

**FRAMING OF OIL POLLUTION NEWS: A STUDY
OF THREE SELECTED NEWSPAPERS IN THE
NIGER-DELTA, NIGERIA FROM 2008-2018**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2021

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere thanks go to God Almighty for His kindness and mercies. Thank you, God, for Your Infinite Compassion and help to me throughout my study period. Furthermore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my primary supervisor Dr. Nik Norma Nik Hasan, for her immense knowledge, experience, mentorship, and meticulous supervision. I thank her so much for every encouragement. My profound thanks go to my Co-supervisor, Prof. Dr. Adnan Hussein, for his contribution to the success of this work. I could not have imagined a better supervisor and mentor without them. Besides, I would like to thank Dr. Mohammad Saifudin, Deputy Dean Academic, Student, and Alumni Affairs, for his contributions to the progress and successful completion of this work. Besides, I thank the administrative staff members of the Department of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), for their support and kindness whenever their help is needed. My profound gratitude goes to the six (6) Nigerian journalists from *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch newspapers* who cover oil pollution news in the Niger-Delta region for the information provided during the interview. I also appreciate the support and help of all the four (4) traditional rulers and members of their cabinets from the selected four states of the Niger-Delta interviewed for this study. My special thanks go to His Royal Highness Eze Iwuogu of Ohaji Egbeama Ugwuta, Imo State, Nigeria, for his unalloyed support and fatherly advice. Very crucially, I owe my family a lot of gratitude for their prayers, sacrifice, support, and understanding throughout this journey. First of all, to my late parents, Mrs. Catherine Onuabuchi Odoemelam and Mr. James Anyanwu Odoemelam, for the excellent upbringing, I received from both of you. I pray that at the resurrection day, we shall meet in the bosom of our Lord to part no more. Secondly, I am most

grateful to my amiable wife, Tina, and my sons, Daniel, David, and Moses, for your prayers. I would not thank you all enough, but God in His Infinite mercies and compassion will repay all of you. To the rest of my family members, brothers, and sisters, I am grateful for your invaluable contributions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	All Progressive Congress
DPR	Department of Petroleum Resources
FME	Federal Ministry of Environment
FOA	Food and Agricultural Organization
HRH	His Royal Highness
HRM	His Royal Majesty
JIV	Joint Investigative Visits
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta
MOCs	Multinational Oil Companies
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
ND	Niger-Delta
NDPVF	Niger-Delta Peoples Volunteer Force
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NOSDRA	National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
USD	United States Dollars

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**PENBINGKAIAN BERITA PENCEMARAN MINYAK: KAJIAN TIGA
AKHBAR TERPILIH DELTA NIGER, NIGERIA, DARI 2008-2018**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pbingkaian berita pencemaran minyak di Delta Niger, Nigeria dari 2008 hingga 2018. Kajian ini meneroka kandungan tiga akhbar Nigeria; *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, dan *The Punch* dalam liputan beritanya mengenai pencemaran minyak di wilayah Niger-Delta. Banyak bukti yang terdapat dalam bahan bacaan menunjukkan bahawa pencemaran minyak di Niger-Delta Nigeria telah menimbulkan kemarahan dan kecaman tempatan dan antarabangsa selama beberapa dekad. Kemarahan dan kekecewaan itu berkaitan dengan kemusnahan berterusan punca pendapatan dan persekitaran semula jadi komuniti pembawa minyak oleh Syarikat Minyak Multinasional (MOC) yang beroperasi di wilayah tersebut. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kegunaan lima bingkai berita yang dikembangkan oleh Semetko dan Valkenburg; tanggungjawab, impak ekonomi, konflik, minat manusia, dan moral dalam liputan mengenai pencemaran minyak di Niger-Delta oleh tiga akhbar terpilih yang dikaji. Sebanyak 1095 makalah dianalisis kandungannya, seramai dua orang wartawan dari ketiga-tiga akhbar terpilih tersebut ditemu duga. Kajian ini juga menemu duga seorang penguasa tradisional dan anggota kabinet dari empat (4) negeri wilayah Nigeria-Delta Nigeria yang dipilih untuk tinjauan; Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, dan Rivers States. Satu kerangka kerja mempengaruhi pengkodan data; kerangka kerja Semeko dan Valkenburg (2000) untuk analisis kandungan dan analisis tema berdasarkan senarai 20 soalan yang dijawab dengan YA (1) atau TIDAK (0) yang dikembangkan oleh Semetko dan Valkenburg (2000). Kajian

