ABSU *Journal of Arts, Management, Education, Law and Social Sciences*.
Vol. 6&7; 001-009, 2016/2017 www.absujamelss.org

The Representation of Sexuality among Niger Delta Youths in Agary and Ezinwoke's Fictions

Onyechigoziri C.
Department of English Language and Literature, Abia State University,Uturu.

Abstract.
In recent times, Niger Delta writers have drawn connections between strange social outcomes and the region's complex crisis in the extant literature. While many scholars have churned out volumes on the causes, scope and implications of the crisis in the region, others have explored the complicity of the government at the national and international levels. However, not many have highlighted the emerging forms of deviant dispositions which have fossilised as popular culture, especially among youths in the Niger Delta region. Conventionally, popular culture has been engaged as tropes that are peculiar to entertainment and politics, thereby creating a gap in scholarship which this paper attempts to fill. Basically, the focus of this work is to illustrate how emerging social trends from the Niger Delta experience defy traditional nuances on gender, sexuality and other social variables. The arguments are hinged on the tenets of queer theory and the data drawn from fictional representations of trending dimensions of sexuality as tropes which are common among youths and emerging from the crisis in the Niger Delta region. The selected novels, Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* and Patience Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*, portray sexual romp which manifests in 'side-chickism', 'baby-mama trend', gang rape and sadistic sexual orgies as common tropes which have become a clog in the quest for an egalitarian society. This research is important for promoting the study of popular literature and expanding the frontiers of Niger Delta literature in the 21st Century.

Key words: popular culture/tropes, Niger Delta crisis, youth, sexuality and queer theory.
***Corresponding author:** *onyechikere@gmail.com*

Introduction

Literature, especially of any region or group, has always reflected socio-political, cultural or religious peculiarities in order to highlight social problems and recommend practical solutions. Thus, Niger Delta literature has continued to explore the dynamics of the crisis besetting the region. The Niger Delta region consists of oil producing states in the south-south region of Nigeria and includes Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Cross Rivers and Akwa Ibom States but politically includes other oil producing states as Abia State, Imo State and Ondo State. In other words, as Chinyere Nwahunanya avers, it covers the areas where there are confirmed petroleum deposits extracted by indigenous oil companies and foreign multinationals (xiv). In 1956, petroleum was first discovered in Oloibiri, in present-day Bayelsa State. Since then, other oil-rich locations in the Niger Delta have also been discovered, making the region one of the most active hubs of oil exploration in Africa. However, the region has been beset with diverse social, political, and environmental hazards connected to oil exploration practices that do not conform to global standards. The poor exploratory practices despoil the Niger Delta environment, thereby displacing the people physically and economically. Yet the massive resources from this region have been the mainstay of the Nigerian economy over the years. Consequently, people in the region believe that they have not benefitted enough in terms of social and economic infrastructures and some of them resort to violence while the government matches them with heavy military presence.

While many writers and critics have explored the political and economic implications of the crisis, others have analysed the environmental implications; but scholars are yet to significantly identify events, experiences or forms of social phenomena, especially social vices, that emanated from the crisis and are gradually becoming their culture. Hu Yang views culture

is evolutionary and proposes that globalisation and modern social transformation accelerate the flow of population, and mutual influences of all kinds of cultures destroy autonomous space for a nation's original culture (64). Yang's thesis is true in the Niger Delta context where certain original cultures subsisted before the discovery of oil in 1956 at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State. The spark of industrial activities in many Niger Delta communities culminated in conditions that altered original cultures and conventionalised new practices.

