

EXTENT OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all university undergraduates in Southwest, Nigeria. A sample of 1752 male and female Undergraduates in Federal, State and Private Universities were used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for the sample selection. Questionnaire on Extent of Government Interventions in Environmental Issues (QEGIEI) was used to collect data for the study. The validity of the instrument was ensured through face and content validity procedures and the reliability of the QEGIEI was established using Cronbach Alpha method and alpha value of 0.74 was obtained this was considered high and reliable enough for the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of one research assistant in each of the selected universities. The data generated for this study were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and percentages to provide answers to the research questions. The findings of the study showed that extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria was high. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that university management should intensify on environmental education programmes so as to provide students with more comprehensive knowledge of government interventions in environmental issues irrespective of their gender and the ownership of the University.

Keywords: Government Interventions, Environment, Environmental Issues, Environmental Policies Undergraduates

Introduction

The environment refers to both the physical and social circumstances which surround people and have influence on them. It is both objective and subjective. Human beings act in the environment in response to their quest for development. The interaction and interdependence between man and his environment is a reciprocal one. As man influences his environment, he is in turn influenced by his environment (Jekayinfa & Yusuf, 2008). Therefore, man is responsible for environmental issues. According to Eccleston and March (2010), environmental issues are harmful effects of

human activity on the biophysical environment. Environmental degradation has emerged as a serious issue in the world today. According to Meinhold and Malkus (2005), the world is now alarmed with various environmental problems, such as climate change, ozone layer depletion, global warming, and so on. Many of these problems are the result of irresponsible environmental behaviour, which is highly influenced by the attitudes people possess. Nigeria is not without her own complex environmental issues that had also resulted in environmental degradation and has endorsed the education for sustainable life.

In the light of the above, the core of achieving sustainable growth and development in any country is to have a sustainable environment free from any form of life-threatening hazards. Thus, to create such an environment, governments at all levels are expected to intervene in environmental issues by formulating and implementing environmental protection laws to solve different environmental problems caused by human activities to ensure industrial and technological development to meet the growing population of each country.

Environmental issues are harmful effects of human activity on the biophysical environment. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA, (2017) stated that the environmental destruction caused by humans is a global problem that is ongoing every day. Major current environmental issues may include climate change, erosion, flooding, deforestation, pollution, environmental degradation and resources depletion. Government intervention in the environmental issues is the act of environmental protection. *Environmental protection* is a practice of protecting the natural environment on individual, organizational or governmental levels, for the benefit of both the environment and humans. Environmental protection is a practice of caring for the environment, on individual, organizational or governmental levels, for the benefit of the natural environment and future generations. The practice of taking care of the environment is not restricted to the government or to corporate organizations alone, individuals and communities especially the undergraduates at various levels are also expected in taking responsibilities for the environment in order to sustain it for the present and for the future generations.

Government interventions on these environmental issues are the policies put in place by the government to protect or

sustain the environment. This involves setting up of policies, establishment of environmental protection agencies by the states and the federal government, and creation of ecological fund etc. Government intervention in the environmental issues is the act of environmental protection. Environmental protection is a practice of protecting the natural environment at individual, organizational or governmental levels, for the benefit of both the environment and humans (Ayodele, et al., 2019). Oluwagbohunmi, (2023) stated that government is a vital agency of education that enact laws and maintain law and order in the society, thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for education and also the environment.

To protect the environment from the adverse effects of pollution, many nations worldwide have enacted legislation to regulate various types of pollution as well as to mitigate the adverse effects of pollution. Pollution control is a term used in environmental management. It means the control of emissions and effluents into air, water or soil. Without pollution control, the waste products from consumption, heating, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, transportation and other human activities, whether they accumulate or disperse, will degrade the environment. Nigerian government environmental laws consist of framework environmental legislation, sectorial legislation and incidental legislation. A framework environmental legislation is a single law which contains a comprehensive system of laws for environmental management. Such legislation includes the Harmful Wastes (Special Criminal Provisions) Act 1988 Cap 165 LFN 1990; Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act 1988 Cap 131 LFN 1990; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act 1992 and Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act. The sectorial legislation

addresses specific aspects of the environment and human activities including Mineral Act 1956, Oil Pipeline Act 1958, Oil in Navigable Waters Act 1968, Petroleum Act 1969 and Factories Act 1987. Incidental legislation are those laws that are not specifically intended to address environmental issues, but do contain some elements that have impacts on environmental issues. It includes Water Works Act 1915, Criminal Code 1916 Cap 77 LFN 1990 and Public Health Act 1917 (Eneh, 2011).

