

THE ROLE OF RADIO HEALTH PROGRAMMES IN PROMOTING PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO CURB THE SPREAD OF CORONA VIRUS IN NIGERIA: WAZOBIA FM 95.1 ON FOCUS

MOYOSORE ALADE (PhD)

**Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria**

adenijim@run.edu.ng

&

NINUOLUWALAYOMI OGUNLEYE

**Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria**

Ogunleye6925@run.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study was specifically conducted to look into the role that radio health programmes played in preventing the spread of COVID-19, how radio stations educated the public about COVID-19 prevention strategies, and the extent to which Wazobia FM has contributed to this effort. In this study, the survey design was used, and basic random sample procedures were used. The population is made up of Wazobia FM 95.1 FM Abuja branch staff. 57 respondents were conveniently chosen, of whom 50 were validated, to determine the sample size. The study was anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory and the Agenda Setting Theory. A self-made, verified questionnaire was employed to gather data. Mean scores and frequency tables were used to analyze the completed and verified surveys. The results of the investigation show that radio broadcasts had a significant impact in halting the spread of COVID-19. The study also showed that radio stations educated the public about COVID-19 prevention strategies through raising knowledge of the disease's spread, raising public understanding of COVID-19 prevention, and teaching the public about the disease's symptoms and indicators. Thus, it is advised that radio stations acknowledge their crucial role in the battle to reduce misinformation in Nigeria and throughout Africa. This should improve their efficacy in carrying out their social duty of raising public awareness of the spread of Covid-19.

Keywords: Role, Radio Health Programmes, Preventive Measures, Covid 19, Wazobia FM 95.1.

INTRODUCTION

The globe was shocked to learn on December 31, 2019, that Wuhan, in the Asian nation of China's Hubei Province, had contracted an unusual and deadly disease. The World Health Organisation (WHO) was notified of a number of pneumonia cases in the city that had an unclear cause (Umaru, Suleiman & Aondover, 2020).

An unusual and novel virus was identified in January 2020 and named the 2019 novel Coronavirus. But the virus's genomic study and samples taken from cases showed that this was what started the pandemic. Remarkably, the World Health Organization, the premier global health organization, declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a "global health emergency" on January 30, 2020. As the virus proceeded to spread at an alarming rate around the world,

the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a worldwide pandemic on March 11, 2020. This was the organization's first pandemic declaration since 2009's declaration of "H N influenza" (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

The development of COVID-19 brought with it deadly health risks that posed a threat to humankind. Untold consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak make it an international health disaster. As a result, it has developed into an international public health challenge (Powell, 2020).

The COVID-19 epidemic has posed a significant challenge to our understanding of the world and health-related concerns in general as well as our daily lives. In addition to the fact that the virus's manner of transmission and infection rate posed a threat to human survival, social distance is also necessary for the safety precautions taken to stop its spread. Particularly in the efforts being made by governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders and groups in public health towards the complete eradication of illnesses globally, information, education, and communication are important strategies for changing behavior (Eze, 2014).

The Nigerian government implemented lockdowns and social distancing measures in the three most affected states—Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja—in response to an increase in infections and fatalities. Depending on the situation, state governors also imposed full or partial lockdowns in their respective areas. Nonetheless, because of the governments disorganized and subpar social assistance systems, lockdowns brought immense suffering to a large number of Nigerians (Adepohu, 2020). Leading the front in Nigeria's fight against COVID-19 have been the Federal Ministry of Health and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Both groups have taken the initiative to establish hospitals, isolation units, and other facilities to handle both suspected and proven cases.

Along with staff training, the NCDC has established fast reaction teams in all 36 states of Nigeria (Ephraim, 2020). Nevertheless, despite efforts to stop the COVID-19 virus from spreading, one issue that has presented significant challenges to both organizations is the dissemination of incorrect or misleading information regarding the virus.

To raise public awareness and combat Covid-19, information is essential. Right now, there are a few obstacles in the way of the campaign to raise awareness about Covid-19 because some people still think the condition doesn't actually exist. Excellent communication is essential to achieving excellent health for the majority of the population. According to Gralinski and Menachery (2020), the mass media offers current information on health-related concerns, such as enhancing the public's and healthcare professionals' knowledge, awareness, and practices. According to Noar (2006), public health initiatives have long been supported by mass media campaigns. For many years, communication efforts with a variety of subjects and target groups have been carried out. Wakefield (2010) claims that exposure to such messages is consequently typically passive. The main objectives of mass media campaigns have typically been to alter people's knowledge, awareness, and attitudes, which helps to achieve the goal of changing behavior.