ini mendapati bahawa tanggungjawab, impak ekonomi, konflik, dan minat manusia adalah kerangka yang paling banyak digunakan dalam *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, dan *The Punch* dalam semua laporan berita pencemaran minyak. Walau bagaimanapun, kerangka moral adalah kerangka yang paling tidak digunakan dalam tiga akhbar terpilih tersebut dalam tempoh sepuluh (10) tahun kajian ini. Selanjutnya, kajian ini juga menemui beberapa jenis kerangka berita yang berkembang daripada hasil temu duga dengan wartawan dan penguasa tradisional, seperti akibat pencemaran minyak, kemiskinan ekologi, kesulitan ekonomi, dan pelaku pencemaran minyak. Kerangka baharu berkembang lain yang ditemui termasuklah: impak terhadap punca pendapatan manusia, ketidakselamatan, penganiayaan wartawan, kesukaran dalam mengesahkan maklumat dan ketiadaan akses kepada kawasan pencemaran minyak, persekitaran yang tidak selamat, pengangguran belia, propaganda media massa, dan rasuah. Secara keseluruhan, kajian menunjukkan bahawa tiga surat khabar terpilih menggunakan lima berita yang dikembangkan oleh Semektko dan Valkenburg dalam laporan pencemaran minyak di Nigeria.

**FRAMING OF OIL POLLUTION NEWS: A STUDY OF THREE SELECTED
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ABSTRACT

This study wittingly examines the framing of oil pollution news among three selected newspapers in Niger-Delta, Nigeria, from 2008-2018. The study explored contents in three Nigerian newspapers, *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch*, in their news coverage on oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region. Evidence abounds in the literature showing that oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta has generated both local and international outrage and condemnation over many decades. The direct impacts cum problems resulting from oil pollution have led to economic deprivations, destruction of farmlands, and livelihood of the people. This study aims to explore the different news frames used by the three selected newspapers in their coverage of oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. Also, the study aimed at exploring the challenges of covering oil pollution news in Nigeria's Niger-Delta among journalists and news editors of the three newspapers. Another objective of this study is to explore the views of Niger-Delta opinion leaders held due to oil pollution and their challenges. The study was guided by the press's agenda-setting, framing, and public opinion theories. Besides, this study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to ascertain the use of the five news frames developed by Semetko and Valkenburg; responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, human interest, and morality in the coverage of oil pollution in the Niger-Delta by the three selected newspapers under review. A total of 1095 news articles were content analyzed. Two journalists from each of the three chosen papers were interviewed through in-depth interviews. The study also conducted a focus group discussion with one traditional

ruler and their cabinet members from each of the four (4) states of Nigeria's Niger-Delta region selected for the survey; Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, and the Rivers States. One framework governed data coding; the Semeko and Valkenburg (2000) framework for the content analysis and thematic analysis based on lists of 20 questions answered with either "YES" (1) or "NO" (0) developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). The study found that responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, and human interest were the most used frames in *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch* in oil pollution news reports. However, the morality frame was the most diminutive used frame among the three selected newspapers within the ten years of the study. Moreover, the research also identified several types of emerging news frames from the findings of the interviews with journalists and traditional rulers, such as consequences of oil pollution, ecological impoverishment, economic hardship, and perpetrators of oil pollution. Other emerging new frames found include; impacts on human livelihood, insecurity, maltreatment of journalists, difficulty verifying information and inaccessibility of oil pollution sites, unsafe environment, mass media propaganda, and corruption. In all, the study revealed that the three selected newspapers used the five news developed by Semetko and Valkenburg in the reports of oil pollution in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Accounts in literature have shown that oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger- Delta has generated both local and international outrage and condemnation over many decades. The anger and frustrations were related to the constant destruction of livelihood and the natural environment of the oil-bearing communities by Multinational Oil Companies (MOCs) operating in the region. Consequently, the cumulative impact of this situation has impoverished millions of farmers of Niger-Deltans that depend on streams, seas, rivers, and oceans for survival. The air and water in the region stink, while the fish and crabs smell pure "sweet bonny" light crude oil (AmnestyInternationalReport, 2016).

The above portrays a scenario of the numerous economic, social, and health impacts of oil pollution on the host communities of oil companies operating in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. Therefore, there is a growing quest for information from the public on environmental issues such as oil pollution. There is a significant link between how these environmental problems are constructed and presented in the media and how it shapes opinion leaders' views. As a result, this chapter discusses the study background, the problem statement that necessitated this research, the research questions, and the objectives. The remaining part focused on the study's significance, scope, operationalizations, and the concepts used in this study.

1.2 Background

Annually, information from a variety of outlets, including books, journal articles, and periodicals, shows that the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria suffers from hundreds of oil pollution, which damages the environment and devastates the local population (Amenaghawo & Wennerbeck, 2016). Powerful actors in the oil industry and the Nigerian government have failed to prevent and clean-up the oil pollution. The negligence in the Niger-Delta region has resulted in decades of contamination. As a result, Nigeria's Niger-Delta region is now one of the most polluted places on earth (AmnestyInternationalReport, 2016). The entire population of Nigeria's Niger-Delta depends primarily on the marine ecosystem and other farm products for their survival. Hence, any environmental degradation that affects water resources and land reduces the potential for sustainable livelihood in the region.