Some scholars have traced the armed conflicts in the region to 1966 when certain groups began to demand resource control and access to infrastructural privileges. For instance, Judith Asuni suggests that armed conflicts in the Niger Delta can be traced to 1966 when Isaac Adaka Boro formed the Niger Delta Volunteer Force to protest the inability of the Nigerian government to address the burning issues of the region. Asuni further explains that although the revolutionary group was crushed by the military government within 12 days, its persistent demands for greater autonomy and resource control by the region inspired the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) championed by Ken Saro-Wiwa (5). Ken Saro-Wiwa has been dubbed Africa's first environmental martyr. He was a Nigerian writer-activist, tried and executed along with eight of his Ogoni Kinsmen for a crime he did not commit. With the nightmarish event surrounding his death on the 10th of November 1995 and that not only drew attention to ecological degradation but also established international consciousness, the irreparable damage done to Ogoni farmland and fishing waters by the huge oil conglomerates, SPDC (Shell Petroleum Development Company) and the political oppression of his people, marginalized and exploited by a tyrannical Nigerian state became issues on the front burner. In his posthumously published detention diary, *A Month and a Day*, Saro-Wiwa describes the struggle in terms of two simultaneous worlds – one an 'ecological war' fought against Nigerian – based multinational oil companies, principally Shell and Chevron, and the other 'a political war' aimed at nothing less than an extermination of the Ogoni people by systematically dispossessing them of their fundamental human rights and locally generated wealth (97). The Niger Delta struggle has also been allegorized in ethnic terms as the fight of minority societies to be recognized within the overarching context of the nation.

Since no significant strategic measures were adopted to assuage the people and respond to the issues that triggered the protests of the early 1990s, the region was plunged into another round of protests for resource control. With the continued economic despoliation of their lands, youths in the region resorted to kidnapping, the formation of militia groups, blowing up of flow stations, illegal oil bunkering, arms importation and many other social vices. Gradually the Niger Delta region became a theatre of violence and lawlessness.

Beyond the immediate physical violence, other forms of violence also started manifesting. For instance, the youths dropped the moral codes they used to know, amplified the vices in their societal frame and have adopted bizarre dimensions of these vices as emerging cultures. Even the expatriate workers, perhaps in an attempt to balance the culture they met with what they knew, evolved patterns that many Niger Delta youths have adopted.

Sexuality is a term in literary criticism that designates the sexual orientation, disposition and identity of people. Generally, in many societies across the globe, the expression of sexuality is considered dignified when it is 'natural' that is, with a consenting, adult and opposite gender as in heterosexual marital relationships. Gradually, as many people embraced civilisation and began to mingle with people of other cultures, the expression of sexuality acquired dynamism. People began to experiment with variant modes of sexuality like homosexuality, incest, rape, orgies, making babies with multiple partners, sadistic sexual escapades, etc. Over the last thirty years, queer theorists have deigned frames for the conceptualisation and construction of sexuality especially with the aim of examining the Western notions emanating from their liberal cultural dispositions and the pervasiveness of

moral panics that characterise the engagement of sexuality in many other cultures. In the literature, the term 'queer' has been chosen by gay men and women to describe their peculiar approach to sexuality. Lois Tyson describes the queer approach as a critical frame that captures categories of sexuality that transcend conventional binaries such as homosexual/heterosexual to include varying possibilities of sexuality best described as dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities (337). Tyson acknowledges that socio-cultural contexts define the perspectives to sexuality and identifies variants like preference for someone older or younger, for a human or animal, for a single partner or a group activity, for oneself alone (as in masturbation) or for a variety of different partners (338).

Queer theorists differ on many grounds but agree on the fact that any expression of sexuality that is not in consonance with the socio-cultural context of any immediate society can be described as transgressive sexuality. Over the years, transgression in sexuality has manifested conventionally in transgressive homosexuality in some cultures, transgressive heterosexuality like extramarital affairs which defy certain cultural nuances on heterosexual marital relationships manifest in riotous life and violent sex, wild parties and orgies and so on.

Quite significantly, the Niger Delta region has witnessed an upsurge in the expression of sexuality, especially from the times of cultural intermingling with Western oil explorers to this time when the crisis in the region has demobilised the moral panics that restrained social vices. Traditionally, the people of the region upheld sexual dispositions that tilted towards heterosexual marital relationships. Indeed, there were pockets of deviant sexual behaviours like illicit random sex (especially among an ethnic group who may offer sex partners to their visitors as a sign of hospitality), rape and perhaps self-sex with pornographic pictures or videos. However, the influx of oil workers, men with different sexual orientations amplified the transgressive modes witnessed in the region before 1956. Many of the white expatriates bamboozled Niger Delta women with their unique gifts or promises of a better life in a foreign country and used them for sexual gratification in experimental ways. Some of the women endured the tortuous wild sex the foreigners subjected them to simply because they needed cash and other gifts they could get. Incidentally, many of the expatriates were not willing to stand by the women when they got pregnant. As such, there was an upsurge in the number of bastards in the oil producing parts of the region. Many of these children were referred to as 'born throway'.