The Nigerian government's efforts to stop the corona virus from spreading would be significantly hindered if regular radio and other media sensitization and awareness campaigns were not conducted. These accomplishments can be credited to radio's influence as a media instrument for information dissemination as well as to adequate healthcare facilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It should go without saying that one of the most important media tools for increasing public awareness of current events is the radio. Owing to people's attachment to radios, there may be a negative impact on awareness levels if Covid-19 awareness programmes aren't conducted on the station to raise people's awareness and sensitization to important developments and trends, particularly in the health sector like the Covid-19 era. This could put people at risk of contracting the deadly disease.

However, radio stations should focus on enhancing lifestyles in light of the current global economic crisis. Thus, it is relevant to look at radio's involvement during this pandemic as a tool to educate the public about the importance of practicing good hygiene and adhering to COVID-19 safety measures to stop the spread of the novel corona virus. It is important to remember that while radio presenters fulfill their duties, they should convey hope rather than fear or an overly dramatic portrayal of the pandemic situation, as this would affect the listeners' or viewers' psychological as well as physical health. This study seeks to discover the role of radio health programmes in promoting preventive measures to curb the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this project is to investigate the role of radio health programmes in promoting preventive measures to curb the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria. It is specifically intended to:

1. Examine the degree to which Wazobia FM had broadcast on Covid-19 preventive measures to its listeners.
2. Look into how radio Wazobia FM educated listeners about COVID-19 preventive strategies.
3. Ascertain the type of programmes presented on Wazobia FM to create awareness on Corona Virus and curb its spread

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Responsibility Theory

The Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, established in the United States of America in 1947 to reevaluate the definition of press freedom as stated in the Libertarian or Free Theory, is credited with giving rise to the social responsibility media theory (Folarin, 2012). This idea came into being in an effort to temper the libertarian theory's extreme support for press freedom. Making sure the press doesn't misuse its freedom is the goal here (Udeze S. and Chukwuma O, 2013).

According to the social responsibility thesis, media outlets have an obligation to discharge their tasks in a socially responsible manner due to their power and near monopoly status. According to the view, the media have a responsibility to carry out their duties and

commitments to society in an ethical manner. One of the primary claims made by Udeze et al. (2020) in outlining the tenets of the social responsibility theory is that "the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society." Providing the public with sufficient, impartial, and fair updates on pertinent social changes is one of these duties, among others.

According to this study, radio stations have a responsibility to inform listeners about the corona virus vaccine and to do so at times of international health emergency. Creating jingles, radio dramas, interviews with medical professionals, and working with the NCDC on the Covid-19 vaccine are some ways to raise awareness of the disease. By doing so, people will be able to adopt the necessary hygienic practices and take preventative measures, which will stop the virus from spreading and have an impact on their decision to accept the vaccination.

The Agenda Setting Theory

This theory postulates that the media can set the "agenda" by advising or informing audiences about the important and pertinent problems. They can do this by deciding which tales to feature and how much space and importance to give them (Folarin, 1998). The "ability of the mass media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda" is referred to as agenda setting. That is, the public will consider a news story more significant if it is covered regularly and widely.

This is precisely what transpired in the Nigerian context, as notifications of the Corona Virus Disease was disseminated frequently and extensively over nearly every media platform in the nation. Some people think that mass media channels can effectively promote individual health behaviors when they provide enough individual exposure to compelling messages. According to Baran, S. & Davis, D. (2012), mass media outlets have emerged as important social and cultural organizations in society and act as a catalyst for change in the process of development.

Since the mass media distributes information to a specific audience throughout society, its influence transcends social and geographic boundaries. This covers nearly every societal group that is impacted by their programming.

In summary, the focus of public health has rapidly shifted from disease to treatment for disease precautions or health promotion. As a result, the mass media has been utilized to promote health-related lifestyle behaviors. People's health-related behaviors may be encouraged by the growing amount of information made available through the usage of mass media.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers employed the survey research design, and the data gathering instrument was a questionnaire. The population of the study comprises of employees of Wazobia FM 95.1 FM Abuja branch because Abuja was the second state in Nigeria to be severely affected by the virus. The researcher conveniently selected 57 participants as sampled size for this study in order to find out the types of health programmes that were aired to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The questionnaires were administered to the staff online and 50 of them responded.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Corona Virus in Nigeria

The corona virus-caused fatal disease COVID-19 was initially identified in Nigeria on February 27, 2020. An Italian construction worker who had just returned from Milan was the index case. With over 900 deaths in August 2020, the number of infections has increased to nearly 52,000 since February 2020. The Nigerian government implemented lockdowns and social distancing measures in the three most affected states—Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja—in response to an increase in infections and fatalities. Depending on the situation, state governors also imposed full or partial lockdowns in their respective areas. But because of the governments disorganized and subpar social welfare programmes, lockdowns brought immense suffering to a great number of Nigerians (Obokoh, A. 2020).

