

HARNESSING EFFECTIVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION FOR GRASSROOTS HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

A LEAD PAPER

BY

PROF CHINWE ELIZABETH UZOUCHUKWU

NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA

ce.uzochukwu@unizik.edu.ng

08037917259

Introduction

The Nigerian population made up of more than 200 million people are confronted with myriad health challenges resulting in high maternal and child mortality rates, malaria incidences despite several interventions, HIV/AIDS and other infectious and non-communicable diseases. These health challenges have continually posed serious impediments to the overall development of the nation and its people, especially at the grassroots level. Across Nigeria and many emerging economies of the world, effective communication has been identified as a panacea for addressing these myriad health challenges as it has remained a vital component in managing disease outbreaks and addressing health care delivery issues of any nation.

In an era characterised by unprecedented disease outbreaks such as the recent COVID-19, Ebola pandemics and the attendant poor health disparities across the nation, the need for effective health communication initiatives for massive health awareness becomes imperative. Ikhioya, (2019) observes, that the collective well-being of individual members of the communities and nations are essential for national development. Such development is achievable through communication. Effective health communication creates health awareness, prevents diseases and promotes overall well-being of the individual and the society at large. However, in Nigeria, a developing nation where there is copious health care disparities down to the grassroots, adoption of certain positive health behaviours has remained a daunting task requiring concerted media effort to actualize.

Available statistics have also demonstrated the need for effective health communication, given the level of damage occasioned by inadequate and ineffective health information, especially during health pandemics. For instance, during COVID-19 era, communicable diseases increased to 23% of all deaths in 2020 and 28.1% in 2021 (World Health

Statistics, 2024). Although the spread of information on safety protocol during COVID-19 pandemic was widespread, it appeared that some less educated people and those in rural areas had limited information on the pandemic, which resulted in some kinds of negative health conditions in such remote areas, justifying the need for effective health communication using the appropriate medium, especially during health pandemics. It was discovered that COVID-19 ranked among the top three leading causes of death globally in 2020 and 2021, responsible for 4.1 million and 8.8 million lives lost, respectively (World health statistics, 2024). Also, during the pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO), national health agencies and the Nigerian Center for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) leveraged multiple communication channels to communicate the safety protocols, yet there were several deaths, and complications arising from the pandemic. However, it was understood that these health communications significantly helped to reduce the transmission rate and helped communities become aware of, and adopted the safety protocol, which helped lower the mortality rate. These show that effective health communication is critical during pandemics and disease outbreaks, as it can help mitigate the spread of diseases, reduce fatalities, and minimize health complications as witnessed during the COVID-19 era.

During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014-2016), there were numerous casualties but effective communication played a pivotal role in reducing transmission and deaths. According to a report by the World Bank (2016), the use of community outreach programs and local radio stations significantly improved people's understanding of how to prevent Ebola, such as proper burial practices and avoiding contact with infected individuals. As a result, transmission rates were lowered, and the outbreak was brought under control faster. According to a study by Gesser-Edelsburg, Hijazi, & Baughman (2020), social media platforms helped disseminate health messages in real-time, allowing for more rapid distribution of information and warnings. These challenges necessitate an effective health communication to help strengthening health systems by influencing the awareness, knowledge and compliance of people to messages targeted at addressing the effects of diseases, health challenges and pandemics. There is therefore need for use of appropriate communication mediums to ensure that vital health information is delivered to the public, enabling individuals and communities to take necessary precautions, seek timely medical care, and adhere to public health guidelines.

In Brazil, the Zika virus outbreak (April 2015- November, 2016) demonstrated how public health organizations used community engagement to enhance communication effectiveness. The Ministry of Health in the country worked with community leaders and local organizations to communicate the risks of Zika and preventive strategies. This grassroots-level approach helped reduce transmission in several regions. Therefore, the importance of effective health communication during pandemics cannot be overstated because communication not only helps in educating people about preventive measures but also helps them build trust, foster compliance, and ultimately helps contain and control the spread of the health pandemic especially among people at the grassroots. Thus, encouraging grassroots development through effective health communication presents a strategic approach which emphasizes the indispensability of informed, strategic, and culturally sensitive communication in the promotion of public health initiatives (Uduak, Igiri, George and Aruku, 2023). Again, in view of the importance of effective health communication to national development, Malikhao, (2020) opines that dissemination of health information is not merely supplying the masses with the facts and figures they need about their health, but rather, conveying a strong dynamic and interactive health information that is capable of influencing individual behaviours, community norms, and inform public policies initiatives.

Effective health communication, as a key element in managing prevalent health challenges, such as communicable and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health issues, mental health concerns, environmental health hazards, and access to healthcare services, is a central part of development, facilitating not only the transmission of knowledge but also encouraging behavioural change and the cultivation of a more health-conscious society Nkanunye and Obiechina (2017). Similarly, Ogbalu (2018) maintains that effective health communication plays an essential role in promoting healthy behaviours, preventing disease, and enhancing the overall quality of life of the people. Furthermore, effective health communication is a critical link between various stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem, such as policymakers, healthcare providers, researchers, and the general public, fostering collaboration and consensus in pursuit of public health goals.

Improving grassroots health development may prove difficult to actualise without effective communication strategies. Such communication strategies must be designed in a way that will address

different public health issues and empower both the local communities and the individuals therein to make informed health decisions leading to healthy living in the society. This paper thus explores how to harness effective health communication strategies for effective health communication implementation at the grassroots level, as well as the processes for deploying effective health communication to promote grassroots health development in Nigeria.

Understanding Health Communication

The word health communication, previously described with terms such as ‘public health publicity’, ‘physical education’, ‘health education’, ‘accessible health education’ and ‘health propaganda’ is all about communicating health information. Hence terms such as ‘communication for health’, ‘communicating for health’ or ‘health promotion’ describe the same concept. Health communication encompasses the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions to enhance health behavioural outcomes. It links the domains of communication and health and it is recognized as a necessary element in the efforts to improve personal and public health. It is also the art and technique of informing, influencing, and motivating individual, institutional, and public audiences about important health issues and expected health behaviours (HealthyPeople, 2010).

Igwe and Obeagu (2024) identified health Communication as a critical component of public health practice that plays a significant role in health information dissemination, promoting health behavioural change for improved health outcome globally. Health communication as a branch of Development Communication is interested in using communication to facilitate or promote health development of a people. Such development Okunna (2018) opines must systematically apply the principles, processes and strategies of communication to achieve positive change for the majority of the people in a given society holistically (in terms of economic, social, political, cultural, moral) to make their lives whole and enable them realize their full potentials. Furthermore, Health Communication according to Uzochukwu, Onyenekwe and Chinedu-Okeke (2023) covers several areas including edutainment, interpersonal communication, health journalism, risk communication, media advocacy, crisis communication, social marketing and social communication which can come through multi-media communications as a judicious health message or integrated into existing media for communication.

Sudhansubala and Preethi, (2016) attempt to capture all the components of health communication by defining the concept as a branch of communication studies which deals with the communication patterns and practices used in campaigns, health education discourses, awareness programmes and also the simple conversation taking place between the two major actors in the field of healthcare: doctor and his patient.

Though these definitions struggled to accommodate different perspectives of the concept of health communication, it is imperative to understand that the communication efforts must be structured in such a way as to achieve the intention for which the communication was made. Getting the people to respond to a message as communicated in a given health campaign requires special skill and expertise in moving them from where they are to where the communicator wants them to be. At this point what occupies the mind of an initiator of a given health communication is, to which people, and through which medium is the information to be disseminated? Arguably, mere health communication is not enough to influence grassroots health development, what is required is an effective health communication tailored to the needs of the grassroots that will result in positive health outcomes. Effective in the sense that both parties in the communication should have a level-playing ground that can maintain commonalities of codes to understand the communication in simple terms. This requires a coordinated information dissemination technique carried out with a source that is both available and credible before the target audience at their level.

Effective health communication is expected to enhance favourable health attitude change decision among the people. Park (2009) cited in Osagiede and Agbonlahor, (2014) maintains that the ultimate goal of all communication is to bring about a change in the desired direction of the person who receives the communication. The purpose also is to change behaviour of people by promoting and adopting healthy behaviours, which improve and maintain health and discontinue behaviour, which is harmful to their health. The communication efforts are geared towards the promotion of health-related information to the people. This includes asking the right questions to the right target audience and identifying the best and most accessible channel for disseminating the designed messages. In this context, critical examination and understanding of the target audience language of communication and channel selection becomes very important. It takes a communicator who understands the audience to tailor health communication messages to become relevant to the target audience and achieve behaviour change.

Effective health communication encourages mobilization for support and acceptable health practices among the audience and influences health policy decisions (Igwe & Obeagu, 2024). Uzochukwu and Ikegbunam, (2023) assert that positive health behaviours can be influenced through the dissemination of information and messages that can raise awareness on health issues and encourage the adoption of positive health safety measures among the individual members of any given community.

Summarily, effective health communication is vital in:

- Preventing diseases and promoting healthy behaviour
- Improving health outcomes and reducing morbidity and mortality
- Enhancing patient-provider relationships and adherence to treatment as well as
- Addressing health disparities and promoting equity

Unfortunately, communication gaps and other communication issues in the country have continued to exacerbate overall poor healthcare efficiency and even patient safety risks in developing countries with the attendant challenge of poor health facilities and lack of health personnel to meet up with the health needs of the Nigerian teeming population.

The State of Health Communication in Nigeria

The Nigeria health communication landscape is characterized by myriads of challenges which make it almost impossible to achieve health effectiveness leading to positive behaviour change. Some of them include:

1. Limited access to health information, particularly in rural areas where vital health information needed for people to make informed decision about their health is inadequate or not available to those who need them most. The result is a knowledge gap which exacerbate health disparities leading to inadequate health decisions, delayed diagnosis and treatment of diseases.
2. Low literacy levels, affecting comprehension of health messages, this results to difficulty in understanding complex medical terminologies and concepts beyond the comprehension of the people at the grassroots, their inability to comprehend written health information such as instructions on medications and difficulty in interpreting health statistics and data invariably reduces their ability to make informed health decisions.

3. Cultural and linguistic diversity, necessitating contextualized communication that is inclusive and culturally relevant. The effect is language barriers which limits language proficiency among health providers, as well as cultural differences in values, beliefs and practices which influence health behaviour.
4. Inadequate funding and resources for health communication promotes insufficient health education programmes and communication infrastructures, limited access to technology (digital platforms), expertise (health communication specialists) and prevents staff training, research and evaluation which will improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities.
5. Limited capacity of healthcare providers results in overworked and stressed health providers with reduced attention to patients, rushed consultation and incomplete information due to insufficient time for patient education and burnout which reduces their motivation and effectiveness to work.

Considering some of these challenges, what strategies can enhance effective health communication at the grassroots for positive health development?

Strategies for Effective Health Communication in grassroots health development in Nigeria

Nigeria is facing several health-related challenges ranging from chronic infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health crisis, cancer related health challenges, environmental health sanitation and malnutrition. In addressing these public health issues, effective health communication strategies have remained a veritable panacea in enhancing positive public health behaviours through raising awareness on health challenges, mobilizing individuals and communities into positive actions against diseases, and promoting communicated health safety measures in tackling health challenges as Nwankwo, Nwankwo and Ani, (2019) observe.

Some of these strategies with far-reaching implications in grassroots health development include:

1. Use of local languages and dialects in addressing health challenges. To satisfy the grassroots health information need, health communication messages must be designed and disseminated in indigenous languages with appropriate media of communication in order to achieve the desired goal. This will increase knowledge and awareness of health-related issues among the people by

communicating accurate and timely information in the people's familiar tongue to empower them to take appropriate actions or make informed health decision capable of preventing emerging and spreading diseases. According to Smith and Richard, (2017) effective cross-cultural communication in delivering health-related messages will convey information in a manner that transcends language and cultural barriers and ensure that patients from diverse backgrounds can fully comprehend and engage with their healthcare.

2. Use of interpersonal communication and community outreaches such as the village square, town hall meetings, community dialogue, town crier, market square and visit to schools and churches in rural communities to promote health and behavioural changes among the people at the grassroots. This can be achieved through health-related messages tailored to reflect the needs of the target audience. In this regard, effective health communication will promote behaviour change if the messages are well designed and appropriately delivered. The implication is that at the point of health message delivery, efforts must be made to ensure that persuasive and engaging communication strategies such as social marketing, testimonials and storytelling are applied to get the people to believe and adhere to the message.
3. Contextualizing communication to meet the local customs and beliefs of people with different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs. Effective health communication must employ media-mix involving a variety of communication media channels including the mass media, social media, community-based events, interpersonal communication and community leadership setting to reach diverse audiences effectively (CDC, 2020). While acknowledging the relevance and implications of effective health communications in the society, Igwe and Obeagu, (2024) affirmed the power of effective communication in addressing social determinants of health behaviours and promotion of health equity in the society. Similarly, Ibrahim, Odigie, Aliyu and Abubakar, (2019) argue that by designing health messages and strategies to the specific needs and cultural beliefs of different communities, health communication can help reduce health disparities and ensure that vulnerable and marginalized populations have access to accurate health information and services. In this regard, the peculiarities of different communities and their cultural beliefs have to be taken into consideration in designing a health communication message that is targeted on them.

4. Closing up information gaps created by limited access to health information by strategically using different communication channels available and accessible to the target audience to inform, educate, and engage individuals and the communities to promote positive health behaviours. Effective health communication as an essential component of public health communication and practices is needed for equitable health information dissemination for community health development, prevent diseases and positively influence the overall public health behaviours of the people. Using effective health communication strategies in mobilising the people into positive actions have been confirmed to yield the desired result which is creating awareness about health issues, disseminating crucial health information and encouraging behaviour change attitude towards health safety measures.
5. Capacity building for healthcare providers. Providing trainings and attending workshops and seminars will improve the service delivery of healthcare providers in terms of better diagnosis, treatment and patient care, increased health outcomes with reduced morbidity and mortality and better-quality care for the grassroots.
6. Participatory approaches involving community members in message design will result in producing culturally relevant messages that reflect the local values, beliefs and practices of the people, messages tailored to their local language and literacy level addressing their specific health challenges and thus making them invest in community health initiatives and take charge of their health decisions. This is corroborated by Uduak, Igiri, George & Aruku, (2023) that participatory approaches involving community members ensure that health messages are culturally sensitive and relevant and also empowers individuals to take charge of their own well-being.
7. Theatre for Development (TfD) as a powerful communication strategy in enhancing grassroots health development encourages dynamic participation of community members in creating information through drama performances that are adapted to the local cultures, languages and contexts of the community. It makes health messages relate with the social realities of the people, evokes emotions, arouses empathy and breaks down the cultural and social barriers to health behaviour change. Through such community engagement and participation in health initiatives, community

members especially the marginalized groups at the grassroots can take control of their health and well-being.

Overall, it is not enough to design and disseminate health communication messages to the people at the grassroots. There must be efforts towards examining the influence of such communication initiatives on behavioural change among the target audience. This implies that research should be conducted periodically across target communities where specific health communication was targeted to ascertain the level of successes and failures of the campaign(s) in order to re-strategize on addressing the previous failures to achieve effective health development.

In this regard, Igwe and Obeagu, (2024) maintain that health communication in public health does not just end in passing vital health information to the people but also covers the act of developing a strategy for monitoring and evaluation of the success or failures of health messages and campaigns. WHO, (2021) suggests that health literacy principles should be used in designing health campaign messages to ensure that clear and understandable information that addresses the cultural and social peculiarities of different population is obtained? Understanding these peculiarities becomes necessary considering that different communities have different cultural and social beliefs that determine what they accept and what they reject. A communication effort targeted at grassroots development must capture the grassroots views and beliefs.

A Review of Channels of Content Dissemination for Effective Health Communication

To communicate effectively, messages designed must reach the target audience before positive health outcomes can be expected in the form of feedback from the audience. Importantly, media selection in health communication dissemination for effective grassroots health development must be carried out by media experts who understand the weaknesses and strength of each media concerning the target audience. Medium of health information dissemination include the traditional mass media, the indigenous communication media used in the ancient African days, community engagement, interpersonal communication and the new media. Any target intervention that is meant to reach out to the grassroots in this recent time must look at the demographics of the audience. In other words, the choice of media for health information dissemination must be guided by the demographic constituents of the target population (Iwelunmor, Blackstone, Veira, Nwaozuru and Airhihenbuwa, 2016).

Communication of health information can effectively be transmitted for effective grassroots health development through these channels.

Traditional Media: the mass media as channels of information dissemination wield tremendous influence and power in shaping people's perception. Its power and indispensability at the information level in the modern society according to Okunna and Omenugha (2012) reach millions, raise issues, create awareness on topics and disseminate information with great efficiency. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines and books can be applied in transmitting health information to the grassroots as their messages appeal to different audiences. However, the availability of these media to the target audience in a health communication initiative must be considered. This is to avoid sending a message to a medium where there is no person within the target range. While the radio shares the accessibility advantage, television has the ability to pass a message using both audio and visual images. On the other hand, the newspaper magazine and book enjoy the advantage of remaining with the buyer for ever as much as it can be preserved but it only serves the literate ones. In using any of these media of information dissemination, effort must be put in place to understand the nature of the audience.

Digital Media: Leveraging social media, mobile apps, and websites as means of packaging and disseminating health information for development is the way to go in the modern society considering the proliferation of internet enabled gadgets. Its universality and massive uses among the generation X makes it vibrant in initiating health communication for rural development. Unfortunately, it equally has its disadvantages such as literacy barriers and data funding. Hard economic situation and insufficient nature of the telecommunication services in the country however, serve as barriers to the success of the digital media as a form of health information dissemination for grassroots health development.

Community Engagement: This mode of health information transmission involves the role of community leaders, local community gatherings, and grassroots organizations in enhancing communication for community development. In an era of urban rural news imbalance, the best way to pass a health message targeted at the grassroots is through the involvement of the community itself. With the use of this means for information sharing, the communicator allows for community

participation in the dissemination of health information to one another. People tend to believe information from people who they knew before the emergence of a given health challenge. Even in vaccine acceptance and rejection, sources known to the people tend to command believability and vaccine acceptance more than sources unknown to them. This implies that in trying to get the grassroots, effort towards getting those they know and trust should be put in place to get them informed.

Poster services: Campaigns can as well get to the people through the use of posters and billboards. Posters and billboards designed and worded in languages that the people can understand will help in disseminating health concerns to such people. Posters and billboards appropriately designed with visual images can pass the messages just as pictures do in print and broadcast messages. Again, evidence-based information related to different health issues can be passed through the use of posters and billboards. The major challenge of this means of information dissemination is the means of pasting the posters and chances of these posters getting to the target audience.

Drawing from the fact that all the communication media listed above have one barrier or the other in effectively communicating to the masses for positive attitude and behaviour change that would trigger grassroots health development in the society, this paper thus suggests an integrated media-mix approach where all forms of media should be involved in disseminating health information for grassroots health development.

Conclusion

Effective health communication is a vibrant constituent of healthcare delivery predominantly at the grassroots level. It promotes health awareness, prevent diseases and improve overall well-being of individuals and society. Harnessing effective health communication strategies will definitely contribute meaningfully to grassroots health development. When communities are educated on preventive measure to disease control such as vaccination, sanitation and hygiene practices, there is promotion of healthy behaviours through adoption of healthy lifestyles on nutrition and physical activity, there is community improvement in health outcomes by deploying patient-provider communication aimed at ensuring adherence to treatment plans and medication regimes and reduction in health disparities by addressing cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing health care services,

grassroots health development will become achievable in a country like ours. The onus lies on policymakers, healthcare providers and various stakeholders to prioritize effective health communication, allocate necessary resources and support needed for the grassroots to have access to quality health information and services.

References

- Adepoju P. (2017). Health Communication in Nigeria: A study of the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme, Lagos State. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*. 9: 1-20.
- Babatunde, O.A., Fakunle, A., & Agbana, B.E. (2017). Health literacy among patients with hypertension in a tertiary health institution in South-western Nigeria. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*. 27: 155-162.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Health Communication Basics.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). *COVID-19 Response and Mitigation*. Available online at <https://www.cdc.gov>
- Gesser-Edelsburg, A., Hijazi, R., & Baughman, S. (2020). Health communication during the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact of misinformation and social media. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(14), 4924.
- Healthy People (2010). United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 11, 11 – 20.
- Ibrahim, I. M., Odigie, V. I., Aliyu, I., & Abubakar, A. (2019). Health communication in Nigeria: A review of the role of mass media. *Journal of Public Health in Africa*. 10: 928.
- Ibrahim, M. T. & Olorunfemi, O. J. (2019). Evaluating the effectiveness of health communication campaigns in Nigeria: A systematic review. *Journal of Public Health in Africa*. 10: 874.
- Igwe, M. C. & Obeagu, E. I. (2024). The Scopes and Implications of Health Communication in Public Health Practices in Nigeria. *J Bacteriol Mycol*. 11 (1): 1218.
- Ikhioya, G. O. (2019). Impact of effective health communication strategies in Nigerian health care delivery system. *EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 1(5). DOI 10.36349/EASJHCS.2019.v01i05.001
- Iwelunmor J, Blackstone S, Veira D, Nwaozuru U, & Airhihenbuwa C.O. (2016). Toward the sustainability of health interventions implemented

- in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review and conceptual framework. *Implementation Science*. 11: 1-16.
- Malikhao, P. (2020). Health Communication: Approaches, strategies, and ways to sustainability on health or health for all. *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2014-3_137
- Nkanunye, C. C., & Obiechina, G. O. (2017). Health communication strategies as gateway to effective health promotion and well-being. *Journal of Medical Research and Health Education*, 1(3), 13.
- Nwankwo, B. E., Nwankwo, C. N. & Ani A. C. (2019). Mass media and health promotion in Nigeria: A study of the role of the Nigerian Television Authority in the fight against Ebola Virus Disease. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*. 11: 42-55.
- Ogbalu, A. I. (2018). Communication as a vehicle for health promotion in contemporary Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Health Promotion*, 11(1), 1-5. ISSN: 0995-3895.
- Okunna, C.S. (2018). *Development communication in governance in Nigeria: People at the center of communication? An Inaugural of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka*. Enugu: New Generation Educare Ltd.
- Okunna, C.S. & Omenugha, K.A. (2012). *Introduction to mass communication*. Enugu: New Generation Publishers.
- Osagiede, I.F & Agbonlahor, L.N. (2014). Health communication skills for effective health education. *Nigerian Journal of Health Promotion* VoL 7.
- Rasila B. N. & Mudau, M. J. (2012). Effective communication as a strategic tool for rural development: A model to take South African Government beyond mobilization and consultation through public participation. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 4(7), pp. 134-141. <http://www.academicjournals.org/JMCS> DOI: 10.5897/JMCS12.035
- Smith, R. & Richard, S. (2017). The end of disease and the beginning of health. *Italian Journal of Public Health*, 7(2), 128-135.
- Sudhansubala, S. & Preethi, N. R. (2016) Understanding health communication: Trends and possibilities. *Artha J Soc Sci*, 15, (2), 87-107 ISSN 0975-329X|doi.org/10.12724/ajss.37.5
- Uduak, U., Igiri, A., George, K. & Aruku, K. J. (2023), Promoting health education through effective communication for development. *Journal of Education Technology* Volume 2, Issue 1, December; 68-88 <https://doi.org/10.58578/alsystech.v2i1.2399>

- Uzochukwu, C. E. & Ikegbunam, P. C. (2023) Exposure to “Arm-Our-Youths” cancer health information campaign and adoption of safety health measures among In-School Adolescent Girls in Anambra State. *ISRG Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 1 Issue V (Sept-Oct 2023) DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8405929
- Uzochukwu, C.E., Onyenekwe, N.O. & Chinedu-Okeke C. F. (2023). Introduction to health communication in C.S. Okunna (ed) *Communication and Media Studies Multiple Perspective*. Enugu: New Generation Educare Ltd.
- World Health Organization (2021). Health Communication: A Framework for Understanding Communication-Based Interventions for Health Promotion.
- World Bank. (2016). *The Economic Impact of the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa*. Available online at <https://www.worldbank.org>
- World Health Statistics (2024). Monitoring health for the SDGs, *Sustainable Development Goals*. ISBN 978-92-4-009470-3 (electronic). Available online at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION: ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

ADA FIDELIS DAMI
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
VERITAS UNIVERSITY, ABUJA
Email: adafdami@gmail.com
08035888530

Abstract

The global environmental crisis, characterized by climate change, deforestation, species extinction, natural disasters, and ecological degradation, necessitates urgent efforts to address its impacts. Considering the role of environmental communication in promoting sustainable practices and addressing environmental challenges, this qualitative study, informed by Agenda Setting Media Theory, reviewed existing literature on environmental communication, media's role, and sustainability. The findings highlight the complexity of environmental issues and the need for inclusive, participatory, and culturally sensitive communication approaches. It concluded that the study concludes that the potential of science communicators and effective advocacy can reposition sustainability at the forefront of public discourse and drive meaningful social change. The study, among others, recommended moving beyond the mere translation of scientific knowledge and instead promoting environmental education, fostering collaborations, and considering the environmental impact of digital media technology. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for tailored communication strategies that address specific environmental concerns and sustainability practices in different communities. By adopting these strategies, environmental communication can effectively advocate for sustainable practices and promote a more environmentally conscious society.

