



## ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION FRAMING IN RIVERS STATE BY VANGUARD AND DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPERS

<sup>1</sup>REUBEN, Ata-Awaji Anthony  
<sup>2</sup>EKWUEME, Marylin Chijioke  
<sup>3</sup>OBILOR, Chinenye Jane

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Department of Mass Communication, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education  
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt

**Corresponding Author:** REUBEN, Ata-Awaji Anthony atawajireuben@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Environmental pollution is a global problem seen as life-threatening issue, especially in a developing country like Nigeria. This prompted the study which centred on assessment of *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers' framing of environmental pollution in Rivers State. This is because studies have established the role of newspapers' framing of issues in eliciting actions and policy direction toward solving problems. The study was guided by three research objectives and the framing theory. It adopted quantitative content analysis as the research design. The study found that oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State were not frequently framed by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* Newspapers, that prominence was not given to framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. It also found that while *Vanguard* newspaper mostly adopted attribution of responsibility frame, *Daily Trust* on the other hand, generally used economic consequence frame. This implies that there is slight variation in the framing pattern of the two newspapers. The study recommends among others, that prominence should be given to oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State because of their consequences on human and aquatic health, social and environmental consequence, etc. and that Nigerian newspapers should adopt both solution and responsibility frames more in presenting oil spillage and gas flaring to the masses, as this will help in prompting actions from policy makers.

**Keywords:** Environment, Framing, Newspaper, Oil Spillage & Gas Flaring, Pollution

### Introduction

The world over, environmental pollution poses great challenge to humanity. As a result of the challenges pose by environmental pollution to humanity, Chimezie (2024), notes that issues relating to the environment, are constantly receiving by international agencies. One of such bodies is the United Nations General Assembly, making it to set up a body known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1984 to formulate global agenda for a positive change in this area. Charles et al. (2022) also state that environmental pollution has attracted global concern due to human actions which are destroying the natural floras. But Nwala et al. (2024) blame the problem on activities of oil companies. Similarly, Jacob et al. (2024) attribute major causes of oil spillage in Nigeria to failures in production equipment, pipeline and petroleum production equipment destruction, among others. Anyanwu et al. (2024) express worry that the issue of environmental degradation is problematic as it is raising a lot of health concerns globally. Highlighting efforts by African people in tackling the menace, Okoro and Nnaji (2012) noted that on the African continent, the first African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) took place in Cairo, Egypt in 1985 and came up with what is known as the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation. At the conference, it was established that serious actions should be taken in fighting environmental pollution. This shows that environmental pollution has a long history, and has always

attracted reactions and actions from those who feel concerned about the importance of environment to humanity.

Nwabueze (2015) asserts that environmental activism has been in existence for a long period at global level. According to him, the first recorded incident of environmental activism took place almost 40 years ago in Rajasthan, India when some people in that city gave their lives to resist the cutting of trees in their region. The case provided the catalyst for the evolution of more organised environmental activism which the world is experiencing today. Momoh et al. (2020) hold similar view as that opined above, stressing that over the past 40 years, there has been increase of various environmental treaties aimed at conserving the environment. Environmentalism in Nigeria, however, cannot be said to be at the same level of advocacy and development as it is in the developed world. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta pollution incidents brought about by oil exploration in the region dominate the focus of environmentalism in the nation. Environmentalism is a philosophy which seeks justice on the environment and environmental sustainability. Ite (2016) observed that environmental sustainability requires the use of environmental goods and services in such a way that their productive capacities are not reduced, nor their overall contribution to human well-being diminished.