In the region today, the atmosphere created by the crisis has gradually numbed the regard for traditional nuances and forms of transgressive sexual behaviours have not only gained momentum but have formed a part of what can be classified as contemporary cultures of the people. Laura Grindstaff avers that no one discipline can claim monopoly of what is considered a popular issue or culture (218). She notes that certain practices which are forced on a people due to circumstances and have become common, not necessarily because the people like them or accept them, but because overwhelming situations conventionalised such practices, are emerging trends which can be regarded as popular culture. For instance, it is common practice to dig bunkers and trenches during wars or violent conflicts as people struggle to survive, just as it is common to see young and old females submit to sexual exploitation as they strive for survival in a region marred by oil-induced economic, social and political crises.

Since the violence in the region has collapsed the walls of restraint and what is left of the moral codes that guide child upbringing, many youths have turned to transgressive sexual behaviour, sometimes to vent the frustrations occasioned by the crisis or as a means of survival; yet at other times, to show that they have become 'civilised'. Indeed, the issues that have trailed the Niger Delta crisis are so complex that it may take some more time to exhaust the representation in scholarship. Incidentally, while scholars have focused on violence and environmental issues in the region, there is visible dearth in the engagement of the dynamics of sexuality within the peculiar context of the crisis-ridden Niger Delta region. With the re-

emergence and rise of paedophilic sexual encounters, sexual escapades with older men or women, sexual orgies, rape, pimping for sex, prostitution and so on. It is important to examine how writers have drawn connections between the crisis in the region and the trending social vices. Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* and Patience Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose* are explored in this study. These writers have tried to represent the dynamics of amplified transgressive sexuality as an emerging culture in the region and their contributions define the focus of this study. Using the tenets of the queer theoretical frame, the study examines the representation of deviant sexuality as a culture which has emerged from the crisis in amplified and bizarre modes. In other words, the researcher examines how the representations of sexuality in the texts exceed traditional definitions of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

The Depiction of Sexuality in Agary's *Yellow Yellow*

Yellow Yellow is an intriguing presentation of the Niger Delta crisis because of the robust engagement of experiences that are peculiar to the ordinary people, men, women and the youths of the region. Beyond historicising oil politics and the associated environmental issues, the novel portrays experimental sexuality as a vice that was amplified as foreigners trooped into Niger Delta communities and one that has taken roots as a trope among the youth of the region in recent times. Oil prospecting began after oil was discovered in the Niger Delta area in 1956. This development informed the influx of people from many parts of the world into the region. Some of them were expatriate drillers, engineers, scientists as well as sailors who moved various forms of equipment through the waterways. As these foreigners settled into the communities, they employed some of the male youths as oil workers. Both the oil workers and the foreigners wielded tremendous economic power and their activities impoverished the people. The male youths who did not get engaged in the communities scampered to the urban areas, especially Port Harcourt, in search of oil company jobs. The females got involved in one form of experimental sexual relationship or the other with expatriates and oil workers for financial gains. Gradually, traditional sexual behaviours in the region were completely altered.

As the novel opens, Zilayefa recounts the experiences of her mother, Bibi, who is swayed into a sexual relationship with a Greek sailor. The novel reveals that Bibi's fate is determined when she meets a foreigner, whose ship had docked briefly in Nigeria, and clings to him as her escape route from the joblessness and harsh economic realities in the Niger Delta region. Their relationship, just like most relationships of that nature, involves sex and she gets pregnant. Bibi raises the product of that relationship, Zilayefa, as a single mother because the Greek Sailor has travelled and may never return to the region. According to Zilayefa, "There was no message; he was just gone, leaving behind his planted seed in my mother's belle (Yellow, 7). Bibi's experience, as the novel shows, is a common experience for many young girls in the region who see foreign oil workers that troop into the region as pathways of exit from the oil-ravaged communities; channels of transition from low-life to comfort. Many of these girls have been destabilised by the environmental devastation and the oil crisis in the region. As a result, many of them have nothing to offer in these relationships apart from their bodies. It is on this premise that Agary represents the amplification of sexuality in the novel.

