trumbull, 2005). Hennink *et al* (2010, p. 25) stated that “while deductive reasoning is predominantly in the design cycle (by applying existing theories and literature to refine research questions and incorporating its concepts in a deductive conceptual framework), inductive reasoning is more prominent in the ethnographic cycle (when collecting data and making inductive inferences). They noted that the design cycle comprises of four interlinked tasks: “formulation of research questions, incorporating literature and theory, developing a conceptual framework, and selecting a fieldwork approach” Hennink *et al* (2010, p. 25). Likewise, the ethnographic cycle consists of interlinked tasks of “designing the

research instrument, selection of participants, data collection and making inferences” Hennink *et al* (2010, p. 25).

In summary, a quantitative research method focus on quantifying the research problem in order to count and measure issues and subsequently generalise the findings to a larger population. Hence, its outcome often results in the identification of patterns, trends, correlations, frequencies and averages. In contrast, qualitative research focuses on understanding and explaining the beliefs, experience and behaviour of research participants in a particular context. Due to the nature of this research study, semi-structured interview as a technique of qualitative research method will be utilised for data collection. In addition, both the deductive and inductive reasoning approach will be employed. Deductive reasoning will be use to formulate codes from the literature, while inductive will be used to develop codes from the data gathered (Hennink *et al.*, 2010). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 32) define codes as “tools to think with”, while Graneheim and Lundman (2004, p. 107) referred to a code as “the label of a meaning unit”

4.3 Method of data collection

Evidenced from the thorough review of literature in the field of marketing, scholars have focused on the use of three main data collection instruments, which are questionnaires, interviews and secondary sources (Williams *et al.*, 2015; Hoppner *et al.*, 2015; Lo and Im, 2014; Atrek *et al.*, 2014; Akrouf, 2014; Giota and Kleftras, 2014; Uchino *et al.*, 2014; Huang *et al.*, 2014; Chu and Wang, 2012; Zimmerman and Roberts, 2012; Petrican *et al.*, 2011; Gentzler *et al.*, 2011; Morry *et al.*, 2010; Canevello and Crocker, 2010; Skarmeas and Robson, 2008; Rauyruen and Miller, 2007; Ramaseshan *et al.*, 2006; Carr, 2006; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Van Bruggen *et al.*, 2005; Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Venetis and Ghaur, 2004; De Ruyeter *et al.*, 2001). In spite of this, this research study took on board the used secondary sources and interviews for data collection purposes. This is consistent with Athanasopoulou’s (2009, p. 583) suggestion that researchers should use more “qualitative approaches to

capture the subtle differences between context; analyse RQ in different relationship development stages, and look at new type of relationships between parties that may not be individuals or businesses, or may not assume the traditional roles of buyer and seller". Table 4.3 summarised the advantages and disadvantages of using each of the research instruments.

In order to have appropriate and detailed understanding of the various relationship quality constructs identified in Chapter 3 within the theoretical framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted in different communities within the NDRN. Parahoo (2003, p. 307) referred to an interview as "the verbal interaction between one or more researchers and one or more respondents for the purpose of collecting valid and reliable data to answer particular research questions". The researcher commenced with the design of an interview schedule which was drawn from the various relationship quality constructs identified and discussed in the previous Chapter 3. This was to ensure that all the various constructs essential to the successful outcome of this research study were taken into consideration. Hence, a semi-structured interview was designed to give room for flexibility. This is consistent with Bryman and Bell's (2004, p. 355) assertion that "flexibility is important in varying the order of questions and also in clearing inconsistencies in answers".

Table 4.3: Advantages and disadvantages of research instruments (Summarised from the literature)

	QUESTIONNAIRE	INTERVIEW
Advantages	Can provide hard numbers, get unbiased individual responses, be used for evaluations, provide for subgroup analysis and be generalised to a population (Gamboa <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Charles <i>et al.</i> , 2005)	It allows synchronous communication in place and time, takes advantage of social cues (such as intonation, voice, and body language), provide verbal response to interview question, can be tape recorded, easy to terminate conversation with interviewee, and there is no delay between question & answer (Kvale, 1983; Opdenakker, 2006)
Disadvantages	It is impossible to collect behavioural data,	The process of transcribing tape recorded information is time consuming, and tape recorder

	time costly and time consuming, and can suffer from sampling issues (Charles <i>et al.</i> , 2005)	is prone to malfunctioning (Bryman, 2001; Opdenakker, 2006),
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In addition, a semi-structured interview schedule aided the researcher in asking questions which were not previously scheduled, but considered relevant in the context of the ongoing interview (Neuman, 2006). Also, it guides the research participants when responding to interview questions by keeping them on track. This is consistent with Bariball and While's (1994) and Parahoo's (2006) assertion that a semi-structured interview gives the researcher the opportunity to play with words but not to change the interpretation or meaning of the interview questions. This view suggests that the researcher has to be conscious of the appropriate use of words because certain words might connote different meaning to various research participants. Furthermore, Parahoo (2006) established that a semi-structured interview allows validity to be enhanced. This is because the researcher can assist the research participants in gaining a detailed understanding of research questions, in which the researcher can subsequently probe and clarify, if need be. Main areas explored within the content of the interview schedule are:

1. **The key elements of a relationship:** The purpose of this is to gain a detailed insight and background into the nature of the relationship between the OPC and HC from the HC point of view. In addition, it gave the research participants the opportunity to themselves assess and evaluate the relationship between the OPC and HC, thus further supporting the justification for this research study. This is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota's (1995) suggestion that the elements of a relationship (i.e. the activity links, actor bonds, and resource ties) are critical to relationship partners' strategy and capability development. This aspect also seeks to understand why there is consistent conflict and violence in the region.
2. **The determinants of relationship quality:** This focuses on capturing and understanding the constructs that give rise to relationship quality. In addition, why research participants consider

such constructs as essential in achieving effective relationship quality. Crosby *et al* (1990) referred to these constructs as the antecedents of relationship quality.

3. **The dimensions of relationship quality:** This aspect is included in order to establish and explore the likely constructs which serves as indicator that provide information on the level or state of the quality of relationship. Hence, it measures the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. The interview questions explored under this section focus on relationship quality evaluation.

Combining the three aspects of the interview questions identified above together will help establish and justify the argument in context for the need to enhance and/or improve the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. Data collected were through telephone interviews and then face-to-face interviews with five and sixteen people respectively. See more detail on telephone and face-to-face interview in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 respectively.

4.3.1 Telephone interviews

The telephone interviews were conducted during the first phase of the data collection process as a test run. Its essence was to help shape the final research interview questions. In addition, it gave the researcher the opportunity to learn how to get research participants involved in the interview process. Furthermore, it was used as a medium to explore and investigate the understanding of the proposed interview questions by the selected research participants (McNamara, 1999). Hence, five telephone interviews were randomly conducted towards the shaping of the final research interview questions. Research participants were identified through recommendation from friends and family members. However, effort was made to ensure that all five research participants are inhabitants and indigenes of a community within the NDRN.

Subsequently, the researcher made contact with recommended research participants via the telephone explaining the purpose and format of the interview. The proposed research questions were then presented to the

research participants for their responses. Research participants' appropriate interpretation and understanding of the research interview questions asked was the researcher's focus during the whole process. In addition, the interview questions were checked for appropriate language and clear terms of reference.

4.3.2 Face-to-face semi-structured interviews

Considering the research nature and aims, which are to explore and understand the nature, elements and quality of the relationship between the OPC and HC, face-to-face interviews were used during the second phase of the data collection process. This method of data collection involves an interviewer engaging an interviewee (i.e. the research participants) in a discussion on a specific research area in order to gain insight or explore certain issues (Hennink, 2010). Each interview conducted began with an introduction about the researcher, the research area and questions to ascertain the research participant's demographic data as shown in appendix 5. This is consistent with Berg's (2007), and Strauss and Corbin's (1998) assertion that initial contacts create a warm and acceptable environment for both the interviewer and interviewees, and help develop an understanding of the research study purpose. Hence, the interviewees will find it easier to raise any concerns or ask questions they might have about their participation or the study. Likewise, the researcher (i.e. the interviewer) will be able to collect some pre-information about each research participants, which ultimately helps in establishing and developing the desired and expected kind of trust and relationship necessary for the getting the research participants' acceptance in participating in the interview process.

Table 4.4: Advantage and disadvantages of semi-structured interview (Trumbull, 2005)

Advantages	Disadvantages
It facilitates rapport/empathy.	It reduces the control the investigator has over the situation
Allows a greater flexibility of coverage.	Takes longer to carry out
Allows the interview to go into novel areas.	It is hard to analyse
It tends to produce richer data and Obtains relevant information.	Interviewing skills are required
Gives the freedom to explore general views or opinions in more detail.	Need to meet sufficient people in order to make general comparisons.
The audience are specifically targeted.	Need to ensure confidentiality.

Furthermore, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006, p. 128) stated that a semi-structured interview is “a meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents”, which indicates that in-depth interviews are a special kind of knowledge-producing conversation”. Arguably, both the interviewees and interviewer have the responsibility of creating meaning and knowledge. Table 4.4 depict the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interview. However, contrary to the commonly cited disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews (e.g. Bryman, 2001; Trumbull, 2005; Opdenakker, 2006), data collected during this phase was productive, valuable and reliable. This is because the researcher was able to probe interesting areas that arose during the interviews conducted. Sixteen face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with each lasting between thirty-five to fifty minutes. Hennink (2010) summarised the processes involved in conducting a semi-structured interview into four steps. These are:

1. Establishing an interview guide for data collection purpose.
2. The interviewer creating rapport or contact with interviewees (a trust relationship).
3. Questioning the interviewees in a free and open-minded manner.
4. Probing interviewees’ views and opinions during interaction and conversation.

These steps depict the core process followed by the researcher in carrying out the interviews with the respective research participants. The interview schedule was designed with key interview questions to proffer answers to the research study aims and objectives listed in section 1.4 based on research participants' responses. The research participants were chosen purposively based on the outcome of the initial telephone interviews conducted. The five research participants interviewed during the first phase of the data collection process made reference and/or suggested the calibre of people within the community that could be considered for the second phase of the interview process. Based on this background, contact was made with sixteen research participants. The face-to-face interview process with each research participant commenced with an introduction of self, the research aims and objectives, and asking research participants to confirm their demographic information. This gave the researcher the opportunity to create a rapport and establish trust with research participants. Although, Parry and Mauthner (2004, p. 145) asserted that "while respondent/researcher rapport may enrich the data, archiving of these data will present particular problems for researcher confidentiality". Research participants were questioned in a free and open minded manner that allows the research participants to express their views and opinions objectively, and also give the researcher the opportunity to query and/or probe any of the research interview questions as the need arise.

In order to complement the data collected through the research study semi-structured interviews, secondary data were gathered from both peer reviewed and academic journals from various disciplines, and published documents and books on the NDRN and Nigeria. The journal articles reviewed gave an insight and understanding into the construct needed in developing the research study theoretical framework, while the published documents and books were helpful in understanding the nature of the current situation in the NDRN.

4.4 Sample selection method

Getting to know and understand the NOGI and its operations, its stakeholders, the NDRN and its constituencies was imperative in order to select the appropriate sample. Hence, a considerable amount of effort and time was invested in this. This gave the researcher the opportunity to direct his attention to the appropriate needs of the NOGI in addition to identifying the key stakeholders.

Subsequent to taking into consideration the different types of sampling techniques as shown in table 4.5, sample selection was based on selective sampling. According to Schatzman & Strauss (1973), selective sampling originates from restrictions placed upon the researcher's observations by the research settings and/or context. Sandelowski *et al* (1992, p. 302) referred to selective sampling as "a decision made prior to beginning a study to sample subjects according to a preconceived, but reasonable initial set of criteria. Likewise, Glaser (1978, p. 37) defined selective sampling as "the calculated decision to sample a specific locale according to a preconceived but reasonable initial set of dimensions (such as time, space, identity or power) which are worked out in advance for a study". This suggests that the ability of the researcher to select the appropriate sampling method depends on his or her understanding of the research context and/or settings. Coyne (1997) termed selective sampling as a purposeful sampling.

Table 4.5: Sampling techniques and their Advantages and disadvantages (Summarised from the literature)

Types of Sampling	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Random	Can be used with large sample populations	Avoids bias	Can lead to poor representation of the overall parent population
Stratified	When the population is heterogeneous and contains several different groups, some of which are related to the topic of the study	Ensures a high degree of representativeness of all the strata or layers in the population	Time consuming and tedious
Simple random	When the population members are similar to one another on important variables	Ensures a high degree of representativeness	Time consuming and tedious
Selective	This is used primarily when there is a limited number of people that have expertise in the area being researched. Subjects are hand picked based on specific characteristics	Ensures balance of group sizes when multiple groups are to be selected	Samples are not easily defensible as being representative of populations due to potential subjectivity of researcher
Multistage	Complex form of cluster sampling in which two or more levels of units are embedded one in the other	less costly, less laborious & more purposeful	Not as effective as true random sampling, but probably solves more of the problems inherent to random sampling
Cluster	When the population consists of units rather than individuals	Easy and convenient	Possibly, members of units are different from one another, decreasing the techniques effectiveness

4.4.1 Sample size

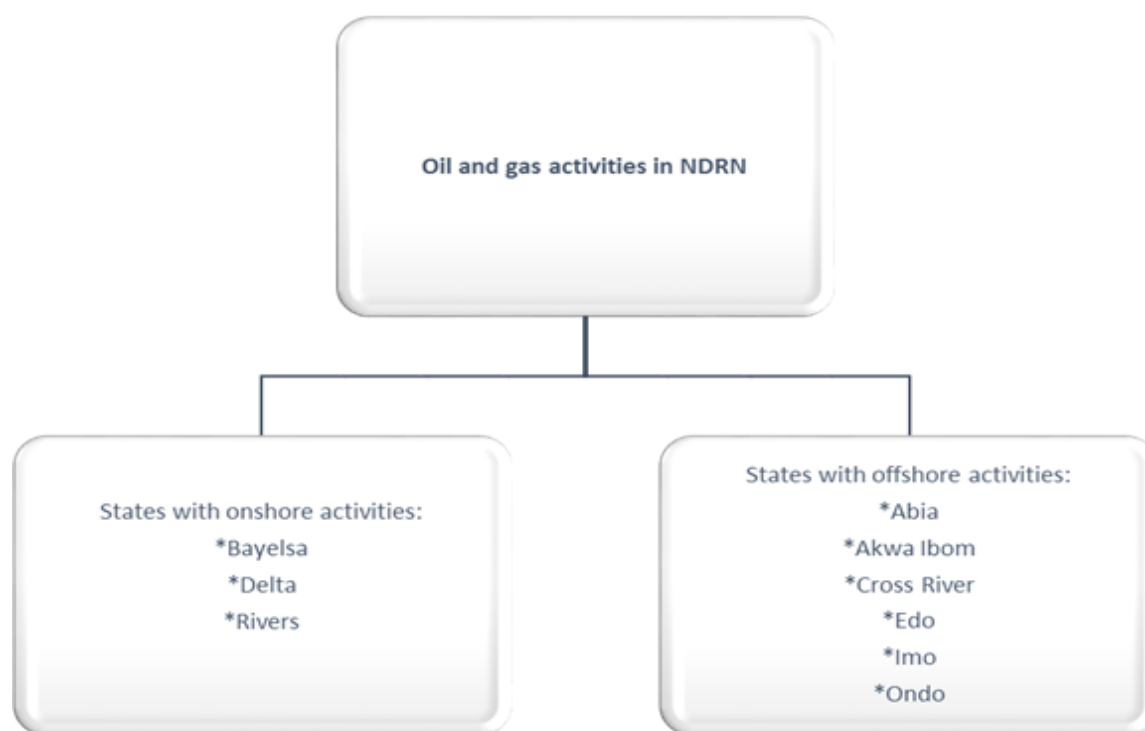


Figure 4.1: Inshore and offshore activities by State (Author generated)

Within the NDRN are nine independent states (i.e. Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers). However, three of these states (i.e. Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) were selected for the purpose of data collection because they are worse affected due to the intensity and nature of oil production and operations, which are mostly onshore (see figure 4.1). In addition, these states experience the highest level of violence and conflicts compared to the remaining six other states in the NDRN. Hence, the personal security of the researcher becomes something to be aware of. A total of sixteen face-to-face interviews was conducted as shown in the table 4.5 below. Research participants were selected based on recommendation. This is because the region has been likened to a war zone and thus unsecured for the researcher (Ekumaoko, 2013; Ola, 2013; Ukiwo, 2009). Hence, people who have privileged and important information because of either or both of their position and/or their direct

involvement in the relations and/or negotiation process of their communities with the OPC were identified and interviewed.

The number of interviews conducted in each state and for the whole research was not predetermined, instead it was decided to continue until the researcher reached the point of saturation. This was evidenced during the data gathering process as no new insights were obtained. Bowen (2008, p. 140) defined saturation point to entails "bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy". Hence, a point of diminishing returns could be said to be reached in the data gathering process. In addition, saturation was perceived by the current study as a situation, in which any additional participants don't provide any additional insights. Hence, the researcher is no longer learning very much (if anything) from each subsequent interview. Guest *et al* (2006) proposed that saturation often occurs around 12 participants in homogeneous groups. This is consistent with Latham's (2013) assertion that saturation occurs around 11 participants. Hence, Crouch & McKenzie (2006) concluded that less than 20 participants in a qualitative study helps a researcher build and maintain a close relationship and thus improve the "open" and "frank" exchange of information. This can help mitigate some of the bias and validity threats inherent in qualitative research. Consequently, the "sweet spot" sample size for many qualitative research studies is 15 to 20 homogeneous interview participants. These scholars' standpoint further supports the sample selection for the current study.

Further, the context for the current study also imposed some limitations on the sample selection. The researcher could not gain free access to the various communities within the region due to security reasons (violence and conflicts). Hence, situation do not permit the collection of appropriate data. This is consistent with Robson's (2002) assertion that such a situation reduces the likelihood that the researcher will be able to collect those data that the researcher needed intended research participants to share in order to be able to address the research aims. Therefore, the current study

concluded that the 16 research participants interviewed were representative of the NDRN communities.

Table 4.6: Details of interviews held (Author generated)

STATES	NUMBER OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED
Bayelsa	5
Delta	5
Rivers	6
Total	16

4.5 Pilot Study

The importance of conducting a pilot study within the social qualitative context and/or settings cannot be ignored. Aitman *et al* (2006) asserted that often times, pilot studies reveal to the researcher the deficiencies and lapses in the design of a procedure and/or proposed experiment, which can be rectified or addressed prior to major or main studies. Likewise, Polit and Beck (2009) defined a pilot study as a trial or small-scale version conducted prior to a major study. Arguably, a pilot study could be seen as a means of avoiding resource waste i.e. money or time. Following the formulation of the research study interview questions, the researcher had several consultations with the research study supervisor. Subsequently, five telephone interviews were made as a pilot study with experts and operators in the field and of the context of study respectively. This gave the researcher the opportunity to test the initial research interview questions and, from responses received, develop the final research interview questions as provided in appendix 5. In addition, the researcher was exposed to knowledge and ideas that were not thought of during the initial research interview questions development. This was evidenced in the researcher's ability to establish if responses received could be analysed in terms of the information required, and the need to revise and re-word initially proposed interview questions to suit the understanding of the research participants. Also, the researcher had an insight into understanding who the key stakeholders within the NOGI are. Hence, the pilot study aided in deciding and selecting the research participants. Other

key issues identified from the pilot study as it relates to the current study are:

1. It informed the design of later research by probing for subjects, language and concepts.
2. It helped in understanding if the subject being investigated is adequately (or potentially adequately) captured by the proposed interview procedure and schedule of questions.
3. Determined whether the full-scale research that is proposed will actually investigate what it is intended to such as wording of questions.
4. Identified logistical problems which might occur using proposed methods. Assessing the feasibility of a (full-scale) study/survey.

4.6 Reliability and validity

The relevance of reliability and validity has been questioned among qualitative researchers (Stanbacka, 2001). Qualitative researchers (e.g. Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Cohen *et al* 2000; Golafshani 2003; Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Neuman 2006; Koro-Ljungberg 2008) have perceived reliability and validity differently. Hence, their importance to qualitative research cannot be ignored (Patton, 2002). Going by Golafshani's (2003, p. 601) assertion, reliability and validity are "two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results, and judging the quality of the study". However, Kirk and Miller (1989) argued that "reliability is the extent to which measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out", while "validity is the extent to which it gives the correct answer".

Reliability was not the term used by all scholars; it was consistently referred to as "dependability" (Newman, 2006, p. 196; Guber, 1985, p. 300) and truthfulness, and consistency, in addition to dependability (Seale, 2002; Seale, 1999; Clont, 1992). Contrary to these views, Collingridge and Gantt (2008, p. 390) argued that "reliability in qualitative research typically refers to adopting research methods that are accepted by the research

community as legitimate ways of collecting and analysing data. Specifically, reliable qualitative methods consistently produce rich and meaningful descriptions of phenomena". Likewise, validity was referred to being "truthful" in qualitative research (Neuman, 2006). Hence, there is a need to ensure honesty and fairness. Other scholars (e.g. Cresswell and Miller, 2000; Stenbacka 2001; Golafshani 2003) added that putting in place checks and balances is of great advantage when carrying out qualitative research.

In order to minimise all forms of bias while also ensuring data reliability and validity, this research study carefully, though through, the processes involved in the design and development of interview schedule, data collection, and data analysis. Ritchie and Lewis's (2003) definition of validity was considered appropriate; precision or correctness of a research reading. This is evident in the quality and richness of the data gathered, analysed and presented in subsequent chapters. The data collected represents the views and opinions of different sub-groups of stakeholders within the community. Hence, the findings reflect the perspectives of the community people.

The research study sample coverage is a representative of the various sub-groups in the community within the NDRN. Research participants were selected purposefully in order to avoid gathering data outside the research study scope. Consistency was maintained throughout the selection process so as to ensure data reliability and validity. The findings were validated against the data collected for this research study through semi-structured interviews, and the opinion and views of experienced practitioners within the NOGI.

4.7 Handling data

Data handling is an important aspect of this research study. Prior to carrying out the data analysis process, effort was made to ensure a flexible and careful process of handling the data gathered from the field. Hence, Richards (2005, p. 33) concluded that "making qualitative data is ridiculously easy. The challenge is not so much making data but rather

making useful, valuable data, relevant to the question being asked, and reflecting on the process of research". The data handling process involved the following stages:

4.7.1 Data recording and transcribing

Arguably, it is impossible for the researcher to remember all responses given by interviewees to research interview questions during interview sessions. Hence, the need for recording in qualitative research studies. Bryman (2008, p. 451) asserted that "the recording of conversations and interviews is to all intents and purposes mandatory". The data provided by the research participants was recorded using a mini tape recorder once informed consent had been granted. The recording is of great importance to the researcher because it gives the researcher the opportunity to concentrate while the research participants are speaking without the need for note-taking. Hence, the researcher could query or probe the research participants if need be. The recorded data was transcribed as expressed by the research participants i.e. verbatim in order to retain the data quality, content and richness. Also, it gives the researcher the opportunity to reflect on the views and opinions of the research participants.

Whilst it is impossible to capture interviewees' body language and other physical expressions during data transcription, the researcher made consistent effort to capture as much as possible. This standpoint can be likened to Green and Thorogood's (2009, p. 117) assertion that "transcribing conversation is, of course, a translation process in itself. The choices of punctuation, spelling and detail of the transcript all affect how it is read by those analysing it". The researcher did all the transcribing, which also facilitated the researcher's familiarity with the data collected, despite scholars (e.g. Bryman 2008; Barbour 2008; Richards 2005; Punch 2005; Ritchie and Lewis 2003) stating that the process is rigorous and time consuming.

