

**STAKEHOLDER INCLUSION AND POLLUTION CONTROL IN BENIN
METROPOLIS: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF MARKET WOMEN IN
ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE**

Ijeoma UGIAGBE¹ & Fred Osahon OKUNMAHIE²(Corresponding author)

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria
ijeoma.ugiagbe@uniben.edu

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social
Sciences, Edo State University Iyamho, Edo State, Nigeria
fred.okunmahie@edo.university.edu.ng

Abstract

This study evaluated the policy on the inclusion of key stakeholders in the scheme of things as it affects the pollution control activities of environmental protection agencies in Benin Metropolis. It specifically espoused the effects of excluding market women from the scheme of things in the context of pollution control and the excessive, multiple environmental levies in the study area. The survey research design was adopted, and 8 markets were included in the sampling technique. All the women who own stall/shop in the selected markets were part of the study, and their population was 15,650, and the sample size was 450. The cluster and systematic sampling methods were utilised. Each selected market was assigned 250 questionnaires, and 10 lines of different wares were selected, and the shop owners were systematically selected. Cross-tabulation and testing were employed for Inferential statistics, while the interview was thematically analysed. Findings show that environmental protection and pollution control agencies have failed to actualise their set goals because of failure to involve the market women and make them active participants rather than passive onlookers in the environmental protection and sustainability activities in the study area. This

calls for policy review and a change of management style of the managers in the environmental protection agencies.

Keywords: Policy of inclusion: Environmental protection agencies; Pollution control; Market women; Benin Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Governments worldwide consider environmental protection and other aspects of sustainable environmental strategy and management as a priority. There are attempts to harmonise existing environmental resource management policies, regional and national realities and the global threat of environmental degradation and climate change. The threat of environmental pollution is real because gaseous and solid waste have been constant and recurrent problems staring at the face of planet Earth. (Nwosu & Okoye, 2019). The developed world has, to a large extent, achieved a lot in the remediation of the hazards of climate change and environmental pollution because of the policy thrusts, government commitment and management approach. However, in the Third World nations, there are grave and real threats of environmental pollution due to the lameness and policy somersault of the government in the management of the threat of environmental degradation and pollution. Nigeria is caught in the Web of environmental pollution, as evidenced in the Niger Delta and flood disasters in the last decades of the 2010s.

The economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development have been adequately embedded in many parts of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. In particular, it states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice with particular emphasis on the environmental pillars of sustainable development. Article 20 (2) of the Constitution states inter alia that "the state shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wildlife of Nigeria" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012).

There is a growing global concern for the preservation and conservation of the environment and pollution control systems because every human being has the right to environmental protection. It is the quality and standard of human life and healthcare that a person enjoys, and the survival of humans depends entirely on the environment from which humankind derives livelihood (Abegunde et al 2007).

The workability or usefulness of environmental laws depends on the implementation and execution of the laws, and execution of same partly depends on the support and participation of the public at every facet of human endeavour in the society (Brudnukaeku & Oku, 2021). Public participation refers to the level at which individual persons, groups and organisations get involved with the relevant legislative activities and the attitude of the other stakeholders, including government agencies and organisations' efforts to manage, prevent or remediate environmental issues. Participation in this context means to take part, to share, and act together to protect the environmental resource and prevent pollution and disasters (Okonofua, 2022).

In Nigeria, efforts at bringing about a cleaner environment and pollution control have yielded not-so-enviable positive results owing to the lack of synergy between the government and regulatory agencies and the people/groups at the grassroots who really carry out the tenets of the relevant legal and policy/programme frameworks. This disconnect and lack of synergy, failure and voluntary participation of the people at the grassroots level have been adduced as the main reasons for the failure of pollution control and effective environmental and natural resource management in Nigeria. The extent and impact of public participation in environmental resource and protection activities of the government in key areas like the market and organisations need to be put in scientific perspective. This study therefore focuses on the level and impact of participation of market women in selected markets in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

Modern societies all over the world are growing concerned about environmental issues, while developing countries are experiencing complex and fast-growing pollution problems. The potent combination of industrialisation, urban development, and mass-consumption trends is exacerbated by foreign and international companies operating with little regard for the impact on the local environment, as is the case in the Niger Delta region, decimated by multinational oil companies. Achieving a sustainable environmental strategy that harmonises existing policies, regional realities, economic considerations, and all other human activities is a peculiar challenge faced by environmental regional managers globally (Nwosu & Okoye, 2019).