Keywords: Environmental Communication, Advocacy, Sustainability Practices

Introduction

The global community in the 21st Century has witnessed unprecedented surge in environmental issues, including deforestation, crumbling infrastructure, natural disasters, and ecological degradation, thereby, motivating more studies into the role of communication in addressing the menace (Arikenbi, Ainakhuagbor, Ikhara & Jimba, 2023). In the past, the three components of the environment- air, soil and water

were said to be pure, virgin, undisturbed, uncontaminated and basically most hospitable. Today, the reverse is the case; this is largely due to urbanization and development of science and technology leading to total conquest of the earth by man. The results are soil erosion, flooding, pollution and land degradation among others (Lungu 2007; Wasiu, Abdullateef, Uthman & Abdulazeez, 2016). As further confirmed by Ogadimma, Raza & Mohamad(2023):

Environmental degradation has become a significant challenge of our time, from the rising temperature emanating from the depletion of the Ozone layer, shrinking of forest reserves, flooding, and pollution, to man-made disasters that affect the environment. The world, especially the global south, including Africa (Nigeria), has continued to experience multiple consequences emanating from exacerbated environmental woes (p. 21).

In Nigeria, like many other developing countries of the world, Man is totally dependent on the environment for his daily needs such as food, shelter and clothing and it is in the bid to acquire these basic needs that he has dealt adversely with the environment. Man is increasingly placing burden on the planet through their daily activities such as agriculture, industries, manufacturing, transportation and housing so much that it has negatively affected the environment thereby causing land degradation, water pollution, and air pollution among others. Besides, the increasing hostility and unhealthy use of the environment are causing dislocation of the ecosystem and depletion and extinction of species of plants and animals (Abdulazeez, Asemah & Ekharefo, 2024; Daramola and Ibem, 2010; Wasiu et al, 2016).

Definitely, the concern for environmental management and sustainability is therefore, a front burner in the list of world programmes and efforts to stem the tide of unacceptable level of environmental degradation have gained more attention globally. The 1972 Stockholm United Nations Conference on Human Development established the nexus between underdevelopment and environmental integrity. In 1992, the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil generated an action plan for sustainable development in the 21st Century, which forms the policy instrument for programmes on environment in various countries. In a follow-up effort, sustainable environmental management was well captured in the Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015 and

as well, given a prominent place in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016-2030 (Nassir and Jude, 2021; Wasuu et al, 2016)

Certainly, in the midst of escalating environmental crises that reverberate on a global scale, societies across the world, as noted by Abdulazeez, Asemah & Ekhareafu (2024), find themselves at a critical juncture, compelled to address the pressing need for immediate and collective action. The urgency lies not only in acknowledging these issues, but in adopting proactive and comprehensive strategies to mitigate their impact on our planet's delicate ecosystems (Abdulazeez, Asemah & Ekhareafu, 2024).

In Nigeria, a nation grappling with environmental challenges, social inequalities, and economic disparity, fostering public awareness and positive attitudes towards sustainable development initiatives is said to be very crucial in achieving sustainable environmental result in line with the United Nations' SDGs, specifically Goal 13, which focused on Climate Action that underlines education, awareness-raising, and communication as very important for mitigating environmental degradation (Banjo and Obun-Andy, 2023; Olusegun and Adebisi, 2024).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the role of environmental communication in advocating for sustainable practices. Though a comprehensive examination of scholarly literature, the paper aims to highlight how effective communication serves as a compelling force to combat the danger of environmental crises. Hence it seeks to explore the role of advocacy in influencing behavior change and environmental decision-making. More so, the paper emphasizes the essential role of stake holders as a beacon of hope and progress in the efforts to harness the environmental sustainability for the long-term and development of the region affected by the environmental crises.

Statement of the Problem

The growing urgency of the environmental issues at rates much faster than anticipated can be devastating. Although the old story of climate change, natural hazards, a global pandemic, and environmental degradation is increasingly picked up by the media (Harcup, O'Neill, 2017), it finds further elaboration and discussion in the environmental and climate change communication literature (Hendersson and Wamsler, 2020; Schäfer, 2021). The ideas on how effective communication strategies promote the practice of sustainability remain uncertain. Substantial progress has been made in terms of scientific knowledge about the environmental problems; however, how this translated into a

behaviourally active policy and changes have not been adequately ascertained, hence, the need to bridge that knowledge gap in this study.

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda-Setting Theory

Understanding the agenda-setting theory and its application as part of the environmental sustainability campaign requires special efforts to explain the role that communication can play versus mass media for assuring the overall success of such initiatives as functions of the mass media. This study is anchored in Agenda-setting theory. McCombs and Donald Shaw, who originally suggested that media set the agenda for public discussion. This implies that the media do not tell you what to think, but what to think about. McQuail (1994) further explained the agenda-setting showing that the media provide issues in news coverage by influencing the rank order of public awareness of issues and attribution of significance which, eventually, could influence public policy making. The theory holds the ultimate view that the media have the capacity to promote an issue and cause its regular addressing. This theory is intended to be applied to news media, although, in certain cases, it has been also extended to other areas of media research and message transmission to the audience. Thus, the agenda-setting theory can be regarded as containing some components of the environmental communication theory. It can equally be fully applied in this research by assessing the level of attention and consideration which the media of communication give to environmental coverage and reports.

Agenda-setting involves not only bringing environmental issues into the public domain, it also emphasizes the way in which such issues are defined and explained for public understanding, as well as the possible solutions considered as suitable. Here, the role of environmental communication professionals is more evident than that of environmental science thinking, who are usually acting behind the scenes. Thus, the agenda-setting strength of mass media can be effectively utilized to support their role in creating awareness, refining behaviours, raising consciousness, encouraging community participation and developing public's disposition towards environmental sustainability.

Literature Review

Sustainable Development Initiatives in Nigeria

Sustainable development initiatives in Nigeria encompass a range of efforts aimed at fostering economic growth, social equity, and environmental conservation (Ezeah & Roberts, 2021). These initiatives are guided by the principles of sustainability, seeking to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Olusegun and Adebisi, 2024; United Nations, 2015). In Nigeria, sustainable development initiatives are imperative due to the country's diverse socio-economic challenges, including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (Oyebanji & Ogunbode, 2023).

One prominent sustainable development initiative in Nigeria is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was launched in 2003 to address poverty, unemployment, and social inequality (World Bank, 2020). NEEDS emphasizes poverty reduction, job creation, and human capital development through interventions in education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure (Oladipupo and Olanrewaju, 2022). Another key initiative is the Nigerian Vision 20:2020, which aims to transform Nigeria into one of the top 20 economies in the world by the year 2020 through sustained economic growth, diversification, and industrialisation (World Bank, 2020).

Moreover, sustainable development initiatives in Nigeria extend to environmental conservation and climate action, given the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts such as flooding, desertification, and biodiversity loss (Ezeah and Roberts, 2021). Efforts such as the National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy and the Clean Nigeria Programme seek to mitigate climate risks, promote renewable energy adoption, and improve waste management practices (Oyebanji and Ogunbode, 2023). Despite these initiatives, challenges such as inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and policy implementation gaps pose significant barriers to achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria (World Bank, 2020).

Promoting Environmental Education (EE)

Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment (EPA, 2021). EE allows individuals to gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values,

experiences, and determination, enabling them to act – individually and collectively – to solve present and future environmental problems. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions. Components of environmental education include awareness and sensitivity to the environment and environmental challenges, knowledge and understanding of the environment and environmental challenges, attitudes of concern for the environment and motivation to improve or maintain environmental quality, skills to identify and help resolve environmental challenges, and participation in activities that lead to the resolution of environmental challenges. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that EE is vital in imparting an inherent respect for nature among society and in enhancing public environmental awareness. UNESCO emphasizes the role of EE in safeguarding future global developments of societal quality of life (QOL), through the protection of the environment, eradication of poverty, minimization of inequalities, and insurance of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2014). While the term often implies education within the school system, EE also includes all efforts to educate the public and other audiences, including print materials, websites, and through social media campaigns.

Environmental Communication

Environmental communication refers to any kind of environmentally relevant information flow which involves both communicators and audiences and is achieved through coding, effective message delivery and interactive listening (Pillmann, 2002). This implies that environmental communication represents the communication of environmental data and information between various audiences using different media, and the foundation for establishing relationships between people and the environment, and also a means for enhancing environmental literacy and sustainable environmental practices. Flor (2004) defines environmental Communication as the application of communication approaches, principles, strategies and techniques to environmental management and protection. It is the study and practice of how individuals, institutions, societies and cultures apply, distribute, receive, understand and use messages about environment and human interactions, from inter-personal communication to virtual communities, participatory decision making and environmental media coverage.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1999) defines environmental communication as a planned and strategic use of communication processes and media products to support effective policy-making, public participation and project implementation geared towards environmental sustainability. It is a two-way social interaction process enabling people concerned to understand key environmental factors and their interdependencies and to respond to problems in competent ways.

Environmental Communication is a significant element in environmental sciences, which it is believed to be a trans discipline. Its emergence is traced to the interdisciplinary work involving communication, environmental studies, environmental science, risk analysis and management, sociology and political ecology. This 'marriage' has made Flor (2004) to assert that the era of transdisciplinary studies has arrived. Flor and other scholars realized that our understanding of nature and our actions towards the environment depend not only on science but also on public debate, media, internet and even on ordinary dialogues and person-to-person conversations. Thus, in parallels with the growth of environmental studies, there is also the emergence of educational and professional opportunities that stress the role of human communication in environmental affairs. Similarly, scholars in cultural studies are mapping some of the ways in which images in popular media sustain attitudes of dominance and exploitation of the natural world (Opel, Johnston & Wilk, 2010).

Environmental Communication is viewed as both symbolic and material (Murugesan, 2008; William, 2022). Humans react to their surroundings and generate ideas depending on what they see. When it comes to Environmental Communication, it is difficult to resist the phrase "call to action" because it is closely related to topics like climate change, endangered wildlife, and pollution. Thus, Environmental Communication plays an integral role in sustainability science by taking knowledge and putting it into action. Since Environmental Communication is focused on every day practices of speaking and collaborating, it has a deep understanding in the public discussion of environmental policy (Lindenfeld et-al., 2012). Sustainability science requires cooperation between stakeholders and thus requires constructive communication between those stakeholders to create sustainable change. Robert Cox is one of the great leaders in the discipline of Environmental Communication and its role in the public sphere. Cox covers the importance of Environmental Communication and its role in

policymaking processes, advocacy campaigns, journalism, and environmental movements (Pedelty, 2015). Cox overlooked the importance of Environmental Communication in the Public Sphere: the role of visual and aural communication, electronic and digital media, and perhaps most glaringly, popular culture propelled mainly by the New Media, Pedelty, 2015.

The reason why communication is fundamental for sustainable development can be explained by considering the nature of sustainability. First of all, societal discourse is fundamental to provide legitimacy in sustainable development (Newigat-el, 2013).

Secondly, sustainability is a highly complex issue that requires overcoming specific regarding to societal communication (Newigat-el, 2008). Typically, issues with respect to sustainability are characterized by high levels of complexity and uncertainty, thus communication plays a key role in delivering information across the agents. Due to these high decision stakes, for instance, Funtowicz and Ravetz have suggested new modes of science including high levels of communication and dialogue, involvement of stakeholders for broadening the information basis as well as involving increased number of societal values (Funtowicz, & Ravetz, 1993).

Furthermore, sustainability goals appear as ambivalent in terms of involving conflicts of interests and conflict of values. At this point, communication becomes essential for creating a common understanding about societal values on sustainability and determining some concrete goals which require being followed (Newig, at-el, 2013). Implementation of measures for sustainable development is slightly difficult, since the capacities to govern sustainable development are not centered, highly dispersed among various actors in the society and involves multiple levels of decision making. Therefore, coordination based on network-like forms would be useful for allowing effective arguing bargaining as well as social learning, which in turn, contribute to the implementation of sustainable development strategies (Newig, at-el, 2013).

Environmental Communication Advocating for Sustainability

Since Gro Harlem Brundtland set out her vision of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), the central role of technology in driving environmentally benign, socially just, economic growth has been a core tenet of sustainability discourse, underpinned by the conviction that poverty, global inequality and environmental degradation are linked, and that to address one, it is necessary to address

all. Of particular note for our work is the prominent role assigned to ICT in achieving these aims:

Information technology based chiefly on advances in micro-electronics and computer science is of particular importance. Coupled with rapidly advancing means of communication, it can help improve the productivity, energy and resource efficiency, and organizational structure of industry. (WCED, 1987).

While it notes that, the potential for harm in the unconsidered use of technology, the fundamental message is one of optimism in the potential for technological progress to mitigate the environmental damage caused by economic growth. This optimism is shared by sustainable development's "sister" discourse, "ecological modernization" theory. Lacking the environmental justice element of sustainable development, ecological modernization theory focuses on the reconfiguration of the capitalist political economy of developed nations, arguing that with government support and appropriate technological intervention it is possible for economic growth to benefit the environment (Dryzek, 2013). Within the sustainability field, the rhetorics of eco-modernization and its techno-fix approach have received considerable criticism, for their unquestioning acceptance of the growth paradigm (Grunwald, 2016); for their anthropocentrism (Crist, 2016); and for misunderstanding the causes of the modern environmental crisis, disregarding technology's ambivalent record in mitigating the environmental consequences of economic growth, and its tendency to cause unintended and unexpected environmental consequences (Dietz & O'Neill, 2013).

Nonetheless, despite limited empirical evidence that technological development can solve the present environmental crisis (Næss & Høyer, 2009; York, Rosa, & Dietz, 2003), the pragmatic and technocratic character of these discourses remains attractive to policy makers, providing as they do, an alternative to the environmental movement's traditional position that a transformation of the core political and economic institutions of modern society is required to achieve long-term sustainability (Mol & Spaargaren, 2000). The assumed critical role for technological innovation, including digital innovation, in achieving an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future, has come to underpin much of modern sustainability policy, at national and transnational levels (OECD, 2009; United Nations, 2012).

The Role of the Media in the Promotion of Environmental Sustainability

The nexus between mass media and sustainable development initiatives has become a focal point of scholarly inquiry, both domestically in Nigeria and internationally. Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, encapsulates the pursuit of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental conservation (United Nations, 2015). Within this framework, the role of mass media emerges as pivotal, serving as a conduit for disseminating information, shaping public discourse, and mobilising collective action towards sustainable objectives (Olusegun and Adebisi, 2024).

Achieving sustainable development, which balances present needs with those of future generations, requires public engagement (Sachs, 2015). Mass media, encompassing television, radio, newspapers, and increasingly, social media platforms, plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse (Asemota, 2019). By disseminating information about sustainability issues and initiatives, the media can cultivate public awareness (Okafor, 2016). This awareness can, in turn, influence attitudes – the beliefs, feelings, and evaluations people hold towards sustainability practices (Ajayi & Ojo, 2017; Olusegun and Adebisi, 2024)

Similarly, the media can serve as a catalyst for behavioural change (Balogun, Olorunfemi, & Amole, 2020). Media campaigns that showcase the positive impacts of sustainable practices, such as waste reduction or renewable energy use, can encourage individuals to adopt these behaviours in their daily lives (Balogun et al, 2020).

However, the influence of mass media on public awareness, attitudes, and behaviours towards sustainable development initiatives is, indeed, “a complex phenomenon” (Olusegun & Adebisi, 2024, p. 1). The effectiveness of media messaging depends on factors such as the framing of the information, the level of trust audiences place in media outlets, and the accessibility of different media platforms across Nigeria's diverse regions (Anyaeze, 2018).

Scholarly discourse on the intersection of mass media and sustainable development highlights the potential of media platforms to raise awareness, influence perceptions, and catalyse behavioural change (Smith, 2023; Adewale & Hassan, 2022). These discussions underscore the multifaceted nature of media's impact, encompassing agenda-setting, framing, and advocacy. In Nigeria, a country characterised by socio-economic diversity and environmental challenges, the role of mass media

in advancing sustainable development assumes heightened significance (Okoye & Chijoke, 2021).

Challenges that Hinder Effective Communication on Sustainability.

Environmental communication encompasses a range of practices aimed at disseminating environmental information and promoting sustainable behaviour. According to Kallbekken and Sælen (2013), effective environmental communication not only raises awareness but also influences attitudes and behaviours related to sustainability. Hence, the researcher identified several barriers to that effective, environmental communication on sustainability as follows:

1. **Lack of Awareness and Knowledge:** Moser (2010) found that a significant barrier to environmental action is the lack of understanding among stakeholders about sustainability issues. This gap in knowledge impedes effective communication and engagement.
2. **Organizational Culture:** Organizational culture can either facilitate or hinder environmental communication efforts. As noted by Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017), organizations with a strong sustainability culture are more likely to adopt effective communication strategies. Conversely, cultures resistant to change can stifle innovation and hinder engagement in sustainability initiatives.
3. **Complexity of Environmental Issues:** Environmental problems are often complex and multifaceted, making it challenging to communicate them effectively. Research by Corner et al. (2015) emphasizes the need for clarity and simplicity in messaging to ensure that stakeholders can grasp the significance of the issues at hand.

Empirical Studies

Numerous empirical studies have shown that the media have the power to enlighten and educate the populace to accept or reject any new government initiative. One of the major way of promoting risk environment issues is through awareness campaign. In fact, many authors have been cited on awareness campaign where the result of the findings shows significance of awareness campaign to the betterment of the environmental sustainability. For instance, Ogadimma, Raza & Mohamad(2023) in a study on “Dearth of Media reportage of environmental issues in Nigeria: Need for innovation and adoption of green culture to curb environmental decay” revealed that both the

quantum and quality of media attention to environmental issues are dismal. The results revealed that only 754 stories were reported by the four newspapers analyzed within the two-year study period, and of the 754 stories reported, only eight were editorials. This study further argues that it takes more than the media to create awareness about environmental sustainability. This research addressed this gap by recommending a national system of innovation and adaptation of green culture - where all the environmental stakeholders – the public and private sectors, and the media would synergistically address environmental challenges through mitigation and adaptation measures that will bring about the right policies, perception, attitude, and support to the sustenance of the environment.

Arikenbi, Ainakhuagbor, Ikharo & Jimba (2023) found in a study on “An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Mass Media Campaigns in Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria” that mass media campaigns have had a significant impact on increasing public awareness of environmental issues in Nigeria. These campaigns have successfully communicated the urgency of protecting the environment and the consequences of unsustainable practices. Moreover, they have motivated citizens to take action, with many respondents reporting changes in their behaviour such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and supporting environmental initiatives. This study concludes by emphasizing the importance of continued investment in mass media campaigns for environmental sustainability in Nigeria. The study recommended tailoring campaigns to local context, leveraging new media platforms, and enhancing collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector to create a holistic and impactful approach to environmental education and advocacy.

Similarly, Abdulazeez, Asemah & Ekhareafu (2024), in a study on “Awareness and Perception of Media Campaigns on Environmental Sustainability in Benin City, Nigeria” revealed significant gaps in awareness, with traditional media channels being preferred for receiving sustainability information. However, there is generally positive perception regarding the credibility and effectiveness of media campaigns. Social norms were identified as particularly influential, followed by institutional policies and individual knowledge. Recommendations in the study by them (Abdulazeez, Asemah & Ekhareafu, 2024) included implementing targeted outreach efforts, utilising diverse communication channels, ensuring transparency in

messaging and fostering community-level engagement strategies to promote environmental sustainability effectively.

Also, Olusegun and Adebisi (2024) studied the “*Influence of Mass Media on Public Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours towards Sustainable Development Initiatives in Nigeria*” and found out that mass media significantly influences public discourse on sustainability in Nigeria. A large portion (74%) of the respondents reported that mass media contributes to their awareness of environmental issues and shapes their attitudes and this aligns with Agenda- Setting Theory. Based on the findings, their (Olusegun and Adebisi, 2024) study recommended that media outlets should leverage digital media platforms to reach a wider audience and create engaging content; challenges of fake news and biased information on digital platforms should be addressed; and that, sustainability campaigns should be adapted to resonate with different cultural contexts.

In a study by Banjo & Obun-Andy (2023) on “*Environmental Education and Media Role in Creating Awareness in Ogun State, Nigeria*”, it was revealed that lack of education on environmental (X = 2.51, SD = 0.86) and weak government policies (X = 2.13, SD = 0.97) were some of the challenges faced by the media in creating environmental awareness. The result of the hypothesis revealed a positive significant correlation between environmental education and media awareness ($r = .649$, $p < .05$). The study recommended that the media should create more awareness on environmental hazards which can stimulate the public interest on the need to frequently observe governmental policies on environment.

Ezekiel and Peter (2014) conducted a study which assessed the use of radio and other means of disseminating information among the residents of Ado-Ekiti. The findings revealed that radio is the most important instrument in information dissemination because it reaches a larger percentage of the people irrespective of their location; it promotes the level of awareness of the people on social-political and economic issues and its also enable people to be adequately informed about programmes and activities of the government. Omogor (2013) carried out syudy on “the channels of information acquisition and dissemination among the rural dwellers”. It discovered that town-criers, marketplaces, socio-political metings, traditional festival, role player, songs and dance, demonstration, lecture and exhibition, GSM handsets, television, radio, and newspaper are channels of information among rural dwellers.

Churi et-al (2012) conducted research on “Understanding Farmers Information Communication Strategies for Managing Climate Risks in Rural Semi-Arid Areas, Tanzania”. The finding shows that climate information was found to be an important factor for making decisions. Radio was found to be an important communication channel by the respondents in the study area for communicating climate information, especially on flooding. Farooqi (2014) examined “Institution Approach Flood Disaster Management in Nigeria: Need for a preparedness Plan”. The study found out the failure of the country’s intervention strategies to satisfactory ameliorate the sufferings of the Flood victims and speed-up recovery processes justify the need for the adaptation of a more efficient and innovative response plan to tackle flood emergency conditions in Nigeria.

Oruonye (2012) study flood risk perception and response in Jalingo Metropolis Taraba state, Nigeria. The result of the findings shows that 23.7% of the respondents were aware that was prone to flooding, while 76.3% were not aware. This study recommends the need to educate the people living in the flood plain on the dangers of future occurrence. A study carried out by O’Sullivan and Bradford (2011), which examined improving communication strategies for effective flood risk management, found that lack of awareness is a potential barrier to communication and building capacity to cope with flooding.

Likewise, in a study title “Towards Improved Public Awareness for climate Related Disaster Risk Reduction in South African: a participatory Development Communication Perspective” by Chagutah (2009) found that capacity for the execution of successful communication for the development campaigns in disaster risk reduction activities should be bolstered at all levels of government. Tsegyu (2015) also appraised mass media awareness campaign in curbing the spread of ebolavirus disease among residents of Minna, Niger State, Nigeria with the aim of examine the communication strategies adopted to curb health risk. They found that several strategies were used. Radio and television jingles had the most with 50% percent, closely followed by print media and social media.

Furthermore, Owolabi and Ekechi (2014) studied communication as critical factor in environmental management and sustainability development in Nigeria with the aim of observing the various communication methods engaged in environmental sustainability and also evaluating the interplay of the different communication channels with other environmental rises management tools. It shows that most common

channels of communication media were print and electronic, new media, town crier, opinion leaders more others. However, Martin (2013) analysed editorial discourse on environmental challenges in Nigeria newspapers using 2012 Flooding, the study shows that environmental sustainability needs the cooperation of the government, community effort and enlightenment programmes through environmental education and mass media.

Carrie (2022) notes that, learning regarding the environment in the US: The 1980s saw the continuation of development and growth for a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had focused largely on environmental education. Simultaneously, the number of educators who implemented early conservation in their classrooms significantly increased over the course of the following decades.

