

## The Media and Environmental Health in Anambra State: A Study of Awka Metropolis

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the contribution of the media to Environmental Health in Awka, Anambra State Capital: The broad objective was to determine the ways through which the mass media raise awareness on environmental health issue. The study was anchored on Agenda-Setting Theory while adopting survey research design and simple random sampling technique with the questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Findings showed that the broadcast media has been very effective in environmental health management broadcast media transmits stories of environmental issues, messages on environmental hazards are very significant to human and societal development and that message on environmental issues has raised consciousness and created awareness on environmental issues amongst the people, thereby*

*making them more environmentally sensitive. It also found that, the mass media has impacted the attitude of the public in dealing with environmental issues and concludes that environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens. It suggested that concerned authorities should give the citizenry, unimpeded access to information concerning the environment including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, while providing them the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. This research also recommends a replacement of the watch-dog role to that of a Guide-dog role since the watch dog role has been viewed as witnessing interference by both the government and the governed.*

*Keywords: Media, Environmental health, Environmental hazards, hazardous materials.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The influence of the mass media on the human society is enormous as it has become an integral part of man

and virtually indispensable. These cuts across behavioral, scientific, and even the environment, [1]. Man

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is said to be environment-dependent and so needs to be environment conscious even with perceived environmental problems that yearn to be mitigated so as to protect the future. This calls for precise, organized, purposeful and co-coordinated mass media approach to environmental issues, problems and challenges. The mass media, among other roles, should challenge the people to take ownership of their environment and find ways of solving the problems for a more sustainable society.

Issues about environmental degradation, conservation, protection, sanitation and management are now at the front burner in the corporate growth and survival policies of most business and non-business organizations. This focus on the environment was hyped in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden which raised attention to the numerous consequences of neglect or abuse of the There environment, urging all to conserve, protect, renew and maintain a healthy environment for continued human survival, growth and sustainable development. [2] notes that at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, this problem was regarded as a major barrier in the path towards sustainability of the environment and urged countries to formally adopt Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) policies, legislation, strategies, and guidelines that will assist.

While [3] laments the environmental problems that accelerate changes in living conditions, United Nations Economic and Social Council, (2009)

decries poor waste management practices, in particular, the widespread dumping of wastes in bodies of water and uncontrolled dump sites which aggravate the problems of general low sanitation levels across the African continent.

In Nigeria, nay Anambra State, the problem of solid waste management (SWM) has been an age long concern and an obligatory function of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) [4]. [5] recognizes it as a challenge facing state and local government environmental protection agencies while [6] observes that lack of financial resources, institutional weakness, improper selection of technology, transportation systems, disposal options, public's apathy towards environmental cleanliness and sanitation have made this service unsatisfactory. [7] recognizes the power of the media to disseminate information capable of shaping social norms and values and influencing people's decisions in manners that promote a more environmentally sustainable society, more so, as the state can boast of many broadcast stations (both government owned and private ones). This study covers the media and residents of the capital territory comprising the whole of Awka South LGA, parts of Awka North, Anaocha, Njikoka, Dunukofia, local government areas who are audience of programmes broadcast by the media in the state.

This study therefore peers into the Media and Environmental Health, focusing on increased consciousness, awareness, education and knowledge about the environment in consonance with the views of [8] who contends that

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development media messages, if structured and sustained over a long period of time will ensure a smooth transition of mass media agenda to public agenda.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The society depends on the mass media for their information needs mostly through the television and/or radio. The mass media is said to be active in its contributions to the management of environmental health issues in Nigeria. Every individual is a potential generator of waste and thus, contributes to the problem of waste management which [9] identifies as being aggravated by social attitudes.