Over the years, however, oil spillage and gas flaring have affected lands, seas, aquatic organism and human beings living in Rivers State due to the economic activities by local and multinationals in that state. According to Akeju and Oguntimein (2023), over 11 billion gallons of oil spills have occurred in the Niger Delta region, with serious consequences on the people. Jacob et al. (2024) equally report that more than 6000 spills have occurred in the over 40 years of oil exploitation in Nigeria, with an average of 150 spills yearly. This has continued to have negative impact on the people. Mentioning the sufferings of Ogoni people of Rivers State in particular, Ocholi (2022) asserts that there is total devastation of the social and cultural lives of the people to which no solution has been found. Similarly, Ngozi et al. (2017) argued that Port Harcourt is an example of an industrialised location in Nigeria, where population and traffic densities tend to be high, and also housed two oil refineries, airport, sea port and major industrial estates, among others. According to the above cited authors, such activities have brought about increased agricultural practices, industrial activities, energy consumption and waste disposal methods which lead to large release of heavy metals into soil, thus leading to the contamination of the soils.

Amid this situation, Yousaf (2013), in John and Jonjua (2018), reports that communication scholars and environmentalists have acknowledged the central role of the mass media in environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, Alabi (2017) noted that one of the most important functions of the mass media is the dissemination of news. He maintains that members of the society actively seek news and information to keep themselves abreast of developments; keep them relevant and plan their lives. Hence, the media have become integral part of our lives. The mass media adopt different strategies in carrying out their social and constitutional responsibilities. One of the strategies is framing of events or issues. Ndinojuo et al. (2018) aver that the idea behind framing is that the media places emphasis on specific attributes of events and then attempts to place them within a field of meaning for the audience to decode them.

There are several environmental pollutions in Rivers State but for this study, two of those issues which are oil spillage and gas flaring, will receive attention. This is because previous studies Asogwa, Ibe and Orji-Egwu (2022) focused on how *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *the Nation* and *Thisday* newspapers frame climate change crisis in Nigeria. Similarly, Ekeanyanwu and Nwosu's study (2022) was on the role of print media in environmental advocacy. On their parts, Oredipe et al. (2019) investigated newspaper coverage of oil-related environmental rights issues in the Niger Delta while Chinedu (2017) studied plastic pollution coverage in Nigerian newspapers.

The above studies focused on climate change, environmental advocacy, environmental rights of residents of oil producing areas and coverage of plastic pollution. This prompted this study to investigate

framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspaper, as they relate to Rivers State, from January 2022 to December 2023. This is because as reported by Jacob, Amadike et al. (2024), oil pollution had since become a problem in oil-producing areas, and this require urgent attention because of its devastating effect on the environment. Similarly, Ohwofasa and Obeh (2025) assert that gas flaring is one of the most critical issue confronting humanities. They contend that gas flaring greatly reduces agricultural produce, as soil, air and water, are damaged by it. Elehinafe et al. (2022) lament that consisting gas flaring causes serious life-threatening sicknesses.

Previous studies by Asogwa et al. (2022) focused on how *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *the Nation* and *Thisday* newspapers frame climate change crisis in Nigeria, while Oforibika, Alalibo and Solomon's study (2018), examined environmental pollution and reportage in Nigeria. A similar study by Emeafor et al. (2017) assessed press coverage of environmental pollution in Nigeria while Boyagoda(2016) did an exploratory study on reporting green in Sri Lankan Newspapers. The scope of some of these studies is Nigeria while one is Sri Lanka. The issues of interest to the above-mentioned scholars range from climate change to general environmental degradation. Rivers State, in particular was not their scope and oil spillage and gas flaring were not the focus of these studies. This explains why the current study centres on Rivers State and oil spillage and gas flaring, to fill the gap in literature.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The state of the environment continues to deteriorate, and the environmental challenges are escalating. Environmental challenges, especially oil spillage and gas flaring abound in Rivers State due to oil exploration and other industrial activities that go on in that state on daily basis. This has continued to affect other economic activities like fishing and farming; social activities and the general health of the people living in the state.

