

**ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING  
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE AMONG  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN STUDENTS**

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**APRIL, 2026**

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**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SAFETY  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,  
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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

**APRIL, 2026**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his love and grace throughout my stay in this institution.

## **CERTIFICATION**

We, the undersigned, certify that this research was carried out by **Faith Chika PIUS** with matriculation number **EDU2102528** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of B.sc(Ed) Environmental Education in the Department of Health, safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin city, Edo state.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <b>PAGE</b> |
|--|-------------|
| <b>TITLE</b>   | <b>i</b>    |
| <b>DEDICATION</b>  | <b>ii</b>   |
| <b>CERTIFICATION</b>   | <b>iii</b>  |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>  | <b>iv</b>   |
| <b>ABSTRACT</b>  | <b>vii</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>   |             |
| Background of the study  | 1           |
| Statement of the Problem   | 4           |
| Research Question  | 6           |
| Purpose of the Study   | 7           |
| Significance of the Study  | 7           |
| Scope And Delimitations of the Study   | 9           |
| Limitations of the Study   | 10          |
| Definition Of Terms  | 11          |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>                               |             |
| Overview of Media Coverage on Environmental Awareness                          | 13          |
| Comparative Effectiveness of Traditional and Digital Media                     | 17          |
| Influence of Social Media on Environmental Awareness                           | 23          |
| Media Driven Environmental Awareness and Behavior Change                       | 27          |
| Social Media and Environmental Attitudes among University<br>of Benin Students | 32          |
| Summary of Reviewed Literature   | 36          |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>  |             |
| Research Design  | 40          |
| Population of the Study  | 41          |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Sample and Sampling Technique   | 41        |
| Research Instruments  | 41        |
| Validity of the Instrument  | 42        |
| Reliability of the instrument   | 42        |
| Method of Data Collection   | 42        |
| Method of Data Analysis   | 43        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</b> |           |
| Presentation of Results   | 44        |
| Discussion of Findings  | <b>49</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>             |           |
| Summary   | 52        |
| Conclusion  | 53        |
| Recommendations   | <b>54</b> |
| <b>REFERENCES</b>   | <b>55</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX</b>   | <b>59</b> |

## **ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to find out the Role of Media in Promoting Environmental Awareness and Sustainable Practice among University of Benin Students.

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The sample size for the study was hundred and fifty (150) students. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to access the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practice.

The findings revealed that media doesn't provide adequate and timely coverage of environmental awareness issues and it has been so overtime. Media coverage not only informs audiences about environmental threats but also explains their causes, consequences, and possible solutions. Media campaigns by organizations like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and environmental NGOs have improved public awareness of waste management and pollution. University students, being highly media literate, often depend on these channels for environmental updates. Digital media is more effective than traditional media (print and tv/radio stations) in the promotion of environmental awareness among students. Media messages and awareness campaigns provide information that not only educates but also motivates individuals to adopt sustainable practices, such as proper waste disposal and pollution reduction. However, barriers such as limited internet access, information overload, unclear message, low interest, and weak collaboration between media outlets and environmental organization hinder the full impact of media based environmental education. It was therefore recommended that the university should leverage digital and social media platforms, ensure timely and consistent information reaches the students, and that media messages come from credible and reliable sources to enhance their influence on students attitudes and behaviors.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The contemporary global environmental crisis has necessitated urgent action towards sustainable development and environmental consciousness, particularly among the younger generation who will inherit the planet's future. Environmental degradation, climate change, and resource depletion have become pressing concerns that require immediate attention and behavioral change at all levels of society. Universities, as centers of learning and intellectual development, play a crucial role in shaping environmentally conscious citizens who can drive sustainable development initiatives.

In Nigeria, environmental challenges have become increasingly pronounced, with issues ranging from deforestation and soil erosion to water pollution and climate change impacts. There is evidence that Nigeria is already experiencing environmental challenges attributed to climate change (CC) and its impacts, making environmental awareness and sustainable practices critical for national development. According to Ogunbode et al. (2022), the environment encompasses all aspects of nature, both living and non-living, and has an impact on the quality of life, emphasizing the need for comprehensive environmental education and awareness programs.

The role of media in environmental communication has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly with the proliferation of digital platforms and social media networks. Media serves as a powerful tool for information dissemination, attitude

formation, and behavior change, making it an essential component in environmental awareness campaigns. According to Adebayo and Ogundimu (2023), a significant majority (92.2%) of respondents were able to accurately recall campaign messages, with 68.8% identifying television as their major source of information, demonstrating the effectiveness of media in environmental communication.

The advent of social media has revolutionized how environmental information is shared and consumed, particularly among university students who are digital natives. Research has shown that social media platforms have great potential in widely disseminating environmental sustainability awareness among higher education students. According to Waheed et al. (2017), the explosion of social media use such as Facebook among higher education students is deemed to have great potential in widely disseminating environmental sustainability awareness. This presents both opportunities and challenges for environmental education and sustainable practice promotion.

Studies have revealed concerning gaps in environmental awareness among university students. Nigerian students performed poorly on the sustainability literacy test (SLT), with students majoring in agriculture exhibiting higher knowledge in the social and overall topics, indicating a need for enhanced environmental education strategies. Furthermore, research by Abdullah et al. (2022) found that the education level of university students contradicts with their awareness to environmental communication on social media, although the awareness was found to be of modest fit to environmental communication.

Recent research has explored the psychological mechanisms through which social media influences environmental behavior among university students. According to Zhang et al. (2024), social media has a significant impact on pro-environmental behavior through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Impact Theory, particularly influencing Environmental Attitude and Subjective Norms. This theoretical framework provides valuable insights into how media platforms can be leveraged to promote sustainable practices among university students.

The role of mass media in creating environmental awareness has been extensively studied, with researchers emphasizing the need for strategic communication approaches. According to Kapoor and Sharma (2017), the role of mass media in developing countries needs improvement in the spread of environmental awareness, highlighting the importance of context-specific strategies for effective environmental communication. This finding is particularly relevant for Nigeria, where media infrastructure and accessibility vary significantly across different regions.

University students represent a critical demographic for environmental awareness initiatives due to their position as future leaders and decision-makers. They possess the intellectual capacity to understand complex environmental issues and the social networks to influence their peers and communities. However, the effectiveness of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among this population requires systematic investigation to understand the mechanisms, barriers, and facilitators of media-driven environmental communication.

This study is therefore crucial for understanding how different media platforms and communication strategies can be optimized to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices among university students in Nigeria. The findings will contribute to the development of more effective environmental communication strategies and inform policy decisions regarding environmental education in higher institutions.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the growing recognition of media's potential in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices, significant gaps exist in understanding the effectiveness, reach, and impact of different media platforms and strategies. The proliferation of media channels has created a complex landscape where environmental messages compete for attention among countless other information sources, raising questions about message effectiveness and audience engagement.

One of the primary challenges facing environmental communication through media is the phenomenon of information overload. In an era where individuals are bombarded with information from multiple sources, environmental messages may struggle to capture and maintain audience attention. The fragmentation of media consumption patterns, particularly among younger demographics who increasingly rely on social media and digital platforms, has created challenges for traditional environmental education approaches that primarily relied on conventional media channels.