Some of the issues identified as solid waste problems in developing countries including Nigeria are: shortage of garbage collection vehicles and delays in collection of garbage due to breakdown of these vehicles; lack of proper storage areas for recyclable solid waste prior to disposing in open dumping areas; lack of a long-term systematic approach to sustainable waste management and inadequate public cooperation or lack of public awareness and lack of cooperation by other state institutions, which engage in haphazard or unauthorized dumping at the garbage dumping sites. This obviously causes health and environmental challenges such as blockage of drainages, flooded roads and the spread of offensive

odours and diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid fever, malaria and even cholera.

From the foregoing, accelerated media campaigns, the lack of commitment on the part of the government and poor attitude of the people towards the environment have been identified as problems. This study is therefore poised to ascertain how the media enlightenment campaigns on solid waste management influence the attitude and behavior of residents of Awka, the Anambra State capital territory.

#### **Research Questions**

The following questions were posed to guide the study.

- What are the respondents' levels of exposure to messages on environmental health?
- What public awareness campaigns on environmental health are broadcast in the media in Anambra state?
- To what extent have the broadcast media contributed towards enlightenment on environmental health management?
- How do the residents perceive the broadcast media messages on Environmental health?
- Is there a significant relationship between positive attitudes of residents towards waste management and the media campaigns?

#### **CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE**

While it is historically documented that radio broadcasting was first launched in Nigeria in 1932 (Nigeria Community Radio Coalition, 2012), television broadcasting was said to

have emerged in the country in 1959 [10]. It is, however, important to note that among all mass media in Nigeria, studies have found radio as the most popular and widely

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owned and used medium among Nigerians [11].

According to Broadcasting Board of Governors (2014), radio is the dominant mass media channel in Nigeria, with 77.4 percent overall listenership among the population adding that more than seven in 10 people across all major demographic groups listen to radio for news and other media contents regularly every week. It was further found that 60 percent of the Nigerian populations watch television regularly on weekly basis (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2014).

### **Environment**

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act of 1990, under section 38 defines environment to include water, air, land and all plants and human beings and/or animals living there in and the interrelationship which exist among these or any of them.

According to [12], the term "environment" could be perceived as "the aggregate of external conditions that influence the life of an individual or population, specifically the life of man and other living organisms on the earth's surface". The term environment comprises land, air, water and all the physical structures surrounding us. In this paper therefore, the concept "environment" refers to the totality of space, time and socio-cultural settings of man and other living organisms therein.

Beyond hosting the physical surrounding for natural habitats, the environment provides the basis for human exploits for agricultural, industrial, commercial,

technological and tourism development of a society, which may be part of the reasons environmental issues currently occupy a center stage at global discourse.

In Nigeria, environmental issues did not gain official prominence until the 1988 Koko (a town in Delta State) toxic waste dumping saga which also brought to the fore the urgent need to establish the Nigeria Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), Federal Ministry of Environment and other relevant agencies, obviously to tackle environmentally related issues, in the country. This trickled down to the states backed by relevant legislative framework, with Anambra having the Anambra State Environmental Protection Agency (ANSEPA) and later, Anambra State Waste Management Agency (ASWAMA).

### **Environmental Concern**

Environmental concern has to do with one's attitude towards the environment or the relationship between humans and the ecosystem. According to [13], it incorporates multiple dimensions in the sense that attitude reflects different aspects regarding humans and nature, such as awareness of ecological problems, support for environmental regulation, green movement and exhibition of eco-conscious behaviour.

Research by [14] showed that those who tended to be environmental conscious were likely to be young and well educated. Environmental consciousness is the first step towards solid waste management. There also exists research asserting that environmental consciousness is

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necessary and essential to pro-environmental behavioural changes [15].

In a bid to underscore the import of Environmental Education in the face of environmental problems [16] observes that environmental education should be incorporated into the whole system of formal education at all levels to provide the necessary knowledge, understanding, values and skills needed by the general public as well as occupational groups for their participation towards devising solutions to environmental question.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Agenda Setting theory is considered as the underpinning for this work. [19] explains that it, “refers to the power of the media to influence public perception of the relative prominence and importance of different events and actors/agencies”. Introduced by [20], Agenda setting function means the capacity of the media to tell the people, what issues are important [21].