In Nigeria, protection of the environment is a priority axis of the sustainable development policy. Mandates for environmental protection and management related to projects across various sectors of Nigeria's economy are enforced under federal, state and local relevant acts, rules and regulations. These also include the standards and common laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as well as other environmental agreements and treaties ratified by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2018). Despite the plethora of fully construed legal and policy frameworks relating to the management and protection of environmental resources, the results from the policies, laws, programs and activities are not encouraging; hence, environmental degradation and pollution hazards remain a grave and real threat. Studies established that experience from Nigeria's environmental policies and implementations of the traditional command-and-control system has not yielded the expected results in all ramifications (Adelagan, 2004). Okonofua (2022) referred to this chain of traditional command as DAD (decide, announce and defend) or DEAD (decide, educate, announce and defend) methods, and this can be seen as one major source of the gap in trust and lack of synergy between the government and public participation in environmental resource and pollution control.

Public participation is a fundamental legal principle in local governance and environmental management. It is founded on the desire to achieve sustainable decision-making owing to the belief that better decisions will result by involving those who are affected by the decisions; hence, public participation found particular resonance in environmental law matters due to the complex and dynamic nature of environmental issues, which are intrinsically political yet involve both public and private interest (Anneke, 2012).

The future of policy, trust, and program initiative in the past has failed to make the necessary impact on the reduction and control of population and attaining sustainable environmental protection because of the approach of the government and the exclusion of the key stakeholders in this context. Women are unarguably the bedrock of the family and, by implication, of societies all over the world, as they occupy a particular position in society. In Nigeria, government officers are usually aloof and uprooted from the people; hence, the problem of implementation of policies and programs has remained endemic and enduring. The antidote to these failures is the lack of inclusiveness, especially the grassroots stakeholders like the women and other artisans in cities and rural areas who are supposed to help promote and protect the thrust of policies and programs in the context of environmental protection and pollution control. This paper examined the nexus between the policy of inclusiveness, pollution control, and environmental protection and sustainability.

Pertinent questions like what roles can the market women and roadside artisans play in pollution control? Why does the problem of pollution remain endemic in Nigeria, especially in the urban centres? What are the modalities for effective inclusiveness in the management of environmental problems in the study area and the way forward? The crux of this paper is the examination of the nexus between the local people, market women and artisans in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

The objectives of this study were to ascertain the reasons for the failures of the past policy thrusts and programs aimed for pollution control and environmental protection and sustainability; examine the role of market women and artisans in the government's quest for environmental protection, pollution control and sustainability; explore how policy and program can accommodate gender mainstreaming and inclusiveness of market women and artisans in the context of pollution control and sustainable environmental development and protection and explore the modalities of creating an enabling environment of inclusiveness, gender mainstreaming and involvement of the locals like the artisans in the quest for sustainable environmental development in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Policy

A policy is a plan, directive, thrust and strategy on how to bring about a planned or envisaged change in an area, sector or unit of a society or the entire nation (Ugiagbe, 2012). Social policy in this context refers to guidelines and interventions for the changing, maintenance or creation of the living conditions that are conducive to human welfare in all ramifications (Vargas - Hernandez, Naruzi & Ali Trani, 2011). In this context, issues of the welfare of people, housing, economic, political, education and health, amongst others, are referred to as social policy because it focuses on the welfare of groups of people and not individuals.