4.7.2 Data analysis

The data collected was analysed using content analysis. This method of data analysis has been used both by quantitative and qualitative scholars. For example, Kaplan (1943, p. 230) referred to it as "a technique which attempts to characterise the meaning in a given body of discourse in a systematic and quantitative fashion". Likewise, among the qualitative scholars, Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define content analysis as a "research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". Webber (1990) argued that content analysis as a method of data analysis focuses directly on the transcript and/or text of human communications because communication is core to social interaction. Franzosi (2004) added that content analysis is often used to capture the key themes that emerge from a transcript and/or text. Against the usual norm within the qualitative research studies of using NVivo for data analysis, the current study considered NVivo not suitable for the following reasons:

1. Presentation of the data and ease of reading the texts: It is less flexible in this respect as the NVivo software program has a different architecture, which requires the data collected to be organised into document(s). However, with content analysis, the researcher could commence reading the data gathered immediately after transcribing the data.
2. Use of semi-automation tools: The word frequency (and subsequent text searching) tool can only be restricted to the responses of a single question if those responses have been imported or assigned to the project in a single document, without any other question responses in the same document. Whereas content analysis allow the researcher to create own stop-lists, if required, separately from a default list.
3. Ease of use: NVivo is considered to be quite laborious because of the extensive use of dialog screens and the need to save exploratory

queries; it can do all of the tasks we require but it does take a lot of user effort to work out how to achieve the desired effects.

Harris (2001) asserted that content analysis is important for studying organisations, beliefs, human relations and attitudes. Therefore, content analysis could be considered the most appropriate approach for the purpose of analysing data collected through interviews in order to understand and explore people's views and opinions on the quality of a relationship (Golicic and Mentzer, 2005). This is because it provides insight into complex models of research participants thought and language use. In addition, it is an unobtrusive method, which does not involve the researcher influencing the behaviour of the people being studied. Hence, it offered the researcher the opportunity to test and utilise the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 in order to assess and understand the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. To this end, this research study adopted Harris's (2001) eight step process for the purpose of data analysis as shown below:

1. Identify the questions to be asked and constructs to be used.
2. Choose the texts to be examined.
3. Specify the unit of analysis.
4. Determine the categories, or themes of meaning. Into which responses are divided.
5. Generate a coding scheme or coding rules.
6. Conduct a sample or pilot study.
7. Collect the data and revise the scheme as necessary.
8. Analyse the data and assess validity and reliability.

4.7.2.1 Unit of analysis

The determination of a unit of analysis is considered one of the most essential decisions when taking on board content analysis for research data analysis purpose (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). A unit of analysis represents different objects of study such as an organisation, a program, or a person (Donna, 1998), or a state, a community, or a nation (Patton, 1987). In addition, a unit of analysis has been considered as part of a text

(Weber, 1990), and a phrase or every word abstracted from a transcript (Feeley and Gottlieb, 1998). Sekaran and Bougie (2010) defined a unit of analysis as the unit that will be analysed by a research study which is often determined by the study research questions. They noted further that the unit of analysis which could take the form of an individual, group of individuals or an organisation influences the research study data collection method and sample size.

Lages and Montgomery (2004), and Lages and Lages (2004) asserted that analysing based on individual experience avail the researcher the opportunity to identify the degree of relationship quality in a specific relationship. Lages *et al* (2005) added that analysis based on individual experience is of great advantage to researchers venturing into new research studies, while Graneheim and Lundman (2004, p 106) concluded that "the most suitable unit of analysis is whole interview or observational protocols that are large enough to be considered a whole and small enough to be possible to keep in mind as a context for the meaning unit, during the analysis process". Hence, the unit of analysis for this research study is the interview text about the research participants experience of OPC and HC relationship. This consists of a large study aimed at describing the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC within the NDRN. Research participants' experiences of OPC and HC relationship was extracted and brought together to constitute the research study unit of analysis.

4.7.2.2 Inductive and deductive method

Researchers often refer to the two methods of reasoning in research as the inductive and deductive approaches.

Researchers have argued that the inductive approach to research move from specific observation(s) to broader generalisations and/or theories (Pellegrino and Glaser, 1979; Heit, 2000). Figure 4.2 presents the steps involved in such process. Inductive research studies begin with specific observation(s), start to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories. This approach requires the

researcher to be completely open-minded without any preconceived ideas of what will be the outcome of the study.

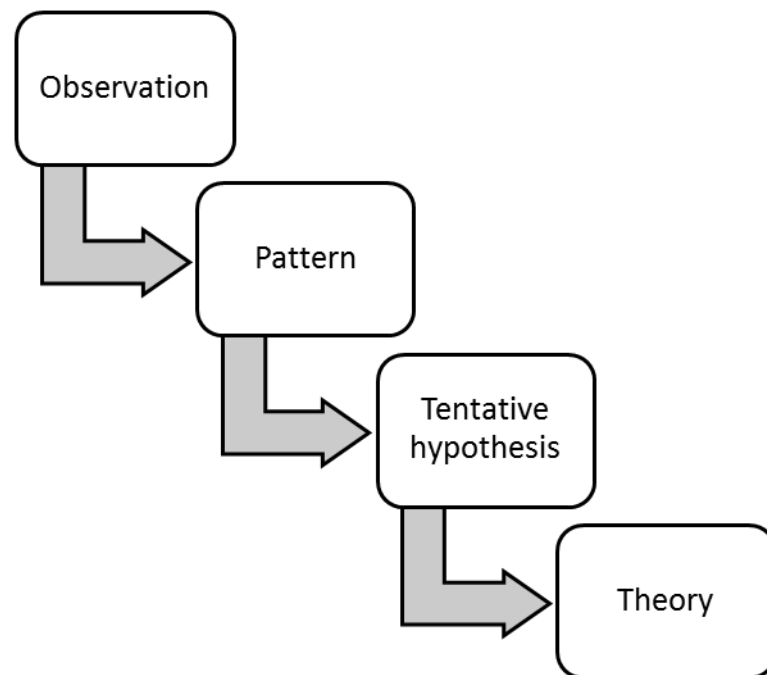


Figure 4.2: The inductive reasoning process

The deductive approach to research works from the more general to the more specific. Arguably, this could be perceived as the opposite of inductive approach to research. This approach involve thinking up a theory about a topic of interest, which will be narrowed down into more specific hypotheses that could be tested (Simon, 1996). Figure 4.3 presents the sequential steps to be followed when carrying out a deductive research study.

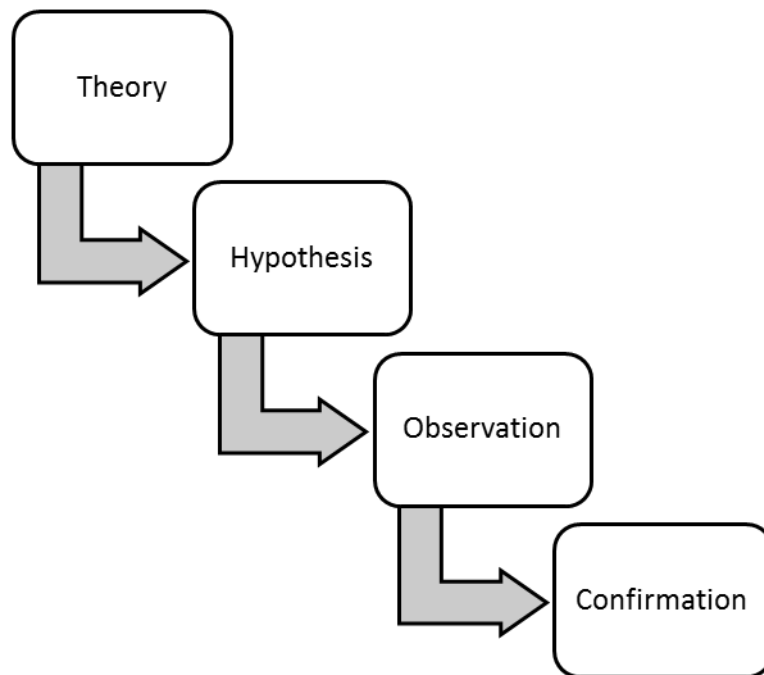


Figure 4.3: The deductive reasoning process

Both the inductive and deductive reasoning approaches to research support the generation of theory through grounded theory. This is a research tool which enables the researcher to seek out and conceptualise the latent social patterns and structures of a research study through the process of constant comparison (Walsh *et al.*, 2015). At first, the researcher will use an inductive approach to generate substantive codes from the collected data, while the developed codes will subsequently suggest where to go next to collect more focused data, and questions to ask. This later process is referred to as the deductive phase of the grounded theory process.

4.8 Measures of constructs

The various constructs that make up this research study's theoretical framework have been defined in the previous chapters and their inclusion justified. This section describes the operationalisation of the various constructs that make up the theoretical framework. All the measures employed were identified and adapted from the work of previous scholars (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001) to reflect the goals and context of the current research study.

4.8.1 Mutual goals

Wilson (1995) defined mutual goals as the extent to which relationship partners share goals which are meant to be achieved jointly by them and the maintenance of such a relationship. Hence, there is a need for the relationship partners to focus on cooperative behaviour (Kumar *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, measures of mutual goals are considered as follows:

1. OPC goals are in line with HC goals
2. HC can depend on the OPC for important or crucial decisions
3. OPC takes into consideration the effect of its decisions on the HC
4. HC can easily share its problems with the OPC

4.8.2 Communication

Building on the communication characteristics (i.e. timely, relevancy and reliability) suggested by Morgan and Hunt (1994), and the definition by Lages *et al* (2005) that communication is the extent to which relationship partners willingly or freely share useful information that will enhance the relationship, the following measures are considered appropriate for communication:

1. OPC keeps the HCs informed
2. HC communicate well the OPC
3. OPC provide the HC with timely information
4. OPC provide the HC with useful relevant advice
5. Both OPC and HC keep one another informed on any changes to the original plan

4.8.3 Control mutuality

Canary *et al's* (1991) measures of control mutuality were adapted and taken on board.

1. Both the OPC and HC agree on what to expect from one another
2. OPC is cooperative with the HC
3. OPC is attentive to HC's opinions

4. HC has influence on OPC decisions
5. HC is satisfied with the way OPC handle decisions that affect the HC
6. We agree on what we can expect from one another
7. Both OPC and HC have an equal say on matters that affect them both

4.8.4 Trust

Scholars have suggested different measurements in order to assess the level of trust between relationship partners. Within the communication discipline, trust is likened to credibility (Hovland *et al.*, 1953). In the strategic alliance discipline, trust is referred to as alliance (Sherman, 1992). In the automobile discipline, trust is considered as risk and reward i.e mutual trust (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987), while in retailing, it is seen as loyalty (Berry, 1993), and cooperation and dialogue (Schurr and Ozanne, 1985). Doney and Cannon (1997) identify credibility and benevolence as the two main measures of trust. They define credibility as "an expectancy that the partner's word or written statement can be relied on", while benevolence is referred to as "the extent which one partner is genuinely interested in the other partner's welfare and motivated to seek joint gain" (p. 36). Moorman *et al's* (1993) measurement of trust was based on confidence, while Morgan and Hunt's (1994) trust measurement was based on reliability and integrity. Crosby *et al* (1990) identified reliability, honesty and integrity as the main measures of trust and Kumar *et al* (1995) focused on honesty and benevolence.

For this study, trust is measured using the general perception measure, which is also referred to as the cumulative focus. Rust *et al* (1995) argued that this way of measuring trust is consistent with the conceptual development of trust itself. Cronin and Taylor (1992) added that this method allows consistency in the application of a construct. Based on the aforementioned measurements suggested by different scholars, trust within the current study will be assessed using the items listed below:

1. The OPCs do not have problem understanding our needs
2. Promises made by OPC are reliable

3. The OPCs have a good knowledge about their HC
4. The OPCs have made sacrifices for the HC in the past
5. The OPCs cares about the HCs welfare and keeps their interest in mind
6. The OPCs keep their promises
7. HCs believe any information provided by OPC
8. The OPCs are open to discussion
9. OPCs are sincere in their operations

4.8.5 Satisfaction

The measures for satisfaction were drawn from a variety of sources. This is because the context in which the present study is being carried out is different from the context in which the existing body of literature has been produce. In addition, a majority of the existing body of literature focuses on the B2B form of relationship and therefore cannot be generalised to take into consideration the current study (Moorman *et al.*, 1993; Gundlach *et al.*, 1995). Six items were used in evaluating and assessing satisfaction based on scholars' assertions (e.g. Robert *et al.*, 2003; Rosen and Surprenant, 1998; Smith and Barclay, 1997; File and Prince, 1992)

1. HC are delighted with OPC operations and activities within the region
2. HC are happy with OPC operations and activities within the region
3. HC are content with OPC activities and operations within the region
4. OPC have always put HC interest first
5. OPC understood and act upon HC needs
6. OPC overall approaches are satisfactory

4.8.6 Commitment

Commitment is "the belief that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). In view of the conceptualisation of commitment among relationship partners, it is important that measures of commitment should take into consideration the belief of the respondents with regard to working to ensure the success of the relationship and how important the

relationship is to them. As a result, this current study adapted Morgan and Hunt's (1994) scale of measurement, which is focused on evaluating if the relationship that the OPC have with HC is:

1. Something HC are committed to
2. Very important to HC
3. Something HC are willing to maintain
4. Something HC care about
5. Deserves HC maximum effort

4.9 Ethical considerations

Beaulieu and Estalella (2012) asserted that researchers faces ethical challenges when conducting a qualitative research. This could be attributed to the likely research impact(s) on the research participants and/or sensitive nature of the data collected. Robert (2015) added that ethical issues in qualitative research vary in relation to the purpose of the research study and data collection mode. Hence, the need arise for the researcher to be aware of the ethical issues that could impact on the research study in order to ensure a balance between the research potential benefits and harms.

4.9.1 Prior to the data collection and analysis

Ethical concerns prior to data collection and analysis take into consideration the research procedural process, reflection on proposed research methodology, and potential harm to research participants. Approval was sought from the research board arm of the Robert Gordon University (RGU) in order to ensure compliance with the necessary legal and ethical requirements. This is consistent with Robert's (2015, p. 315) assertion that "researchers are required to obtain ethical approval from an ethics review body". The details of of the legal and ethical requirements of which are:

1. A description of project to be undertaken
2. The data collection process and procedures
3. Nature of data to be collected i.e. private or confidential.

4. The impact of the research project on the researcher, research participants, or any other third party.
5. The likely consequences of the research outcome.
6. Need for informed consent or approval from research participants.
7. Need for protection or safeguard of the researcher.

These guidelines provided the researcher the opportunity to identify and address potential issues related to this research study.

4.9.2 During the data collection and analysis

Ryen (2016) asserted that consent, confidentiality, and trust are the three main areas of a qualitative research study that often raise the need for ethical guidelines. Subsequent to being granted an ethical clearance, the data collection process commenced. Research participants' informed consent were sought for their respective voice tape recording. All ethical procedures and guidelines were followed so as to protect the research participants' anonymity and confidentiality, maintain the study integrity and data security. Semi-structured interview, which was the data collection method employed for this research study was interactive in nature. This suggests that there was a face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the research participants. Silverman (2005), and Gray (2009) asserted that making certain that the research participants are not harmed by a research study is the main ethical issue associated with data collection and analysis. This could be attributed to the fact that qualitative studies explore opinion and views, which could subject research participants to embarrassment, risk exposure, and loss of their self esteem (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Hence, the researcher provided the research participants with appropriate and detailed information on the nature and purpose of the research study. In addition, research participants were provided with a consent form (see appendix 7), which confirmed their understanding, and willingness to participate. This is consistent with Robert's (2015, p. 318) assertion that "informed consent from research participants is generally required".

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter explored and discussed in detail the method used for data collection and data analysis. A qualitative research methodology was taken on board because of its appropriateness and flexibility. In addition, this method gave the researcher the opportunity to explore and understand the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC. Furthermore, it allowed the research participants to provide their respective opinions and views about the current relationship status between the OPC and HC, while the researcher in turn had the leeway to question and probe any area of concerns that the interview schedule did not cover but considered important. The next two Chapters will present the study research findings and discussion respectively.

Chapter 5

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter centres on the analysis of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with community chiefs, youth leader/youth members, community members, family representatives, contractors, and CDC who are all members of different communities within the NDR. These interviews were carried out to test and validate the appropriateness of relationship quality constructs identified by existing theoretical models that contribute to relationship quality to the case of NDRN. Conducting semi-structured interviews allows the interviewees to express their concerns, opinions and feelings in order to describe a situation or issue, and thus offers the interviewer the opportunity to obtain direct and relevant information (Trumbull, 2005).

This chapter begins with background information about the interviewees, followed by the use of content analysis to study the data collected through semi-structured interviews and to discover interviewees' response patterns.

5.2 Data collection

The sample selected for the study consisted of 16 research participants, all of whom are inhabitants and indigene of a community within the NDRN. In selecting the 16 research participants, it was important to take into consideration the different peer groups within the community. This allows the interviewer to have access to a spectrum of ideas and opinions. This sample consisted of three community chiefs who are responsible for the day to day running of their various communities, three community members, three youth leaders'/youth members who serve as the mouth piece for the community youths. In addition, two community contractors, who are appointed by their community to execute contracts awarded by OPC, two family representatives, who represent their family when negotiating with OPC on landed property, and 3 community development

council members who are responsible for decision making in respect to their community development.

The interviewees came from different communities within the Niger delta region core states (Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta) which are worst affected due to the intensity and nature of oil production, and militant activity which is mostly inshore. Table 5.1 presents a detailed description of all interviewees. A request for interview participation letter was later sent via email to all interviewees detailing the title of the research study, study objectives and the research ethics policy on which the whole interview process was based (Appendix 6 for more details). Subsequently, interviewees were contacted via the telephone to confirm their willingness to take part in the study. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, as the interviewer assured all interviewees that the research focused mainly on their respective ideas, opinions, observations and experiences in the capacity they occupied as an inhabitant and indigene of a community within the NDRN. Interviewees' permission was sought in order to tape-record the interviews, which lasted for thirty-five minutes to fifty minutes. These are all consistent with Ryan's (2016, p. 32) assertion that "research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time".

Table 5.1: Description of interviewees (Author generated)

Interviewees	Interviewees code name	Age range	Roles	State
01	RP/CDC/01	41-50	CDC	River
02	RP/CC/02	41-50	Community chief	River
03	RP/YL/03	31-40	Youth leader	River
04	RP/CDC/04	20-30	CDC	Bayelsa
05	RP/YL/05	20-30	Youth member	Bayelsa
06	RP/CC/06	41-50	Community chief	Bayelsa
07	RP/FR/07	31-40	Family representative	River
08	RP/CC/08	31-40	Community chief	Delta
09	RP/FR/09	41-50	Family representative	Bayelsa
10	RP/CM/10	31-40	Community member	River
11	RP/CONT/11	20-30	Contractor	River
12	RP/CM/12	20-30	Community member	Bayelsa
13	RP/YL/13	20-30	Youth member	Delta
14	RP/CONT/14	41-50	Contractor	Delta
15	RP/CDC/15	31-40	CDC	Delta
16	RP/CM/16	41-50	Community member	Delta

The interview questions specified themes flexible enough to explore research participants experience and any emerging theme(s) during the interview process. These questions were designed based on previous research, the current research aims and objectives, and the experience of both the researcher and the supervisory team. To begin with, the researcher sought to establish a warm and friendly relationship with each research participant by discussing a matter outside the research scope within the first few minutes of making contact with them. This is consistent with Bedard and Gendron's (2004) assertion that this first few minutes could help reduce the risk of the research participants' response bias. Hence, research participants would be willing to freely respond to the interview questions. In addition, each interview session was rounded up with a broad question, asking "what do you see as the most urgent problem to tackle in this region". This further gave the research

participants the opportunity to recap and emphasis on their previous key points and also disclose additional information which they considered important to the discussion.

5.3 Data analysis

Following the steps identified by Creswell (2009) as shown in figure 5.1, data collected were systematically and logically analysed in order to achieve a precise understanding and interpretation of interviewees experiences (Spiggle 1994). Data collected were carefully and thoroughly transcribed without any addition or subtraction to interviewees' opinion and ideas. Several of the research participants showed concern about their anonymity and confidentiality. This is consistent with Parry and Mauthner's (2004, p. 144) assertion that "research instruments can also threaten the anonymity of research participants". Hence, research participants were sent a copy of the transcription there-after so as to re-assure them that nothing within the transcribed interview could be linked to them. This is consistent with Bond *et al's* (2013) assertion that some research participants request that the researcher seek their permission prior to using their quotes. In addition, it gives the research participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the interview transcript and subsequently give their approval.

Following the approval to proceed with data collected by concerned interviewees, transcribed interviews (now known as data collected) were read and reflected upon by the researcher in order to become familiarised with the content. This concurs with Creswell's (2009) suggestion that reading and reflecting through data collected gives the researcher a general sense of the data collected. Data coding commenced based on pre-identified themes from previous and current scholars. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 32) defined codes as "tools to think with", which allows data to be viewed and thought of in different ways. Hence, it gives room for easy analysis and condensation of data (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). The coding process resulted in the emergence of new themes developed to denote topics that pre-identified themes did not take into consideration. Van Manen (1990, p. 87) asserted that a theme "describe an aspect of the

structure of experience”, while Baxter (1991) concluded that themes in research are threads of meaning that recur within research data. Hence, the pre-identified themes were recurring threads from previous and existing scholars within the area of study.

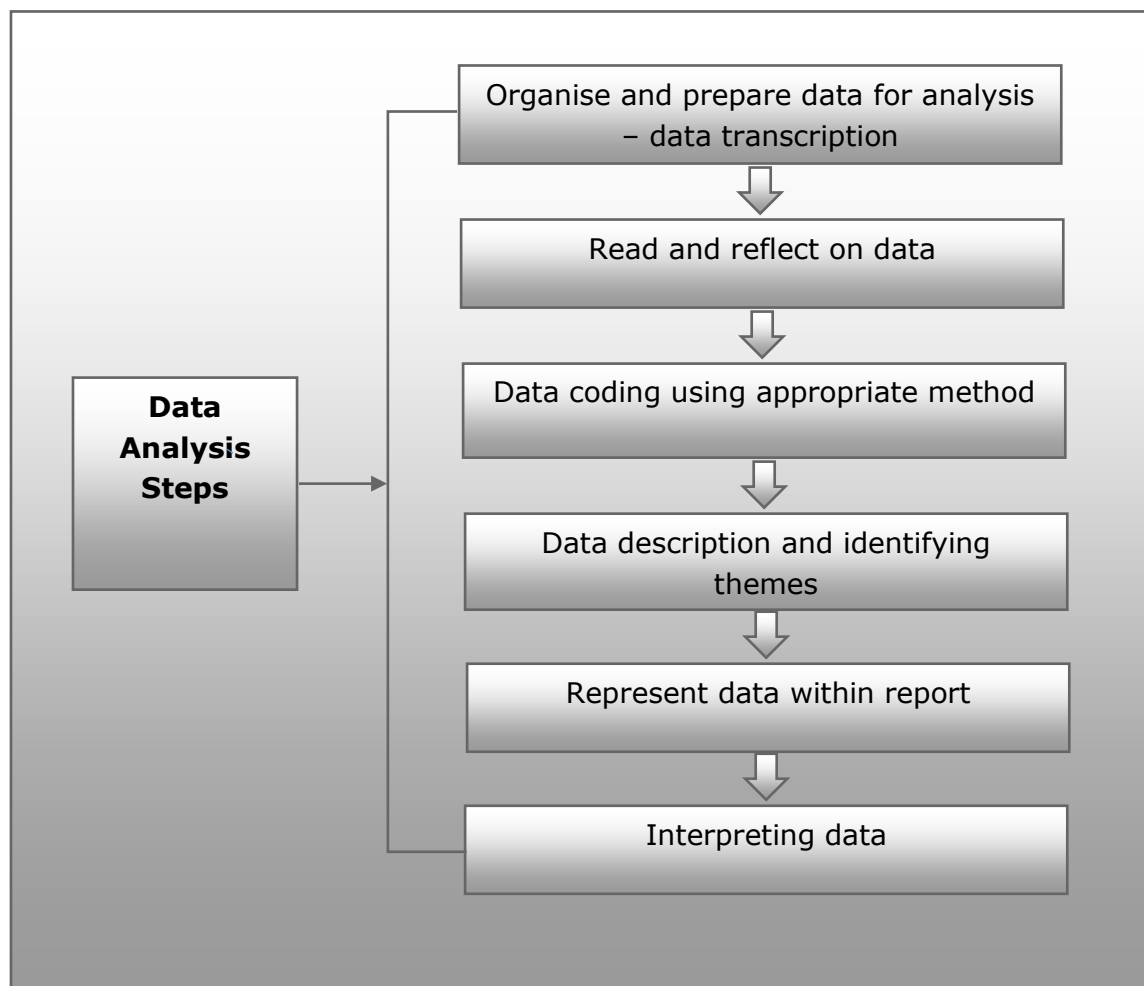


Figure 5.1: Data analysis process (Creswell, 2009)

The next step entails the interpretation of data gathered using the different themes identified when coding. Creswell (2009) noted that this step allows the researcher to reduce the data gathered to a meaningful size. Connections and relationships between different themes were established in the process.

