

# Ecofeminism and the Politics of Victimhood in Patience Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*

Original Research Article | Volume 1 | Issue 4 | 2026 | Article Number: 010

Accepted: 18 August 2026 | Published: 10 September 2026 | ISSN: 2979-8582 (Online)

 Crossref : <https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-XL9VRX72>



**Okachukwu Onuah Wosu (PhD)**

Department of English and Literary Studies, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo Port Harcourt, Nigeria

 OOW( [0009-0009-9908-1501](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9908-1501) )

Correspondence: Okachukwu Onuah Wosu (PhD), [wosu.okachukwu@ust.edu.ng](mailto:wosu.okachukwu@ust.edu.ng)

## Abstract

This paper examines the interconnected victimisation of women, children, and the natural environment in Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*. Using an ecofeminist approach, the study explores how patriarchal structures, oil exploration, poverty, social inequality, and institutional neglect contribute to the exploitation of both vulnerable human beings and the environment in the Niger Delta. Through a qualitative textual analysis of selected characters, events, and environmental representations in the novel, the paper identifies significant parallels between the degradation of nature and the oppression of women. Characters such as Ibiba, Eneni, and other young females experience abandonment, sexual exploitation, economic deprivation, and exclusion from decision-making. In contrast, communities such as Kirama suffer from gas flaring, oil spillages, polluted rivers, damaged farmlands, and health challenges. The novel also presents children as indirect victims of environmental degradation, as polluted water sources, poverty, and unsafe living conditions expose them to abuse, illness, and death. The paper argues that the exploitation of women and nature originates from similar systems of domination that prioritise economic power, masculine privilege, and oil wealth over human dignity and ecological sustainability. It further demonstrates that environmental injustice cannot be separated from gender and social injustice because damage to the ecosystem intensifies the vulnerability of women and children. The study concludes that *No Time to Lose* offers a powerful literary critique of oil exploitation and patriarchal oppression while promoting social justice, environmental responsibility, gender inclusion, and sustainable relationships between humans and nature.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Environmental Degradation, Women, Oil Exploitation, Patriarchy, Niger Delta, *No Time to Lose*

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between human beings and the natural environment has remained a major concern in literary and environmental studies, particularly in societies affected by industrial exploitation, social inequality and ecological destruction. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, oil exploration has produced serious environmental and social consequences, including gas flaring, oil spillages, polluted water sources, destruction of farmlands, poverty, health problems and the displacement of local communities. According to Okachukwu Onuah Wosu:

The damages done to the environment as a result of human activities have continued to constitute topical issues of public discourse among concerned persons. The callous destruction of nature due to industrialization and urbanization and the threats it poses constitute one of the major concerns of ecocriticism. (60)

These conditions affect the entire population, but women and children often experience the consequences more severely because of their limited economic power, social vulnerability and exclusion from important decision-making processes.

Literature provides a significant platform for exposing these interconnected forms of injustice. Through characters, settings, and events, writers represent how environmental destruction affects the daily lives, health, livelihoods, and dignity of people living in oil-producing communities. Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose* presents the Niger Delta environment as a victim of the same exploitative systems that oppress women and children. The novel establishes a strong relationship between the degradation of nature and the violation of vulnerable members of society. Its protagonist, Minima, encounters different forms of poverty, gender-based exploitation, environmental pollution and institutional neglect from childhood to adulthood. Through these experiences, the novel reveals how social and environmental injustice reinforce one another.

In the novel, communities such as Kirama are surrounded by natural beauty but are simultaneously exposed to the destructive effects of oil-related activities. Gas flares continually release poisonous smoke into the atmosphere, alter the ecosystem and expose residents to respiratory illnesses. Women who depend on farming experience severe coughing and breathing difficulties, while pipelines are laid across their farmlands without adequate consideration of their safety or agricultural productivity. Oil spillages also destroy farms and prevent crops from growing, thereby increasing hunger, poverty and economic dependence among affected families. The pollution of streams and rivers further forces children to travel long distances to find water, exposing them to avoidable dangers and accidents. The death of Ike during a swimming competition illustrates how environmental deprivation can create conditions that threaten the lives of vulnerable children.