Despite these situations and the outcry of the people, the problem persists. This raises questions as to the role of newspapers in addressing the situation. This is because framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by newspapers can have influence on policymakers and prompt environmental action. Hence, this study examined how *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers framed oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State. Moreover, previous studies by Chinedu (2017) investigated plastic pollution coverage in Nigerian newspapers. The study analysed the representation of plastic pollution in Nigerian newspapers and its effect on public awareness. On their parts, Ekeanyanwu and Nwosu (2022) assessed the role of print media in advocating for environmental protection in Rivers State. The study examined articles published between 2019 and 2021 in *The Port Harcourt Telegraph*, *Rivers Voice* and *Garden City Times*, which are Port Harcourt-based newspapers. Similarly, Azubuike and Okwuchukwu (2023) investigated oil spill coverage in Rivers State newspapers. The newspapers examined were *The Tide*, *The Rivers News* and *National Network*, from 2018 to 2022.

None of these studies focused on framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State, by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers, for geo-political zone depiction and comparative analysis of framing of the problem. Oil spillage and gas flaring have grievous consequences on the environment. The constitute economic, social and health hazards. It is, therefore, necessary to conduct study on this from the scope of Rivers State, due to its economic importance in Nigeria and the world at large. More so, a study on this problem, will help in deepening understanding of the issue, as framing of the problem will help in how it is understood by people, treated and could cause policy change and action by stakeholders, aimed at addressing it.

### **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examined how *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers framed oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State, from January 2022 to December 2023 while the objectives of this study areto:

1. Examine the frequency of framing of environmental pollution in Rivers State by *Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers within the period under study;
2. Ascertain the prominence accorded oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by *Vanguard and Daily Trust* newspapers in their reportage; and
3. Identify framing pattern of Vanguard and Daily Trust newspaper on reportage of environmental pollution in Rivers State.

## Literature Review

According to McQuail (2005), frames are devices used to direct attention and then to guide the processing of information to ensure that a preferred reading of the facts comes to dominate public understanding. McQuail quoted Entman (1993) to have hinted that framing involves selection and salience. Entman summarises the main aspects of framing by saying that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies. As a result, Marimba (2010) describes frame as a central idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, exclusion and elaboration. He maintains that mass media audiences socialised differently. The communicator and the reader have pre-existing frames of mind. However, the communicator through selection, exclusion, framing and reframing attempt to influence the audiences, usually to embrace whatever perspective that is being proposed thereby changing existing frames.

In the light of the above, Nwabueze and Egbra (2016) see frames as selection of certain aspects of a situation and highlighting them in the media in a way that promotes a specific definition, interpretation, or evaluation of recommendation. Similarly, Nasrallah (2017) sees media framing as construct of meaning by framing people, events, and ideas, and has been used to study a variety of topics in the social sciences. News frame, according to Lamidi and Olisa (2016), serves as journalistic tools through which journalists recount a story in a limited amount of space and place an event within its broader context. Newspaper framing of issues, especially environmental pollution, is necessary because frames are interpretive storylines that communicate why an issue is a problem, who or what is responsible for it and what should be done to address the identified problem. Hence, framing of oil spillage and gas flaring will help in drawing attention to them as they constitute environmental pollution. Ono et al. (2023) assert that globally, physical environment seems to be at war with nature and nurture. According to them, while nature is responsible for most damages to the environment in the western world, human activities are mostly responsible for environmental pollution in Nigeria. Worika and Etimire (2018) observe that in the last few decades, the environment of Rivers State has gradually become one of the most polluted and degraded in Nigeria. Ayuba et al. (2012) observe that the oil industry has indisputably brought economic benefit to the Nigerian state but has left environmental pollution problems with visible physical destruction.