Methodology

The study was informed by a qualitative documented review involving a comprehensive review of existing literature on environmental communication, Media's Role in Environmental Communication, environmental sustainability and challenges in environmental communication for sustainability. This involved searching relevant databases, such as Google, Google Scholar, and Scopus, using keywords. The review also analyzed case studies and empirical research on the effective communication strategies for sustainability by facilitating and participatory in environmental communication, to raise awareness for sustainability, facilitating collaborations and participatory environmental communication, environmental activism, and promote environmental education to facilitate behaviour change. In addition, the review also examined the role of stakeholders in making the best out of the effective communication strategies to transform Environmental Communication for sustainability.

Analysis/Discussion

According to Parris and Kates (2003), successful communication strategies can enhance stakeholder buy-in and facilitate collaborative efforts toward sustainability goals. Conversely, ineffective communication can lead to stakeholder disengagement and scepticism, undermining sustainability initiatives (Zahra et al., 2020). Having the ultimate objective of providing decision-makers with an indication of the likely consequences of their actions, environmental impact applied internationally as a preventive environmental management tool to ensure

that proposed actions are economically viable, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, made it clear that we can no longer think of environment and economic and social development as isolated fields. Rio principles of sustainable development had clearly stated that “in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.” Further “environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.” According to Principle 17 of Sustainable Development, “environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.”

Agenda 21, which was also as a result of the Rio Convention, proposed that governments should promote the development of appropriate methodologies for making integrated energy, environment and economic policy decisions for sustainable development, inter alia, through environmental impact assessment (EIA), and carry out investment analysis and feasibility studies including environmental assessments for establishing forest-based processing enterprises and projects likely to have significant impacts upon biological diversity. Investment banks like Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB), Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and World Bank (WB) have environmental safeguards to ensure that financing of projects is not only based on the precautionary principle, preventative action rather than curative treatment but sustainable development.

Strategies to Bridge the Gap, Knowledge and Action

Since Gro Harlem Brundtland set out her vision of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), the central role of technology in driving environmentally benign, socially just, economic growth has been a core tenet of sustainability discourse, underpinned by the conviction that poverty, global inequality and environmental degradation are linked, and that to address one, it is necessary to address

all. Of particular note for our work is the prominent role assigned to ICT in achieving these aims:

Information technology based chiefly on advances in micro-electronics and computer science is of particular importance. Coupled with rapidly advancing means of communication, it can help improve the productivity, energy and resource efficiency, and organizational structure of industry. (WCED, 1987).

While it notes that, the potential for harm in the unconsidered use of technology, the fundamental message is one of optimism in the potential for technological progress to mitigate the environmental damage caused by economic growth. This optimism is shared by sustainable development's "sister" discourse, "ecological modernization" theory. Lacking the environmental justice element of sustainable development, ecological modernization theory focuses on the reconfiguration of the capitalist political economy of developed nations, arguing that with government support and appropriate technological intervention it is possible for economic growth to benefit the environment (Dryzek, 2013). Within the sustainability field, the rhetorics of eco-modernization and its techno-fix approach have received considerable criticism, for their unquestioning acceptance of the growth paradigm (Grunwald, 2016); for their anthropocentrism (Crist, 2016); and for misunderstanding the causes of the modern environmental crisis, disregarding technology's ambivalent record in mitigating the environmental consequences of economic growth, and its tendency to cause unintended and unexpected environmental consequences (Dietz & O'Neill, 2013).

Nonetheless, despite limited empirical evidence that technological development can solve the present environmental crisis (Næss & Høyer, 2009; York, Rosa, & Dietz, 2003), the pragmatic and technocratic character of these discourses remains attractive to policy makers, providing as they do, an alternative to the environmental movement's traditional position that a transformation of the core political and economic institutions of modern society is required to achieve long-term sustainability (Mol & Spaargaren, 2000). The assumed critical role for technological innovation, including digital innovation, in achieving an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future, has come to underpin much of modern sustainability policy, at national and transnational levels (OECD, 2009; United Nations, 2012).

Enhancing effective communication to sustainability, call to action needed to put in practice by identifying situation analysis and problem identification, that means Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) as one of

the most participatory methods that can easily be combined with an analysis of Knowledge Attitudes-Practices (KAP) of the actors or groups concerned and the formulation of situation-specific communication objectives. Once a mode of cooperation is established between those groups, they will interact and share experiences in other stages of the communication strategy as well. Considering Actors and Knowledge-Attitude-Practice, if the raising awareness is not enough, the diffusion of an innovation is required about new idea, information applied to personal values and lifestyle, preliminary attempts to practice the innovation that are usefulness and impact, in acceptance and commitment to the change in practice. That is to say – if communicators can motivate and mobilize their audiences to take action and commit themselves to the new, environmentally friendly practices, raising awareness or creating interest indeed will be of advantage enough. This process from awareness to adoption works best if the social groups concerned are actively involved and supported in a partnership based on trust. Not only that, Actors and Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP): Critical Behaviour and Key Factors of Influence In order to narrow down the field of practices potentially relevant to an observed environmental problem, communities in cooperation with communication specialists should consider the impact or importance of a particular form of behaviour to the problem, the feasibility of changing or maintaining the behaviour, whether the ideal behaviour, or similar forms, already exist in the community concerned. The practices which meet these criteria can be called critical behaviour. In order to screen behaviour that influences natural resources and environmental concerns it is useful, to focus on specific types of behaviours rather than general categories, to emphasize the positive in existing practices, to classify behaviour based on impacts it has on sustainability, to understand the feasibility of influencing relevant behaviour, and to understand behavioural

Conclusion

Environmental problems and their solutions are complex from the ways it's been communicated about them. Human ideologies, values, beliefs, and experiences intensely influence the responses to environmental issues. Therefore, it is important to support environmental orders that make space to cultivate equal approaches to environmental communication towards sustainability to bring the wealth of knowledge that already held about environmental issues into meaningful practices, not only for the purpose of communicating but work that involves

cultivating broader understanding about socially just and sustainable solutions to environmental issues. The issue of environmental sustainability has become a matter of concern to everyone. The need for the application of environmental communication patterns further gives the hope that a sustainable environment is an achievable goal, as communication in its general interpretation provides means of sense making about the world, orienting us toward events, people, wildlife and choices that we are to make. However, unless a more robust awareness work is done to reduce environmental degradation and other poor environmental practices in the near future, it is very likely that many parts of the world, especially developing countries will continue to suffer the dangers induced by poor environmental practices. The environmental impact assessment is a systematic process aimed at providing information to decision-makers for ensuring that environmental considerations are a part of decision-making.

Recommendations

- i. Moving beyond an understanding of environmental communication as merely the “translation” of scientific knowledge for the general public, it is dynamic that expertise of environmental science and sustainability understand environmental communication as a critical practice with complex social, cultural, and political stakes. In turn, environmental educators must consider both the practical and theoretical dimensions of communication approaches in order to promote informed, ethical, and justice-oriented communicative competencies for publics to call into action.
- ii. Promote environmental education through media to disseminating accurate and reliable information about environmental issues and their impact on the community.
- iii. Key player should foster collaborations and participatory environmental communication to facilitate collaborations and participatory Environmental Communication by engaging various stakeholders, including the public, government departments, journalists, private sectors, and local authorities, in environmental communication conversations, questions, arguments, and debates.
- iv. It is essential to consider the environmental impact of digital media technology and promote sustainable digital practices.

- v. Conduct further research on successful environmental communication that address the specific environmental issues and concerns of different communities on sustainability practices.

References

- Abdulazeez, I., Asemah, E. S. & Ekharefo, D. O. (2024). Awareness and Perception of Media Campaigns on Environmental Sustainability in Benin City, Nigeria. *Biannual Review of Glorious Vision University Glorious Vision University*, 1(1), 1-14.
- Adewale, O. O., & Hassan, O. (2022). The role of mass media in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 15(3), 45–58.
- Ajayi, O. O. and Ojo, O. E. (2017). Environmental awareness, knowledge, and attitudes as determinants of household waste management practices in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 192, 200–208.
- Allen, M. (2016). Strategic communication for sustainable organizations: Theory and practice. Springer.
- Anyaeze, A. N. (2018). Media framing and climate change communication in Nigeria: A critical analysis. *Climate and Development*, 10(8), 732–743.
- Arikenbi, P.G., Ainakhuagbor, A., Ikharo S. & Jimba, D. I. (2023). An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Mass Media Campaigns in Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria. *Journal of Advanced Research and Multidisciplinary Studies* 3(3), 78-95.
- Asemota, O. M. (2019). The role of the media in environmental communication and education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Environmental and Ecological Engineering*, 13(8), 1-6.
- Balogun, A. M., Olorunfemi, B. S., & Amole, A. T. (2020). Media advocacy and household waste management practices in Nigeria: A case study of Lagos State, *Environmental Communication*, 14(2), 229–245.
- Banjo, A. O. & Obun-Andy, M. K. (2023). Environmental Education and Media Role in Creating Awareness in Ogun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Women in Technical Education and Employment*, 4(1), 22 – 28.
- Daramola, A. & Ibem, E.O. (2010) Urban environmental problems in Nigeria: Implications for sustainable development. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12 (1), 124 145.

- Dietz, R. and O'Neill, D. (2013). *Enough is enough: Building a sustainable economy in a world of finite resources*. London: Routledge.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2013). *The politics of the earth: Environmental discourses* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Entman, R. M. (1991). Framing US Coverage of international News: Contrast in Narratives of KAL and Iran Air Incidents. *Journal of Communication*, 41(4), 6-27.
- Ezeah, C., & Roberts, E. (2021). Sustainable development challenges in Nigeria: A critical Analysis. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*, 8(2), 45–62.
- Flor, A. (2004). *Environmental communication*. Dilimon, Qwzon City: University of Philistines Open University.
- Funtowicz, S. O. and Ravetz, J.R. (1993). Science for the post-normal age. *Futures*, 25, 739–755.
- Harcup, T.; O'Neill, D. What is news? News values revisited (again). *J. Stud.* 2017, 18, 1470–1488.
- Hendersson, H.; Wamsler, C. New stories for a more conscious, sustainable society: Claiming authorship of the climate story. *Clim. Chang.* 2020, 158, 345–359.
- Herrick, C.N. and Pratt, J.L. (2013). Communication and the narrative basis of sustainability: Observations from the municipal water sector. *Sustainability*, 5, 4428–4443.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction*. London: Sage Publication.
- Morelli, J. (2011) Environmental sustainability: A definition for environmental professionals. *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, 1(2), 1-9.
- Næss, P. and Høyer, K. G. (2009). The emperor's green clothes: Growth, decoupling, and capitalism. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 20(3), 74–95.
- Nassir, A. A. and Jude, M. M. (2021). Development Communication: An Overview of Environmental Communication in Nigeria. In A. A. Nassir and E. S. Asemah (eds.) *Communication, Environment and Sustainable Development in Nigeria* (pp. 7-21). Kaduna: M. O Press & Publishers Ltd.
- Newig, J. (2011), Climate Change as an Element of Sustainability Communication. In *Sustainability Communication*:

- Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Theoretical Foundations; Godemann, J., Michelsen, G., Eds.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, New York, NY, USA, pp. 119–128.
- Newig, J., Voß, J.-P., Monstadt, J. (2008) *Governance for Sustainable Development: Coping with Ambivalence, Uncertainty and Distributed Power*; Routledge: London, UK.
- OECD. (2009, June 25). Declaration on green growth adopted at the meeting of the council at ministerial level. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/env/44077822.pdf>.
- Ogadimma, E. C., Raza, S. H. & Mohamad, B. (2023). Dearth of Media reportage of environmental issues in Nigeria: Need for innovation and adoption of green culture to curb environmental decay. *Sage Journals*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/02666669231187364>. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1318-7818>.
- Ojo, T. O., & Afolabi, O. (2022). Impact of digital media on sustainable development in Nigeria: A case study of social media platforms. *African Journal of Communication*, 19(1), 78–94.
- Okafor, C. E. (2016). Environmental communication and public awareness for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*, 4(3), 391–402.
- Okoye, O., Chijioke, I. (2021). Media and sustainable development in Nigeria: A comparative analysis of traditional and digital platforms. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 28(2), 78-92.
- Oladipupo, A. and Olanrewaju, A. (2022). Assessing the impact of NEEDS on poverty reduction in Nigeria. *African Development Review*, 34(1), 78-94.
- Olusegun, A. O. and Adebisi, K. A. (2024). Influence of Mass Media on Public Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviours towards Sustainable Development Initiatives in Nigeria. *IARO Journal of Humanities and Management (IJOHAM)*, 4, 1-8. Retrieved from <https://fpihumanitiesjournal.federalpolyilaro.edu.ng/>.
- Opel, A., Johnston, J. & Wilk, R. (2010). Food, culture and the environment: Communicating about what we eat. *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, 4(3), 251-254.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1999) *Environmental communication: Applying communication tools toward sustainable development*. Working paper of the working party on development co-operation and environment. Available from: <http://>

- www.pumagua.unam.mx/assets/pdfs/publicaciones/recomendadas/ applying_communication_tools_sustdvt_oecd.pdf.
- Oyebanji, A., & Ogunbode, A. (2023). Climate change mitigation strategies in Nigeria: Progress and challenges. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 33(2), 112-128.
- Pillmann, W. (2000) Environmental communication: systems analysis of environmentally related information flows as a basis for the popularization of the framework for sustainable development, 14th Symposium Computer Science for Environmental Protection. Bonn, Germany: Metropolis.
- Sachs, J. D. (2015). Sustainable development goals, *The Lancet*, 386(10004):983-1000.
- Smith, J. K. (2023). Mass media and sustainable development: A global perspective. *International Journal of Media Studies*, 42(1), 112-128.
- United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.
- United Nations. (2012, September 11). Rio+20 the future we want: Outcome document adopted at Rio+20. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1298>
- Wasiu, M. R., Abdullateef, I. B., Uthman, T. O. M. & Abdulazeez, O. A. (2016). Harnessing Social Media as Viable Platforms for Environmental Management in the 21st Century. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 18(5), 87-99.
- WCED. (1987). Our common future. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank (2020). Nigeria: Country partnership framework for the period FY21-FY24. World Bank Group.

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS ON YOUTHS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS IN NIGERIA

By

AWODI, Sheidu¹

Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
awodisheidu@gmail.com, +2348059138971, +2349131144929

EZEAH, Gregory Herbert²

Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
gregory.ezeah@unn.edu.ng, +2348037728393

AMANA, Sharon Umola³

Department of Mass Communication, Prince Audu Abukar University,
Anyigba

umolaamana@gmail.com, +2349031792467

&

OLOGUN, Opeyemi⁴

Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University, Kabba
oologun@ksukabba.edu.ng, 2348164916157

Abstract

This current generation of youths especially those in Nigeria rely mostly on social media apps like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook not only for social-related issues but as a source of health information. Because of the interactive, valuable and shareable features of these platforms, the health communication campaigns tend to appeal to this generation. However, engagement is sometimes low because of lacks such as the DSP's digital literacy, accessibility, the capability of content fit to the targeted health issues, and cultural beliefs that concern health. This study examines how and why youths are involved in health communication campaigns in Nigeria using social media. It focuses on the influences of these aspects on the propensity of the youths to participate in health campaigns through

social media platforms that promote health. This paper uses quantitative survey data to establish an understanding of the views, reasons for participation and challenges faced by youths. The results provided evidence that social media can be effective for health campaign interventions if intervention have elements that aligns with youth preferences and culture. The results are expected to help in designing healthy campaigns that consider incorporating social media for youths' participation in future to improve health communication practices in Nigeria.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth engagement, Health, Communication, Nigeria.

Introduction

The increase in engagement with the social media by youths has been given more user-oriented interaction compared to the main stream media when reaching this population with information. The place of social media in health communication campaigns is gradually becoming a significant discourse in health communication, but the success of such efforts still depends on many factors like readability, cultural motives, and digital literacy (Eke, Omekwu, & Odoh, 2024). Adapting health communication to digital platforms aligns with the direction taken by the public especially the youths interacting with health communication in the digital age (Nguyen & Chu, 2022).

With specification on younger population, most Nigerian youths are technologically inclined, but may not be fully computer literate, and they may not be competent to handle health information on social media. According to Owolabi, Ilesanmi, Ayoade and Ajayi (2019), youth engagement in social media health campaigns is also influenced by the content. It is much easier to encourage young people to engage in health promotion campaigns that concern youth-related health issues. Such campaigns should also use language, images, and stories typical for the youth's perception as well as concerns. Al-Sharqi and Hashim, (2019)'s study showed that in Nigeria, Social Media which includes Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are not only used for social purposes but also as the source of health information among the youths. These platforms afford users some level of interactivity for instance use of visuals as well as shareable messages and therefore they are suitable for the

dissemination of health communication campaigns amongst young people.

Egede, Walker, & Payne (2020) lament the need for youths to be involved in health communication campaigns since they are among the largest groups of the population in Nigeria. According to WHO (2021), young people in Nigeria today are faced with very many health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, mental health problems, and reproductive health among others hence health awareness for this group of people is compulsory. Thus, it is a fact that mainstream health communication approaches and campaigns are less effective with youth because these are not interactive and do not fit into the youth experience (Cinelli, Quattrociochi, Galeazzi, Valensise, Brugnoli, Schmidt, & Scala, 2021). As a communication tool, social media can be easily accessed and its use is interactive making health campaigns on social media relevant in reaching out to youths; however, some elements hinder the level of engagement.

According to Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, Irwin and Hoving (2013), if the campaigns incorporate social media forums and are culturally tailored and appeal to the targeted young people, there will be higher chances of effectiveness. However, few studies have examined the best ways of using social media for health campaigns among Nigerian youths. Many of them were done in Western countries, where it is easier to access digital materials than in Nigeria and also the level of digital literacy. This is why it is important to direct research based on new local contexts, relations and features of Nigerian youth's digital environment and cultural contexts (Eke et al., 2014).

Because social media sites have become more popular than before, new avenues for health communication have been presented to younger demographics in particular. However, there are some real concerns that must be addressed to successfully involve Nigerian youth in health discussions and promotions on social media. Youths in Nigeria depend on social media for diverse information but the level of participation in health campaigns is low because of digital literacy, accessibility of content and culture (Eke et al., 2014; Al-Sharqi & Hashim, 2019). These studies show that the benefit of using social media for health communication purposes is negligible and the full benefit of the forum in improving young people's health behaviours is not realised (Nguyen & Chu, 2022).

This remains a challenge since not all youths in Nigeria possess the same level of IT literacy upon which they can efficiently search and

interpret health information on social media while some youths lack the skills on how to analyze the health campaign messages (Egede et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). Also, young persons still have little access to the internet as well and the high data costs in Nigeria also reduce their chances of being very active in health promotional campaigns on social media. Such limitation makes it difficult for youths to interact with campaigns continuously, and this reduces the effectiveness of health communication campaigns (Oyeyemi, Gabarron, & Wynn, 2014; Obar & Wildman, 2015). Another issue is the absence of information that suits the culture of Nigerian youths in health-related social media-promoted health campaigns.

According to Awotidebe,Phillips and Kuku (2018) as well as Essien and Eko (2019), health campaigns messages disseminated through social media platforms do not take into account the cultural diversity among the youths in Nigeria, thereby, making the messages less commensurate with their potential effect. This observed cultural gap require that such campaigns, though encompassing sensitive issues of the youth, fit the local cultures of the youths. In as much as social media could enhance health communication among the youths in Nigeria, there are robust drawbacks that prevent it. Promoting digital literacy, access and cultural relevance is important for improving youth engagement to actualize social media's potential for health-related outcomes as proclaimed by Moorhead et al., 2013; & McCauley et al., 2022. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the determinants of young people's engagement in health communication interventions on social media platforms to make useful recommendations for future campaign development.

Objective of the Study

Based on the study's focus on youth engagement in health communication campaigns via social media in Nigeria, the following objectives are formulated:

- i. To determine the level of Nigerian youths' interaction with health communication campaigns on social media.
- ii. To establish the factors the Nigerian youths use in engaging themselves in social media health campaigns.
- iii. To evaluate the experiences of Nigerian youths on issues of accessing and comprehending health information via social media platforms.

- iv. To identify the approaches on how best to use social media to engage youths in health communication campaigns.

Justification

They youths are confronted with diverse health problems such as mental, illicit substance, and sexual and reproductive health problems that warrant different levels of awareness and care (WHO, 2021). The justification of this research therefore rests in the ability to enhance the ways and manner in which practitioners can get health messages to young persons in Nigeria who constitute a significant size of the Nigerian population and shapes the current cum future health and development of the country. The findings of this study can increase the awareness of what aspects make young people interested in social media health campaigns; thus, improving the effective targeting of young people in health campaigns and spending more time engaging in health-promoting activities.

Also, the study fills the gap in the literature since most health social media communication research is carried out in well-networked Western nations with higher digital literacy and easier access to the internet (Nguyen & Chu, 2022). For meaningful comparison and recommendation of officially accessible, effective interventions for youth that use online and mobile technology, it is crucial to comprehend the similar and different enablers and barriers facing Nigerian Youth from those in other countries including the following areas; difficulty in the use of digital technology, cultural disposition and the accessibility to the internet among others. In doing so, this study could help policymakers, health practitioners, and communication specialists work out engaging social media campaigns that would resonate with the ethnic background of the Nigerian youths.

Also, the findings of this study contribute to global health goals by examining means for improving digital health communication linked to sustainable development goal three of promoting healthy lives and well-being to all (United Nations, 2015). The outcomes of the study can also be useful for other regions where similar challenges exist in supporting the promotion of health protection among youth with the instrumentality of social media.

Material and Methods

This study adopts and utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the communication campaigns involving health

issues of Nigerian youths through social media. Choosing the mixed-method design allows to analysis of all the quantitative and qualitative data together (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Surveys will be used to quantify youths' participation in health campaigns' social media accounts through the use of quantitative measures including reach, frequency and self-reported behavioural outcomes. This provides an opportunity to gain a general idea of the campaign effects and is appropriate for analyzing data in a sample which represents a population, which makes it more generalizable (Babbie, 2020).

The quantitative is further complemented by qualitative support which involves focus group discussions involving youths in Nigeria in the age bracket of 18-25 years to gain a deeper understanding of their perception and experiences of health campaigns on social media. Compared to other methodologies, focus groups provide very rich material concerning the nature and the purpose of people's interactions with health content on the Internet (Krueger and Casey, 2015). Through the use of this qualitative perspective, the research can assess essential quantitative qualities regarding the targeted social media campaigns including peer pressure influence and perceived credibility on health behaviors. The views will also enable participants to articulate their concerns or critiques, thus enriching the quantification results.

A questionnaire was developed and administered to participants, and focus group discussions were conducted with participants, the responses to the open-ended survey questions, as well as the discussion transcripts, were analyzed thematically. The quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Thematic analysis was done by looking for patterns in the perceived success of the social media campaigns. Statistical analysis will involve looking at relationships between the use of social media and perceived health behaviors.

Discussion of Findings

Firstly, to assess the level of engagement of Nigerian youths with social media health campaigns, the result shows a high level of awareness and engagement of the Nigerian youths in health campaigns via social media platforms. High engagement is observed on Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter as 61% of the sample uses these media actively. This agrees with the arguments the position of NCC (2021) and Chukwuere & Chukwuere (2017) that social media has become a quintessential aspect of young people's lives in Nigeria in light of growing mobile phone and

internet usage (NCC, 2021) and has a certain allure to youths in particular due to factors such as immediacy, convenience interactivity which are not inherent in traditional media.

Engagement analytics like likes, shares, and comments reflect a fairly active level of health content interaction. Nevertheless, even though the majority of youths recognize health campaigns concerned with mental health, Covid, Malaria, STDs and HIV/AIDS, their engagement includes activities such as sharing or commenting rarely. This trend accords with Okorie and Salawu (2017) who found that even though youths come across health-related messages, they are passive because they do not believe in the truthfulness of health information found on the internet. In contrast, Evans et al. (2016) argue that when interactive and personalized campaign elements are used, interest rises, meaning that additional campaign localisation and presenting clear and targeted calls to action may add value in the case of youth participation. A large number of youths submits that they would feel more comfortable using health Influencer-recommended content or hailing from recognizable personalities. This trend avails Social Cognitive Theory's argument made by Bandura that people imitate role models whose behaviours are relatable. Popular personality appeals are seen as more believable and influential since campaigns build on the credibility youths have on these personalities. Still, it raised potential issues of fake information spread which should be solved by cooperation with the right and reliable sources for campaign credibility.