Similarly, the female characters in the novel experience abandonment, sexual exploitation, rape, economic deprivation and social exclusion. Ibiba is impregnated and abandoned by an expatriate oil worker, while Eneni is deceived, sexually abused and left to face the burden of pregnancy and single parenthood. Other young females are exploited by wealthy men who use their economic power to take advantage of poverty and deprivation. The novel therefore presents women and the environment as sharing a similar condition of powerlessness. Just as the environment is treated as a resource that can be exploited without responsibility, women are objectified and treated as bodies that can be used, violated and abandoned. This connection is particularly evident in the imagery of men as "sowers" and women as fields upon which seeds may be scattered, an image that directly links the objectification of women with the exploitation of the land.

This paper adopts an ecofeminist perspective to examine the shared victimhood of women, children and the natural environment in Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*. Ecofeminism provides an appropriate framework

for understanding how patriarchal domination, economic exploitation and environmental destruction operate through related structures of power. The paper argues that the suffering of women and the degradation of nature in the novel are not separate experiences but interconnected consequences of a system that prioritises oil wealth, masculine privilege and political power over human dignity and ecological sustainability. Through a close textual analysis of selected characters, incidents, and environmental imagery, the study demonstrates that the novel advocates gender justice, environmental responsibility, and a more sustainable relationship between human beings and the natural world.

## Review of Related Literature

Even though Ezinwoke's novel *No Time to Lose* is not entirely new, given its publication date, it has not significantly captured the attention of literary critics. This seeming neglect is surprising, considering the undeniable literary quality of the work in terms of its well-crafted plot structure, its powerful use of imagery, the richness of its language, which showcases the author's poetic sensibility, and its exploration of the Niger Delta predicament through a variety of perspectives. The novel also presents a well-realised artistic vision, achieved through juxtaposition and anagnorisis. Moreover, *No Time to Lose* is amenable to critical ecofeminist investigation, which is the focus of this study. Therefore, in order to retrieve the novel from the oblivion into which it has been pushed by the lack of attention in literary circles, and to emphasize its significant contribution to the assumptions of this study, the novel has been included among the focal fictive works in this research.

A few scholars have examined Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose* from the perspective of literary criticism. Dick Okechukwu and Unwaha, Charles conducted an elaborate critical analysis of Ezinwoke's narrative technique in *No Time to Lose*, using a formalist approach as their theoretical framework. These critics saw the novel as a bi-structured representation of the oil-induced problems of the Niger Delta and their potential solutions, with the protagonist, Minima, embodying the contradictions of the Niger Delta. According to Dick et al, the protagonist is a product of an illicit relationship between an expatriate oil worker and a naive Niger Delta girl. By the beginning of the novel, the expatriate oil worker has relocated to Europe, leaving the young protagonist, Minima, fatherless. These critics further argued that since Minima's mother was a student, he grew up in poor conditions characterized by hunger and homelessness, particularly in Diobu and Marine Base, both in Port Harcourt. Even when Minima and his mother relocated to Kirama, his mother's village, their economic conditions remained unchanged. According to these critics, these economic hardships were the result of the unethical exploitation of petroleum in the Niger Delta, particularly an extractive approach that destroyed the environment and the economic bases of the locals. This approach was hazardous to their health, without reinvesting the immense wealth into the lives of the landowners and the environment.

Dick, Unwaha, and Okpanachi asserted that *No Time to Lose* was conceived from the novelist's realization of the failure of revolutionary activism, as seen in violent protests, hostage-taking, and the destruction of oil-bearing pipes. In their analysis, they observed that the novelist, Ezinwoke, proposed peaceful ideological protest as a more viable solution to the Niger Delta's oil-induced problems than violent activism.