5.4 Findings

The research findings are presented in two separate sections. Section one considers interviewees' perception as to whether any relationships exist between OPC and HC within the region based on the general relationship properties, and section two covers the different relationship quality constructs that the existing literature considers essential for a successful relationship. It is worth noting that quotes are as provided by the research participants. Hence, the language has not been tidied.

5.4.1 Relationship elements

This section attempts to present an in-depth and coherent analysis of data gathered from the interviews conducted with sixteen community inhabitants. The essence is to know if any degree of relationship exists between OPC and HC within the region.

5.4.1.1 Activity links

This theme explores different ways the HC perceived to get involved with the OPC. It is worth stating that the OPC get involved with various stakeholders (i.e. Nigerian government, state government etc.) within the NOGI. However, the focus of this research study is on OPC involvement with the HC. This conforms to the stakeholder theory, which considers a stakeholder as "anyone who can affect, or is affected by an organisation, strategy or project". Therefore, as far as implementing a project successfully within the communities is concerned, it begins with the need to create an enabling involvement with the HC. In the process of creating an enabling involvement, the OPC take on various activities with the HC. According to Hakansson and Snehota (1995), activity is broadly defined as a sequence of acts aimed at a purpose. While the broad definition of activity results in some difficulties (i.e. lack of given activity unit for analysis and enabling classifying of activities in meaningful categories) when analysing relationship activities, the sequence of acts suggests activities can be categorised in diverse ways.

All sixteen research participants who were interviewed had good knowledge of the relationship between OPC and HC within the NDRN. In order for the interviewer to have a precise understanding of the various activity links between OPC and HC within the region, interviewees were asked about their views on what way(s), if any, is the OPC involved with the HC in the NDRN. Most research participants begin by defining what they perceived involvement to mean, even though none of the interviewees specifically used the term "activity links".

"Firstly, involvement is the act of participating in something"
RP/CDC/01

".....when you are associated with someone or a situation"
RP/YL/03

"Is when am really engrossed with something of which the output relies on my performance" **RP/FR/07**

"When you are involved is when you are considered as a necessary part of something. I mean your contribution counts" **RP/CM/10**

Even though it is difficult to have a similar/unique definition of involvement expressed by interviewees it is evident that research participants had good understanding of the question they were asked. Some research participants further expressed the perceived value to which both the OPC and HC stand to benefit if there is adequate and appropriate involvement of the two parties within the region as:

"...having the right involvement in the region will give room for proper engagement of HC in the affairs of the OPC" **RP/CC/06**

"...it allows the right connection between the parties and enhance their satisfaction level" **RP/CONT/11**

"...appropriate involvement within the Niger delta region will give room for proper interaction and opportunities for both the oil producing company and host community" **RP/CDC/15**

“...considering the present situation in the region...encouraging the right involvement between the OPC and HC will help build the community” **RP/YL/13**

Although data gathered revealed that different activity links (i.e. involvement) take place between the OPC and HC, it is evident that most interviewees agreed to lack of appropriate involvement between the two parties within the region. In addition, majority of the research participants emphasised how important it is for the OPC to ensure an active involvement with the HC, as opposed to both parties putting in effort in attaining an active involvement. Hence, this will lead to the parties achieving their desired result and avoid unnecessary risk (Hakansson and Snehota 1995). Attempting to identify the various activities that brings the OPC and HC together presents some difficulty because there is no general agreement among research participants that a connection exists between OPC and HC. This is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota’s (1995) findings that defining of activity links poses some difficulties because there is no given generally accepted activity unit. They concluded that activity links are directed towards some specific purpose. Therefore, understanding the various involvement between the OPC and the HC requires an identification of the different purposes that brings the two parties together. For some of the research participants, OPC and HC involvement resulted from resources exchange. This involve the flow of resources such as money and land between relationship partners.

“What brings the oil producing companies and the host communities together is the exchange of resources. For example, my family has to part with the family land for OPC money. This thus resulted in our own financial gain” **RP/CONT/11**

“...oil producing companies acquires the community land in exchange for financial gain by the community” **RP/CDC/01**

“The primary involvement is that host community allow the oil producing companies to extract oil from the community land in exchange for financial resource” **RP/CC/08**

For one of the research participants, assigning equal value to the resources deemed for exchange between the OPC and HC is challenging. Another research participant pointed out that determining the appropriate value or worth of resources in this relationship is a fundamental issue as quoted below.

“...getting to know the worth of resources in this relationship is an essential problem...the OPC must be sincere in this respect”

RP/CC/02

In other words, either the OPC or the HC gives one thing in return for another. This suggests that there are activity links between the two parties. In addition, it could be argued that RP/CC/02 established a link between value and trust which is a measure of OPC sincerity. However, the worth or value of what so ever is being exchanged has been deemed inappropriate in most situations by the HC. Most research participants strongly believed that OPC and HC involvement originated from negotiation that subsequently resulted in a memorandum of understanding agreement.

“So many things get them involved; however, the genesis of any involvement between the parties is negotiation. This is when the OPC comes into the community looking for greener pasture and smooth operations through deliberation with the community representatives. This subsequently leads to other things like what will be parted with by both parties involved and the signing of a memorandum of understanding” **RP/CONT/14**

“The community relations department in the OPC negotiate with the community relation representatives in order to get things going between the parties. Both OPC and HC representatives will discuss during the negotiation process the terms and conditions that will form the memorandum of understanding. Most of the times, things like community land will be parted with in exchange for money”

RP/CDC/04

“We get involved through holding a meeting together to discuss the terms and condition of their presence in our community. In this meeting, OPC try to negotiate its way into the community through land acquisition for example.....the memorandum of understanding documents the whole negotiation process” **RP/CM/10**

“OPC visit the community head to negotiate the terms and conditions of their presence in the community. During the negotiation process, the community head will have made known to the OPC what they need to pay in return for the community land they will be having access to” **RP/YL/13**

“During this period, several interactions take place so as to ensure adequate involvement from both parties. I personally see the whole process as negotiation because the two parties discuss in details what will be included in the memorandum of understanding” **RP/FR/07**

It is evident from the quotes above that both the OPC and HC come together to deliberate on the terms and conditions of their involvement. This is consistent with Hakansson (1982), Turnbull and Valla (1986), and Hallen, Johanson & Sayed Mohamed’s (1989) findings that activities are performed jointly within the relationship. However, from **RP/YL/13** quote above, the question of how to decide on a value for the exchange between the two parties remained unanswered. In addition, it is evident from **RP/FR/07** quote above that a level of expertise is expected of the HC in order to ensure a fair deal with the OPC. Some research participants however consider OPC and HC involvement to have emerged through strategy formulation. Research participants referred to this as a means via which the OPC and HC deliberate on projects prior to implementation so as to derive maximum benefit from the project.

“.....from my own understanding, they relate very well and both are involved in strategy formulation on any project within the community. For any project that comes up in the community, the OPC seeks the community contribution and advice on the project prior to implementation and also give feedback thereafter” **RP/FR/09**

RP/CM/06 in support of this view stated that:

“Project implementation brought the OPC and HC together. OPC in ensuring a successful project implementation do present their plans to the HC for input and suggestions. This I believe the OPC regards as input for their strategy and decision making”

For one research participant, OPC and HC involvement was as a result of capacity building.

“OPC involvement with HC comes in form of capacity building. Because OPC comes into the community to enhance the skills and knowledge of the community youth by giving them training and providing incentives for community youths for any line of trade they are interested in”

RP/CM/12

Arguably, **RP/CM/12** quote above suggests that the OPC is making attempts to create value within the community. Another research participant indicated his understanding of OPC and HC involvement as corporate social responsibility (CSR).

“How we get involved that I know of is a means I see as deceptive. This is when OPC comes into the community under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility; planning to improve youth skills, provide better technology within the community through training.....”

RP/CC/06

Whilst it can be concluded that all interviewees concur that there are activity links between OPC and HC, there was disagreement as to whether the various activities through which the OPC and HC get involved create value or not. Arguably, **RP/CC/06** quote above supports this view. Moreso, if value is actually created, does such value meet the desires or needs of the parties involved? Hence, one research participant who expressed dissatisfaction with the OPC and HC involvement noted that:

“The OPC and the communities get involved in all manner of ways you can’t even imagine. Their coming together is as a result of their

individual needs. But the result of this involvement only brings about division among the community people as opposed to creating a sense of unity among the people” **RP/CDC/15**

Activity links within the NDRN between OPC and HC become visible only when either party is in need, and is thus directed towards achieving a purpose. This is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota’s (1995, p. 56) argument that “activity links are not developed in all relationships; they are usually developed when the activities of the counterpart become visible and understandable, that is, when some amount of attention is aroused”. Therefore, it is evident that the various activity links between the OPC and HC identified by research participants should aim towards creating and/or adding value to the parties involved. In addition, the majority of the research participants do not consider the various activity links that bring the OPC and HC together to be binding as opposed to Hakansson and Snehota’s (1995) assertion. Rather they see these activities as an informal way of meeting part of the community needs. Nevertheless, several of the interviewees who likened OPC and HC involvement to negotiation regarded this medium as binding and legal due to the memorandum of understanding signed by both parties. This later standpoint suggests that changes can be made towards attaining value through the various activity links identified by the research participants.

5.4.1.2 Resource Ties

Considered essential to any relationship is the existence of resource ties. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) referred to relationships as the valuable bridges necessary to access resources when parties in a relationship become integrated. This standpoint suggests the vital role resources play in a relationship. Knowing if, or not, the OPC and HC involvement brings about any resource(s) exchange or transfer, was considered an essential aspect during the interview sessions. Research participants were asked what they considered to be the outcome(s) resulting from the OPC and HC involvement. Data gathered suggested three key themes as shown in figure 5.2.

Most research participants consider OPC access to the community or/and family land within the region as the major source of resource tie.

“OPC focus on the NDR since inception has been on the landed property. This is more important to them because of the resources endowed in it” **RP/CDC/04**

“Our land is rich in oil and gas.....this brings the OPC to our community” **RP/CM/16**

“My family land was sold to OPC because they discovered oil on the land” **RP/FR/09**

“The NDR is known today because its land is gifted and enriched with oil and gas” **RP/YL/05**

“The endowment of the region with good land resulted in OPC existence within the region” **RP/CC/06**

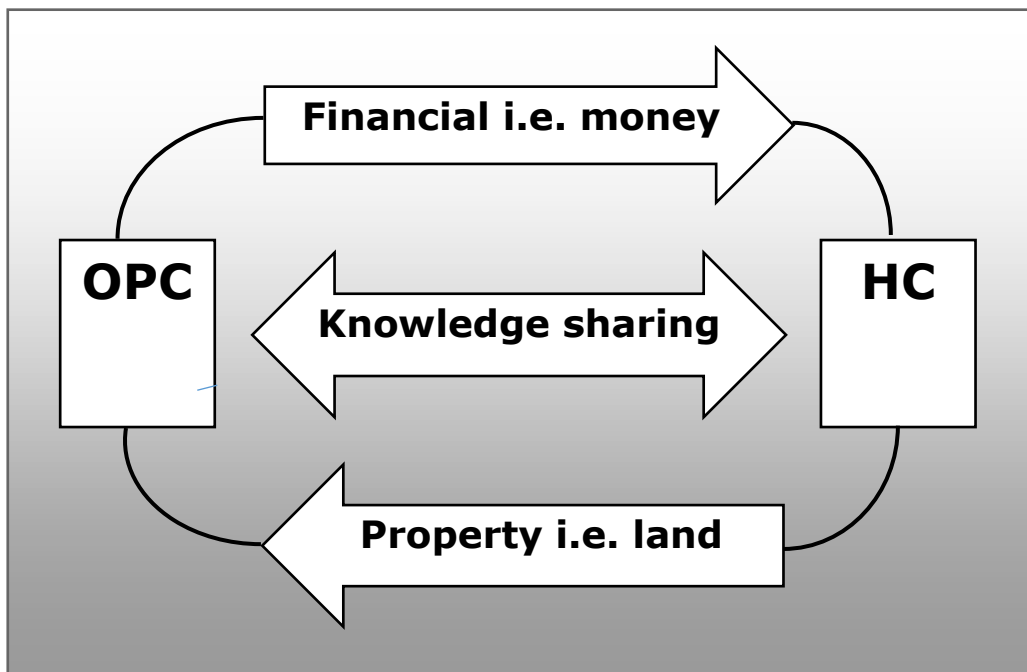


Figure 5.2: Key resource ties (Summarised from research participants’ responses)

The second major resource tie suggested by research participants was the financial resource which most participants also referred to as “money”.

“We as community people make money from the OPC. This comes in form of payment for land acquisition, through contract awarded to community members and few employments to community people”
RP/CM/10

“.....we get paid in return for our land and possibly man power in some cases” **RP/FR/07**

“OPC presence within the region has brought about financial gain to most families within the community whose land were acquired”
RP/CDC/01

“I can say my family benefitted from OPC when we sold our family land to them in return for money” **RP/YL/13**

In spite of research participants’ acknowledging financial resource i.e. money as a form of tie between the OPC and HC, two research participants expressed concern about the financial resource resulting in corruption and not being of mutual or equal gain to the HC.

“Resulting from this involvement is financial benefit to the community. OPC gives back in return to the community some of the revenue generated in the community through oil extraction. But in my own view, I think what the community is benefitting is not enough. There is an act of exploitation or put it in a lame man language, there is corruption within the system” **RP/CM/12**

Likewise, **RP/CDC/04** shared a similar opinion as the **RP/CM/12**

“In most cases, the people sent as representatives from the community try to circumvent part of the fund made available to the community by OPC for their personal use rather than giving back to the community. This I see as corruption which is a major problem in the Niger Delta today”

It is evident that both the **RP/CDC/04** and **RP/CM/12** acknowledged the existence of corruption in the NDRN, but from different points of view (i.e. OPC and HC respectively). Arguably, both the OPC and HC are corrupt. The third form of resource ties identified by research participants was knowledge sharing.

“.....in the process of consulting, OPC share with the community people the likely pros and cons of their projects. They enlighten the HC of their operations as it will affect the environment and the benefits the community can derive from such project. This enhances the knowledge of the community people” **RP/CC/02**

“.....OPC has make it a point of duty to make community people share in their knowledge by submitting to the community a detailed outcome of environmental impact assessment of any project to be implemented in the community. This they explain and educate the community people about. This I believe gives us better understanding of the impact their operations will have on the community as a whole” **RP/YL/03**

“Although the level of education in the community is very poor, we as community representatives tend to advice the OPC of various peer groups in the community so as to avoid conflict of interest and ensure various peer groups needs are met” **RP/CC/08**

“.....they do educate the community people on their mode of operations and existence. For example, producing and submitting to the community representatives an environmental impact analysis of their projects add to the knowledge of the community members” **RP/CONT/11**

Hence it is evident that knowledge sharing as a resource tie between the OPC and HC flows from both parties by way of OPC giving the HC details of their projects, while HC educate and enlightens OPC about their community. Financial resource i.e. money on the other end flows from the OPC while property i.e. land flows from the HC as shown in figure 5.3. The

three forms of resource ties expressed by research participants are in agreement with some of the various forms identified by Hakansson and Snehota (1995)

In summary, a financial resource i.e. money, property i.e. land, and knowledge sharing are the various forms of resource ties that emerged from data collected. The main concern for most research participants was that these resources have not been mutually shared, and also there is no physical evidence to support this view. **RP/CM/12** argued that OPC and HC involvement had not been mutually beneficial. Another research participant suggested that having a common ground about the level of involvement in a relationship is essential for resource(s) development.

“.....yes OPC and HC involvement has been beneficial but not as expected. I believe OPC is taking advantage of the HC as a result of few educated people in the communities.....the OPC should come clear on the total benefit they are deriving from the community and a full detail of their operations. By doing this both parties can mutually agree to a sharing pattern beneficial to both” **RP/CDC/15**

The above quote further suggests that both the OPC and HC are corrupt. Arguably, the few educated people in the community are using this as an opportunity for their personal advantage, as opposed to the advantage of the community at large. Hence, both parties agreeing on a mutually beneficial sharing pattern becomes an issue. In addition, it could be concluded that the lack of a legally binding agreement or negotiation between the two parties also contributes to the current situation.

5.4.1.3 Actor Bonds

In the course of the interview sessions, research participants' understanding of the bond between OPC and HC was explored. Data gathered revealed that there was no clear or common trend with regard to how OPC interact and relate across different host communities. Research participants attributed this to different leadership structures that exist in various communities. Most of the research participants described the bond

between OPC and HC as transactional (i.e. focused on short-term benefits) as opposed to a relational exchange which encourages long-term benefits.

“OPC and HC relationship is a give and take kind of relationship. Things only works out well when either party is in need” **RP/FR/07**

“The bond between OPC and HC do not last long. In most cases, both parties hardly look into the future rather they are both after their respective immediate desires” **RP/CDC/04**

“.....I see the bond between OPC and HC as the one which do not allow free and enabling environment for the OPC operations and community development” **RP/CONT/14**

“Bond between OPC and HC lacks commitment. Is such that OPC and HC work in isolation forgetting that no one is an island” **RP/CM/16**

“.....is a give and take like kind. The two parties only put into consideration what they each want to achieve irrespective of the impact of such desire on the other party” **RP/CDC/15**

It is obvious that the existing bond shared by the OPC and HC is tailored towards pursuing and meeting individual needs, yet Hakansson and Snehota (1995) argued that an inappropriate bond between parties in a relationship limits their capacity to get and process information needed within such a relationship. Nevertheless, research participants acknowledged that if OPC and HC shared a collective bond, their capacity to interact and relate effectively would be enhanced further, and thus improve OPC performance and community development within the region.

“They go to any length to get their respective desires achieved forgetting the benefits of been united as one. I will advise the two parties to interact often and always engage on a round table discussion especially when it comes to making decisions that affect each other. By doing this, optimal result and benefit will be achieved” **RP/CDC/01**

“It has never been good. I can’t really recollect when the OPC has had any smooth operation within the community. If OPC can realise that they are not an island within the region, things will get better”

RP/CC/06

“OPC getting to know that they can’t be independent of HC is key in this discussion. When both the OPC and HC integrate with each other, this region will grow and develop tremendously” **RP/YL/13**

“.....sharing a bond will give room for the OPC and HC to speak about their intentions and be considerate in dealing with each other thus creating opportunity for them to exceed their limits” **RP/CM/10**

“.....it permit effective communication and development at collective level as oppose to working individually” **RP/CONT/11**

“The existence of appropriate bond between OPC and HC will result in efficient use of resources in the region” **RP/CONT/14**

“.....conflict and violence can only be eradicated in this region if the OPC and HC get along properly. In other word bond has to exist between them” **RP/CDC/04**

The quotes above indicate that research participants’ understanding of the subject matter (actor bond between OPC and HC) was considerably in accordance with relationship theory and consistent with Hakansson and Snehota’s (1995) findings. In addition to different leadership structures that exist in various communities, at least two research participants argued that government neglect of its duties and lack of unity among community inhabitants are factors contributing to a lack of bond between OPC and HC within the region.

“We must be careful to describe the situation in Nigeria within context. Is the country where the basic necessity, utility that should be provided for by the government and infrastructure are missing.....so the government that this host communities then see becomes the OPC because of their share size and what they considered to be their

wealth.....a very tall expectation from the host communities that they demand from the OPC and these ones try as much as possible to then prioritise and fulfil those needs based on the benefit they will get in return from the HC” **RP/CM/16**

“.....within the community itself there is no existence of any bond. As a result saying any bond exist between OPC and HC will be a rare thing to say” **RP/CONT/11**

To sum up the opinion of research participants, it is evident that both OPC and HC have to be mutually oriented in order for a close and productive bond to transpire between them. OPC and HC need to be aware of how a collective bond can impact on their relationship, OPC productivity and development within the region, as emphasised by **RP/YL/03**.

“.....in as much we can conclude that OPC has been helpful in developing our communities, yet more need to be done.....for things to get better, OPC and HC has to mutually agree on a collective term that takes into consideration the future of both party and not their immediate needs. They must see the relationship as interdependent and frequent interaction should be put in place”

5.4.2 Determinants of relationship quality

This section is focused on understanding the constructs that are essential or have to be in place for a quality relationship to exist between the OPC and HC.

5.4.2.1 Mutual Benefit

This study adopted Morris *et al*'s (2007) stance that mutual benefit only occurs in a cooperative relationship, while a competitive relationship does not require a mutuality of benefit (as discussed in the literature review section). In order to ascertain the current relationship situation (i.e. cooperative or competitive relationship) within the region, research participants were asked their opinions on what way(s) the HC participates in the activities of the OPC. Most research participants felt that mutual

benefit is lacking between OPC and HC within the region. The primary reason for this suggested by data gathered being that OPC and HC find it difficult to cooperate with one another in order to co-ordinate their activities, so as to achieve a mutual goal.

"Both the OPC and HC find it difficult working towards a mutually agreed objective. Both seek to pursue individual goals which at the long run do not benefit both parties but rather leads to conflict of interest" **RP/CDC/01**

".....mutual benefit between the parties is nothing to recon with as there is lack of cooperation and engagement between the parties"
RP/CM/12

"I consider these guys to be competitors because they hardly get along with one another" **RP/FR/09**

"OPC has failed to promote cooperation and collaboration within this relationship. They strive to resolve issues as opposed to sharing a common interest in order to create value" **RP/CC/02**

".....like the saying goes, prevention is better than cure. In the case of OPC and HC, they prefer to do things independently and when things get worst, they start looking for solution which in most cases are short term solutions" **RP/YL/13**

Some of the research participants made effort to define what an ideal mutual benefit situation should be.

"....is seeking a win win situation or idea for all parties" **RP/CC/08**

"Require a joint effort made by the parties involved in order to create value" **RP/YL/05**

"Is a situation that require negotiation, dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders" **RP/CDC/15**

Another research participant provided the quote below as an example of a mutual benefit.

“It means that OPC and HC must come together and see one another as partners in making decision that affects the region. Whatever OPC want to do within the community must first be deliberated upon by both party so as to reach a conclusion that is beneficial to both. This will eliminate competition between them” **RP/CDC/01**

Mutual benefit also requires joint effort from parties within a relationship in order to earn each other’s trust and commitment, as some research participants perceived that cooperation between the OPC and HC will result in trust and/or commitment.

