Effects of Oil Pollution and Associated Health Risks on Residents of Khana Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria

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DOI: 10.56201/ijgem.vol.11.no10.2025.pg61.82

Abstract
Background: *The health hazards created by oil exploration and exploitation are covert and slow in action. They are not given the deserved attention in official documents in Nigeria, even as they can be major contributors to the disease burden in oil-bearing communities. Research and environmental pollution risk assessment carried out by several authors and companies have revealed that Khana Local Government Area (LGA) in Rivers State has been plagued by environmental degradation resulting from petroleum exploitation. This study aims to investigate the health impacts of oil pollution in Khana LGA since the country's economic struggles have led to increased poverty, unemployment, and reliance on potentially contaminated natural resources for livelihood. Given the complex interplay between environmental pollution, health, and economics, there is an urgent need to assess the effect of oil pollution on the health of Khana LGA residents.*
Methodology: *A cross-sectional study design was employed for this research to assess the effects of oil pollution and its associated health risks among residents in Khana Local Government Area (LGA). using a well-structured questionnaire and analysed using Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) while Chi-Square tests were applied to test associations between oil pollution and key variables such as duration of residence, health effects, and proximity to sites.*
Results: *Of the 388 respondents, the majority (82.5%) reported being directly affected by oil pollution. The most reported types of pollution were water pollution (41.2%), soil pollution (30.9%), and air pollution (20.6%). Pipeline vandalism and illegal refining were identified as the main causes of pollution. Health challenges such as headaches, chest pain, and respiratory issues were reported by 64.4% of respondents. About 51.6% of respondents perceived the health risks of oil pollution as extremely serious. Chi-Square analysis confirmed significant associations between oil pollution and key variables, including duration of residence ($\chi^2=157.88$, $p=0.000$), direct health effects ($\chi^2=165.36$, $p=0.000$), impact areas ($\chi^2=291.96$, $p=0.000$), perceived severity ($\chi^2=368.25$, $p=0.000$), timing of outbreaks ($\chi^2=193.67$, $p=0.000$), and proximity to pollution sites ($\chi^2=88.50$, $p=0.000$).*
Conclusion: *This study concludes that oil pollution has significant health, environmental, and socio-economic impacts on residents of Khana LGA. Most respondents reported health effects, particularly respiratory problems, and perceived the risks as extremely serious. Given the associations identified, urgent interventions are necessary.*

Keywords: *Oil Pollution, Health Risks, Khana LGA, Environmental Health.*

Introduction

Oil pollution has been identified as the major environmental pollutionant affecting the residents of Khana LGA [88]. This is because oil is one natural resource in the LGA. Oil pollution is on the increase because of poor management/pollution control after or during oil exploration activities in the LGA [17]. This has led to oil spills at different levels and different associated environmental pollution. Surface oil spills are easy to identify and will leave visible traces such as oil stains, as well as other characteristic signs such as odors due to the vapors emitted by the spilled oil [13].

The underground oil spills are more difficult to catch and yet may be more problematic (oil may reach groundwater more easily and travel with it). Both surface and underground oil spills have the potential to contaminate soils, sediment, water (groundwater and surface water bodies), and air (due to many volatile compounds emitted by the spilled oil into the air).The effects of oil spills on humans may be direct and indirect, depending on the type of contact with the oil spill [17].

Direct exposure to oil spills – occurs close to where people live or work and where they may come in contact with oil spill components [34]. By breathing contaminated air - since oil and products (petroleum products) have many volatile compounds which are emitted as gases from spilled oil, the air becomes contaminated with those volatile oil products or vapors producing specific odors. Even when odors are not felt, a health risk may exist for some individual compounds if residents are exposed (breathe the air) for a long time. By direct contact with the skin - people may come in direct contact with oil and/or oil products while walking in a contaminated area (e.g., beach). An initial irritation will be obvious. Additionally, contaminants may be absorbed through the skin and enter the body [13].