In analyzing the narrative structure, these scholars discovered that the major narrative technique used by the novelist in *No Time to Lose* was juxtaposition. Through this technique, the writer was able to explore the spread of poverty in Nigeria, the stark contrast between poverty in the Niger Delta and the opulence in Abuja, as well as the underdevelopment in the Niger Delta compared to the sophistication of the facilities and amenities in London. Dick, Unwaha, and Okpanachi noted that these explorations and comparisons lead the audience toward arriving at the author's intended meaning. According to them, the author's

aesthetic vision was that while the Niger Delta was in turmoil, the strategy adopted to solve the problem was flawed. They argued that the solution to the Niger Delta predicament lies in addressing the poverty of the mind, which could be achieved through educational empowerment and peaceful ideological protests, rather than violent activism, which only deepens the wounds. It is clear that Dick, Unwaha, and Okpanachi were not concerned with an ecofeminist analysis of Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*, as this study aims to do.

Similarly, Beatrice Noble examined aspects of style, particularly characterization, in Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose*. Noble concentrated on the protagonist's struggles as an activist and traced the experiences of Endwell (Angel) in the village of Kirama, a settlement inhabited by people living in poverty, yet ironically an oil-rich community. Noble's submission focused on the injuries sustained by Endwell during a protest against a multinational oil company. This injury allowed Endwell to be flown abroad for medical treatment because healthcare workers in Nigeria were on strike.

For Noble, the high point of *No Time to Lose* was the protagonist's realization, upon recovery, that there was a stark contrast between London and his village, Kirama. This contrast plunged him into a dilemma: whether to remain in London and enjoy a good life, shielded from the chaotic life in Kirama, or return to continue his activism against the government. It is worth noting that Noble's engagement with *No Time to Lose* does not include an ecofeminist perspective.

Abraham Yahaya classified Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose* as a fictional work that draws themes from the prevalent issues faced by people in oil-rich communities. He further identified the work as a bildungsroman, structurally divided into two parts. Yahaya argued that while the first part of the novel dramatizes the oil-associated problems in the Niger Delta, the second part offers solutions to these problems. The issues highlighted in Yahaya's review include the abject poverty among locals in oil-producing communities, emphasizing the contrast between the wealth of the oil workers and the poverty of the natives. Yahaya also highlighted the exploitation of Niger Delta women, as the oil wealth of expatriate workers was used to lure innocent Niger Delta girls into relationships, only to abandon them once they became pregnant. Yahaya also emphasized "the irresponsible extraction of crude oil and its degrading impacts on the people and their environment" (467).

Yahaya discussed Minima's patriotism in the face of land and water pollution, portraying him as a die-hard activist willing to risk his life for environmental justice and fairness. However, Yahaya did not highlight aspects of the novel that deal with the condition of women or ecofeminist concerns. This research aims to fill that gap.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Ecofeminism**

Ecofeminism emerged from the combination of feminist and ecological thought. It examines the relationship between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural environment in patriarchal societies. The term "ecofeminism" was coined by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne to highlight how the same social, political and economic structures that subordinate women also encourage the destruction of nature. The theory therefore argues that gender injustice and environmental degradation are interconnected rather than separate problems.

Ecofeminism is based on the criticism of hierarchical dualisms created and sustained by patriarchal systems. These dualisms include man/woman, culture/nature, reason/emotion, mind/body and human/non-human. In such classifications, men, culture and reason are often considered superior, while women, nature and emotion are treated as inferior. This arrangement justifies the control and exploitation of both women and the environment. Ecofeminists maintain that patriarchal societies frequently view

women and nature as passive resources that can be owned, used and discarded.

The major concern of ecofeminism is the connection between female oppression and environmental abuse. It challenges the logic of domination, which assumes that individuals or groups deemed superior have the right to control those deemed inferior. Scholars such as Alison Archambault, Richard Twine and Lawrence Buell identify this logic of domination as central to ecofeminist thought. Similarly, Chun Ling describes ecofeminism as “a feminism with inclinations to ecology” (67), emphasising its concern with both gender equality and environmental protection.

Ecofeminism is closely related to ecocriticism because both approaches examine the relationship between human beings and nature. However, ecofeminism specifically focuses on the ways environmental destruction affects women and other vulnerable groups. Women are often directly connected to natural resources through farming, food production, water collection and caregiving responsibilities. Consequently, environmental problems such as pollution, deforestation, oil spills and destruction of farmland frequently increase women’s economic and social burdens.