The impact of gas flaring on the environment and human lives has received global concern, just as the effect of gas flaring in the Niger Delta region, is also of great concern to environmentalists, as it impacts negatively on the flora, fauna and human health and livelihood in the region. Currently, air pollution in Port Harcourt has been blamed on constant gas flaring. As observed by Agri et al (2020), gas flaring has been condemned in many parts of the world but in Nigeria gas flaring occurs on daily basis as a result of low penalty against oil companies. Reuben and Ikot-Osin (2020) hint that soot in Port Harcourt, which they view as black substance that dots the atmosphere and later settles on substance and being inhaled by people, is caused by gas flaring. Elem (2021) also hints that soot exists in Port Harcourt, stressing that it has become a complex environmental problem.

Amid this, newspaper has remained a viable and reliable medium of mass information and advocacy. Okon (2013) argues that the primary concern of newspaper in a society like Nigeria, should be about highlighting problems so they can be tackled. Similarly, Nwala et al. (2024) observe that newspapers are expected to draw the attention of people, oil companies and the government to environmental pollutions

arising from oil exploitation. Nwala *et al* (2024) quote Yusuf and Daniel (2015) to have asserted that newspapers shape public opinion and influence government policies and decisions, even as they cater for the needs of various sections of the society. Odoemelam (2021) equally notes that newspapers have serious roles to play in the framing of environmental pollutions in Nigeria due to their ability to construe environmental actions to the masses.

### **Empirical Review of Studies**

Asogwa *et al.* (2022) investigated how *Guardian, Vanguard, Punch, the Nation* and *This day* newspapers frame climate change crisis in Nigeria. The major objective of the study was to discover the prominence given to climate change by the five newspapers. It adopted content analysis as the research design. The study uncovered among others, that the newspapers did not accord importance to climate change. The study and the present one have some similarities: both studies examined how newspapers framed environmental problem in Nigeria. However, while the reviewed study focuses on one aspect of environmental problem which is climate change, the current study centres on two environmental problems of oil spillage and gas flaring. It should be noted that climate change is an aspect of gas flaring. In other words, gas flaring contributes to climate change, meaning that there are other factors that bring about climate change. Therefore, in terms of scope, objective and theories, these two studies differ.

Oforibika *et al.* (2018) examined Environmental Pollution and Reportage in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to find out extent of reportage of environmental pollution by *Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and ThisDay* newspapers. It adopted the content analysis method in examining the content of reports on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta. Finding showed that prominence was not given to environmental pollution in the Niger Delta, as none of the newspapers placed stories on the environment strategically on the front or back pages. The study and the current are similar due to the fact they focus on environmental pollution and framing by Nigerian newspapers. The differences lie in the areas of scope, objective and theory because while the swotted study focused on the entire Nigeria, the current study's area of study is Rivers State.

Chukwu (2018) conducted a study on media coverage of oil spill incidents in the Niger Delta: A content analysis. The study investigated media coverage of oil spill incidents in the Niger Delta and assessed the framing of oil spill issues. Framing theory was used as theoretical framework. The research design adopted was content analysis of *Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun* and *Thisday* newspapers and the data analysis was done by qualitative thematic analysis. Findings revealed that oil spill incidents were primarily framed as corporate negligence, influencing public perception towards demanding corporate accountability and compensation. The reviewed study and the current study are related as they focus on environmental issue and content analysis. But the reviewed study differs from the current study in the content and geographical scopes, objectives and methodological approaches.

A study by Emeafor *et al.* (2017) examined press coverage of environmental pollution in Nigeria: A study of three selected newspapers. The study was guided by four research objectives which are to find out the frequency of coverage of environmental pollution by the *Guardian, Daily Trust and Vanguard* newspapers, ascertain the level of prominence given to environmental pollution issues in the selected newspapers, determine the story types used in coverage environmental pollution issues in by the newspapers and determine the type of environmental pollution issues mostly reported in the three newspapers. The study adopted content analysis research design. It established that editorial and feature story had 0.8 per cent reportage on environmental pollution in the studied newspapers. There is similarity between the current study and the reviewed work. The similarity is in the area of identified problem and the universe of study. Differences, however, exist in terms of scope, objective and theory. For example, the reviewed study focused on how newspapers covered environmental pollution in Nigeria, in general while the present study centred on Rivers State.