Secondly, to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of social media health campaigns in encouraging positive health behaviors, effectiveness ratings are slightly below the midpoint with a mean score of 2.41, with just slightly over one-third of the campaigns creating a behavioural change among participants driven by the social media health campaigns. This is supplemented by Abayomi and Olonade (2020) which opined that despite high levels of knowledge regarding matters affecting the health of youths in Nigeria, their ability to change their behaviours in line with required standards remains impaired, due to factors within their external environment which include inadequate health facilities or supportive structures. From the qualitative data, one can also gain an additional understanding of factors that decrease perceived effectiveness. Socio-cultural adaptability is mentioned as one of the biggest issues within the campaigns as it is often not clear what many of the behaviours suggested within the context of the campaign. This is in concordance with Owolabi et al. (2019), who opined those campaigns should be localized and

therefore ensure they capture the Nigerian youths. The focus here stems from Social Cognitive Theory showing that campaigns though they encourage certain behaviours, youths need ways and means, and achievable objectives to enable them to change their behaviour. Self-efficacy, an aspect of SCT importantly specifies people's motivation to change because without self-efficacy youths may tell themselves that content is inspiring but unreachable (Abayomi & Olonade, 2020). This shows the need for campaigns to provide discussion platforms as safe and anonymous form to avoid traceability and stigmatization. Overall, these findings establish that social media health campaigns may be significantly effective in awareness increasing among Nigerian youths, but the effectiveness of such health promotion on behavioural change is subject to the applicability of contextual constraints, culturally sensitive and privacy concerns.

Thirdly, to identify the barriers affecting youth engagement with social media health campaigns, the data show that the key challenges limiting youth participation in health campaigns through social media amongst other are the question of trust and credibility of health information shared through social media. A significant number of the participants reported moderate to severe doubt towards the credibility of the health information shared on social media, with many of them, expressing a biased preference for information shared by health departments, ministries, and organizations or recommended by health professionals. Such skepticism is consistent with the submission of Chou et al, (2018) that social media are driven by fake news and that social media users are distrustful and with people becoming more conscious of the flip side of commentary work where fake news can go viral making youths wary of the health messages that they receive on social media (Cinelli et al., 2020). Additionally, cultural perceptions turned out to be another constraint with issues such as mental or sexual health topics being seen as indecent or taboo. Even though the awareness level was high, the campaign did not influence the knowledge of the disease as expected since health campaigns need to be culturally sensitive to the targeted population. This points to the fact that young people in Nigeria are more likely to interact with content that speaks to their needs and cultural context; therefore, campaign messages should be in the local language, mirror relevant situations and present solutions that are culturally sensitive to the young people in Nigeria. Another element of examination was confidentiality when disclosing information concerning health in the public domain. Several youths reported that they are at risk of being

ridiculed or embarrassed by their friends as regards health information with topics such as reproductive health or mental health. This shows that the fear of social consequences discourages young people from sharing health-related information on social media which is in line with the position of Gonzalez et al., (2020).

Finally, to explore the role of influencers and peer networks in shaping youth health behaviors on social media, the study observes that campaigns involving influential individuals, in this case young men and women with a healthy lifestyle are more effective in attracting youths to healthy campaigns. Several participants mentioned that they paid more attention to the health messages if presented by their role model or celebrities, and this conforms to the SCT's observation learning by the community. Availability and accessibility of peers and celebrities give credit to the health messages and make youths feel that they are in a larger group intending to improve on health and existence. Participants also explained that when they see their friends doing the same such as reposting materials, joining a challenge, or supporting healthy behaviour, they too become more likely to do the same. This finding supports other works done earlier setting forth that peer support and community engagement are effective in enhancing healthy behaviour (Fisher et al., 2015). Given that young people rely closely on their immediate social contacts regarding health behaviours, one obtains strength to promote campaigns involving clique support and sharing thereby improving co-impact rather than individual influence. However, the study also provides a more complex look at the perceived disadvantages of influencer marketing. Some identified misinformation as a problem because influencers are unprofessional and have little knowledge about the health issues being represented. Such criticism is justified by the ethical considerations of influencer marketing where the promotion of health messages and more importantly accurate information is very sensitive (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Thus, using the potential of influencers and peer multipliers can greatly improve the effectiveness of these campaigns, given that the spread of information is authentic and culturally sensitive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the study, it focused on the factors and the level of engagement of the youths in Nigeria in social media health communication campaigns; perception of the campaigns; perceived barriers; and the roles of influencer campaigning. The study suggests that, though people have a general idea about health campaigns on Instagram and Twitter and even

actively interact with the WhatsApp health campaigns, the actual change at the behavioural level is something that remains in the moderate range. Barriers to youths' interaction with these campaigns include; doubt in the authenticity of the information provided, cultural detachment, and concern for data privacy. Finally, the communities and the influence of other persons became rather important in terms of Desire Lines, as well as in terms of possible advantages and disadvantages of the use of influencers in the promotion of health-related messages. The perceived barriers highlighted in this study are paramount evidence of why health communication interventions should consider cultural appropriateness and be tailored to suit youths' needs and concerns. This way, using local influencers it is possible to improve the persuasiveness of the health messages and increase the youth's sense of community and support. But accuracy and reliability cannot be neglected also as it is crucial to prevent misinformation among voters. The study further recommends the following;

- i. Health organizations should use qualified healthcare providers and popular opinion leaders to develop and popularize good health information which can promote trust and Credibility among youths to read and motivate them to get engage more often in the health content.
- ii. Health communicators need to adapt the campaigns in light of cultural beliefs and experiences existing among the youths in Nigeria which include the use of regional languages, writing on cultural practices, and describing relatable cases which could capture the attention of users.
- iii. Because of privacy issues, health campaigns should call for the implementation of features that would enable users to post and interact anonymously as it gives Youth Avenue for freely discussing their experiences and seek advice on particular services.
- iv. Health campaigns should incorporate features where group influence can be elicited in a simple manner where participants have to share their health improvement stories and lots more. Community health campaigns and peer-promoted efforts can increase population participation and unite people for change and healthier actions.
- v. Constant evaluation of health campaigns is important to determine their efficiency to make appropriate adjustments. Campaigns conducted by organizations should include periodic surveys of

youths with regards to the content of campaigns and the delivery methods used so that strategies can change with time to reflect the current camera needs and wants of youths.

References

- Abayomi, A., & Olonade, R. (2020). The role of social media in mental health literacy and stigma reduction among Nigerian youths. *Journal of Health Communication*, 25(3), 200-210.
- Agha, N.) Health Communication and Youth Participation in Social Media Campaigns. *African Journal of Health Studies*, 25(1), 46-59.
- Al-Sharqi, L., & Hashim, K. (2019). Social Media and Youth Engagement in Health Campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(4), 200-214.
- Atkin, C. K., & Rice, R. E. (2012). Advances in public communication campaigns. In R. E. Rice & C. K. Atkin (Eds.), *Public Communication Campaigns* (4th ed., pp. 3-19). Sage.
- Awotidebe, T., Phillips, J. S., & Kuku, V. (2018). Addressing Health Literacy in Nigerian Youth Health Campaigns. *Journal of African Studies*, 20(3), 167-182.
- Babbie, E. (2020). *The practice of social research* (15th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1-26.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Chou, W. Y. S., Gaysynsky, A., & Vanderpool, R. (2018). The COVID-19 Misinformation Challenge in Public Health: The Role of Social Media. *Health Education & Behavior*, 45(1), 1-3.
- Chukwuere, J. E., & Chukwuere, P. C. (2017). The impact of social media on social lifestyle: A case study of university female students. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(4), 9966-9985.
- Cinelli, M., Quattrocioni, W., Galeazzi, A., Valensise, C. M., Brugnoti, E., Schmidt, A. L., & Scala, A. (2020). The COVID-19 social media infodemic. *Scientific Reports*, 10(1), 1-10.

- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Egede, L. E., Walker, R. J., & Payne, E. H. (2020). Digital Literacy Challenges in African Health Campaigns. *Public Health Journal*, 28(2), 192-199.
- Eke, H., Omekwu, C., & Odoh, J. (2024). The Use of Social Networking Sites among Nigerian University Students: The Influence of Digital Literacy on User Engagement. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2014.
- Evans, W. D. (2006). How social marketing works in health care. *BMJ*, 332(7551), 1207-1210.
- Evans, W. D., Blitstein, J., Hersey, J., Renaud, J., & Yaroch, A. (2016). Systematic review of public health branding. *Journal of Health Communication*, 13(8), 721-741.
- Fisher, C. M., Jansen, E. E., & Ransom, L. (2015). The role of peer support in influencing health behavior change among adolescents: a systematic review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56(2), 158-164.
- Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Gonzalez, M. M., Antheunis, M. L., & Schouten, A. P. (2020). Social media, stigma, and mental health in adolescents: A systematic review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(4), 633-641.
- Hermida, A. (2010). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 297-308.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Khan, M. L., & Idris, I. K. (2021). Youth Engagement and Digital Literacy in Health Communication. *Digital Health Studies*, 16(1), 74-89.
- Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241-251.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Lee, Y., & Ho, S. (2020). Digital Health Promotion in Social Media: An Analysis of Youth Engagement. *Journal of Health Communication*, 25(2), 151-163.

- McCauley, K., Kemp, L., & Miller, P. (2022). Social Media and Health Communication in African Youth: A Systematic Review. *Health Promotion Review*, 45(6), 58-72.
- Moorhead, S. A., Hazlett, D. E., Harrison, L., Carroll, J. K., Irwin, A., & Hoving, C. (2013). A New Dimension of Health Care: Systematic Review of the Uses, Benefits, and Limitations of Social Media for Health Communication. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(4), e85.
- Naylor, P. J., Nettlefold, L., Race, J., et al. (2015). Implementing school based physical activity interventions: a systematic review. *Preventive Medicine*, 70, 78-89.
- Nguyen, M. H., & Chu, T. T. (2022). Social Media in Health Communication: A Systematic Review on Youth Engagement. *Public Health Reviews*, 43(5), 78-90.
- Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). (2021). *2021 Annual Report*. Abuja: NCC.
- Noar, S. M. (2006). A 10-year retrospective of research in health mass media campaigns: Where do we go from here? *Journal of Health Communication*, 11(1), 21-42.
- Okorie, N., & Salawu, A. (2017). Social media and youth participatory communication in Nigeria: A study of the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 9(3), 381-399.
- Owolabi, M., Ilesanmi, O., Ayoade, B., & Ajayi, T. (2019). Youths' perception of digital media literacy and its impact on health information in Nigeria. *African Health Sciences*, 19(4), 3173-3182.
- Oyeyemi, S. O., Gabarron, E., & Wynn, R. (2014). Ebola, Twitter, and misinformation: A dangerous combination? *BMJ Global Health*, 15(5), 453-458.
- Snyder, L. B. (2007). Health communication campaigns and their impact on behavior. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 39(2 Suppl), S32-S40.
- Statista. (2023). *Percentage of population aged 0-24 in Nigeria from 2000 to 2023*.
- Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362-369.
- Witte, K., & Allen, M. (2000). A meta-analysis of fear appeals: Implications for effective public health campaigns. *Health Education & Behavior*, 27(5), 591-615.

- World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). *Global Status Report on Youth Health and Well-Being*.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (2003). Albert Bandura: The man and his contributions to educational psychology. In B. J. Zimmerman & D. H. Schunk (Eds.), *Educational psychology: A century of contributions* (pp. 431-457). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF MEDIA ETHICS AS A TOOL FOR UPHOLDING PROFESSIONAL STANDARD AMONG JOURNALISTS IN NIGER STATE

BY

HALIMAT AVOSUAHI SHUAIBU

Email: halimat.shuaibu.93990@unn.edu.ng

08066714336

Abstract

Ethical challenges in journalism, including issues related to confidentiality and harm reduction, remain prevalent, highlighting a significant gap in understanding and applying ethical standards in the Nigerian media landscape. This study examined audience perception of media ethics as a tool for upholding professional standard among journalists in Niger state by employing a mixed-methods approach. A comprehensive survey, including questionnaires distributed to 371 respondents from Minna and key informant interviews with staff from Prestige FM and NSTV Minna, was conducted. The research utilised Social Responsibility Theory to explore how ethical practices influence audience perceptions and media consumption. The findings reveal persistent ethical shortcomings in journalism practices, particularly in safeguarding sensitive information and minimising harm. Despite some adherence to ethical guidelines, significant gaps remain that affect public trust in media. The study recommends enhancing ethical training for journalists and implementing stricter internal review processes within media organisations. Additionally, reinforcing the regulatory framework for media ethics is crucial to ensure clear guidelines and consequences for unethical conduct.

Keywords: Ethics, Media, Journalist, Perception, Niger State

Introduction

Globally, media ethics have become a cornerstone in the discourse on journalism standards, significantly influencing public trust and the credibility of news organisations. In recent years, the increasing prevalence of misinformation and digital media has heightened the emphasis on ethical standards in journalism (Smith & Jones, 2023). Studies have consistently shown that audience perceptions of media

ethics play a crucial role in shaping the professionalism of journalists and the overall integrity of news reporting (Johnson, 2022). The rise of social media platforms has introduced new challenges, such as the rapid spread of misinformation and the blurring of boundaries between traditional journalism and user-generated content (Lee, 2023). Understanding how audiences perceive media ethics is essential for upholding professional standards and ensuring the reliability of news sources in this evolving landscape.

In Africa, media ethics are influenced by diverse socio-political environments and varying levels of media freedom. Recent research highlights that African media systems often face unique challenges, such as political interference, economic pressures, and limited resources, which can impact journalistic ethics and practices (Oyinloye, Akinola, Opaleke, & Okunade, 2024). For instance, the African Media Barometer reports that media ethics are frequently compromised due to financial constraints and political influences, which affect the ability of journalists to adhere to professional standards (Awofadeju, & Sawyerr 2024). Despite these challenges, there is a growing emphasis on the role of audience perception in reinforcing ethical standards, as public scrutiny and demand for accountability become more pronounced (Moses & Adeyemi, 2023).

In Nigeria, the issue of media ethics is particularly relevant given the country's complex media landscape, characterised by a mix of state-controlled and independent media outlets. Research indicates that Nigerian journalists often navigate a challenging environment where ethical standards are tested by political pressures, economic constraints, and legal uncertainties (Okoro & Nwankwo, 2024). The Nigerian Press Council and other regulatory bodies have introduced various codes of conduct aimed at promoting ethical journalism (Oyinloye, et al, 2024).

However, adherence to these codes often varies, and there is a growing recognition of the need to understand audience perceptions as a means to enhance ethical practices and ensure accountability (Ogunleye & Ibrahim, 2023). Studies have also highlighted the role of public feedback in shaping media practices and reinforcing the commitment to ethical standards (Abdullahi, 2023). The perception of media ethics among audiences reflects the region's distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics.

Research in Niger State has shown that local media outlets are influenced by regional political dynamics, community expectations, and infrastructural limitations (Kareem & Musa, 2024). Local studies indicate

that the effectiveness of media ethics in Niger State is closely linked to how well journalists understand and respond to audience expectations (Sani & Aliyu, 2023).

Statement of Problem

The integrity of journalism, as a pillar of democratic society, depends significantly on adherence to ethical standards; these include truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, and accountability (Awofadeju & Sawyerr, 2024). In Niger State Nigeria, concerns about the ethical conduct of journalists have raised issues surrounding public trust and the media's credibility. When these standards are compromised, the media's role as an unbiased informant and watchdog weakens, leading to a decline in public confidence.

Audience perception of media ethics is crucial in understanding the effectiveness of these standards. A negative perception can result in widespread mistrust and disengagement from the media, which has broader the implications for the democratic process. (Azubuike & Nwaubeta, 2022).

In the light of the above, understanding audience perceptions of media ethics in Niger State is essential for identifying gaps in ethical practices and developing strategies to address them. Despite the growing mistrust, there is a notable lack of empirical studies investigating how audience feedback can be utilised to improve media ethics in the region. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining audience perceptions of media ethics and exploring the potential of their feedback in upholding professional standards.

Objective of the Study

The main objective is to examine audience perception of media ethics: A tool for upholding professional standards among journalists in Niger state. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Access the audience's perception of the adherence to media ethics by journalists in Niger State
- ii. Identify the specific ethical standards that audiences believe journalists frequently uphold or violate in Niger State
- iii. Analyse the impact of audience perception of media ethics on their trust in journalistic practices in Niger State.

Justification and Significance of the Study

The justification for this study lies in the increasing concerns about ethical breaches in journalism and their impact on public trust in the media. As media ethics shape the credibility of journalism, understanding audience perception is crucial in assessing how well journalists adhere to professional standards. Given the widespread influence of media in Niger State, this study provides valuable insights into whether ethical principles are upheld and how they affect journalistic integrity. Existing studies have largely focused on journalists' perspectives, leaving a gap in understanding how audiences perceive media ethics. By exploring this dimension, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on media accountability and the role of public perception in enforcing ethical journalism. The findings will serve as a basis for improving media practices and fostering greater trust between journalists and their audiences.

The significance of this study extends to academic, policy, and practical domains. Academically, it adds to existing literature by offering empirical evidence on audience perceptions of media ethics and its role in professional journalism, particularly within the Nigerian context. Policymakers and media regulators can use the findings to develop guidelines and frameworks that strengthen ethical standards in journalism. By highlighting audience concerns, the study can inform policies that promote responsible media practices. Practically, the research benefits journalists by revealing public expectations and fostering ethical accountability in their reporting. Media organisations can leverage the insights to enhance editorial policies and training programmes, ensuring adherence to ethical journalism.

Literature Review

Ethical Implications of Professionalism

The link between media and ethics plays a pivotal role in shaping public dialogue, influencing societal values, and fostering well-informed citizens. Merrill (2018) highlights that media ethics deals with the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, and the various actions taken by those in journalism and mass communication when reporting on issues (Azubuike, & Nwaubeta, 2022). Pepple and Acholonu (2018) observed that for journalism to be of high quality, ethical considerations must be a priority for journalists to address the growing criticism from the public.

This approach, known as "doing ethics," suggests that making ethical decisions in journalism is a skill akin to writing well, taking good

photographs, and editing effectively. By adhering to ethical standards, journalists can better fulfill their duty of truthfulness while reducing harm to vulnerable news sources and audiences. Effective ethical decision-making is essential for preserving the profession's integrity and trust. In journalism, ethics involve responsibilities to both oneself and others. Amatu and Nwafor (2022) argue that journalists must recognise their social responsibility to consistently act according to professional ethics. With increasing concerns about breaches of ethical codes, which undermine principles of fairness, equity, and balance in journalism, numerous scholars have examined its ethical consequences.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

The empirical review section highlights the critical role of ethics in journalism and underscores the need to examine how these ethical practices influence professional standards. Eke and Adekunle (2022) investigated adherence to the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) Code of Ethics among broadcast stations in Kwara and Osun states, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, the study surveyed 196 broadcast media journalists from these states, revealing a high level of compliance with the NBC Code. The findings indicated that awareness significantly influenced this compliance, as no broadcast organisation in the states had faced NBC sanctions in recent years. The researchers recommended ongoing efforts by the NBC to enhance awareness and ensure adherence to the broadcast code of ethics across Nigeria. One notable gap in Eke and Adekunle's study is its focus solely on broadcast media journalists, leaving out other types of media practitioners such as print and online journalists.

Awofadeju and Sawyerr (2024) investigate how media ethics influence public opinion, focusing on principles such as objectivity, fairness, accuracy, and accountability.

Their study, which involves a thorough literature review and case study analysis, examines how biased reporting can manipulate public opinion through methods like agenda-setting, framing, and selective exposure. The study concludes that adherence to ethical principles is vital for providing unbiased and reliable information and stresses the role of government and regulatory bodies in ensuring ethical media conduct. One significant gap in Awofadeju and Sawyerr's study is the lack of empirical data or primary research directly examining current practices and instances of biased reporting. The study relies on secondary sources and

theoretical analysis without presenting original data on how these ethical issues manifest in real-world media practices.

Oyinloye, Akinola, Opaleke, and Okunade (2024) analyse various scholarly sources to explore how commercial pressures influence journalistic integrity, news content, and audience trust. Anchored in the press's social responsibility theory, their study highlights that the drive for profit can create conflicts between commercial interests and ethical journalism.

They find that commercialisation often leads to sensationalism, clickbait, and attention-grabbing headlines, undermining balanced reporting and eroding public trust. The study advocates for prioritising ethical standards within news organisations to maintain journalistic integrity. One gap in this study is the lack of direct empirical evidence from current journalistic practices affected by commercial pressures. The research is based on a review of existing literature but does not include primary data or case studies illustrating how commercialisation affects news organisations and audience trust in practice.

Theoretical Framework

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the limitations of the Libertarian Theory, which advocated for minimal governmental intervention in the press (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). Proponents of the Social Responsibility Theory, including scholars like Peterson and the Hutchins Commission, argued that while freedom of the press is essential, it must be accompanied by a responsibility to provide accurate, fair, and comprehensive information to the public. The assumptions of the Social Responsibility Theory rest on the belief that media should act as a watchdog for society, ensuring that diverse viewpoints are represented and that harmful content is minimised.

This theory posits that journalists have a duty not only to report news but to do so ethically and with consideration for the potential impact on audiences. It acknowledges that while media can influence public opinion and behaviour, it also carries the responsibility to uphold ethical standards that protect individuals and communities from harm. Critiques of the Social Responsibility Theory highlight its potential for subjectivity in defining what constitutes the "public good" and the risk of imposing moral standards that could limit journalistic freedom. Critics argue that the theory may lead to paternalism, where media gatekeepers decide what information is appropriate for audiences, potentially undermining the

fundamental tenets of free expression (McQuail, 2010). Despite these critiques, the theory remains influential in discussions about media ethics, as it encourages a balanced approach to journalism that prioritises both freedom and responsibility.

In the context of this study on audience perceptions of media ethics in Niger State, the Social Responsibility Theory serves as a valuable framework. It can guide the exploration of how ethical practices in journalism influence public trust and engagement with media outlets. By applying this theory, the study assessed whether journalists in Niger State are fulfilling their responsibility to provide ethical reporting and protect sensitive information, thereby fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry. This application reinforces the need for ethical training and accountability in journalism, aligning with the study's findings and recommendations for enhancing professional standards in the local media landscape.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of audience perceptions of media ethics and their role in upholding professional standards among journalists in Niger State. The quantitative aspect involved a survey using a structured questionnaire administered to respondents in Minna Metropolis. The qualitative component comprised in-depth interviews with journalists from Prestige FM Minna and NSTV Minna, offering insights into journalistic practices and ethical considerations.

Population of the Study

The study population for the quantitative component consisted of adult residents of Minna Metropolis, aged 18 and above, who consume news from various media outlets. With Minna's estimated population at 443,592 (Niger State Bureau of Statistics, 2024), the city was chosen due to its status as the state capital and its concentration of major broadcast media. The qualitative component focused on journalists at Prestige FM Minna and NSTV Minna, given their influence on media ethics in the region.

Sample Size

A sample size of 382 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, ensuring representativeness. Tejumaiye (2022) supports the selection of a sample size that adequately reflects the study population.

Sampling Technique

For qualitative interviews, 10 journalists—five from each media house—were purposively selected. Systematic random sampling was used for the survey, while purposive sampling ensured informed participants for interviews.

Instrument of Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire divided into three sections: demographic information, perceptions of media ethics, and the impact of these perceptions on trust in journalism. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents in Minna Metropolis to gather the data. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected journalists from Prestige FM Minna and NSTV Minna. An interview guide was developed to cover key topics such as views on media ethics, challenges in upholding ethical standards, and the influence of audience feedback on journalistic practices. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data. This integration provided a holistic understanding of media ethics and professional standards in Niger State.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of three hundred and eighty-two (382) questionnaires were administered during data collection of this study. However, only 371 (97.1%) were duly responded and return, while the remaining 11 (2.9%) were either damaged or more than one option was indicated by the respondents.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	
Male	264	71.2
Females	107	28.8
Total	371	100

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

Table 1 depicts the analysis of data collected with respect to gender of the respondent. It shows that 264 representing 71.2 % of the respondents are males and 107 representing 28.8% of the respondents are females.