“With mutual confidence in place, OPC will enjoy absolute trust from the communities around” **RP/CDC/04**

“I personally believe that if OPC and HC can agree on the purpose of their cohabitation, they will be in a position to build trust in one another” **RP/CM/16**

“Both OPC and HC need to realise that commitment cannot come to play if they both do not share a mutual goal” **RP/FR/07**

“They’ve got to understand that when they share different goals, there will be no commitment as to developing the region” **RP/CONT/11**

“Communities will only commit more into this relationship if only there is evidence of greater benefits” **RP/CC/02**

One more theme that emerged was relationship success. One research participant linked mutual benefit to relationship success.

“.....relationship success cannot occur in the absence of agreed mutual goals between OPC and HC within this region. However, either OPC or HC have the tendency to commit more effort towards

their relationship success if there is a clear evidence of mutual benefit” **RP/CM/10**

5.4.2.2 Communication

In response to the question – what do you think about how the OPC and their HC communicate with each other? An interviewee stated that:

“We are not satisfied with the level of information we get from the OPC. They don’t give us the community enough information that will inform our negotiations with them and whatever decision we need to make” **RP/CC/02**

Likewise, **RP/YL/05** stated that:

“To be precise, OPC do not give us helpful information on what benefits accrues to the community youth. They operate at a distance from us thinking if the elders are satisfied, the community is ok. They don’t get to speak to us until there are issues or conflict in the region. For example, we only get their attention and the details of their plans for the youth when we organise a barricade or blockage to their facilities”

Two of the interviewees’ **RP/CDC/15 AND RP/CONT/11** respectively define communication as:

“To me communication process is the exchange of information between two parties where one send the message and the other receive it. However, it does not end there. It becomes an effective process when the receiver understands in full the sender’s message”

“Communication process in a simple way is when a sender’s message is fully understood by the receiver”

Majority of interviewees responded by stating firstly the importance or essence of effective communication between the OPC and HC will contribute to enhancing their relationship.

“Communication represent success in this relationship.....it deserves special attention and frequent contacts with each other” **RP/CM/10**

“Conflicts are avoided in any relationship through timely and appropriate communication. It helps the parties to dialogue, agree on issues, and considering the Niger delta situation, OPC can always get an instant feedback from the community” **RP/CC/06**

“To tell you the truth, communication is key in this relationship. Without it there will be no way forward. This applies to all stakeholders within the Nigeria oil and gas industry and not just OPC alone. You can imagine if there is no communication between us, how can we deliberate and come to an agreement on what needs to be done” **RP/CDC/04**

“Communication connotes respect and friendliness. It means ability of parties in a relationship to count on one another.....they should maintain communication at all times” **RP/FR/07**

“OPC will achieve nothing in this region if they fail to communicate with us the community and other stakeholders within the Nigeria oil and gas industry. Whatever way you put it, achieving continuity in this relationship relies on frequent and appropriate communication with HC” **RP/CONT/11**

These excerpts are in line with Williams *et al* (1990) and Miles *et al* (1990) assertion that compatibility between parties in a relationship depends on their quality of interaction. Research participants also suggested different ways via which these parties communicate. Majority of the interviewees argued that OPC communicate with HC through the community development council (CDC) which is made up of different people within the community.

“.....communication is through the CDC. If there is any information they want to pass, it will go through the CDC” **RP/YL/03**

".....communication through the CDC is the one recognised in the community. However, people that makes up the CDC varies from community to community" **RP/FR/07**

".....CDC serves as the community face whenever there is need to communicate with the OPC" **RP/CM/16**

".....how OPC and HC communicate with one another depends on what the issue is all about. The CDC represent the community at large but there are cases when OPC has to liaise with other parties within the community. For example, we have family represents who negotiate with OPC on behalf of the family on land sales" **RP/CDC/04**

Two of the interviewees however argued that even in situations where HC has CDC as its representative, OPC ignores the CDC by communicating with people the OPC considered to be elite and influential in the community.

"Ideally, communication with HC should be through the CDC but this is not often the case. OPC on numerous occasions by pass the CDC to discuss issues relating to HC with individuals they considered to be elite or influential within the community" **RP/YL/13**

".....how OPC go about communicating with HC is the major problem in the NDR. They are not doing the right thing by negotiating or discussing issues relating to HC with individuals within the community because such individuals are influential and educated as opposed to the main community representatives which is the CDC" **RP/CDC/15**

Several interviewees argued that the community rulers (the royal King and his cabinet chiefs) communicate with the OPC on behalf of the HC:

".....communication is through the king and his council of chiefs" **RP/CM/10**

“.....the community chiefs or the royal office act on behalf of the HC. Even when there is any issue with family land purchase that requires the OPC discussing with the family in question, the king and his chiefs tend to do that on the family’s behalf and in most cases, the interest of the families are not protected” **RP/FR/09**

“.....communication is through the council of chiefs” **RP/YL/05**

The above excerpts revealed that the medium via which the OPC and HC communicate is poor and unreliable. **RP/YL/03** in support of this stance argued that:

“.....the communication is poor in my community. This is because OPC often exert force on us instead of encouraging dialogue between the two parties”

Two of the research participants managed to express themselves on what they perceived communication to be by linking it to information sharing and information exchange respectively.

“When you talk about communication we should talking about sharing information with someone or a partner” **RP/CDC/01**

“.....you can’t be holding back from exchanging information with a partner and in your mind you think you are communicating” **RP/CM/16**

Collaboration and culture emerged as new themes associated with communication.

“I think both the OPC and HC undermine the impact of communication. If things are done properly, effective collaboration between OPC and HC will be achieved” **RP/CDC/01**

“Effective Communication gives room for engagement among partners. When the right information is shared, there tend to be collaboration among partners” **RP/CC/08**

"There is a thin line between agreement and disagreement. OPC need to understand their community and also make themselves understood. There are no way things will work if they do not understand our viewpoint on matters especially when it relates to our cultural heritage.....however, putting in place appropriate communication will fill the gap" **RP/YL/13**

Also, trust and commitment were linked to communication.

"When communication is encouraged in a relationship, parties share and listen to one another's thought and ideas. Within this process, trust will be built in the relationship" **RP/FR/09**

"Gaining trust of the communities require frequent interaction with us. OPC must embed within their corporate goal an attitude of regular interaction with HC in order to earn our trust" **RP/CM/10**

"OPC trusting the community or the HC trusting OPC is a function of the information available. And not just that, available information from both parties has to communicate appropriately and it must be adequate" **RP/CDC/04**

".....removing information exchange between these parties is like taking away trust from the region" **RP/CM/12**

"Considering the current situation in this region, it will be difficult to earn any community commitment if the right information is not shared with us. Because things are not working right at all" **RP/CC/02**

".....when these guys share unrestricted information between them, commitment will be restored within the region" **RP/FR/09**

One research participant concluded that inadequate information sharing in the region is one of the fundamental sources of conflict and violence.

".....going back to when oil exploration started in the region, information sharing in form of communication as always be an issue. The HC do not have the exact barrels of crude oil taken from the region.....so for me the key source of violent and conflict in the region is inadequate information sharing and this mostly comes on the part of the OPC" **RP/CM/10**

It is evident that communication between OPC and HC has been seen as an important aspect of their relationship. Also, it revealed that communication is related to collaboration, culture, trust and commitment.

5.4.2.3 Control Mutuality

Control mutuality is "the degree to which partners agree about which of them should decide relational goals and behavioural routines" (Stafford and Canary 1991 p. 224). In order to give research participants opportunity to express adequate understanding of the theme, interviewees were asked what the response of each party is to conflict and dispute resolution in the region. Nearly all the research participants argued that OPC exercising domineering behaviour and, in most cases, imposing its decision on the HC, as being against both parties agreeing upon the power balance within the relationship.

".....communities do not have any profound contribution or participation towards controlling or influencing things that occur in their neighbourhood.....family land are taken in return for stipend, this has over time accumulated in an act of oppression for the communities" **RP/CM/10**

".....as per level of influence, we may not say we have influence because the community has no legal backing compare to the OPC" **RP/YL/05**

".....even though in my community both the OPC and HC try to reach an agreement, OPC still imposes its decision on us. Probably because they get prompt support from the government" **RP/CC/06**

"There is no communal participation in the Niger Delta Region so much more that little disagreement often leads to serious violence. This is because the owners of the resources are not getting the benefit for the resources and rather than the OPC giving them a listening ear, they hide under the umbrella of the government to deprive the HC of their entitlements" **RP/CDC/04**

"It has never been easy. When they have differences.....they will come up with a round table discussion that will be in favourable part of the company. The company has never wanted to lie low for the HC" **RP/FR/09**

".....is usually difficult when there is crisis. If you know most of the oil platforms, they have military personnel on ground so the only time that the communities have a say in this issue is going to such platform with a form of blockage where they have to stop all form of OPC activities" **RP/YL/13**

The various quotes above suggest that when a relationship is unbalanced, the afterward effect will be a breakdown in relationship quality. One of the research participants who had a slightly different opinion argued that HC are now considered as a key stakeholder when making decision.

"Over the years, things are getting better because there is more awareness and OPC are more truthful compared to the past. Looking at 30 years ago, what they do in terms of integrity was nothing to write home about then compared to now. Because OPC knows that people are more knowledgeable on the way things are and that people know their rights...OPC are more careful by getting the cooperation of the HC before they commence operation...OPC now see HC as a stakeholder to recon with" **RP/CM/16**

The quote above suggests that control mutuality encourages the parties in a relationship to develop a deeper understanding of each other's position. Also, there is need for each party in a relationship to understand and agree upon the influence and power balance within the relationship. A few other

interviewees endeavoured to describe what negative outcomes the domineering behaviour of OPC has resulted in.

“Hmm.....the response is usually more damaging to the communities. Often time when there is misunderstanding it ends in violence and destruction of community amenities” **RP/CC/02**

“.....the aftermath effect of conflict and dispute in the region is really disastrous. It affects all stakeholders including the government itself. The effect it has on the government is its revenue because it generates over 80% of its revenue through this region. Individual employees of OPC are also affected because some are kidnapped and ransom demanded before they can be released” **RP/CDC/15**

One of the research participants concluded by suggesting an ideal situation for mutual control.

“.....a situation whereby parties to a relationship feel they are in a position to influence one another” **RP/CONT/11**

5.4.3 Dimensions of relationship quality

This section explores the constructs that could be considered as indicators of the quality of relationship between OPC and HC.

5.4.3.1 Trust

Trust is the confidence a party has in another party's reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt 1994), Moorman *et al* (1992) consider trust to be the willingness of partners in a relationship to rely on one another in confidence. Most research participants argued that OPC and HC involvement lacks honesty, openness or reliability.

“I don't think there is any openness between the parties because the joint investigation does not involve the communities or its representatives. This shows they are hiding something. We can't say

this is what they make from the region or if proper procedures are followed when drilling. They don't give details" **RM/CM/10**

".....OPC can't be trusted at all because most often they fail to meet the community expectations. Even thou there is an element of OPC over promising when trying to gain community attention" **RP/CDC/01**

"The damage to trust transpired over a period of time because OPC gradually held back on on-going conversation with communities" **RP/CDC/15**

"OPC failed to recognised that community involvement is crucial for its survival within the Niger delta region as a result, they don't come open or give the full details of things to HC" **RM/YL/13**

"Trust between OPC and HC has been eroded because the manner in which OPC interact with us is relatively poor" **RM/CC/02**

Despite most research participants' belief, one of the interviewees argued strongly that some of the OPC can still be trusted based on the fulfilment of their promises.

"...some OPC can still be trusted because they keep to their promises" **RM/CONT/11**

Other interviewees further argued that trust within the region requires the effort of both OPC and HC, and that trust influences commitment.

"Trust play a vital role in any partnership...as such it requires OPC and HC joint effort so as to achieve the desired result." **RM/FR/07**

"OPC need to come open and honest by giving full details of their activies. Likewise HC must be transparent in their dealings ensuring all promises are kept" **RP/CDC/04**

Some of the interviewees suggested what an ideal trust relationship between OPC and HC should be and its likely outcome.

“Trust has to do with ethical behaviour and ensuring frequent communication...OPC is sure of building for itself a good reputation”
RP/CDC/01

“...is all about working together with the purpose of achieving a mutual goal. If OPC can work with us, conflict and dispute resolution won't be an issue for the parties” **RP/CC/08**

“Trust is when OPC implement mutually established objectives according to plan...yes there will be occasions when thing do not go as plan but carrying the HC along on such scenarios will help enhance the trust. Then we can say transparency is in operation”
RP/YL/05

“Trust between OPC and we the community should be evident in our peaceful cohabitation and continuity in relationship” **RP/CM/16**

Trust was also considered as something that parties to a relationship develop over time.

“All we require from OPC is their honesty and openness. Although this I believe comes with time” **RP/CONT/14**

“Building trust is like a journey of a thousand miles” **RP/FR/09**

Some interviewees emphasised the need for trust within the region.

“...to begin with, OPC must demonstrate that our trust is essential in the relationship because we cannot do business without someone who does not believe in our trust but relied on the government”
RP/YL/03

“If OPC believes in us as a community and trust us, things will start to work as expected” **RP/CM/12**

Also, most of the interviewees perceived commitment as a motivator of trust.

“Once OPC and HC are committed to each other in developing the region, building trust will not be an issue and of course it takes a period of time to get parties committed to a cause because it is not a day affair. In other word their level commitment will inspire their trust level” **RP/CC/06**

“In my own opinion, commitment influences trust and it does not happen overnight. If you as a person knows that someone is committed to you especially in achieving your objectives and goals, you will surely put your trust in such a person” **RP/CONT/14**

“Improving the trust level between OPC and HC requires commitment of these parties. Once these parties can improve on their commitment level in this relationship, trust will be attained” **RP/CDC/15**

“In as much the these parties can improve their commitment level, trusting each other will not be an issue” **RP/CDC/04**

“Trust and commitment are complementary factors. For example, if I can establish trust in you, I will be committed to you. Also, there is no way I can get committed to you without trusting you at the long run” **RP/CM/16**

Others with a contrary opinion thought that trust is a driver of commitment, as opposed to commitment being a driver of trust.

“The current situation in the region shows that both parties are not in good terms. In order to get the best out of this relationship, both the OPC and HC must work on their level of trust. When trust is in place, commitment between the parties will come to play” **RP/CC/02**

“OPC and HC relationship lack trust. Often times misunderstanding comes up between the parties and it always difficult to find a solution since both do not trust one another. This has inevitably led to lack of commitment as well” **RP/FR/07**

"Truly speaking trust between these parties will give rise to their allegiance to each other. If these parties can get to a point where by OPC say or do something without HC doubting it, then you can be assured of commitment of both parties to this relationship.

RP/YL/05

"...if OPC and HC can improve their level of trust in their dealings.....in my own opinion commitment will follow. Talking about trust, both OPC and HC has to put in effort in making sure things are done properly and not to be left for either party" **RP/CONT/11**

Three of the interviewees concluded by making recommendations to OPC on how to earn the HC's trust:

"...OPC must be in a position to engage the community people in discussion and be ready to invest in time as well" **RM/CDC/01**

"...OPC need to be open with the HC and invest in developmental projects" **RM/CM/10**

"...OPC need to reassess its business ethics and practices"
RP/YL/03

Collaboration and culture are other themes that emerged.

"...achieving trust between OPC and HC requires collaboration from both partners. They must desire the need for each other" **RP/CC/08**

"The lack of trust between OPC and our communities has really damaged our cultural heritage. Our customs and traditions are no more respected by the OPC. Can you imagine the OPC wanting to destroy our shrine where we worship our god because of common oil. This is something that we inherited from our fore fathers"
RP/FR/09

5.4.3.2 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the pleasurable fulfilment of need (Oliver 1997, 1999) and overall evaluation of performance (Fornell 1992) as discussed in the literature review section.

"Satisfaction is the pleasure you derive when pre-planned actions yield the desired outcome. Is something you feel within you emotionally" **RP/CDC/01**

"In my own opinion, satisfaction is the pleasure that comes from the fulfilment of one's need or wishes" **RP/CONT/14**

"Is a state of mind whereby someone is pleased with the outcome of an event. This might result from meeting a need or demand"
RP/FR/07

One of the research participants described satisfaction as a state of happiness.

"Satisfaction is what I perceive to be happiness. Feeling contentment for the outcome of an event" **RP/CM/10**

Two other research participants aligned satisfaction with fair treatment and cost and benefit.

"...fair treatment of partners in a relationship" **RP/FR/09**

"...when benefit of any involvement or relationship outweigh the cost" **RP/YL/03**

Nearly all research participants classified OPC and HC involvement as dissatisfactory. Their respective assessment of this involvement was based on factors of; the impact of the involvement on the region taking into consideration economic and environmental factors, how decisions affecting the region are decided upon and development in the region since the inception of OPC presence in the region.

"...is just fair considering what OPC has contributed into the community" **RP/CC/08**

"...the present satisfaction level in our communities is unpleasing..... both the OPC and HC always want to have their ways when it comes to decision making" **RP/CM/12**

"...satisfaction level in the Niger delta region between OPC and HC do not support development at all. Both parties failed to realised that there need to be mutual understanding on their respective needs/wants before satisfaction can be achieved" **RP/CDC/15**

"...not commendable as a result of some bad heads in the community itself" **RP/CONT/11**

".....OPC paramount interest is making sure their operations are ongoing even if anything is going wrong within the community is not their business unless their operation is held on standstill that is when they usually pay attention to the HC" **RP/YL/13**

These excerpts reveal that the dissatisfactory level of relationship experienced in the Niger delta region emanates from both the OPC and HC. Both parties have been considered to be responsible for the way dissatisfaction has grown over the years. A research participant who tried to assess OPC and HC involvement from inception concluded that:

".....the involvement between OPC and HC has deteriorated over time. The level of confidence the communities has in OPC is no more there. This may be partially attributed to government involvement in some matters that should have been left for the communities to handle. An example is the land matters" **RP/CM/16**

This issue has been viewed to be consistent across all communities. Similarly, **RP/CDC/15** also thought that dissatisfaction in the region started when oil was first discovered in the region. Hence, the emergence of resource curse in the region.

".....the decay in the system is so much that it will take many many years to clean them out. We are talking about when the first oil was discovered in 1950s.....things were not done properly.....so for me, people are not satisfied I can tell you that"

A couple of research participants stated the impact of dissatisfaction between OPC and HC within the region.

".....result in considerable distance in communication process"
RP/CONT/11

".....the present level of dissatisfaction has given rise to distrust and frustration in the region" **RP/CC/02**

".....commitment level between OPC and HC towards growth and development is devastating" **RP/CDC/01**

Research participants however suggested different actions that can bring about satisfaction between partners.

".....achieving the desired outcome in a relationship gives satisfaction" **RP/CM/12**

"Meeting up to expectation. When partners deliver what was agreed upon or promised" **RP/FR/09**

"When parties to a relationship consent to the result of their relationship" **RP/CDC/04**

It is evident that satisfaction enhances the quality of a relationship. Also, interviewees' opinions suggested that satisfaction requires a good understanding of each other's need(s), and frequent communication between OPC and HC. A few research participants contested that mutual understanding between the OPC and HC does not signify satisfaction. In summary, interviewees' opinions suggest that satisfaction is linked to perceived benefit of commitment and trust. This is further discussed in the discussion section.

5.4.3.3 Commitment

Moorman *et al* (1992) described commitment as effort necessary to maintain and uphold a relationship. Likewise, Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined commitment as the willingness of partners in a relationship to maintain it. Also, Kumar *et al* (1995) considered commitment as a partner's intention to continue in a relationship. When research participants were asked their understanding of commitment between OPC and HC within the Niger Delta context, a number of participants' perceived it as "commitment of the OPC to the HC", instead of commitment of both partners to each other. Research participants believed that the OPC should show more commitment compared to the HC commitment in the relationship.

"They are occupying our environment so they need to be more committed as they tend to lose more if we send them away"

RP/CM/10

"OPC are making huge income from our land. I will expect them do more than we expect from them" **RP/YL/13**

".....our environment has deteriorated over the years as a result of cohabiting with the OPC. Nothing stops them from doing more to ensure the development of the communities" **RP/CDC/15**

RP/CDC/01 however argued that there should be a balance in commitment level of both the OPC and HC.

"In my opinion both OPC and HC need to improve on their commitment level. In as much we complain that the OPC is not doing enough, the question that comes to mind is are the communities doing enough to help the situation.....both party must work hand in hand in order to improve the region and not putting the bulk on a single partner"

RP/CDC/04 referred to commitment between OPC and HC as a field of play.

“The situation in the Niger delta region is a complex one because there are quite a number of stakeholders to recon with aside the OPC and HC.....all these stakeholders play significant roles and influence OPC and HC commitment level within the region. If you need to get the true picture of commitment level between these parties, there is need to understand the roles of other players in the region.....if you consider OPC and HC level of commitment excluding other players in the industry, it will be an unbalanced assessment. Take for example, the government regulates the activities of OPC, this will indirectly influence OPC commitment level as there are rules and regulations that OPC have to abide with”

Commitment between OPC and HC was considered to be influenced greatly by other stakeholders in the industry.

“OPC and HC commitment level cannot be assessed in isolation of other players in the Nigeria oil and gas sector. For example, OPC interaction with different government regulatory bodies on drilling, health & safety .etc. will affect OPC commitment towards the HC”

RP/CM/12

RM/FR/09 argued that lack of expertise on the part of some HC is a contributing factor to the diminishing commitment level of OPC and HC in the region.

“.....there are some community members that feel entitled to the production and there are others who have been enlightened and understand the dynamics of oil production, the technology and the capabilities that these IOCs brings and therefore understand that they are also a company interested in profit and who are fulfilling the corporate social responsibility. So typically, education will be key for me. Education because education bring everyone to the same thinking platform and allows better understanding when and during engagement”

Evident from this excerpt is that OPC and HC commitment level varies across communities. A few research participants attempted to describe what commitment between OPC and HC is perceived as:

“Commitment between the OPC and HC is just a promise in futility. It has gotten to a level where both the OPC and HC make promises they can’t both fulfil” **RP/CONT/11**

“I see fulfilment of obligation between the OPC and HC as broken promises because target set from the onset are not realistic and achievable. This still falls back on both parties having a good understanding of their respective needs” **RP/FR/07**

Similarly, some research participants gave an ideal definition of what OPC and HC commitment within the region should be:

“.....parties to a relationship having confidence that their involvement with each other is imperative so much that optimum effort is required at maintaining such relationship” **RP/YL/03**

“I think commitment is devoting the right effort or energy into activities that develop and maintain a relationship” **RP/CDC/04**

“.....put it in a simple word, commitment suggest an act of reciprocity” **RP/CC/02**

“Is the effort taken on by a party in a relationship to sustain the relationship” **RP/CM/12**

“Is combining forces to figure out relationship differences and also influence whatever happens afterwards” **RP/FR/07**

One research participant linked investment to relationship commitment.

“OPC has to invest more on developmental projects in the region in order to have HC commitment” **RP/CM/16**

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that some research participants strongly believe that the government, as a key player within the Nigerian oil and gas industry, has a key role to play in maintaining OPC and HC commitment level in the region.

"In my own opinion, I strongly believe that the various levels government (i.e. local, state and federal) has crucial roles to play in making the issue of commitment of OPC and HC practicable in the region.....both the OPC and HC need to be proactive and conscious of best working practices within the industry" **RP/CDC/01**

This was also supported by **RP/YL/13** and **RP/CC/08** as noted below respectively.

".....government agencies working within the Nigeria oil and gas industry must deal with the OPC and HC with full disclosure and transparency. By doing this, commitment level of OPC and HC will be at a satisfactory level"

".....government represented by its agencies should be able to facilitate proper engagement between OPC and HC, ensuring obligations and promises made are realisable and achievable. With this in place, commitment level in the region will be at a satisfactory level"

RP/CC/06 and **RP/YL/13** suggested likely benefits that will result if the government, represented by its agencies, takes their rightful position within the NDRN.

