

## Port Harcourt Residents' Perception of "Ogoni Clean Up Show on Rhythm 93.7 Fm" for Remediation of Oil Impacted Sites in Ogoni Land

**OSIKA, Tamuno Matthew**

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State  
tmosika@yahoo.com

**OCHONOGOR, Christopher Ifeakachukwu**

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State  
Christopher.ochonogor@uniport.edu.ng

**NWACHUKWU, Fautinus Ginikanwa**

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State  
fautinus\_nwachukwu@uniport.edu.ng  
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### **Abstract**

*This study was premised on how the perception influences the remediation work in Ogoni land. The major problem is the imminent undermining of the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land in the event of message misinterpretation in the communication process between HYPREP and Ogonis occasioned by negative perception of the radio programme in focus. Thus, the study investigated Port Harcourt residents' perception of Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM for the remediation of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. To tackle this problem, the main objective of the study is to determine Port Harcourt residents' perception of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM and to identify the hindrances to the use of the programme. The study also reviewed some literatures on related concepts, empirical studies and theories, such as the top-bottom perception theory to explain phenomena. The study adopted the survey research design and a mixed method to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from 385 respondents which were presented and analysed. Findings revealed ineffectiveness of the programme and detrimental impact of negative perception of the programme on the remediation work. To this end, the study concludes that Port Harcourt residents' perception is that, the programme is not very effective for the remediation work of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. In view of this, the study recommends that the programme should be focused on addressing sensitive, negative perceptions in the audience to prevent reactions that can undermine the remediation work.*

**Keywords:** Port Harcourt Residents, Perception, Ogoni Clean Up Show, Rhythm 93.7, Remediation, Oil Sites

## Introduction

The discovery of crude oil in large commercial quantity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has resulted into major conflicts rather than wealth creation and development in the region. This is largely due to the damage done to the region's environment resulting from oil exploration activities without proper remediation and commensurate compensation to the people who are badly affected. A report compiled by the World Wild Fund and other partners confirmed that the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria is one of the five most polluted spots in the world (Azaiki, 2003). The major pollutions in the Niger Delta region have been mostly oil spillage and gas flaring by oil companies. These have resulted into loss of soil fertility, depletion of biodiversity, decline of fisheries, among many others. These have made the traditional economic activities of the people which is fishing and farming unprofitable and unproductive thereby, adversely affecting their livelihood.

Poverty therefore ravages the people of the region while the Nigerian state and oil multi-nationals neglect the alleviation of the suffering of the people and remediate the degraded environment so that they can get back their livelihood for survival (UNDP report, 2009). The continuous failure of both the Nigerian state and oil multi-nationals to positively influence the livelihood of the Ogoni people or provide alternative means, especially to the energetic youths of the region has resulted in several violent and non-violent agitations rising out of frustration. These agitations cut across virtually every part of the region and one of such key agitation was the Ogoni Uprising in the 1990s.

As a result of the uprising, oil companies for decades found it difficult to continue oil exploration and production in Ogoni land which consists of four Local Government Areas of Eleme, Tai, Gokana and Khana, all in Rivers State of Nigeria. The Ogoni agitation was led by human rights and environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a prolific writer, educationist and communicator. He adopted a non-violent approach to the Ogoni struggle which attracted global concern and attention. The result of the agitation was the shutdown of oil and gas exploration and production in Ogoni land. The struggle was led by Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). MOSOP agitations led to the adoption of the Ogoni Bill of Rights which became the totality of the demands of the Ogoni people. These agitations by the Ogonis became volatile and the land insecure due to continuous protests that brought oil production to a halt with negative consequences on the communities. Several casualties were recorded in Ogoni land as a result of the agitations.

Following this turn of events, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others (referred to as the nine Ogoni martyrs) were arrested and tried by a military tribunal. The Ogoni nine were convicted by the Military Tribunal and condemned to death. The Ogoni nine were executed on 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1995 for allegedly masterminding the gruesome murder of the four prominent Ogoni chiefs. No doubt, the execution of Saro-Wiwa and his tribesmen provoked international outrage and brought sanctions against the Nigerian government at that time.

Even though Saro-Wiwa was killed, events that occurred after his death revealed that he was more eloquent in death than life (Ukiwo, 2010). This is evident with the pursuit of the Ogoni Bill of Rights as an inspiration for the Ogoni struggle championed by the MOSOP and its

successive leaders. The Ogoni Bill of Rights which was submitted to the Federal Government of Nigeria by the Ogoni people on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1990 demanded among other things, the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation (see appendix 1). Following international attention, condemnation and criticisms that trailed the Nigerian government's delay or refusal to attend to the Ogoni demands, the discourse for the remediation of the Ogoni environment and ecology gained prominence.