The quality and accuracy of environmental information presented through various media platforms represent another significant concern. The democratization of content creation

has enabled anyone to produce and share environmental information, regardless of their expertise or credibility. This has led to the proliferation of misinformation, oversimplified narratives, and sensationalized content that may distort public understanding of environmental issues. The challenge of maintaining scientific accuracy while making content accessible and engaging remains a persistent problem in environmental media.

Furthermore, the digital divide continues to limit media's reach in promoting environmental awareness, particularly in developing countries and marginalized communities. Access to digital technologies, internet connectivity, and media literacy skills varies significantly across populations, potentially excluding vulnerable groups from environmental education initiatives. This digital inequality may exacerbate existing environmental justice issues, where communities most affected by environmental problems have the least access to environmental information and resources.

The current study investigates the impact of environmental sustainability government initiatives, social platform influence, environment awareness, and environment consciousness on green practices. Research indicates that while social platform influence can enhance environmental awareness, the translation of this awareness into concrete green practices remains inconsistent and requires further investigation.

The generational differences in media consumption patterns present another challenge for environmental communication strategies. Older generations may rely more heavily on traditional media sources, while younger generations increasingly turn to social media and digital platforms for environmental information. According to the recent Eurobarometer

(2022) survey, 75% of respondents claimed that television is one of their most used forms of media to access news, followed by online news platforms (43%) and radio (39%). This generational divide necessitates differentiated approaches to environmental communication that can effectively reach and engage diverse age groups.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the current state of media coverage of environmental issues across different platforms, and how has this coverage evolved over the past decade?
2. What are the ways in which different media platforms (traditional vs. digital) differ in their effectiveness at promoting environmental awareness among University of Benin students?
3. What are the key factors that influence the translation of media-driven environmental awareness into actual sustainable behavior change?
4. What role does social media play in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors among University of Benin students?
5. What are the barriers and challenges that limit the effectiveness of media-based environmental education initiatives?

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among University of Benin students specifically;

1. To evaluate the current state of media coverage of environmental issues across different platforms, and how has this coverage evolved over the past decade.
2. To identify how the different media platforms (traditional vs. digital) differ in their effectiveness in promoting environmental awareness among University of Benin students.
3. To provide key factors that influence the translation of media driven environmental awareness into actual sustainable behavior change.
4. To assess the role social media plays in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors among University of Benin students.
5. To evaluate the barriers and challenges that limit the effectiveness of media based environmental education initiatives.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance environmental awareness among University of Benin students. Understanding the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices is crucial for addressing the urgent environmental challenges facing humanity in the 21st century.

The research findings can inform the development of policies and programs that leverage media platforms to promote environmental awareness and support the implementation of sustainable practices at the community and national levels.

The study's significance is also evident in its potential contribution to combating environmental misinformation and promoting media literacy. By examining how different media platforms and formats influence environmental understanding, this research can inform the development of strategies to counter misinformation and enhance critical evaluation skills among media consumers.

Recent studies have shown that media exposure to climate change information can have indirect effects on pro-environmental behavior through heightened worry, and that social media plays a more significant role than traditional media in moderating the relationship between norm perception and pro-environmental behavior. The findings can inspire additional research questions and methodologies that can advance our understanding of environmental communication and contribute to the development of more effective approaches to environmental education and engagement.

Additionally, this research contributes to understanding the psychological mechanisms through which media influences environmental behavior. Early research on social media's relationship to climate change suggests several positive impacts, including greater knowledge of climate change, mobilization of climate change activists, and space for discussing the issue with others.

## **SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses specifically on assessing the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among University of Benin students, encompassing both traditional and digital media platforms.

The temporal scope covers the period from 2014 to 2024, allowing for analysis of trends and changes in environmental media coverage over the past decade. This timeframe captures significant developments in both environmental awareness and media technology, including the rise of social media platforms, the increasing urgency of climate change communication, and the evolution of digital media consumption patterns.

The study examines various types of media platforms, including traditional media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines), digital media (online news portals, websites, blogs), and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok). The research also considers emerging media formats such as podcasts, online documentaries, and interactive digital content.

The research focuses on environmental awareness and sustainable practices broadly defined, including topics such as climate change, pollution, conservation, renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable consumption.

The research does not examine the internal operations or business models of media organizations in detail, instead focusing on the content they produce and its impact on audiences. While economic factors affecting environmental media coverage are

acknowledged, detailed analysis of media economics and ownership structures is beyond the scope of this study.

The study does not include comprehensive policy analysis or recommendations for media regulation, instead focusing on the assessment of media's current role and effectiveness in environmental communication. While policy implications are discussed, detailed policy development and implementation strategies are not the primary focus of this research.

The study also delimits its focus to exclude analysis of entertainment media content that may have environmental themes but is not primarily educational or awareness-focused.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the scope, methodology, and generalizability of its findings. Understanding these limitations is crucial for interpreting the research results and identifying areas for future investigation and improvement.

One significant limitation relates to the rapidly evolving nature of media technology and platforms. The digital media landscape changes continuously, with new platforms emerging, existing platforms evolving their features and algorithms, and user behaviors adapting to these changes. This dynamic environment means that findings related to specific platforms or technologies may become outdated relatively quickly, limiting the long-term applicability of some aspects of the research.

The measurement and assessment of environmental awareness and behavior change present considerable methodological challenges. Environmental awareness is a complex

construct that encompasses knowledge, attitudes, values, and intentions, making it difficult to measure comprehensively and consistently across different populations and contexts.

Access to comprehensive and reliable data represents another significant limitation. While some media platforms provide extensive analytics and engagement data, others offer limited or no public access to audience metrics and impact data. This inconsistency in data availability may create gaps in the analysis and limit the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions about the effectiveness of different media platforms and approaches.

Media exposure is just one of many factors that influence environmental attitudes and behaviors, including personal experiences, social networks, economic circumstances, educational background, and cultural values.

The rapidly changing political and social context surrounding environmental issues may affect the relevance and applicability of findings. Environmental communication occurs within broader political and social contexts that can influence public receptivity to environmental messages and the effectiveness of different communication strategies.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The following terms were defined operationally;

**Assessment:** The process of evaluating or analyzing the effectiveness or impact of something.

**Media:** In this study, media refers to the various means of mass communication used to reach and influence large audiences. This includes traditional media platforms such as

television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, as well as digital media platforms including websites, online news portals, social media platforms, podcasts, and mobile applications.

**Promoting:** Actively encouraging, supporting or advocating for environmental awareness through media content.

**Environmental Awareness:** Environmental awareness refers to the understanding and knowledge of environmental issues, their causes, consequences, and potential solutions.

**Sustainable Practices:** Sustainable practices refer to behaviors and actions that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews related literature under the following subheadings:

- Overview of Media Coverage on Environmental Awareness
- Comparative Effectiveness of Traditional and Digital Media
- Influence of Social Media on Environmental Awareness
- Media Driven Environmental Awareness and Behavior Change
- Social Media and Environmental Attitudes among University of Benin Students
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

#### **Overview of Media Coverage on Environmental Awareness**

Media coverage plays a fundamental role in shaping how societies understand environmental issues. Over the past two decades, environmental communication has expanded significantly across television, radio, newspapers, online platforms, and social media networks. The rise in environmental challenges, ranging from climate change and plastic pollution to deforestation, flooding, and biodiversity loss has made media coverage more central to public discourse. Scholars emphasize that the media serves as a bridge between scientific information and public understanding, helping translate complex environmental issues into simple, relatable messages.