Oil pollution has threatened the environment and local people for many decades. The pollution of farmlands and the collapse of the local economy of the people of Niger-Delta is a further significant indicator of environmental contamination (Plessl, 2017). Also, over the years, oil pollution has negatively impacted the physical environment of oil-producing communities. Elum, Mopipi, and Henri-Ukoha (2016) observed that oil pollution has increased the rate of environmental pollution in the Niger-Delta and perpetuated food insecurity due to the death of fish, crops, loss of farmlands, and viable rivers for other economic activities. The pollution also threatens subsistence peasant farmers and the environment; hence, the entire livelihood and survival of the people (Udofia, 2015). The release of crude oil into the streams, lakes, rivers, beaches, seas, oceans, and land in the Niger-Delta region can be identified as the primary cause of extreme poverty. Thus, when oil pollution occurs, it becomes

poisonous and threatens the rich coastal habitat of the affected areas. Besides, Okonkwo, Kumar, and Taylor (2015) argued that 70% of the people of the Niger-Delta region live below the poverty line with less than \$1 a day and without essential amenities. The arguments by Okonkwo et al., Elum et al., Plessi, and Amnesty international show that oil pollution has severely impaired the coastal ecosystem in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. It has also compromised the livelihoods of the region's impoverished residents and thereby causing restiveness among the youths. Therefore, the discovery of oil in Nigeria since the 1950s has made the country a victim of negative environmental consequences of oil pollution. These have manifested into a decrepit and squalor situation for the people and revealed how multinational oil companies in the region had neglected their corporate social responsibilities (AmnestyInternationalReport, 2016). It is as a result of these environmental pollution issues in the Niger-Delta that this study has become necessary.

First, it is of utmost importance to study the local newspapers, which are still the primary source of information for the locals to understand the oil crisis (Ashong & Udoudo, 2017). After all, it was evident that media could influence directly by summoning an emotional or intellectual response and indirectly controlling exposure to particular events. Moreover, the complexity of those events in the media is subject to public scrutiny (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010). As a result, exploring the news frames on oil pollution, the content of media framing, and agenda-setting across the local newspapers for this study is essential. This is done by setting the media agenda with news framing. The agenda-setting focuses on the association between media coverage and population perception of issue importance. It implies that the frequency of news story presentation and how the media decides to convey that coverage correlates to population perception about the importance of an issue or topic

(Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2006). While framing “is the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2007). Because of the above reasons, the media can shape and mold the Niger-Delta leaders' views through coverage of specific topics (Dunaway, Branton, & Abrajano, 2010).

Consequently, the success of any media organization in reporting environmental issues and fostering awareness of the dangers of environmental degradation and pollution caused in Nigeria by activities of multinational oil corporations depends on its ability to gather, process, and disseminate relevant and timely environmental news to the public. Thus, news framing and coverage of oil pollution by the media are worthy of study because they represent environmental issues that affect people nationally and internationally. Nerlich et al. argued that environmental problems such as global warming receive more attention from the scientific community, whereas oil spills are mainly left out (Nerlich, Forsyth, & Clarke, 2012). Similarly, to create environmental awareness and understanding, the mass media must be at the forefront of the crusade against environmental degradation while considering the public (Lee & Chuan, 2012).

Besides, the newspaper culture in Nigeria is that of trust, mainly when information emanates from privately-owned newspapers. The majority of the country's newspapers are owned by private individuals who often seek to ensure that the best work for them as men and women of the pen profession (Ate & Ikerodah, 2012). Therefore, newspapers have become potent tools to disseminate information about environmental pollution and other relevant information. Scholars like Harrison (2019) see it as the last beacon of hope for society. The media is the last beacon of hope as it is expected to fight injustice melted to the public by the government of the day without

fear or favor through accurate and objective reporting of issues. Again, the press is the hope of society because it must ensure freedom of speech, respect for human rights, and act as a watchdog of society.

Privately-owned newspaper outfits in Nigeria are usually more direct in their reports and are not given to unbridled propaganda to act as government mouthpieces. Without fear or favour, they typically report the story as it is. Some are more vociferous in criticizing government policies and get hounded and molested by agents of government (SundaySun, 2014). As a result, the three selected private newspapers have contributed to this study by being more responsive to the people of the Niger-Delta region, critical of the oil giants and the government, and open to opposing perspectives in their coverage of oil pollution. They have also contributed to the understanding of this study by framing oil pollution as responsibility, human interest, economic consequences, conflict, morality, human health concerns, insecurity, and economic depletions. The above qualities associated with privately owned newspapers enhance public trust in every oil pollution news story and other news items. Against this backdrop, this study's outcome is well understood and taken as the thorough picture of the environmental situation in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. However, there are exceptions, and, in some instances, some newspaper proprietors project their sentiments and bias based on ethnic affinity. Likewise, privately-owned newspaper outfits rarely get advertisements from the government, its agencies, or individuals that are against the government.

On the contrary, government-owned media are mainly propaganda machinery to popularize government policies. They are subordinates to authoritative systems and are not independent of the government (Moehler & Singh, 2011). Thus, citizens do not place considerable trust in government-owned media in contrast to the private. In this

study, oil pollution news stories and others from government media are seen as inaccurate and government cover-up due to lack of trust in government institutions. As a result, easy access to newspapers in Nigeria can give the print media a significant role in setting an agenda, framing, and influencing opinion leaders on oil pollution. Hence, in this study, newspapers are used to investigate agenda-setting, news framing, and opinion leaders on oil pollution as an environmental issue in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region by examining the contents of three selected newspapers.