The remediation of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land involves the cleaning-up of oil polluted sites that have adversely affected the environment. It mainly impacted vegetation and source of water supply due to the physical characteristics of oil. The 2003 report of the National Research Council (NRC) a Washington DC based organization, estimated that two million tons of oil has been released into the environment annually due to human and natural causes which contaminate the environment. This resulted into adverse long-term effects under particular conditions (Peterson et al. 2003). Between 2009 and 2011 the Federal Government of Nigeria requested the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) to carry out a survey of the nature and extent of oil pollution in Ogoni land. The survey covered contaminated land, ground and surface water, sediments, vegetation, air pollution, public health, industry practices and institutional issues. This was done in collaboration with several partners in the region, including government agencies at the national, state and local government levels, traditional rulers and various rural community-based groups.

An additional mandate to UNEP was to determine appropriate remediation measures to rehabilitate contaminated sites to the level of international standard (UNEP, 2011). Consequently, UNEP after its survey and findings recommended the immediate remediation of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land to be coordinated by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP). HYPREP was established under the Federal Ministry of Environment in 2016 by the Muhammadu Buhari's administration to achieve some set objectives in Ogoni land which include, determine the scope, means and modalities of remediation of soil and ground water contamination in the impacted communities as may be recommended by HYPREP Governing Council and remedy them. The remediation work also includes enhancing local capacity for better environmental management and promotion of awareness of sound environmental management, as well as to ensure livelihoods and sustainable development. In the same vein, the HYPREP has the responsibility to ensure security and promote peace building efforts in impacted communities, strengthen governance, transparency and accountability in the region. The Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo on behalf of the President, Muhammadu Buhari flagged-off the Ogoni clean-up of oil impacted sites on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2016 (Saint, 2022). It was a moment of respite for the Ogoni communities as recognition of the struggle for justice in Ogoniland.

Soon after HYPREP took off, its activities were met with a lot of criticism from residents of Rivers State, Ogoni opinion leaders, elites and influential individuals and groups who held different opinions about the remediation project. The media were inundated with several criticisms of the government's handling of the HYPREP project. These media offensives against the remediation project were perhaps largely due to inadequate communication between the government agency (HYPREP) and the residents of the state. This may be sequel to under-reportage of oil spills and their adverse effects on citizens and environment in Nigeria. According

to UNEP (2011) the oil spills occurring in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have not been adequately covered by the media globally, notwithstanding the significant impacts on human health and the local ecology.

Some civil right groups and individuals criticized HYPREP for not communicating effectively on its action plan and blueprint for the realization of the remediation work of oil impacted sites in Ogoniland. One notable case to mention was the call for the immediate change of the Head of Corporate Communication of HYPREP by the Ogoni Development Drive (ODD), a civil right group, who alleged lack of adequate communication flow between the agency and the people of Ogoni (John, 2021).

Realizing the essential role of the media to adequately disseminate information to the public and to effectively respond to the several media backlashes on the remediation work; the programme “Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM” was conceived and created HYPREP. The “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” is a call-in audience participation programme in which studio guests such as HYPREP management officials, some selected opinion leaders and traditional rulers of Ogoni were made to respond to comments and questions from the audience who call-in. Sponsored by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in 2019 to promote HYPREP activities and its public image and ensure understanding and acceptance of the programme also focuses on marketing HYPREP goals and programmes by drawing attention and highlighting what HYPREP has done, what HYPREP is doing and intends to do.

The programme is an interactive one, where audience members can call in to either ask questions for clarifications by the studio guests, make suggestions or even criticize the policies and plans of the government agency (HYPREP). The programme is been produced by the government agency (HYPREP) and presented in the studio by Rhythm 93.7 FM On Air Personnel (OAPs). The programme is mainly produced by HYPREP, while Rhythm 93.7 FM only broadcast the show. HYPREP provide the topic for discussion and source the studio guests to discuss the topic for the day. It is usually broadcast every Tuesdays of the week between 5 00 and 6 00 in the evening. The main theme of the programme is fostering unity, peace and cooperation for the success of the remediation work of oil impacted sites in Ogoniland.

The motivation behind this study is to establish whether the use of broadcast media programs will be effective for communication between development agencies and rural community development stakeholders in Rivers State. This is premised on understanding how the Port Harcourt residents perceive the “Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM” in relation to the remediation of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land. It would be interesting to know whether the programme created by HYPREP as part of its media campaign is perceived as laudable or not in the clean-up process.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Scholars agreed that as much as it is important for broadcast media programmes to reach the largest possible salable audience for the financial health of their stations (Eastman and Ferguson, 2009), there is also need for the broadcast stations to cause positive social change in their environment. Perhaps it is against this backdrop that Rhythm 93.7 FM gave HYPREP the opportunity to sponsor

the “Ogoni clean-up show” to cause positive social change among the elites, activists and leaders who were already aggrieved with the remediation process and its handlers. The grievances of Ogoni elites against the remediation work are that the handlers were not implementing some of the core recommendations of the UNEP report. Although, the HYPREP has continued to maintain that the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land is in progress, stating that the provision of portable drinking water has reached advanced stage and efforts were ongoing to improve the livelihood of the people through empowerment (HYPREP report, 2021).