#### **Evolution of Environmental Coverage**

Historically, environmental reporting became prominent in the 1960s following toxic waste disasters and rising global concern about pollution. The publication of Rachel

Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 triggered global awareness about the link between chemicals and environmental degradation. By the late 20th century, environmental journalism had grown into a specialized field covering conservation, climate policy, waste management, and sustainability (Hansen, 2019).

With the advent of digital media, coverage has expanded beyond traditional outlets. Online newspapers, environmental blogs, YouTube channels, and social media pages now provide daily updates on environmental topics. This has made environmental information more accessible to young people, particularly university students who rely on smartphones for news updates.

#### Media as a Source of Environmental Knowledge

Research shows that media is one of the primary sources of environmental knowledge for the public (Anderson, 2015; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Media coverage not only informs audiences about environmental threats but also explains their causes, consequences, and possible solutions. For example: News outlets frequently cover issues like flooding, erosion, heat waves, and waste disposal challenges, documentaries such as *Before the Flood* and *Our Planet* give visual explanations of climate change and conservation.

In the Nigerian context, studies indicate that media campaigns by organizations like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and environmental NGOs have improved public awareness of waste management and pollution (Okoro & Agbo, 2020; Orji, 2018).

University students, being highly media literate, often depend on these channels for environmental updates.

### Framing of Environmental Issues in the Media

Media framing refers to how journalists and content creators select certain aspects of a story to highlight. The way environmental issues are framed influences how audiences interpret them (Nisbet, 2009). For instance:

Climate change may be framed as a scientific issue, a political debate, or a moral responsibility.

Waste disposal might be framed as a personal behaviour problem or a government responsibility.

Studies show that positive framing of environmental issues highlighting solutions and empowerment motivates more pro-environmental behaviour compared to framing that emphasizes fear or catastrophe (Hart & Feldman, 2016; Feldman & Hart, 2018).

This is particularly important for communicating with young people, who are more responsive to action-oriented and visually engaging environmental messages.

### Visibility of Environmental Issues in Nigerian Media

In Nigeria, environmental problems such as oil spills, deforestation, flooding, and poor waste management receive considerable media attention. Research by Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe (2012) shows that Nigerian newspapers frequently report environmental issues, although coverage is sometimes inconsistent. Environmental awareness campaigns by

Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and various NGOs further amplify environmental messages in the media space.

However, scholars note that coverage often focuses on urban regions, leaving rural environmental issues underreported (Nwafor, 2021). In addition, complex scientific issues like climate change are often oversimplified or poorly explained, reducing the public's understanding.

Nonetheless, the increasing use of social media in Nigeria has diversified environmental communication. Influencers, student leaders, environmental clubs, and NGOs now share sustainability content that resonates with young audiences, especially university students (Ifeoma & Okoro, 2020).

#### Media Coverage and Youth Engagement

Young people, especially university students, are among the most active consumers of digital media. Several global studies indicate that youth engage more with environmental issues when they encounter them online through interactive and visually engaging formats (Holmes, Richardson & Mullen, 2018; Leal Filho et al., 2021). Social media platforms allow real-time engagement, where individuals can comment, share, participate in challenges, or follow environmental pages. For instance;

TikTok hosts trending environmental hashtags such as #ZeroWaste and #SaveThePlanet.

Instagram features sustainability influencers demonstrating eco-friendly habits.

Twitter hosts environmental conversations during climate events or global environmental days.

These digital interactions reinforce the idea that consistent media coverage does not only create awareness but shapes environmental identity among young people.

### Gaps in Media Coverage

Despite the increasing visibility of environmental issues, several gaps exist in media coverage:

**Superficial reporting:** Many outlets focus on sensational events (like floods) but ignore underlying causes.

**Limited focus on solutions:** Research shows that constructive journalism leads to behaviour change, yet such reporting is still limited (Wozniak et al., 2021).

**Inconsistent coverage:** Environmental stories are sometimes overshadowed by political or entertainment news.

**Low local relevance:** Some content is global in nature but lacks localized examples that speak to Nigerian students' daily experiences.

These gaps highlight the need for more contextualized and youth-friendly environmental coverage.

### **Comparative Effectiveness of Traditional and Digital Media**

Media platforms differ in how they communicate information, shape public attitudes, and mobilize individuals toward environmental action. Traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers has historically been the dominant channel for public communication. However, digital media, driven by internet technologies and mobile

devices, now plays an increasingly significant role in shaping environmental awareness, particularly among young people.

Comparing these two media categories helps to reveal their strengths, limitations, and relative influence on environmental communication. This comparison is essential because University of Benin students engage with both forms, although at varying degrees.

### Traditional Media and Environmental Communication

Traditional media remains a major player in environmental reporting. Television, radio, and newspapers have long served as reliable sources of information for the Nigerian public. Scholars note that traditional media plays a particularly important role in shaping public opinion on environmental issues through structured reporting, investigative journalism, and professionally curated news content (Hansen, 2019; Boykoff, 2011).

### Strengths of Traditional Media

#### Credibility and Trustworthiness:

Traditional media organizations generally follow established journalistic standards, which enhance credibility. Research shows that audiences still trust environmental stories from TV and national newspapers more than unverified online posts (Maibach et al., 2010; Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

#### Broad Reach:

Television and radio can reach large populations, including those with limited internet access. In Nigeria, radio is particularly influential due to its affordability and wide coverage (Asemah, 2011).

### Depth of Reporting:

Newspapers often provide comprehensive analysis and investigative reports, helping audiences understand environmental problems from political, economic, and scientific perspectives.

### Government and NGO Environmental Campaigns:

Public awareness campaigns on waste management, flooding, and climate policy often rely on radio jingles, TV announcements, and newspaper ads, making traditional media a powerful advocacy tool.

### Limitations of Traditional Media

Despite their strengths, traditional media face important limitations:

**Limited interactivity:** Audiences remain passive consumers and cannot easily respond, comment, or engage with content.

**Slow dissemination:** News is released at scheduled times, making it less immediate than digital updates.

**High production costs:** Environmental documentaries and investigative reporting require substantial resources, leading to fewer environmental stories.

**Competing news priorities:** Politics, entertainment, and economic issues often overshadow environmental coverage.

Because of these limitations, traditional media alone cannot effectively engage youth populations who prefer interactive content.

### Digital Media and Environmental Communication

Digital media including social media platforms, websites, blogs, podcasts, and online videos has transformed the landscape of environmental communication. Compared to traditional media, digital platforms offer immediacy, interactivity, user-generated content, and widespread accessibility.

### Strengths of Digital Media

- **Interactivity and Engagement:**

Digital platforms encourage active participation through likes, comments, shares, polls, stories, hashtags, and discussions. According to Tufekci (2015), interactivity increases users' emotional connection to environmental issues.

- **Speed and Real-Time Updates:**

Environmental news spreads rapidly on Twitter, Instagram, and online news platforms. This immediacy helps audiences stay informed about emerging environmental events such as floods, heatwaves, or fires (Anderson, 2017).

- **Visual Appeal:**

Digital media allows the use of images, infographics, animations, and videos, which enhance understanding of complex scientific issues. Research shows that visual media increases environmental engagement among youth (Leal Filho et al., 2021).