Table 2. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	% age
18-30	13	3.5
31-40	141	38.0
41-50	183	49.3
Above 50	34	9.2

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

The result presented in Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents' age. The table reveals that 13 (3.5%) of the respondents were between 18-30 years; 141 (38.0%) of the respondents were between the ages of 31-40 years; while 183 (49.3%) of the respondents were between the ages of 41-50 years of age and 34 (9.2%) of the respondents were from 50 years and above.

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Education	Frequency	%age
Primary	15	4.0
Secondary	41	11.1
OND/ND/NCE	104	28.0
HND/ B.Sc.	167	45.0
M.Sc./Ph.D.	34	9.2
None	10	2.7
Total	371	100

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

Table 3 shows the analysis of data collected with respect to educational qualification of the respondent. It depicts those 15 respondents representing 4.0 % of the respondents having primary school education, 41 respondents representing 11.1% have secondary school certificate, 104 respondents representing 28.0% have OND/ND/NCE certificates; 167 respondents representing 45.0% have HND/B.Sc., 34 respondents representing 9.2 % of the respondents had M.Sc. and Ph.D. qualification and 10 respondents representing 2.7% had no formal educational qualification.

Table 4: Audience’s Perception of the Adherence to media ethics by Journalists in Niger State

	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
Journalists in Niger State consistently follow ethical guidelines in their reporting	6(24) (1.6%)	83(249) (22.4%)	18(36) (4.8%)	264(264) (71.2%)	1.5

There is a high level of transparency in the news coverage provided by Niger State journalists.	7(28) (1.9%)	97(291) (26.2%)	7(14) (1.9%)	260(260) (70.0%)	1.6
The accuracy of information reported by journalists in Niger State is frequently questioned.	227(908) (61.2%)	127(381) (34.2%)	10(20) (2.7%)	7(7) (1.9%)	3.5
Niger State journalists demonstrate a strong commitment to impartiality in their news stories	4(16) (1.1%)	107(321) (28.8%)	13(26) (3.5%)	247(247) (66.6%)	1.6
Public trust in the media ethics of Niger State journalists is generally high	10(20) (2.7%)	21(63) (5.7%)	81(162) (21.8%)	259(259) (69.8%)	1.4
Average Overall Mean					1.9

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

Table 4 reveals critical concerns about journalistic practices in Niger State. The mean score of 1.9 reflects widespread dissatisfaction, particularly regarding accuracy, which is questioned by 61.2% of respondents. Despite some perceived commitment to impartiality and high public trust, the overall poor ratings underscore the urgent need for significant improvements in ethical adherence and transparency to enhance journalistic credibility and public confidence. The staff of Prestige FM Minna and NSTV was interviewed; one of the respondents when asked about media ethics stated that: “*Media ethics to me means adhering to principles of accuracy, fairness, balance, and transparency. These principles guide our reporting to ensure we provide truthful and unbiased information to our audience*” (KII, June, 2024). Another respondent from NSTV stated that:

Media ethics, to me, encompasses a set of principles that guide our conduct as journalists in delivering accurate, fair,

and transparent information to the public. The cornerstone principles include accuracy, ensuring that the information we provide is factual and verified through reliable sources. Fairness is equally crucial, presenting all sides of a story without bias or distortion, while balance ensures that diverse perspectives are represented. Transparency involves disclosing our sources and methods openly, allowing the audience to understand how we arrive at our conclusions. These principles not only uphold our professional integrity but also foster trust with our audience, knowing that they can rely on us for credible news and information (KII, June, 2024).

Table 5: Ethical standards that audiences believe journalist frequently uphold or violate in Niger State

	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
Journalists in Niger State frequently uphold the ethical standard of accuracy in their reporting	4(4) (84.6%)	30(90) (8.1%)	23(69) (6.2%)	314(314) (1.1%)	1.3
The adherence to confidentiality of sources by journalists in Niger State is often observed	310(1,240) (83.6%)	47(141) (12.7%)	12(24) (3.2%)	2(2) (0.5%)	3.8
Journalists in Niger State frequently violate the ethical standard of impartiality in their news coverage	17(68) (4.6%)	20(60) (5.4%)	7(14) (1.9%)	327(327) (88.1%)	1.3
There is frequent upholding of the ethical principle of fairness by journalists in Niger State	4(16) (1.1%)	107(321) (28.8%)	13(26) (3.5%)	247(247) (66.6%)	1.6
The ethical standard of minimising harm is often neglected by journalists in Niger	309(1,236) (83.2%)	31(93) (8.4%)	30(60) (8.1%)	1(1) (0.3%)	3.8

 State.

 Average Overall Mean

2.4

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

Table 5 indicates significant issues with journalistic ethics in Niger State. Only 0.5% acknowledge adherence to confidentiality, and 83.2% believe the minimisation of harm is frequently neglected. With an overall mean of 2.4, the data shows that while some ethical standards are met, major deficiencies persist, particularly in confidentiality and harm reduction. A respondent from the key interview when asked about the challenge of upholding ethics as a journalist in Niger State affirmed that:

One challenging ethical dilemma I faced involved sensitive information that could potentially damage someone's reputation if reported inaccurately. We received leaked documents alleging misconduct by a public figure but lacked corroborating evidence. Our team decided to conduct thorough investigations, reaching out to all involved parties for their perspectives. We prioritized fact-checking and ensuring balanced coverage before making any public disclosures. Ultimately, we chose not to publish until we could verify the authenticity of the documents and ensure fairness to all parties involved. It was a delicate balance between transparency and protecting individuals' reputations, guided by our ethical commitment to accurate and responsible journalism (KII, June, 2024)

On how they handle conflict of interest; a respondent asserts that:

Transparency is paramount in handling conflicts of interest or biases in our reporting. If we identify a potential conflict or bias, we disclose it openly to our audience, maintaining our commitment to fairness and integrity. We strive to present diverse perspectives on contentious issues, allowing our audience to form informed opinions based on balanced information. Our editorial team collaborates closely to ensure that personal biases do not influence our reporting. By adhering to these principles, we maintain credibility and trust with our audience, reinforcing our commitment to ethical journalism (KII, June, 2024).

Table 6: Impact of Audience Perception of Media Ethics on their trust in Journalistic Practices in Niger State

	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
High adherence to media ethics by journalists in Niger State significantly increases public trust in their practices	314(1,256) (84.6%)	33(66) (8.9%)	20(40) (5.4%)	4(4) (1.1%)	3.7
Negative perceptions of media ethics in Niger State diminish audience trust in journalistic practices	320(1,280) (86.2%)	37(111) (10%)	10(20) (2.7%)	4(4) (1.1%)	3.8
Trust in journalistic practices in Niger State is strongly influenced by the perceived accuracy of media reporting.	347(1,388) (93.5%)	7(21) (1.9%)	11(22) (3%)	6(6) (1.6%)	3.9
Perceived bias in media ethics in Niger State leads to reduced confidence in journalistic integrity	288(1,152) (77.6%)	66(198) (17.8%)	9(18) (2.4%)	8(8) (2.2%)	3.7
Audiences in Niger State are more likely to trust journalists who are seen as ethically sound and transparent	299(1,196) (80.6%)	41(123) (11.1%)	26(52) (7.0%)	5(5) (1.3%)	3.7
Average Overall Mean			3.8		

Source: Field Survey, June, 2024.

The data from Table 6 underscores the pivotal role of media ethics in shaping public trust in Niger State. With an average mean of 3.8, it is evident that adherence to ethical standards, perceived accuracy, and transparency are crucial in fostering trust. A significant 93.5% believe that accuracy strongly influences trust, while 86.2% see a direct link between negative perceptions of ethics and diminished trust.

One respondent highlighted the “fragility yet essential nature of trust in journalism today”. With the rise of misinformation and sensationalism, rebuilding and maintaining trust requires strict adherence to ethical standards. The respondent noted that “audiences increasingly scrutinise journalistic credibility, expecting rigorous information verification and comprehensive context for complex issues”.

Transparency about sources and methods is vital for distinguishing credible journalism from unreliable sources.

When covering sensitive or controversial topics, ethical considerations guide responsible journalism. The respondent emphasised “*the importance of minimising harm to individuals or communities affected by reporting, respecting their privacy and dignity*”. Seeking informed consent from vulnerable individuals and providing context for complex issues are prioritized to promote understanding. By balancing transparency with sensitivity and adhering to ethical standards, the editorial team aims to present diverse viewpoints fairly and accurately, serving the public interest.

Discussion of Findings

The study found significant deficiencies in confidentiality and harm reduction practices, despite compliance with some ethical standards. This aligns with Pepple and Acholonu’s (2018) observations of low ethical adherence among journalists due to factors such as sycophancy and ignorance. Although Pepple and Acholonu focused on Rivers State, this study highlights similar ethical shortcomings in Niger State, underscoring the audience’s perception of gaps in ethical adherence.

The study discovered that, audiences associate high ethical adherence and transparency with increased public confidence. This corresponds with findings by Eke and Adekunle (2022), who reported that heightened ethical awareness among broadcast journalists in other states leads to improved public trust. Nevertheless, Niger State’s unique media environment calls for regional insights into how these dynamics might differ across media forms and regions.

The study also revealed that, ethical journalism plays a crucial role in strengthening public trust. This finding resonates with Azubuike and Nwaubeta’s (2022) discussions on the role of ethical journalism in mitigating challenges faced by journalists. While Azubuike and Nwaubeta’s conclusions lack regional specificity and empirical depth, this study offers insights into how perceptions of ethical conduct directly affect audience trust in Niger State’s journalism.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a fundamental connection between ethics and journalism practice in Niger State. The research underscores that discussing professionalism or the fulfilment of social responsibility by journalists cannot be accomplished without first

examining the importance of the code of ethics. This paper has illustrated that the journalism profession in Nigeria could see considerable improvement if media practitioners adhere to a relevant and effective code of ethics. The study highlights that ethical journalism is crucial for maintaining public trust, which is a well-established principle. However, it also identifies that significant challenges remain in ensuring that ethical standards are consistently applied. These challenges include persistent gaps in confidentiality, harm reduction, and overall ethical adherence among journalists.

Recommendations

Drawing from the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Media organisations in Niger State should create and implement explicit guidelines to safeguard sensitive information and reduce harm to those involved in news stories. Frequent workshops and refresher courses on ethical standards are essential to ensure journalists are knowledgeable about the most current best practices and legal obligations.
- ii. Media organisations in Niger State should embrace transparent reporting practices and set up internal review panels to oversee compliance with ethical standards. Making information about ethical practices and decision-making processes publicly available can foster trust with the audience.
- iii. The regulatory framework for media in Niger State should be reinforced to ensure that there are clear guidelines and penalties for unethical journalism and biased reporting. This may require reviewing and updating current media laws and regulations to align with international best practices.

Suggestion for Further Studies

- i. The influence of media ownership on ethical journalism practices in Nigeria.
- ii. Public trust in the Nigerian media examining the relationship between ethical journalism and audience engagement.
- iii. The role of social media in shaping audience perception of media ethics among Nigerian Journalists.

References

- Abdullahi, A. (2023). Civil society and policy influence in Nigeria: A case study. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration*, 18(1), 112-130.
- Adams, F., & Bello, O. (2022). Regional responses to global challenges: The African experience. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(2), 45-62.
- Amatu,&Nwafor. (2022). Ethical issues in journalism practice: An assessment of journalists' adherence to mass media laws and ethics in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Mass Media Review*, 4(1), 172-186.
- African Media Barometer.(2023). Media ethics and accountability in Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.africanmediabarometer.org>
- Azubuike, C., & Nwaubeta, G. (2022). Imperatives of ethics in journalistic practice in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies*, 5(4), 152-162.
- Awofadeju, P., & Sawyerr, O. (2024). The role of media ethics in shaping public perception: A critical analysis of biased reporting and its impact on public opinion. *Journal of African Innovation and Advanced Studies*, 3(2), 33-49.
- Blumler, J. G. (1979). The role of theory in uses and gratifications studies. *Communication Research*, 6(1), 9-36.
- Blumler, J. G., & Katz, E. (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523.
- Johnson, L. (2022). The impact of audience perceptions on media ethics. *Global Journalism Review*, 29(1), 55-73.
- Kareem, S., & Musa, T. (2024).Local governance and socio-economic challenges in Niger State. *Journal of Nigerian Regional Studies*, 10(1), 77-93.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). *Determining sample size for research activities*. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.
- Lee, R. (2023). Navigating misinformation in the digital age: A global perspective. *International Journal of Media Studies*, 24(2), 98-115.
- Merrill, J. C. (2018). *Journalism ethics: Philosophical foundations for news media*. USA: Pearson.

- Moses, I., & Adeyemi, R. (2023). Colonial legacies and contemporary challenges: An African perspective on media ethics. *African Review of Sociology*, 29(4), 321-339.
- Okoro, P., & Nwankwo, J. (2024). Governance and policy effectiveness in Nigeria: An empirical analysis. *Nigerian Journal of Policy Studies*, 21(2), 156-174.
- Ogunleye, K., & Ibrahim, H. (2023). Challenges in policy implementation in Nigeria: A case of media ethics. *West African Review of Governance*, 11(3), 98-115.
- Oyinloye, O., Akinola, A., Opaleke, A., & Okunade, J. (2024). Investigating the impact of news commercialisation on journalistic ethics and audience trust. *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences (AJSBS)*, 14(2), 844-955.
- Okunna, C. S. (1995). Ethics of mass communication. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Philip, O. P. (2010). Ethical considerations in journalism practice. In I. Pepple (Ed.), *Journalism and public interest* (pp. 49-57). Port Harcourt: Soteria.
- Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 3-37.
- Sani, A., & Aliyu, M. (2023). Regional disparities and media ethics in Niger State. *Journal of Niger State Studies*, 8(2), 50-66.
- Smith, R., & Jones, A. (2023). Global trends and media ethics. *International Journal of Global Studies*, 22(3), 88-104.
- Tsegnyu, S., & Asemah, E. S. (2014). An investigation of media practitioners' adherence to professional ethics in Minna, Nigeria. *Review of Communication and Media Studies*, 1(4), 10-21.
- Udeze, S. E. (2012). Media law and ethics. Enugu: RhyceKerex Ltd.

INFLUENCE OF AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF THE NPHCDA'S RADIO CAMPAIGNS ON CERVICAL CANCER (HPV) VACCINE INTAKE

**NWEKE, CHINYEREFELICIA
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE,
NIGERIA.**

09073761916, Email: fnweke@unizik.edu.ng

**CHINWE ELIZABETH UZOCHUKWU, PHD
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE,
NIGERIA.**

08037917259, Email: ce.uzochukwu@unizik.edu.ng

**OKOLI, OGECHUKWU N.
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE,
NIGERIA.**

08030569547, Email: ogechukwuokoli59@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria has a population of 60.9 million women ages 15 years and older who are at risk of developing cervical cancer. Current estimates indicate that every year 12, 075 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer while 7, 968 die from the disease. Cervical cancer ranks as the second most frequent cancer among women in Nigeria and the second most frequent cancer among women between 15 and 44 years of age. To curb the disease, the Federal Government embarked on radio HPV vaccination campaigns through the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA). This paper, therefore, sought to find out Awka South female residents' level of awareness of the campaigns, their perception of the campaigns, the extent their perception of the campaigns determine their decision to take the HPV vaccine and the extent they have taken the vaccine. To achieve these objectives, the researcher adopted the descriptive survey design and determined the sample size of this study (384) using Meyer's (1973) sample size determination formula. The samples were selected using the multi-stage sampling procedure. To collect data, the researcher used a close-ended and pre-tested

questionnaire and used frequency tables and simple percentages to analyze the data. From this study, the researcher found, among others, that Awka South female residents are highly aware of the campaigns. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the Federal Government should continue the radio campaigns until massive HPV vaccine intake is achieved in Nigeria.

Keywords: Audience, Cervical cancer, Campaigns, HPV vaccine, Perception

Introduction

Cervical cancer is the most frequent cancer among women worldwide. The mortality rate for cervical cancer is 7.3 per 100,000 women globally (Iloh, Badaru, Obayi, Anike, Thomas & Abonyi, 2024). World Health Organization (2021) reported that cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally, with an estimated 604,000 new cases and 340,000 deaths in 2020. The mortality rate for cervical cancer is 7.3 per 100,000 women globally, while the morbidity rate is 14.1 per 100,000 women (WHO, 2021). This disease also has a rapid growth in Africa countries (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). The mortality rate for cervical cancer in Africa is estimated to be around 12.5 per 100,000 women, which is higher than the global average of 7.3 per 100,000 women (World Health Organization, 2021). Cervical cancer grows rapidly across African countries, and Nigeria has a high mortality and morbidity rate (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). Cervical cancer is a significant public health concern in Nigeria, where it ranks as the second most common cancer among women (Ogbonna *et al.*, 2019 cited in Ilohet *al.*, 2024). It is the second principal cause of cancer morbidity and mortality with an estimated incidence of 14,943 cases and 10,403 deaths in 2018 (WHO, 2018 cited in Ilohet *al.*, 2024). The burden placed on women by this disease contributes to the perpetuation of poverty and disruption of the socio-economic fabric of both families and communities (Nwobodo & Maryam, 2017). The incidence and mortality rates of cervical cancer vary globally, with higher rates observed in low- and middle-income countries due to limited access to screening, prevention, and treatment services (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). In high-income countries, according to them, the implementation of organized cervical cancer screening programmes and HPV vaccination has significantly reduced the incidence and mortality of the disease.

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that develops in the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). The cancer is primarily caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted infection (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). Early stages of cervical cancer may not present any symptoms, but as the cancer progresses, women may experience vaginal bleeding, pain during sex, or pelvic pain (National Cancer Institute, 2021). Regular Pap smears and HPV testing can help detect cervical cancer at an early stage, when it is most treatable (American Cancer Society, 2021). Several signs and symptoms of cervical cancer do exist and in most cases women experiencing these symptoms at the early stage, may not actually know what it entails until it is severe and crucial (Ilohet *al.*, 2024). The first sign and symptom of cervical cancer may take several years to develop. The signs and symptoms of this cervical cancer include: watery and bloody vaginal discharge that may be heavy and can have a foul odour, bleeding in the vaginal after intercourse, menstrual periods may be heavier and last longer than normal (Ilohet *al.*, 2024).

According to the World Health Organization, vaccinating girls aged 9–14 against HPV can prevent at least one-third of all HPV-related cancers in Africa (Gallagher, Howard, Kabakama, Mounier-Jack, Burchett, Lamontagne & Watson-Jones, 2017; Canfell, 2019). Many high-income countries now include HPV vaccination for adolescent girls in their routine immunization schedule (Gallagher, LaMontagne & Watson-Jones, 2018; Gultekin, Ramirez, Broutet & Hutubessy, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, the five countries with the highest rates of cervical cancer deaths emphasize the need for increased uptake of HPV vaccination in the region (Gallagher *et al.*, 2017). Since Nigeria is one of the five countries, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) embarked on radio campaigns to advocate for the uptake of the HPV vaccine.

Although the early history of broadcast media campaigns, particularly those involving health, was largely one of failure, the promise of reaching large audiences has led to continued efforts, a sharpening of design methodologies and more realistic campaign expectations (Adediran, 2023). According to him, these more sophisticated efforts, combined with more powerful evaluation methodologies, provide evidence that media health campaigns can be effective in changing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and even behaviours when properly designed. Since the perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaign among the female residents of Awka South would not have been if there was no

campaign designed by the agency, it becomes imperative to find out how the campaign influences their decisions to take the HPV vaccine.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that boys and girls be vaccinated at ages 9-14 with two doses of HPV vaccine before becoming sexually active while adolescents above 15 years including special populations such as those with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) be given three doses of the vaccine (Adeniyet *al.*, 2022). WHO also recommends the inclusion of the HPV vaccination into the National Immunization Programmes (NIPs) by countries as part of an integrated and holistic strategy to mitigating HPV and cervical cancer (United Nations Fund for Population, 2008 cited in Adeniyi *et al.*, 2022).

In order to determine the cervical cancer knowledge and prevention practices among female civil servants in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Obiechina and Muo (2021) adopted the cross-sectional survey research design and administered a self-structured and validated questionnaire to 335 female civil servants. Out of the 335 questionnaires they administered, 313 were returned and used to analyze the data they collected. In the analysis of the data, they also used simple percentages, mean and standard deviation and equally used Chi-Square and ANOVA to test their hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. From their study, they found, among others, that most of the female civil servants had no knowledge of cervical cancer. Based on their findings, they recommended, among others, that there should be more sensitization campaigns to bridge the identified knowledge gaps and scale up cervical cancer screening services to all women to increase service uptake. This study focused on the female civil servants residing in Awka South while the current study focused on all the female residents of Awka South.

In their study to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practice of cervical cancer screening and prevention, Anene-Okeke, Aluh and Okorie (2019) did a cross-sectional survey using a self-administered structured questionnaire they administered to 335 Pharmacy and Medicine undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, who they conveniently selected for their study. They coded and entered the data they collected into Microsoft Excel and then exported it to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. They further used descriptive data such as frequencies, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation for measurement. From this study, they found among others, that the students had a good level of awareness of cervical cancer. Based on their findings,

they concluded that the students generally had a good awareness and knowledge of cervical cancer which was not translated into practice. This study focused on university students while the current study focused on the female residents of Awka South.

To ascertain how cervical cancer awareness campaigns have influenced the knowledge, attitude and practice of female undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, finally, Odoh, Onwukwalonye and Onyebuchi (2018) adopted the survey research method and administered questionnaire to 400 students of the two universities. They analyzed the data they collected using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). From this study, they found, among others, that the level of awareness, knowledge and attitude level about cervical cancer are high among the female undergraduate students. Based on their findings, they recommended, among others, that campaigns seeking to create awareness that cervical cancer should not stop at general awareness but should be focused on seeking to influence positive behaviour of females as relates seeking to detect, prevent and treat the disease. This study focused on cervical cancer awareness campaigns while the current study focused on the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake.

In October 2023, Nigeria introduced the single-dose Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine into the routine immunization schedules for girls aged 9–14 years in two phases (World Health Organization, 2023). The vaccine is now freely available to the eligible population in what is the first phase of the rollout in 16 out of its 36 states and the federal capital territory (Adepoju, 2023). The vaccine rollout also began in May 2024 in the other 21 states in what is the second phase of the rollout. Before this introduction, they were available for individual use through purchase, with limited insurance coverage (Akande & Akande, 2024).

Accessibility and affordability have been described as major challenges limiting the uptake of the vaccine (John-Akinola, Ndikom, Oluwasanu, Adebisi & Odukoya, 2022). It is estimated that each dose costs about \$13 (USD) and it is not readily available in public and private facilities (John-Akinola *et al.*, 2022; Okolie & Nwadike, 2023) In Nigeria, studies have found low levels of awareness and uptake of the vaccine (Olowookere *et al* 2012; Onowhakpor, Omuemu, Osagie & Odili, 2016; Ndikom & Oboh, 2017; Ojimah, C., & Maduka, 2017). According to them, inadequate educational interventions, highlighting the need to improve information, education and communication about this subject

area, have been associated with the low levels of awareness and uptake of the vaccine.

Since there is a need for improved information, education and communication, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) embarked on radio campaigns to encourage and convince Nigerians (including the female residents of Awka South) to take the HPV vaccine and make their female children available for HPV vaccination. It is therefore paramount to find out the level of influence which the perception of the female residents of Awka South of the campaigns has on their HPV vaccine intake that necessitated this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to achieve the objectives of this study.

1. What is the audience level of awareness of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake?
2. What is the audience perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake?
3. To what extent does the audience's perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns influence their decision to take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine?
4. To what extent does the audience's perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns determine the extent they take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine?

Significance of the study

This study is significant in the following ways:

1. This study will add to the existing literatures in the field of mass communication. It will also serve as a reference material for future researchers especially for those majoring on health communication.
2. It will improve cervical cancer prevention. Understanding how audience perception of radio campaigns influences the intake of HPV vaccine can help optimize public health messaging and increase vaccine uptake.
3. This study will improve health communication. When the impact of audience perception on health perception is analyzed, it can provide insights into effective health communication strategies which will benefit various public health initiatives.

4. Nigeria is a country where cervical cancer is a significant health concern, therefore, this study can help identify ways to address disparities in HPV vaccine access and uptake, particularly among vulnerable populations
5. This study aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) goals to eliminate cervical cancer; hence it is a contribution to global health goals.