There are also Nigerian national laws derived from international laws, between 1963 and 1990, Nigeria is signatory to a number of international laws, including Mineral Oil (Safety) Regulations Act 1963, Petroleum Regulations Act 1967, Oil in Navigable Waters Act 1968, Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulation Act 1969, Oil Terminal Dues Act 1968, Associate Gas Reinjection Act 1979, Petroleum Amendment Act 1973 and Harmful Wastes (Criminal Provisions) Act No. 42 of 1988 (Eneh, 2011; Anukam, 2017).

Some other diverse pieces of legislation, which fall within the ambit of environmental protection, include Civil Aviation Act 1964, Antiquities Act 1915 (1958), Live Fish (Control of Importation) Act 1965, Explosives Act 1964, Territorial Waters Act 1967, Exclusive Economic Zone Act 1958, Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations Act 1969, Nigerian Atomic Energy Commission Act 1976, Natural Resources Conservation Act 1989, River Basin Development Authorities Act 1987, Sea Fisheries (Licensing) Regulations 1992, Quarries Act 1969, Land Use Act 1972, National Parks Acts 1991, The National Environmental Standards and Regulations enforcement Agency Acts 2007, Environmental Impact Assessment Acts 1992, The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency Actn 2005, National

Environment (Sanitation and Wastes Control) Regulations 2009 and The Federal National Acts 2004 (Eneh, 2011; Anukam, 2017).

Nigeria's environmental policy is aimed at achieving sustainable development in the country and, in particular, at securing for all Nigerians a quality environment adequate for their health and well-being; conserve and use the natural environment and resources for the benefit of present and future generations; restore, maintain and enhance ecosystems and ecological processes essential for the functioning of the biosphere and for the preservation of biological diversity and to adopt the principle of optimum sustainable yield in the use of living natural resources and ecosystems; raise public awareness and promote understanding of essential linkages between environment and development and to encourage individual and community participation in environmental improvement efforts; and co-operate in good faith with other countries, international organizations and agencies to achieve optimal use of trans-boundary natural resources and effective prevention or abatement of trans-boundary environmental pollution (Eneh, 2011; Anukam, 2017).

Six standards were introduced as part of the implementation of Nigeria's environmental policy. They are (1) effluents limitations (2) water quality for industrial water uses at point of intake (3) industrial emission limitations (4) noise exposure limitations (5) management of solid and hazardous wastes and (6) pollution abatement in industries (Eneh, 2011; Anukam, 2017). An effluent limitation guideline sets the degree of reduction of a pollutant that can be achieved through the application of various levels of technology. An effluent limitation is a restriction on the amount of a pollutant that can be released from a point source into a

water body. The discharge of waste water containing metals has effluent limitations, standards, or prohibitions, expressed in terms of the total metal, that is, the sum of the dissolved and suspended fractions of the metal (Eneh, 2011).

Despite the presence of several environmental policies and laws in Nigeria, the environment, particularly in the Southwest region, continues to suffer from degradation. For instance, The GUARDIAN, on Monday June 29 2020 showed the neglected and ravaged Lagos – Abeokuta expressway. This degradation may be attributed to environmental policy failure, which is rooted in institutional failure on the part of the government. The government's inability to fulfill its responsibilities and respond to the needs of the people may contribute to environmental degradation. Although policies may be formulated in the interest of the people, the implementation of these policies, especially environmental policies, often need people-oriented approach.

The implications of these challenges are that environmental policies become weak in protecting the environment from harmful practices, and an unprotected environment cannot guarantee sustainable development in the Southwest region of Nigeria. Therefore, this study looked into government interventions in environmental matters in South west Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study generally examined the extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria;