1.3 Problem Statement

Over the years, the media in Nigeria has evolved into a societal institution that influences the nation through news coverage. For example, the oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria has become part of media coverage over the decades. Oil pollution in the Niger-Delta is reported based on the destruction of the people's livelihood, human health impacts, economic depletion, people responsible for the pollution, insecurity, and ecological degradation. One way the media use in covering oil pollution is framing. Entman (1993) explained that "framing makes a piece of information more meaningful or memorable." The extent of news story coverage on oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region in terms of frequency will influence the public's perception of its meaning or significance. The media play significant roles in shaping popular opinions on oil pollution, the economy, and politics because the media coverage of events is the primary news source that people use to form opinions of public issues such as oil pollution.

This study explores the framing of oil pollution news in selected three newspapers in the Niger-Delta, Nigeria from 2008-2018. Scholars such as Ebegbulem, Ekpe, & Adejumo, 2013; Ejiba, Onya, & Adams, 2016 have highlighted the public

concern about the destruction of their means of livelihood, health impacts, the environment, and frequent conflicts between Multinational Oil Companies (MOCs) operating in the Niger-Delta region and the oil-bearing communities due to oil pollution. This anxiety emanates from their decades of experience over the negative impacts of oil pollution, leading to thousands of deaths and even forceful shutdown and expulsion of Shell workers out of the region in the late 1990s.

However, despite all this evidence, research on the framing of this issue is relatively too little. The presence of oil in farmlands, seas, oceans, creeks, and arable lands in the Niger-Delta region has attracted attention from media professionals and research scholars. Previous studies on the Niger-Delta region focused on oil pollution, massive landslides, air pollution, famine, erosion, climate change, and biodiversity (Omamuyovwi, 2017; Ashong & Udoudo, 2017).

Other past studies on framing oil pollution news in the selected three newspapers in the Niger-Delta, Nigeria have focused on oil pollution as conflict and war but unrelated to the kinds of frames used and views of Niger-Delta leaders. Thus, Amaneghawon (2016) investigated the framing of the Niger-Delta oil conflict in selected newspapers in Nigeria in terms of sources and prominence. In another study, Wennerbeck (2016) analyzed the oil war in the Niger-Delta and its representation in the media. Besides, previous research on the framing of oil pollution and other environmental problems has associated oil pollution with health problems (Bruedeler, Anna, Holder & Roland, 2019) and economic loss (Nwabueze, Sogbanmu, & Ugwumba, 2020).

Additionally, previous studies also revealed that 71.8% of Nigerians rely on newspapers as sources of information, especially in the South-east and South-west of the country (Akande, Oyeniya, & Aduba, 2014; Musa & Ferguson, 2013). Although,

in principle, the news media, in general, should be the fourth estate for the public, ownership of media could limit its roles and responsibility. Hence, it can be argued that the media framing and agenda-setting of any media outlets could be skewed to the owners' wants.

Studying the framing of oil pollution news stories in the selected three newspapers in Nigeria is essential. Oil pollution has led to the economic crisis in the Niger-Delta region. Elum et al. (2016) posit that oil pollution has caused food insecurity, loss of arable lands for economic activities, death of fishes and other aquatic organisms. Also, Babatunde (2020) add that oil pollution is mainly associated with poverty, protests, insecurity, hunger, destruction of mangroves and livelihood, and damage to soil fertility. Since oil pollution leads to an economic crisis, it has become necessary to explore the kinds of frames used in its coverage. This is because knowing the kinds of frames used would enable the study to find out which newspaper used the most frames in the coverage of oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region as an economic consequences issue.

Furthermore, oil pollution is challenging to the environment and the farmers in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. This is due to the release of oil into oceans, creeks, rivers, seas, streams, rivers, and lakes in the Niger-Delta region. As the region's people are mainly farmers, the immediate impact cum problems resulting from oil pollution have led to economic deprivations, destruction of farmlands, and livelihood (Ekpenyong & Udofia, 2015, Chijioke et al. 2018). Framing has become necessary to help journalists and news editors explain why oil pollution news coverage is salient or essential. This is because oil pollution poses a massive threat to the environment and farmers. Just as Duru (2014) argued, oil pollution causes considerable damage to plants; oiled shoots of cash crops wilt and die, and crop yield stifled. In this way, it

reduces the amount of disposable income available to farmers and their families. Oil pollution also disengages farmers from their farming businesses, thereby causing economic hardship to themselves and their dependents (Idumah & Okunmadewa, 2013). Therefore, it is a known fact that oil pollution causes considerable damage to Nigeria's Niger-Delta region's overall means of survival. From Idumah and Okunmadewa (2013), the above argument shows that oil pollution reduces the quality and quantity of food available to households in the Niger-Delta.