Indirect exposure to oil spills - even when people live in places far from where the actual oil spill took place: By bathing in contaminated water - for example swimming in a contaminated water stream - even when an oil sheen may not be visible, dissolved oil contaminants may exist in the water if it was impacted by an oil spill [13]. By eating contaminated food - some oil compounds bioaccumulate in living organisms and may become more concentrated along the food chain. Humans may become exposed to concentrations of contaminants in the food that could be orders of magnitude higher than in the contaminated environment [16].

This is especially problematic since residents could be exposed even if they live far away from an oil spill if they consume food coming from a spill affected area. Due to the rapid growth of population and industrialization environmental pollution is increasing at an alarming rate. Thus, leading to an increased characteristic effect on human health, especially in areas like Khana LGA, which is fast growing [88].

1. Methods

Study area

Khana is a Local Government Area located in the South-East senatorial district of Rivers State, Nigeria. [109]. Khana LGA is the largest of the four LGAs in Ogoniland, with a total of 106 communities. The people are predominantly farmers and fishermen. The local language is the "Khana language". The administrative seat located in the town of Bori. It has an area of 560 km² and a population of 421,300 people at the 2006 census [3].

Study Design and Study Population

A cross-sectional study design was employed for this research to assess the effects of oil as an environmental pollutant and its associated health risks among residents in Khana Local Government Area (LGA). The study population are residents of Khana LGA.

Sample size and Sampling Techniques

By the count of the 2006 National Population Census, Khana LGA has a 2022 projected population of 421,300 [3]. This population covers the three kingdoms that make up Khana LGA namely; Ken-Khana, Babbe and Nyo-Khana. These kingdoms together have 73 very large communities. Sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula for known populations [107]. After the calculation, A sample size of 400 was used for this study. Sampling procedure was carried out Using a simple random sampling technique.

Data collection instruments and procedures

Face-to-face interviews were conducted and information on Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) regarding Effect of Environmental Pollution on Health including sociodemographic characteristics were collected from each household head or responsible adult (18 years or above) using a self-administered structured questionnaire. The Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) questionnaires was developed based on the review of relevant literature from different studies on Environmental Pollution and its associated health risk.

There are 19 wards and 97 large communities with an average of about 750 households (in each community) in Khana LGA [3]. From these breakdown, a four - stage sampling procedure was carried out Using a simple random sampling technique.

Stage 1. Two (2) large communities were selected from each of the (19) Wards using Simple Random Technique.

Stage 2. All the selected communities were identified as stated above and a simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 households closest to any surrounding oil polluted environment from each community. These households were identified by numbers.

Stage 3. In each selected household, the House head and any other member which is above 18 years was selected and issued the prepared questionnaire after the participant information sheet and informed consent.

Stage 4. Using a simple random sampling technique, one respondent above 18 years from each visited community was selected and issued the questionnaire after the participant information sheet and informed consent.

Statistical analysis

Data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The baseline characteristics of the study participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, while Chi-Square tests were applied to test associations between oil pollution and key variables such as duration of residence, health effects, and proximity to sites. Statistical significance was set at p-values < 0.05.

Results

The study was carried out using a structured questionnaire administered to 388 residents, achieving a 97% response rate. The distribution of respondents according to their socio-demographic characteristics is shown in Table 1. Among the 388 respondents, the majority were aged between 26–33 years (23.2%), followed by those aged 18–25 years (20.6%) and 34–41 years (18%). The sex distribution showed that females were slightly more represented (53.6%) compared to males (46.4%). Regarding marital status, 46.4% were married, 30.9% were single, and 7.7% were separated, with smaller proportions cohabiting (5.2%) or in complicated relationships (2.6%). Educationally, 38.7% had secondary education, while 27.8% had tertiary education, with fewer respondents having primary education (20.6%) or no formal education (12.9%). 30.9% of respondents were self-employed, followed by 23.2% who were not employed, while others engaged in trading (18%), farming (14.9%), and civil service (12.9%). Most respondents used gas (43.8%) as their primary cooking fuel, while

