Vol. 7 No. 3 November, 2024
JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM EDUCATION
ISSN: 2659-0794 (PRINT) ISSN:2659-0808(ONLINE)
Content Available at: **https://jeate.k-publisher.com/index.php/Jete**

Investigating the Role of Mass Media For Promoting Environmental Sustainability Awareness among Nigerian Citizens

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Keywords

Mass media, Sustainability, Awareness, Environmental problems, Industrialization

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Abstract

In this our contemporary time, environmental problems such as flooding, climate change, global warming, waste managements and others are fast increasing as a result of increasing in population, modernization and industrialization. Therefore, the need to protect, conserve and preserve the environment cannot be over emphasized or underestimated. Hence, this study examines the role of mass media for promoting environmental sustainability awareness among Nigerian citizens. The study adopted descriptive research design to obtain first-hand information from the studied population. The target population for this study were the citizens from Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 respondents representing both genders from the two dominant religions Christianity and Islam among the population.

	The instrument used was a researcher developed questionnaire while the hypotheses were tested using X^2 statistical tool. Findings revealed that there was significant influence of mass media on the environmental awareness of Sagamu Local Government citizens. Since X^2 cal is greater than (X^2 tab =10.34>7.81). Findings also revealed significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness of Christian and Muslims in Sagamu Local Government Area X^2 cal. 12.8>7.81 X^2 cal.9.68>7.81. Findings further revealed significant influence of mass media on environmental awareness of male and female indigenes of Sagamu Local Government Cal. 38.18> 7.81, Cal.12.74>7.81. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the power sector of Nigeria should be improved upon so that the mass media can be effective in creating environmental awareness among the citizens. There should be adequate training for the media workers on acquiring skills and strategies to disseminate information and create awareness on environmental sustainability.

Introduction

The role of media in promoting environmental awareness among Nigerian citizens cannot be underestimated or overemphasized. In this our contemporary time, environmental problems are fast increasing as a result of increasing in population, modernization and industrialization. Therefore, the need to protect, conserve and preserve the environment cannot be compromised for the present and the future generation. However, increase global concern for environmental issues is evident from the various national and international reports, conferences, campaigns, workshops, and organization reports on the need to protect human environment from further deterioration. These include UN conference on human environment. Stockholen conference of 1997, Belgrade charter of 1975, Tbilisi report of 1977, Harlen Brundtland commission of 1983 and Agenda 21 of Rio Declaration of 1992, (Fayemi 2023, Kushwaha 2015). In Nigeria for example, there is serious concern for different types of environmental problems such as pollution, climate change, waste management, flooding, desert encroachment, oil spillage especially in the oil producing are of the country. Andrew (2018) define environment as a home to all living and non-living organisms and the basis for sustenance and survival of human. Nwanne (2013) also defines environment as our surroundings which includes all form of life; plants, animals, human beings, air, water, land, buildings. To Khan (2016), environment is the basic need of living things because every necessity of life for them depends on it. Thus, it can be regarded as foundation of human survival.

However, it is imperative to protect and preserve the environment, in other words, ultimate attention should be paid to the environment and be treated with utmost and maximum respect with reverence to ensuring it quality and sustainability. Many scholars had given their thought on sustainable development as it concerned human environment. The world acclaimed and widely acceptable definition was proposed by the Brundtland commission in 1975. The Brundtland commission defined sustainable development, as development that; meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nation 1987). According to Akpoghiran, Umukoro and Okoro (2018), Stoddart, (2011), the overall goal of sustainable development is the long-term stability of the economy and environment, this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental and social concerns throughout the decision making process. This initial conceptual underpinning of the SD laid the foundation for the emergence of the SDGs in 2015. It is imperative to mention that the (SDG 1,2,3,6,7,11,12,13,14,15) are directly or indirectly related to the environment domain for sustainable development. Evidence indicate that many countries including Nigeria have established laws and formal institutional framework for maintaining environmental sustainability and integrity as well as addressing the environmental challenges emanating from the exploitation of the natural resources of the environment.