That is to say, the media provide people with impression of the outside world so that they can form impressions within them. So people

Environmental Education (EE) is a cross curriculum topic promoting global awareness, sustainable living and active citizenship. The media therefore has an enormous role to play through their news, programmes and features. A view corroborated by [17].

Much as there are overt challenges about environmental health communication due to differences in culture, religion, status and even gender, [18] avers that positive result occurs best when well-designed and cooperative communication strategies are put in place.

rely on the media to allow them experience what they need to encounter in the physical realm. However, the media do not present people with thoughts but furnish them with what to have thoughts about such as climate change issues. [22] explains that in modern societies, the media are an indispensable avenue of obtaining information and are crucial in molding awareness and concern as far as climate change issues go. You may wish to apply the theory to the present study.

#### METHODOLOGY

Research design is the guide that assists the investigator to come up with solutions to the identified problems and also guides the various stages of the research. [23] defines research design as a process of creating an empirical test to support or refute knowledge of claim. Survey design is chosen for this study to make for adequate study of group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data.

The area under study houses some media outfits so the population also includes some communication experts, as well as residents of the L.G.As that make up the Awka capital territory. This is because the media practitioners understand how media owners control media contents in their respective organizations, while the residents receive the content and also are beneficiaries of the services of the

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waste management agencies. They also generate the wastes.

Probability Sampling technique, specifically, simple random sampling was employed to have different opinions from different respondents regardless of religious affiliation, ethnic and cultural background and for appropriate generalization. This is also to reduce selection bias to the barest minimum. Adopting Cochran's statistical formula, a sample of 400 was decided on. You have stated the sample without stating the population size. Sample size is expected to be worked out from total population of the study. Please provide information about population size.

The questionnaire, a quantitative method of data collection, which is also scientific was used. The

#### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were evenly distributed to respondents in the 5 LGAs that make up the State capital

questionnaire was made up of part A which was the demographic data part while the B part was for the general audiences to measure the variables. A pilot study was conducted with 30 residents of Ifite village in Awka to ensure content and construct validity as well as reliability. Frequency and simple percentages table was used for presenting the data collected and thereafter summarized.

The questionnaire copies were administered directly to the respondents personally so as to address areas of doubts and complexities. Again, to ensure high retrieval rate, the researcher waited on each respondent to complete the questionnaire and submit back. The copies were retrieved immediately for coding and analysis.

territory. Each had 80 copies allocated to it. All 400 copies were retrieved and found valid for analysis.

**TABLE 1: Gender of respondents**

| Gender       | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Male         | 180        | 45           |
| Female       | 220        | 55           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

The above table shows that one hundred and eighty (180) respondents (45%) were male while two hundred and twenty (220)

respondents (55%) were females, implying that majority of the respondents were females.

**TABLE 2: Age of the Respondents**

| Age          | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 18-25        | 122        | 30.5         |
| 26-33        | 140        | 35           |
| 34-39        | 70         | 17.5         |
| 40 and above | 68         | 17           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

The table above shows that majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 26-33 (35%), followed by 18-25 (30.5%); respondents

between the age of 34-39(17.5%), while 17% of them are above 40 years.

**TABLE 3: Marital Status of the Respondents**

| Marital status | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Single         | 140        | 35           |
| Married        | 260        | 65           |
| Divorced       | 0          | 0            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

The above table shows that one hundred and forty (140) respondents (35%) are single, while two hundred and sixty (260)

respondents (65%) are married. This implies that majority of the respondents participated in this study are married.

**TABLE 4: Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

| Qualification  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Diploma/SSCE   | 210        | 52.5         |
| B.Sc.          | 128        | 32           |
| Masters& above | 62         | 15.5         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

The table above shows the seventy (210) respondents (52.5%) are holders of diploma or SSCE; one hundred and twenty-eight (128) respondents (32%) are degree

holders, while sixty-two (62) respondents (15.5%) are Masters degree holders. This implies all respondents are literate adding that majority are Diploma/SSCE Holders.