From the foregoing, it is safe to argue that oil related crisis in the region, as well as the desperate quest for survival, has caused a shift from social ideals to the consolidation and amplification of inappropriate social outcomes which have gradually emerged as popular culture among the people. One of such vices that have visibly metamorphosed into popular culture is transgressive sexuality. The novel reveals that Zilayefa and many other female youths, as teenagers, would throw up their back-sides for their male counterparts to pick them up (15). Whatever this seductive game signifies, mothers like Mama Ebiye are too engrossed with the difficult realities of hard life to consider the appropriateness or inappropriateness of such games. She justifies the fun activities by reminding Bibi that the children endured the difficult conditions in the region and finished their secondary school; so they deserved some

celebration (16). Zilayefa advances from merely throwing her backsides to the experimental expression of her sexuality in other ways. She flirts around during Chief Semoke's burial ceremony and targets a Greek business man, Sergio. Drawn by the same pressure to escape the unpleasant experiences in the region, she flirtatiously stares, smiles and makes visible passes at the stranger (19).

Zilayefa's narration further reveals that deviant sexual dispositions were already noticeable in Elementary schools but the dynamics of the Niger Delta experience has gradually woven them into the cultural fabrics of the region. She notes that Elementary school boys and girls usually gather during break periods to play games that border on their sexuality – a game that involves a boy picking a girl to kiss her (26-27). Having explored sexuality in such ways, many of these Niger Delta teens encounter the complexity of the Niger Delta crisis and will not hesitate to engage in sexually transgressive behaviour if it will guarantee some economic leverage. The pockets of vices they picked up in their small units only find amplification as they encounter prospects for a new life. When Zilayefa gets a time off with Sergio at Wokiri, she describes their transgressive sexual behaviour as follows:

> *Sergio had not tried to swallow my face or push his tongue down my throat, and he did not insist when I stopped his hand from exploring under the skirt of my dress. I closed my eyes and allowed the feeling from the kiss to linger as we both lay down on my wrapper; he pulled me close and placed my head on his chest. (27)*

True to Agary's representation above, sexual relationships involving minors or teenagers and adults who are old enough to father them have become quite conventional in the region. Many of these young girls do not mind that their sexual partners are married as long as there is exchange of money at the end of the encounters. As Zilayefa figures out how to leave the confines of her local community, a hotbed for the Niger Delta crisis, for a better life in the urban areas (where the impact of the crisis is less), she thinks that she can find her way to Bonny, the base of expatriates working for the oil companies, and sell her body to a white (35). In other words, she is willing to submit her body for any type of sexual experiment with a white man. Such desperation as manifested by Zilayefa has pervaded the region and is responsible for the momentum that repulsive sexual dispositions are becoming popular culture in recent times.

Agary's novel is replete with many instances of the connections between sexually deviant dispositions and the economic situation in the local communities of the Niger Delta region. Zilayefa reveals that the female youths who found connections with oil workers and expatriates return to the local communities to mesmerise other natives. Hence, many young girls become desperate for encounters with men who wield economic power. Zilayefa notes that it requires extraordinary inner will to resist the temptation of following in the path of these visitors as many youths dreamed of a life that would provide them with enough cash to buy nice clothes, send money home once a month, and make the occasional impressive visits to the village (37).

In their desperation to escape poverty and become like those who have "sold' their bodies, many of these female youths get entangled in transgressive sexual escapades. According to the narrator:

> *Our visitors told of times when they fell into the hands of a crazy whitey who beat them up or pushed objects like bottles into their privates as part of the fun. It seemed that, sometimes, there were so many unimaginable horrors to get through before the clients released money. Nevertheless, if one were lucky, before they made the mistake of taking off with one of these crazy whiteys, someone else who had experienced his brutality would tactically stop them and warn them off him. (37-38)*

Most times, the victims of such sexual brutality are torn between the options of going back to their environmentally despoiled communities where economic life has been paralysed and

sustaining their newly found lifestyles by enduring the desecration of their bodies. Even the male youths are not left out. The novel reveals that many of them act as pimps for the local and expatriate oil workers and collect some stipend from the girls (38). Unfortunately, sexual transgression for sustenance has risen and is gradually becoming an irresistible sad in the region. There have been increasing cases of prostitution, ritual killings to support connections with oil workers and expatriates, "side chikism" and other socially repulsive practices because many youths are burdened with economic pressures and are seeking ways of escape.