others relied on kerosene (20.6%), firewood (14.9%), charcoal (12.9%), or woodchips (7.7%). The primary source of drinking water was boreholes (51.5%), followed by streams (18%), wells (15.5%), and reservoirs (14.9%). Religion was predominantly Christian (85.1%), with Muslims and traditionalists constituting 10.3% and 2.6%, respectively. Housing types varied, with 46.4% living in rented apartments, 30.9% in family houses, 18% in personal buildings, and 4.6% in other arrangements.

The findings from the study on the effect of oil pollution on the respondents in Khana Local Government Area as seen in Table 4.2, revealed significant insights into the residents' experiences with oil pollution. Out of the 388 respondents, the majority (51.5%) had been in Khana LGA from birth, followed by (20.6%) who had lived in the area for 2 to 5 years. A substantial portion of respondents (82.5%) reported having been affected by oil pollution. Among those affected, 36.1% noted health issues as the primary area of impact, while 30.9% identified water sources as being contaminated. Socio-economic effects, such as financial hardship, were reported by 15.5% of respondents. When asked to rate the impact of oil pollution, 64.4% described it as high, with 25.8% rating it as medium. Additionally, 38.7% of respondents indicated that the last noticeable oil pollution outbreak occurred within the last 3 months, while 46.4% reported the most recent outbreak occurred over a year ago. Regarding proximity to pollution outbreaks, over half of the respondents (51.5%) lived not so far from the area most affected by oil pollution, and 35.6% reported living close to the pollution zone. Only 12.9% indicated that their homes were very far from the affected area.

Table 4.3 shows the responses on causes and awareness of oil pollution in Khana Local Government Area. The first question asked whether respondents were aware of oil pollution, with 61.9% confirming that they had knowledge of it, while 38.1% reported that they did not. When asked whether they thought Khana LGA was affected by oil pollution, 95.4% affirmed this, while only 4.6% disagreed. Regarding the types of oil pollution observed, 41.2% mentioned water oil pollution, 30.9% identified soil oil pollution, and 20.6% noted air oil pollution. A smaller percentage, 5.2%, reported environmental oil pollution, and 2.1% cited other types. Further questions explored awareness and exposure to oil pollution. Of the respondents, 36.1% believed there was sufficient awareness about oil pollution in the area, while 63.9% felt that awareness was lacking. The common means of exposure to oil pollution were drinking contaminated water (41.2%), breathing contaminated air (25.8%), and cultivating on polluted soil (25.8%). Some (7.2%) reported other exposure methods. In terms of health implications, 90.2% believed oil pollution contributed to increased health challenges, while 9.8% disagreed. Lastly, 12.9% of respondents had taken actions to prepare for future oil pollution outbreaks, while 87.1% had not. These findings highlight the widespread concern and awareness of oil pollution in Khana LGA.

Table 4.4 reveals a significant number of respondents reporting commonly experienced health challenges. A majority, 64.4%, affirmed that health challenges were commonly experienced in the area, and of these, 61.9% believed these challenges were linked to oil pollution. Among the health effects personally experienced by respondents, headaches were the most frequently reported, with 38.6% affected, followed by chest pain (30.9%) and nose irritation/congestion (25.8%). Other reported health effects included skin rash (20.6%), difficulty in breathing (18.0%), and difficulty in sleeping (12.9%), while 18.0% of respondents reported experiencing all of the listed symptoms. When asked about the seriousness of the health risks posed by oil pollution, the majority of respondents (51.6%) regarded the risk as extremely serious, while 33.5% considered it negligibly serious, and 14.9% did not view the risk as serious. Regarding the most observed health effects in the