Materials and Methods

In this study, the descriptive survey design was adopted. The population for this study were female residents of Awka South with a projected population size of 146,177 (National Population Commission). The sample size of this study (384) was determined using Meyer's (1973) sample size determination formula while the samples were selected using the multi-stage sampling procedure. Using the multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher randomly selected two (2) communities (Awka and Amawbia) from Awka South and two (2) wards (Awka I and Awka II; Amawbia I and Amawbia II) from the two communities before randomly selecting ninety-six (96) respondents from each of the four wards (Awka I and Awka II; Amawbia I and Amawbia II) for this study, totalling 384 respondents. To collect data, the researcher used a close-ended and pre-tested questionnaire and used frequency tables and simple percentages to analyze the data. It is important to state that the researchers administered 384 copies of questionnaires to the respondents (female residents of Awka South) but not all of them were recovered as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Response Rate

	Frequency	Percentage
Recovered	365	95
Not recovered	19	5
Total	384	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Results

Findings from this study were drawn from data obtained from 365 respondents. On gender status, 0% of the respondents were males while 100% of the respondents were females. This implies that the respondents of this study were all females. On the age status of the respondents, it shows that out of the 365 respondents that were studied, 1% of them are below 18 years old, 27% of them are between 18 and 24 years old, 38%

are between 25 and 34 years old while the remaining 34% of the respondents are 35 years and above. Therefore, the study revealed that most of the respondents were mainly between the ages of 25 and 34 years old. On the marital status of the respondents, out of the 365 respondents, 56% of them are single, 39% of them are married, 4% of them are no longer with their spouses while the remaining 1% are widows. This implies that majority of the respondents are not married. Regarding the occupational status of the respondents, out of the 365 respondents that were studied, 3% of them are students, 43% of them are civil servants, 12% of them are farmers, 28% of them are traders, 8% of them are tailors, 1% of them are doing other things to make a living while the remaining 5% are unemployed. Basically, this shows that majority of the respondents were civil servants.

Research Question 1: What is the audience level of awareness of the NPHCDA’s radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake?

Table 2: The respondents’ level of awareness of the NPHCDA’s radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	28	8
High	281	77
Low	56	15
Very low	0	0
Total	365	100

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the respondents’ level of awareness of the NPHCDA’s radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake. It shows that out of the 365 respondents that were studied, the level of awareness of 8% of the respondents of the campaigns is very high while that of 77% of the respondents is high. It equally shows that out of the 365 respondents that were studied, the level of awareness of the remaining 15% of the respondents is low while none of the respondents indicated that their level of awareness of the campaigns is very low. Based on this finding, the respondents’ level of awareness of the campaigns is high.

Research Question 2: What is the audience perception of the NPHCDA’s radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake?

Table 3: The Respondents' perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake

Items	Frequency	Percentage
The campaign the impression that cervical cancer can be prevented and cured	126	35
It encourages people to take the HPV vaccine	162	44
It discourages people from taking the HPV vaccine	7	2
It promotes good health safety practices	61	17
It promotes the spread of cervical cancer	0	0
It is misleading	9	2
Total	365	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows the respondents' perception of the campaigns NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer HPV vaccine intake. It shows that out of the 365 respondents that were studied, 35% of the respondents believe that the campaigns create the impression that cervical cancer can be prevented and cured while 44% of the respondents believe that the campaigns encourage people to take the vaccine. The table also shows that out of the 365 respondents that were studied, 2% of the respondents believe that the campaigns discourage people from taking the vaccine while 17% of the respondents believe that the campaigns promote good health safety practices. The remaining 2% of the respondents believe that the campaigns are misleading while none of the respondents believe that the campaigns promote the spread of cervical cancer. Based on this finding, the respondents' perception of the campaigns is that it encourage people to take the HPV vaccine.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the audience's perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns influence their decision to take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine?

Table 4: The extent to which the respondent's perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns influence their decision to take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	47	13
Moderate extent	298	82
Low extent	20	5
Total	365	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows the extent the respondents' perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns determines their decision to take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine. It shows that the perception of majority of the respondents (82%) of the campaigns, moderately determines their decision to take the vaccine.

Research Question 4: To what extent does the audience's perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns determine the extent they take the cervical cancer HPV vaccine?

Table 5: The extent to which the respondents' perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns determines the extent they take cervical cancer HPV vaccine

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	55	15
Moderate extent	259	71
Low extent	51	14
Total	365	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 shows the extent the respondents' perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns determines the extent they take cervical cancer HPV vaccine. It shows that the perception of majority of the respondents (71%) of the campaigns, moderately determines the extent they take the vaccine.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, some findings were made. One among them is that the female residents of Awka South are highly aware of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine intake. This finding shows that the female residents of Awka South listen to radio and are interested in acquiring knowledge of how not to come down with cervical cancer, giving credence to the fact that one of the shared information in

the media, especially radio are ideas, messages, opinions, feelings and experience about how health issues from our environment (including cervical cancer) could be prevented from spreading (Ikeokwu, 2023) while the priority given to the information strongly influences the priority of the public especially the rural dwellers (McCombs, 2014).

The second finding of this study is that the female residents of Awka South believe that the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine intake, encourage people to take the vaccine. This is an indication that they understood what the campaigns are all about. It shows that the NPHCDA did not fail in their effort to help them understand the need to take the vaccine and always adopt the right health safety measures through radio which Ikeokwu (2023) rightly pointed out that apart from breaking the barrier of illiteracy, it (radio) reaches all people without discrimination and demand less intellectual exertion from the listeners than print media. While having the perception that the campaigns encourage people to take the vaccine is good, the female residents of Awka South should not see the vaccine as something that would not add significant value to their health as doing so can increase their chances of contracting cervical cancer.

The third finding showed that the extent the perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine intake among the female residents of Awka South moderately influenced their decision to take the vaccine. This is the power of perception. If they do not see cervical cancer as a deadly disease and have no form of exposure to helpful information that will help to prevent them from coming down with the disease, their perception of the campaigns would not have had this level of influence on their decision to take the vaccine. This is why Ikeokwu (2023) believes that for media campaigns to attain a strong impact on behavioural and attitudinal change, exposure of audience to such messages is critical.

The fourth finding revealed that the extent the perception of the NPHCDA's radio campaigns on cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine intake among the female residents of Awka South moderately determines the extent they take the vaccine. This finding supports the argument of Uzochukwu, Nwosu and Okeke (2022) who stated that the exposure of individuals to health messages do not in itself determine the success of the message or ability of the receivers of those messages to understand, internalize and comply with the messages. The NPHCDA who designed the campaigns that were studied obviously wants the campaigns to largely determine the extent people take the HPV vaccine but this is not the case

among the female residents of Awka South, indicating that there may be other factors that largely determine the extent they take the vaccine.

It is undoubtedly the responsibility of the government and its agencies like the NPHCDA to convincingly sensitize the general public on something as serious as taking the cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine to prevent the country from recording high number of cases of cervical cancer and deaths directly from and associated with it in the future. But while the NPHCDA can be said to have taken the right step in the right direction with its recent radio campaigns to ensure massive uptake of the HPV vaccine, the female residents of Awka South and other members of the public who the vaccine is meant for but are yet to take it, should take it so as not to become future carriers and spreaders of the disease.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance for the Federal Government and its health agencies to continue their radio campaigns on cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine intake until massive HPV vaccine intake is achieved in Nigeria. The female residents of Awka South and other members of the public should not allow their perceptions of healthcare providers, the government and their campaigns to stop them from taking decisions and actions that will be beneficial to their health and well-being. The Federal Government should also make the cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine highly accessible and adequately available at designated and approved healthcare centres in Anambra State for residents of the State. The NPHCDA on their own part should always be transparent and truthful in its campaigns to ensure massive intake of the cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine among the female residents of Anambra State so as to easily and fully convince them to take the vaccine and make their female teenage children available for vaccination. The Federal Government should always prioritize the welfare and security of health care providers in Anambra State for them to be encouraged to always play active roles in helping to achieve the NPHCDA's goal of having majority if not all the female teenage children and female residents of the State vaccinated against cervical cancer. A reproduction of this study may be relevant in order to enlarge the scope such as the study area, population as well as sample. This repetition will give further insight into the subject matter.

References

- Adediran, I.A. (2023). An assessment of the broadcast media campaign against drug abuse in Nigeria. *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 9 (2), pp. 42-56.

- Adeniyi, F.I., John-Akinola, Y.O., & Oluwasanu, M.O. (2022). Intention and concerns about HPV vaccination among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo State. *Nigerian Medical Journal*, 64 (3), pp. 352-364
- Adepoju, P. (2023). Nigeria targets almost 8 million girls with HPV vaccine. *Lancet*, 402: 1612.
- Akande, O.W., & Akande, T.M., (2024). Human papillomavirus vaccination among students in a tertiary institution in North Central Nigeria: A cross-sectional study on socio-demographic factors associated with its awareness, uptake and willingness to pay. *The Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 31, pp. 14-24.
- American Cancer Society (2021). *Cervical cancer statistics*. Retrieved on September 5, 2024 from <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>
- Anene-Okeke, C.G., Aluh, D.O., Okorie, U.H. (2019). Knowledge, attitudes and practice of cervical cancer prevention among student health professionals in Nigeria. *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Care*, 4 (4), pp. 125-130.
- Gallagher, K.E., Howard, N., Kabakama, S., Mounier-Jack, S., Burchett, H.E.D., Lamontagne, D.S., & Watson-Jones, D. (2017). Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine coverage achievements in low and middle-income countries 2007–2016. *Papillomavirus Research*, 4, pp. 72-78.
- Gallagher, K., LaMontagne, D., & Watson-Jones, D. (2018). Status of HPV vaccine introduction and barriers to country uptake. *Vaccine*, 36, pp. 4761-4767.
- Ikeokwu, C.J., (2023). Assessment of radio jingle for creating awareness against illegal street trading in Rivers State. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 4 (8), pp. 593-603.
- Ilo, O.O., Badaru, V., Obayi, A.N., Anike, A.I., Thomas, W.B., & Abonyi, R.O. (2024). Cervical cancer knowledge among female undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Nigerian Journal of Health Promotion*, 17, pp. 83-92.
- John-Akinola, Y.O., Ndikom, C.M., Oluwasanu, M.M., Adebisi, T., & Odukoya, O. (2022). Cervical cancer and human papillomavirus vaccine knowledge, utilization, prevention, educational interventions and policy response in Nigeria: A scoping review. *Cancer Control*, 29, pp. 1-11.
- Ndikom, C.M., & Oboh, P.I. (2017). Perception, acceptance and uptake of Human papillomavirus vaccine among female adolescents in

- selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. *African Journal of Biomedical Research*, 20, pp. 237-244.
- Nwobodo, H., & Maryam, B.B.(2017). Analysis of interventions for improving cervical cancer screening uptake among Nigerian women. *Public Health of Africa*, 1(2), 000107.
- Obiechina, G.O., & Muo, C.E. (2021). Cervical cancer knowledge and prevention practices among female civil servants in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 15 (1), pp. 36-43.
- Odoh, M.C., Onwukwalonye, B., & Onyebuchi, A. (2018). When knowledge does not translate to practice: A study of the influence of cervical cancer campaigns on Nigerian female undergraduates in Enugu State. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 2, pp. 83-103.
- Okolie, E.A., & Nwadike, B.I. (2023). Spotlight on human papillomavirus vaccination coverage: Is Nigeria making any progress? *JCO Global Oncology*, 9:e2300088.
- Olowookere, S.A., Abioye-Kuteyi, E.A., Airewele, E.P., Fasure, H.A., Fayose, O., Onakpoma, F., & Ibitoye, A. (2012). Awareness and uptake of human papillomavirus vaccination and cervical cancer screening among female undergraduate students in a tertiary institution in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Family Practice*, 3, pp. 27-32.
- Onowhakpor, A.O., Omuemu, V.O., Osagie, O.L., & Odili, C.G. (2016). Human papillomavirus vaccination: Knowledge, attitude and uptake among female medical and dental students in a tertiary institution in Benin-City, Nigeria. *Journal of Community Medicine and Primary Health Care*, 28 (2), pp. 101-108.
- Uzochukwu, C.E., Nwosu, C.J., & Okeke, A.O. (2022). Audience exposure, awareness and compliance with COVID-19 pandemic messages in Nigeria: A study of residents of Anambra State. *NnamdiAzikiwe University Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 2 (2), pp. 1-19.
- World Health Organization (2021). *Cervical cancer*. Retrieved on September 5, 2024 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cervical-cancer>.
- World Health Organization (2023). *Nigeria to vaccinate 7.7 million girls against leading cause of cervical cancer*. Retrieved on September 5, 2024 <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/nigeria/news/nigeria-vaccinate-77-million-girls-against-leading-cause-cervical-cancer>.

EVALUATION OF POLITICAL REPORTING AND ETHICAL ISSUES THE ROLE OF RADIO BENUE MAKURDI

Orya, Theophilus Tertsea ¹
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Prof. Greg H. Ezeah ²
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Nweze Ogochukwu, Osinachiadimma. ³
Department of Mass Communication,
Renaissance University Ugbawka, Enugu

Chukwuebuka-Nwosu Justina Nwadiuto ⁴
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Corresponding author: Orya, T.T. Email:
theophilusorya@gmail.com Phone Number: 07038387296

Abstract

The study particularly, aimed to ascertain the ethical issues that the mass media are entangled in while reporting politics and how do they affect their performance of the social responsibility and agenda-setting functions as well as upholding the professional standards. The study was anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory. The research technique employed was the survey method. Residents of Makurdi, the Benue State capital where Radio Benue is located formed the population. According to 2021 census figure as released by the Nigerian National Population Commission (NPC), Makurdi was estimated at approximately 5, 50000. The Multi- Stage sampling techniques was employed to select a sample size of 400, while the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Data was collected and analyzed by frequency distribution tables and expressed in simple percentages, while the qualitative explanation building method of analysis based on the research questions raised in the study was used to analyze responses from the respondents.

Finding however, shows that, there are unethical issues inherent in mass media (Radio Benue) which are: biasness, sycophancy, bribery and corruption among others. The research work also finds out that, ownership influence caused unethical reporting through financing and legal control mechanism, and intolerance of oppositions and criticism among others. The study therefore recommends that, journalists should consider the utilitarianism of their actions as a way of getting over some of these ethical issues or problems instigate them from responsible reporting and upholding the professional standards.

Keywords: Media Ethics, Responsible Reporting, Political Reporting and Radio Benue Markudi

Introduction

Media ethics and responsible reporting are the basic principles that guide the practices of journalism and shape the relationship between the media and the public. Since the inception of the digital media, the media all over the world has been embraced and moved by the technological advancement and growth of social media. Maintaining the professional standard has become an intricate or multifarious issue of concern. In this perspective, media ethics are moral principles, rules, and regulations that journalists must put into cognizance to ensure accuracy, fairness, and accountability while discharging their fundamental functions of information, education, entertainment, surveillance, and correlation between the government and governed. These ethical standards are very vital, not just for safeguarding the integrity of the profession but also for fostering public trust in media organizations.

Responsible reporting is far from the merely presentation of facts; it demands the media practitioner to deem the panoramic implications of their work, making sure that the information presented to the public is well authenticated, gathered, selected, organized, and précised as well as free from any unethical practices that will damage the image and reputation of the individuals or communities affected by the news stories. When presenting it to the public, they should ensure it is objective, fair, and unsensational in the news reportage but ethically virtual.

The broadcast media is one of the channels of communicating with a large and heterogeneous audience simultaneously. The channels of mass communication can be broadly pigeonholed as print, broadcast and digital media. While the broadcast media such as radio and

television diffuse information electronically, the print media such as newspapers and magazines transmit information through the printed medium. The relatively new digital media, comprising the internet and mobile devices, transfer information digitally (Gottfried, and Shearer, 2022).

Over the years, the broadcast media have played a significant role in political reporting and electioneering in the country. Indeed, it is the most strategic means of winning the hearts and minds of the electorate who are the determinants and king-makers in any democratic, free, fair and transparently credible election. The electorates generally rely on the broadcast media during electioneering and election reporting periods to provide the needed information for them to make well-versed decisions. The mass media through their traditional role of informing, enlightening, educating and entertaining have the capacity to meet the information needs of the electorate, by serving as a link between the political parties, their candidates and the electorates. The media serve as a platform for political parties and their candidates to campaign for votes. Through their coverage and publication or broadcast of political campaign messages, the broadcast media influence the electorates' decision either in favour or against a given political party or candidate (Nwaoboli and Abiodun, 2023).

The media serve to inform the public about morals; serve as the mouthpiece of the public at large and as an essential ingredient in unraveling or exposing corruption and other kinds of public sector irregularities. But where the government tries to control the newspapers and broadcast organisations or try to muscle the press, it will be impossible for the public to ascertain the true nature and extent of government activities. The freer the press, the greater the role it can play in maintaining democracy, providing information and contributing to a sound, stable government (Harcup, 2023). Ukwa (2020), while appreciating the impact of the Nigerian media on the emancipation of the people's right from the iron grip of the colonialists till date, identified junk journalism as an evidence of the depth of decadence into which our society had sunk and a manifestation of generational problems within the ranks of the press itself. He also opined that unethical practices had created credibility problems for the people's confidence as it lacked the analytical value of education and real entertainment being wrapped with lies and fabrications. Kediehor (2022) shows his worries over various unethical activities of the Nigerian media when he opinionated that the

brown envelope is the clear evidences that journalists accept gratifications in the course of their duties.

The pervasive influence of radio in political reporting and shaping public perception and awareness creation towards democratic processes cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, radio remains one of the media of communication that has wider viability and accessibility of transmitting across urban and rural areas. Radio have play a dominant role in our thoughts and actions, acting as the eyes and ears, of the society and as mobilizers, informers, educators, entertainers and channels for dissemination of information, propagating culture, educating, entertaining, mobilizing, correlating the environment and promoting the general economic well-being of the society.

Political reporting entails mass media reportage or coverage of politics and activities associated with it. It is beyond merely disseminations of information, facts, values, and policies adopted by government to wider society but also presenting events involving political rivalry and cooperation in the struggle and exercise of power and authority, as well as culminating decision-making among various groups that make up a society. Political reporting also involves surveying the world's political activities each day and reporting what is happening, what is scheduled to happen, what people are saying, and what it means to society. It requires empathy to understand people, their needs, hopes, and aspirations, their fears and feelings, and be able to relate them to the government for the betterment of society at large (Ugande, 2011).

Criticism has continued to trail the activities of media outfits in Nigeria, especially the broadcast media, whose ownership is being dominated by the government. The ethical standards entail being fair, objective, and balanced by the broadcast media, especially when reporting politics, but when the media unduly favored the government, a political party, or an interest, they could be said to be unethical in reportage. In Nigeria, the media have played by no means a role in the political development of the country, despite all shortcomings inherent in the role. Jobe (2003) says the role of the Nigerian press in politics is a controversial one; it has its prize-winning days and also has occasions in which its role is difficult to appreciate. There have controversies as regards what is being represented on the reality of objectivity of media practices which are subject to some factors that have worked against the norms and ethical guideline of media practices. What is not in doubt is that it has had a central role in politics since the pre-Nigerian era. However, the media have been surrounded with ethical issues like

accusations of bias reporting, brown envelope, sycophancy, among others, which attract the media a lot of criticisms in their political reportage. Ascertaining the whether or not these ethical issues is the concern of this paper.

Unarguably, the mass media have played an indispensable role in the political stability and entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria like any democratic society of the world. Through the agenda-setting function, the mass media smoothened, projected and mobilized for the development of politics, attainment and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

The mass media however, have been often accused of unethical conducts; biasness, lack of objectivity and imbalance in the reportage of political activities in Nigeria, more so, that they are mostly owned by the government like in the case of Radio Benue. This study, therefore, investigates how ethical the mass media are, in reporting politics or to ascertain whether the mass media are cut in the web of unethical issues while reporting politics.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the ethical issues that the mass media are entangled in while reporting politics and how do they affect their performance of the social responsibility and agenda-setting functions. The specific objectives are to;

1. Find out the ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue
2. Ascertain the extent to which Radio Benue is involved in unethical reporting of politics.
3. Determine the effects of ethical issues on public's perception of Radio Benue.
4. Establish the link between ownership and unethical reporting of politics by Radio Benue.
5. Ascertain the ways by which Radio Benue can be ethical in political reporting.

Research Questions

- i. What are the ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue?
- ii. To what extent does Radio Benue involve in unethical reporting of politics?
- iii. What are the effects of ethical issues on public's perception of Radio Benue?

- iv. What is the link between ownership and unethical reporting of politics by Radio Benue?
- v. What are the ways by which Radio Benue can be ethical in political reporting?

Significance of the Study

This research work will be highly significant in the following dimensions;

Firstly, the study will assist the media organization (Radio Benue) under investigation, to avoid been involved in ethical issues that could elicit negative perception of the medium by public it serves.

Secondly, the study will assist journalists in Nigeria who are engaged in reporting politics on the need to be ethical in their reportage.

Thirdly, the research work is useful to the government; policy makers and regulatory institutions such as the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission, in that, the mass media need to be regulated, to stick to ethical standards.

Fourthly, it is significant to other researchers, especially those that will engage in investigating in political reporting and ethical issues. It will serve as a contribution to existing body of knowledge and add to the literature that will be a springboard for further studies.

Lastly, the study will contribute to the understanding of the character and orientation of Nigerian journalists who are usually criticized for being partisan materialistic and highly unethical in reporting politics.

Literature Review

Radio Benue Makurdi

Radio is one of the media of mass communication which transmits its programmes to a large audience through the emission of rays or waves. The word “radio” is derivative from a Latin word “rays” meaning programmes, waves or signals. Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian, invented radio in 1896. Radio as an audio medium means is only for the ear; messages on radio cannot be viewed by audience but can only be heard. Chiakaan (2015) view radio as a broadcast medium that limits itself to the transmission of messages which are aurally received by members of the public. Because radio activities or programmes are received by members of the public on a general note, this makes radio, like television to be a broadcast medium. Again, radio employs only sound in researching the general public with information.

The core concept of radio revolves around the transmission and reception of audio signals via radio waves. The transmission and

reception waves are generated by a transmitter, which encodes sound into electromagnetic signals. These waves travel through the air and are captured by a receiver (such as radio receiver in car or portable radio), where the encoded sound is decoded and played through speakers or headphones. Radio broadcasts typically cover large geographic areas and can be transmitted over AM (Amplitude Modulation) bands. AM radio is known for long distance, lower-quality audio, while FM offers clearer sound quality over shorter distance.

In the context of this study Radio Benue Markudi 95.0 Fm is construed to be a state-owned radio station based in Makurdi, the state capital city of Benue State, Nigeria. It is cornerstone of communication in Benue State. It connects the people to the world around them while preserving their cultural heritage and fostering an informed, engaged society. As a government owned station, Radio Benue often plays a role in promoting the government's programs and policies, providing updates on state development, and ensuring transparency and accountability. It can serve as a bridge between the government and the people, enhancing civil participation

Radio Benue Markudi 95.0 Fm was established in 1990 as a public broadcaster for Benue State. The media house has extensively and fundamentally served the state in information dissemination, education and entertainment while maintaining its social responsibility to promote and uphold cultural heritage and social correlation among the state citizenry and beyond. The Radio station covers political news, local events and education programmes, policies and governance also providing a platform for a range of voices. The station is more than just a broadcaster; it is an active participation in the community through outreach programmes, it helps to educate people on health, and environmental conservation. It also provides and gives feedback, thus ensuring that the station remains connected to the local population (Radio Benue Corporation Makurdi, 2025).

Media Ethics

The ethical conduct of media professions is crucial in ensuring that journalism remains a trusted source of information in the society. The word "ethic" is derived from the Greek origin, 'ethos' which means character while the word 'moral' comes from the Latin conception 'moralis' which means custom or manner. Ciboh (2011) contends that, ethics serves as guide to human conduct in a desirable's way. Ethical

principles are ideals which allow the individual to act according to the dictates of his conscience and judgment.

In this context media ethics are provisions of codes designed to restrict journalist's actions in performing their duties to the accepted norms of the society and bind members of the profession to maintain social responsibility of upholding professional standard.

Journalism entails a high degree of public trust. To earn and maintain this trust, it is morally imperative for every journalist and news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards. In the exercise of these duties, a journalist should always have a healthy regard for the public interest. Truth is the cornerstone of journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event.

Conscious of the responsibilities and duties of journalists as purveyors of information, the Nigerian Press Organization gives this Code of Ethics. It is the duty of every journalist to observe its provisions.