Besides, oil pollution poses a considerable challenge to the oil-bearing communities of the Niger-Delta region. For instance, when the oil-bearing communities eat food such as vegetables, fishes, and other aquatic organisms exposed to oil pollution, it causes human health problems such as skin diseases, rashes, neonatal deaths, birth deformities, and diarrhea (Bolaji Babatunde 2015). For instance, when fishes get in contact with crude oil, the impact of natural and artificial elements levels in the sediments of fishes in Niger- Delta water increases. As a result, oil pollution into streams, rivers, lakes, creeks, and farmlands could cause a 45% increase in the carcinogenic danger level in humans. Hence, after so many years of exposure to oil pollution, eating fishes from these sources could cause harmful effects such as cancer (Albert, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2018). In the same vein, Sako (2017) argued that plants and animals accumulate dangerous and harmful toxins in their tissues when exposed to oil pollution. As a result, such plants and animals are unfit for human consumption. Also, people exposed to oil pollution show high levels of disease symptoms and environmental distress such as worries, annoyance, and intolerance as some of the region's health effects (Nriagu, Udofia, Ekong, & Ebuk, 2016).

Oil pollution has led to constant conflicts in the Niger-Delta region. Over the last fifty decades, oil pollution has led to the arms struggle and proliferation of numerous

militant groups in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region (Mba, Mba, Ogbuabor & Arazu, 2019). Thus, Babatunde (2020) argued that the direct consequences of oil pollution have led to multidimensional and protracted conflicts in oil-bearing communities. Exploring the framing of oil pollution is significant to ascertain which of the selected three newspapers used the conflict frame more in the coverage of oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region. This is because most affected communities sometimes resort to militancy as a last resort by joining groups like Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) or Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) as a way to attract the attention of both the Multinational Oil Companies (MOCs) and the government of Nigeria for compensation. Hence, it is a known fact that oil pollution causes considerable conflict and damage to the overall survival of the people of Nigeria's Niger-Delta region (Mba et al., 2019). Environmental pollution caused by oil plays a vital role in creating conditions for the present culture of conflicts in the Niger-Delta. Such factors as poverty, media exposure, hopelessness among the youths in the region, and depressed economic situation are among the problems orchestrated by oil pollution.

Furthermore, studies also revealed that 71.8% of Nigerians rely on newspapers as sources of information, especially in the South-east and South-west of the country (Akande et al., 2014; Musa & Ferguson, 2013). Although, in principle, the news media, in general, should be the fourth estate for the public, ownership of media could limit its roles and responsibility. Hence, it can be argued that the media framing and agenda-setting of any media outlets could be skewed to the wants of the owners.

Research from other countries such as the United States shows that US newspapers frame environmental and other public health-related matters to enhance general understanding. Framing is also at improving appropriate responses from individuals and communities (Melinda, 2016). Canadian newspapers' framing of environmental

issues also influences reporters' news values and public opinions on topics such as the Trans Canada Keystone XL oil pipeline (Inyckj, 2017). In Malaysia, Saifudin (2016) also acknowledged that when the media communicates environmental information via news articles and features, the public perceives the media as 'green' and as a 'proper' media organization that takes responsibility for nature rather than being profit-oriented. Thus, the public creates a relationship between the media and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), especially when the public contacts the media to report environmental problems.

Based on the above studies, those centered explicitly on media coverage failed to address framing, which is how a piece of news such as oil pollution is framed. The argument over the ability of the three selected newspapers for this study to use framing in the coverage of oil pollution are questions that continue to elicit varied responses. What kinds of frames did the three selected newspapers use to cover oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region? Why did journalists and news editors of the three selected newspapers use salience to cover oil pollution? Are there challenges faced by journalists and news editors while covering oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region?. What kinds of views are held by Niger-Delta leaders due to oil pollution and the challenges they faced due to oil pollution?.

Thus, this study investigated the framing of oil pollution news stories in selected three newspapers in Nigeria from 2008-2018. The study was guided by a combination of agenda-setting and framing theories, in-depth interviews of journalists, and focus group discussions of opinion leaders of the Niger-Delta rulers. The aim is to uncover the kinds of news frames used by the selected three newspapers in the coverage of oil pollution, why journalists use salience in reporting oil pollution, and

opinion leaders' views about oil pollution Niger-Delta. The study was also guided by the five news frames developed by Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five news frames are responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, human interest, and morality.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research problem statement, the research questions are:

1. What kinds of frames do *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch* newspapers use to report oil pollution in Nigeria? Why?
2. Why do journalists and news editors of the three selected newspapers use salient in the coverage of oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region?
3. What kinds of challenges faced by journalists and news editors of the three newspapers covering oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region?
4. What kinds of views are held by the Niger-Delta opinion leaders due to oil pollution and the challenges they faced due to oil pollution?