Some strands of ecofeminism argue that women are closer to nature because of their reproductive and nurturing roles. However, this position has been criticised for reinforcing stereotypes that associate women mainly with motherhood and domestic responsibilities. Contemporary ecofeminism therefore emphasises that women’s relationship with nature is largely shaped by social, cultural and economic conditions rather than biological characteristics alone.

Major contributors to ecofeminist thought include Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ivone Gebara, Alice Walker, Sallie McFague, Greta Gaard, Carol J. Adams, Susan Griffin, Mary Daly and Vandana Shiva. Despite differences in their approaches, these scholars challenge patriarchal domination and promote equality, care, interdependence and ecological sustainability.

In literary studies, ecofeminism examines how women and nature are represented as victims of exploitation, violence and neglect. It also considers how literary texts connect gender oppression with environmental destruction, poverty and unequal access to power. This theory is suitable for the analysis of Ezinwoke’s *No Time to Lose* because the novel presents women, children and the Niger Delta environment as victims of similar exploitative structures. Female characters experience sexual abuse, abandonment, poverty and exclusion, while the environment suffers from gas flaring, oil spillages, polluted water and destruction of farmland. Ecofeminism therefore provides an appropriate framework for examining the shared victimhood of women and nature in the novel.

### **Ecofeminism and the Politics of Victimhood in Ezinwoke’s *No Time to Lose***

Ezinwoke’s novel represents the connections in the victimhood status that both women and the environment acquire in the conflict spectrum using the Niger Delta experience. The protagonist of the novel, Minima, is a very sensitive character whose birth and early life epitomize the scope of social and environmental injustice that the Niger Delta people suffer as oil extractive activities go on in their communities and city centres. The novelist not only depicts the scope, dimensions and implications of the Niger Delta crisis but also highlights, through the protagonist, ethos that can be useful in attaining social justice and environmental sustainability.

In *No Time to Lose*, the experiences of females, especially young females and children, were highlighted as similar to the scope of environmental denigration that has been associated with the Niger Delta region in the face of the oil-related crisis captured by writers and scholars. The novelist graphically depicted the experiences of female children living in the Diobu axis of Port Harcourt noting that many of them could not find food to eat or decent accommodation; so they lived in uncompleted buildings and their parents

closed their eyes to the glaring risks because they lacked what was required to offer better alternatives. The risks were amplified whenever it rained. According to the narrator:

Sometimes it rained so heavily that we wondered if the world was finally ending just like in the days of Noah. At such times, families dispersed, as everyone had to find their own place to sleep. This had a devastating effect on young girls because some became exposed to the whim of deceitful men; they became ready, helpless prey for men on the lookout for sexual escapades. (11)

The novelist bequeathed victimhood status to young females living in Diobu axis of Port Harcourt and highlighted the role of social structures tainted with the injustices associated with patriarchy. In Ezinwoke's novel, just like Agary's depiction in *Yellow-Yellow*, expatriate staff and other oil company workers, who were predominantly male, were given preferential treatment and allowed to acquire enormous economic power which empowered them to mesmerise helpless young females and exploit them at will. Minima's mother, Ibiba, was one of such females. She got pregnant for an irresponsible expatriate oil worker and searched endlessly for him (18). She eventually realised that the father of her son had abandoned her and travelled back to his country, never to return (30). As she bemoaned her exploitation and purged her pent up emotions in lines of poetry, Ibiba noted that she was hurt, rejected and dejected (31).

The novelist also presented the Niger Delta environment, just like the young females at the time, as denigrated, violated and degraded. In the novel, Ezinwoke paradoxically described Kirama as a community that was adorned with beautiful evergreen mangrove vegetation by day but illuminated by gas flares at night. The gas flares endangered the human and nonhuman life forms and altered the ecosystem, attributable to the poisonous smoke it continually emitted. The people of Kirama, who did not know the cause of their problems, suffered a cough disease and attributed it to lack of adequate communion with their ancestors (22). The villagers felt a connection with their ancestors who related with them in the dark but the flares denied them this communion. Thus the environment, like the humans that enjoyed communion with it, had become victims of poor oil exploratory practices. Ezinwoke's representation of the severance of human-nature bonds that existed in many societies can be likened to an attempt to establish the links between environmental degradation and the exploitation of vulnerable people, especially women and children.