Leading the front in Nigeria's fight against COVID-19 have been the Federal Ministry of Health and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Both groups have taken the initiative to establish hospitals, isolation units, and other facilities to handle both suspected and proven cases. In addition, the 36 states of Nigeria have seen the establishment of fast reaction teams and staff training by the NCDC.

Nevertheless, despite efforts to stop the COVID-19 virus from spreading, one issue that has presented significant challenges to both organizations is the dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information regarding the virus. It has been stated that the greatest threat Nigeria confronts in the fight against COVID-19 is the dissemination of false information. False information has stoked public fear and worry, hindering efforts to halt the corona virus from spreading throughout Nigeria and Africa, and making people reluctant to get the Covid-19 vaccination (Maclean & Dahil 2020).

The Role of Radio in Curbing the Spread of Corona Virus

Undoubtedly, during the Covid-19 outbreak, Nigeria's radio sector was instrumental in providing pertinent information to the nation's citizens. These will be covered under the ensuing subsections:

Teaching of School Lesson: When schools and other educational facilities closed due to the pandemic, radio stations in Nigeria played a legitimate role. Following the closing of all school gates, Nigeria's radio sector evolved into a potent repository of educational knowledge. In an effort to support the country's causes, radio stations sent classroom teachings on various school subjects to young students' doorsteps over considerable distances.

Assignments on the lessons covered were given to students throughout the sessions in an effort to keep them up to date with regular schoolwork. Thus, regardless of geographic distance, young students in primary and secondary schools simultaneously experienced what appeared to be regular classroom teachings thanks to the services of numerous radio stations. As a result, this electronic public outreach medium encouraged more families to adopt radio listening customs and helped sustain long-distance educational projects in Nigeria. During the pandemic era, this pushed families to invest in this sector of the ICT business (Odo, 2015; Danbatta, 2017; Akinnaso, 2020).

Strong Sensitization of the "New Normal": The phrase "new normal" alludes to the recently approved healthcare regulations by the World Health Organization and Nigeria's healthcare agencies. These regulations aim to lower the number of deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic, prevent the spread of the disease among citizens, and keep an eye on the whereabouts of infected individuals. Accordingly, Nigerians learned that wearing face masks could lower the number of Covid-19 infections through a variety of radio campaigns. They also received the basic knowledge that contact with the disease may be avoided by maintaining strict cleanliness and regularly washing hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Importantly, the Covid-19 epidemic gave Nigerians a chance to supplement their family's income.

In many households, the manufacturing of face masks and hand sanitizers developed into a significant business. Families involved their kids in the manufacturing of these necessary goods. However Despite being haphazard and unprofessional, the continuous manufacture of both goods gave families extra cash, encouraged resourcefulness, kept family members from going hungry or being idle, and gave them new skills. Several Nigerian houses were able to weather the severe economic downturn brought on by the Covid-19 outbreak thanks to these additional talents.

Education about the Signs and Symptoms: During Nigeria's Covid-19 pandemic, one important medium for disseminating information about the pertinent signs and symptoms that indicated a person may have the disease was the radio. This clarifies yet another important function that this crucial ICT infrastructure performed throughout the pandemic. It served as a true news source, providing Nigerians in their homes and communities with news and information about COVID-19 in both their native tongues and English. It informed listeners on the symptoms and indicators linked to the illness.

Nigerians learned about the virus's indications and symptoms, which included diarrhea, shortness of breath, high fever, coughing and catarrh, loss of smell, and appetite loss, among other things, through the radio network's organs. Nigerians also learned that maintaining good hygiene could help prevent infections and premature death. This included frequent hand washing, avoiding crowded areas, wearing face masks frequently, avoiding all physical contact and handshakes, sneezing into elbows, and strictly maintaining physical distance between people (Afolabi, 2020).

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	22	44%
Female	28	56%
Age		
20-30	6	12%
30-40	18	36%
41-50	18	36%

51+	8	16%
Education		
BSC	30	60%
MASTERS	12	24%
PHD	8	16%
Marital Status		
Single	2	4%
Married	26	52%
Separated	5	10%
Divorced	5	10%
Widowed	12	24%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

To what extent was radio broadcast used in curbing the spread of covid-19?

Table 2

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High extent	25	50%
Low extent	10	20%
Undecided	15	30%
Total	50	100%

Field Survey, 2023

From the responses obtained in the table above, 50% of the respondents said high extent, 20% said low extent, while the remaining 30% were undecided.