The novel further identifies unwanted pregnancies and the proliferation of bastards as some of the consequences of deviant sexuality in the region. With the escalation of the crisis in the region and the desperation for survival, there is a noticeable decline in social and family ideals to the extent that a mother would throw a party for a teenager who gets pregnant and gives birth out of wedlock (42). Many of the young females depicted in Agary's novel are either products of illicit sexual relationships or are involved in one deviant sexual escapade or the other. Emem's reference to a "generation of yellows in the Niger Delta area" is a representation of the spate of moral laxity that has gained momentum with the influx of foreigners into the region. Emem goes ahead to categorise the fathers of these "yellows" tracing them to Britain, Syria, Lebanon, Greece – all connected to oil exploration in the region (74).

Agary's *Yellow Yellow* reveals how the upscale in the rate of prostitution, other bizarre manifestations of sexuality and children with multiple fathers in the region is connected to oil crisis. First, oil-related environmental pillage renders farms and water bodies unproductive by sending young productive youths out of their communities to the overcrowded city centres where they survive based on the extent they are willing to go in exploring sexuality. In Agary's novel, the narrator explains as follows:

> *Every evening, male guests would come down to the bar to ease the tensions of the day with alcohol. Many of them were expatriates, either working for the oil companies or doing business in the oil sector. Interested fellows knew their parts and played them well – a girl flirts, interested fellow buys her a drink or two, and they strike up a conversation if he speaks English (if not, they smile and gesticulate; language is never a barrier). The night ends in the interested fellow's room if he wants to take it that far. (76)*

Thus, the vicious circle of illicit sexual encounters runs through Agary's novel. Some young girls lose their lives as they try to abort unwanted pregnancies, while others give birth to the children and live with the burdens of single-parenthood. There are still others living with various sexuality transmitted diseases and infections.

A very prominent feature of queer sexuality is the attraction young females have for older men or young males to older females. The former is quite replete in Agary's novel. Emem is a young female who gradually becomes a very negative influence on Zilayefa. Emem has a string of older men that give her pleasure and take care of her needs such that she never seems to lack anything (128). Incidentally, one of the effects of transgressive sexuality is that many young females get pregnant and give birth to children who are denied paternal affection. These children grow into young women who equally seek sexual relationships with older men to make up for the paternal succour they have missed. Zilayefa's escapades with Sergio and Admiral are illustrations of her longing for paternal affection. Describing Admiral, a man old enough to be her father, she notes as follows:

> *He was so handsome with his dimples and the sprinkles of grey in his hair. I felt a deep sense of longing for him, not because of the comfort Emem hinted at, which was money, but because I was hoping that the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I never had. (138).*

Driven by her quest for the warmth of a father, she is ready to go all the way to the extent of getting deflowered by Admiral (144). Musing about the experience, she considers it a

privilege to be considered fit for a relationship by someone as highly placed as Admiral. In her words, "I wanted to make him happy and hoped that in return I would experience the emotional comfort, attention, and protection that I had seen between him and Alaere" (145). Consequently she goes to every length, including obliging him with adventurous sex positions (151). Later she re-unites with Sergio and they start a sexual relationship. As the story ends, Zilayefa is unable to determine the paternity of her unborn child because she has had more than one sex partner. She is unable to find a place in the lives of Admiral or Sergio. She decides to abort the pregnancy and escapes death by the whiskers in the process. Thus, Agary captures the spate of promiscuity and transgressive sexual behaviour that has pervaded the region as a result of the oil crisis.