The novel further highlighted how the oil exploratory activities in the Kirama community amplified lack, poverty and health crisis. Many individuals, including women and young females, wore the same torn clothes for many days (23). One can only imagine the health, social and psychological implications of having young females move about in thorn and dirty clothes for long periods. Many of them would likely be sexually exploited by men who could offer change of clothes, or, worse still, become vulnerable to rape because of the lure of sensitive parts of their bodies that may be exposed by the torn clothes. Minima's grandmother and other women who had farms near the fire pit experienced health challenges like serious coughing and difficulty in breathing which became worse each time they went to their farms (33). More so, pipelines bearing oil were laid across their farms without considering the effect of such pressured pipes on the yield of the farm produce (34). The complaints of the women were casually dismissed by the community head that was empowered and enriched by a system that was designed to exclude females from the mainstream of decision-making (34). The desecration of the Kirama environment was complete when Minima returned to pick up a local government identification letter. Minima's grandmother told the story of how the situation became worse. According to the narrator, "She further explained how they had gone to the farm close to Ntawoba Creek one morning only to find the entire place covered with a black oily substance; and how no plant had grown in the farm ever since" (98). The stakeholders further thwarted the

moves for land reclamation and proceeded to fell the Nypa palms from the marshland as if they did not realise the environmental benefits in those offerings of nature (99). Thus, the experience of the Kirama community epitomises the Niger Delta context where the environment, like vulnerable women and children, is exploited irreparably.

As the protagonist left Kirama and travelled back to Port Harcourt with his uncle, the novel opened up other dimensions of the social and environmental injustices that depict the similarities in the victimhood status of women and the environment. Minima explained that as they approached Marine Base, he noticed that river banks had become refuse dumps and aquatic life was irredeemably desecrated (51). He also noticed that young females in Marine Base were as violated as the environment. He noted as follows:

A constant feature was the contrast of flashy cars of different models, parked by wealthy men who usually came in pursuit of pleasure from unassuming young girls. They were lured by promises of cash. There were many ramshackle houses, inhabited by the lowliest of the low. The houses, built using all sorts of materials from old rusted zinc, wood, tarpaulin and cartons to waterproof and raffia, were scattered in no particular form. There were all sorts. You name it and you would find it. In Marine Base, the real essence was dampness, filth, poverty and deprivation (53).

Minima's account above juxtaposes the state of environmental pollution and abuse prevalent at that time to the sexual exploitation of young females in Marine Base. Even the older females bore the brunt of the harsh social systems that subsisted at the time. Eneni's mother and other women became breadwinners of their households because they could not bear the lack and deprivation that befell their families (61). The economic conditions were so bad that the efforts of the women alone could not bring in sufficient income; so their children, including the young females, joined in whatever trade their mothers recommended irrespective of the risks involved. Eneni's plight is a clear illustration of the level of exploitation occasioned by the improprieties connected to the Niger Delta imbroglio and their implications for young and old females. Recounting Eneni's ordeal, the narrator stated:

On further questioning, she revealed that two men had kept her against her will in the compound in GRA where she had gone to sell plantain. They had done what the women feared: they had taken turns to abuse her through the night. It had not been the first time for Eneni, though. Four months ago, the guy had called her into the house on the pretext of buying plantain. The house was big and looked empty. She had no change to give to him and he told her to sit down in the parlour while he went upstairs to look for smaller bills. (63)

The young man, as described above, seduced Eneni and deceived her into having regular sexual meetings with him until she got pregnant, then he absconded, and left her to face the arduous burden of single parenting. When Eneni's mother, in the company of other women got to the compound where the rape took place, they were humiliated and thrown out by the security personnel on duty (66). Just like Ibiba (Minima's mother), Eneni and the other girls in Marine Base were treated with the same level of disrespect and denigration meted out to the environment.