Boyagoda (2016) also did a study on Reporting Green: An Exploratory Study of News Coverage of Environmental Issues in Sri Lankan Newspapers. The objective of the study was to find out whether Sri Lankan newspapers adequately cover environmental issues. It adopted content analysis approach. The study unravelled that most of stories related to the environment in the newspapers were reported without any in-depth analysis, and that the level of importance given to environmental issues were low in the newspapers.

This study and the present one are similar since their focus is the environment and newspapers treatment of issues that are antithetical to the environment. Despite the similarities, there exist areas of differences. The focus of the reviewed study was Sri Lanka and newspapers in that country while the present study paid attention to Rivers State, Nigerian newspapers at the national level. More so, the research objectives and theories for both studies are different.

These studies were carried out by scholars within and outside Nigeria but none of them reflected newspaper framing of environmental pollutions in Rivers State, with a focus on oil spillage and gas framing from January 2022- December, 2024. None of the studies also had same objectives as this current study. This is the gap in literature which this present work seeks to fill.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Framing Theory**

Lamidi and Olisa (2016) hint that framing theory is often traced to the work of Erving Goffman in 1974 which he entitled framing analysis: an essay on the organisation of experience. These scholars note that framing is a method through which the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. Ogbodo Ugbo, Duru, and Jibrin. (2021) corroborate the above view by asserting that the idea of framing theory originated from the work of Gregory Bateson and was advanced by sociologist-Erving Goffman in 1974. Ogbodo et al (2021) add that the theory explains the mental schema through which individual's experiences are organised, stressing that in the context of journalism and communication studies, the theory refers to the slants that journalists adopt in reporting news.

Oluwadamilare and Ekwueme (2020) state that framing theory identifies phenomena, discusses, acts about it, take a position, and recommends solutions. The theory further explains that mass media regularly adopt the use of some specific words or language, make reference to some contextual sources, select certain movies or pictorial representations, and refer to a particular case study in conveying its messages to its audience, thus, colouring the mind-set of the audience towards a preconceived thought. The above cited authors note that the focal point about framing theory is not on the number of stories but the angle used. In the views of Ndinojuo *et al.* (2018), framing theory is regarded by some scholars as the second dimension of the agenda setting theory. It is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another because of how the issue is projected by the press in their coverage. The ideology behind framing is that the media place emphasis on specific attributes of events and then attempts to place them within a field of meaning for the audience to decode intentionally or unintentionally. Specifically, the tenets of framing theory suggest that frames are abstractions that work to organise or structure message meaning; that how an issue is presented to the masses influences the choice they will make about how to process the information; that frames are interpretive storylines that communicate why an issue is a problem, who or what is responsible for it and what should be done to address the problem and that the mass media identify phenomena, discuss them, take a position and recommend solutions through the frames used in reporting such situations. This theory is appropriate for the study because its tenet which states that frames are interpretive storylines that communicate why an issue is a problem, who or what is responsible for it, and what should be done to address the problem, aligns with the objective and the problem statement of this study.

## Methodology

Content analysis research method was adopted for this study. It is considered appropriate for this study because in the views of Ohaja (2003) content analysis permits the investigation of the manifest content of communication to ascertain the pattern existing in content.

The population of the study are *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. They were selected for the study, due to their wide circulation and huge readership. Another reason for the choice of the newspapers is due to their geo-political zone depiction. *Vanguard* represents the south while *Daily Trust* depicts the north.

The population of the two newspapers is 1,460 issues published from January 2022– December, 2023 that is 365 issues for each newspaper. The time frame for the study is equal to twenty-four months, and there are approximately 730 days in twenty-four months and each of the four selected newspapers would publish equal number of issues within twenty-four months. For the twenty-four months, each newspaper would publish 365 issues. Therefore, the two dailies would publish 1,460 issues.