1.5 Research Objectives

This research explored newspapers framing and public opinion on oil pollution in Nigeria from 2008-2018. The specific objectives of this thesis are, therefore, broken down into the following:

1. To explore the different news frames used by the three newspapers in their coverage of oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta;

2. To explain why the three papers use salience why framing news on oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta in a particular way;
3. To explore the challenges of covering oil pollution news in Nigeria's Niger-Delta among journalists and news editors of the three newspapers.
4. To explore the kinds of views, the Niger-Delta leaders held due to oil pollution and their challenges due to oil pollution.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is significant since a detailed review indicates that past studies on the kinds of frames and views held by Niger-Delta leaders on oil pollution in Nigeria are scarce. Although environmental degradation persists in Nigeria, similar studies are often left out. Thus, this study is filling the communication gap aspects. This research also serves as empirical evidence of the environmental status in Nigeria. In this study, framing is studied to understand how oil pollution news stories are constructed and presented to the people of the Niger-Delta and the country. Public opinion of the people and media staff are studied to ascertain their views, concerns, and frustrations about oil pollution ravaging the communities within the Niger-Delta region. This confirms the observation by Fernandez (2016) that one actor does not dominate the media. Instead, the media is represented by multiple actors and discourses, each negotiating to ensure that their views predominate and influence groups' interpretation, understanding, and actions.

Academically, this research is significant because it further explains why journalists and news editors face challenges while covering and reporting news on oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. The study also uncovered the differences

and similarities between the various kinds of news frames used by the three newspapers to cover oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region.

Professionally, this study is significant because it unearthed the different news frames and news sources that could motivate media professionals within and outside of Nigeria to be more committed to covering oil pollution issues. For instance, (Fielden, Grupac, & Adamko, 2018) argued that exposure to various news media sources and frames is an essential source of political information that promotes commitment to pursuing noble courses. Administratively, this study generates information for governments and other relevant stakeholders in formulating better environmental policies. This study develops verifiable data to analyze oil pollution problems in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region for future research. The development of these valid data helps the people of Nigeria's Niger-Delta and Nigerians, in general, to be well-informed on how to relate with media reports on oil pollution.

Furthermore, this study used the kinds of frames used by the selected papers, why journalists used salience, and the views of opinion leaders of the Niger-Delta to explore how relevant stakeholders articulate oil pollution problems in the Niger-Delta despite its controversial nature. This is bolstered by Janks (1997) that language is used for reproducing or contesting existing social relations to serve different interests. As a result, this study fills a research gap due to the shortage of studies on the kinds of frames used in the coverage of oil pollution in Nigeria. This study has gingered mass media professionals in Nigeria and worldwide towards planning, research, evaluation, and dissemination of useful environmental messages, yielding the desired objectives in resolving some of the problems of oil pollution and other ecological issues globally. Moreover, this study used framing of news stories on oil pollution in Nigeria to understand how to encourage various levels of government in the country and around

the world on the importance of formulating better policies both for the environment and the mass media practitioners. Also, to develop effective environmental prevention strategies that are likely to shape people's attitudes, increase their knowledge, and change their behaviours that endanger the environment.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Oil pollution is prevalent in the Niger-Delta region relative to the other parts of the country, as it is home to the oil industry in Nigeria. Crude oil was first discovered in the Niger-Delta region in 1956 at Oloibiri in the present-day Bayelsa State of Nigeria. The country's first oil field came on stream in 1961, producing 5,100 BPD (Elekwachi, Nwankwoala Hycienth, Ocheje Johnmark, & Onyishi, 2019). This study focused only on framing oil pollution news in selected three newspapers in the Niger-Delta, Nigeria, from 2008 to 2018. There are over 120 local and English language daily newspapers published in Nigeria. Out of 50 national dailies, three (3) papers, namely, *The Daily Sun*, *The Guardian*, and *The Punch*, were purposively selected for this study.

The three newspapers were chosen for this study by the researcher because they have high circulation rates throughout the country and are readily available. The rationale for selecting the newspapers is further elaborated in chapter three under methodology. The study was also purposively limited to interviewing one (1) journalists and one (1) news editor from each of the three newspapers chosen for this study. This selection is because the researcher wants to feature only journalists and news editors working and experience covering environmental issues. Also, one (1) traditional ruler and members of their cabinet from four (4) out of the nine (9) states

that make up Nigeria's Niger-Delta region were purposively selected. The reason for this selection is because traditional rulers are well known by the people.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts

The meaning and usage of the terms listed in this study are limited to how they are defined below. Efforts would be made to make a clear-cut explanation or provide additional information wherever any of them is used to mean other than how it is defined. Thus, Jensen et al. (2019) explain that operationalization enables the researcher to generalize his findings to the defined population, while concepts are the building blocks of social theories. As a result, operationalization helps in clarifying, strengthening, and making connections between the ideas and data used in a study.

Hence, Saunders et al. (2018) explain that operationalization or measurement is how the researcher attempts to convert the various dimensions of a concept into directly measurable entities. It is the description of the 'operations' that he or she will undertake to measure the multiple aspects of the idea of interest, enabling him or her to make empirical observations on it. In other words, concepts are those instruments that a researcher employs to describe observable phenomena. They are the foundations on which the researcher builds propositions and theories. Consequently, operational terms and concepts used in this research include framing, newspapers, news, pollution, public opinion, media, and agenda-setting.