- **User-Generated Content:**

Social media enables everyday users including students, influencers, and activists to produce and share environmental content. This democratizes communication and allows grassroots environmental campaigns to grow organically (Carvalho & Burgess, 2018).

- Targeted Communication:

Algorithms on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube tailor content to user preferences, increasing the likelihood that environmentally conscious individuals receive sustainability messages.

### Limitations of Digital Media

Despite the tremendous advantages, digital media also faces challenges:

**Misinformation:** Unverified environmental claims can spread quickly, confusing audiences (Pearce et al., 2019).

**Information Overload:** Excessive content can overwhelm users and reduce message impact.

**Short attention span:** Social media promotes brief, fast-paced communication, which may reduce in-depth understanding.

**Algorithm bias:** Platforms may prioritize entertainment content over educational environmental posts.

Even with these limitations, digital media remains the most influential form of environmental communication among younger audiences, especially university students.

### Comparative Impact on Environmental Awareness

Numerous studies have compared the influence of traditional and digital media on public environmental awareness. While both forms contribute significantly, digital media often outperforms traditional media among young, educated populations.

### Reach and Accessibility

Traditional media dominates among older and rural populations.

Digital media dominates among youth and urban residents, including university students who have smartphones and internet access.

### Engagement and Participation

Digital media fosters active participation rather than passive consumption. Eco-challenges, campaigns, and discussions are more easily spread online. For example:

Hashtag movements like #BeatPlasticPollution gained global traction online.

Influencers create tutorial-style videos on recycling, composting, and sustainable fashion.

Studies show that active engagement strengthens environmental attitudes more than passive exposure (Holmes et al., 2018).

### Depth of Understanding

Traditional media provides structured reporting and often offers more credible environmental coverage. Digital media, however, provides diverse sources and simplified explanations that appeal to a younger audience.

The most effective environmental communication strategies often combine both media forms. For example:

Television announcements may introduce a campaign.

Social media challenges may sustain long-term engagement.

### Media Preferences among Students

Research consistently shows that university students prefer digital media for environmental information because it is timely, relatable, visually engaging, and interactive (Lee et al.,

2020; Leal Filho & Salvia, 2021). Students frequently use smartphones and social platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube.

Nigerian studies support the same trend. Okoro & Nwafor (2020) found that Nigerian university students ranked social media as their primary source of environmental information, surpassing radio and newspapers. This has significant implications for environmental educators and policymakers aiming to increase environmental awareness among youth.

### **Influence of Social Media on Environmental Awareness**

Social media has become one of the most influential communication tools in the 21st century, particularly among young people. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and YouTube play a central role in shaping users' perceptions of global and local environmental issues. Compared to traditional media, social media offers immersive, interactive, and user-generated content that resonates strongly with younger demographics especially university students.

This section examines how social media influences environmental awareness, its unique advantages as a communication tool, and how young people engage with environmental content online.

#### **Growth of Social Media as an Environmental Communication Tool**

Over the last decade, social media has evolved from a platform for entertainment and personal interaction into a powerful channel for education, activism, and public engagement. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), more than half of young adults

globally rely primarily on social media for news and information. Environmental organizations, activists, journalists, and government agencies harness these platforms to disseminate information on climate change, pollution, sustainability, and conservation.

Environmental communication scholars argue that social media has transformed how people understand and respond to environmental issues by enabling instantaneous, interactive, and highly visual communication (Cox, 2013; Anderson, 2017). For instance: The rise of environmental hashtags such as #ClimateAction, #ZeroWaste, #PlasticFree, and #SustainableLiving has created online environmental communities.

Influencers regularly share eco-friendly lifestyles, thereby shaping norms about sustainability.

Campaigns like the “Fridays for Future” movement gained global momentum through social media mobilization.

The popularity of social media among youth makes it one of the most effective platforms for promoting environmental awareness today.

### Social Media as a Source of Environmental Knowledge

Research shows that social media has become one of the most important sources of environmental knowledge, particularly for youth populations (Holmes et al., 2018; Leal Filho et al., 2021). Students often encounter environmental information through:

- Short-form videos explaining sustainability topics
- Infographics illustrating pollution statistics
- Reels and TikTok clips demonstrating eco-friendly habits

- Memes that simplify complex scientific issues
- News updates from environmental agencies or science journalists

These formats make environmental information more relatable, easier to understand, and more memorable than traditional long-text articles or TV reports.

Studies also indicate that the visual and interactive nature of social media strengthens retention of environmental information (Pearce et al., 2019). When students continuously encounter environmental content across multiple platforms, their awareness levels increase significantly.

#### Engagement and Interactivity

One of the unique advantages of social media is its ability to promote active interaction. Unlike television or newspapers, social media allows users to create, comment on, share, and remix environmental content. This interactivity increases emotional connection and strengthens engagement with environmental issues.

Ways social media enhances engagement:

- Comment sections foster conversations around environmental concerns.
- Likes and shares encourage the rapid spread of environmental messages.
- Hashtags help build online communities around sustainability movements.
- Challenges and trends motivate young people to participate in eco-friendly actions.

Scholars argue that high engagement levels create a sense of ownership over environmental issues, making students more likely to adopt sustainable behaviours.

#### Role of Influencers and Environmental Advocates

Influencers and eco-activists play a growing role in shaping environmental consciousness.

Content creators with large followings often demonstrate sustainable behaviours through:

- Zero-waste lifestyle videos
- Recycling tutorials
- Sustainable fashion tips
- Advocacy messages on climate change
- Campus-based environmental activities

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) helps explain this phenomenon: young people tend to imitate behaviours demonstrated by influencers they admire. Recent studies show that influencer-led environmental content significantly shapes attitudes and encourages eco-friendly actions (MacDonald et al., 2022; Schaefer & Schlichting, 2014).

Among university students, influencers serve as relatable figures, making environmental practices seem achievable and socially desirable.

#### Social Media as a Tool for Environmental Activism

Research shows that social media has strengthened environmental activism by increasing visibility and enabling mass mobilization. Notable examples include:

Greta Thunberg's climate movement, amplified worldwide through social media (Boulianne et al., 2020).

Online petitions demanding climate policy changes.

Youth-led environmental protests organized on Twitter and Instagram.

Social media activism empowers young people to participate in environmental movements without requiring formal organizational structures. The ease of mobilization encourages participation in campus environmental events, such as clean-up exercises, tree planting, and recycling initiatives.

#### Accessibility and Convenience

Social media platforms are accessible, affordable, and widely used among Nigerian university students. According to DataReportal (2023), Nigeria has more than 36 million active social media users, with the highest engagement among young adults aged 18–29. Smartphones and data bundles make social media the most convenient source of environmental information.

Students can easily access environmental content at any time, whether in hostels, classrooms, or during leisure. This convenience explains why social media has become the primary environmental communication tool among young people in higher institutions.

#### **Media Driven Environmental Awareness and Behavior Change**

Media remains one of the most powerful tools for shaping people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to environmental sustainability. Across the world, communication scholars agree that information alone is not enough. People need continuous exposure, relatable messaging, and persuasive communication before they adopt environmentally responsible behaviors. This makes the media an indispensable driver of environmental behavior change.

Media-driven environmental awareness usually follows a three-stage pattern:

- Exposure to environmental information,
- Internalization or understanding of the issue, and
- Adoption of new attitudes and behaviors.

This process aligns with the principles of the Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP) model, which explains how increased knowledge influences attitude formation and, eventually, behavior modification (Rogers, 2003).