Composite week sampling technique was adopted in selecting sample size. A composite week was drawn in each of the months under study. Based on Wimmer and Dominick's (2011) advice that a study might use a sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the four or five possible Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, until all weekdays have been included; the researcher considered that there are 104 weeks covering the month of January 2022 to December 2023. Meanwhile, there are 7 days in each week, which means that 7 days will be studied in a month. The dates selected will apply to the two newspapers. Therefore, 7 X 24 (two years) will be 168 editions for each newspaper. This number multiplied by 2 (number of newspapers to study) will give a total of 336 sample size. Coding sheets were used in generating the data. To ensure reliability, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, through test and re-test approach was used. The empirical calculation of result showed the correlation of (r) of 0.99. Data were collected with the help of two research assistants who helped in coding the items. The research assistants were trained on how to code the newspaper messages, using units of analysis and content categories (using coding sheet) as a guiding instrument. The content categories were used to classify the newspaper contents and they formed the nucleus of content analysis (Wimmer& Dominick, 2011). Data for this study are analysed using quantitative method. The data obtained from coding of newspaper contents are arranged in tabular format. This format makes presentation clear and calculation of percentage scores and figures feasible. The data were later described and interpreted in the light of objectives and research questions set at the onset of the study.

## Data Analysis

**Table 1 shows the frequency of framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers**

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Vanguard</i>	13	48.1
<i>Daily Trust</i>	14	51.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above indicates that the frequency of framing of oil spillage and gas flaring by the two newspapers was abysmal. *Daily Trust Newspaper* framed the problem only 14 times (8.3%), out of the 168 editions of newspaper, for a period of two years while *Vanguard Newspaper* framed it 13 times (7.7%) of same number of editions as *Daily Trust Newspaper*. The implication is that the lesser framing the news media have on environmental issues of this nature, the lower the level of public awareness. This has negative consequence on the level of awareness of the citizens concerning environmental pollution in Rivers State.

**Table 2 shows prominence accorded oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers**

Newspaper	Prominence		
	Front Page	Inside Page	Back Page
Vanguard	0 (0%)	13(48%)	0 (0%)
Daily Trust	0 (0%)	14(51.8%)	0 (0%)
Total	0	27	0

Table 2 above indicates that Vanguard newspaper did not frame the situation on its front page. Framing of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by Vanguard newspaper, appeared only in its inside pages. Daily Trust newspaper took same approach. By implication, none of the newspapers ascribe prominence to oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State. It means that the environmental problem in Rivers State will not receive the desired attention from government and other stakeholders because as noted by Ogu (2020) one of the ways of giving priority attention to the environment is by giving environmental issues prominence in frequent reportage of events by the mass media.

**Table 3 shows framing pattern by the selected newspapers of oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State**

Newspaper	Framing Pattern					
	Conflict/ Crisis Frame	Blame Frame	Human Interest Frame	Attribution of Responsibility Frame	Solution Frame	Economic Consequence Frame
Vanguard	0 (0%)	1 (7.6%)	2 (15%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)
Daily Trust	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)	7 (50%)
Total	1	2	3	7	4	10

As indicated in the above table, there are six frames around which oil and gas framing revolved based on this study. For the Vanguard newspaper, the most frequently used frame is attribution of responsibility. This is followed by economic consequence frame, solution frame and human interest frame and blame frame. Conflict/crisis frame was not used. In the Daily Trust newspaper, economic consequence frame appeared 7 times, followed by solution and attribution of responsibility frame which appeared 2 times, each. Based on results, only Daily Trust newspaper used conflict/crisis frame. While Vanguard mostly adopted attribution of responsibility frame, Daily Trust on its own favoured economic consequence frame. The implication of this finding is that since the two newspapers framed the problem differently, the issue would also be viewed differently by the masses.