Social policy is that part of public policy that deals with social issues such as healthcare, human services, criminal justice, inequalities, sustainable development, environmental protection, education, youth and women's welfare and development and labour, amongst others (Rittel & Webber, 1873). It is not an academic exercise but a problem-directed plan of action to bring about an expected change by focusing on key areas that meet changes or structural ordering, for example

changing the demographic structure of an increasing proportion of the population to over the age of 75 who are presumed to require additional financial and social support relative to the employed and active population (Shardlow, 2007). Social policy is the study of social services and the welfare state, and in general social policy looks at the idea of social welfare and its relationships to politics, humanity and society.

Pollution Control and Environmental Management

Pollution control is an integral part of environmental protection and regulation by the government through legal framework, policy thrust, program and activities. The basic law for environmental pollution control defines environmental pollution as any activity by organisations or individuals which compromises the health and/or environment of other persons in a localised area when the causal link is clearly established (Japan Environmental Pollution Control Measures, 2018). The seven categories of pollution are atmospheric pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, noise, vibration, ground subsidence and noxious odours. Pollution control is the measures or official rules, decisions and actions, vis-a-vis the environmental quality, natural resources and ecological sustainability. Pollution control and environmental protection and management refer to complex and interlocking statutes, systems, common laws, regulations and policies that seek to protect the natural environment that may be impacted or endangered by human activities (Cediboh et al 2020; Cumingham et al 2001; Ayuba, 2005). Environmental protection is paramount, while pollution control is subject to environmental protection and management.

The statutory framework of environmental protection in Nigeria is a compendium of a range of legal frameworks which include the Nigerian Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, the Urban and Regional Planning Act, the Harmful Waste Act, the National Gas Policy Act, the Environmental Impact Assessment Act, the Federal Ministry of Environment and effluent limitation standards, amongst others. There are other regulatory bodies at state and federal levels as mentioned above. (Evuti, 2018) Pollution is a negative resource as it causes natural resource degradation and is more than just an externality. Renewable resources and their conservation, population stabilisation, technological and industrial adjustment are elements of the environmental management strategy of resource management and pollution control (Youssefi - Khalajabadi, 1994).

Policy of Inclusion

The policy of inclusiveness refers to a policy thrust, goal and activities where there is a balanced gender inclusiveness in the overall goal, aspiration and thrust of a policy or planned action of a program. This is sometimes referred to as gender mainstreaming, which is the reorganisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, programs and activities of government and organisations at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making (Council of Europe, 1998 in Walby, 2003). Policy of inclusiveness will entail gender equality, which means equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life.

Policy of inclusiveness is not synonymous with sameness of establishing men, their lifestyle and conditions as the norm (Walby, 2003); rather, the contraction of this discourse is that in policy thrust, programs and activities, women should be included in all spheres of development from planning to implementation stages so that they can contribute meaningfully to the program and activities. Policy of inclusiveness entails informing the women, mobilising them, ensuring their active participation, evaluating and appraising the outcome of any program and activity in this context, the pollution control and environmental management.

Environmental Protection, Sustainability and Management in Nigeria: A Critical Review

It is indisputable that a major function of government throughout the world is to formulate and implement the development programs that will lead to, among other outcomes, improved and better health education, infrastructure, water supply, clean environment and the provision of all the basic things of life (Ibrahim, 1997). In fact, the promotion of sustainable development and protection of the international environment are essentially part of the comprehensive mandate of the United Nations (UN) as a world body through its international environmental policies aimed at making the environment safe for all.

The emerging consensus in the international development community favours environmental protection; hence, different countries, including developing ones, have since initiated public policies presumably aimed at protecting the environment and promoting its sustainability and the health of the people (Fagge & Mustapha, 2015). In fact, effective environmental governance is no doubt paramount to achieve sustainable environmental development (Olunu et al 2020). Perrez (2019) noted that the function of environmental governance is to provide a comprehensive, coherent, effective and efficient framework for the protection and sustainable use of natural resources. Olunu

et al (2020) reported that efficient environmental governance include numerous activities such as the identification of problems, the provision of adequate information on the identified problems, the provision of a forum for the formulation of policy advice and guidance, the coordination and promotion of cooperation between the different actors and the establishment of concrete mechanisms for implementation of the formulated policies and the integration of environmental policies in the broader policy frameworks.