Furthermore, Ezinwoke presented the *Molue romance* as a depiction of the level of disregard for the sanctity of the feminine essence similar to the violation of the environment. According to the narrator, the buses popularly known as *Molue* were the only available means of transportation in Lagos then, so they were closely packed and people occupied the aisles in standing positions. The narrator further noted:

The perverts would press themselves closely to the unsuspecting female passenger. Because it was early morning and still dark, she would feel the stiffness pressing closely to her backside followed by frequent sideways movements. No one would notice but the poor victim. (126)

By citing the instance of *Molue romance*, the novelist presented the issue of injustice to females as one that transcended the Niger Delta region which had found its way into the culture of most societies in Africa and beyond. As he journeyed along, Minima highlighted the scope of environmental devastation at Zakibian. He highlighted environmental red-flags such as extremely poor hygiene and open defecation (130). He referred to the tribal wars and eruption of violence between the Tivs and the Junkuns, noting the extent of violence and decimation of life forms (132). The stories about the wars revealed how violence in ancient times wreaked havoc on the biotic community and how the forms of violence that emerged from the oil crisis in the Niger Delta region toed the same line of environmental and social injustice.

A further illustration of women and the environment as twin victims of patriarchal injustice is the disposition of Nelo and his friends. The novel portrayed a society that seemed to reserve well-paying jobs for the masculine gender. Within the Niger Delta context, as depicted in the novel, a greater part of the activities in the oil and gas industry required high risk and working in hazardous conditions. Chinweizu argued that “there was a dimension of the patriarchal framework that accepted men as the biologically more dispensable sex which explained why societies trained men for high-risk occupations while shielding the women in order to maximise a society’s reproductive capacity” (126). Consequently, young boys and men had more money and means at their disposal than their female counterparts. Nelo and his friends, who had just stumbled on jobs and business opportunities in the oil industry, indulged themselves with young university girls (204) and mischievously likened themselves to “sowers scattering their seeds” (205). In other words, as the young boys implied, the girls were fields that could be ploughed at will. Hence, many of the boys were proud unmarried fathers of children they did not intend to take care of. Ezinwoke’s choice of imagery here is quite significant because it foregrounds the objectification of women and shows the shared victimhood status between women and the environment. If Nelo and his friends are sowers who can determine when and how to cast their seeds, it means that women, just like ordinary fields or farms, are vulnerable and cannot determine who sows or what is sown on them.

In addition, during Mr. Burton’s visit alongside other members of the Greener Earth International, a Non-Governmental Organization, they noticed the scope of damage to the environment of oil-bearing communities (242). As the spate of violence gained momentum, militants engaged the military anywhere and everywhere and the environment became a major casualty. According to the narrator:

Communities were set ablaze. They destroyed pipelines, causing oil spillages and fires, thereby destroying the environment all the more. I felt such actions defeated the very aims of the struggle. The criminal elements cashed in and the city became a shadow of itself (p. 250).

Similarly, young female bank workers were used as baits for huge deposits into commercial banks; many of them were pushed to go out and do whatever they could to bring in accounts with huge balances (260). Andrew confirmed to Nelo that the female officer that walked into the latter’s office could afford to dress the way she did because she was one of the ‘performing’ female staff and had to be appeased one way or the other. Then the criminals that robbed Andrew’s bank demonstrated the disregard for females by raping helpless female bank workers (270 - 271) the same way they shot in the air and carried out all sorts of destruction without considering the implications. Even the soldiers who were sent to Kirama community to restore normalcy grabbed women and moved on to their camps if they could not find young boys in the

respective compounds (276). The women they abducted had nothing to do with the uprising and ensuing violence for which the military was invited in the first place; they were simply victims and had to feel the pangs of victimisation.

Another incident that graphically demonstrates the similarities between the plight of humans and the environment as a result of oil extraction activities is the scene where the nearby streams and rivers had been polluted to the extent that the water could not be used for any domestic purposes and the children had to go far to fetch water for their parents. Far from adult observation, the children played a wanton game that was destructive to a palm tree on their way to the river. As Niwide entered the bush, the other children followed, and made various incantations invoking and beseeching the power of nature to constrain their parents from executing any form of punishment. As the children repeated their lines, they knotted the leaves and each knot symbolised a part of the bodies of their parents. They all had someone to tie and by the time they finished, the palm tree was wearing several knots (39). The unfortunate treatment meted out to the palm tree would not have, in every likelihood, occurred if nearby streams and rivers that had good water had not been polluted by oil- extraction activities.