#### The Role of Information Exposure

Environmental behavior research consistently shows that people are more likely to adopt eco-friendly behaviors when they are regularly exposed to environmental messages. For example, Schultz et al. (2018) found that consistent exposure to environmental messages through mass media significantly increases individuals' likelihood of practicing recycling and energy conservation.

In Nigeria, platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, and increasingly social media, play a major role in exposing citizens especially young people to environmental issues. Nwankwo and Okafor (2020) report that urban youth rely heavily on digital media for information on issues like waste disposal, climate change, and pollution, making these platforms major determinants of awareness levels.

The University of Benin environment, being a “media-rich” setting, means students typically access environmental information through a combination of WhatsApp broadcasts, Instagram reels, campus-based radio, and online newspapers such as

UNIBEN's information portal. This creates multiple touchpoints for environmental messaging, enhancing the probability of behavior change.

### The Influence of Message Framing

The way environmental messages are framed also matters. Studies show that gain-framed messages (highlighting benefits) and loss-framed messages (warning about dangers) influence people differently.

Gain-framed example: "Proper waste sorting keeps the campus clean and protects your health."

Loss-framed example: "If you fail to dispose of waste properly, you increase the spread of diseases on campus."

According to Spence and Pidgeon (2010), gain-framed messages are more effective for encouraging preventive behaviors, such as reducing waste or conserving energy. Meanwhile, loss-framed messages tend to be more effective for creating concern about severe issues like climate change or air pollution.

For students in UNIBEN, relatable framing especially through short-form visual content helps them emotionally connect to environmental challenges on campus. When students see videos of blocked drains, littered hostels, or polluted areas around campus, the message becomes personally meaningful, increasing the likelihood of behavior change.

### Entertainment–Education and Environmental Behavior

Another strategy used by the media to encourage behavior change is Entertainment–Education (E-E), a communication approach where educational messages are embedded

into entertaining content. This method has been especially effective in environmental communication.

For instance, films like *The Lorax* and documentaries such as *Our Planet* blend storytelling with environmental themes to influence viewers' environmental thinking. Singhal and Rogers (2002) argue that Entertainment–Education works because stories create emotional engagement, helping audiences adopt new social norms.

In the Nigerian context, Nollywood has produced several movies touching on pollution, bush burning, and environmental degradation. Though not always labeled as environmental films, the themes subtly shape audience understanding and contribute to a growing culture of environmental awareness. Similarly, influencers and content creators on TikTok and Instagram use skits, vlogs, and before-and-after videos to promote sustainable habits.

Among university students, who often prefer visually engaging content, Entertainment–Education is an effective method for promoting behavioral change.

### Social Norms and Peer Influence

Media does not influence individuals in isolation; it also shapes social norms the behaviors people consider acceptable within their peer groups.

When environmental awareness trends emerge online, students often adopt behaviors because they see their friends, influencers, or celebrities practicing them. Cialdini et al. (2006) found that people are significantly more likely to conserve energy, recycle, or reduce waste when they believe others around them are doing the same.

On campuses, this manifests through:

- Viral challenges promoting recycling or cleanup activities
- Influencers posting eco-friendly lifestyle content
- Student organizations publicizing sanitation programs
- Peer-to-peer sharing of environmental content on WhatsApp or Instagram

These interactions create a “bandwagon effect,” where students adopt environmentally responsible behaviors because it becomes socially desirable.

### Media Campaigns and Collective Action

Well-coordinated media campaigns have historically led to environmental behavior change. Globally, initiatives like Earth Hour or World Environment Day rely heavily on the media to mobilize public participation.

Research by McKenzie-Mohr (2011) shows that media campaigns combined with community-based activities (e.g., cleanups, recycling drives) produce long-term behavior change compared to campaigns that only share information.

At the University of Benin, student organizations such as JCIN UNIBEN, Rotary club, Nigerian Environmental Society frequently run environmental awareness campaigns promoted on Instagram, WhatsApp, and campus radio. These campaigns often address:

- Waste disposal
- Plastic reduction
- Tree planting
- Campus sanitation
- Climate change education

Media amplification of these activities increases participation and strengthens collective responsibility.

### Barriers to Media-Induced Behavior Change

Despite the influence of media, several factors can reduce its effectiveness:

Information overload: Students may receive too much content, reducing attention.

Perceived behavioral inconvenience, some sustainable practices may seem stressful or time-consuming.

Low trust in media sources – Misinformation online can affect credibility.

Weak enforcement of environmental policies – Without structural support, awareness may not convert into action.

Cultural norms – Some students may adopt unsustainable practices because “everyone else is doing it.”

According to Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), even people with high environmental awareness may not exhibit eco-friendly behaviors due to social, cultural, or personal barriers. This highlights the need for holistic strategies that combine media messaging with practical environmental policies on campus.

### **Social Media and Environmental Attitudes among University of Benin Students**

Social media has become one of the most influential communication tools among young adults, especially university students. At the University of Benin, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter (now X) shape how students access information, interact with peers, and form opinions including their attitudes toward

environmental issues. Because students spend a significant amount of time engaging with digital content, social media plays a crucial role in shaping their environmental perceptions, concerns, and willingness to adopt sustainable practices.

### Social Media as a Primary Information Source for Students

Across Nigerian universities, students increasingly depend on social media for daily information. Studies show that young adults prefer social media over traditional media because it is fast, interactive, and relatable (Afolabi & Agboola, 2019). This shift is evident at UNIBEN, where students rely on:

- WhatsApp groups for campus announcements
- Instagram and TikTok for environmental fact reels
- YouTube for documentaries
- Twitter/X for trending conversations on climate change
- Influencer content on sustainability

Because these platforms allow real-time information sharing, students are more likely to encounter environmental content through trends, hashtags, memes, short videos, and influencer campaigns.

A study by Olusola and Eke (2021) found that Nigerian university students trust environmental information on social media more when it comes from people they follow or admire. This personal connection increases the likelihood of adopting positive environmental attitudes.

### User-Generated Content and Peer Influence

One of the defining features of social media is that users are both consumers and creators of content. This means that environmental messages can originate from:

- Students' personal posts
- Student associations
- Campus influencers
- Content creators on environmental sustainability
- UNIBEN-related information pages

When students see their peers posting about recycling, reducing plastic use, campus cleanups, or climate change advocacy, they are more likely to internalize these behaviors as socially acceptable. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986), people learn behaviors by observing others, especially peers and role models.

In UNIBEN's context, when students post pictures from environmental campaigns such as hostel cleanups, "no-plastic" initiatives, or World Environment Day events, it encourages others to view environmental responsibility as a shared social norm.

#### Visual Content and Emotional Engagement

Social media is highly visual, relying on pictures, infographics, videos, and reels. Research indicates that visual content increases emotional engagement, making environmental issues more relatable. A study by O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole (2009) shows that emotionally compelling images such as polluted rivers, deforestation scenes, or overflowing waste bins trigger concern and motivate action.

For UNIBEN students, visual experiences such as:

- TikTok videos showing poorly disposed waste around hostels
- Instagram reels about effective waste sorting
- YouTube mini-documentaries on climate change

WhatsApp broadcasts with environmental infographics to help them understand environmental problems more vividly. This visual clarity strengthens environmental attitudes by making the issues feel real, urgent, and personally relevant.