In Nigeria, the laws include water ways Act (1915), Public Health Act (Amended 1958), Forest Ordinance (1937), Petroleum Drilling and Production Regulation Act (1969). Navigable Water Act (1968), Minerals Act (1969), Associated Gas Reinjection Degree (1979), Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act (1989), Natural Resource Conservation Council (1989), Land Use Degree (now Act 1978), Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA 1992), Federal Ministry of Environment ACT (1999), National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA 2006) (Robinson, 2013). In spite of the gamut policy frameworks, the environment is cautiously under serious threat and degradation from both anthropogenic and natural factors which is constituting a challenge to the attainment of environmental sustainability. In this respect, scholars and other United Nations Agencies have called for increased effort in promoting environmental sustainability through serious awareness.

The mass media is a potential institution that is an indispensable tool to achieve the goal of environmental awareness needed for sustainability of our environment. Tseygu and Ogoshi (2015) define the mass media as the social institution for generating and transmitting standardized messages to a large, widespread and heterogenous audience. Nwanne (2013) argues that many Nigerians are connected to the mass media in one way or the other for information on daily happenings and information that concerns their lives. Corroborating this, Goefrey and Obiri (2015) assert that mass media remains the most influential institution in the society that is effective for promoting awareness on environmental sustainability due to its capacity and strength to reach out to decision makers, government agencies, authorities and citizens alike, widely and simultaneously. In other words, through the instrumentality of social media, awareness on the

environmental problems and hazard can be created and also educate the populace or citizens on their contribution to make the environment safe for human being.

Environmental awareness can be defined as a state of mind of people to conserve, pressure and protect the environment. It is the perception of the people about environmental phenomenon. Arit (2011) defines environmental awareness as a purely cognitive construct indicating whether a person is aware of endangered environment. Thus it is crystal clear that when an individual is aware of keeping the environment secure and protected, then there is an active consciousness that will incite such a person into action. According to Saikia (2017), the concept of environmental awareness is explained as familiarities with an environmental subject with real understanding of it deeper causes and implications. He goes further to reiterate that this demonstrates that environmental awareness has a great effect on environmental stewardship, attitudes and it as an effect on environmentally friendly behaviour.

An environmentally aware individual will not just dispose, reduce and waste environmental material indiscriminately, such a person will be quite aware of the implication of his/her actions. An environmentally aware organization will not discharge the toxic waste materials from the industry to pollute the environment because they are conscious of the implication of their actions on the environment. In other words, environmental awareness will bring about a change in the thinking and attitude of individuals and firms or industries to ensure environmental quality and sustainability. Environmental sustainability can be defined as tapping, excavating, exploitation and usage of environmental resources to meet the needs of present generation without jeopardizing and compromising the needs of the future generation. Thus it is a concept that advocates a consciousness about the preservation of the environment. However, to achieve the objective of environmental sustainability there must be a balance between human activities, level of consumption, and replenishment of environmental resources. The media can be an instrument in breaking the silence that surrounds the environmental problems and in creating an environment that encourages discussions of how the community can participate and change their behaviour. Media's efforts to sensitize the public about environmental issues and its continuing central role in the struggle against the cause of environmental problems are indispensable. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to examine the role of mass media for promoting environmental sustainability awareness among Nigerians.

Statement of the Problem

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a critical global concern, underscored by increasing challenges such as climate change, flooding, waste mismanagement, and pollution. These issues are especially pronounced in Nigeria, where rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrialization have exacerbated environmental degradation. Despite the establishment of various laws and frameworks, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Act and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, the Nigerian environment remains under persistent

threat. A key contributing factor to this problem is the insufficient awareness and engagement of the populace in sustainability practices.