**Section B: Psychographic Data of Respondents**

**Table 5: What is the respondents' level of exposure to environmental issues on various media?**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Rarely       | 30         | 7.5          |
| Often        | 279        | 69.75        |
| Very Often   | 89         | 22.25        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, thirty (30) respondents (7.5%) claimed that they are rarely exposed to environmental stories on the media, two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents (69.75%) claimed that they often exposed to environmental stories on various media, while eighty-nine (89)

respondents (22.25%) claimed that they are very often exposed to environmental stories on the various media. This implies that the majority of the respondents in this study are often exposed to environmental issues on various media.

**Table 6: Which of these mediums do you think has been effective in environmental health Management?**

- **There is a deviation from the research question stated before which is:** What public awareness campaigns on environmental health are broadcast in the media in Anambra state?
- **The heading (6 above) should read:** public awareness campaigns on environmental health that are broadcast in the media in Anambra state?

| Respondents            | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Broadcast Media</b> | 356        | 89           |
| <b>Newspaper</b>       | 40         | 10           |
| <b>Internet</b>        | 4          | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, it shows that three hundred and fifty-six (356) respondents (89%) claimed that broadcast media have been effective in environmental health information, forty(40) respondents(10%) claimed newspapers have been effective,

while four (4) respondents(1%) claimed that the internet has been effective. This implies that majority of the population in this study believe that broadcast media have been most effective in environmental health information dissemination.

**Table 7: Do you think the media transmit enough stories on Environmental issues?**

- To contribution of broadcast media towards enlightenment on environmental health management?

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 390        | 97.5         |
| No           | 10         | 2.5          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, three hundred and ninety (390) respondents (97.5%) agree that media transmit enough stories on environmental

issues while 10 (2.5%) disagreed, implying that the various media transmit enough information on environmental issues.

**Table 8: Do you agree that the broadcast media standout on the communication of environmental issues?**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 384        | 96           |
| No           | 16         | 4            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents (96%) agree that the broadcast media has standout on the communication of environmental

issues, while sixteen (16) respondents (4%) disagree that the broadcast media does not standout on the communication of environmental issues.

**Table 9: Messages on environmental hazards are very significant to human and societal development?**

Is there a significant relationship between positive attitudes of residents towards waste management and the media campaign

| Influence    | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 354        | 88.5         |
| No           | 35         | 8.75         |
| Don't know   | 11         | 2.75         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

The table above indicates that three hundred and fifty-four (354) respondents (88.5%) claimed that messages on environmental hazards are very significant to human and

societal development; thirty-five (35) respondents, (8.75%) said 'No' and eleven (11) respondents (2.75%) did not know

**Table 10: Do you think the public have high perception of environmental hazards from various broadcast media?**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 288        | 72           |
| No           | 112        | 28           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

From the table above, two hundred and eighty-eight(288) respondents (72%) agree that there is a high perception of environment hazard through the broadcast media, while

one hundred and twelve (112) respondents (28%) claimed that there is no high perception of environmental hazards through the broadcast media.

**Table 11: Do you think mass media has changed the attitude of the public in dealing with environmental issues?**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 320        | 80           |
| No           | 80         | 20           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

From the table above, three hundred and twenty (320) respondents(80%) claimed that the mass media has changed the attitude of the public in dealing with environmental issues, while eighty (80) respondents (20%) claimed the mass media has not

changed the attitude of the public on environmental issues. This implies that majority of the population agree that the mass media has changed the attitude of the public in dealing with environmental issues.

**Table 12: Messages on environmental issues have raised viewers' knowledge and created awareness on environmental issues**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 320        | 80           |
| No           | 80         | 20           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

Source: Field Survey 2019.