"There will be adequate participation, improved performance and relationship stability between OPC and HC" **RP/CC/06**

".....long term survival of OPC and HC relationship" **RP/YL/13**

It is evident from the data gathered that OPC and HC commitment level is unsatisfactory and that the government and its agencies have a significant role to play in improving the parties' commitment level within the region.

5.4.4 Emerged themes

In addition to the pre-identified themes from the literature, research participants' opinions and views further suggested culture and mutual goal as key determinants of relationship quality.

5.4.4.1 Culture

Research participants emphasised on the importance of culture in the successful relationship-building process between the OPC and HC.

"...having said all this, a key important thing we are ignoring is the people's culture. For example when the oil producing companies insist on exploring oil on a land kept for the worship of our gods. I mean the shrine" **RP/CM/16**

"Showing respect is important aspect of our culture. Now imagine when the oil companies now implement projects that affect us without our permission" **RP/YL/13**

"...fishing is something that is part and parcel of my clan. The uncared and negligent attitude of the oil companies have destroyed what we believe and live for" **RP/FR/07**

Some of the research participants argued in favour of the oil companies' acceptance of their culture resulting in trust.

"The oil companies need to show an attitude that want to work with the community people by respecting whatever the people consider to be sacred" **RP/CDC/01**

"I believe oil producing companies will earn the host community trust if they the oil companies can live and adapt to the community values" **RP/CONT/11**

"Gaining someone trust require accepting the person the way he or she is. I mean the beliefs, values and norms" **RP/CM/10**

One of the research participants established that culture is a necessary requirement for trust and communication between the two parties.

“If the oil companies can take their time in understanding their community norms and beliefs, trust and communication between the two parties will be excellent” **RP/FR/09**

Majority of the research participants concluded that in the absence of the OPC acknowledging the culture of the community, the quality of their relationship would always be poor. This is attributed to the fact that the community people tend to be committed to, and guided by, their culture.

5.4.4.2 Mutual goal

All the research participants mentioned the construct of mutual goal. They argued in favour of the construct as being key to determining the success or failure of the relationship.

“It will be difficult to achieve success in the region without both parties agreeing on the goals or objectives to pursue” **RP/CC/02**

“Is really difficult to believe that the oil companies can make decisions that affect our communities without our consent. Hmm that is the beginning of failure” **RP/CDC/04**

“...the foundation is weak. Things should be done in agreement as against trying to dominate. The community has to contribute and consent to the objectives to be achieved in the region” **RP/CM/12**

“The first step in this relationship is to agree on the joint goals. Outside this the outcome is failure” **RP/YL/05**

Research participants concluded on the need for the oil producing companies to ensure that adequate strategies are in place for achieving mutual goal.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of research participants opinion and views on the relationship between the OPC and HC, and summarised the key findings from conducted interviews with sixteen inhabitants of different communities within the Niger delta region, all of whom serve at various capacities within their communities. The next chapter will discuss in detail these key findings in comparison to the literature review conducted in chapter 3. In addition, it will inform the validation of the proposed theoretical framework for this research study.

Chapter 6

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT, DISCUSSION AND VALIDATION

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to explore and understand the nature and quality of the relationship between the OPC and HC by considering relationship elements, determinants of relationship quality, and dimensions of relationship quality in establishing and developing a successful relationship quality between the OPC and HC. The fundamental assumption is that when the OPC involve and engage the HC, both the OPC and HC will enjoy a stable, mutually beneficial and long-term relationship. Hence, there is a need for assessment of the role each party plays in the relationship. Such assessment will aid the OPC in identifying and concentrating effort in the appropriate aspect of the relationship. In this research study, the relationship elements (i.e. activity links, resource ties and actor bonds) and determinants of relationship quality (i.e. mutual benefit, communication and control mutuality) are referred to as antecedents of relationship quality. These constructs in turn positively influence the dimensions of relationship quality (i.e. trust, satisfaction and commitment).

This chapter presents an interpretation of the analysis and findings described in the previous chapter. The findings were contrasted and compared to existing theoretical frameworks by assessing and examining the various constructs that made up the theoretical framework and the propositions. Subsequently, an enhanced and modified model is suggested.

6.2 Relationship elements

The existence of activity links, actor bonds and resources ties are the core features that determine the nature of any relationship that has developed between two parties. They are useful in explaining or examining the various ways in which parties to a relationship are connected, how the relationship has developed, and how the parties perceive each other. These three variables are closely related and are more or less evidenced in any

relationship. Therefore, when assessing the relationship between two parties, these variables deserve detailed examination.

6.2.1 Activity links

Activity links become important when building a relationship because the parties involved are linked to each other through their various activities and these capture the efficiency in the use of resources. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) described activity links as a flow of exchange episodes involving each party to a relationship undertaking one or more activities. This description suggests the need for involvement and coordination between relationship partners as they will consequently affect how activities are carried out in the relationship. Interviewees' understanding of activity links in this study reflects the act of participation in something, association with someone or a situation, engrossment with something which relies on performance, being considered as a necessary part of something, and when your contribution counts. These are consistent with Hallen *et al* (1989), Turnbull and Valla (1986) and Hakansson's (1982) finding that relationship partners in any relationship perform activities jointly.

Consideration of activity links has been found to be an important starting point when building a relationship. Whilst it is considered as a means by which OPC and their HC are brought together, interviewees expressed different opinions on the likely benefits of activity links. All interviewees expected the OPC to increase the level of awareness and involvement in the region. Whilst some contended that activity links will bring about proper engagement and a "right" connection, others argued that proper interaction, exposure to opportunities and community building will result when there is appropriate activity links between OPC and their HC. Thus, the activity links in a relationship have dynamic (developments) and structural (efficiency) effects (Hakansson and Snehota 1995) and also development of capabilities (Teece *et al.*, 1997). Moller and Torronen (2003) stated that activity links affect interaction in any relationship.

In addition, interviewees identified resources exchange, negotiation, strategy formulation, capacity building and corporate social responsibility as the various activities that link OPC to their HC. These activities are aimed at meeting the needs of OPC and their HC. This aligns with Hakansson and Snehota's (1995) assertion that activities are acts directed towards a purpose. They however argued that analysing activities presents some difficulties. Likewise, interviewees revealed that value determination in resources exchange, for example, present some difficulties, yet Porter (1985) noted that activities are important in creating value. The OPC need to be aware of the importance of each activity identified and how these activities can add value to their relationship. Whilst Hakansson and Snehota (1995) argued that strong activity links do not occur in all relationships, they concluded that activity links develop when the activities of parties to a relationship are understandable and visible to one another. This suggests openness between partners in a relationship.

6.2.2 Resource Ties

Resource ties capture a party's awareness and knowledge about the resource of another party within a relationship (Holmen *et al.*, 2005). Resource ties develop as parties in a relationship access or exchange resources with one another as they carry out their respective activities. In most cases, the development process transforms existing resources of the parties so as to create new resources. This further suggests that relationship parties interact and become aware of one another's resources. Hence, as resource ties develop between two parties in a relationship they become mutually and increasingly interdependent (Hakansson and Snehota 1995).

Like activity links, research participants perceived resource ties as a key component in this research study. However, research participants were more concerned about the negative impact (i.e. act of corruption) the various avenues of resource ties between the OPC and HC has created within the region. This is contrary to Yamagishi *et al's* (1988) assertion that resource ties facilitate exchanges and create positive connections between

relationship partners. Hence, most research participants' concluded that resource ties as a relationship element do not add value to their respective communities, and that the OPCs operate at a distance from the HC. This is not in line with Holmen *et al's* (2005) findings that resource ties occur when partners become aware of, and interact about, their respective resources. They argued further that the resources that bring together both the OPC and HC have not been mutually shared between the two parties. This is contrary to scholars' (e.g. Kalwani and Narayandas, 1995; Turnbull *et al.*, 1996; Spencer *et al.*, 1996; Wilkinson *et al.*, 1998) assertion that resource ties enable efficient use and development of relationship resources. Arguably, evident from the data collected and analysed, it is apparent that the existence of resource ties is an essential relationship element that should be taken into consideration for this research study. However, research participants' views suggested that the current relationship between the OPC and HC does not benefit from this relationship element.

6.2.3 Actor Bonds

Similar to resource ties, actor bonds refer to the ways parties in a relationship respond to and perceive each other. Actor bonds impact on the identities of relationship partners towards one another and also affect the way these partners view and interpret situations. Hakansson and Snehota (1995, p. 198) stated that "identities, to begin with diffused, are shaped by the mutual interaction and its interpretation by the individuals within the two parties over time". Hence, parties in a relationship react to one another's actions in diverse situations. The development of identities between two parties in a relationship is largely related to developing commitment and trust. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) argued that commitment connotes to what parties will do for one another, while trust relates to what parties can do for one another. Hence, actor bonds between partners in a relationship emerge over time and are mutually developed through the experience and knowledge gained via interaction.

Research participants acknowledged that there is a bond between the OPC and HC. However, this bond is perceived as transactional in nature and not productive as expected. They argued that both the OPC and HC only take into consideration their immediate needs during negotiations, as opposed to long-term considerations. A further concern expressed by some research participants was the lack of bond among the various actors within the community. They argued that this has further caused division within the community. Hence, making it difficult or problematic for the OPC to create and maintain a bond with the community as a single entity. This view by the research participants is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota's (1995) argument that inappropriate actor bonds between relationship partners will result in poor communication and inefficient use of their respective capacity.

6.3 Determinants of relationship quality

knowing and understanding the constructs that give rise to relationship quality is pivotal to this research study. The determinants of relationship quality form part of the antecedents of relationship quality. Hence, mutual benefit, communication and control mutuality are considered essential in achieving a successful relationship quality.

6.3.1 Mutual benefit

Adler (1967) argued that a relationship where two parties are involved must benefit both parties in a meaningful manner, notwithstanding if the two parties do not derive equal benefit from the relation. Zineldin (2004) and Svensson (2002) further stressed the importance of mutual benefit as fundamental to any business relationships, noting that all business activities must focus on creating mutually beneficial relationships with all business stakeholders. This standpoint suggests that benefit comes from both cooperation and competition. While competition between parties does not demand mutuality of benefit, cooperation between parties in a relationship does require this. This is because competition often brings about conflicting interest between relationship partners as opposed to cooperation that involves like-minded partners (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2003).

It is unclear if HC consider a relationship with OPC to be competitive or cooperative. However, data gathered revealed that in either way the relationship is assessed, mutual benefit does not exist between the parties. This was attributed to the fact that OPC and HC do not share a common goal with one another. This is consistent with Morris *et al's* (2007) viewpoint, which argued that in the absence of cooperation between partners, mutual benefit would be lacking. In addition, research participants acknowledged that a lack of agreed mutual benefit between OPC and HC has resulted in underutilisation of resources within the region, thus an increase in waste. This conforms to Wilkinson and Young's (2002) argument that cooperation is a form of resource acquisition strategy while competition is a strategy useful in attaining marketplace advantage.

Furthermore, findings from the data gathered revealed that mutually agreed benefit between partners prompts commitment. This is consistent with Morris *et al* (2007) and Morgan & Hunt's (1994) claim that mutual benefit influences commitment within a relationship. This suggests that HC will show commitment to the relationship if they perceive that OPC presence within the community will result in greater benefits. Similarly, data gathered revealed that trust has positive impact on mutual benefit, which invariably results in relationship success. This is congruent with Zabkar & Brencic's (2004) assertion that trust between partners is a means of shaping partners' intentions and behaviours.

Research participants concluded that the earlier both the OPC and HC consider one another as cooperating partners, by ensuring mutuality of benefits accruable to one another, the sooner they will both enjoy a smooth and peaceful relationship. Morris *et al* (2007) corroborate this finding that the lesser the competitive rivalry between partners, the higher will be the opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship. Also, Bengtsson and Kock (2000) argued that competition in any relationship undermines mutual benefit. This suggests that a mutually beneficial relationship will promote cooperation between OPC and HC and invariably lessen competition between the partners.

These findings emphasise the importance of OPC and HC ensuring mutuality of benefit between one another. In particular, benefits associated with information and resources that will help in achieving a successful relationship.

6.3.2 Communication

Communication was interpreted as being an important factor that gives rise to trust, which is essential in building commitment to the relationship enhancement management between OPC and HC. More importantly, while OPC make use of the community CDC or the king and his cabinet as the main sources of communicating information to all HC, as claimed by a majority of the interviewees, Larson and Kulchitsky (2000) argued that how information is shared or exchanged among partners is subject to the nature of such information. Issues relating to the HC like: exploration and drilling issues, environmental issues (i.e. pollution), community land issues (i.e. negotiation and purchase), family land issues (i.e. negotiation and purchase) and issues relating to contractors within the community are all conveyed through the CDC or the King and his cabinet.

For effective and efficient communication purposes, most research participants emphasized the importance of OPC employing a communication strategy that considers the nature of information to share and the affected entity within the community in order to determine how such information will be transmitted. They argued that the CDC or the King and his cabinet do not represent either the family or the youth appropriately when discussing issues pertaining to them with OPC. This has further brought division within the HC itself. It was suggested that a direct and face-to-face communication with family representatives and the youth on matters relating to them would be ideal. This is consistent with the framework underpinning communication. By doing this, research participants argued that OPC would have access to first-hand information, access to immediate feedback and a more focused goal with concerned entity within the community (Cannon and Homburg, 2001).

In respect of sharing information with the right people or body within the community, some interviewees suggested that OPC should improve on its communication process. Some research participants argued that, in most cases, the OPC communication process is not consistent with the framework upon which the communication process was founded. This suggests that for every piece of information shared or exchanged between OPC and HC, both parties must ensure that the intended meaning is correctly “decoded” or “encoded” by the receiver. Highlighting the importance of communication between OPC and HC within the NDRN, data gathered clearly showed that communication is crucial in maintaining continuity between OPC and HC within their relationship. Research participants argued that effective communication would produce the intended or desired result within the relationship, while inadequate communication will often result in conflict and violence.

Regarding communication content, research participants noted that negotiations on land sales, benefits of OPC presence in the community, impact of OPC activities (i.e. exploration and drilling), embarking on developmental projects within the community, employing youths of the community, and awarding contracts to members of the community are frequent issues for communication. Almost all research participants however drew attention to the inadequacy of information being shared by OPC with the HC. In addition, it was revealed that OPC employ force in some cases as opposed to organising a meeting to meet with community representatives (i.e. the CDC or the king and his cabinet) or concerned entity within the community in resolving issues. During a particular interview session with a youth leader, he emphasised that OPC do not give adequate or helpful information on projects implemented within their communities. This in turn results in the communities making inappropriate decisions, which often result in conflict with OPC.

In particular, research participants also made known that untimely sharing of information by OPC with the HC affect their communication. They argued that OPC should be proactive in their communication process in order to arrive at the desired result with HC. However, the communication

process may be different in some cases and scenarios considering the issue(s) and the people involved. It was further revealed that often times when communication is delayed, the situation results in conflict and violence. It becomes imperative at this point for the government to intervene in communication between the parties for prompt response.

Furthermore, research participants established a connection between communication and trust. A few of the interviewees argued that trust is an afterward effect of effective communication. Their views show that effective communication has both direct and indirect outcomes in upholding trust between OPC and HC within the relationship. These views support Anderson *et al's* (1987) assertion that communication is positively related with trust. This implies that effective communication will play an important role in maintaining and upholding the OPC and HC relationship, and will strengthen further their level of trust. Effective communication in the OPC and HC relationship is an important relationship quality construct and a consequential factor necessary in building trust within the relationship. This study concludes that communication is important in the context of relationship enhancement management between OPC and HC, and communication has significant impact on trust.

Reflecting on communication as a driver of commitment, as revealed by the findings from the data gathered through the interview sessions, it is obvious that communication had positive influence on relationship commitment. This is consistent with Pallant's (2007) assertions. Supporting the influence of communication on commitment argument, RP/CC/02 and RP/FR/09 stated that:

"Considering the current situation in this region, it will be difficult to earn any community commitment if the right information are not shared with us. Because things are not working right at all"

RP/CC/02

"...when these guys shares unrestricted information between them, commitment will be restored within the region" **RP/FR/09**

These excerpts support the importance of communication in upholding and increasing commitment between OPC and HC in the NDRN. This suggests that OPC could increase HC commitment in the region by putting in place effective and appropriate communication means and processes.

6.3.3 Control mutuality

In general, research participants perceived control mutuality as power balance in a relationship. This they referred to by agreeing with the distribution of power and level of mutual influence between OPC and HC. This is in line with Men (2001) and Hon & Grunig's (1999) assertion that control mutuality shares some similarity with empowerment and feeling of control because it is relevant to power sharing and influence. Data gathered revealed that the more HC can influence and/or control matters and issues pertaining to their relationship with the OPC, the more strongly they believe that OPC values their ideas and opinions. This suggests that a commendable level of interactivity and interaction between the OPC and HC will be of significant importance.

Research participants also describe control mutuality in relation to conflict management in the region. It was revealed that the alarming rate of violence and conflict in the region between OPC and HC signifies lack of control mutuality between the parties. Research participants however argued that if HC perceive OPC's ability to manage conflict in the region to be effective and efficient, this may result in control mutuality between the parties. This is consistent with Stafford & Canary's (1991) claim that satisfaction with and/or agreement on the way things are done, or decisions are made, in a relationship signifies control mutuality. This further suggests the importance of OPC and HC incorporating conflict management ability and effective communication in their relationship.

Furthermore, control mutuality was expressed in relation to decision-making between OPC and HC. Research participants argued that OPC and HC relationship lacks stability and interdependence because decisions that originate from the relationship do not reflect each party's opinion. This conforms to Ki and Hon's (2007) claims. Also, it was revealed that two-way

communication between OPC and HC in their decision making process is pertinent in attaining a control mutuality position. Research participants concluded that OPC must improve the self-efficacy of HC (e.g., enhance their control ability and empower them) in order to gain their satisfaction and commitment. These findings suggest that there is a need for appropriate power sharing between OPC and HC.

6.4 Dimensions of relationship quality

Trust, satisfaction and commitment are frequently termed as dimensions of relationship quality. They are also referred to as the indicators of relationship quality because they assess and/or evaluate the relationship quality between relationship partners. Hence, these constructs will be discussed in relation to the context of this research study.

6.4.1 Trust

Within existing literature, trust has been viewed from two distinct standpoints (LaBahn and Kohli, 1997). One standpoint viewed trust as a combination of behavioural intentions and beliefs (Moorman *et al* 1992), while the other considered trust to centre on trustworthiness (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Anderson and Weitz 1989). This study adopted Morgan and Hunt's (1994) standpoint which referred to trust as trustworthiness (discussed in the literature review section). In addition, trust has been studied at three different levels; firstly, at the individual level (Crosby *et al.*, 1990), secondly at the organisational level (Garbarino and Johnson 1999), and thirdly Rauyruen and Miller (2007), and Karantinou and Hogg (2009) focused on both individual and organisational level. Regardless of these views and levels of study, Smyth *et al* (2010) concluded that trust is not a calculated judgement but rather an attitude which is socially measured through interactions.

For the purpose of this research work, trust was considered at the organisational level. This is because each community within the NDRN is seen as a separate legal entity, with each independent of the others when establishing a relationship with the OPC. From the data gathered, almost all

research participants argued that trust does not exist between OPC and HC. Research participants revealed that OPC and HC involvement lacks honesty, transparency, openness or reliability. Some of the reasons for this was attributed to the fact that the OPC do not have an adequate knowledge of HC structures, attitude, behaviour, beliefs and customs. Also, it was also made known by some of the research participants that the HC do not have a full understanding of OPC's vision, mission, and values as well. This has resulted in both parties not having a thorough understanding of the challenges they may face.

OPC has been blamed by the HC for not following proper procedures in their exploration activities, failed in meeting community expectations, and held back on interaction and sharing of detailed information with the community, thus the HC find it right to reciprocate OPC actions by disrupting their operations if need be. A research participant however explained that HC can still trust some of the OPCs because they keep to the terms of their agreement (i.e. GMoU). This view acknowledged the existence of diversity among various communities within the region. Trust is required in maintaining and upholding continuity in the OPC and HC relationship. In achieving this, OPC and HC are expected to act ethically, ensure frequent and timely communication, give room for mutual goals, and allow adequate engagement with one another in order to ensure peaceful cohabitation within the region.

Research participants indicated that communication is an important driving factor for OPC and HC to establish trust in their relationship. It was made known that trust is developed over time through numerous interactions and information sharing between partners. They revealed that OPC's honesty, openness and reliability in giving appropriate and timely information on issues that affect the HC is crucial to the success of the relationship. This will help the parties build mutual understanding and establish confidence between them and also reduces the risks associated with failed projects and over-promising. Also, research findings revealed that trust between OPC and HC is important in establishing commitment within the relationship. They argued that commitment will be the afterward effect of

OPC and HC improving the level of trust between them. This suggests a linear relationship between the OPC and HC. Even though the process of building the trust required within this relationship will take time, it is obvious that trust is a motivating factor for OPC and HC commitment (Zineldin and Jonsson 2000; Coote *et al* 2003). However, contrary to this finding, some research participants pointed to commitment as a motivating factor in establishing trust between OPC and HC. It was considered a long-term focus for OPC and HC in order to attain the desired level of trust needed in building their relationship. This suggests that commitment is built over time between parties in a relationship and in the process of doing so, each party's trust for one another is established as well.

Furthermore, collaboration and culture are other areas where trust is perceived to be important. HC anticipate that the OPC should be honest and open when working with HC on any project, to provide timely updates and regularly notify them of any changes that occur to a pre-agreed plan. Also, HC expect OPC to understand and show respect for the customs and traditions upon which the communities are rooted. This brings about a cordial relationship between the parties and lessens the frequent conflicts and violence in the NDRN. In summary, in this type of relationship (i.e. OPC and HC relationship), trust is important. It was seen as a key driver of commitment and as a derivative of commitment at the same time.

6.4.2 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the pleasurable fulfilment of need (Oliver 1997, 1999) and overall evaluation of performance (Fornell 1992). Satisfaction from these two researchers' perspectives can be seen as an emotion-based judgement and evaluation of a service experience. Oliver (2010) revealed that satisfaction can be judged and evaluated at three different stages; (i) during interactions, (ii) at the end of a series of interactions, and (iii) a global assessment taking into consideration the whole encounter and experience between partners.

Some researchers (for example; Rust *et al* 1995, Garbarino & Johnson 1999, and Oliver 2010) argue that assessing satisfaction level at different

stages of interaction allows cumulative measuring of satisfaction between partners, which can subsequently be integrated into an overall evaluation of satisfaction process that gives room for improvement, as opposed to a single global measure of satisfaction level which does not suggest room for improvement (Rust *et al* 1995). This study assessed the satisfaction level between OPC and HC at different stages of interactions; when OPC and HC make their first contact, when projects are to be implemented within the community, when community need arises, and undertook a global evaluation of OPC and HC relationship stages.

Research participants' evaluation of satisfaction level between OPC and HC was based on; performance of agreed responsibilities between OPC and HC, how OPC conducts its business and operations within the community, community input in OPC decision-making, and how OPC manages the incidence of environmental pollution, conflict and violence in the region. This is in line with Oliver's (2010) assertion that meeting expectations is a suboptimal target and not the key to satisfaction. Majority of the research participants acknowledged that the OPC relationship with HC is unsatisfactory. This they attributed to the negative impact of OPC operations within the region, how OPC conducts its business and OPC attitude toward the community whenever conflict arises.