In Nigeria and many other developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, development efforts have often failed to produce the desired results and have in fact left both the people and their environment worse off. The consequences of such failure manifest themselves upon the people in various ways, including poverty, powerlessness, a polluted environment, and backwardness, amongst others (Ibrahim, 1997). The environmental policies in Nigeria have failed to achieve their ostensible objectives, and failure is attributed to the sheer lack of a management framework to implement environmental protection, and there have not been demonstrable policies in Nigeria that have fully and genuinely achieved their set goals (Fagge & Mustapha, 2015). The failure in this context is alleged to lack of public participation, a lack of political will to implement the tenets and thrust of the policy, and corruption by others.

Public participation is an integral part of achieving environmental protection and sustainable development. Youssefi - Khalajabadi (1994) noted that environmental impact assessment demonstrates that environmental management instructions that allow people to participate in the management of their environment, and this demonstrates the patterns and a sense of ownership which make the participation and management meaningful and satisfactory for the community. This author noted that NGOs and other grassroots participatory movements enhance the prospect in which people are encouraged to take the initiative to manage the environment, develop their expertise and capacity to survive in particular circumstances, as in the article on environmental pollution and degradation.

Nigeria's state actors in environmental management are categorised into three, namely: national/federal, state and local government. Common to these three actors are the executive, legislative and judicial components or bodies with which the actors carry out their duties (Ogunkan, 2022). The executive arm is usually tasked with developing and enforcing environmental policies and is usually the coordinator of all levels of environmental management. The legislative arm serves

as the relevant legal foundation for all environmental policy and legal instruments, while the judicial arm interprets environmental laws and disputes emanating from the governance and management of the environment (Ogunkan, 2022).

The success or failure of environmental governance or management in Nigeria is measured by the level of effectiveness in the management, policy implementation, legislation/legal framework and policy enforcement. The institutional efficiency of the existing environmental management system and the indicators at the level substantiate the assessment. However, engagement, accountability and transparency, rule of law, adaptability, equity, justice and fair play, efficiency and effectiveness are the pillars and indicators of good environmental governance and management, but these are lacking in the Nigerian situation analysis (Adedibu, 2015). Fagbohun (2012) noted that precepts that are marks of good environmental governance are lacking in Nigeria. In particular, he noted that public participation in environmental governance is still restricted in the scope of open access to environmental information devoid of special focus on key stakeholders, and public participation in the environmental decision-making process with many challenges such as limited economic growth to support a growing population.

According to Akamabe and Kpae (2017), environmental management and good governance have been hampered in Nigeria and hence ineffective due to the lack of direct and/or indirect citizen involvement and participation in the formulation and implementation of environmental policy guidelines and programs. This lack of public participation is further compounded by the lack of direction or clear definition of issues relating to environmental management and governance in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Constitution failed *ab initio* to clearly state the agency or level of government that has the power to supervise the environment and the authority to impose rules or set the standard on pollution and polluters, and this is not good for the implementation of global best standards in environmental management in Nigeria (Ogunkan, 2022).

All over the world, government alone cannot serve the myriad of environmental pollution. In fact, Pring and Noe (2002) succinctly noted that the capacity of a country to promulgate enforceable law and formulate implementable and sustainable environmental policies is enhanced by its ability to involve civil society in shaping policy trust and political decisions which affect their lives. In this context, participation in environmental decision-making efficiently connects the general public to environmental governance and ownership. Accountability and transparency are more attainable by

involving individuals who are at the centre of possible reasons, consequences and answers to environmental problems like the market women and roadside artisans (Ogunkan, 2022).