1.8.1 Framing

How the mass media creates and presents information in its news stories affects how audiences view the news items. It refers to the amount of prominence that newspapers place on a news angle of an event due to the frequency of the news angle in associated stories, and the source cited to authenticate the news angle, and the

newspapers' use of words to enforce a specific understanding of the problem from the public. Categorically, framing in this work is used to depict the kinds of news frames used by the journalists and news editors of the three selected newspapers in the coverage of oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region using Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five news frames as a guide. There have been various definitions of the term 'framing,' as many scholars and authors suggested. For instance, (McLeod & Shah, 2015) explains that framing is "how messages, based on specific emphasis and exclusion", can structure the people's thinking who encounter them.

1.8.2 Frame

The frame has been utilized in various contexts, most often outside the realms of media and communication. Its usage in this study was to express the content analysis of the three selected newspapers' oil pollution news stories. Frames in this study were also used to demonstrate how oil pollution news was represented in the selected three newspapers of the Niger-Delta, Nigeria, from 2008-2018. Similarly, frames in this study were also used to express the thematic grouping of in-depth interviews with journalists and news editors and focus group discussions with traditional rulers from the Niger-Delta region. There have been various definitions of the term 'framing,' as many scholars and authors suggested.

1.8.3 Mass Media

It encompasses all types of media of information, such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, television, radio, the internet, or other forms of electronic media such as social media. The term was used interchangeably with the newspaper, which served as the case study for this study. Thus, the newspaper for this study is used to

demonstrate the medium through which the people of Nigeria's Niger-Delta region read every day about oil pollution ravaging their area. Newspapers publish various content, including reporting, commentary, opinion, advertisements, culture, and sports.

1.8.4 News

In this study, the news was used to express only straight news stories about oil pollution or oil spillage published in the three selected newspapers in any part of the Niger-Delta region. In other words, the news is an event that happened in the past 24 hours, which was not known earlier. It also shows that information is of broad interest to the people and generates curiosity among listeners (Mellado, 2015).

1.8.5 Oil Pollution

Oil pollution for this study is the spilling of oil into the rivers, creeks, streams, and farmlands of the people of Nigeria's Niger-Delta region, thereby causing untold hardship to the people. Oil pollution was used to express the damage caused to the streams, rivers, seas, oceans, destruction of farmlands and the environment, and other livelihoods of the people of the Niger-Delta region. According to Obida, Blackburn, Whyatt, and Semple (2018b) pollution is the introduction of substances that are harmful to plants, animals, and humans in the environment. It is also the presence of one or more elements in the atmospheric air at concentrations and duration above the natural limits (UIm, 2018). Similarly, Bloemsma (2016) described pollution as a significant threat to health due to its tremendous and various health effects on humans of all ages and in both genders.

1.8.6 Agenda-setting

Several scholars like Entman, (1993) have used this term to explain how media agenda translates to what the public considers the most crucial issue. Agenda-setting was used in this study to explore oil pollution as an issue of salience. Hence, the importance attached to the coverage of oil pollution by the journalists and news editors of the three selected newspapers in the Niger-Delta region. In short, agenda-setting is referred to attribution of salient or importance to an issue such as oil pollution prevalent in the Niger-Delta region.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews past studies on the roles of newspapers in Nigeria. Besides, it explores environmental communication in Nigeria and the state of the Nigerian environment. It also discusses the theoretical aspects of this study, such as the press's agenda-setting and framing theories. The application of the agenda-setting and framing theories to this study was explored. Also, the politics and corruption in the oil industry in Nigeria were discussed as well. These literature reviews offer a historical perspective on the background of oil pollution in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region. The studies also include details of what the Nigerian press has done over the years to highlight the country's environmental pollution problem.

2.2 Roles of Newspapers in Nigeria

As the earliest form of traditional mass media, newspapers are widely read in urban and rural areas throughout Nigeria and several other African countries, including Ghana, South Africa, Liberia, Togo, and Ivory Coast. While some newspapers have a broader reach, others focus exclusively on the interests and information needs of the communities in which they operate. Community newspapers are published in the communities' native languages and provide residents with information that aids their development. Community newspapers are growing in readership because people rely on them to fill information gaps. In contrast, national newspapers are experiencing a

readership decline due to the emergence and growth of social media (Andsager, Chen, Miles, Smith, & Nothwehr, 2015).

Thus, the role of newspapers in representing societal issues such as the environment is sometimes complicated, dynamic, and chaotic. Due to substantial environmental problems in Nigeria, such as oil pollution, climate change, air pollution, erosion, and flooding, journalists are sometimes under pressure to report these environmental issues promptly. As a result, the roles of newspapers in the coverage of environmental problems are sometimes either sketchy or confusing due to the complicated, chaotic, and time constraints faced by journalists in Nigeria. One of the problems that complicate the role of journalists in Nigeria is ownership and control, as owners tend to dictate news coverage. Also, there is the problem of lack of proper training and education on the part of journalists, financial constraints, and commercialization of news, management policy, the dependence of journalists on press releases, lack of adequate facilities, and apathy for reading and research by journalists covering environmental and other issues facing the country (Kadiri, Muhammed, Raji, & Sulaiman, 2015). Newspapers in Nigeria sometimes takes the role of educators, reporters, communicators, and sometimes as the agent of change and stability.