- i. Editorial Independence
- ii. Accuracy and Fairness
- iii. Privacy
- iv. Privilege/Non disclosure
- v. Decency
- vi. Discrimination
- vii. Reward and Gratification
- viii. Violence
- ix. Children and Minors
- x. Access to information
- xi. Public interest
- xii. Social responsibility
- xiii. Plagiarism
- xiv. Copyright
- xv. Press Freedom and Responsibility

Ethical Dilemma in Nigerian Journalism

Despite the introduction of code of ethics for Nigerian journalists and the setting of the Nigerian Press Council, there are other ethical issues which are part of the overall of the problem in the society. These include: sycophancy, character assassination pressure, Afghanistan, moonlighting, sensationalism, self-censorship, plagiarism, advertorial, deception and faking stories among others.

Responsible Reporting

Responsible reporting refers to the ethical practice of journalists and media professionals when gathering, presenting, and disseminating information. It involves ensuring accuracy, fairness and accountability, while considering the potential impact of the story on individual, communities, and societies at large.

Kovach and Rosenstiel, (2014) emphasize that truth-telling is the cornerstone of journalism, requiring journalists to avoid sensationalism, bias, and misinformation. In this context, responsible reporting involves not only the accuracy of the facts but also presenting them in a balanced and contextually appropriate manner. Misleading headlines, selective reporting, and failure to provide necessary context can distort public trust in the media (Pew Research Centre, 2023). The rapid spread of information through social media platform has further complicated these issues, with unverified content often being amplified without proper scrutiny.

Key Ethical Challenges in Modern Media

The ethical challenges in media include:

- i. Sensationalism
- ii. Bias
- iii. Privacy
- iv. misinformation

The challenges of maintaining objectivity in reporting is another critical issue in media ethics. Ward (2019) argues that journalists must navigate their personal bias while adhering to professional codes of conducts. This is especially challenging in a highly polarized media environment, where ideological divisions can influence reporting. The erosion of objectivity in favour of partisanship, particularly in political journalism, has been widely criticized for contributing to social fragmentation (Gottfried and Shearer, 2022). However, some scholars, such as Craig (2021), suggest that complete objectivity may be unattainable, and instead, transparency about journalistic processes and bias is essential to building trust with audience.

Privacy concerns also play a significant role in the ethical challenges journalists face. The right to privacy is often at odds with the public's right to know, particularly in cases involving public figures or sensitive information. Media outlets are frequently scrutinized for overstepping ethical boundaries by intruding into private lives or sensationalizing personal tragedies commercial gain (Lamb, 2023). The balance between

these competing interests is delicate and must be carefully considered within the framework of ethical guideline set by professional organizations like the society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) which upholds principles of fairness and accountability in reporting.

In recent years, the concept of “fake news” has heightened concerns about the integrity of journalistic practices. Fake news, misinformation, and the deliberate spread of false information have eroded public trust in the media (Fletcher et al., 2021). According to Tanco et al, (2020), the spread of misinformation can be mitigated through the practice of fact, checking, adherence to journalistic codes of ethics, and the promotion of media literacy among the public. Journalists are increasingly called upon to not only report facts but to combat misinformation by adhering to high ethical standards in their reporting.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Social Responsibility Media Theory. Social Responsibility media Theory is an offshoot of libertarian theory. The theory owes its origin to the Hutchins Communication on Freedom of the Press, set up in the United State of American in 1947 to re-examine the concept of press freedom as enunciated in the Libertarian (free press) Media Theory. This was because the so-called free marketplace of ideal had failed to guarantee press freedom and to yield the expected benefits to society.

Baran and Devis (2009) assert that, the theory emphasizes the need for an independent press that that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, and accuracy news reports. The most innovative feature of social responsibility theory was its call for media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative greater communities. It said that the media should do this prioritizing cultural pluralism by becoming the voice of all people not just elite groups or groups that had dominated national, regional, or local culture in the past (Mcquail, 2010)

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in Asemah et al., (2017), social responsibility theory implores media practitioners to ensure representation of all facets of the society. This means that it is obligatory for the journalists to ensure that his good image is maintained in the society and should consider the coverage of rural areas as part of the responsibility. The press is supposed to be responsible for the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society. If on the hand the media fails to do just that, then the government agency should be used to ensure that they are forced to do that.

The theory is relevant to this study because it provides the way in which the media ought to behave in the society and as the media report politics; they should act responsibly by not taking to unethical practices such as sycophancy, corruption, biasness and ethnicity but remain fair and objective. The social responsibility theory also called the media to be ethically responsible in their reportage of news and events and maintain to uphold the professional standards.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is because, “survey are useful tools in the measurement of public opinions, attitudes and orientation, which are dominants among the population at a period” (Babbie, 2001, p. 164). This technique was considered appropriate for the study as it ascertained the ethical issues in political reporting by the media with a focus on Radio Benue Makurdi. The survey technique is based on the premise that a given population is too large for any researcher to realistically observe all the elements in the population and is useful in helping researchers gather valuable data from the sample of a substantial population with the purpose of making valid inferences. For this study therefore, residents of Makurdi, the Benue State capital where Radio Benue is located formed the population. According to 2021 census figure as released by the Nigerian National Population Commission (NPC), Makurdi was estimated at approximately 5, 50000. Therefore, to arrive at the determined sample size for this study, the researcher used the Taro Yamane formula. This is statically shown below. Taro Yamane’s formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where;

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Degree of average

$$n = \frac{5,5000}{1 + 300377 \times 0.05^2} = 399.46$$

n = 400

Using the above formula, the sample size for the study was determined as 400. This figure is deemed appropriate from the recommendation by Wimmer and Dominick (2011), that a survey using a sample of 400, if properly conducted, will usually represent the characteristics of that population. To determine the sample for this study, the multi-Stage sampling techniques was employed to select respondents for this study. Stratified Sampling, Simple random sampling techniques

and Purposive sampling were used. Therefore, Markurdi was stratified into North Bank, Wadata, Modern Market, and Wurukum areas. This study used questionnaire and as research instrument. To this end, a structured questionnaire was divided into two parts, part one contained questions that deal with the demographic composition of respondents while part two contained questions that focus on the problem under investigation: Evaluation of political reporting and ethical issues: The role of Radio Benue Makurdi. Data collected was collated and analyzed by frequency distribution tables and expressed in simple percentages, while the qualitative explanation building method of analysis based on the research questions raised in the study was used to analyze responses from the respondents

The questionnaire was administered to 400 respondents, fortunately enough, due to close monitoring of the questionnaire; all the copies were returned and found usable. The table below shows the distribution of the questionnaire.

Presentation of Results

Evaluation of Political Reporting and Ethical issues the Role of Radio Benue Makurdi

Table 1: whether there are ethical issues associated with political reporting on Radio Benue

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%	-
			Yes
	372	93%	
No	28	7%	
Total	400	100%	

Data in Table 1 sought to find out whether there are ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue. Based on the majority responses of 93% affirmed yes that there are ethical issues in political reporting by Radio Benue.

Table 2: Ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Sycophancy	49	24.2
Bribery and corruption	44	11
Biasness	97	24
All of the above	116	29
Total	400	100%

Table 2 sought to ascertain ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue. According to the distribution of 400 respondents, majority of the respondents by 116 (29%) chooses all of the above. That implies that the ethical issues associated with political reporting by Radio Benue are: biasness, sycophancy, bribery and corruption.

Table 3: The extent to which Radio Benue involved in unethical reportage of politics

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Extremely involved	206	51.5
Highly involved	93	23.3
Mildly involved	43	10.7
Partially involved	58	14.5
Total	400	100%

In Table 3 respondents rated the level of involvement of Radio Benue in unethical reportage of politics. According to the 400 respondents who answered the question, Majority of (51.5%) respondent asserted that Radio Benue is extremely unethical in political reporting.

Table 4: Determine the effects of ethical issues on public’s perception of Radio Benue

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Loss of agenda-setting power/inability to Hold government accountable	124	31
Loss of patronage/public sympathy	65	16.2
Loss of Credibility and believability	82	20
All of the above	129	32.3
Total	400	100%

Table 4 sought to determine the specific effects of ethical issues on public perception of Radio Benue. Out of the 400 sampled respondents, majority of 129 (32.3) identified all of the above: Loss of agenda-setting power/inability to hold government accountable, Loss of patronage/public sympathy and Loss of Credibility and believability as the effects of ethical issues of public perception of Radio Benue.

Table 5: Link between ownership and unethical reporting of politics by Radio Benue

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Through funding and legal measures	42	10.5
Through recruitment/appointments Board, management and staff	94	23.5
Government/intolerance to opposition	98	24.5
All of the above	166	41.5
Total	400	100%

Table 5 has established how ownership causes unethical reporting by Radio Benue. Out of 400 sampled respondents that attended to this item, majority of 166 respondents representing (41.5%) affirmed that all of the above; through funding and legal measures, through recruitment/appointments board, management and staff, and Government/intolerance to opposition are ways and reasons that depict how ownership causes unethical Radio Benue by Radio Benue.

Table 6: Way through which Radio Benue can be Ethical in reporting

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Editorial Independence	48	12
Fairness and objectivity	99	24.7
Decency and balance	33	8.2
Truth and accuracy	101	25.2
All of the above	119	29.7
Total	400	100%

Result from table 6 shows the way through which Radio Benue can be ethical in reporting. Majority of the verdict 199 (29.7%) respondents asserted all of the above: Editorial independence, fairness and objectivity, decency and balance, truth and accuracy as ways through which Radio Benue can be ethical in reporting.

Discussion of Findings

This study shows that there are ethical issues inherent in Radio Benue's reportage. The ethical issues are: biasness, sycophancy, bribery and corruption in result of tables 1 and 2 which agreed that the media is being tangled with ethical issues as mentioned above. Biasness has almost become a hallmark of journalism practice in Nigeria, as the mass media almost become a hallmark of partisan biasness which is a serious threat to responsible and ethical journalism. By been bias the media especially in political reporting tend to favour the government of the day to the detriment of the general public.

Observing this ugly trend in the coverage of the 2003 general elections (Jibo, 2003) hold that, the Nigerian press has been pocked by vested interest, and is therefore bias, when this trend is ongoing, the media deliberately suppressed critical issues of public interest; there is gross diversion of public attention and selective target on issues and personalities. In fact, the audience is psyched towards a favourable disposition to a particular political party and candidate specially the ruling party.

The position of Jibo is a replica of what has been taking place on Radio Benue in the course of news reporting in which the station has from 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 favoured the ruling People Democratic party (PDP) while 2019 and 2023 the ruling All progressive congress (APC) posed unfavourable to opposition parties and their candidates.

For sycophancy, Radio Benue has been in the practice of singing undue praises of the government of the day, the ruling party; her candidates, chieftains and members. As pate (2011), posits, media organization, particularly, states owned media have perfected the crude and irritating act of the praise singing for governors and other officials. Members of the opposition are denigrated and news about other parties is hardly given serious consideration. Similarly, Jibo (2003) while commenting on sycophancy on Radio Benue remarks that, only appraisals that eulogies the government in power is considered news. Result of the study also revealed bribery and corruption popularly called “brown envelop” Asaju (2011) bring a new dimension to it through the use of “Kwa” a euphemism for the (brown envelop syndrome) which organizers of press conferences and or other media events dole out to the journalists’ activities of the ruling party the distort facts and slant to favour the ruling party. This is in line with the adage which says, “He that pays the piper calls the tune”

In the same vein, findings indicate the extent to which Radio Benue or the media generally involved in unethical reporting of politics is great or high. This is manifested in the high level of biasness exhibited by the station, singing of undue praise to the ruling party, denying access to the opposition and deceiving the audience/the public in table 5 finding showed that out 400 respondents, 166 agreed that Radio Benue is being entangled with ethical issues being mentioned above. The findings can be buttressed by the present situation in which Radio Benue was giving undue consideration to the candidates in PDP in the 2023 general election and local government election it was obviously denying access to candidates of the opposition especially the All-Progressive Congress (APC) while APC as ruling party now replicate the same act in 2024 local government elections thereby preventing oppositions parties to sale their manifestoes and blueprint to the electorates.

Findings also found that to the prevalence of unethical practices in news reporting by Radio Benue has lead to negative perception of the station by the public. The negative perception cost the station the credibility and believability of the public who no longer consider the station worthy of setting political agenda and holding government accountable to the people which supposed to be its core operation mandate as being illustrated on table 4 affirmed that Radio Benue has failed being socially responsible in upholding journalism professional standard.

By objectivity, Radio Benue is expected not to influence by emotion or personal prejudice but should be distanced from the controversy and disagreement surrounding political events or news. Being accuracy, the station has to be exact and meticulous. Accuracy requires journalist reporting to stick to the exact facts and figures or the information or news about politics. It has to provide the public with authentic information both in terms of fact and context. It requires attribution of information by identifying sources.

Radio Benue can also be ethical when it cherishes truth. Truth is conformity to fact or reality; and a fact is something that can be verified. With truth, the station will not present news or political reports that are characterized by deceit or lies thereby building public confidence for the station.

Meanwhile, ethical issues on Radio Benue can be tackled through professional training of journalists and improved welfare package for them. By this, it will arm them intellectually and financially to resist being entangled in ethical issues.

Other ways of correcting this anomaly (unethical practice) include; strict enforcement of professional codes of ethics by professional and regulatory bodies such as Nigerian Union of Journalists, Nigeria Guild of Editors, and Nigerian Press Council etc., and government ownership and influence should be removed if not completely as matter of fact should be reduced.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind that the society expects a great responsibility from the journalists, it behooves on Nigerian journalists to pay attention to certain kinds of conflicts to avoid projecting the impression that they can no longer be trusted.

It is evident from this study that the media as represented by Radio Benue are caught in the web of ethical issues such as biasness, sycophancy, bribery and corruption, as they report politics. This has led to negative perception of the public which usually result into the loss of credibility, believability and ultimately the social responsibility as well as agenda-setting potency of the media (Radio Benue) becomes defeated.

To this end, the onus is on the media particularly Radio Benue to retrace its steps by being ethical while reporting politics and by being ethical, the station has to imbibe the moral or ethical indices of journalism such as fairness, objectivity, accuracy and truth. It is by so doing that the station would justify its mandate of setting political agenda and holding

government accountable to the Benue societies, which are the fundamental roles of the media in a democratic setting like Nigeria.

Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are put forward.

The management, staff or journalists working for Radio Benue should eschew unethical practices and thrive hard to be ethical when reporting political activities. They can be ethical by imbibing the fairness, accuracy, objectivity and truth doctrines of journalism.

There should be full deregulation, and guideline of the media, this will reduce or checkmate undue government influence or interference in the operations of the media like Radio Benue which is owned by the state. The management of media-Radio Benue should ensure that only professionally trained journalists are employed and saddled with the task of reporting politics. They should be subjected to training, retraining and on the job training through workshops, seminars and conferences.

Also, there should be improved welfare package in terms of salaries, allowances, bonuses and honorarium for journalists. This will mitigate their justification of poverty and poor working conditions as reasons for their involvement in unethical practices so as to obtain financial gratifications.

Furthermore, professional bodies like the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria (BON) and National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should strictly enforce professional codes of ethics and sanctioned media stations that indulge in unethical practices.

References

- Asemah, S. E., Nwammuo, N. A. & Nkwam-Uwaoma, O. N. (2017). *The theories and models of communication*. Jos: University Press.
- Babbie, E. (2001). *Introduction to social inquiry*. California: Wadsworth Publishers
- Baran, S. J. & Davis, D. K. (2009). *Mass communication theory. Foundations, ferment and future*, (5th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Chiakaan, G. J., & Ahmad, J. I. (2015). *Mass communication for beginners*. Makurdi: Azaben Publishers
- Ciboh, R. (2011). Nigeria journalists, ethics and the challenge of truth. *Benue journal Communication and Development*, 21(6), 643-711.
- Craig, D. (2021). *Journalism ethics: A global approach*. Routledge.

- Fletcher, R., Newman, N., & Nielsen, R.K. (2021). *The Reuters Institute digital news report 2021*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2022). *The state of the news media 2022*. Pew Research Centre.
- Harcup, T. (2023). *Journalism ethics at the crossroads: Global perspectives in the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Jibo, M. (2003). "The Nigerian press and politics" in Jibo, M. Simbine (Ed). *Contemporary issues in Nigeria politics*. Ibadan: Jodad Publications.
- Jibo, M. (2003). *The Nigerian media and 2023 elections*. Ibadan: Jodad Publisher
- Kediehor, C. (2022). Ethical dilemma in reporting politics in Nigeria: Towards the 2019 general elections. Delta: University Press
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The elements of journalism: What newspaper should know and the public should expect*. Crown Publishers.
- Lamb, C. (2023). *Media law and Ethics*. Reuters institute for the study of journalism.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *Mass communication Theory: An introduction* (6th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Nigerian Press Organization (1998). Code of ethics for Nigerian journalists.*
- Nwaoboli, E. P., & Abiodun, A. O. (2023). A content analytical study of the vanguard newspaper online coverage of 2023 Nigerian presidential election. In *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, 4(6), 111-137
- Pate, U.A. (2003). *Media ethics and political reporting in the broadcast media in Nigeria*. Enugu: P prime Targets Limited
- Pew Research Center (2023). *Trust in news media: 2023 trends*. Pew Research Center.
- Tandoc, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2020). Defining "fake news" and its implications for media ethics. *Journalism Studies*, 21(6), 873-889.
- Ugande, B. (2011). *Issues in broadcasting*. Culture Media Nig. LTD
- Ukwa, I. U. (2020). Newspaper coverage of violence in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. A study of the vanguard and the punch newspaper. *Journal Political Communication*, 15 (6) 70-82.
- Ward, S. J.A. (2019). *Ethics and the media: An introduction*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge: University Press.

**ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF HEALTH
COMMUNICATION TOWARDS JAUNDICE AMONG RURAL
DWELLERS IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
ENUGU STATE**

**Osamor, Emmanuel Onyekachukwu
Department of Mass Communication
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Onyekaemma6@gmail.com
08038361786**

&

**Greg H, Ezeah
Department of Mass Communication
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Gregory.ezeah@unn.edu.ng**

Abstract

The study looked at attitude and perception of health communication towards jaundice among rural dwellers in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state. Jaundice is a sickness that makes an infant's skin to turn yellow in color, mucus membrane or of the eyes and this comes from what is known as bilirubin in the baby's blood and tissues, a by-product of red blood cell which are broken down and replaced frequently. Common childhood diseases, including jaundice among infants persist without majority of parents knowing what exactly the cause of this sickness is due to their perception and attitude around its severity. Three objectives were raised which is to ascertain the perceptions of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state. amongst others. The study made use of survey method with a population of 483,256 and a sample size of 384 with the help of the Australian Calculator, the instrument for this study was the questionnaire. The study was anchored on health belief model. Findings showed that, majority of rural dwellers had a good perception of what Jaundice is, other findings revealed that, rural dwellers of Nsukka local government area are conscious of the sickness and they look for solution for it amongst other findings. Some recommendations were made amongst others; Government should create an avenue for rural dwellers to have easy access to seek for health information from health workers without delay/stress rather than engaging in self-medication.

Keywords: Attitude, Perception, Health Communication, Jaundice, Rural Dweller

Introduction

In new-borns, jaundice often reveals itself as a yellowish tint in the skin, eyes, or mucous membranes. This occurs because bilirubin is produced when red blood cells break down rapidly in infants, it also builds up in their blood and tissues. Typically, the liver processes bilirubin, but a baby's liver needs to develop swiftly to handle this responsibility. It's striking to note that around 60% of infants experience jaundice, with an even higher prevalence in premature babies.

True well-being goes beyond merely being free from medical conditions; it encompasses a holistic balance that integrates physical health, mental resilience, and meaningful social interactions. World Health Organization (WHO), as highlighted by Omole and Adebayo (2019), emphasizes this holistic perspective. Health is a fundamental necessity for individuals to live active and productive lives within their communities. The growth and development of a community are largely driven by healthy individuals whose contributions to the workforce significantly boost the economy, thereby propelling national development (Omotoso, 2010).

People living in areas with low population density and smaller communities are typically known as rural inhabitants. They frequently generate income through local businesses or are among the few salaried workers in their communities. Despite their significant contributions to their surroundings, they may face greater challenges in accessing education and economic opportunities compared to urban residents. According to Omole and Adebayo (2019), around 70% of Nigeria's population resides in rural areas, with many facing difficulties in obtaining formal education.

To make a living, rural dwellers engage in a range of activities. This includes farming and craftsmanship, with both men and women participating, as well as semi-literate artisans and traders. Additionally, there are civil servants such as teachers, healthcare workers, and other professionals. Community leaders, including chairpersons, councilors, village heads, and their chiefs, play crucial roles. Retired elites, former civil servants, ex-service members, and professionals from various backgrounds also contribute to these rural communities.

Maintaining a healthy mind and body is essential for human well-being and is a fundamental goal of development. Health communication utilizes both strategic and creative methods to improve health outcomes for individuals and communities. As noted by the Society for Health Communication (SHC, 2017), this field merges evidence-based practices, theoretical frameworks, and innovative strategies to shape attitudes, behaviors, and policies related to well-being. It is crucial in addressing health disparities, especially in underserved rural populations, by promoting positive changes in perceptions and practices that benefit both individuals and society (SHC, 2017).

According to Elizabeth (2014), individuals or entities that effectively educate communities on health-related matters, provide medical care, and offer treatment to groups of people are known as healthcare workers. This group includes professionals such as doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives, radiologists, and pharmacists who deliver these essential services. For healthcare workers to be truly effective and fulfilled in their roles, they must be knowledgeable and capable of communicating effectively on health issues to deliver solutions to their communities, even across long distances.

The World Health Organization (WHO), as cited by Asibey and Agyemang (2017), acknowledges that ensuring good health among rural populations is a crucial factor in promoting development in rural areas and reducing poverty. This emphasizes the critical importance of how health communication is disseminated to the public and the entire nation (Asibey and Agyemang, 2017). When members of a community are unhealthy, it significantly hampers economic growth. Therefore, without properly utilizing the health information received, a community cannot progress.

Unhealthy state of mind and body could be attributed to ignorance, limited knowledge, misinformation that could bridge the gap in communicating health issues to rural dwellers in the community which eventually leads to the predominance of health challenges and death (Igere, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

It is no longer news that, rural areas in our society today remains the most neglected, and the dwellers, the most deprived with respect to provision of modern health care services. Common childhood diseases, including jaundice among infants persist and often times, infant suffers from this sickness after few weeks of delivery without majority of parents

knowing what exactly the cause of this sickness is due to their perception and attitude around its severity. Jaundice in infants is considered normal, not severe but deadly. Health communication has not been sufficiently channeled to properly educate rural dwellers on proper management of jaundice in infants. They often resort to self-medication which may lead to serious complications or even death. However, there remain dearth of evidence on the current wave of perception and attitudes towards jaundice and its medical management in infants among rural dwellers. This study seeks to investigate the perspectives and viewpoints of residents living in rural communities within the Nsukka Local Government Area. The goal is to determine how effective health communication can improve current conditions to protect infants' lives from preventable deaths.

Objectives to the study

The main objective of this research is to assess the attitudes and perceptions of rural residents in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State concerning health communication strategies related to jaundice. The specific objectives include to:

- 1 Ascertain the perceptions of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state.
- 2 Evaluate the attitude of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state.
- 3 Examine the attitude of rural dwellers in seeking for health communication towards jaundice from health workers in Nsukka local government area in Enugu state.

Research Questions

The following will constitute the research question of the study which is;

- 1 What is the perception of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state?
- 2 What is the attitude of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state?
- 3 What is the attitude of rural dwellers in seeking for health communication towards jaundice from health workers in Nsukka local government area in Enugu state?

Significance of the Study

This study will entail both practical and theoretical significance from health communication towards jaundice among rural dwellers in Nsukka local government area, Enugu state.

- **Practical Significance** entails those indigenes in the society that will be enlightened about Jaundice
- **Theoretical Significance** will give room for other researcher to further expand knowledge and fill in any gap detected from this study.