The attention of government, where needed are often lacking in the context of environmental management in Nigeria, from the vexed devastation and destruction occasioned by the oil exploration and exploitation in the Nigeria Delta region to overgrazing, bush burning and indiscriminate tree felling. For farming and domestic cooking industrial hazards and pollution in the urban centers due to poor environmental waste management are stark realities of government failures in environmental management (Fomus 1993) the Ogoni land pollution, the gas flaring and the inability of the government to hold the multinational oil companies responsible for the destruction, devastation, degradation and wiring out of biodiversity microbes and vegetation in Niger Delta are some of pointer to the environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Introduction of Benin Metropolis

Benin Metropolis, the capital of Edo State, Nigeria, has been the headquarters (commercially, culturally and politically) of the ancient Benin Empire since 10 AD. It was formerly called *Igodomigodo*, and later *Ubini* in 12 AD and later corrupted to Benin by the Europeans (first by the Portuguese and later by the British after the Benin punitive expedition in 1897). When Nigeria was eventually established as a British protectorate and later granted political independence, Benin Metropolis, popularly called Benin City, remained one of the major cities in Nigeria to date.

Benin Metropolis is politically (in modern parlance) divided into three local government areas (namely Oredo, Egor & Ikpoba Okha), but in the context of culture, the Oba of Benin is still the single paramount ruler. The Metropolis is dominated by the Benin ethnic group; hence it is called Benin City, i.e., the City of the Benins. The Metropolis is replete with many markets of the local markets where sellers own stalls and display their wares openly, and there are also modern shopping malls. As a patriarchal society, the market women in their hundreds of thousands may be regarded as the silent majority because they do not have a say and the right to have a say in the issues that concern them, including sanitation and pollution control (Ugiagbe, 2018). The approach of the government at the state and local government levels excludes and sidelines women from participating in pollution control because the agencies involved do not consult women in decision-making, and this may contribute to the failure of the pollution control measures in the area, which this paper attempts to ascertain.

Theoretical Review

The two theories that informed this study are the theory of planned behaviour and feminist determinism. The theory of planned behaviour was developed by Ajzen in 1991 and posited that planned behaviour is the intention to engage in a behaviour in a predisposed manner in reaction towards personal norms, actions and reactions of others and supposed behavioural control. The attitude of women towards pollution control and sanitation is informed by the attitude and dispositions of the government officials who treat the women as passive recipients of orders and directives of government without due consultation and respect for the women who bear the brunt of obnoxious directives, levies and control. The market women therefore develop an attitude of ownlessness and nonchalance towards pollution control, hence the vicious cycle of filth and pollution of the market and failures of government efforts to control pollution and effectively manage the environment for sustainable growth/development.

The second theory is the feminist constructivism of knowledge that argues that the way society is being managed, dominated by men and reducing women to subservient positions, is a product of human definitions and interpretations shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Szapuova, 2016; Randal, 2002). It highlights how cultural categories, like men, women, and black/white, are created, changed, and reproduced through historical processes within institutions, culture, and society with the instrumentality of patriarchy. The failure of government to carry market women along through consultation, inclusiveness, and their participation is a fallout or part of the manifestation of larger patriarchal culture where male hegemony is unchallenged. In the same way, the market women are sidelined and excluded from decision-making and implementation and are only considered when orders and directives are being given by government officials in issues concerning pollution and sustainable environmental management.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design and mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach were adopted for this study, and the women (18 years and above) of the purposely selected 8 markets were included in the sampling technique. The 8 markets were purposively selected because they were the largest and busiest markets in the metropolis with very high turnover. All the women 18 years and above)