It is questionable at this point if the satisfaction level is perceived mutually by OPC and HC. Although a majority of the research participants do not see mutual understanding equating to satisfaction, **RP/CM/12** argued that mutual understanding is important because OPC and HC must have a feeling of fair treatment. He noted that OPC and HC are both responsible for the deteriorated level of satisfaction within the relationship resulting from their different or respective understanding of "satisfaction". This suggests the need for the OPC and HC to have a common understanding of what constituteS satisfaction within their relationship context. Also, satisfaction was perceived as a direct antecedent of trust and commitment. Participants argued that when parties in a relationship are mutually satisfied, trust and commitment will come to play. Trust and commitment in this context are seen as concurrent elements.

Research participants concluded that satisfaction is perceived when desired outcomes are achieved, when agreed promises are fulfilled or when results are consented to by parties to the relationship.

6.4.3 Commitment

Commitment according to Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007) focuses on involvement, while La (2005) argued that commitment has two dimensions; relationship orientation and attitudinal disposition. Commitment for the purpose of this study has been termed as the desire of parties in a relationship to retain and maintain the relationship. This is consistent with assertions by Moorman *et al* (1992) and Anderson and Weitz (1992).

Data gathered during various interview sessions suggested that most interviewees expect OPC to display a higher level of commitment compared to HC level of commitment in the region, rather than both parties showing the same level of commitment. This indicated an imbalanced commitment level between OPC and HC in the region, as such parties tend to be independent of one another. Williamson (1985) however argued that joint or reciprocal commitment results in a long-term and stable relationship. Likewise, Gundlach *et al* (1995) noted that two-way approaches to commitment between partners promotes their relationship and fosters trust also. Commitment presents partners with an opportunity to determine their future exchanges and develop a shared norm in the process.

A majority of the research participants' responses to the question about OPC and HC level of commitment to each other within the region, indicated that OPC and HC level of commitment to one another is not satisfactory. This is suggested as indicating commitment is lacking between the parties. However, it was difficult for research participants to identify unique/specific measures or determinants upon which OPC and HC level of commitment in the region can be assessed. Research participants' assessment of OPC and HC commitment level in the NDRN was based on target-meeting and promise fulfilment by parties in a relationship.

Some research participants noted that the GMoU agreement between OPC and HC should help improve their commitment level in the region if properly and adequately implemented. The GMoU in this context was perceived by most research participants as a means of communication between the OPC and HC as opposed to a binding agreement.

“.....having a GMoU in place will give room for effective communication between the parties within this relationship under discussion and ultimately these parties commitment towards project development and harmonious relationship will definitely follow”

RP/CDC/15

Also, the role of government and its agencies were capitalised on. Participants’ believed that the government must intervene in the ongoing situation in the region through enforcement of its policies and regulations on both parties for a balanced commitment to be achieved. In addition, the government should make the GMoU a legal and binding document. Participants’ argued further that if the GMoU is seen as a binding and legal document that spells out the terms and conditions of their relationship; adequate participation, improved performance and relationship stability to be achieved, thus making the relationship worthwhile investing into.

6.5 Emerged constructs

This section presents a detailed discussion on the constructs that were not previously identified in the literature review chapter. It focuses on the emergence and/or development of new themes resulting from the analysed data in chapter 6. Culture and mutual goal were considered as patterns across the data set analysed, which are important in describing the relationship between the OPC and HC.

6.5.1 Culture

Culture is one of the themes that emerged during the data analysis process. A majority of the research participants stressed the need for the OPC to understand their HC cultural heritage in order to obtain a productive

and successful relationship with the HC. In addition, the research participants added that the various strategies employed in the past failed to take into cognisance the importance of the people's cultural heritage when suggesting remedies to the reoccurring violence and conflicts in the region. This finding is in line with Tobor's (2016, p. 15) assertion that "A majority of researchers writing on the Niger Delta crisis proffered possible solutions without considering the significance of the culture of the people for whom the program is meant".

Even though there is no consensus on the definition of "culture", it is usually perceived to connote values and beliefs. Jaques (1951) defined culture as a traditional and customary way of thinking and doing things, shared by all its members. This suggests that members are bound by a common set of values and that any new member must learn and at least partially abide by such values in order to be accepted. In the same manner, Assael (1987, p.297) defined culture as "the norms, beliefs and customs that are learned from society and lead to common patterns of behaviour". Assael's (1987) standpoint is that members within a culture share a common set of values, which dictate acceptable behaviour for the members of the culture. Odubo and Tobor (2016) defined culture as a system of shared tradition, behaviours, basic assumptions, norms, belief systems, values, and way of life that is peculiar and unique to a certain set of people.

Research participants' opinions suggest that OPC projects and formulated strategies failed to support or consider the significant of the HC cultures. The excerpts below reveal some of the research participants' opinions.

"We have great religions and they have had an enormous effect on humanity" **RP/CC/02**

"...at times we feel that our tradition is overwhelmed because of their influence" **RP/YL/05**

"We as community members are all rooted somewhere, which is our custom and tradition. As a result, OPC cannot come over night and take that away from us" **RP/CM/12**

Two key cultural areas identified and emphasised by the research participants are the need for the communities to protect their local shrines and their fishing jobs.

"...ignoring the tradition of the people of the Niger delta region in this relationship often result in conflicts. For example destroying our shrine" **RP/FR/09**

"Oil companies do not support the moral values upon which most communities are founded. Most of these communities are known for their active fishing business but the presence of oil companies brought oil spillages and gas flaring into our communities" **RP/CC/08**

These opinions suggest that the OPC's negative attitude towards their local shrines and fishing business, in which most community people are rooted, do not encourage developmental initiative. This is consistent with Brennan *et al's* (2009) assertion that appreciating the uniqueness of the local culture will have a significant impact on the success of any development initiative. One of the research participants concluded that:

"There is a thin line between agreement and disagreement. OPC need to understand our community and also make themselves understood. There is no way things will work if they do not understand our viewpoint on matters especially when it relates to our cultural heritage. I believe giving room for frequent communication will fill the gap" **RP/CM/12**

This view is consistent with Tobor's (2016, p. 19) finding that "Culture plays a significant role and it is embedded in community participation. Engaging and involving indigenous citizens in the affairs of the communities can lead to increased quality of decisions, access to new information,

enhanced fairness, and improved environmental outcomes and legitimacy". Another research participant added that:

"Oil companies need to understand that this relationship is not just about the communities looking for association rather a question of doing the right thing by avoiding oil spillages and letting the people regain their livelihood back. Because the situation tend to get worse if not attended to immediately" **RP/CDC/15**

Hence, this research study deemed it appropriate to consider culture as one of the determinants of relationship quality.

6.5.2 Mutual goal

Wilson (1995) defined mutual goals as the extent to which relationship partners share goals which are meant to be achieved jointly by the relationship partners and the maintenance of such a relationship. Hence, parties to a relationship must all participate in the relationship as agreed (Adler, 1967). McQuiston, (2001) added that mutual goals provide relationship partners with the right conditions and the opportunity to participate effectively in a relationship. Vieira *et al* (2008) argue further that mutual goals between relationship partners encourages similarity of values such that relationship partners equally work towards a common long-term goal or achievement. Zineldin (2004) stated that a mutual goal is when relationship parties cooperate and coordinate their activities together. These definitions further suggest that relationship parties are expected to work towards achieving a unified goal that could create value and mutually beneficial exchanges.

Of great concern to the research participants was the formulation of goals and strategies that solely affect the Niger delta communities without their knowledge or consent.

"A fundamental problem in this relationship is how goals and strategies that affect us the community are set. Oil companies must involve the community" **RP/CC/06**

"...oil companies should be willing to deliberate with the communities any strategy they will take on board and will affect us" **RP/CM/16**

"Is very simple, we both have something of value to offer ourselves. As a result we should come together to decide what our goals should be" **RP/CDC/01**

"I believe the communities should be in a position to freely accept or reject any terms and conditions of exchange they are not comfortable with" **RP/FR/07**

The excerpts above suggest that taking into cognisance the HC when making decisions and formulating strategies in respect to activities within the NDRN is significant to achieving a successful relationship. This is consistent with Zineldin's (1998) standpoint that a mutual goal is a way of integrating a relationship such that partners' will achieve a common goal. He identifies seven features for the development of mutual goal between relationship partners as shown below:

1. Two or more individuals, groups or organisations are willing to be engaged in an interactive exchange relationship.
2. Each party possesses something of value that the other party wants.
3. Each party is willing to give up its "something of value" to receive in return the "something of value" belonging to the other party – in other words, the relationship is perceived to be mutually rewarding.
4. Each party is free to accept or reject terms and conditions of exchange that will leave them better off (or at least not worse off) than before the exchange.
5. The parties are able to communicate and interact with each other.
6. The parties recognise that ethical values and norms, interdependence, commitment, and adaptation are crucial for the creation, development and enhancement of a positive, sustainable long-term relationship.
7. The parties can strike a positive balance between the pros and cons of the relationship.

Vieira (2008) argued that mutual goal should be considered as a core determinant of relationship quality. Likewise, some scholars (e.g. Huntley, 2006; Parsons, 2002; Boles *et al.*, 2000; Smith, 1998; Lagace *et al.*, 1991; Crosby *et al.*, 1990) asserted that mutual goal is one of the most commonly emphasised relationship quality determinants. Two research participants stated respectively that when the OPC and HC pursue the same goal(s), their level of trust and satisfaction would improve.

“...believe me not until the oil companies allow the community to participate in the process of decision making, they cannot earn our trust” **RP/CONT/14**

“We are not satisfied with the way things are done. Decisions that affect us cannot not be made in our absent. We need to contribute as well” **RP/COT11**

These excerpts are in line with Anderson and Weitz (2008) assertion that trust between relationship partners is enhanced when they share similar goals and Vieira *et al's* (2008) argument that the level of satisfaction experience by parties to a relationship is enhanced when they share similar goals. Hence, this research study considers mutual goal as a determinant of relationship quality.

6.6 Developed theoretical framework revisited

The research study's developed theoretical framework is modified in figure 6.1 after taking into consideration the findings derived from the data collected and analysed, which has informed the modified final framework. This framework is more detailed and comprehensive than the originally proposed framework because in addition to what the theory says, it includes the opinions and views of the various research participants interviewed for this research study. In addition, the framework shows the elements necessary in ascertaining or establishing the existence of a relationship between the parties and the determinants of relationship quality as antecedents of relationship quality.

Subsequently, the dimensions of relationship quality are presented as an outcome to the antecedents of relationship quality in achieving a mutually beneficial relationship, which is the ultimate goal of relationship quality. Furthermore, interconnections were made among the various relationship elements and constructs. This was based on the propositions derived from the opinion and views of research participants.

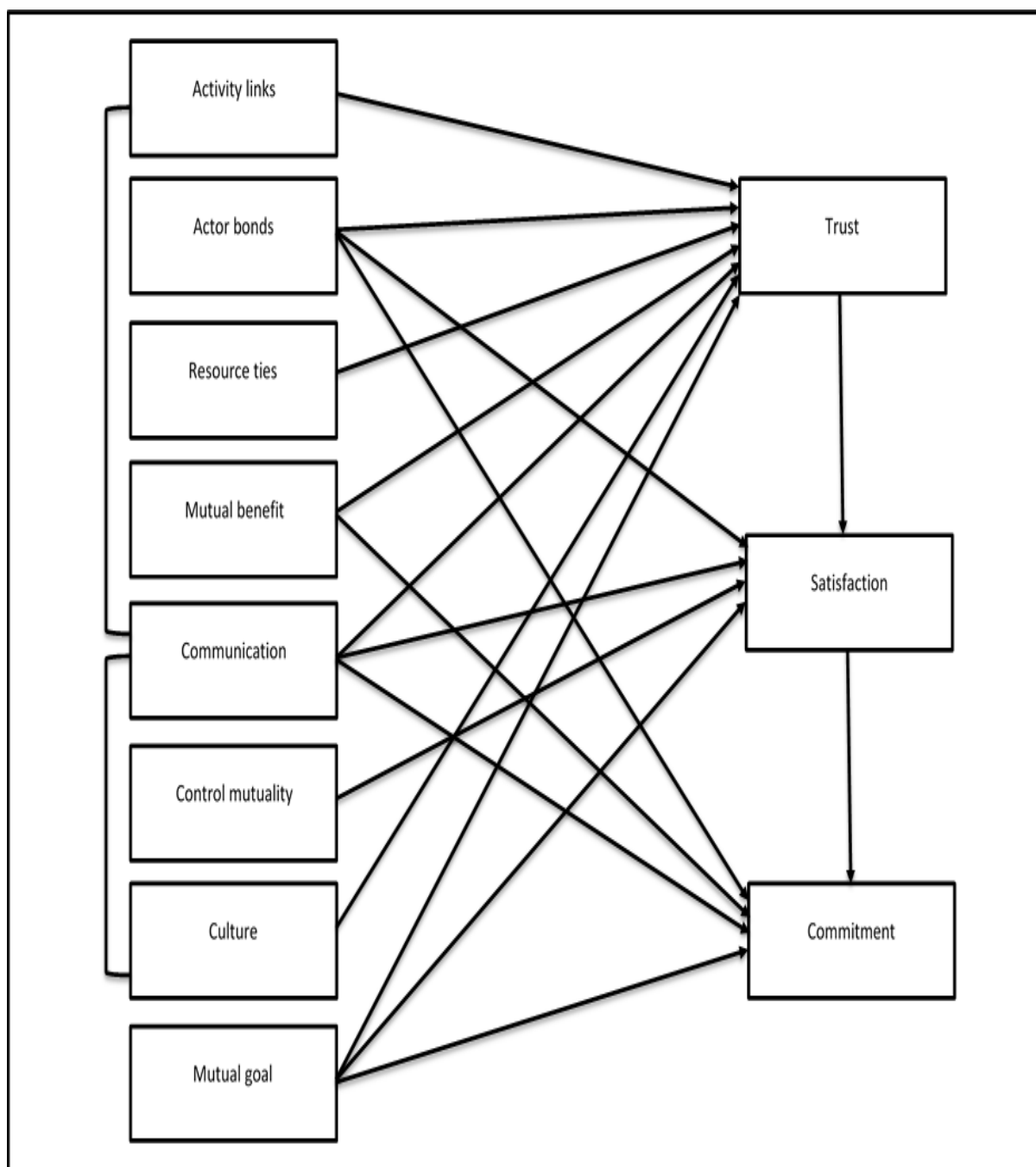


Figure 6.1: Final structural model of a B2Com relationship quality framework (Author generated).

6.7 Validating the propositions

This section will check the accuracy of the propositions listed in section 3.9 as suggested by the literature (i.e. past and existing research studies). These propositions have been generated based on already observed data. Hence, it becomes imperative to test these propositions against the data collected for this research study through semi-structured interviews, and the opinion and views of experienced practitioners within the NOGI.

6.7.1 Propositions validation based on the opinion and views of the research participants

Table 6.1 presents the opinion and views of the research participants in relation to the proposed propositions. This ascertain the relevance of each of the constructs and/or elements of the proposed theoretical framework to this research study. All the proposed propositions were supported by the research participants opinion and views in addition to four other propositions suggested by the analysed data which was collected through semi-structured interviews.

It was proposed that activity links positively influence trust. The result of the data collected and analysed indicated that although different activity links (i.e. involvement) take place between the OPC and HC, it is evident that most interviewees agreed to lack of appropriate involvement between the two parties within the region. Hence, there is a lack of trust in the relationship. However, most of the research participants asserted that if the OPC could create an enabling involvement with the HC, trust will be achieved. This is consistent with Medlin's (2002) assertion that activity links are inherent in achieving trust. Therefore, H1 is supported by this research study.

P2 posited that actor bonds positively influence trust, which suggests that an interdependent relationship between the OPC and HC encourages frequent interaction and fosters mutual trust. The findings of the collected data analysed supported this proposition. Most of the research participants concluded that both the OPC and HC have tailored their respective bond

towards pursuing and meeting individual needs, thus, resulting in lack of trust in the relationship. They however agreed that when both parties are close and in one accord, trust would emanate between the two parties. This is consistent with Schurr and Ozanne's (1985) assertion that cooperation between relationship partners bring about trustworthiness. Hence, P2 is supported by this research study.

Table 6.1: Result of propositions validation based on research participants responses (Author generated)

Propositions	Proposed relationships	Propositions supported
P1	Activity links - Trust	Supported
P2	Actor bonds - Trust	Supported
P3	Actor bonds - Communication	Supported
P4	Actor bonds - Commitment	Supported
P5	Actor bonds - Satisfaction	Supported
P6	Resource ties - Trust	Supported
P7	Mutual benefit - Trust	Supported
P8	Mutual benefit - Commitment	Supported
P9	Communication - Trust	Supported
P10	Communication - Satisfaction	Supported
P11	Communication - Commitment	Supported
P12	Control mutuality - Satisfaction	Supported
P13	Trust - Satisfaction	Supported
P14	Trust - Commitment	Supported
P15	Satisfaction - Commitment	Supported

P3 proposed that actor bonds positively influence communication. Research participants argued in favour of this proposition noting that the lack of relationship bond between the OPC and HC has resulted in poor information sharing between the parties. They added that if the OPC and HC share a collective bond, their capacity to interact and relate effectively would be enhanced. This is consistent with Hakansson and Snehota's

(1995) assertion that an inappropriate bond between parties in a relationship limits their capacity to get and process information needed within such a relationship. Therefore, P2 is supported by this research study.

Most of the research participants described the bond between the OPC and HC as transactional i.e. focused on short-term benefits which often result in non-satisfaction and lack of commitment between the two parties. This is contrary to P4 and H5 which posited that actor bonds influence commitment and satisfaction respectively. Even though, the research participants acknowledged that there is no relationship bond between the OPC and HC, they concluded that the presence of a mutually bonded relationship between the OPC and HC will bring about satisfaction, and encourages their level of commitment.

P6 proposed that resource ties positively influence trust. This attempt to explain various avenues through which relationship partners have access to each others resources that can be used and exploited. Despite that most of the research participants acknowledging that the various ways in which the OPC and HC share resources does not encourage nor create trust in the relationship, they concluded that resource ties between relationship partners would create mutual trust.

P7 and P8 attempted to explain that mutual benefit positively influences trust and commitment. It was evident that research participants opinion and views positively support these proposition. They argued that both the OPC and HC must integrate their respective interest and/or embrace joint effort in order to earn each other's trust and commitment. This is consistent with Grunig's (1993) assertion that mutual benefit creates and maintains equilibrium between relationship partners.

The findings suggested that communication significantly influences trust, satisfaction and communication. Although, poor and/or inadequate information sharing between the OPC and OPC was identified as one of the fundamental sources of conflict and violences in the region. Research participants asserted that appropriate communication between the OPC and

HC could often result in both parties sharing thought and ideas with each other. P9, P10, and P11 were all supported.

P12 posited that control mutuality positively influences satisfaction. Evidenced from the research participants opinion and views, control mutuality would facilitate long-term and excellent relationship outcomes which could result in optimal satisfaction between the OPC and HC. This is consistent with Ki and Hon's (2007) assertion that control mutuality bring forth excellent relationship outcomes. Hence, this research study supported P12.

P13 and P14 were significantly supported by the findings of the research study. It was proposed that trust positively influences satisfaction and commitment respectively. Evidence suggested that trust is a driver of both satisfaction and commitment. Research participants asserted that if both the OPC and HC could improve on their respective level of trust in relation to the dealings and activities that bring them together, satisfaction and partners commitment will be achieved in the relationship.

P15 posited that satisfaction will positively influence commitment. This was supported by the findings of the research study. Research participants asserted that satisfaction is the fulfilment of needs which prelude relationship partners commitment.

6.7.2 Propositions validation based on the opinion and views of practitioners

In The developed theoretical framework was sent to ten practitioners within the NOGI for their opinion and views on the different constructs and/or elements that made up the framework in order to demonstrate and/or confirm the framework's accuracy. However, only two responses were received. This could be attributed to the short period of time involved. The respondents' details are shown in table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Details of oil and gas practitioners

Code name	Job role	Years of experience
Respondent 1	Community relation manager	15
Respondent 2	Public relations manager	10

The respondents expressed their opinion and views as detailed below:

Actor bonds was perceived by the two respondents to be an essential construct within the framework. This is because:

“...both the host community and oil producing company will see each other as developmental partners as opposed to an exploiter”

RESPONDENT 1

“OPC should work towards getting the total support of the HC by presenting itself as a partner that is ready to have positive developmental impact on the HC while transacting business in the HC”

RESPONDENT 2

These views are consistent with Hakansson and Snehota’s (1995) assertion that actor bonds foster connection and/or attachment that bind relationship parties together.

Likewise, **resources ties** was described by the two respondents as a means of engagement, and also a source of opportunities between the OPC and HC respectively.

“...appropriate engagement between the two parties will go a long way in solving the re-occurring conflict between the OPC and HC”

RESPONDENT 2

“This construct will create business opportunities for both parties, and if observed appropriately, both the OPC and HC will enjoy a lasting relationship”

RESPONDENT 1

Furthermore, the respondents perceived **mutual benefit** of vital importance to the success of the relationship between the two parties. They

asserted that both parties must take into consideration, and mutually agree on, the benefits of their coming together.

"...with both OPC and HC having something to offer in the partnership" **RESPONDENT 1**

"I believe both party acting and operating towards achieving the same end point would be of great advantage to the relationship"
RESPONDENT 2

Communication was referred to as the "life blood" of the relationship by respondent 2, while respondent 1 termed it as a link that holds the relationship.

"This is a key requirement within the framework. In fact I will personally consider it the life blood of the relationship"
RESPONDENT 2

"Is the most important element in this framework; without a proper means of communication, the OPC and HC can never co-habit as partners" **RESPONDENT 1**

Hence, their assertions support communication as a necessary construct for relationship building.

The need for both parties to ensure and foster a power balance i.e. **control mutuality** in the relationship was re-emphasised by both respondents. Even though, both respondents argued that the OPC has always made it possible for the HC to influence any of its decisions that relates to the HC.

"There is no dispute as per this construct being of immense importance to the relationship. However, the HC has always been a part of the decision making process" **RESPONDENT 1**

"Both parties to this relationship demand some level of power and influence, which the OPC has always taken into consideration when

dealing with the HC...care must be taken in respect of this construct between the OPC and HC" **RESPONDENT 2**

Both respondents supported the need for **mutual goal** as a key construct within the relationship framework but however argued that it is a difficult construct to achieve. They attributed this to the presence of different actors within the HC. Hence, making mutual goal a difficult construct to achieve.

"In as much I perceive this construct to be of great benefit to your developed framework, it is difficult to achieve in the relationship between the OPC and HC. This is because there are too many actors within the HC" **RESPONDENT 2**

"This has been a major issue for the OPC over the years. There are too many players within the HC who are making it difficult for the parties to enjoy mutual goal. My advice is that the OPC should continue to encourage mutual goal through participation with these various players within the HC" **RESPONDENT 1**

Culture was acknowledged by both respondents for the OPC to be aware of. However, they added that the HC must give room for "business best practices" to operate side by side with the culture of the people. The respondents concluded that both parties must work together to make things work.

"More of my advice in this respect will be to the OPC. This is because the OPC is at the losing end. The tradition of the people should be respected for peace to rain" **RESPONDENT 1**

"I am aware that the OPC would not survive in any HC without understanding and having respect for their culture, the people, their way of life, vocation etc." **RESPONDENT 2**

The respondents are more concerned about the measure of **trust** between the OPC and HC.

“Trust between the OPC and HC can only be built when there is mutual understanding and respect between them, and both stick to the obligations stipulated in their agreement” **RESPONDENT 1**

“Both the OPC and HC must be transparent in all their dealings. Not only doing what is right and agreed, but must be seen and perceived to be doing it” **RESPONDENT 2**

These assertions further support the need for trust to be perceived as an indicator of relationship quality between the OPC and HC.

Likewise, **satisfaction** was perceived by both respondents to be an essential indicator of the relationship quality between the OPC and the HC.