Sexual Deviation among Youths in Esinwoke's *No Time to Lose*

Sexual impropriety is a theme that resonates in Esinwoke's *No Time to Lose*. The novel opens with the challenging childhood experiences of the narrator, Minima, whose skin colour easily gives him away as one who is either a foreigner or has something to do with a foreigner. His visit to his community, Kirama, reveals that the entry of White oil explorers seemed insignificant at first but completely altered the social context of the community with time. He notes as follows:

> *The presence of the white men fascinated the children and they would flock around their vehicles chanting 'Oyibo! Oyibo!' In a gesture of friendliness, the oyibos would throw sweets and chocolates to them, which the children would fall over to catch. Many did not know what they were but they all agreed the taste was good. (29)*

Many young girls from Kirama would flock around the white men and get deceived to engage in sexual relationships. Many of them, like Minima's mother, would end up disappointed. Saddled with pregnancy and the challenges of single-parenthood, they would lament the 'murder of womanhood' (30).

The novel also reveals that the pervasiveness of sexual deviation in the region is connected to the terrible living conditions occasioned by the crisis. For instance, when Minima relocates to Port Harcourt, he observes the extent of poverty in his neighbourhood at Marine Base. He notes that most families rely on their children for financial support and this inevitably leads to significant decline in moral values as well as upsurge in sexually deviant dispositions (60). This is the case of Eneni, a thirteen year old girl who gets entangled in a web of sexual orgies as she pursues a trade to support her parents' income. The novel reveals that she carries out her trading in the evenings, by the roadside (61). Gradually, Eneni begins to carry her wares to a particular house in a rich residential area and gets involved with George, the young son of the house owner. It is in this house that George and his friend carefully seduce Eneni with erotic scenes from an eighteen–rated movie and take turns to sexually gratify themselves throughout the night (63). Eneni's interest in sexual orgies with older boys is clearly connected to her early exposure to entanglements that she is not prepared for.

The novelist further portrays the white oil expatriates as rich men who commandeered girls for sexual gratification adding that young girls get exposed to nightlife, prostitute with white oil rig workers and bring money home (65). Eneni, just like many other young girls in Marine Base, becomes a casualty of the Niger Delta crisis as the consequent harsh economic realities push her into sexual encounters that result in pregnancy and eventually, marriage to an irresponsible man who is thrice her age (163).

Minima's transition from a conservative disposition towards sexuality to transgressive sexual modes is another illustration of how deviant sexual forms have emerged from the Niger Delta crisis. The novel reveals that Minima would slide into the thoughts of Erre, his long-time lover, as an aphrodisiac instead of getting sexually involved with the young children that flocked around during his National Youth Service days in the North. He reveals:

> *The very thought of her evoked some kind of seismic sensation in my system. Erre had that power over me. Though I was very far from her, I felt some kind of power drawing me to her. My gender became unruly as at other times when I thought of her. I slept. I dreamt of her. (147)*

It is possible that Minima indulges in masturbation anytime he thinks of Erre since he is able to achieve an erection. Whether this is the case or not, the important fact is that the moral panics instilled by his mother and the adults around him prevented him from indulging in expressions of sexuality that would go against the norms of the Northern society where he found himself.

However, the narrative changes when he gets back to Port Harcourt and reconnects with his friend, Nelo. The novel reveals that Nelo, who used to discourage Minima from sexual escapades, has become a veteran in transgressive sexual behaviour. Having become a successful oil businessman who deals with expatriates on large-scale basis, Nelo has dropped the moral panics that restrained him as a schoolboy. The crisis in the region has not only exposed many young boys like Nelo to massive wealth through oil bunkering and related illegal businesses but also exposed them to associations with expatriates with different orientations about sexuality. After some time in Nelo's house, Minima explains that there was so much of wine, women and dance, adding as follows:

> *I saw money, I smelt money and I touched money! Life was good. We had wild parties and occasionally indulged ourselves with young university girls. It was difficult for me to get a steady date; possibly, because the other guys lived the same way. In fact, some became fathers. (204-205)*

Nelo's house becomes a rendezvous for transgressive sexual behaviours. Some of the girls get pregnant and become 'baby mamas' because the young men have no intention of marrying them. The 'baby mama' phenomenon is one transgressive disposition that has been amplified by the Niger Delta crisis. From one position, the upsurge in this socially deviant sexual behaviour can be traced to the fact that it is common practice among the white oil rig workers that came into Niger Delta communities. Then it can be traced to the oil crisis which has subjected young ladies to extreme economic conditions to the extent that some of them do not mind getting pregnant for wealthy men even if such men are not willing to marry them.