This is a clear indication that the peoples’ perception about the clean-up process is different from what the handlers present. This is an issue that has preoccupied public discourse that needs to be managed in order to prevent it from degenerating into full blown crisis that may disrupt the clean-up process, thereby plunging Ogoni land into another round of anarchy. Relying on Dougall (2008) view on issue management as an anticipatory, strategic management process that helps organizations detect and respond appropriately to emerging trends or changes in the socio-political environment, it is no doubt imperative that HYPREP needs to close the gap between it (HYPREP) and the Ogoni people through effective communication. Hence, the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*”, perhaps, to adopt appropriate measures through issues management strategy which is stewardship for building, maintaining and repairing relationships with stakeholders (Health, 2002).

Just as the invitation of UNEP, acceptance and implementation of its report by the Federal Government of Nigeria were positively perceived by Ogoni elites and helped to assuage the Ogoni uprising to an extent, it would be pertinent to find out how Port Harcourt residents, as neutral party between HYPREP and Ogoni elites perceive the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” for the remediation process of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land. This is important to ascertain whether there is possible loss of message fidelity in the communication process between government and the people through the programme. Also, it should be noted that the agitations in Ogoni land may equally affect Port Harcourt residents and many others, who are not only inundated with the media backlashes against HYPREP and the remediation work in Ogoni land, but may be likely prone to vulnerability in terms of insecurity, health and socio-economic difficulties due to possible rural-urban drift.

The problem of this study is the possibility of Port Harcourt residents’ vulnerability if the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land is undermined in the event of misinterpretation of messages and information analysis in the communication process between HYPREP and the Ogonis occasioned by the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*”.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this research basically is to ascertain Port Harcourt residents’ perception of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM and the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain Port Harcourt residents’ perception of the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*”;

2. Investigate the extent of the influence of Port Harcourt residents' perception of "*Ogoni clean-up show on 93.7 FM*" on the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land; and
3. Find out whether there are challenges in the use of the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*" as a communication platform for the remediation of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land.

## Literature Review

### Audience Perception

McQuail (2000) described audience as the collective term for 'receivers' in mass communication process. In short, audience is a group of people, who listens or reads a particular media outlet. Audiences are made up of people who are different from each other, in a different perspective. These audiences' barriers may be political, economic, cultural, educational, psychological, ethnic, religious, physical or intellectual. The above wide diversity of backgrounds, behaviours, attitudes, skills and opinion made audience's perception of radio messages differ. Perception is the interpretation attached to cognitions.

This concept is one that is essential in media and communication studies which focus on the way the consumers of media contents organize and interpret the contents to make meaning. Audience refers to a group of people who watch, read or listen to something. They are also known as assembled spectators or listeners. Audience uses initial knowledge and experience to interpret and create meaning from what they see, taste, smell, feel or hear. Audiences have an innate ability to establish order according to certain laws of perception (Harrigan, 2007).

Audience perception of information depends largely on the reaction of the senses for effective communication to take place. Communication and perception are two inseparable ideas when it comes to the issue of meaning and interpretation of information by the audience. The way one audience perceives effective communication might be different from the other, thereby creating a multidimensional approach to the perception of information or media content. No wonder LaMarre (2009) describes audience members as slow to change and slow to understand the changes in documentary. For Plantinga (2005), what is more compelling in the discourse is how audience members perceive the documentary itself, notwithstanding whether they are slow or not.

### Place of Radio in Rural Development

Since the dawn of civilisation about two and half million years ago, every society's growth, survival and continuity depends on among other things, a system of communication, through which people exchange ideals, feeling; an economic system for the production of goods and services, a health system to counteract disease and ensure human reproduction; a sociopolitical system to maintain control and order and a defence system to protect their territories against external aggression (Ugboaja, 1985). Ndolo (2006) observes that the partial success of modern mass media application for development projects, especially in the rural areas have resulted in various calls by

communication scholars for rural development agents in the field, for a greater utilisation of indigenous communication channels for rural development.

According to Moge kwu (1990), the importance of rural radio in the introduction and sustenance of change in rural communities is undeniable, yet, successive Nigerian leaders have continued to utilise the Western mass media as the panacea for rural development, thus, there is a pressing need to improve and create more rural stations and create programmes that will meet the needs of the rural dwellers, thereby, bringing about national development. Radio can be used to mobilise the people at the grass root level for community development and national consciousness. No serious mass-oriented development programme, especially in rural communities in Africa ever succeeds without the active involvement of the people within the traditional system.