### Discussion of Findings

**Research Question One 1** sought to find out the frequency of coverage of environmental pollution in Rivers State by Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers

This question has been answered based on data contained in table 1 above. As could be seen in that table, framing of oil and gas spillage in Rivers State by the newspapers under study, appeared only 27 times out of the 336 editions of the two newspapers studied, which is 8.03% of the issues. Thus, the rate of framing of oil spillage and gas flaring by the two newspapers was awful. This finding corroborates earlier study by Innocent (2016) which notes that in terms of incidence, environmental stories had an average frequency rate of 0.5 stories per issue of the newspapers examined.

**Research Question 2** *sought to find out prominence given by Vanguard and Daily Trust newspapers to oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State.*

Table 1 above answered the question. Out of the 27 times that the two newspapers framed oil spillage and gas flaring during the period of study, the problem did not appear on the front pages of any of the newspapers. This entails that 0 % of the stories appeared on the front pages. This is grossly inadequate, and shows that the newspapers did not accord prominence to environmental oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State. This result agrees with the findings by Okoro and Nnaji (2012) in a study on press coverage of environmental pollution in the Niger Delta: content analysis of the *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Sun* and *Thisday* Newspapers. The study ascertained that in spite of the growing rate of global concern for the environment, the newspapers did not strategically place stories on environmental pollution in the Niger Delta on the front or back pages.

**Research Question One 3** *sought to find out the framing patterns adopted by Vanguard and, Daily Trust newspapers in framing environmental pollution in Rivers State?*

As could be seen in table 3 above, there are six frames around which oil and gas framing revolved based on this study. For the *Vanguard newspaper*, the most frequently used frame is attribution of responsibility which appeared 5 times, indicating 38%, and this is more than one third of the time. In *Daily Trust newspaper*, economic consequence frame 7 seven times (50%). Meanwhile, only *Daily Trust newspaper* used conflict/crisis frame. Deductively, we could say that there is petite variation in the framing pattern of the two newspapers. This finding is somewhat similar to that by Chukwu (2018) which established that oil spill incidents were primarily framed as corporate negligence, influencing public perception towards demanding corporate accountability and compensation as a result of the impact of oil spills on economic and social activities.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that oil spillage and gas flaring were seldom framed by the newspapers studied. This implies that the lesser framing the newspaper have on oil spillage and gas flaring, the lower the level of public awareness about the environmental problem and actions required by the masses to stay safe amidst the environmental hazard, in their environment. More so, prominence was not given to oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State by the Nigerian newspapers. This suggests that seriousness was not attached to the issue, hence agenda could not be set on it. Meanwhile, there is variation in the framing pattern adopted by *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. While *Vanguard* newspaper mostly adopted attribution of responsibility frame, *Daily Trust* newspaper on its own, favoured economic consequence frame. The implication of this finding is that since the two newspapers framed the problem differently, the issue would also be viewed differently by the masses, stakeholders and policy makers.

Conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, have again, confirmed the tenets of framing theory. For instance, there is no way the attention of government and other policy makers could have been drawn to the environmental problem facing Rivers State when the issue is framed seldom by the newspaper. This is because, as argued by Mu'azu and Moses (2021), framing of situations by the mass media has the potential to direct the attention of the masses to a particular issue and helps to guide the public about what to think.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, we recommend that:

1. Oil spillage and gas flaring should be framed adequately by Nigerian newspapers and other media of mass information. Oil spillage and gas flaring are serious issues which affect many aspects of life. For example, gas flaring contributes to climate change. Therefore, Nigerian newspapers should not focus attention on climate change and neglect framing of gas flaring.
2. Prominence should be given to oil spillage and gas flaring in Rivers State because of their consequences on human and aquatic health, social and environmental consequence, etc.
3. Nigerian newspapers should adopt both solution and responsibility frames more in presenting oil spillage and gas flaring to the masses. This will help in eliciting actions from policy makers.

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