community, 46.4% of respondents cited headaches, followed by chest pain (30.9%) and nose irritation (20.6%). These findings highlight the widespread impact of oil pollution on the health of residents in Khana LGA, with significant concerns about its severity and the range of health issues faced by the population.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	18–25	80	20.6
	26–33	90	23.2
	34–41	70	18.0
	42–49	60	15.5
	50–57	45	11.6
	58–65	30	7.7
	66 and Above	13	3.4
Sex	Male	180	46.4
	Female	208	53.6
Marital Status	Married	180	46.4
	Separated	30	7.7
	Divorced	28	7.2
	Single	120	30.9
	Co-habiting	20	5.2
	Complicated	10	2.6
Education Level	No Formal Education	50	12.9
	Primary Education	80	20.6
	Secondary Education	150	38.7
	Tertiary Education	108	27.8
Occupation	Not Employed	90	23.2
	Trading	70	18.0
	Civil servant	50	12.9
	Self employed	120	30.9
	Farmer	58	14.9

Table 4.1(CONT.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Source of Cooking Fuel	Kerosene	80	20.6
	Charcoal	50	12.9
	Woodchips	30	7.7
	Gas	170	43.8
	Firewood	58	14.9
Source of Drinking Water	Stream	70	18.0
	Well water	60	15.5
	Borehole water	200	51.5
	Reservoirs	58	14.9
Religion	Christian	330	85.1
	Muslim	40	10.3
	Traditionalist	10	2.6
	Others	8	2.1
Types of Housing	Family House	120	30.9
	Rented Apartment	180	46.4
	Personal Building	70	18.0
	Others	18	4.6

Table 4.2: Distribution of Responses on Effect of Oil Pollution in the Study Area.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Duration of stay in khana LGA.	<1 year	40	10.3
	From Birth	200	51.5
	Within 2–5 years	80	20.6
	>5 years	68	17.5
Have you ever been Affected by oil pollution within your duration of stay?	Yes	320	82.5
	No	68	17.5
Direct effects of oil pollution.	Health	140	36.1
	Water source (Environment)	120	30.9
	Socio-economy (Finances)	60	15.5
	None	28	7.2
	Food	20	5.2

	Farm produce/fish production	15	3.9
	Others	5	1.3
Rate of experienced oil pollution.	High	250	64.4
	Medium	100	25.8
	Low	30	7.7
	No comment	8	2.1

Table 4.2(CONT).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
How long has it been since the last noticeable oil pollution outbreak?	0–3 months ago	150	38.7
	More than 1 year ago	180	46.4
	Cannot remember	30	7.7
	Always polluted with oil.	28	7.2
Distance of residence from an oil spill sight.	Very far	50	12.9
	Not so far	200	51.5
	Close to your home	138	35.6

Table 4.3: Distribution of Responses on Causes of Oil Pollution in Khana LGA

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge of oil pollution.	Yes	240	61.9
	No	148	38.1
Is Khana Local Government Area affected by oil pollution?	Yes	370	95.4
	No	18	4.6
Types of oil pollution experienced in Khana LGA.	Water oil pollution.	160	41.2
	Soil oil pollution.	120	30.9
	Air oil pollution.	80	20.6
	Environmental oil pollution.	20	5.2
	Others.	8	2.1
Major causes of oil pollution in khana L.G.A	Oil spills	80	20.7
	Poor waste management practices.	20	5.2
	Illegal refining	97	25.0

	activities.		
	Others	10	2.6
	Pipeline vandalism.	86	22.1
	All of the listed	95	24.4
Causes/Route of Exposure to oil pollution	Drinking oil contaminated water.	160	41.2
	Breathing oil contaminated air.	100	25.8
	Cultivating on oil contaminated soil.	100	25.8
	Others	28	7.2

Table 4.3(CONT.)