The mass media, with its extensive reach and influence, has proven to be a vital tool for raising awareness and mobilizing action on social and environmental issues globally. In Nigeria, however, the effectiveness of the mass media in promoting environmental sustainability awareness is constrained by several factors, including inadequate resources, infrastructural challenges, and a lack of strategic focus on environmental issues. Additionally, the extent to which media efforts resonate with diverse demographic groups, such as different genders and religious affiliations, remains unclear.

In local contexts like Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State, where environmental challenges are prevalent, the role of mass media in fostering public consciousness and behavioral change has not been adequately studied. This gap in research leaves critical questions unanswered: To what extent does mass media influence environmental awareness among different segments of the population? What barriers hinder the media's effectiveness in promoting sustainability? Addressing these questions is crucial for designing targeted interventions that can enhance environmental stewardship and contribute to achieving sustainability goals at both local and national levels.

Research Objectives

General Objective:

To investigate the role of mass media in promoting environmental sustainability awareness among citizens in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives:

1. To assess the influence of mass media on the environmental awareness of citizens in Sagamu Local Government Area.
2. To examine the role of mass media in promoting environmental awareness among different religious groups (Christians and Muslims) in Sagamu Local Government Area.
3. To evaluate the impact of mass media on the environmental awareness of male and female citizens in Sagamu Local Government Area.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that serves as foundation for this study is media dependency theory which was propounded by Ball Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976. The permeating effects of the media in today’s world cuts across every sphere of our daily lives; environmentally, economically, politically, educationally, religiously, etc. it is undisputable to argue that students depend upon the mass media for educational information even more to the detriment of face to face in – class teacher-student interaction.

Loveless (2008) posits that citizens search for information that will help them solve various problems in the society. Mass media is however at the vanguard of providing this vital information. For example, the citizens depend on the television, radio, newspapers and various platforms on the internet such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram for local and global weather information and other local and global environmental disaster information like hurricane, tornado, flooding, earthquake, climate change, environmental communicable diseases etc. In other words, the awareness of all these environmental hazards or problems can only be instilled by the mass media which has an overwhelming influence on an individuals' thoughts, decisions and actions. Thus, apart from individual citizen dependence on the mass media, the goal of achieving environmental sustainability itself is dependent upon the mass media, meaning that the mass media is one of the most powerful institutions that can help achieve the objective of environmental sustainability as desired.

Method

This study adopted descriptive research design to obtain first-hand information from the studied population. The target population for this study were citizens from Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) respondents representing both genders (Male and female) from the two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam) among the target Population. This is to afford every respondent equal chance of being chosen for this study. The instrument used by the researcher in gathering data from the respondents was a self-developed questionnaire which comprised of two sections (A&B). Section A comprised of a demographic data of the respondents which include their age, gender and religion while Section B contained relevant questions designed to elicit information on their perception of the role of mass media in promoting awareness for environmental sustainability. The questionnaire was divided into 5 parts; each part was to analyze the formulated hypothesis. The researcher used five–point likert scale of strongly agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, undecided in other to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was validated by the researcher to ensure that it had face, content and external validity. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument which yielded 0.87 reliability index.

The researcher personally doted out the questionnaire to the respondents and collected it back as soon as they had filled them. The demographic data was analyzed using simple percentage while the formulated, hypothesis were analyzed using chi-square (X^2) inferential statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Sex distribution of respondent's demographic data

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	26	52
Female	24	48
Total	50	100

From table 1, 26 respondents are male while 24 are female. Therefore, most of the respondents are male.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondent

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
16-20 yrs.	7	14
21-25 yrs.	26	52
26-30 yrs.	11	22
31-35 yrs.	6	12
Total	50	100

From table 2, 7 of the respondents are between 16-20 years of age, 26 were between 21- 25 years of age 11 were between 26-30 years of age while 6 were between 31-35 years of age. It can therefore be concluded that most of the respondents were between 21-25 years of age.