“Both parties can express satisfaction based on the fulfilment and commitment to their word and signed agreement” **RESPONDENT 1**

“Achievement of both OPC and HC goals and objectives, without either of the parties feeling short-changed will definitely bring satisfaction and a win-win situation to the partnership”
RESPONDENT 2

Furthermore, respondents suggested a likely successful atmosphere for both parties level of **commitment**.

“Combination of trust and satisfaction between the OPC and HC in the right direction will certainly result in commitment by all stakeholders, which is good for business and continuity”
RESPONDENT 1

“OPC and HC should aim towards mutual goals and objectives in order to get each other commitment” **RESPONDENT 2**

6.8 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research findings based on research participants opinion and views on the relationship between the OPC and HC. In addition, the developed theoretical framework was

revisited and validated against the data collected, and opinion and views of practitioners within the Nigerian oil and gas industry. The findings suggested that all the elements and constructs within the research study developed framework in addition to culture and mutual goals are of crucial importance in enhancing and/or improving the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This research study has made a new contribution to the relationship marketing discipline in the area of business-to-community (B2Com) relationships using a qualitative approach. This chapter presents the key achievements and contributions of this research study to both academic discourse and practitioners. This is made possible through the review of the key findings in respect of the research study aims and objectives, and exploring the research's wider implications. In addition, it reflects on the research limitations, and identifies some potential research areas for future exploration.

7.2 Research aim and objectives revisited

This research study focused on oil producing companies to host community relationships in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NDRN) and the research aim was to propose a framework to help maximise the potential integration of secondary stakeholders and oil producing companies in Nigeria. The resulting framework comprises soft relationship determinants that could be used to enhance the integration of secondary stakeholders and primary stakeholders.

Associated objectives were:

1. Examine the nature and quality of the relationship between secondary stakeholders, and oil producing companies in Nigeria.
2. Review challenges and strategies for improving integration of secondary stakeholders, and oil producing companies in Nigeria.
3. Identify key determinants of relationship quality toward which oil producing companies could use to build and sustain a mutual stakeholder sense-making relationship.

4. Determine the impact of current relationship quality frameworks in improving and enhancing integration of secondary stakeholders , and oil producing companies in Nigeria.

The fulfilment of these objectives is imperative in order to satisfy the requirement of the research aim. Therefore, the research study objectives are interlinked.

In answering research objective one (RO 1), research participants described the HC relationship with the OPC as exploitative in nature. Hence, resulting in violence and conflicts between the two parties. The relationship between the OPC and HC began to deteriorate into violence and conflicts when crude oil revenue was "centralised" by the Nigerian federal government, and the state government was granted the sole autonomous right to land acquisition. Thus, resulting in the unacceptance of the community as an actual key stakeholder, allowing the perceived key stakeholders (i.e. the government and the OPCs) to take advantage of the situation. Research participants expressed and emphasised how the communities in the region have been deprived of their rights and livelihood. This is consistent with Idemudia's (2007) assertion that the HCs perceived their relationship with the OPCs to be of negative influence and other scholars' (e.g. Osaghae, 2015; Idemudia, 2014a; Aghedo, and Osumah, 2014) assertion that the relationship is a "war" kind. It could be argued that the OPC and HC enjoyed a warm and friendly relationship prior to the government taking control of crude oil revenue and land rights in the region because there was no violence and/or conflicts recorded up to then.

Research question objective (RO 2) was focused on understanding if any link exists between the OPC and HC. Research participants expressed their respective views taking into consideration how and/or what gets the two parties involved, what does the OPC and HC involvement bring about or produce, and the level of bond between the two parties. Research participants identified the process of resources exchange (i.e. financial, property and knowledge), negotiation, strategy formulation and capacity building as the key areas in which the OPC and HC are linked together. This

suggests that the various relationship elements identified from the literature are present in the OPC and HC relationship. However, a majority of the research participants concluded that the OPC involvement with the HC is not binding, thus resulting in exploitation and value hardly being derived from the relationship.

In addition to the determinants of relationship quality identified from the literature, culture and mutual goal were suggested based on the research participants' opinions. Research participants emphasised that their cultural heritage has been eroded by the operations and behaviour of the OPC. They established a link between the OPC acknowledging their culture and achieving success in the region. This is consistent with Douglas and Dubois's (1977) finding emphasising the importance of cultural influence on people and the need to consider such influence when formulating strategy. Likewise, research participants felt the need for the OPC to agree mutually with the HC on any decision or strategy that would affect the region. Hence, the research participants perceived mutual benefit, communication, control mutuality, culture and mutual goal as the key determinants of relationship. This answers research objective three (RO 3).

The fourth research objective (RO 4) was answered as research participants gave their respective opinion on the outcome of effective relationship quality between the two parties. They described trust, satisfaction and commitment as the key outcomes of an effective relationship quality. They emphasised the importance of these constructs as relationship quality outcomes, and how the constructs are interlinked as opposed to being considered as individual constructs.

7.3 Research contribution

The success of the existing research studies on relationship quality is shifting towards the study of new relationship types (Athanasopoulou, 2009). The concept of "relationship" is one that includes relationship parties who are not necessarily an organisation or individuals (Huang and Chiu, 200), or where the parties involved do not take on the traditional roles of a seller and buyer (Athanasopoulou, 2009). Osobajo and Moore (2017), and

Athanasopoulou (2009) recommend that researchers should look at new relationship types between parties that may not be organisations or individuals using qualitative approaches to analyse the quality of relationship, while Vieira *et al* (2008) suggest that relationship quality constructs could be varied depending on the research context. Consequently, this research study extended the concept of relationship and relationship quality in several aspects.

First, this research study was the first of its kind to develop a detailed and comprehensive framework of relationship quality in the context of a business-to-community (B2Com) relationship in a unique commercial context. It draws from the literature in four main areas: interpersonal relationships (i.e. relationship between individuals), business-to-business relationships (B2B), business-to-customer relationships (B2C), and customer-to-business relationships (C2B).

Second, existing research on the constructs of relationship quality have either analysed data deductively (i.e. by applying existing theories and literature to a specific research context (Hennink *et al.*, 2010)) or inductively (i.e. moving from data to the development of framework (Kerlinger, 1986)) using a statistical or mathematical analytical tool (Osobajo and Moore, 2017). This is the first to employ both the deductive and inductive reasoning approaches using content analysis to inform the research final framework. This is because the two approaches give a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the concept of relationship quality within the context of a business-to-community relationship. As shown in figure 6.2, certain determinants of relationship quality (i.e. culture and mutual goal) were identified by research participants (Vieira *et al.*, 2008).

Third, this research study extended the application of relationship quality frameworks that were conducted in a developed economic environment such as the United Kingdom and United States of America (Osobajo and Moore, 2017) to a developing economic environment such as Nigeria through the replication of these frameworks and re-testing their constructs

and propositions. This is consistent with Vieira *et al's* (2008) suggestion that additional constructs may need to be included in order to acknowledge the context of the current study. Likewise, Collins (1985) stated that replication of previous or existing studies is imperative for the generation of knowledge, while Hubbard and Armstrong (1994) concluded that replication is the key to generalisation for the advancement of science. Even though researchers have made adequate and robust effort in developing these frameworks, the fact that these studies were carried out in a developed economy suggests scope for further replication and extension studies. In addition to mutual benefit, communication and control mutuality, this research study adds to the body of knowledge by confirming that culture and mutual goal are important determinants of relationship quality within the NOGI context.

7.4 Limitations and direction for future research

Deciding on the research design for this research study resulted in certain trade-offs, which could limit the research findings.

The aim of this research study is to develop a framework that is capable of enhancing the quality of relationship between the OPC and HC, but with specific focus on the NOGI. In doing so, this research study offers a framework that draws from the literature reviewed and the data gathered. The research study analysis supported the connection and interlink that exists between the determinants of relationship quality and dimensions of relationship quality based on the samples surveyed. However, caution should be taken in generalising the research study results to other sectors within the NDRN. This research study acknowledged that it is likely impossible to develop a framework that is appropriate for all sectors because of the following reasons:

1. The process followed in drawing the sample size for the research study produced results that were specific to the oil and gas industry. This is because research participants interviewed were selected based on their perceived knowledge of the relationship between OPC

and HC within the NDRN, which may not be applicable to other sectors.

2. The use of content analysis as the most appropriate method for analysing the data collected through interviews in order to understand and explore people's views and opinions on the quality of relationship may not be applicable to other sectors.

Hence, further refinement and modification of the constructs proposed by this research study may be necessary in order to take into account the industry specific context of future research studies. Future research studies should consider using other sampling approaches such as a stratified systematic sampling which would divide the community population into the various groups of actor identified within this study, and each group of actor sampled using a systematic approach in order to obtain a reliable sample size.

Furthermore, this research study supported the relevance of the various relationship quality constructs suggested by previous scholars as used in this research study framework, and expanded the constructs to include culture and mutual goal and found that the constructs were all valid and reliable. However, the research propositions and interrelationships among the various constructs that made up this framework might not be the only propositions and interrelationships that uphold the relationship. Further research could explore other important propositions and/or interrelationships among the various constructs within the framework that may provide new insights to the framework developed in this research study. This is because the research samples selected for this research study come from the community only. Hence, future research studies should consider drawing samples from either the OPC or both the OPC and HC in order to have diverse opinions and views from research participants and facilitate investigation of the interdependence of the relationship, which will likely inform new relationship quality constructs.

In addition, it would be worthwhile if future research in the field of study could look into the optimum order in which the different constructs and/or

elements identified within the framework would be effective in enhancing and/or improving a B2Com relationship. However, the order suggested by the findings of this research study flow from the interrelationships between the various elements and constructs that made up the study framework. Also, the findings suggested a linear relationship between trust, satisfaction and commitment.

7.5 Research recommendations and conclusion

The aim of this section is to conclude with a series of recommendations from the study, especially with regards to how the study will benefit different stakeholders.

7.5.1 The local community

An important outcome of this research study is the need for the local community to ensure unity among its people. This involves the local community forming a complete and harmonious whole, especially in the area of relating with external bodies such as the national government and international oil and gas companies.

7.5.2 International oil and gas companies in Nigeria

This research study reflects on the various actors within the community. It will be useful for the international oil and gas companies in Nigeria to gain adequate and appropriate insight and understanding into the role(s) played by each of these actors within the Niger Delta region (NDRN). By adopting the stakeholder approach, this research study has identified the various actors within the community existing in the NDRN. Even if the research outcomes in this respect cannot be generalised, it does give an insight and basis for the need to understand how and why actors within a specific stakeholder group can influence a relationship building processes. In addition, the findings of this research study lay emphasis on the need for the international oil and gas companies in Nigeria to take cognisance of the community culture.

7.5.3 The national government

This research study emphasised on the importance of mutual goal among the various stakeholders within the region. Of great concern is how goals, strategies, and policies that affect the region are made without the knowledge and consent of all the stakeholders involved. This often results in violence and conflicts in the region. It is therefore imperative for the national government to ensure appropriate and adequate participation of all the stakeholders during policy formulation in order to obtain a violence and conflict free region, which will enhance the nation's revenue, region development and quality of relationship of the national government with the other stakeholders.

7.5.4 Practitioners

This research study also enhances the understanding of practitioners (i.e. public relation officers) working within the Nigerian oil and gas industry (NOGI) and other sectors on how to develop and maintain their relationship with the communities they operate within. It is obvious that as oil producing companies experience difficulty in the exploration and production of crude oil, establishing and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship will become more of a priority. In addition, oil producing companies will be able to exploit crude oil resources that were previously uneconomical due to the accessibility of such resources. Practitioners need to work with various actors within the community to develop a mutually beneficial relationship that meets the needs of all relational parties. Effort should be made in creating a mutual goal atmosphere and understanding the culture of the people in order to develop a better relationship with the community.

Having considered different relationship quality frameworks, this research study concludes that the developed theoretical framework is a tool capable of enhancing and/or improving the quality of relationship between two or more relationship parties in a business-to-community relationship.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Summary of Definitions of Relationship Marketing (Agariya & Singh, 2011)

Author(s)	Definition
Hammarkvist et al. (1982)	It comprises all the activities by the firm to build, maintain, and develop customer relations.
Berry et al. (1983)	It is all about attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships in multiservice organizations.
Levitt (1983)	It can be viewed as a process consisting of five stages, namely awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment, and dissolution.
Hallen & Wiedersheim-Paul (1984)	It can be defined as a process that consists of four stages, namely pre-contact, initial interaction, development, and mature relationship.
Jackson (1985)	It refers to the marketing activities oriented toward strong, lasting relationships with individual accounts.
Turnbull & Wilson (1989)	It is defined as the formation of long-term buyer-seller relationships through the creation of structural and social bonds between companies.
Gronroos (1990)	It is concerned with the establishment, maintenance, and enhancement of relationships with customers and other stakeholders at a profit so that the objectives of all the parties involved are met. This is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises.
Gummesson (1990)	It can be viewed as the building, maintenance, and liquidation of networks and interactive relationships between the supplier and the customer, often with long-term implications.
Berry & Parasuraman (1991)	It is defined as a process of attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships.
Christopher et al. (1991)	It is viewed as having the dual focus of getting and keeping customers.
Pathmarajah (1991)	It is the process whereby the seller and the buyer join in a strong personal, professional, and mutually profitable relationship over time.
Shani & Chalasani (1991)	It attempts to involve and integrate customers, suppliers, and other infrastructural partners into a firm's developmental and marketing activities.
Webster (1992)	It is a process of understanding and managing profitable customer relationships by delivering superior customer value, service, and satisfaction.
Barney & Hansen (1994)	It is the activity in which routine development of prescriptive behaviour has been linked to decreased transaction costs resulting from bargaining and monitoring behaviour, increased innovation, building positional advantage, and enhancing performance.
R. Morgan & Hunt (1994)	It is defined as all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges.
Evans & Laskin	It is defined as a process that includes inputs (understanding

(1994)	customer expectations, building service partnerships, empowering employees, and total quality management), outcomes (customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, increased profitability, and quality products), and ongoing assessment (customer feedback, integrating relationship marketing into the firm's strategic planning framework).
Cravens & Piercy (1994)	It is the understanding, explanation, and management of the ongoing collaborative business relationship between suppliers and customers.
Matthyssens & Van den Bulte (1994)	It is not directly aimed at immediate transactions but is based on building, supporting, and extending customer relationships.
Gummesson (1994)	It is a process of gathering information about customers and then deciding with whom to develop a dialogue; it allows buyers and sellers to work together in joint problem solving, easing the pressures on the buyer. It uses customer retention as a measure of marketing success in place of market share.
Sheth & Parvatiyar (1995)	It is about developing close interactions with selected customers, suppliers, and competitors for value creation through cooperative and collaborative effort.
Cravens (1995)	It is the strategy for business organizations to enter into long-term associations with customers and to counter the effects of increased customer demands and intensifying global competition.
Perrien & Ricard (1995)	It is defined as an asymmetrical and personalized marketing process that takes place in the long run, results in some bilateral benefits, and rests on an in-depth understanding of customer needs and characteristics.
Ravald & Gronroos (1996)	Its main goal is focusing on relations and the maintenance of relations between the company and the actors in its micro-environment with the prime objective to be first and foremost to create customer loyalty so that a stable, mutually profitable, and long-term relationship can be enhanced.
Takala & Uusitalo (1996)	It has its main stress on establishing, strengthening, and developing customer relations while keeping the focus on the profitable commercialization of customer relationships and the pursuit of individual and organizational objectives by long-term and enduring relationships with customers.
Tzokas & Saren (1997)	It is the process of planning, developing, and nurturing a relationship climate that will promote a dialogue between a firm and its customers that aims to imbue an understanding, confidence, and respect of each other's capabilities and concerns when enacting their role in the marketplace and in society.
Anton (1996)	It is a comprehensive business and marketing strategy that integrates technology, process, and all business activities around the customer.
Buttle (1996)	It is concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with strategically

	significant markets.
Paravatiyar (1996)	It is the process of cooperating with customers to improve marketing productivity through efficiency and effectiveness.
Jolson (1997)	It is a strategic approach developed by a supplier willing to establish long-term and mutually profitable relationships with its customers.
Bendapudi & Berry (1997)	It is centred on understanding and satisfying consumer needs.
Ballantyne (1997)	It is an emergent disciplinary framework for creating, developing, and sustaining exchanges of value between the parties involved, whereby exchange relationships evolve to provide continuous and stable links in the supply chain.
O'Malley et al. (1997)	It involves the identification, specification, initiation, maintenance, and (where appropriate) dissolution of long-term relationships with key customers and other parties through mutual exchange, fulfilment of promises, and adherence to relationship norms in order to satisfy the objectives and enhance the experience of the parties concerned.
Morris et al. (1998)	It is a strategic orientation adopted by both the buyer and seller organizations that represents a commitment to long-term, mutually beneficial collaboration.
Srivastava et al. (1998)	It addresses all aspects of identifying customers, creating customer knowledge, building customer values, and shaping customers' perceptions of an organization and its products.
Gummesson (1999)	It is marketing based on interaction within networks of relationships.
Harker (1999)	It is a process of identifying and establishing, maintaining and enhancing, and when necessary terminating relationships with customers (and other parties) so that the objectives of all parties regarding economic and other variables are met. This can be achieved through a mutual making and fulfilling of promises.
Galbreath & Rogers (1999)	It is about the management of technology, processes, information resources, and people needed to create an environment that allows a business to take a 360-degree view of its customers.
Brown (2000)	It is the key competitive strategy that business organizations need to stay focused on the needs of customers and to integrate a customer-facing approach throughout the organization.
Chatterjee & Prasad (2000)	It is a discipline that focuses on automating and improving the business processes associated with managing customer relationships in the area of sales, management, customer service, and support.
Payne (2000)	It is concerned with the creation, development, and enhancement of individualized customer relationships with carefully targeted customers and customer groups, resulting in maximizing their total customer lifetime value.

Rust et al. (2000)	It is the process whereby the firm selects its best customers and develops stronger, deeper, and more intimate relationships with them, creating customer equity.
Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001)	It is a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer.
Bryan (2002)	It is the dynamic process of managing a customer-company relationship such that customers elect to continue mutually beneficial commercial exchanges and are dissuaded from participating in exchanges that are unprofitable to the company.
Langford-Wood & Salter (2002)	It is all about establishing long-term relationships with customers and thereby improves customer retention and profitability for the company.
Rigby et al. (2002)	It is the process of addressing attractive customers, decreasing the cost of serving customers, and increasing customer retention by providing tailored offerings to existing and new customers.
Rao & Perry (2002)	It is not a paradigm shift but rather an appropriate marketing approach when management considers product/service, customer, and organization factors.
Anderson & Kerr (2002)	It is a comprehensive approach for creating, maintaining, and expanding customer relationships.
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002)	It is a meta-construct involving several key dimensions, reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers.
Gummesson (2002)	It is marketing based on relationships, networks, and interaction, recognizing that marketing is embedded in the total management of the networks of the selling organization, the market, and society. It is directed toward long-term win-win relationships with individual customers, and value is jointly created between the parties involved.
Sharp (2003)	It can be defined as a process consisting of four stages, which include interaction, analysis, learning, and planning.
Greenberg (2003)	It is an enterprise-wide mindset, mantra, and set of business processes and policies that are designed to acquire, retain, and service customers.
Henning et al. (2003)	It focuses on allocating resources to supportive business activities in order to gain competitive advantages and on managing the relationship between a company and its current and prospective customer base as a key to success.
Kincadid (2003)	It is the strategic use of information, processes, technology, and people to manage the customer's relationship with the company across the whole customer life cycle.
Kotorov (2003)	It is a strategy, not a solution, and can provide enormous competitive advantage if implemented in a cooperative environment.
Chen & Popovich	It is a combination of people, processes, and technology that seeks to understand a company's customers. It is

(2003)	an integrated approach to managing relationships by focusing on customer retention and relationship development.
Kotler & Armstrong (2004)	It is the overall process of building and maintaining profitable customer relationships by delivering superior customer value and satisfaction.
Zablah et al. (2004)	It is an ongoing process that involves the development and leveraging of market intelligence for the purpose of building and maintaining a profit-maximizing portfolio of customer relationships.
N. A. Morgan et al. (2004)	It is the combination of processes that reflect the firm's skills at systematically and routinely establishing, maintaining, upgrading, and reestablishing beneficial relationships with customers.
Bolton (2004)	It is a technique to underpin organizational performance improvement in improving customer retention, satisfaction, and value.
Lambert (2004)	It is being viewed as strategic, process oriented, cross-functional, and value-creating for buyer and seller.
Arnett & Badrinarayanan (2005)	It is all about the ability of business organizations to identify, develop, and manage cooperative relationships with key customers characterized by trust, relationship commitment, and communication.
Boulding et al. (2005)	It not only builds relationships and uses systems to collect and analyze data, but it also includes the integration of all of these activities across the firm, linking these activities to both firm and customer value, extending this integration along the value chain, and developing the capability of integrating these activities across the network of firms that collaborate to generate customer value while creating shareholder value for the firm.
Sin et al. (2005)	It is a comprehensive strategy and process that enables an organization to identify, acquire, retain, and nurture profitable customers by building and maintaining long-term relationships with them.
Hoots (2005)	It means developing a comprehensive picture of customer needs, expectations, and behaviours and managing those factors to affect business performance.
Payne & Frow (2005)	It is about enhanced opportunities to use data and information to understand customers and co-create value with them. This requires a cross-functional integration of processes, people, operations, and marketing capabilities that is enabled through information, technology, and applications.
Ehigie (2006)	It is based on the premise that maintaining good relationships with customers is essential for business continuity. Business begins and ends with customers; it begins with identifying consumers needs and ends with satisfying them.
Peng & Wang (2006)	It can be defined as all marketing activities directed toward building customer loyalty (keeping and winning customers) by providing value to all parties involved in the relational exchanges.

Blery & Michalakopoulos (2006)	It is a strategy that can help companies to build long-lasting relationships with their customers and increase profits through the correct management system and the application of customer-focused strategies.
Mishra & Li (2008)	It refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationship exchanges.
Meng & Elliott (2008)	It is a strategy for retaining customers in a highly competitive environment.
Ramani & Kumar (2008)	It is a process for developing innovation capability and providing a lasting competitive advantage.
Lambert (2010)	It is being viewed as strategic, process oriented, cross-functional, and value-creating for buyer and seller and as a means of achieving superior financial performance.