Variable	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Does experienced oil pollution cause health challenge in khana local Government Area?	Yes	350	90.2
	No	38	9.8
Are you prepared against the effects of oil pollution?	Yes	50	12.9
	No	338	87.1

Table 4.4: Distribution of Responses on Health Risks Associated with Oil Pollution

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Is there some commonly experienced health challenge in Khana Local Government Area?	Yes	250	64.4
	No	138	35.6
Do you think this commonly experienced health challenge is linked to oil pollution?	Yes	240	61.9
	No	148	38.1
Which of the listed common health effect of oil pollution have you personally experienced?	Chest pain.	120	30.9
	Headache.	150	38.6
	Nose irritation/Congestion.	100	25.8
	Skin rash.	80	20.6
	Difficulty in breathing.	70	18.0
	Difficulty in sleeping.	50	12.9
	All of the listed.	70	18.0
	Others.	20	5.2
Health effect of oil pollution commonly experienced.	Chest pain	120	30.9
	Headache	180	46.4
	Nose irritation/Congestion	80	20.6
	Skin rash	70	18.0
	Difficulty in breathing	50	12.9
	Difficulty in sleeping	40	10.3
	All of the listed	40	10.3
	Others.	8	2.1

Table 4.4 (CONT.)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Severity of risks posed by oil pollution.	High	200	51.6
	Medium	130	33.5
	Mild/Low	58	14.9
	Total	**388**	**100**

Table 4.5: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis 1: Oil pollution does not significantly impacts the environment, health, and socioeconomic activities in Khana LGA.

Variable	Contraceptive Decision		χ^2	P-value
	Yes	No		
Duration of stay in khana LGA.				
<1 year	40	97	157.00	<0.01**
From Birth	200	97		
Within 2–5 years	80	97		
>5 years	68	97		
Ever been affected by oil pollution				
Yes	320	194	165.36	<0.01**
No	68	194		
Area(s) oil pollution has affected you				
Health	140	55.43	291.96	<0.01**
Water source (Environment)	120	55.43		
Socio-economy (Finances)	60	55.43		
None	28	55.43		
Food	20	55.43		
Farm produce/fish production	15	55.43		
Others	5	55.43		

Table 4.6: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis 2: Oil pollution in Khana LGA is not primarily caused by pipeline vandalism, oil spills, illegal refining activities, and poor waste management practices.

Variable	Contraceptive Decision		χ^2	P-value
	Yes	No		
knowledge about oil pollution				
Yes	240	194	21.21	<0.05*
No	148	194		
Khana LGA is affected by oil pollution				
Yes	370	194	312.68	<0.01**
No	18	194		
Major causes of oil pollution in khana L.G.A				
Oil spills	80	65.6	57.83	<0.01**
Poor waste management	20	65.6		

practices.				
Illegal refining activities.	97	65.6		
Others	10	65.6		
Pipeline vandalism.	86	65.6		
All of the listed	95	65.6		
Type of oil pollution seen in Khana LGA				
Water oil pollution	160	77.6	217.37	<0.01**
Soil oil pollution	120	77.6		
Air oil pollution	80	77.6		
Environmental oil pollution	20	77.6		
Others	8	77.6		
Enough awareness about oil pollution in Khana				
Yes	140	194	31.64	<0.05*
No	248	194		

Table 4.7: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis 3: Residents of Khana LGA does not experience health challenges such as respiratory illnesses, skin conditions, and waterborne diseases due to oil pollution.

Variable	Contraceptive Decision		χ^2	P-value
	Yes	No		
Is there a commonly experienced health challenge in Khana?				
Yes	250	194	33.14	<0.01*
No	138	194		
Is the health challenge linked to oil pollution				
Yes	240	194	21.21	<0.01**
No	148	194		
Personal health effects experienced				
Chest pain	120	48.5	408.04	<0.01**
Headache	150	48.5		
Nose irritation/Congestion	100	48.5		
Skin rash	80	48.5		
Difficulty in breathing	70	48.5		
Difficulty in sleeping	50	48.5		
All of the listed	70	48.5		
Others specify	20	48.5		