who own a stall/shop in the selected markets were the participants of the study. The population of women who own shop/stall in the markets was 15,650 according to records in the Ministry of Economic Development, Edo State, 2023. The sample size was 460, of which 450 participants were administered the questionnaire, while 8 leaders from each of the selected markets and 2 officials of the environmental management agencies were interviewed totally 460 participants. The cluster and systematic sampling methods were utilised. First, the selected markets each formed a cluster, and then the women shop owners were systematically selected and administered the questionnaire. The trained research assistants assisted in the administration of the questionnaire, and in situations where the participants could not write or comprehend the questions, the assistants read out the questions and completed the questionnaire for the participants after obtaining their informed consent. Each selected market was assigned 250 questionnaires, and 10 lines of different wares (foodstuff, children's wear, meat sellers, provision stores, shoes, etc.) were systematically selected by selecting every 3rd shop on the selected lines in the markets and the shop owners were approached and administered the questionnaire. The data collected were analysed with SPSS (version 22), cross-tabulated and tested with inferential statistics, and the results are presented in tables. The in-depth interviews were screened and transcribed, and the major themes isolated and discussed; quotations from such interviews were quoted verbatim in the reports. The qualitative and quantitative data were used to complement one another in the analysis. The socio-demographic table here is for the quantitative component of the study; that is, the women administered the questionnaire in the selected markets, while the results of the 10 participants interviewed are incorporated in the analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussions

In this study, data were generated with respect to six variables in the context of participants' age, marital status, level of education, religious affiliation, types of wares and number of times they pay environmental levies, which were analysed. The summary is presented hereunder.

Table 1: General Profile of Market Women (Participants) in the Study Area.

Age (Years)	No.	%
Below 20	6	1.3
21 – 40	212	47.1
41 – 60	163	36.2
61 +	69	15.3
Total	450	100.0

Marital Status		
Single	64	14.2
Married	277	61.2
Separated	58	12.9
Widowed	50	11.1
Divorced	1	0.2
Total	450	100.0
Level of Education		
None	36	8.0
Primary School Leaving Certificate	164	36.4
Junior Secondary	44	9.8
Senior Secondary/NECO/GCE	107	23.8
National Diploma/NCE	55	12.2
HND/First Degree	42	9.3
Masters/PhD	2	0.4
Total	450	100.0
Type of wares/goods		
Baby wear/things	178	38.5
Food stuffs, operators of grinding machines'	38	8.4
Provision stores	177	39.4
Adult wears, Jewries/ornaments	29	6.4
Plastic buckets, shoes, pots etc.	28	6.2
Total	450	100.0
No. of times environmental levies are paid per month.		
Once	106	23.6
Twice	140	31.1
More than Twice	204	45.3
Total	450	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2023

Analysis of research questions

What are the institutional and regulatory frameworks which guide the activities of pollution control in the study area?

To investigate the above issue, an in-depth review and analysis of documents related to pollution control activities were sourced from the local government offices in Benin Metropolis. Based on the investigations carried out, the core elements which constitute the **institutional** and **regulatory** framework of pollution control agencies in the study area are outlined below:

1. It is mandatory for members of a market to join already existing and registered unions in the market before they can carry out their business.
2. It is mandatory for all prospective and existing market unions to register with the environmental agency and sanitation agents. This enables the monitoring agencies to have a firm grip on the market women or other members of a local market
3. It is mandatory for market women to pay a compulsory weekly or quarterly levy for sanitation and environmental protection. The regulatory institutions could organise quarterly meetings with the executives of the market unions, who then report the outcome of the meetings to all members of the unions.
4. Pollution control institutions/agencies are permitted by law to embark on the collection of environmental levy whenever market women default in paying.

Research Objective: Examine the role of market women and artisans in the government's quest for environmental protection, pollution control, and sustainability in the study area.

Specifically, the question was whether there is a policy of inclusion in the monitoring/regulatory environmental agencies' activities in handling pollution control in the markets. The results show that the majority of the research participants stated that there was a gap between the market women and the officers of the regulatory agencies because they always come to give orders and directives on how and what to pay and not to dialogue with the market women on the best way to control pollution and manage environmental protection issues.