Rural radio programme serves as a source of cultural, political, health and other educational and enlightenment programmes for the masses, leading them towards self-actualisation and national development. It is in this light that Okam (1981) submits that much of the failure that attends government mass-oriented programmes is traceable to the fact that policy makers at the national level fail to utilise this powerful and credible medium. Radio can be used as a source of entertainment through arts and cultural festivals, musicals and dramatic performance, by local singing groups, masquerades and other music and drama groups. Radio is a medium of communication through which the individuals share the world around them and beyond their immediate environment. Radio in a country should influence social and, especially the political fabric.

The social objective of using radio to mobilise people in Nigeria entails the area of education, information and entertainment. It is essential to provide through radio a kind of general education for people, irrespective of their educational background. This would be by a combination of formal and informal form of education. Electronic media generally, according to Asemah (2011), provide the public with information. Electronic media serve as watchdog and do not abuse power. For education, there is thrill of learning from the source material. Radio as an electronic media, is expected to play the role of improving and changing social, cultural, political and technological thinking, which will, in the long run, have positive results on the process of rural development. This sensitive role expected to be played by radio is not far from the fact that it shows special qualities in disseminating information. Radio is so powerful that it brings political, economic and social news to any community or group of communities faster than other medium. Nwuneli, cited in Asemah (2011) in his own contribution on the role of radio, says, it has brought stimulus into the house, brings about competitions within families, thereby, grooming people who will contribute positively to the process of development. This fact agrees with the idea of Wigwe (1988) because of the emphasis on grassroots development. Salama (1978) notes that radio serves as an opinion leader in its news commentary and editorial. It mirrors the society in programmes like drama that present issues relevant to society in action which creates easy understanding and learning. It informs and educates the listeners in its discussion and documentary programmes. It entertains in its light programmes like musicals, sports comedy and dances. It also seeks to improve the society in its special occupational programmes geared towards agricultural business and other related areas. In essence therefore, radio can be employed to pass across vital information about latest techniques in agriculture, trends in agricultural extension services, Radio as a Tool for Rural

Development in Nigeria: Prospects to the generality of rural dwellers. Radio has been used to promote and support the cause for nature holding and to this end, Moemeka (1985) remarks that a local broadcast media like radio, if well managed, fully operated, will provide a continuous flow of educational information on all aspects that affect the lives of rural communities and also arouse their awareness with a view to changing what is detrimental to their lives. Thus, radio can be effectively used to promote health related issues. Radio educates, informs and enlightens the public of which the rural populace is included.

Wigwe (1988) while writing on development communication says: The key role assigned to radio is to inform, educate, enlighten and entertain. The rural mobilisation and development process therefore, demands from the media the responsibility of making attainable enlightenment and aspiration of the rural populace. Towards this end, the mass media support service, should therefore promote dialogue between the designers of rural development process and programmes. They will mirror to each group in a relentless manner, the programmes that have been implemented, how it has been accepted, its short coming, areas of improvement and the reactions of the beneficiaries. All these coupled with the medium 's appeal to both the literate and illiterate audiences make radio the most fertile medium. Radio is the most effective medium of information at the grassroot level in Nigeria. It has assumed this powerful dimension because of many factors like, natural disposition, coverage area and cost. From the view point of Tafida (1986), cited in Asemah (2011), broadcasting (radio) is so powerful; it brings political, economic and social news to any community or any group of communities. Wigwe (1988) believes that radio broadcasting has credible role to play in disseminating information to the masses at the grassroots level for development purpose. Information in this sense involves the social, political and economic aspects. Another contributor, Adaba (1987), cited in Asemah (2011) argues further that there is an essential communication role for radio broadcasting at the local level. Within an over-all national system, there is a clear need for radio broadcast to be used to motivate and mobilise the people at the grassroots, so that they can participate actively in the development of their own society. This fact agrees with the idea of Wigwe (1988) because of the emphasis on grassroots development.