Table 3: Religion Distribution of Respondents

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Christianity	24	48
Islam	26	52
Total	50	100

Table 3, shows that 24 of the respondents are Christian while 26 of the respondents are Muslims, this shows that the Muslims are a little more than the Christians.

Testing of Hypothesis

H_{o1} There is no significant influence of mass media on the environmental awareness of Sagamu citizens.

Table 4: X^2 test showing influence of mass media on the environmental awareness of Sagamu citizens.

Variables	**Observed**	**Expected**	**0-E**	**$(0-E)^2$**	**$(0-E)^{2/E}$**
SA	18	12.5	5.5	30.25	2.42
A	7	12.5	-5.5	30.25	2.42
D	10	12.5	-2.5	6.25	0.5
SD	15	12.5	2.5	6.25	0.5
Total	50	50			10.34

Degree of freedom =3

X^2 tab @ 0.05 level of significance= 7.81

X^2 calculated= 10.34

Interpretation: Since X^2 Cal. is greater than X^2 tab = $10.34 > 7.81$

Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that "there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness of Sagamu local government''.

H_{o2}: There is no significant influence of the mass media on environmental awareness of Christian in Sagamu local government

Table 5: X^2 test showing influence of mass media on the environmental awareness of Christians in Sagamu local government.

Variables	**Observed**	**Expected**	**0-E**	**$(0-E)^2$**	**$(0-E)^{2/E}$**
SA	23	12.5	10.5	110.25	8.82
A	12	12.5	-0.5	0.25	0.02
D	08	12.5	-4.5	20.25	1.62
SD	07	12.5	-5.5	30.25	2.42
Total	50				12.88

Degree of freedom =3

X^2 tab @ 0.05 level of significance= 7.81

X^2 calculated= 12.88

Interpretation: Since X^2 Cal. is greater than X^2 tab = 12.8 > 7.81

Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that "there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness among the Christians in Sagamu local government''.

H_{03}: There is no significant influence of the mass media on environmental awareness of Muslims in Sagamu local government

Table 6: X^2 test showing influence of mass media on environmental awareness of Muslims in Sagamu local government.

Variables	**Observed**	**Expected**	**0-E**	**$(0-E)^2$**	**$(0-E)^{2/E}$**
SA	15	12.5	2.5	6.25	0.5
A	19	12.5	6.5	42.25	3.38
D	4	12.5	-8.5	72.25	5.78
SD	12	12.5	-0.5	0.25	0.02
Total	50				9.68

Degree of freedom =3

X^2 tab @ 0.05 level of significance= 7.81

X^2 calculated= 9.68

Interpretation: Since X^2 Cal. is greater than X^2 tab = 9.68 > 7.81

Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that "there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness among the Muslims in Sagamu local government''.

H_{o4}: There is no significant influence of mass media on environmental awareness among the male indigenes of Sagamu local government

Table 7: X^2 test showing influence of mass media on environmental awareness among the male indigenes in Sagamu local government.

Variables	**Observed**	**Expected**	**0-E**	**$(0-E)^2$**	**$(0-E)^{2/E}$**
SA	31	12.5	18.5	342.25	27.4
A	10	12.5	-2.5	6.25	0.5
D	5	12.5	-7.5	56.25	4.5
SD	4	12.5	-8.5	72.25	5.78
Total	50				38.18

Degree of freedom =3
X^2 tab @ 0.05 level of significance= 7.81
X^2 calculated= 38.18
Interpretation: Since X^2 Cal. is greater than X^2 tab = 38.18 > 7.81
Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that "there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness among the Male indigenes of Sagamu local government''.
H_{05}: There is no significant influence of the mass media on environmental awareness among the female indigenes of Sagamu local government.

Table 8: X^2 test showing influence of mass media on environmental awareness among the female indigenes in Sagamu local government.