#### Influence of Campus-Based Social Media Campaigns

Faculty associations, clubs, and student organizations at UNIBEN regularly use social media to promote environmental awareness. For example:

- JCIN UNIBEN posts videos of cleanups and awareness activities
- Nigerian Environmental Society runs Instagram campaigns on recycling and green innovation
- Student leaders circulate environmental messages on WhatsApp status updates
- These posts reinforce environmental values within the campus community.

According to Ekwueme and Akpan (2020), student-led digital campaigns generate higher engagement because they match the communication preferences of young audiences. Students are more likely to respond positively when the message appears on familiar platforms and is delivered by their fellow students or relatable creators.

#### Limitations of Social Media Influence

While social media is powerful, it has limitations.

Some students may develop positive attitudes but fail to practice sustainable behaviors due to:

- Misinformation about environmental topics
- Low seriousness attached to online trends
- Short attention spans
- Peer pressure to follow unsustainable habits
- Lack of environmental infrastructure, such as inadequate waste bins on campus

According to Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002), there is often an “attitude–behavior gap” where people feel environmentally concerned but do not act accordingly.

Despite these limitations, social media remains an essential tool for shaping environmental attitudes in higher institutions.

### **Summary of Reviewed Literature**

This chapter reviewed the existing literature related to the assessment of media roles in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices, with particular attention to the University of Benin context. The review covered theoretical, conceptual, and empirical studies that highlight the importance of media in shaping environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

The chapter began with the theoretical framework, which drew upon key communication theories such as the Agenda-Setting Theory, Social Learning Theory, Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These theories collectively explain how media influences public awareness, how individuals learn by observing others, how innovations in sustainability

spread through society, and how knowledge eventually leads to behavioral change. These theories provided the foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which media impacts environmental awareness among students.

The chapter also examined the overview of media coverage on environmental awareness, highlighting that both global and Nigerian media platforms increasingly report on environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, waste management, and biodiversity loss. Studies show that consistent media reporting enhances public understanding of environmental challenges and helps create a sense of urgency. In Nigeria, traditional media such as radio, newspapers, and television have historically played a central role in environmental advocacy, although their influence is now complemented and sometimes surpassed by digital media platforms.

Furthermore, the literature revealed the comparative effectiveness of traditional and digital media. Traditional media remain important for reaching broader, older, or less digitally inclined populations, whereas digital media offer interactivity, speed, and personalization, which make them more appealing to young people. Empirical studies consistently show that digital media including social media platforms are more effective in influencing young adults due to their high level of engagement, peer-to-peer communication, and real-time content delivery.

A significant portion of the review focused on the influence of social media on environmental awareness, emphasizing that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Twitter/X, and YouTube play a vital role in shaping environmental perceptions

among university students. Social media provides visual, relatable, and emotionally engaging content that increases awareness and motivates users to become more environmentally conscious. Research also shows that user-generated content, influencer-driven campaigns, and environmental hashtags significantly improve environmental literacy among youths.

The chapter further explored media-driven environmental awareness and behavior change, demonstrating that exposure to environmental messages often leads to improved knowledge, positive attitudes, and sustainable practices. Success stories from Nigeria and around the world show that media campaigns, documentaries, environmental vlogs, and campus-based digital campaigns can encourage recycling, proper waste disposal, reduced plastic use, energy conservation, and participation in cleanup activities.

Finally, the review examined social media and environmental attitudes among University of Benin students, showing that digital platforms strongly influence how students think about environmental problems and how they perceive their roles in maintaining a clean and sustainable campus. Peer influence, relatable content, visually compelling media, and campus environmental campaigns shared online contribute significantly to environmental attitude formation. However, challenges such as misinformation, low digital attention spans, and insufficient campus infrastructure may hinder the full translation of attitudes into sustainable behavior.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that media, especially digital and social media, plays a powerful role in promoting environmental awareness and influencing sustainable

behaviors among university students. However, the effectiveness of media-driven awareness depends on factors such as message framing, credibility of sources, availability of supportive infrastructure, and the willingness of students to engage with environmental content. These insights collectively provide a strong foundation for the present study, which aims to assess how media influences environmental awareness and sustainable practices among students of the University of Benin.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the research methodology that was used in the study of the research topic Assessment of the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practice among University of Benin students under the following subheadings:

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection.
- Method of the Data Analysis

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess the role of media in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices among University of Benin students. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate for this study because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data from a lot representative sample of the population to describe existing conditions, attitudes, and behaviors without manipulation of variables.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for this study consisted of undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin city, Edo State. From the data collected from the Academic Planning Unit of the University of Benin, the total Full time Student Enrollment Data of Undergraduate students across all faculties for the 2024/2025 academic session is 44,140.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A sample size of 150 respondents from 15 faculties was used for this study. To ensure fairness and minimize bias, the study employed a stratified random sampling technique. This technique involved dividing the university's undergraduate population into different strata based on faculties and academic level (e.g 100 to 500 level) from each stratum, respondents were randomly selected to participate in the study.

The use of stratified random sampling was crucial in capturing the variations in current state of media coverage and evolution over time that may exist across different faculties, age groups, and academic levels.

### **Research Instruments**

The instrument was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A contains information on the demographic data. Section B consist of items eliciting responses on their perception of how the role of media promotes environmental awareness and sustainable practice. The items were structured in Likert modified four points scale with response pattern as detailed below;

Strongly Agree - 4 points

Agree - 3 points

Disagree - 2 points

Strongly Disagree – 1 point

### **Validity of the Instrument**

In order to check the validity of the Instrument, the questionnaire designed by the researcher were given to the supervisor and two other experts (lecturers) in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, for scrutiny and for necessary corrections to ensure content as well as face validity. Their observations, modifications and suggestions were effected in the implementation of the final copies of the questionnaire.

### **Reliability of the instrument**

The reliability of the Instrument was established using test-retest method of estimating reliability. This involved giving copies of the instrument to 20 persons outside the population of the study. After a time lapse of two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same respondents. Data generated from the two administration was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The analysis yielded a coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.82, indicating a high degree of reliability. Since a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is generally considered acceptable in social and behavioral science research, the obtained value confirms that the instrument produced stable and consistent results over time.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to the respondents. The respondents were assured of confidentiality after a careful explanation of how to respond

to the items and urged to answer the questions honestly to the best of their knowledge. The questionnaire was retrieved the same day to avoid loss.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were properly organized and tabulated. The responses were statistically analyzed and all research questions evaluated using mean scores and standard deviation. A mean value of 2.50 or above was read as 'agree', while a mean score of less than 2.50 was interpreted as 'disagree'. This was determined using the modified Likert scale options of;

Strongly Agree (SA)=4 points

Agree (A)=3 points

Disagree (D)=2 points

Strongly Disagree (SD)=1 point.

The average of this will provide  $4+3+2+1/4; 10/4 =2.50$ .

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected, with the interpretation and discussion of findings. The data obtained from the study were used to answer the research questions.