2. Discussion

The study offers critical insights into the population most affected by oil pollution in Khana LGA. The age distribution, with the majority being young adults between 18 and 41 years, highlights a group that is economically active and likely to be exposed to environmental hazards through farming, trading, and other outdoor activities. The slight predominance of female respondents is notable, especially considering women's primary roles in domestic water usage and food preparation—tasks that increase their exposure to contaminated resources. Educationally, a significant portion of respondents had only secondary or lower education, suggesting potential limitations in environmental literacy, which may influence health-seeking behaviour and awareness of pollution-related risks. Occupationally, the dominance of self-employment and informal sectors such as farming and trading further underscores socio-economic vulnerability to oil pollution. These findings mirror those reported by [41], who observed that young, semi-educated populations in oil-polluted communities in Rivers State face compounded risks due to poor infrastructure and environmental neglect. Similarly, [83] emphasized that access to clean water and safe cooking fuels remains limited in many Niger Delta communities, increasing exposure to pollutants. Understanding these socio-demographic profiles is essential for developing targeted interventions and health communication strategies that reflect the lived realities of Khana residents.

Identifying the Effects of Oil Pollution in Khana LGA.

The findings presented in This study highlights the widespread and deeply felt impact of oil pollution among residents of Khana Local Government Area. Majority of the respondents reported being directly affected by oil pollution, with the most common effects being health issues and water contamination. These findings demonstrate the severity of oil pollution's consequences, particularly on human health and access to clean water. The fact that a majority of the respondents have lived in the area from birth suggests long-term exposure, which increases the risk of chronic health problems. The responses also reflect the degradation of local environmental resources essential to daily living. The data further show that oil pollution in Khana is not only frequent but also severe. A large proportion rated the impact as high, and others indicated that the last noticeable outbreak occurred within the past three months, reflecting the persistence and recurrence of oil spills.

These results align with findings by [89] and [4], who also observed that oil pollution in the Niger Delta is both frequent and has devastating health and ecological consequences. Additionally, a large percentage of respondents reported living either close to or not far from pollution sites, indicating high spatial exposure, a factor known to increase both physical and psychological health risks. This finding supports the conclusions of UNEP's 2011 report on Ogoniland, which noted the proximity of communities to polluted areas as a major concern.

Chi-Square Results to Research Hypothesis 1

The Chi-Square test results provide strong statistical evidence that oil pollution has a significant impact on the environment, health, and socioeconomic conditions in Khana Local Government Area. Each tested variable produced a Chi-Square value with a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating that the observed distributions significantly differ from expected uniform distributions. For example, the variable measuring how long respondents had lived in the area and whether they had been affected by oil pollution confirmed the respondents' long-term and widespread exposure to pollution. These results validate earlier descriptive findings and reinforce the persistent nature of oil-related contamination in the area. More importantly, the areas of impact—health, environment, food, and livelihoods—showed a highly significant deviation, which reflects the multidimensional consequences of oil pollution in the

community. This is consistent with the findings of [84], who noted significant disruptions in water quality, air quality, and agricultural productivity due to hydrocarbon exposure in Niger Delta communities. Similarly, [41] reported statistically significant associations between exposure to oil-polluted environments and the incidence of respiratory, dermatological, and gastrointestinal illnesses. The current study's findings align with these by showing that health and livelihoods in Khana LGA are seriously compromised by oil-related environmental degradation.

The statistically significant Chi-Square results for the rating of pollution impact, timing of the last outbreak and proximity to polluted sites further support the conclusion that the effects of oil pollution are not only severe but also frequent and spatially concentrated. These outcomes agree with the United Nations Environment Programme [101] report, which found that oil pollution in Ogoniland was widespread, recurrent, and poorly remediated. Likewise, [41] found that communities closer to spill sites reported higher rates of ecological damage and economic hardship. By rejecting the null hypothesis, the present study provides robust statistical backing to the claim that oil pollution significantly degrades environmental quality and public health in Khana LGA.