Table 2: Perception of the activities of pollution control/environmental Sanitation agencies

Impacts assessment questions	Response
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	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	No Response
I don't feel obliged to participate in pollution control as I used to do.	118 (26.2)	296 (65.8)	9 (2.0)	20 (4.4)	7 (1.6)
I am not able to understand the implications of waste disposal	100 (22.2)	264 (58.7)	17 (3.8)	52 (11.6)	17 (3.8)
Some of my colleagues participate in the regular meetings of environmental agencies.	166 (36.8)	200 (44.4)	62 (13.7)	19 (4.2)	3 (0.9)
The union members see the environmental sanitation officers merely as revenue collectors with no genuine interest in environmental protection	101 (22.4)	271 (60.2)	22 (4.9)	47 (10.4)	9 (2.0)
The periodic meetings between market unions and sanitation officials are just organised to look for means of collecting more levies.	176 (39.2)	240 (53.3)	14 (3.1)	18 (4.0)	2 (0.5)
The arrogance and nonchalant attitude of the sanitation officials discourages us from taking environmental issues seriously	101 (22.4)	271 (60.2)	20 (4.4)	49 (10.9)	9 (2.0)

Source: Field survey 2023

Adding the proportion of those who strongly agreed (22.4%) with those who agreed with the statement (60.2%), then it means that a combined total of 82.6% held the view that the environmental sanitation officers don't mean well for our members. Only a negligible 4.9 % strongly disagreed, with 10.2 % others disagreeing.

A market leader declared *thus*.

" We are only contacted by the environmental when it is time to pay levy or notice of increase in the amount being paid. We are never contacted for dialogue or meeting or even for education on environmental protection or other issues that may help us. We are treated with levity as if we are

not part of the society or government we pay to regularly. The threats and insults from the environmental people are terrible and very degrading because sometimes they seize our goods for default in the payment for just one day” (Mrs F Odi, 62, market leader, 20/8/2023)

Again, it is clear that the views and opinions of the women are not taken into consideration because of a lack of sense of ownership and commitment to environmental protection by the women. The notion is that environmental protection is the government’s business; after all, the women pay levies regularly to the government. So dumping of refuse indiscriminately by the women is not frowned at or condemned by the union leaders who believe it is the duty of the agencies to evacuate the waste paid for by the market women. This partly explains the failure of the pollution control (environmental sanitation) agencies to maintain a high standard of clean environment and pollution control in the Benin Metropolis.

Dissenting views were negligible, with 3.6% and 9.3% holding positive views about the activities of the regulating agencies and women's participation. For example, on the notion of the failures of pollution control agencies, *an interviewee noted that ‘Of a fact, the environmental people are doing a great job because this market would have been a no-go area because of the irresponsible characters of my colleagues who dump refuse indiscriminately in this market. The fear of the environmental people is what is still helping us here; otherwise, there will be no road to pass in this market’ (Mrs P Ake, market leader, 57, 10/8/2023).*

On the issue of lack of gender mainstreaming and participation by women in decision-making and implementation in pollution control and environmental management, a participant declared thus:

We all know that it is a man’s world and men call the shots in Nigerian society, which explains why we are not consulted and don’t have any say in most issues concerning this market. I don’t worry myself about not being consulted; what worries me is the collection of levy every time and evacuating the refuse. This makes the market dirty, and we see rats and other insects all over the market, which is very dangerous to our health and makes us fall sick every time. Even in the meeting we manage to attend sometimes the government people are always talking about levy, money and penalties without allowing us to contribute our views or objections”

Another participant complained bitterly about the incessant payments and double taxation.