#### Presentation of Results

**Research Question 1: What is the current state of media coverage of environmental issues across different platforms, and how has this coverage evolved over the past decade?**

**Table I: Current State of Media Coverage and Evolution Over Time**

| S/N | Items  | Mean | SD  | Criterion Mean | Remark   |
|-----|--|------|-----|----------------|----------|
| 1.  | Media provides adequate coverage of environmental awareness issues.                                    | 2.30 | .60 | 2.50           | Rejected |
| 2.  | I frequently encounter environmental topics (pollution, waste, climate change) across media platforms. | 2.25 | .59 |                | Rejected |
| 3.  | Media coverage of environmental issues has increased in recent years.                                  | 2.21 | .58 |                | Rejected |
| 4.  | The content shared by media on environmental issues is timely and relevant.                            | 2.28 | .60 |                | Rejected |
| 5.  | Media coverage has become more detailed and informative over time.                                     | 2.34 | .61 |                | Rejected |

*Source: Field survey 2026*

This table displays the mean responses on the current state of media coverage and evolution over time. This conclusion is drawn from them meeting the mean criteria score of 2.50. The responses indicate the media doesn't provide adequate and timely coverage of environmental awareness issues and it has been so overtime.

**Research Question 2:** What are the ways in which different media platforms (traditional vs. digital) differ in their effectiveness at promoting environmental awareness among University of Benin students?

**Table II: Comparative Effectiveness of Traditional vs Digital Media**

| S/N | Items  | Mean | SD  | Criterion Mean | Remark   |
|-----|--|------|-----|----------------|----------|
| 1.  | Television and radio effectively promote environmental awareness among students.               | 2.40 | .58 | 2.50           | Rejected |
| 2.  | Print media (newspapers/magazines) influences students' understanding of environmental issues. | 2.38 | .57 |                | Rejected |
| 3.  | Social media is more effective than traditional media in communicating environmental issues.   | 2.75 | .68 |                | Accepted |
| 4.  | Digital media provides faster and easier access to environmental information.                  | 2.80 | .70 |                | Accepted |
| 5.  | Students engage more with environmental campaigns delivered through digital media.             | 2.65 | .66 |                | Accepted |

*Source: Field survey 2026*

This table displays the mean responses on the comparative effectiveness of traditional vs digital media. This conclusion is drawn from them meeting the mean criteria score of 2.50. The responses indicate that digital media is more effective than traditional media (print and tv/radio stations) in the promotion of environmental awareness among students.

**Research Question 3:** What are the ways in which different media platforms (traditional vs. digital) differ in their effectiveness at promoting environmental awareness among University of Benin students?

**TABLE III: Factors Influencing Translation of Awareness into Sustainable Behavior**

| S/N | Items   | Mean | SD  | Criterion Mean | Remark   |
|-----|---|------|-----|----------------|----------|
| 1.  | Media messages motivate me to adopt environmentally friendly habits.                    | 3.23 | .62 | 2.50           | Accepted |
| 2.  | Awareness gained from media influences my waste disposal habits.                        | 3.28 | .58 |                | Accepted |
| 3.  | Media campaigns help me to consciously reduce pollution on campus.                      | 3.78 | .49 |                | Accepted |
| 4.  | Peer discussions triggered by media content influence my sustainable behavior.          | 2.80 | .67 |                | Accepted |
| 5.  | The credibility of the media source affects whether I act on environmental information. | 3.23 | .62 |                | Accepted |

*Source: Field survey 2026*

This table displays the mean responses on factors affecting the translation of awareness into sustainable behavior. This conclusion is drawn from them meeting the mean criteria score of 2.50. The responses indicate that media messages, awareness campaigns, peer discussions, and the credibility of media sources are perceived to positively influence respondents' environmental attitudes and behaviors..

**Research 4:** What role does social media play in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors among University of Benin students?

**TABLE IV: Role of Social Media in Shaping Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors**

| S/N | Items   | Mean | SD  | Criterion Mean | Remark   |
|-----|---|------|-----|----------------|----------|
| 1.  | Social media platforms increase my awareness of environmental issues.         | 2.88 | .67 | 2.50           | Accepted |
| 2.  | Social media influencers encourage me to adopt sustainable practices.         | 3.90 | .42 |                | Accepted |
| 3.  | I follow social media accounts that share environmental tips and information. | 3.20 | .61 |                | Accepted |
| 4.  | Social media has had a significant impact on my environmental behavior.       | 2.88 | .67 |                | Accepted |

*Source: Field survey 2025*

This table displays the mean responses on the role of social media in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors. This conclusion is drawn from them

meeting the mean criteria score of 2.50. The responses indicate that social media increase student awareness of environmental issues, encourage students to adopt sustainable practices, and has significantly impacted environmental behavior in students.\

**Research 5:** What are the barriers and challenges that limit the effectiveness of media-based environmental education initiatives?

**TABLE IV:** Barriers and Challenges to Media-Based Environmental Education

| S/N | Items  | Mean | SD  | Criterion Mean | Remark   |
|-----|--|------|-----|----------------|----------|
| 1.  | Lack of access to reliable internet limits digital media’s effectiveness.                                  | 2.88 | .67 | 2.50           | Accepted |
| 2.  | Students often ignore environmental messages due to information overload.                                  | 3.50 | .42 |                | Accepted |
| 3.  | Inconsistent or unclear messaging reduces the impact of media-based campaigns.                             | 3.45 | .61 |                | Accepted |
| 4.  | Limited student interest in environmental topics affects media outcomes.                                   | 2.78 | .67 |                | Accepted |
| 5.  | Insufficient collaboration between media outlets and environmental organizations limits awareness efforts. | 2.75 | .60 |                |          |

*Source: Field survey 2026*

This table displays the mean responses on the barriers to media based environmental education. This conclusion is drawn from them meeting the mean criteria score of 2.50. The responses indicate that lack of access to reliable internet, information overload, unclear messaging, limited interest and insufficient collaboration with media outlets and environmental organizations are the barriers to media based environmental education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Media doesn't provide adequate and timely coverage of environmental awareness issues and it has been so overtime. This does not tally with the findings of Anderson, (2015) who opined that that media is one of the primary sources of environmental knowledge for the public. Media coverage not only informs audiences about environmental threats but also explains their causes, consequences, and possible solutions. For example: News outlets frequently cover issues like flooding, erosion, heat waves, and waste disposal challenges, documentaries such as *Before the Flood* and *Our Planet* give visual explanations of climate change and conservation. Media campaigns by organizations like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and environmental NGOs have improved public awareness of waste management and pollution. University students, being highly media literate, often depend on these channels for environmental updates.

Digital media is more effective than traditional media (print and tv/radio stations) in the promotion of environmental awareness among students. Okoro & Nwafor (2020) found that Nigerian university students ranked social media as their primary source of environmental information, surpassing radio and newspapers. This has significant

implications for environmental educators and policymakers aiming to increase environmental awareness among youth. Research consistently shows that university students prefer digital media for environmental information because it is timely, relatable, visually engaging, and interactive. Students frequently use smartphones and social platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube.