The reported socio-economic effects, although less frequent, also deserve attention. Financial hardship, linked to the destruction of livelihoods such as farming and fishing, reflects the economic vulnerabilities created by environmental degradation. This is in agreement with [66], who found similar economic disruptions in oil-polluted communities. The convergence of health, environmental, and economic burdens illustrates the multidimensional impact of oil pollution in Khana LGA and underscores the urgent need for sustained remediation efforts, stricter environmental regulation, and community-based health interventions to mitigate these effects.

Assessing the Causes of Oil Pollution in the Affected Areas of the LGA

The study provides valuable insight into the awareness, perceived causes, and exposure pathways of oil pollution among residents of Khana Local Government Area. A majority of the respondents acknowledged being aware of oil pollution, while an overwhelming percentage affirmed that Khana LGA is indeed affected by it. These findings reflect a strong community perception of oil pollution as a real and persistent problem. The types of oil pollution observed by residents included water pollution, soil pollution and air pollution, indicating multi-environmental contamination.

These results align with [89], who emphasized that oil pollution in the Niger Delta often simultaneously affects land, air, and water, creating a complex web of environmental degradation. Despite the widespread acknowledgment of pollution, only few of the respondents believed there was sufficient awareness about oil pollution in their communities, while majority felt that awareness was lacking. This disconnects between personal experience and formal awareness efforts suggest a critical gap in environmental education and community outreach. Similar findings were reported by [66], who noted that despite high exposure rates; structured health education on oil pollution risks remains inadequate in many oil-producing areas. Moreover, the most common modes of exposure identified were drinking contaminated water and inhaling polluted air or farming on contaminated land. These routes of exposure correspond with studies like that of [84], who documented similar pathways in communities situated near oil spill zones in the Niger Delta.

Additionally, an alarming percentage of respondents believed oil pollution is responsible for increased health problems, a perception that confirms the community's understanding of the link between environmental quality and health. However, only less than half had taken preventive action against future pollution incidents, indicating a low level of preparedness. This lack of proactive measures reflects both a potential deficit in community empowerment

and institutional support, echoing [101] findings that many Niger Delta communities suffer from inadequate response mechanisms. Taken together, these results underscore the urgent need for targeted awareness campaigns, policy-driven interventions, and participatory risk reduction strategies to combat oil pollution in Khana LGA.

Chi-square Test for Hypothesis 2

The Chi-Square results provide compelling evidence that oil pollution in Khana Local Government Area is significantly associated with multiple human and systemic factors, including pipeline vandalism, illegal refining, oil spills, and poor waste management. All variables analysed in the hypothesis test yielded p-values less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant deviations from expected distributions. For instance, the strong statistical significance observed in respondents' awareness of oil pollution and the confirmation that Khana LGA is affected by oil pollution underscores the widespread recognition of oil-related environmental degradation in the area. The types of pollution—namely water, soil, and air—also showed significant results highlighting the multifaceted nature of environmental damage experienced by the community.

These findings are consistent with studies such as [89] and [41]which identified oil spills from ruptured pipelines, artisanal refining, and waste mismanagement as primary drivers of pollution in the Niger Delta. The significant results for awareness, exposure routes, health impact recognition and preparedness actions further reinforce the conclusion that the causes of oil pollution are well-known and directly linked to human activities and institutional failures. By rejecting the null hypothesis, the results validate the claim that oil pollution in Khana LGA is not incidental but systemic, requiring urgent attention through stronger policy enforcement, community education, and remediation programs.

Common Health Problems Associated with Oil Pollution in Khana LGA

The findings in this study reveal that oil pollution in Khana Local Government Area has resulted in numerous health issues among residents. A majority of respondents acknowledged the presence of common health challenges, which was linking directly to oil pollution. Headaches emerged as the most prevalent symptom, followed by chest pain, nose irritation, skin rash, breathing difficulties and difficulty sleeping. Notably, a significant percentage of respondents reported experiencing all listed symptoms. These findings are consistent with studies such as Ebeku and Okonkwo (2022), which identified similar symptoms—especially headaches and respiratory issues—in communities within Rivers and Bayelsa States exposed to frequent oil spill incidents.