Similarly, those children on getting to the river engaged themselves in a dangerous swimming competition and opted to compete to determine who would be brave enough to swim across the deepest part of the river and in the process, one of them named Ike drowned. In his account of the incident, Minima narrated the story thus:

I ran back through the bridge to the other side to join in receiving the heroes. However, when someone pointed out that Ike could be drowning because he was not swimming well, the excitement ended abruptly. Cheers of joy turned into shouts for help. By this time the other two had successfully swum to the river bank. Ike was fast disappearing; there was confusion, mixed with loud cries for help. The loud cries drew the attention of other people around the river. Passers-by dropped their bicycles and came to the scene. No one would find Ike by this time. (42-43)

The excerpt above clearly shows the nexus between the plight of vulnerable people, including children and the environment in dysfunctional contexts like those of the Niger Delta region. Just as the palm trees suffered abuse which stemmed from oil-induced deprivation of humans, the little Ike lost his life because the abnormal situation had exposed him to unusual risks.

Ezinwoke's portraiture of environmental exploitation as akin to female violation is quite graphic and incisive. The novel has shown that random activities carried out by key actors in the Niger Delta context and beyond have social and environmental implications which cannot be overlooked because of the spiral effects they have on other aspects of life.

## CONCLUSION

Ezinwoke's *No Time to Lose* reveals that the exploitation of women and the destruction of the environment are products of the same structures of power, greed and patriarchal domination. By presenting polluted communities alongside abused, abandoned and economically vulnerable women, the novel demonstrates that environmental injustice is also a human and gendered crisis. The degradation of land, water and air deepens poverty, weakens livelihoods and exposes women and children to greater forms of exploitation. The novel therefore moves beyond merely describing suffering; it challenges society to recognise that justice cannot be achieved while either women or nature remains oppressed. Its central message is that environmental sustainability, gender equality and social justice must be pursued together because the wellbeing of human beings is inseparable from the wellbeing of the natural world.

## References

- Agary, Kaine. *Yellow-Yellow*. Dtalkshop, 2006.
- Archambault, Alison. "A Critique of Ecofeminism." *Canadian Woman Studies Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1993, pp. 19–22, <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/I0403>.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP, 1995.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell, 2005.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in US and Beyond*. The Belknap Press, 2001.
- Chinweizu. *Anatomy of Female Power*. Pero Press, 1990.
- Dick, Okechukwu T., Charles O. Unwaha, and Abdul Okpanachi. "Narrative Technique and Meaning in Patience Eziwoke's *No Time to Lose*." *Journal of the International Centre for Science, Humanities and Education Research*, 2020, pp. 42–51, [www.ischer.org.ng](http://www.ischer.org.ng).
- Eziwoke, Patience. *No Time to Lose*. Pearl, 2009.
- Ling, Chun. "Ecological Criticism Based on Social Gender: The Basic Principles of Ecofeminism." *Higher Education of Social Science*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2014, pp. 67–72, [www.cscanada.net](http://www.cscanada.net).
- Noble, Beatrice. "Shades of Social Injustice in Patience Eziwoke's *No Time to Lose*." *Agol Journal of Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2021, pp. 24–37.
- Twine, Richard. *Ecofeminism in Process*. 2001, [www.ecofem.org/tiljournal](http://www.ecofem.org/tiljournal).
- Wosu, Okachukwu Onuah. "Resource Exploitation as a Metaphor for Environmental Ruination in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery*." *International Journal of English Language and Communication Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2025, pp. 57–73. <https://doi.org/10.56201/ijeles.vol.10.no1.2025.pg57.73>.
- Wosu, Okachukwu O., and Mbuotidem S. Idio. "Oil Pillage of the Ecosystem: A Study of Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*." *Utuenikang*, vol. 2, no. 1, Dec. 2023, pp. 210–218. *AKSU Journal of English*
- Yahaya, Ibrahim. "A Book Review on Patience Eziwoke's *No Time to Lose*." Edited by Gideon Ornachonu, *Journal of Language, Linguistics, Literature and Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2023, pp. 251–258.



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)