Furthermore, the Niger Delta crisis has created monsters that carry out all forms of nefarious activities to sustain their activism and prove a point to the government. Many Niger Delta writers have captured the spate of kidnapping, robbery, and other manifestations of criminality, including transgressive sexual behaviour. In Esinwoke's novel, armed robbers, suspected to be Yawas' loyalists, rob Andrew's bank and mindlessly violate the female workers (271). Although rape is not altogether new in the Niger Delta region, the crisis in the region has sustained its emergence in worrisome dimensions. The proliferation of arms has empowered many youths who wield the power of the weapons they possess to gratify their sadistic sexual desires.

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator reveals the plight of Erre's friend who is prepared for whatever it takes to stay away from the Niger Delta region. The young lady is ready to go some extremes with men just to get pregnant and use it as a ploy to obtain indigene status in a foreign country (309). Incidentally, many youths, male and female, in their desperate moves to leave the region, have fallen prey to people who sexually exploit them. Some have contracted sexually transmitted diseases and some have lost their lives.

Esinwoke's novel clearly represents forms of sexual behaviour that vary from the traditional modes obtainable in the pristine Niger Delta region before the escalation of the crisis. Even the various modes of sexuality which were deviant before the crisis have gained momentum and become very popular among Niger Delta youths today.

Conclusion

This study presents the authors' graphic depiction of the shades of sexuality which are emerging as conventional practices in the Niger Delta region as a result of oil crisis. The uniqueness of their narratives lies in their careful rendition of the Niger Delta story with less focus on oil politics but more focus on the experiences of the ordinary people who bear the brunt of every decision made by the government and the oil multinationals. Ezinwoke's narrator is a male youth, Minima, who takes readers through the peculiar progression of sexuality as oil prospecting metamorphoses into crisis in the region. Minima's transmutation from one who is disposed towards heterogeneous sexuality, observes moral codes, applies restraints and ensures that his sexuality does not violate traditional patterns to one who involves in sexual orgies, one who has multiple partners and one who engages in wild parties is an indication of the moral laxity that amplified deviant forms of sexuality in the region as the crisis escalated. Similarly, Agary's Zilayefa, a female narrator, presents the connections between sexuality, the influx of foreigners in the region and the economic, social and environmental conditions in the region. The novel presents moral laxity and deviant sexual behaviour as vices that have crept into the cultural system of the region.

The novels highlight the collapse in moral panics and the rise in transgressive sexual disposition, but more significantly, connects this situation to the conflict and devastation in the region. From the foregoing, it is obvious that any attempt to sanitise the region morally in order to enshrine positive or traditional modes of sexuality will fail if there is no conscious attempt to address the issues escalating the crisis, before an attempt to restore moral panic after a re-orientating the people of the region.

References

Agary, Kaine. *Yellow-Yellow*. Dtalkshop, 2006.

Ezinwoke, Patience. *No Time To Lose.* Pearl Publishers, 2009.

Grindstaff, Laura. "Culture and Popular Culture: A Case for Sociology. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Journal.* Vol. 619. No. 1. 2008. Pp. 206-222.

Nwahunanya, Chinyere. (ed.). (2011). Introduction. In C. Nwahunanya *from Boom to Doom: Protest and Conflict Resolution in the Literature of the Niger Delta* (pp. xiii- xxi). Springfield, 2011.

Nwahunanya, Chinyere. The lachrymal consciousness in the literature of the Niger Delta: its implications for conflict resolution. In C. Nwahunanya *From Boom to Boom: Protest and Conflict Resolution in the Literature of the Niger Delta* (pp. 37-49). Springfield, 2011

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today.* Garland, 1999

Yang, Hu. "Study on Popular Culture Contacts and Traditional Culture Identity in the Youth Group." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research Journal.* Vol. 123. No. 1. 2017. Pp. 64-69. https://doi.org/10.2991/icesame-17.2017.16