The perceived severity of these health risks was also significant, as over half of the respondents described the health threats posed by oil pollution as extremely serious. The recurrence of symptoms like headaches and chest pain within the general community further highlights the broad and persistent nature of the health crisis. These results agree with Omodu and Eseduwo (2023), who reported that prolonged exposure to petroleum pollutants in Ogoni communities significantly increased the incidence of chronic respiratory illnesses, dermatological issues, and neurological symptoms. Furthermore, Agbalajobi et al. (2021) emphasized that polluted air and water sources in oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta are major contributors to public health deterioration, especially among vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

The consistency of findings across recent literature validates the assertion that oil pollution in Khana LGA presents serious and wide-ranging health risks. As observed in Igbuku and Boma-George (2023), prolonged exposure to hydrocarbon emissions from artisanal refining and pipeline leakage has been linked to multi-systemic health disorders in residents of Rivers State. These outcomes reinforce the need for urgent environmental health interventions, such

as regular medical surveillance, pollution control enforcement, and the establishment of community-based health education programs. Overall, the data confirm that oil pollution is not only an environmental issue but also a major public health crisis in the Niger Delta.

Chi-Square test for Hypothesis 3

The Chi-Square results on hypothesis 3 provide strong statistical evidence that oil pollution is significantly associated with various health challenges among residents of Khana Local Government Area. All variables analyzed recorded p-values less than 0.05, confirming the rejection of the null hypothesis. Notably, the distribution of respondents reporting common health challenges and those linking those challenges directly to oil pollution highlight the perceived and experienced health burden in the community. The types of health conditions reported—chest pain, headache, and skin rashes—are consistent with known effects of prolonged exposure to petroleum-based pollutants. These findings align with recent studies by Bassey and Oba (2022) and Daminabo et al. (2023), who observed significant increases in respiratory and dermatological conditions in oil-polluted communities within the Niger Delta. Moreover, the perception of risk severity among residents further reinforces the connection between oil pollution and health deterioration. With significant results on the seriousness of health risks and the most frequently observed health problems in the area, the study confirms that oil pollution is not only an environmental issue but a pressing public health crisis. These findings are consistent with Wakama and Emese (2021), who found that frequent oil spills and gas flaring in Rivers State were directly linked to the high prevalence of waterborne and air-related diseases. Overall, the data validate that oil pollution in Khana LGA has a statistically significant and harmful impact on public health, particularly in the form of respiratory illnesses, skin conditions, and waterborne diseases, necessitating urgent remediation and public health interventions.

3. Conclusion

This study conducted in Khana Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, underscores the significant and widespread impact of oil pollution on the environment, public health, and socio-economic well-being of the residents. With a high participation rate, the findings reveal that a majority of residents are directly affected by oil pollution, particularly in terms of health problems such as respiratory issues, skin conditions, and contaminated water sources. The study also identifies human activities like pipeline vandalism, oil spills, and illegal refining as the primary causes of pollution, with insufficient proactive measures from the community to mitigate the issue. Health problems such as headaches, chest pain, and respiratory difficulties are prevalent, indicating the urgent need for improved healthcare and public health interventions. Additionally, while some improvements in public health infrastructure were noted, the study reveals a general dissatisfaction with the government's efforts, pointing to significant gaps in preparedness and response mechanisms. Overall, the findings highlight the resilience of the residents but also stress the urgent need for comprehensive, targeted interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of oil pollution in Khana LGA.

Consent and ethical approval: The study was approved by the Rivers State Health Research Ethics Committee at Rivers State University Port Harcourt Nigeria.

4. **Acknowledgments:** We extend our sincere gratitude to Khana local government residents who participated in this research work, giving all the needed information towards the success of this study.
5. **Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper**.**

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