Furthermore, media messages, awareness campaigns, peer discussions, and the credibility of media sources are perceived to positively influence respondents' environmental attitudes and behaviors. Media messages and awareness campaigns provide information that not only educates but also motivates individuals to adopt sustainable practices, such as proper waste disposal and pollution reduction. Peer discussions triggered by these media messages further reinforce these behaviors, as individuals are influenced by the opinions and actions of their social circles. Additionally, the credibility of the media source plays a crucial role—people are more likely to act on information they perceive as trustworthy. This supports the broader literature on environmental communication, which highlights that repeated exposure to reliable environmental information through multiple channels increases awareness and promotes pro-environmental behavior (Sharma, 2017)

Additionally, social media increase student awareness of environmental issues, encourage students to adopt sustainable practices, and has significantly impacted environmental behavior in students. Social media has become one of the most influential communication tools among young adults, especially university students. At the University of Benin, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter (now X) shape

how students access information, interact with peers, and form opinions including their attitudes toward environmental issues. Because students spend a significant amount of time engaging with digital content, social media plays a crucial role in shaping their environmental perceptions, concerns, and willingness to adopt sustainable practices. Across Nigerian universities, students increasingly depend on social media for daily information. Studies show that young adults prefer social media over traditional media because it is fast, interactive, and relatable (Afolabi & Agboola, 2019).

Lastly, lack of access to reliable internet, information overload, unclear messaging, limited interest and insufficient collaboration with media outlets and environmental organizations are the barriers to media based environmental education. Low trust in media sources, often caused by online misinformation, can undermine the credibility of environmental messages, while weak enforcement of environmental policies means that awareness alone may not translate into action. Cultural norms also play a role, as some students may continue unsustainable practices simply because “everyone else is doing it.” According to Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), even individuals with high environmental awareness may fail to adopt eco-friendly behaviors due to social, cultural, or personal barriers. This underscores the importance of holistic strategies that combine credible media messaging with practical and enforceable environmental policies on campus.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents summary of the study alongside the conclusion drawn from the analysis of data collected and the results obtained in the course of this study. The recommendations offered based on the findings of the study are also highlighted.

#### **Summary**

A descriptive survey design was adopted to collect data from 150 randomly selected students. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by experts from the University of Benin,. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to ensure clarity and honest responses. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, with 2.50 as the decision benchmark.

#### **Findings**

Findings from the study revealed that:

1. Media doesn't provide adequate and timely coverage of environmental awareness issues and it has been so overtime.
2. Digital media is more effective than traditional media (print and tv/radio stations) in the promotion of environmental awareness among students
3. Media messages, awareness campaigns, peer discussions, and the credibility of media sources are perceived to positively influence respondents' environmental attitudes and behaviors.

4. Social media increase student awareness of environmental issues, encourage students to adopt sustainable practices, and has significantly impacted environmental behavior in students
5. Lack of access to reliable internet, information overload, unclear messaging, limited interest and insufficient collaboration with media outlets and environmental organizations are the barriers to media based environmental education

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that while traditional media has not consistently provided adequate and timely coverage of environmental issues, digital and social media have proven more effective in promoting awareness among students. Media messages, awareness campaigns, peer discussions, and credible sources positively influence students' environmental attitudes and behaviors, with social media playing a significant role in increasing awareness and encouraging sustainable practices. However, barriers such as limited internet access, information overload, unclear messaging, low interest, and weak collaboration between media outlets and environmental organizations hinder the full impact of media-based environmental education. Overall, media remains a powerful tool for fostering environmental consciousness, but its effectiveness depends on accessibility, clarity, and strategic engagement.

## **Recommendations**

1. Media coverage of environmental issues should be improved to ensure timely and consistent information reaches students.
2. Schools and environmental organizations should leverage digital and social media platforms to maximize engagement and promote sustainable practices.
3. Efforts must be made to ensure that media messages come from credible and reliable sources to enhance their influence on students' attitudes and behaviors.
4. Barriers such as limited internet access, information overload, and unclear messaging should be addressed to improve the effectiveness of media-based environmental education.
5. Collaboration between media outlets, schools, and environmental organizations should be strengthened to create coordinated campaigns that foster lasting environmental awareness and behavior.

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**APPENDIX**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**  
**BENIN CITY.**

**Dear Respondents,**

I am a student of the department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. I am carrying out a study on the above topic. I therefore solicit for your responses, all your responses will be treated with confidentiality.

Please, answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all information will be kept confidential.

Yours faithfully,

**(Researcher)**

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

**instruction: Kindly respond to the item by a tick (✓) in the appropriate box.**

1. Gender     Male     Female
  
2. Age Range    16–20     21–25     26–30
  
3. Faculty \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Level of Study     100     200     300     400     500
  
5. Do you use social media?    Yes     No

**SECTION B: Respondent responses (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree)**

| S/N         | ITEMS  | SA | A | D | SD |
|-------------|--|----|---|---|----|
| <b>RQ1</b>  | <b>Current State of Media Coverage and Evolution Over Time</b>   |    |   |   |    |
| 1.          | Media provides adequate coverage of environmental awareness issues.                                    |    |   |   |    |
| 2.          | I frequently encounter environmental topics (pollution, waste, climate change) across media platforms. |    |   |   |    |
| 3.          | Media coverage of environmental issues has increased in recent years.                                  |    |   |   |    |
| 4.          | The content shared by media on environmental issues is timely and relevant.                            |    |   |   |    |
| 5.          | Media coverage has become more detailed and informative over time.                                     |    |   |   |    |
| <b>RQ2</b>  | <b>Comparative Effectiveness of Traditional vs Digital Media</b>                                       |    |   |   |    |
| 6.          | Television and radio effectively promote environmental awareness among students                        |    |   |   |    |
| 7.          | Print media (newspapers/magazines) influences students' understanding of environmental issues.         |    |   |   |    |
| 8.          | Social media is more effective than traditional media in communicating environmental issues.           |    |   |   |    |
| 9.          | Digital media provides faster and easier access to environmental information.                          |    |   |   |    |
| 10.         | Students engage more with environmental campaigns delivered through digital media.                     |    |   |   |    |
| <b>RQ3:</b> | <b>Factors Influencing Translation of Awareness into Sustainable Behavior</b>                          |    |   |   |    |
| 11.         | Media messages motivate me to adopt environmentally friendly habits.                                   |    |   |   |    |
| 12.         | Awareness gained from media influences my waste disposal habits.                                       |    |   |   |    |
| 13.         | Media campaigns help me to consciously reduce pollution on campus.                                     |    |   |   |    |
| 14.         | Peer discussions triggered by media content influence my sustainable behavior.                         |    |   |   |    |
| 15.         | The credibility of the media source affects whether I act on environmental information.                |    |   |   |    |
| <b>RQ4</b>  | <b>Role of Social Media in Shaping Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors</b>                           |    |   |   |    |

|             |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 16.         | Social media platforms increase my awareness of environmental issues.                                |  |  |  |  |
| 17.         | Social media influencers encourage me to adopt sustainable practices.                                |  |  |  |  |
| 18.         | I follow social media accounts that share environmental tips and information.                        |  |  |  |  |
| 19.         | Social media discussions (comments, reposts) shape my environmental attitudes.                       |  |  |  |  |
| 20.         | Social media has had a significant impact on my environmental behavior.                              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>RQ5:</b> | <b>Barriers and Challenges to Media-Based Environmental Education</b>                                |  |  |  |  |
| 21.         | Lack of access to reliable internet limits digital media's effectiveness.                            |  |  |  |  |
| 22.         | Students often ignore environmental messages due to information overload.                            |  |  |  |  |
| 23.         | Inconsistent or unclear messaging reduces the impact of media-based campaigns.                       |  |  |  |  |
| 24.         | Limited student interest in environmental topics affects media outcomes.                             |  |  |  |  |
| 25.         | Insufficient collaboration between media outlets and environmental agencies limits awareness efforts |  |  |  |  |