Iyimoga (1987) asserts that communication 's role in authentic rural development is that of providing access to information from the urban areas where modern ideas would be diffused to rural sectors and motivating and mobilising the rural populace to accept and react favourably to those new ideas. According to Asemah (2011), of the mass media generally available to Africans, radio is the most widespread and accessible. And because of its special qualities, radio can be a major force in bringing about development, that is, to any quantitative and qualitative improvements in the lives of the people. It is carried out in isolation from the direct involvement of extension services and is literarily opened in the sense that programmes are directed at unorganised audience. The advantage of this strategy is that, since radio is widely diffused and readily accessible, even in peripheral areas, it can reach large audiences at a low cost. And because it reaches more rural people in third world than any other medium, its potential to bring about increase in knowledge and provide motivation for shifts in practices is considerable. Radio just like television is a tool that can be used to bring about positive attitudinal change in the audience. Radio helps to achieve development, both in the rural and urban areas, as issues of development are aired to the audience in the form of various programmes and individuals are exposed to



happenings in and around their society, through listening to programmes. Radio can be employed to pass vital information about the right attitude, behaviour, knowledge, techniques and skills, which are expected from the members of the public. Radio has been found to be one of the most effective media of transforming a hither-to, under-developed society to a developed polity. Ojebode (2003) concurs when he says that with few years of its emergences, radio has metamorphosed from being an object of private concern, to a political and development instrument in the hands of governments and NGOs. The information dispersing and the enlightenment role of radio is the commonest of its functions. This disseminating function according to Asemah (2011), covers information to people 's alertness to health, agriculture, education, economy, politics, etc. In this case, lectures, news, entertainment, drama, discussions etc, can be used. Radio stations in Nigeria often relay special programmes that promote rural development. More so, radio has the capacity to mobilise support for government programmes. Thus, the government at various levels - local, state and national, have used both radio and television to mobilise support for its programmes.

Arulogun and Adesiyan notes that successful governments in Nigeria have used the media to console people and reassure them of their support in times of fire disaster, religious crisis, flood and other catastrophic events. During the crises in plateau state, the government relied heavily on the mass media in holding together the people; not only in terms of crisis, but also for the continuous peaceful coexistence of the different ethnic groups. Both private and public television and radio stations have introduced programmes, relayed jingles that lay emphasis on the need for peaceful coexistence.

### **Influence of Citizens' Perception on Government Policy Implementation**

Every government policy is intended towards improving the lives of citizens and to ensure a secured and stable society. Government is a system that is responsible for the provision and control of resources for development in any given community, state or nation. According to Writer (2020) citizens can influence what the government does through four channels: political parties, campaigns and elections, interest groups and the media. Collectively, they're called linkage institutions as they "link" citizens to the government. Political parties represent ideologies that people can align themselves with and thereby link themselves to government. If the party's point of view, as expressed through its public policies, are consistent more or less with the citizen's, then that party usually earns the citizen's allegiance. Campaigns and elections, which can be lavish, expensive affairs, afford people the opportunity to hear from party representatives regarding issues and a candidate's qualifications for office. The information citizens rely on to elect their government officials generally comes from the media, such as television, radio, newspapers and the Internet. Citizens share their opinions with their elected officials through various ways, including letter writing. Special interest groups center on subsets of people with common interests and attitudes who try to influence government to share their philosophy. Generally standing for one issue in particular, they may rally around their concerns according to profession, business, corporation or hobby.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Top-bottom Theory of Perception**

This theory was propounded by British psychologist Richard Gregory in 1970 who proposed that the process of perception is constructive and is dependent upon top-down processing in order to interpret new information. For him, the Top-down processing perceives the world around us by drawing from what we already know in order to interpret new information. Top-down theories are hypotheses-driven and stress the importance of higher mental processes such as expectations, beliefs, values, and social influences. Here, schemas are constructed which consist of past experiences, prior knowledge, emotions, and expectations, and then used to form hypotheses upon the arrival of new information. These frameworks, also known as schemas, are constructed from past experiences, prior knowledge, emotions, and expectations (Piaget, 1953). For this reason, the influence of culture on shaping our perceptions cannot be ignored, as culture creates differences in contexts and experiences that individuals draw from when perceiving new information (Deregowski, 1972).

One of the greatest advantages of Gregory's approach is that when speaking of the process of perception it takes into account our personal history and the understanding that to operate with sensory data does not necessarily mean to perceive, but to perceive always means to integrate feelings into a broader context of our beliefs and opinions. On the other hand, it is necessary to add, that there are some shortcomings to be found in Gregory's theory. One of them is its inability to satisfactorily explain the relative correctness and universality of most of our daily perceptions.

The relevance of this theory to this study is that it would help to explain the underlying reasons for the continuous unrest in Ogoni land notwithstanding the establishment of HYPREP to remedy the environmental damage in Ogoni land. It would be expected that, with the UNEP report, establishment of HYPREP and commencement of remediation work on oil-impacted sites, the Ogonis would naturally end all hostilities and possibly allow oil exploration activities that were halted many years ago in Ogoni land. This theory no doubt, would put into proper perspective if such expectation was not achieved.