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From the table above, three hundred and eighty (380) respondents (80%) claimed that environmental messages on the media has created awareness on environmental issues, while eighty (80) respondents (20%) claimed that environmental

messages on the media has not created awareness on environmental issues. This implies that majority of the respondents believe that the media has raised viewers' knowledge and created awareness on environmental issues.

**Table 13: Effects and efficient programming strategy on environmental issues have helped preferences by the audience?**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage% |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Yes          | 319        | 79.75       |
| No           | 81         | 20.25       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>  |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

The table above indicates that three hundred and nineteen (319) respondents (79.75%) claimed that efficient programming strategy on environmental issues have helped preference by the audience, while eighty-one (81) respondents (30%)

said 'NO'. This implies that majority of the population believe that effective and efficient programming strategy on environmental health have helped preference by the audience.

**Table 14: "Environment matters" on the mass media has significantly helped in addressing environmental hazards**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 107        | 26.75        |
| No           | 293        | 73.25        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, one hundred and seven (107) respondents (26.75%) claimed the Environment matters on the mass media has significantly helped in addressing environmental hazards, while two hundred and ninety-three (293) respondents (73.25%) claimed that

the mass media has no significant impact in addressing environmental hazards. This implies that majority of the population believe that the mass media has significantly helped in addressing environmental hazard.

**Table 15: Feedback from audience can help improve programming on environmental issues on the various stations**

| Respondents  | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 266        | 66.5         |
| No           | 134        | 33.5         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>400</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Source: Field Survey 2019.**

From the table above, two hundred and sixty-six (266) respondents representing (66.5%) believe that feedback from the audience can help improve programming on environmental issues while one hundred and thirty-four (134)

respondents representing (33.5%) disagree. This implies that majority of the population agree that feedback mechanism can help to improve programming on environmental issues on the various broadcast stations.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question one which tries to ascertain the respondents' level of exposure to messages on environmental health is answered by items 5 and 6 in questionnaire as 69.75% (279) respondents said they are often exposed to the messages while 22.25% (89) respondents said they are very often exposed to the message. The respondents also agree that they receive the messages through the broadcast media which has been proven to be very effective in environmental health information dissemination. This agrees with the view of [24] that Communication through the broadcast media is capable of raising public awareness, perceptions and attitudes to solid waste management.

The study in a bid to answer research question 2, using items 7, and 8 on the questionnaire also found that broadcast media stand out in transmitting stories on environmental issues including hazards which is corroborated by [25] that the media plays a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world,

particularly in those areas where audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience. The broadcast media are important sources of information about environmental issues.

In answering research question 3 using item 9 on the questionnaire, three hundred and fifty-four (354) respondents (88.5%) strongly agree that messages on environmental hazards are very significant to human and society development.

For research question 4 which seeks to ascertain the respondents' perception of the media messages on environmental health, the study found that the respondents perceive the messages as positive as it has increased their knowledge on environmental health issues, thereby, bringing about positive attitude and disposition. Three hundred and twenty (320) respondents (80%) agreed that Message on environmental issues has raised viewers' knowledge and created awareness on environmental issues. This is an aspect of development communication which

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[26] says” the media sector is often seen as having a special responsibility in promoting development communication, disaster warning and disseminating information to the at-risk communities, in the context of climate change”.

Environmental issues are everybody’s concern and require all hands to be deck. The States agencies should adopt adequate public awareness campaign and participation by making information

On whether there is a significant relationship between positive attitude of respondents towards waste management and the media messages, respondents answered in the affirmative, however, that has not helped in solving environmental problems [27].

#### CONCLUSION

widely available. The media are obviously playing a vital role in promoting environmental health campaign in the society and should be encouraged.

#### RECOMMENDATION

This paper recommends:

1. A proactive as well as reactive approach to the collective will of ensuring that the society is made better for all.
2. People should take ownership of the problems of the society, not as

- spectators, but as active participants in the societal problems including waste management and environmental health issues
3. Regular public enlightenment and sensitization program of environmental issues is advocated.

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