What are the ways in which Radio channels enlightened the people on Covid-19 prevention measures?

Table 3

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S.D	DECISION
1	Creating awareness about Disease Spread	20	17	9	4	3.1	2.57	Accepted
2	Sensitizing the masses on the prevention of covid-19	22	20	8	0	3.3	2.55	Accepted
3	Educating the masses on the Signs and Symptoms	17	19	9	5	3.0	2.74	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In table 3 above, the ways in which Radio channels enlightened the people on covid-19 prevention measures, the table shows that all the items (item1-item4) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item4) have mean scores above 2.50.

The type of programmes presented on Wazobia FM to create awareness on Corona Virus and curb its spread

Table 4

Programmes	No of Respondents	Percent
Interview	5	10%
Jingles	20	40%
Talk Shows	9	18%
Drama	4	8%
Documentaries	2	4%
Discussion	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the table above, 40% said Jingles, 18% chose Talk shows, 20% ticked Discussion, 10% picked Interview, 8% ticked Drama, and 4% choose Documentaries.

Has Wazobia FM helped to curb the spread of covid-19?

Table 5

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	60
No	20	40
Undecided	10	20
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From table 5 above, 60% of the respondents said yes, 40% of the respondents said no, while the remaining 20% of the respondents were undecided.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Following a thorough examination of the data, the findings are summed up as follows:

RQ1: Examine the degree to which Wazobia FM had broadcast on Covid-19 preventive measures to its listeners

The information presented in Table 2 shows that 25 respondents with the score of 50% believe that the radio station broadcasted preventive measures to a high extent, 10 respondents representing 20% said the messages was aired at a low extent, while the remaining 15 respondents representing 30% were undecided. This reveals that Wazobia FM carried out their duties of social responsibility to the society by informing them of the dangers of Covid-19.

Table 5 shows that 30 respondents representing 60% said yes to the question of if the station has helped to curb the spread of the virus, 20 respondents representing 40% of the respondents said no, while the remaining 10 respondents representing 20% of the respondents were undecided.

This corroborates a study carried out by Anwam et al (2021) confirming the use of radio messages to stop the spread of Covid-19 in Makurdi.

RQ2: Look into how radio Wazobia FM educated listeners about COVID-19 preventive strategies

In table 3 above, the ways in which Radio channels enlightened the people on covid-19 prevention measures. Respondents with a mean score of 3.1 assert that the messages were geared to creating awareness about the spread of the disease. Respondents with the mean score of 3.3 said that the broadcast messages were more of preventive measures. Lastly, respondents with a mean score of 3.0 leaned towards the fact that messages were on educating the listeners on the signs and symptoms of the disease. This reveals that the station's programmes enlightened listeners more on how to prevent the spread of the virus. Collinson, Khan, and Heffernan's (2015) study discovered that mass media campaigns can be utilized to deliver information on current and effective medication therapy and immunization, as well as social distancing tactics. This supports the aforementioned findings.

RQ3: Ascertain the type of programmes presented on Wazobia FM to create awareness on Corona Virus and curb its spread

From the table 4 above, 20 respondents representing 40% said Jingles, 9 respondents representing 18% chose Talk shows, 10 respondents representing 20% ticked Discussion, 5 respondents representing 10% picked Interview, 4 respondents representing 8% ticked Drama, and 2 respondents representing 4% choose Documentaries. A study carried out by Anietie et al (2020) showed that the type of Radio programme used to create awareness on Corona Virus in Nigeria is Jingles

CONCLUSION

The goal in this study was to investigate how radio can stop the corona virus from spreading, utilizing the Wazobia FM 95.1 FM Abuja branch as a case study. The study was specifically conducted to look into the role that radio programmes played in preventing the spread of COVID-19, how radio stations educated the public about COVID-19 prevention strategies, and the extent to which Wazobia FM has contributed to this effort. It was found from the study that:

- Radio stations have played a significant role in educating the public about COVID-19 prevention strategies.
- They have done this by raising awareness of the disease's spread, educating the public about COVID-19 prevention, and teaching them about the symptoms and signs of the disease.
- Wazobia FM has also played a significant role in slowing the disease's spread.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings, the researcher suggests that Radio stations recognize their importance in the fight to minimize misinformation in Nigeria and across Africa thus this should enhance their effectiveness in performing their social responsibility of sensitizing the masses on the spread of Covid-19.

News and program content need to be carefully sourced and tailored to ensure that listeners in cities and at the grassroots, receive updated and accurate information about the spread of COVID-19 as it can help them comply to the safety preventive measures.

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