Appendix 2
Summary of Definitions of Relationship Quality (summarised from the literature)

Authors	Relationship Quality Definition
Gummesson 1987	Is a concept which has been formed to stress that skilled handling of relations between buyer and seller is part of customer-perceived quality
Crosby 1991; Crosby et al. 1990	Means that the customer is able to rely on the salesperson's integrity and has confidence in the salesperson's future performance because the level of past performance has been consistently satisfactory" i.e. ability to reduce perceived uncertainty
Storbacka et al. 1994	Considered as a link that brings together the concepts of service quality, customer satisfaction, relationship strength, relationship longevity and relationship profitability
Henning-Thurau and Klee 1997	Is the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfil the needs of the customer associated with that relationship
Leuthesser 1997	Is a composite measure including both buyer satisfaction and buyer trust
Smith 1998a	Is a higher-order construct comprised of a variety of positive relationship outcomes that reflect the overall strength of a relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties
Jap et al. 1999	Is the evaluation of various aspects of relationship—attitudinal, process, and future expectations
Johnson 1999	Describes the overall depth and climate of the interfirm relationship
Henning-Thurau 2000	Is seen as a central determinant of customer retention
Holmlund 2001	Is the cognitive evaluation of business interactions by key individuals in the dyad, comparatively with potential alternative interactions
Hewett et al. 2002	Defined as a buyer's level of trust and commitment to a seller firm
Woo and Cha 2002	Is the customer perceptions and evaluations of individual service employees' communication and behaviour, such as respect, courtesy, warmth, empathy, and helpfulness
Henning-Thurau et al. 2002	Is a meta-construct composed of several key components reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers
Wong and Sohal 2002	Means customer is able to rely on the service provider's integrity and has confidence in the service provider's future performance because the level of past performance has been consistently satisfactory.
Keating et al 2003	Is the quality of interaction between a firm and its customers and such is interpreted in terms of accumulated value
Walter et al 2003	It is a multidimensional construct which considers relationship quality as a higher-order construct including trust and satisfaction
Fynes et al 2004	relationship quality as the degree to which both parties in

	a relationship are engaged in an active, long-term working relationship and operationalise the construct using indicators of trust, adaptation, communication and co-operation
Lages et al 2005	In an exporting setting, relationship quality refers to relationships developed beyond national boundaries
Hennings-Thurau and Klee 1997; Bennett and Barkensjo 2005	I the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfil the needs of the customer
Smith 1998b; De Wulf et al. 2001; Huang and Chiu 2006	Is an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties based on a history of success or unsuccessful encounters or events
Carr 2006	It determines the beliefs held by the parties in the relationship and has an effect upon the future actions taken by each party to the relationship
Ndubisi 2006	Is a bundle of intangible values which augment products or services and result in an expected interchange between buyers and sellers
Golicic and Mentzer (2006)	Is the degree of closeness or strength of the relationship among organizations
Dorsch et al. 1998; Smith 1998a; Van Bruggen et al. 2005; Ulaga and Eggert 2006; Papassapa and Miller 2007	Is consider a higher-order construct that encompasses trust, satisfaction, commitment, minimal opportunism, customer orientation, and ethical profile.

Appendix 3
Relationship Quality Dimensions (Athanasopoulou, 2009)

Author(s)	Relationship Quality Dimension
Dwyer and Oh, 1987	Satisfaction, Minimal opportunism and Trust
Crosby et al. 1990	Satisfaction and Trust
Lagace et al. 1991	Trust and Satisfaction
Moorman et al., 1992	Perceived quality and Commitment
Han et al. 1993	Trust and Satisfaction
Johnson et al. 1993	Satisfaction, Cooperation and Relationship stability
Storbacka et al. 1994	Satisfaction, Commitment, Bonds and Trust
Wray et al. 1994	Satisfaction and Trust
Morgan and Hunt, 1994	Trust and Commitment
Kumar et al. 1995	Conflict, Trust and Commitment
Bejou et al. 1996	Satisfaction and Trust
Wilson and Jantrania, 1996	Trust, Satisfaction, Bond
Menon et al. 1996	Conflict
Henning-Thurau and Klee, 1997	Trust, Commitment and Quality perception
Leuthesser, 1997	Satisfaction and Trust
Doney and Cannon, 1997	Trust
Dorsch et al. 1998	Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment and Opportunism
Smith, 1998a	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Smith 1998b	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Selnes, 1998	Trust and Satisfaction
Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998	Trust and Commitment
Jap et al. 1999	Trust, Conflict, Disengagement and Continuity
Hopkinson and Hogarth, 1999	Power equilibrium, Sense of unity, Expectations of future and Anticipation of trouble
Baker et al., 1999	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Johnson, 1999	Trust, Fairness and Absence of opportunism
Garbarino and Johnson, 1999	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Henning-Thurau 2000	Trust, Product-related quality perception, Emotional and calculative and commitment
Naude and Buttle, 2000	Trust, Satisfaction, Coordination, Power and Profit
Boles et al. 2000	Trust and Satisfaction
Goodman and Dion, 200	Commitment
de Ruyeter et al. 2001	Trust and Commitment
Hewett et al. 2002	Trust and Commitment
Woo and Cha, 2002	Trust and Satisfaction
Henning-Thurau et al., 2002	Satisfaction and Commitment
Friman et al. 2002	Trust and Commitment
Lang and Colgate, 2003	Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment, Social bonds and Conflict
Keating et al. 2003	Trust, Effort, Value, Understanding and Communication
Walter et al. 2003	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Roberts et al., 2003	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Sanzo et al. 2003	Trust, Conflict and Value of relationship
Woo and Ennew, 2004	Cooperation, Adaptation and Atmosphere

Fynes et al. 2004	Trust, Adaptation, Communication and Cooperation
Venetis and Ghauri 2004	Commitment
Lages et al. 2005	Amount of information sharing, Communication quality, Long-term relationship orientation and Satisfaction
Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005	Trust, Benevolence and Commitment
Farrelly and Quester, 2005	Trust and Commitment
Van Bruggen et al. 2005	Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment and Conflict
Huntley, 2006	Trust and Commitment
Ramaseshan et al. 2006	Satisfaction and Commitment
Ulaga and Eggert, 2006	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Leonidou et al., 2006	Adaptation, Communication, Commitment, Cooperation, Satisfaction, Trust and Understanding
Huang and Chiu, 2006	Trust and Satisfaction
Carr, 2006	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Lin and Ding, 2006	Trust and Satisfaction
Papassapa and Miller, 2007	Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment and Perceived service quality

Appendix 4
Relationship Quality Constructs (summarised from the literature)

Authors	Method	Relationship type	Industry	Constructs
Dwyer, Schurr and Oh 1987	Survey and random sample	Manufacturers and dealers i.e. sellers and buyers	USA Automobile	Trust, satisfaction, minimal opportunity
Crosby et al 1990	Survey i.e. questionnaire and random sample	Sales people - retail customers	USA life insurance	Trust, satisfaction
Lagace et al 1991	Telephone request and mailed questionnaires	physicians and Phamaceutical sales people	Business	Trust, satisfaction
Moorman et al 1992	Survey i.e. questionnaire and convenience sample	Providers and users of market research e.g internal marketing manager & researcher	Marketing research	Trust, satisfaction
Han et al 1993	Survey i.e. questionnaire and convenience sample	buyers and suppliers e.g Purchasing agents and sales people	Industrial relationship	Trust, satisfaction
Johnson et al 1993	Survey i.e. mailed questionnaire and convenience sample	Japanese distributors of U.S. manufactured consumer products and U.S. suppliers	Consumer goods	Satisfaction, cooperation, stability
Wray et al 1994	Telephone survey and random sample interview	Financial intermediary and customers of financial service intermediaries	Financial service	Trust, satisfaction
Morgan and Hunt 1994	In-depth on-site interview for preliminary study, questionnaire and random sample	Retailers and their customers	Automobile	Trust, commitment
Zineldin, 1995	Survey i.e. mailed questionnaire and random sample	Banks and corporate customers	Financial service	N/A
Kumar et al 1995	Survey and random sample	Large manufacturers and small regional new car dealers	Automobile	Trust, commitment, willingness to invest
Bejou et al 1996	Survey i.e. questionnaire, random sample and telephone interviews	Sales people and retail customers	Financial service	Trust, satisfaction
Menon et al 1996	Mailed survey letter and questionnaire	Intraorganizational relationships	Busines/ organisation	N/A
Leuthesser 1997	Questionnaire and random sample	Supplier to buyer (B2B)	various businesses	Trust, satisfaction
Doney and Cannon 1997	Mailed questionnaire and random sample	Supplier to buyer	Manufacturing	Trust
Gwinner et al 1998	In-depth interviews judgement sample and Survey and random sample	Service provider and customers in	various industries	N/A

Dorsch et al 1998	Mailed questionnaire and random sample	Vendors and purchasing executives	Purchasing	Trust, satisfaction, commitment, opportunism, ethics
Smith 1998a	Survey, random sample	Purchasing professionals and sales representatives	domestic market	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Smith 1998b	Survey, random sample	buyer-seller relationship	domestic market	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Selnes 1998	Prior telephone invitation and survey i.e questionnaire and random sample	Food producer and its customers	Cafeterias and Restaurants/ food supply	Trust, satisfaction
Bowen and Shoemaker 1998	survey i.e questionnaire and random sample	Hotels and their guests	hotel industry	Trust, commitment
Jap et al 1999	In-depth interviews and interaction data were obtained from four key informants	Buyers-sellers	Retail firms	Trust, Continuity
Baker et al 1999	Survey and convenience sample	Suppliers and resellers	Channel: various industries	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Johnson 1999	Survey i.e. questionnaire and convenience sample	Suppliers and distributors (buyer-seller)	Industrial machinery and equipment distribution	Trust, fairness
Garbarino and Johnson 1999	Survey i.e. questionnaire and random sample of	Service providers and consumers	customer-firm	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Henning-Thurau 2000	Face-to-face questionnaire survey and random sample	Customers and manufacturers	Electronic	Trust, commitment, quality
Naude and Buttle 2000	Questionnaire	Executives in various industries and their suppliers (B-to-B)	Business	Trust, satisfaction, coordination, power
Boles et al 2000	Survey i.e. questionnaire and random sample	Business to business	Business	Trust, satisfaction
Scanlan and McPhail 2000	Exploratory i.e. in-depth interview and descriptive research i.e. survey and convenient sampling	Business travellers and hotel receptionists	Hospitality	Satisfaction
Hibbard et al 2001	Mailed questionnaire	Manufacturers and their independent dealers	Market channel	Trust, commitment
Goodman and Dion 2001	Mailed questionnaire	Distributor-manufacturer	Industrial distribution channel	Commitment
De Ruyeter et al 2001	Indepth interview and questionnaire	Business to business	Technology	Trust, commitment
Hewett et al 2002	Questionnaire and convenient sample	buyer-seller	Industrial	N/A
Woo and Cha 2002	Questionnaire	Service provider i.e. hotels and guests	Tourism/hotel	Trust, satisfaction

Henning-Thurau et al 2002	Questionnaire	Customers-services business	Service business	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Wong and Sohal 2002a	Questionnaire	Department store and retail shoppers	Retail	N/A
Wong and Sohal 2002b	Questionnaire	Employee and company	Retail	Trust, satisfaction, commitment, quality
Friman et al 2002	Case study	Business to business i.e. service firms and international partners	International business	Trust, commitment
Lang and Colgate 2003	Stratified probability sampling and questionnaire	Financial service providers (banks) and online retail customers	Information technology	Trust, satisfaction, commitment, bond
Keating et al 2003	Focus groups and an online survey and convenient sampling	Online retailing	Online retail	Trust, communication, understanding, value
Walter et al 2003	Supplier-customer	Manufacturing supplier and purchasing professional, various industries	Various industries	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Roberts et al 2003	Questionnaire	Service firms and their customers	Various service industries	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Sanzo et al 2003	Questionnaire	Buyer-seller i.e. Industrial firms and suppliers	Industrial	Trust, conflict, value
Woo and Ennew 2004	Questionnaire	B-to-B relationships	Professional services (consulting engineering services)	Adaptation, cooperation
Fynes et al 2004	Mailed questionnaire and convenience sampling	Supply chain relationship	Manufacturing	Trust, communication, adaptation, cooperation
Venetis and Ghauri 2004	Semi-structured interview and questionnaire, convenience sample	Advertising agencies and business customers (products and services)	Advertising	Commitment
Lages et al 2005	Survey i.e. questionnaire and convenience sample	Exporters - importers	Export market	Satisfaction, communication
Bennett and Barkensjo 2005	Survey i.e. interview and questionnaire and convenience sample	Charities and their beneficiaries	Charity	Trust, commitment
Farrelly and Quester 2005	Survey i.e. interview and questionnaire and convenience sample	Football teams (Australian Football League) and their sponsors	Sport	Trust, commitment
Van Bruggen et al 2005	Survey i.e. mailed questionnaire convenience sample	B-to-B relationships Professional painters (owners/heads of painting firms) and distributors of paints	Channel distribution	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, conflict

Huntley 2006	Telephone survey and convenience sampling	Buyer-seller	Technology	Trust, commitment
Athanasopoulou 2006	Case study, indepth interview and document review	Corporate customers and financial service providers (leasing services)	Corporate financial service	N/A
Park and Deitz 2006	Survey, convenience sample	Automobile manufacturers and their salespeople	Automobile	Satisfaction
Ramaseshan et al 2006	Survey i.e. questionnaire and random sample	Department stores and their tenants	Distribution channel	Satisfaction, commitment
Ulagu and Eggert 2006	Depth-interview and mailed questionnaire	Industrial purchasing managers and vendors - various industries	Manufacturing	Trust, commitment, satisfaction
Leonidou et al 2006	Random i.e. questionnaire and systematic sample	US exporters and importer	Industrial export	Trust, commitment, satisfaction, cooperation, communication
Carr 2006	Interview	IS departments and IS users	Information systems	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Ndubisi 2006	Survey i.e. questionnaire and convenience sample	Banks and retail customers	Banking	Trust, satisfaction, commitment
Naudé, P, Ashnai, B, Chaharsooghi, K, & Perzon, H 2007	Questionnaire	Manager to manager	Business to business	N/A
Papassapa and Miller 2007	Mail and online survey; convenience sample	Business to business	Courier Delivery services	N/A
Prinsloo, M, Bäckström, L, & Salehi-Sangari, E 2007	Internal mail system questionnaire	Inter-functional	Small-medium size marketer	N/A
Shabbir, H, Palihawadana, D, & Thwaites, D 2007	Semi-structured interview			N/A
Beatson, A, Lings, I, & Gudergan, S 2008	Self-completed questionnaire	Business and leisure travellers	Tourism	Satisfaction, trust, and commitment
Ibrahim, H, & Najjar, F 2008	Questionnaire	Retailer-customer	Retail	N/A
Kilburn, A, & Kilburn, B 2008	Online questionnaire	internal customers and suppliers	organisation	N/A
Skarmeas, D, & Robson, M 2008	Mailed questionnaire	Importers and foreign suppliers	International business	N/A
Hsin Hsin, C, & Po Wen, K 2009	questionnaire, case study and interview			satisfaction, trust, and commitment
Morry, M, & Kito, M 2009	Questionnaire	self-friend relationship	interpersonal	N/A

Vieira, AL 2009	Questionnaire	Business to business	Hotel	N/A
Vesel, P. and Zabkar, V., 2010	Telephone interviews	Retail relationship	Retail	Trust, commitment and satisfaction
Knobloch, L.K. and Knobloch-Fedders, L.M., 2010	Questionnaire	Actor-partner interdependence	Couple	N/A
Al-alak, B.A., 2010	Questionnaire	N/A	Health and fitness setting	N/A
Canevello, A. and Crocker, J., 2010	Questionnaire	Interpersonal relationship	Human relationship	N/A
Cannière, M, Pelsmacker, P, & Geuens, M 2010	Questionnaire	Customer-firm	Retail	N/A
Čater, T. and Čater, B., 2010	Email and web based questionnaire.	Business-to-business	Manufacturing	N/A
Morry, M, Reich, T, & Kito, M 2010	Questionnaire	Self- versus partner	Human relationship	trait, perception,
Park, J.E et al 2010	Questionnaire		Industrial selling	N/A
Barry, J, & Doney, P 2011	Exploratory research, pretesting, and final survey administration	Suppliers and retailer	Industrial service marketing	Satisfaction, trust, and commitment
Clark, M., Vorhies, D. and Bentley, J., 2011	Online questionnaire	physician and the pharmaceutical sales representative	Medical marketing	Relationship benefits, relationship investment, relational dependences
Gentzler, A et al 2011	On-line questionnare	Parental relationship	Parenting	Communication
Hunt, K, Brimble, M, & Freudenberg, B 2011	Questionnaire	Financial planners and clients	Financial sector	N/A
Keating, B.W., Alpert, F., Kriz, A. and Quazi, A., 2011	Online questionnaire	Customer to business	Online banking service	Service delivery, loyalty
Liang, T, Ho, Y, Li, Y, & Turban, E 2011	Questionnaire	User's social sharing and social shopping	E-commerce	N/A
Petrican, R, et al 2011	Questionnaire	Partner-couple		N/A
Weigel, D.J., Brown, C. and O'Riordan, C.K., 2011	Questionnaire	Individuals in romantic relationships		N/A
Vikas, G 2011	Structured questionnaire	Customers and service providers	Telecoms	N/A
Zhang, Y et al 2011	Questionnaire	Information systems professionals and online customer	Online	N/A

Chu, Z. and Wang, Q., 2012	Questionnaire	Company-third party logistics providers	Supply chain	N/A
Ndubisi, N et al 2012	Questionnaire	Retail banking and customer	Retail banking	N/A
Vidal, D 2012	Questionnaire	Supplier-retailer	Industrial distribution contex	N/A
Yen, C, Liu, L, Tsai, F, & Lai, C 2012	Questionnaire	Life insurance service provider and customer		N/A
Zimmerman, K, & Roberts, C 2012	Questionnaire	Couple	Marriage relationship	N/A
Ahamed, A, & Skallerud, K 2013	Questionnaires	Business to business.	Garment-exporting firms	N/A
Bellavance, F., Landry, S. and Schiehl, E., 2013	Questionnaire	Superior-manager relationship	Organisation	N/A
Brouer, R.L et al 2013	Questionnaire	Unit leader-staff personnel relationship	Academic/school	N/A
Kühne, B., Gellynck, X. and Weaver, R.D., 2013	Questionnaire	Relationship between chain members	Food chain	N/A
Kang, B, Oh, S, & Sivadas, E 2013	Face-to-face interview and questionnaire	Business	Food	N/A
Leonidou, C.N et al 2013	questionnaire	exporter-importer relationship	international business	cooperation, communication, trust, and commitment
Lin, S 2013	Questionnaires	Customers and their service provider		Trust and satisfaction
Marquardt, A.J., 2013	Questionnaire	Buyer-seller relationships	Industrial	N/A
Omilion-Hodges, L.M. and Baker, C.R., 2013	Questionnaire	Individual-leader	Organisation/work place	N/A
Rafiq, M., Fulford, H. and Lu, X., 2013	Online questionnaire	retailer and online grocery shoppers	Internet retailing/e-grocery	Satisfaction, commitment, trust
Rašković, M et al 2013	email and web based questionnaire.	buyer-supplier relationships	industrial procurement	N/A
Tareque Aziz, M. and Azila Mohd Noor, N., 2013	Questionnaire	Retailer-supplier relationship	Retail	N/A
Tung, B, & Carlson, J 2013	Questionnaire	Retail banking and customer	Banking industry	N/A
Tripathi, G. and Dave, K., 2013	Questionnaire	Customer-retail	Retail	N/A
Ying-Pin, Y 2013	Questionnaire	Suppliers and retailers	Automobile industry	Commitment, cooperation, trust, satisfaction, coordination,

				adaptation
Akrout, H 2014	Semi-structured interview	Business to business		N/A
Al-Alak, B.A., 2014	Questionnaire	Banks-client		N/A
ATREK, B et al 2014	Semi-structured interview	Business to business i.e . Company & supplier	Supply chain	Service performance, service quality, product quality
Giota, K.G. and Kleftaras, G., 2014	Questionnaire	Facebook users	Online social media	N/A
Huang, Q., Davison, R.M. and Liu, H., 2014	Online interview, web link and questionnaire	Online customer - buyer	Online market/ buying	N/A
Lai, I.K.W., 2014	Questionnaire	Business to customer	Travel agency industry	Service quality and perceived value are antecedents of relationship quality
Lo, A.S.Y. and Im, H.H., 2014	Questionnaire and in-depth interviews	Hotel staff and customers	Hotel industry	N/A
Nguyen, T, & Nguyen, T 2014	Questionnaire	Business	Export	N/A
Subramony, M., 2014	Questionnaire	Firm-client	Business	N/A
Semrau, T, & Werner, A 2014	Interview	Network relationship	Business network	N/A
Uchino, B.N., Smith, T.W. and Berg, C.A., 2014	Questionnaire	spousal relationships	marriage relationship	N/A
Ahamed, A.J., Stump, R.L. and Skallerud, K., 2015	Questionnaires	Business to business	Exporting firms	N/A
Hoppner, J et al 2015	Mailed questionnaire	Business to business	Business	N/A
Itani, O.S. and Inyang, A.E., 2015	Questionnaire	Sales person to customer	Retail banking	N/A
Sheu, J.B., 2015	Face-to-face interview and questionnaire	Producer-dealer distribution channels	Distribution channels	N/A
Williams, P et al 2015	Questionnaires	Business/firm	Project management	N/A

Appendix 5

Interview Schedule

“Enhancing B2Com relationship quality: A research study investigating the oil producing company to host community relationship in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria”

The research study aims are:

1. To explore and understand the nature and quality of the relationship between the OPC and HC by considering the relationship elements, determinants of relationship quality, and dimensions of relationship quality as the basis of establishing and developing a successful relationship quality between the OPC and HC.
2. To develop a theoretical framework that is capable of enhancing the quality of the current relationship between the OPC and HC, but with specific focus on the NOGI.

All information collected during the study period will be kept strictly confidential until such time as you sign a release waiver. No publications or reports from this project will include identifying information on any participant without your signed permission, and after your review of the materials.

Interview Questions

1. What is your level of education or training?
2. Could you give the names of oil and gas companies operating in this region?
3. In what way, if any is the OPC involved with the HC in the NDR?
4. What will you consider as the outcome(s) resulting from this involvement?
5. What is your view about the effect or impact of this involvement on the bond between the parties?
6. In what way(s) has the HC participate in the activities of the OPC?
7. How will you describe the response of these parties to conflict and dispute in the region?

8. How would you describe the overall satisfaction of these parties involvement?
9. To what extent, if at all has the OPC contributed to this region?
10. How would you describe trust between these parties?
11. What do you think about how these parties communicate with each other?
12. What do you see as the most urgent problem to tackle in this region?

Appendix 6

RGU Research ethics and guidelines

Ethical conduct depends on:

1. Consideration of the impact of the research, including
 - ✓ The potential implications of research for subjects and participants
 - ✓ The potential implications of research for non-participants, and
 - ✓ The uses to which research can be put.

2. Guidance covering the treatment of participants, including
 - ✓ Informed consent
 - ✓ Confidentiality and anonymity (see section 3.3 below), and
 - ✓ Special consideration of vulnerable respondents

3. Academic considerations. Researchers are enjoined to
 - ✓ Maintain research of high quality
 - ✓ Display competence
 - ✓ Act responsibly towards others in their field, and
 - ✓ Advance their discipline

4. Guidance concerning research relationships. These include
 - ✓ The responsibilities of the researcher to the body commissioning the research,
 - ✓ Responsibilities to the university,
 - ✓ Commitments to fellow researchers, and
 - ✓ Integrity in dealing with subjects, participants and stakeholders.

Appendix 7

Consent form/request for interview participation

My name is Oluyomi A. Osobajo, a research scholar undertaking a PhD by research with Robert Gordon University Aberdeen, United Kingdom, where I am conducting research on 'Enhancing Relationship Quality in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Stakeholder and Risk Management Approach for Oil Producing Companies – (OPC) and their Host Communities – (HC) operating in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria – (NDRN)'. The study seeks to conduct a rigorous empirical evaluation and critical analysis on the relationship quality between the parties involved by taking into consideration the following objectives;

1. To fully understand the present situation of recurrent conflict in the region
2. To investigate the causes of conflict, nature and its impact on the relationship quality between OPC and their HC
3. To understand relationship quality and consider the concept in a business to community relationship (B2CR)

The interview will be conducted in accordance to the Robert Gordon University Research Ethics Policy which sole aim is "to establish and promote good ethical practice in the conduct of academic research" as it can be seen in the link below:

www.rgu.ac.uk/file/research-ethics-policy-pdf-146kb

This research will be of interest and help to policy makers, the host communities, and the oil and gas industry and to other stakeholders in the Nigerian oil and gas sector. You have been selected to participate in this research because of your expertise, and influence within the Nigerian oil and gas industry. I very much value your contribution to this study and assure you that your contribution will be treated in confidence. It will be used as anonymous statistical data for the purpose of this research only. I can be contacted at any time in other for you to show your interest on mobile number: +447553580294 or email address: o.a.osobajo@rgu.ac.uk