Variables	**Observed**	**Expected**	**0-E**	**$(0-E)^2$**	**$(0-E)^{2/E}$**
SA	20	12.5	7.5	56.25	4.5
A	14	12.5	1.5	2.25	5.0
D	8	12.5	-4.5	20.25	1.62
SD	8	12.5	-4.5	20.25	1.62
Total	50		0		12.74

Degree of freedom =3
X^2 tab @ 0.05 level of significance= 7.81
X^2 calculated= 12.74
Interpretation: Since X^2 Cal. is greater than X^2 tab = 12.74 > 7.81
Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that "there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness among the Female indigenes of Sagamu local government''.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study reveal that there is significant influence of the mass media on the environmental awareness of Sagamu local government. This is in line with the findings of Misra (2021) who worked on the role of media in environmental awareness: An overview and found out that the circulation of environmental issues may be delayed through print media while the social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social or mass media platform. Do not delay conveying the message within the state, country or worldwide because of web based platform.

The evidence of this fact can be seen with different mass media especially television, radio, internet and various social media platform showing, displaying, writing and talking about negative influences of human being on the components of physical environment to sensitize and create awareness among the citizens.

The findings of the study also showed that there is significant influence of the mass media on environmental awareness among religious body such as Christianity and Muslim in Sagamu local government of Ogun state, Nigeria. This confirmed the findings of Al sheikh and Al Serhan (2022) who investigated the role of Digital media in achieving sustainable development in Arab world. They submitted that digital media is an important development within society and it substructure such as religious segment of the society and considers the strong link between the various interactions that can arise between members of these societies. According to Al Sheikh and Al Serhan (2022) digital media in the modern era plays important and influential roles in the lives of individuals and societies, as it is entrusted with the responsibility to shed light on the various initiatives and plans that are related to cognitive and behavioral awareness that in turn lead to the development of human environment and society in general.

The study further revealed significant influence of mass media on environmental awareness of both male and female in Sagamu local government. This is in tandem with the findings of Jena and Langthasa (2015) who examine the effects of multimedia, on knowledge, understanding skills, practice and confidence in environmental sustainability and discovered that local community members, both male and female, secondary school students and the university students performed better after the participation in the multimedia in environmental awareness programme. Jena and Langthasa (2015) opined that there existed a significant effects of multimedia programme on the awareness of environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

It is expedient and imperative to be aware of the fact that human negative interaction with the environment on daily basis continue to result or cause environmental hazard or problems which serve as a threat to environmental sustainability and human survival. The recent global covid-19 pandemic, Ebola disease crisis in Africa, air pollution, water pollution and other environmental

problems are as a result of human degrading and devastating activities on the environment. Several environmental, legislation and Act have been enacted and passed into law at the international, national and local level to control and ensure that human being to change their orientation and attitude to the environment.

However, the role of the mass media in creating awareness about all these legislations and above all the consequences of the negative interaction of human being cannot be overemphasized or under estimated. For example, it was shown on the television and pages of Nigeria daily the death of many fishes and other aquatic animal at the bank of the river in the South-South part of Nigeria. The mass media is a powerful tool of that can help to disseminate and spread information on how to take of the environment and develop positive attitude to the environment.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made among others from the findings of the study

1. The power sector of Nigeria should be improved upon so that the mass media can be effective in creating environmental awareness among the citizens.
2. Local and community centers should be created in the rural areas, so that the rural people can be well educated on the negative effects or consequences of their actions.
3. There should be adequate training for the media workers on acquiring skills and strategies to disseminate information and create awareness on environmental sustainability. Sufficient and enough airtime should be allocated to the coverage of environmental problems and challenges of television for the populace to be educated.
4. Environmentalist and scholars should be given free opportunities to write on the pages of newspaper to create more awareness for the elite in the society.
5. The media practitioners should be encouraged to use local languages and dialects to create awareness on the consequences of human negative interaction with the environment. Incentive should be given to environmental media journalist to motivate them for effective coverage of environmental issues.

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