

## Environmental Pollution and Reportage in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The incidence of reportage of environmental pollution by Newspapers was under study here. This study was carried out for the period of 9 months (Sept. 2010 – May 2011), 360 editions of four newspapers gotten from University of Port Harcourt Donald Ekong library, Abuja Park Choba. The four newspapers used were: Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and This Day. Population size for the study was 1090 editions. Of the sample size as 360 editions, only 334 editions were found (92.7%) while (7.2%) 26 were missing. There were only 18 editions (5%) having stories on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta. Guardian had 2 (11%), Vanguard 8 (44%), Daily Sun 3 (17%) and This Day 5 (28%). On the extent of coverage a total of 25 stories were reported; Guardian having 3 (12%), Vanguard has 12 (48%), Daily Sun having 5 (20%) and This Day having 5 (20%). Out of these 25 stories, 24 (96%) were on oil spillage while only 1 (4%) was on gas flaring. This result shows proof that there is very poor reportage of environmental pollution by the Nigeria Newspapers. This implies that environmental pollution is treated with levity by the Nigerian media houses.

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**Key words:** Environmental pollution, Niger Delta, Newspapers, University of Port Harcourt.

### 1. Introduction

Natural disasters and the activities of man in the quest to meet his needs have contributed greatly to global environmental issues. Our fragile ecosystem is under attack on various sides as a result of infrastructures, human/animal waste and/or other natural causes such as volcanic eruption.

Worldwide change is needed to avert these challenges, which threatens the continuity of our environment. If we must have a balance environment that does not compromise the standard of living of future generations, we must all adopt: Sustainable Environmental Practices”.

Sustainability which is the capacity to maintain a certain process or state indefinitely have been trying to reconcile the urgent needs of effective environmental protection and conservation of resources which will in turn, prevent environmental pollution. Environmental pollution is due to substantial alteration, in form or function of the components of the physical environment producing harmful effects on human beings, wildlife and the surrounding flora. Pollutants may cause primary damage with identifiable impacts or secondary damages in the form of minor changes that are detectable over a time.

Prior to the discovery of crude oil in Olobiri, Rivers State in 1956 agriculture (before 1970) was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. The oil boom witnessed in the 1970’s led to a tremendous increase in industrial activities. With financial resources available from oil and no development policy,

unguided urbanization and industrialization took place.

As desirable and necessary as this development was, it became an albatross not of itself but because of the lack of appropriate environmental protection policies to guide it. The result was the indiscriminate sitting of industries, noise pollution, deforestation and desertification, indiscriminate waste disposal, disregarding the need for environmental concern. The process technology of some of these industries often resulted in unacceptable levels of toxic and dangerous industrial wastes and effluent emissions.

These culminated in the degradation of the environment and devastating ecological and human disasters (Ashong, and Udoudo, 2007). In the Niger Delta, one of the causes of environmental pollution is from oil exploration and related activities (Solomon *et al.*, 2017). Oil spillage pollutes waters, soil or land, gas flaring and other industrial effluents pollutes the air.

This has led to illness, ecological degradation, human right abuse, high inflation rates and loss of livelihoods. Oil film in water prevents natural aeration, killing aquatic lives, farm lands are lost, water and air are unsafe for human use, and mangrove forests have been destroyed (Obot *et al.*, 2010). As a result of this, the need to combine industrial development and environmental protection arose. Acts of legislation for environmental protection (environmental laws) were then acted.

The Federal Ministry of Environment, created in 1999 has been saddled with the responsibility of protecting the Nigerian environment and ensuring resources are conserved. Also the Department of Petroleum Resources ensures that regulations guarding petroleum exploration are followed.

The problem remains that the activities of these bodies are not reported appropriately to the public. However, the researcher is seeking to provide an insight into the negligence of environmental pollution reportage and to proffer solution.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted the content analysis method in examining the content of reports on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta. The newspapers used were selected on the base of their high coverage of all major interest groups in the country. Only 4 newspapers were used, Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and This Day. The period under study was from September 2010 to May 31, 2011.

The total population size was 1092 editions. Using the systematic random sampling a sample size of 360 editions (32.96%) were selected, i.e. each newspaper had 90 editions selected randomly giving a total sample size of 360. Out of these 360 editions only 334 editions (92.7%) were found while 26 editions (7.2%) were missing.

Contents analyzed were news stories, features, opinion article, editorial and letters-to-the-editor. Data generated were presented in percentages. The newspapers were gotten from the University of Port Harcourt Library.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Three hundred and sixty (360) editions was the sample size and only 18 editions (5%) had stories on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta. Guardian had 2 editions (11%), Vanguard had 8 editions (44%), Daily Sun had 5 (17%) and This Day had 5 (28%).

Out of these 18 editions, there were only 25 stories on environmental pollution; guardian reported 3 (12%), vanguard reported 12 (48%), Daily Sun reported 5 (20%) and This Day reported 5 (20%). Out of these stories, 24 stories (96%) were about oil spillage while only 1 (4%) was on gas flaring. Other forms of environmental pollution such as improper waste disposal, artisanal refining and noise pollution were not reported.

Looking at interpretation given to the subject matters; Guardian, Vanguard and Daily Sun had no editorials on the subject matter. Vanguard devoted only supplements and feature stories to this issue. Guardian had neither.

This Day had 1 editorial and 1 letter to the editor. Furthermore, the placement of these 25 stories were

analyzed and it was found that, in non of these 4 newspaper were these stories strategically placed on the front or back pages. The result above shows that the issue of environmental pollution has been poorly reported by the print media.

This is in addition to the poor interpretation of the subject matter and its consequences. Going further it was found that even when reported, these were hidden inside the newspaper. In no single one was it on the front or back pages. From the study, it could be deduced that noise has not been seen or recognized as a form of environmental pollution in this part of the country even when its implications are enormous.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, further pollution should be vehemently fought and resisted in order not to reap today and compromise the needs of the future generations. Since nature sustains its inhabitants and the fate of nature depends on human hands, there is the need for environmental education through increased reportage by the print media to entrench environmental friendly attitudes, better understanding of existing regulations on the environment as well as making of better regulations capable of ensuring a healthy environment that meet human needs and support healthy living which was equally reported by Oforibika and Ezekiel (2014).

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