### **Empirical studies**

#### **Acquaye and Ofosu-Boateng (2021). Exploratory study on audience perception of information credibility on media platforms in Ghana.**

This study seeks audience perspective on how credible they perceive information in the media environment in Ghana and further interrogates to know measures participants take to authenticate the veracity or otherwise of information from the media. The study also seeks to ascertain media outlets from which participants access information on issues of interest. Two focus groups (called Group one and Group two) were used in this study to gather information on participants' perception of information credibility in the media in Ghana. This study, thus, uses two different focus groups in order to get wide and diverse views on the audience's perspective of information credibility in the media.

It is evident from the study that the phenomenon of fake news is widespread on all media platforms in Ghana. This has largely affected the level of trust media audiences have in information coming from the media, especially online media. With media audiences getting information from different media sources at the same time, their preferences of one media form over the other is an indication of their trust in that media outlet. While radio and television are trusted for the information they share, online portals are used by media audiences as a quasi-fact checking tool. The gap in this study is that it did not investigate whether the preferences of the audience were influenced by their perception of programmes on those choice media. This is a crucial aspect which the current study seeks to unravel.

### Methodology

The survey research design was deployed in this study. The study used quantitative and qualitative research which employed the use of numbers, statistical methods and persuasive discussions to measure the perception of Port Harcourt residents of Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM for the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. The population was gotten from the active audience of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM in Port Harcourt metropolis which covers Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpo Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A 2.7% annual growth rate from the 2006 National Population Census figure was adopted for Port Harcourt metropolis covering Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas. The 2006 census figures for Port Harcourt (538,558) and Obio/Akpor (462,350) LGAs sum up to 1,000,908 (FGN Official Gazette, 2009) and a 2.7% growth rate put the figure at 1,433,300 as at 2022. A total number of 385 respondents were selected as the sample size for this study using Meyer determinant table. The multi-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted to select the participants for sampling. The questionnaire and focus group discussion methods were used to collect data for this study. The quantitative data collated from the questionnaire were presented in a frequency tabular form. Also, the explanation building technique was used to analyze the qualitative data from the focus group discussion. The responses and observations from the focus group discussion were grouped according to themes and analysed.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1 – Port Harcourt Residents’ Perception of the Relevance of Ogoni Clean-up Show**

S/N	Item	SA <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Aggregate	Mean	Decision
1.	It is very relevant to the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land.	110	40	60	150	830	2.3	Disagree
2.	It is not relevant to the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land.	240	60	40	20	1,240	3.4	Agree
3.	It is averagely relevant to the remediation work on oil impacted sites	60	50	180	70	820	2.3	Disagree

in Ogoni land. Cumulative	410	150	280	270	2,890	2.7	Agree
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**Table 2 – Programme’s Effectiveness in Communication for the Remediation Work**

S/N	Item	SA <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Aggregate	Mean	Decision
1.	It is an effective communication Platform for the remediation work On oil-impacted sites in Ogoni.	90	50	50	180	790	2.1	Disagree
2.	The programme is not useful in encouraging Ogoni peoples’ acceptance of the remediation work	50	40	210	60	800	2.2	Disagree
3.	It is not an effective communication Platform for the remediation work on Oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land	220	100	20	20	1,240	3.4	Agree
	Cumulative	360	190	280	260	2,830	2.6	Agree

Tables 1 and 2 presented data to answer research question three which sort to know the perception of Port Harcourt residents of the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” for the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land. Table 1 specifically show data of responses on how Port Harcourt residents perceive the effectiveness in communication. Though, to some, the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM was in a way effective in communication on the remediation work. However, majority overwhelmingly held that the programme was not an effective communication platform for the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land.

In Table 2, the data presented indicated that Port Harcourt residents perceived the relevance of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM for the remediation of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land negatively. This may be consequent upon other factors that played out from the data presented and shown in the earlier tables, particularly table four where the programme was perceived as not being effective in communication. No doubt, a programme’s relevance will largely depend on its effectiveness in the communication process. In view of the data presented in table four and five as regards research question three, it can be concluded that Port Harcourt resident’s perception of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM was not effective and as such not relevant for the remediation work in Ogoni land.

**Table 3 – Influence of Port Harcourt Residents’ Perception of the Clean-up Show on the Remediation Work in Ogoni land.**

S/N	Item	SA <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Aggregate	Mean	Decision
1	Resulted to information misinterpretation for the remediation work	230	90	30	10	1,260	3.5	Agree
2	Resulted to correct information interpretation for the remediation work	50	30	200	80	770	2.1	Disagree
3	Resulted to contradiction in information interpretation for the remediation work	70	60	150	80	840	2.3	Disagree
	Cumulative	350	180	380	170	2,870	2.6	Agree