“My greatest challenge is finance to expand my business, but the government is collecting the little gains we make here through different payments like environmental levy, waste disposal, vigilante

levy, night watchmen levy, union dues, local government levy and stall levy; these are too much for poor market women like me”(Mrs Edo, market leader, 59, 6/82023)

Another participant noted thus;

“It is unwise for government to depend on strict orders and directives to women on environmental issues and expect to see good results. I believe it would have been better if the government carried everyone along and made us stallholders and not onlookers as we are now. This is why some of us don’t feel committed to the ideals of the pollution control agencies. Women should be encouraged and carried along in the scheme of things to always have a say and right to have a say in issues concerning women” (Mrs Musa,66, market leader,21/6/2023)

Cross Tabulation and Analysis of Variables

The data collected for this study were analysed and cross-tabulated on the basis of the bio-data profile of the female participants and their views /perceptions on the research questions administered to them during the fieldwork. Variables like age, educational qualifications, number of taxes the participants pay to various agencies and groups, and their location of markets. These variables were cross-tabulated with the respondents’ views on questions on social exclusion, levies and effectiveness of environmental control agencies and whether there is any form of discrimination against the market women in the scheme of things concerning environmental control. Other questions were whether the environmental agencies’ officials show interest in the businesses and welfare of the women when double-taxing them in the name of pollution control, and whether they are satisfied with the activities of environmental agencies in pollution control in the markets.

Discussions

The analysis of data established that inclusive and all-embracing policies of gender mainstreaming, equality and equity are not being adhered to in the pollution and environmental protection business in the markets surveyed in the Benin Metropolis based on the narratives of the women participants and data analysis results. This is because of the aloofness and arrogance of the staff of the monitoring agencies, which demonstrate that the women were not being carried along in decision-making and implementation. The analysis of data collected established that the aims and ideals of environmental protection and pollution control are not being achieved in the study area because of the attitude and dispositions of the staff of the regulating agencies, who always dispensed with opinions and ideas

of the women in the markets hence, the markets remain dirty, filthy and polluted all the time, like Ekiosa, New Benin and Ogida markets. This aligns with the assertions of Rao & Kelleher (2002) who suggest three dimensions in which changes are needed for smooth implementation of gender mainstreaming, namely in government, within organisations and in institutions. In the context of this study, institutional changes, which refer to broader societal shifts needed to change embedded power relationships and gender roles and relationships throughout the social structures in families, communities, markets and the state in general, are inconsistent with global best standards.

The findings of this study confirm the assertions of Pollack & Hafrer-Burton (2000) that gender mainstreaming and inclusiveness have not been pursued fully or systematically enough to support a definitive conclusion about its success or failure or whether it has been properly implemented or even abandoned midstream, as exemplified in the marginalisation of women in the issues of pollution control in the study area. These findings of this study are also in consonance with the assertions of Riddell-Dixon (1999) that inclusiveness and mainstreaming women's rights are the core mandate of governance and imperative for achieving the ideals of SDG gender mainstreaming and equity. The failure of the supervisory agencies to carry women along in the decision-making and other core activities of the pollution control measures is a misnomer and inimical to achieving the set goals of the SDGs in general and the environmental control agencies in particular.

This study also confirms the position of UNDP (2020) that a growing number of studies have firmly established that how people are affected by climate change and related issues and interact with their environment are shaped by their gender, levels of poverty, powerlessness and access to, and control over, resources and decision-making. In this study, the multiple taxations, the pressure of the officials of the regulating agencies and other factors of climate change seem to compound the problems and challenges of the market women whose survival hung in the balance. This study also subscribes to the assertions of Santos-Farah (2006) that in reality the efforts of empowering women should also include designing programs directed specifically for women or that involve special attention to women should be the preoccupation of government and other stakeholders to achieve inclusiveness, hence women should be active participants and not passive onlookers of things that concerns and affect them as the case in the environmental management in Benin Metropolis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. The supervising ministry of the Edo State government should call the officials of the regulating agencies to order and put an end to the marginalisation and social exclusion of women in the affairs of the markets in Benin Metropolis
2. The multiple taxation of the market women should be discontinued, and there should be accountability by all concerned, including the officials of the regulating agencies and the market women union leaders, to reduce double dealings and exploitation
3. There should be periodic stakeholders' meetings for all market women, officials of the regulating agencies and the supervising ministries of the State government

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