As educators, newspapers have a critical position in the coverage of environmental issues in Nigeria because of their ability to interpret environmental programs to the public and even follow and record their implementation. As a result, newspapers have the mandate to educate the members of the public by explaining in simple and straightforward terms the problems at hand. In the same vein, Aiyesimoju and Awoniyi (2012) described newspapers as potent forces in educating the public about environmental and other social problems facing society. Newspapers play

significant roles in the existing knowledge of environmental problems in Nigeria in so many ways. Firstly, they are accessible to large proportions of the population. Secondly, newspapers dedicate more time and space to environmental topics. Thirdly, through newspapers, people are aware of crucial environmental information such as oil pollution, climate change, and other forms of environmental issues.

As a communicator, newspapers play the role of disseminating crucial environmental issues to all the relevant stakeholders such as the multinational oil companies, government, and oil-bearing communities on the need to be environmentally friendly. According to Agwu and Amu (2015), the media could offer valuable and practical information to the citizenry to make an informed decision about the environment. Newspapers also play the active role of communicating environmental problems in Nigeria and others issues such as politics, business, entertainment, and other social issues in the country. According to Uwaezu, Brownson, and Nwachukwu (2014), the role of newspapers as communicators is significant in the development of a world population that is aware of and concerned about the need and power of information. Additionally, newspapers act as educators and a catalyst for an informed society. However, it is also necessary to note that acquiring knowledge about how to make informed decisions about government programs and policies is one thing. Moreover, newspapers must ensure strict compliance and implementation of all relevant government policies, especially those bordering on oil pollution that has caused havoc in the Niger-Delta region. It is vital to understand that newspapers play a significant role in the overall education of Nigerians about issues happening nationally and globally. Newspapers play the role of agents of change and stability. They have the power to make aspects of environmental problems and other social issues more salient by drawing attention to them. Also, they have the power to distract

attention from environmental issues and others facing the country by relegating them to the background. In this way, newspapers stabilize the state by thinking twice about the implications of their news reports before making them public. Similarly, Thaker, Zhao, and Leiserowitz (2017) argued that newspapers, as agents of change, have the responsibility to uphold the truth by being objective in their reportage at all times. So, there is a need for the media to always hold national interest utmost above personal or parochial interest for the stability of the country. However, insufficient training and education for media professionals like newspaper reporters, ignorance of some critical issues about global and regional concerns might encourage sensational journalism without proper recourse to the stability of the country.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to argue that the public's interest in environmental information is sustained by complex environmental problems, which frequently provide readers with obvious facts and figures. Individuals are aided in environmental decision-making through such detailed reporting. Even in the United States, where access to the internet has increased social media use, the local population continues to rely on newspapers for environmental news (Andsager et al., 2015). As part of their detailed news coverage, newspapers advocate for public action to support commendable environmental programs or policies against harmful ones (Roitman et al., 2018).

Apart from the uncommon environmental news covered daily, Nigerian media devote many pages to environmental news in their daily editions. The content of the pages keeps the readers' informed of the newest environmental issues confronting the nation and potential remedies. Journalists contribute to environmental education and awareness via professional research, discoveries, and confirmation from prominent environmentalists (Kim, Baek, Yoon, Oh, & Choi, 2017; Weathers & Kendall, 2016).

Many readers are drawn to newspapers by the environmental sections, which they see as a repository for environmental knowledge; specific environmental stories are sometimes published in episodes (the narrative continues from one edition to the next), and this strategy maintains readers' interest in following the story.

The majority of newspaper readers are mature adults capable of making healthy choices for themselves and others like family members, friends, neighbors, and groups (Harrison, Macmillan, & Rudd, 2020). Thus, Hurst & Stern (2020) argued that even though a portion of the media audience is exposed to environmental news through broadcast media, they will still consult newspapers for specifics before making environmental judgments.

2.3 Environmental Communication in Nigeria

Rarely has research ever opened up discussions or criticisms on the importance of the media's role in informing the public about oil pollution and other environmental problems they faced. What has triggered arguments for many years now was how effectively the media play their roles in different issues bordering on the environment (Cai, Li, Song, Gao, & Wu, 2019; Hansen, 2018). Similarly, efforts have been made to discuss how print media contribute significantly to the development of environmental communication by providing information that assists audiences in making vital environmental decisions and often serves as a common source of environmental information about emerging environmental threats, oil pollution, human health concerns, destruction of means of livelihood, environmental impoverishment and degradations, and those responsible for it at the national and international levels. Torwel and Rodney (2010) summarized this point as they identified newspapers, television, magazines, radio, and social media as providers of