**Table 4 – Effect of Port Harcourt Residents’ Interpretation of Information for the Remediation Work.**

S/N	Item	SA <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Aggregate	Mean	Decision
1.	The interpretation of information from the Ogoni clean-up show can undermine the remediation work in most parts of Ogoni land.	200	100	40	20	1,200	3.3	Agree
2.	The interpretation of information from the Ogoni clean-up show cannot undermine the remediation work in Ogoni land.	120	50	60	130	880	2.4	Disagree
3.	The interpretation of information from the Ogoni clean-up show may undermine the remediation work in Ogoni land.	20	40	130	170	630	1.8	Disagree
	Cumulative	340	190	230	320	2,710	2.5	Agree

Dealing with research question four which sort to know in what ways will the perception of Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM influence Port Harcourt residents in the remediation work of oil impacted sites in Ogoni land, table 3 specifically show data of responses on how Port Harcourt residents’ perception influenced interpretation of information from the Ogoni clean-up show, whereas, table 4 show data of responses on how Port Harcourt resident’s interpretation of information can affect the remediation work.

In table 3, the data indicated that the perception of Port Harcourt residents created room for misinterpretation of information from the programme. Majority of the respondents were of the view that information from the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM were misinterpreted by Port Harcourt residents. From the data presented it is obvious that Port Harcourt residents did not correctly interpret information from the Ogoni clean-up show, rather the information from the programme were largely misinterpreted and in some cases their interpretation were contradictory. This point to one clear fact of loss of message fidelity in the Ogoni clean-up show.

Table 4 went further to show how respondents responded to the question of how Port Harcourt residents' interpretation of information affected the remediation work in Ogoni land. The data showed majority opinion that the misinterpretation from the Ogoni clean-up show undermined the remediation work in most parts of Ogoni land. This position which constitutes the majority again appears very worrisome, however not surprising. Judging from the data shown in tables 3 and 4, it was evident that the perception of the "Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM" influenced Port Harcourt residents to misinterpret information which resulted into undermining of the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land.

**Table 5 – Challenges to the Use of Ogoni Clean-up Show for the Remediation Work in Ogoni Land.**

S/N	Item	SA <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Aggregate	Mean	Decision
1	The presenter's bias, audience non-adherence to ethics and lack of continuity and consistency by the sponsor.	240	80	20	20	1,260	3.5	Agreed
2	Poor programme promo and technical hitches during transmission	80	40	20	220	700	1.9	Disagree
3	Improper planning and Implementation.	100	50	90	120	850	2.4	Disagree
	Cumulative	420	170	130	360	2,810	2.6	Agree

Data presented in Table 5 answered research question five which bothers on the challenges to the use of "Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM" as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land. These data took into cognizance the possible challenges that would impede the effective use of the programme as a communication platform for the remediation work from the data presented in the table above, most of the respondents submitted that there were challenges, with very few on the contrary. Majority of the respondents attributed the challenges to the radio station (which is Rhythm 93.7 FM) the audience (Port Harcourt residents) and the

programme sponsors (HYPREP). The challenges include studio presenter's bias, audience non-adherence to ethics and lack of continuity and consistency of the programme by the sponsor. Though, some of the respondents opined that lack of funding for the programme was also a challenge that impeded its viability as a communication platform, however, the majority did not see that as a major challenge, maybe due to the perceived strong financial standing of the sponsor (HYPREP). From the foregoing it is evident that, the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*" faced major challenges as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land.

## Discussion of Findings

### **RQ 1: What is the perception of Port Harcourt residents of the Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM for the remediation work on oil impacted sites in Ogoni land?**

Judging from the data presented and analysed, it is evident that Port Harcourt residents' perception of the programme was closely related to its popularity among the audience members. People can only hold a view or perception of something they are aware of and not only what they are not aware of. This study corroborates Acquaye and Ofose-Boateng (2021) observation that consumers of media information rely on their critical faculties to make sense of what they come across. To this end, the perception of Port Harcourt residents was determined by the extent of their exposure to the programme and its content.

Again, realizing the importance of the need for effective communication for the remediation work, handlers of communication are expected to design a programme that will serve the purpose of the work. This is in line with Kinicki and Kreitner (2006) assertion that managers who comprehend the process of information exchange between the linked elements of sender and receiver can as well analyze their own communication patterns and go further to design media or communication programs that fit organizational needs.

The data presented and analysed revealed that Port Harcourt residents' perception of the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*" was that the programme was not very effective and therefore not relevant for the remediation work on oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. This perception obviously does not sound good of the programme whose main intent was to bridge the communication gap between HYPREP and the people. This was hinged mainly on its unimpressive popularity. Just as the top-button theory of perception constructs schemes which consist of past experiences, prior knowledge, emotions and expectations, and use them to arrive at new conclusion, so also Port Harcourt residents may have applied same process in arriving at their perception of ineffectiveness and irrelevance of the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*".