Research Question

1. What is the extent of government interventions in environmental issues in South west Nigeria

Research Method

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of 872,100 undergraduates (male and female) in the 17 public and 27 private Universities in Southwest, Nigeria (NUC, 2023). The sample of this study consisted of 1752 undergraduates who were selected using multistage sampling procedure. The first stage involved the use of a simple random sampling technique to select three out of the six states that made up Southwest, Nigeria, the states are Ogun, Oyo and Ekiti. The second stage involved the use of stratified random sampling technique to select three Universities in each of the states using forms of ownership of universities as basis for stratification, (one federal, one state and one private). The last stage involved the use of proportional random sampling technique to select undergraduates from each of the Universities. One instrument designed by the researcher was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was tagged 'Questionnaire on Extent of Government Interventions in Environmental Issues' (QEGIEI). (QEGIEI) consisted of two sections A and B. Section A, elicited demographic information of the respondents such as gender of the respondents and name of university. Section B consisted of 10 items that determined the extent of government interventions in environmental issues, its response was rated on 4-point likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) –4, Agree (A) –3, Disagree (D) –2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) –1. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured while the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method and reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. The research question was answered descriptively using frequency counts, means, standard deviation and percentages.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria?

To determine the extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria (high, moderate or low), scores of item 1-10 of

QEGIEI was subjected to frequency sum, percentage and mean rating. The low extent was determined by scores below the mean cut off point (2.50) while the moderate extent was determined by the mean cut off point. The high extent was determined by the score above the mean cut off point. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency counts and Mean rating of extent of government interventions in environmental issues in Southwest, Nigeria

<i>Item</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S A</i>		<i>A</i>		<i>D</i>		<i>SD</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Remark</i>
		<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>		
Observation of monthly environmental sanitation	1731	900	52.0	708	40.9	111	6.4	12	0.7	3.44	High
Law against the improper disposal of sewage (liquid waste)	1725	1020	59.1	633	36.7	66	3.8	6	0.3	3.55	High
Laws against open defecation	1722	942	54.7	663	38.5	105	6.1	12	0.7	3.47	High
Laws against bush burning	1716	855	49.8	675	39.3	165	9.6	21	1.2	3.38	High
Laws against the indiscriminate dumping of waste	1704	858	49.0	735	43.1	105	6.2	6	0.4	3.43	High
Effluent limitation laws	1707	804	47.1	756	44.3	132	7.7	15	0.9	3.38	High
Recycling of waste	1713	876	51.1	738	43.1	78	4.6	21	1.2	3.44	High
Law against the disposal of solid and hazardous waste	1719	924	53.8	684	39.8	63	3.7	48	2.8	3.45	High
Regular clearing of drainage	1728	957	55.4	684	39.6	75	4.3	12	0.7	3.50	High
Regulations against unlawful falling of trees	1725	882	51.1	699	40.5	123	7.1	15	0.9	3.43	High

Mean Cut off = 2.50

The information in Table 1 showed that 95.8% of the respondents agreed that government intervened in environmental issues through law against improper disposal of sewage (liquid waste). Also, 95% of the respondents agreed that government intervened through regular clearing of drainages while 94.2% of the respondents agreed that government intervened through recycling of waste. In addition, 93.5% of the respondents agreed that government intervened through law against the disposal of solid and hazardous waste. The table further showed that law against indiscriminate dumping of wastes, open defecations, unlawful tree felling as well as bush burning are ways through

which government intervened in environmental issues as agreed upon by 93.5%, 93.2%, 92% and 89.2% of the respondents respectively. Finally, 92.9% of the respondents agreed that government intervened through observation of monthly environmental sanitation. The information in Table 1 shows government interventions are high in all the 10 items. Thus, the overall extent of government interventions in environmental issues is considered high.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the extent of government interventions in environmental issues was high in Southwest, Nigeria. Government has

implemented a range of interventions, including legislative measures, enforcement of regulations, and public awareness campaigns, to address various environmental issues. The finding corroborated Ajaero, and Onuoha, (2016) who highlighted the significance of environmental legislation in addressing many environmental issues in Nigeria. Their study emphasized the role of government interventions in formulating and implementing laws to regulate pollution, conserve natural resources, and promote sustainable practices. The study also corroborated Hsueh and Lee (2019) who highlighted the importance of strong enforcement mechanisms in achieving environmental objectives. It emphasizes the role of effective enforcement in ensuring compliance with pollution control regulations and reducing environmental harm caused by industrial activities. This is because government desires a favourable and conducive environment for its citizens.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the government has implemented a range of interventions to address environmental challenges and these efforts are generally perceived favourably by the **responders**.

Recommendation

It was recommended that university management should intensify commitment on environmental education programmes so as to provide students with more comprehensive knowledge of government interventions in environmental issues irrespective of their gender and the ownership of the University.

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