A careful review of these viewpoints indicates that the programme was good, but was not very impressive. This was the view of one of the discussants who virtually summarized the various views expressed. It is therefore safe to hold that Port Harcourt residents' perception of the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*" is that it is ineffective and irrelevant. From their responses, the prevailing viewpoint was that since the programme was not effective in communication, it may result in misinterpretation of information by Port Harcourt residents and so react negatively which can spell doom for the remediation work. Again, vital information from the programme which would help in facilitating the remediation work can be given contradictory interpretation due to

how people perceive the source, which in this case is the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM.*”

**Research Question 2: In what ways do Port Harcourt residents’ perception of the Ogoni clean-up show influenced the remediation work of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land?**

Another worrisome finding of this research is that Port Harcourt residents’ perception of the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” influenced information misinterpretation which can undermine the remediation work in Ogoni land. Unfortunately, the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” from the finding drawn from the analysis failed to influence opinions positively. Consequently, opinions were formed towards negativity which influenced how the people react to information received and by extension the remediation work.

Again, the top-bottom theory of perception explains this phenomenon of how the people’s perception influenced them to misinterpret information from the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” for the remediation work of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. The misinterpretation of information which is influenced by the negative perception of the programme can portray the remediation work and its operators such that there may be breakdown of peace, stability and communal disharmony. This aligns with Sutcliffe and Hannigan (2001) position that inaccurate media portrayals significantly exacerbate the public’s stigma, ostracism, harassment and mistreatment of people. From the foregoing, it is equally revealed in this research that Port Harcourt residents’ negative perception influenced detrimental impact on the Remediation work

**Research Question 3: What are the challenges to the use of “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land?**

Dealing with this it was discovered that the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7FM*” faced some challenges from the station, sponsor and audience as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land.; these include studio presenter’s bias, audience non-adherence to ethics of participation and lack of consistency and continuity by the sponsor. It was further revealed that the challenges emanated from the station (Rhythm 93.7 FM), the sponsor (HYPREP) and the audience (Port Harcourt residents).

These challenges greatly affected the motive of the programme to influence the people in order for the remediation work to go on smoothly and successfully. This was largely hinged on the failure of the programme not conforming to the dictates of the agenda setting theory which posits that there is a link between what the media considers important and what the general public considers important. Judging from various viewpoints it is also safe to conclude that the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” failed to achieve its main purpose as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land due to challenges from the station, sponsor and audience.

**Conclusion**

Port Harcourt residents’ perception of the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*”, the study concluded that, Port Harcourt residents’ perceive the “*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*” as ineffective and irrelevant for the remediation work of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land. This is because the programme failed to address the interest of the Ogoni people, whose main concern is to communicate their challenges and expectations as regards the remediation work to the authorities concerned. Also, the programme could not galvanize support for the activities of



HYPREP by utilizing the opportunity to promote mile stones achieved so far in the remediation work. The programme rather featured studio guests and presenters who could not address issues to convince the large population of educated elites among the respondents, as indicated in the demography of this study.

The study concludes that, Port Harcourt residents' perception of the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7 FM*" influenced information misinterpretation which can undermined the remediation work. Port Harcourt residents' perception was borne out of their conclusion that the programme was one of government propaganda to convince them that the remediation work is going on as planned, yet there are no visible achievements which the people can see. To them, this has been the pattern in the past and is not different from the present. Their perception would make them to view information from the programme, whether useful, true or not, to be false and misleading, hence, give such information their own interpretation and meaning. These misinterpretations can create confusion among the people of Ogoni and even undermine the remediation work.

The study concludes that the "*Ogoni clean-up show on Rhythm 93.7FM*" had challenges emanating from the station, audience and the sponsor which made it to be ineffective as a communication platform for the remediation work in Ogoni land. The studio presenters portrayed bias for HYPREP which also contributed to the perception of Port Harcourt residents. Also, the audiences failed to adhere to ethical standards of audience participation by ensuring modest behaviours during the conversations on the programme. Again, the sponsors (HYPREP) may be due to funding failed to ensure continuity and consistency. The programme was discontinued, thereby denying the audience the opportunity to express themselves as it concerns the remediation work of oil-impacted sites in Ogoni land.

### **Recommendations**

1. The programme should be planned, scripted, designed and presented to accommodate the key interests of the audience, so that the audience will perceive it to be effective and relevant for rural development.
2. The programme should have an effective feedback mechanism in order to deliberately address information misinterpretations that would emanate from audience negative perceptions or impressions to prevent reactions that can undermine peace and stability for effective communication in rural development.
3. Studio presenters of programmes should be made to adhere to media ethical standards in order to eliminate or reduce personal bias, the audience should be well educated on the standard practice of audience participation in broadcast media programmes and media programme sponsors should be encouraged to continue funding in order to ensure consistency.

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