Literature Review

Focus of review

Extensive studies by various scholars, authors, researchers, and students have been examined concerning the current topic. In alignment with Ohaja's recommendation that literature reviews should be divided into sub-units and presented logically to enhance readability (Ohaja, 2003), this review follows a structured format. Health workers undoubtedly play an essential role in society, facilitating healthy living and contributing to development. Without their services at the rural level, numerous health risks would arise. Community-level hospitals and health centers are pivotal in addressing the people's needs. Moreover, understanding the perspectives and views of rural residents in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State regarding health communication related to jaundice is crucial. Consequently, this review is structured into conceptual, empirical, and theoretical frameworks, categorized under the following subheadings:

Conceptual Framework

Overview of Jaundice

When red blood cells break down, they generate bilirubin, a yellow substance found in an infant's body, according to the Cleveland Clinic (2022). During pregnancy, the mother's liver manages the processing and elimination of bilirubin for the developing fetus. After birth, this responsibility shifts to the newborn's liver. If the infant's liver is not sufficiently mature, it may have difficulty processing bilirubin efficiently, leading to its accumulation. This excess bilirubin can cause the baby's skin to take on a yellowish hue. Jaundice is a common condition in infants that is generally not serious if treated promptly but can be dangerous if ignored. Therefore, it is crucial for mothers to consult their baby's healthcare provider to check for jaundice, as severe jaundice can result in brain damage if untreated (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).

Physiological jaundice is the most prevalent type of jaundice in infants, typically appearing within the first few days after birth, as noted

by the Cleveland Clinic (2022). As the infant's liver develops, it gradually becomes more efficient at processing and removing excess bilirubin. In most cases, physiological jaundice resolves spontaneously within two weeks, particularly when the newborn is exposed to early morning sunlight. However, in certain situations, additional interventions such as phototherapy or enhanced nutritional support may be necessary.

MedlinePlus (2023) explains that jaundice is characterized by a yellowish tint in the skin, eyes, or mucous membranes, which results from bilirubin, a substance produced when the body breaks down aged red blood cells. Normally, the liver processes bilirubin efficiently, but if there is an excessive breakdown of red blood cells or liver injury, bilirubin builds up, leading to jaundice. This accumulation often signals an underlying condition affecting liver function. Furthermore, jaundice can signal issues with the liver, gallbladder, or pancreas. It occurs when excessive bilirubin accumulates in a baby's bloodstream. This buildup may result from several factors:

- An excessive breakdown of red blood cells (hemolysis), increasing the amount of bilirubin delivered to the liver.
- An overloaded or damaged liver, which can't efficiently process bilirubin.
- Impaired movement of bilirubin from the liver into the digestive tract.

Health Communication

Health communication combines scientific principles and creative strategies, employing diverse methods to improve health outcomes, attitudes, and overall well-being across individuals and communities (Society for Health Communication, SHC, 2017). According to the Rural Health Information Hub (RHIfhub, 2024), this field leverages both spoken and written communication to inspire and enable individuals, groups, and communities to adopt healthier lifestyles. By drawing on elements from various theories and models, health communication aims to foster positive shifts in behavior and perceptions (RHIfhub, 2024).

By leveraging diverse communication channels, health message programs can influence person-to-person interactions, perceptions, and attitudes within small groups or communities through mass media. Health communication strategies are designed to influence and reshape individuals' understanding, beliefs, attitudes, and actions by targeting key areas such as:

1. Reinforcing positive behaviors—promoting actions that support well-being.
2. Influencing social norms—shaping the shared beliefs and expectations within a community.
3. Increasing the availability of support and needed services—ensuring access to resources that help maintain or improve health.
4. Empowering individuals—providing people with the tools and confidence to change or enhance their health conditions.

Here are some examples of media strategies to convey health messages:

1. Radio – Transmitting health-related audio programs to reach a broad audience.
2. Television – Utilizing both visual and auditory content to inform viewers about health topics.
3. Newspapers – Printing articles and advertisements to convey health information to readers.
4. Flyers and Brochures – Handing out printed materials within the community to provide health information.
5. Websites – Offering online platforms that deliver accessible health resources and information.
6. Social Media – Leveraging social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to disseminate dynamic and interactive health-related content.

Rural Dwellers

Rural dwellers are set of people who live in an undeveloped area in a country, they usually rely on their petty trade to make ends meet. According to Aiden and Artem (2023) opines that rural living can be identified as population density, group of people living in a given area, or it can be seen as geographical isolation of people living separately in a particular location. The term "rural" pertains to life in the country living. In these regions, communities depend more significantly on natural resources compared to those in urban environments. In essence, rural areas are defined as non-urban communities.

Empirical

Several related studies have been conducted on this subject.

In their study titled *Information Needs of Rural Dwellers as a Measure of the Effectiveness of Library and Information Services Provision in Anambra State, Nigeria*, Anunobi, Ogbonna, and Osuchukwu (2014) examined how different types of information services

cater for rural communities' needs. Their findings indicated that non-government-funded libraries and information centers were more effective in providing relevant and accessible communication to rural populations. Conversely, government-funded resources, primarily based on print materials, were less successful in meeting these needs. Additionally, the study highlighted that rural residents tend to rely more on oral forms of communication, and their information needs are closely tied to their occupational activities.

In a study titled *Perception and Information Seeking Behavior of Rural Households towards Health Promoting Practices in Maigana District of Kaduna State, Nigeria*, Ezeh and Ezeh (2017) observed that many rural residents struggle to access health-related communication with qualified healthcare professionals. Furthermore, the limited proximity to modern healthcare facilities often leads individuals to resort to self-treatment or seek advice from untrained practitioners.

In a study titled *Neonatal Jaundice: Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices of Postnatal Mothers in a Tertiary Care Hospital in Uttarakhand, India*, Bindu, Archana, Piyush, Girish, Sudhir, and Sourabh (2017) investigated postnatal mothers' understanding and reactions to neonatal jaundice (NNJ). The results revealed varying levels of awareness and inconsistent beliefs regarding the causes, warning signs, potential complications, and treatment options for NNJ. On average, participants scored 6.48 ± 3.93 out of 21 on a knowledge assessment, with 73% of mothers able to identify at least one sign of NNJ. However, only 28%, 54%, and 33% correctly mentioned at least one cause, danger sign, or complication of NNJ, respectively. Alarmingly, just 8% recognized NNJ as a potential risk factor for infant mortality.

The study also highlighted significant correlations between maternal attitudes and factors such as educational background, place of residence, religious beliefs, and prior experience with affected infants, though no significant link was found with the mother's age. In terms of actions, 20% of mothers were willing to take their child to the hospital within 24 hours of detecting jaundice. Furthermore, approximately 91% of those who sought medical guidance were ready to follow the advice provided.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is among the most well-known and widely applied theories in health behavior research. It serves as a fundamental framework for such studies. This model was introduced in

the 1950s by social psychologists Godfrey M. Hochbaum, Irwin M. Rosenstock, Stephen S. Kegels, and Howard Leventhal while they were employed at the U.S. Public Health Service. The idea which led to this theory stemmed from concerns among researchers and health care practitioners noting the insufficient number of individuals undergoing tuberculosis (TB) screening at that time. The HBM states that a person's engagement in, or lack thereof in, health- promoting behaviors or communication is influenced by their perceptions of health issues, their appraisal of the benefits of acting the barriers, and their sense of self-efficacy. Its origins can be traced back to the desire to clarify and anticipate health-related behaviors, particularly with regard to health care consumption.

Methodology

Study Design

The study made use of the survey research design because it was concerned with getting the views/opinion of indigenes and few health workers in Nsukka LGA as it regards to the topic of study which is attitude and perception of health communication towards jaundice among rural dwellers in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state. Such design could make use of either interview or self-administered questionnaire as an instrument to get the needed response from respondents.

Population of the study

Ohaja (2003) defines a population as all the persons or items that fall under the same group being studied or that can be examined to address the research issue or meet the research objectives. Therefore, the population of this study in Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) is 483,256, based on data from the Joint Research Centre (JRC) work on the GHS built-up grid. **Sample size**

The sample size of this study is 384, this was generated with the use of the Australian Calculator from a population of 483,256 and confident interval of 0.05

Sampling Technique

The multi stage sampling was used

The first stage involved simple random sampling, which was used to select two communities out of the three that comprise the Nsukka Urban Local Government Area: Nru, Ihe'n owerre, and Mkpunano. As

Lauren (2020) suggests, simple random sampling ensures that each respondent has an equal chance of being chosen, thus preventing bias in the selection process. For example, the names of the three communities were written on pieces of paper, crumpled, placed in separate containers, mixed thoroughly, and two communities were then randomly picked.

The second stage utilized purposive sampling to select Ihe Owerre for the study due to considerations such as security, proximity, and ease of questionnaire retrieval.

The third stage involved accidental sampling, also known as grab or opportunity sampling, for administering the questionnaire. This technique involves selecting a sample that is readily available rather than one that is systematically determined.

Instrument of data collection

The 4 Likert-scale questionnaires were the instrument used for collecting data for this study, the questionnaire was made up of questions with open and close ended items in simple English to ensure clarity and comprehension to an average respondent.

Method of Data Analysis and Result Presentation

In this research, the collected data was presented and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, primarily descriptive in nature. The quantitative approach utilized simple percentages, tables, frequencies, means, and standard deviations to ensure the accuracy, clarity, and correctness of the data, effectively displaying the distribution of results and findings. The qualitative method was employed for interpretation, discussing the figures to provide a deeper understanding of the findings

Description of the Sample

The researcher distributed 384 copies of questionnaire which represent the sample size for the study and out of this number distributed, the valid copies of questionnaire returned were 370, 8 copies of the questionnaire were lost in the field while 6 copies were invalid. They are seen as invalid because the respondents did not fill the questionnaire correctly. Hence, the data analyzed in the chapter was based on the 370 copies of questionnaire.

Table 1: 4.1.2 Section A: Analyzing of Demographic Data and Analysis

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	-	-
Female	370	100
Total	370	100

Table1 above showed that, female constitute majority of the respondents of this study because the scope of the study applies more to female (mothers).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-29	25	7%
30-34	90	24%
35-39	160	43%
40 and Above	95	26%
Total	370	100

Findings from table 3 above revealed that, majority of respondents are within the age bracket of 35-39, followed by 40 and above, 30-34 while 25-29 was the least of the respondents in age.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents according to Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Government worker	235	64%
Business	125	34%
House wife	10	2%
Total	370	100

The above table showed that, majority of the respondents are government workers, followed by those doing business and the least of it was, the house wife.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents according to Marital Status

Marriage	Frequency	Percentage
Married	356	96%
Single mother	14	4%
Total	370	100

Findings from the above table showed that, majority of the respondents are married while a little percentage of the respondents are single mothers

Section B: Psychographic Data, Analysis of Respondents

This section focused on analyzing the psychographic data which is in consonance with “attitude and perception of health communication towards jaundice among rural dwellers in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state. These questions were constructed using the 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The accepted criterion mean is 2.5 and above but anything below it, is not accepted. In this section, data were further presented in simple table, mean and standard deviation. Therefore, the psychographic data was used to answer each research question in line with the questions contained in the questionnaire.

Research Question 1: What is the perception of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state? Do you know what Jaundice is?

S/ N	Statements of perception	S A	A	D	S D	Total	mean	Std. V	Decision
5	I know what Jaundice is	25	11	-	-	370	3.69	0.21	Accepted
6	I don't know what Jaundice is	-	-	98	27	370	1.53	0.19	Rejected
7	I have no idea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
8	Note: If you know what Jaundice is, what is your opinion or view about it and if you don't know about it, don't proceed to the next question.								
9	It is not a bad sickness if attended to early enough	75	65	10	12	370	2.24	0.12	Accepted
10	It is dangerous and changes skin colour of infants if not attended to early enough.	16	10	82	25	370	3.15	0.23	Accepted

From the table above, it could be deduced that majority of rural dwellers knows about Jaundice, this can be seen as accepted from a mean

score of 3.69 while the perception of those that said, I don't know what jaundice is all about is minimal. This goes to say that, they have a good perception about jaundice.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of rural dwellers towards jaundice in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state? is jaundice a threat to you when you see it on your infants' skin?

S/ N	Statement of attitude	SA	A	D	SD	Total	mean	Std. V	Decision
11	No, it is not a threat	28	68	7	19	370	1.81	0.1	Rejected
12	Yes, it is a threat and it needs medical attention	26	69	2	16	370	3.65	0.2	Accepted
How do you feel when you see a child with Jaundice?									
14	I am scared when I see a child or my child with Jaundice	12	20	4	8	370	2.97	0.24	Accepted
15	I pay less attention because it will go away like that	21	49	9	20	370	1.68	0.41	Rejected

From the above, it could be seen that, majority of rural dwellers said that, jaundice is a threat and they are scared when they see such sickness amongst infants while a few minorities said, it is not a threat, they are not

scared and they pay less attention to the sickness. This goes to say that, rural dwellers of Nsukka local government area are conscious of the sickness and they look for solution for it.

Research Question 3: what are the attitude of rural dwellers in seeking for health communication from health workers in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state? **When your infant suffers from Jaundice, do you seek for health workers to communicate with you on what to do?**

From the table above, it can be deduced that, a reasonable number of respondents seek for health worker to communicate with them on what to do concerning jaundice but majority from a mean score of 2.52 don't seek for health workers because, they still engage in self-medication. This is as a result of financial constraint, time wastage and ignorance of going to the hospital. Findings revealed that, majority still engage in what other people asked them to do because it worked for them. This simply means that, a good number of rural dwellers are exposed to seeking for medical attention while majority still wallow in ignorance of engaging in self-medication and herbal treatment which is detrimental to the infant's wellbeing.

Discussion of findings

Data collected from the field was presented, analyzed, and discussed based on the research questions of the study.

The first research question asked about the perception of rural residents in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State towards jaundice. To answer this, Table 5 showed that most rural dwellers had a good understanding of jaundice, with an average score of 3.69. Only a small percentage were unaware of what jaundice entails, indicating a generally good perception of the condition. This finding contrasts with the study by Bindu, Archana, Piyush, Girish, Sudhir, and Sourabh (2017) titled "Neonatal Jaundice: Knowledge, Attitude, Beliefs, and Practices of Postnatal Mothers in a Tertiary Care Hospital in Uttarakhand, India," which revealed inconsistent attitudes among respondents regarding the causes, severity signs, complications, and treatment of neonatal jaundice. In their study, the mean knowledge score was 6.48 ± 3.93 out of 21, with 73% of mothers recognizing the signs of neonatal jaundice, but only a minority correctly identified its causes, danger signs, and complications.

The second research question aimed to explore the attitudes of rural residents in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State

towards jaundice. Table 6 provided the response, revealing that the majority of rural dwellers perceive jaundice as a threat, while a small minority do not. Most respondents expressed fear when they see jaundice on a child's body, whereas a smaller percentage paid less attention to the illness. This indicates that rural dwellers in the Nsukka Local Government Area are aware of the condition and actively seek solutions. This finding aligns with the study by Bindu, Archana, Piyush, Girish, Sudhir, and Sourabh (2017), titled "Neonatal Jaundice: Knowledge, Attitude, Beliefs, and Practices of Postnatal Mothers in a Tertiary Care Hospital in Uttarakhand, India." Their results showed that attitudes were significantly associated with factors such as education level, residence, religion, and previous experiences with affected babies, but not with age. In terms of attitudes, 20% of mothers were willing to take their baby to the hospital within 24 hours of recognizing jaundice, and almost 91% of those seeking medical advice were ready to follow it.

Finally, the third research question focused on the attitudes of rural residents in seeking health communication from healthcare workers in the Nsukka Local Government Area. Table 7 revealed that a considerable number of respondents seek healthcare workers' communication by visiting hospitals to address the illness. However, the majority still engage in self-medication and herbal treatment due to ignorance, financial constraints, and perceived time wastage at hospitals, which is dangerous for the child's well-being. This finding is consistent with the study by Ezeh and Ezeh (2017), titled "Perception and Information Seeking Behavior of Rural Households towards Health Promoting Practices in Maigana District of Kaduna State, Nigeria." Their findings showed that many rural dwellers have limited access to health communication with healthcare workers and do not have ready access to modern health facilities, often resulting in self-medication or visiting unqualified healthcare providers.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

The study explored attitude and perception of health communication towards jaundice amongst rural dwellers in Nsukka local government area of Enugu state. The intent of this study was to ascertain precisely the attitude and perception of rural dwellers in seeking for health communication concerning jaundice. Survey as a method was used to execute this work with questionnaires as an instrument to get response and views from respondents. Three objectives were raised, a sample size

of 384 was gotten through the Australian calculator from a population of 483,256. The study made use of the multistage sampling techniques, the quantitative and qualitative method was adopted for representing, analyzing and interpreting data generated. The simple percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation was used. Some findings were made and result showed that; majority of rural dwellers had a good perception of what Jaundice is with an acceptable mean of 3.69 while the perception of those that said, I don't know what jaundice is all about is minimal. This goes to say that, they have a good perception about jaundice. Also, findings from second research question showed that, the attitude of rural dwellers depicts that, jaundice is a threat and they are scared when they see such sickness amongst infants while a few minorities said, it's not a threat, they are not scared and they pay less attention to the sickness. This goes to say that, rural dwellers of Nsukka local government area are conscious of the sickness and they look for solution for it. The last findings showed that, some seek for medical attention concerning jaundice while majority engaged in self-medication and herbal treatment which is dangerous for an infant and could lead to death.

Conclusion

In conclusion, having explored through various objectives in this study, it is worthy to say that although, some rural dwellers still seek for medical attention for their infants sickness such as jaundice but it is also worthy to note that majority of the dwellers are still ignorant of the importance of health communication which will provide solution to their problem. Therefore, there is need for more enlightenment to seek for solution first, through communicating to a health expert rather than self-medication.

Recommendations

The study highlighted the attitudes and perceptions of health communication regarding jaundice among rural residents in the Nsukka Local Government Area, underscoring the vital role health communication plays in offering effective solutions to the public. Based on the findings, the study offers the following recommendations, among others:

- 1 An avenue for more awareness should be created by the government to allow health professionals to communicate freely with rural dwellers in all aspects. This will help increase their

- knowledge and understanding of various illnesses, especially jaundice in infants, and reduce the practice of self-medication.
- 2 At the grassroot level, government should ensure that, there is a routine sensitization amongst parents concerning jaundice on their infants, this will enable health worker to save more lives of new born baby.
 - 3 To avoid self-medication which keep endangering their infant's life, government should provide free medical checkup at interval for victims who don't have money to run a test or treat themselves.

Reference

- Aiden, F. & Artem, C. (2023) Explore rural communities. Learn the definition of a rural community and understand its different characteristics. Discover various rural area examples. *Updated: 11/21/2023* <https://study.com/academy/lesson/characteristics-of-rural-communities.html>
- Anunobi, C. V., Ogbonna, A. U., & Osuchukwu, N. P. (2014) titled: Information Needs of Rural Dwellers as a Measure of the Effectiveness of Library and Information Services Provision in Anambra State, Nigeria Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka , Nigeria Justice Development and Peace Library, Onitsha chinobis@yahoo.com, uchetek4real@yahoo.com, & ngostary2k@yahoo.com
- Asibey, B.& Agyemang, S. (2017). Analysing the Influence of Health Insurance Status on Peoples' Health Seeking Behaviour in Rural Ghana. *Journal of Tropical Medicine*, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/8486451>
- Bindu, A., Archana, A., Piyush, C., Girish, G., Sudhir, R., & Sourabh, G. in their study titled; Neonatal Jaundice: Knowledge, attitude beliefs, and practices of postnatal mothers in a tertiary care hospital in Uttarakhand, India. Doi: 10.32677/IJCH. 2017.v04.i04.033
- Cleveland clinic reviewed (2022) retrieved online. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/22263-jaundice-in-newborns>
- Elizabeth, Davis R.N (2024). What is Health care provider? Retrieved from www.verywellhealth.com
- Ezeh, C.C and Ezeh, O.H. (2017). Perception and Information Seeking Behaviour of Rural Households towards Health Promoting Practices in Maigana District of Kaduna State, Nigeria. *Open Journal of Medical Psychology* 6, 233-242. <http://www.scirp.org/journal/ojmp>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette; population of the study (2007) pg. 175-198.

- Lauren, T. (2020) Sample Random Sampling, definition, steps and examples. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/simple-random-sampling>
- Medline plus, trusted health information for you (2023) retrieved online <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007491.htm> Updated by: Michael M. Phillips, MD, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, The George Washington University School of Medicine, Washington, DC. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.
- Mercy, I. (2022). Information Seeking Behaviour of Rural Dwellers on Healthcare: The case of Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria Article . October 2022. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364356296>.
- Ohaja, E.U. (2003). Mass communication research and project reporting writing. Lagos John Letterman.
- Omole, S.M. & Adebayo, T.T. (2019). Cultural Influence on Health Information Seeking Behavior among Rural Dwellers in Atakumosa West Local Government Area of Osun State Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal). <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>
- Omotoso, O. (2010). Health Seeking Behavior among the Rural Dwellers in Ekiti State, Nigeria (Pp. 125-138) African Research Review an International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia Vol. 4 (2) April, 2010 ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070-0083 (Online). Department of Geography and Planning Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.
- Rural health information hub RHHub (2024) Health Communication. Retrieved online <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/health-communication>
- Society for health communication (2017) about health communication <https://www.societyforhealthcommunication.org/health-communication>.
- Society for health communication (2017); About health communication. <https://www.societyforhealthcommunication.org/health-communication>

**ROLE OF 'WOMEN IMPACTING NIGERIA' (WIN) X
(TWITTER) MESSAGES ON NSUKKA WOMEN'S ATTITUDE
AND PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

**UDEOBASI BLESSING N.
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
UDEOBASINGOZIBLESSING@GMAIL.COM**

**PROFESSOR EZEAH GREG
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
GREG.EZEAH@UNN.EDU.NG**

Abstract

This study examined the role of Women Impacting Nigeria's (WIN) Social Media Messages on Nigeria Women's attitude and participation in economic activities, focusing specifically on the awareness, influence, and factors affecting women's engagement with WIN's social media messages and economic participation in Nsukka town. It was guided by the Agenda Setting Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Using a survey research design, data were collected through structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to a sample of 384 women selected through the Cochran formula for determining sample sizes for infinite populations. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, specifically percentages and mean averages. Findings revealed a generally low level of awareness of WIN's social media messages, with limited exposure to campaigns but recognition of its social media use for empowerment. Additionally, the messages had minimal influence on respondents' attitudes toward economic participation, with key hindering factors identified as low visibility of content, lack of awareness of WIN's activities, and insufficient offline publicity. Based on these findings, it was recommended that WIN increase the visibility of its campaigns, enhance offline publicity efforts, and create more engaging content to amplify its impact on women's economic participation in Nsukka town. This study contributes to understanding how social media platforms can be more effectively utilized for advocacy and empowerment initiatives in similar contexts.

Keywords: WIN, social media messages, women empowerment, economic participation, awareness, influence

Introduction

In recent decades, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for advocating women's empowerment globally. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have enabled women's organizations and individual advocates to share messages that promote gender equality, raise awareness about women's rights, and encourage active female participation in various sectors, including the economy. According to Dar (2023), social media has democratized women's rights movements, allowing a diversity of voices to emerge and reach global audiences. This digital trend has transformed traditional advocacy, as social media provides a space for diverse voices, global connections, and increased visibility of women's issues.

Social media's influence extends beyond awareness-raising. It also has the capacity to shape attitudes and motivate behavioral change. Bode and Vraga (2018) have found that exposure to empowering messages on social media positively impacts individuals' perceptions of self-efficacy and motivates actions aligned with those messages. This shift is particularly significant in societies where traditional roles often limit women's economic participation, making social media a platform for reimagining and redefining women's contributions to the economy.

Economic empowerment is a fundamental aspect of achieving gender equality and sustainable development. Various global organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), emphasize that empowering women economically enables them to contribute to poverty reduction, improve family well-being, and enhance national productivity (UNDP, 2018). Duflo (2012) argue that economic empowerment not only benefits women individually but also strengthens community development, as financially independent women are more likely to invest in health and education for future generations.

Across Africa, women-led organizations and initiatives have been using social media to address gender-based disparities in economic participation. Organizations like Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), and others utilize social media to advocate for women's financial independence, support female entrepreneurship, and encourage policies that benefit women in the workforce. According to Mahmud & Yousaf (2022), African women's organizations are successfully leveraging social media to shift public perceptions of women's roles, particularly in economies where traditional expectations have historically limited female participation.

Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN) is one of Nigeria's leading women-focused organizations, utilizing social media to promote Nigerian women's economic empowerment and inclusion. Through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, WIN shares messages that encourage women to pursue entrepreneurship, engage in workforce activities, and gain financial literacy (Ogbeifun & Oboh, 2020). WIN's social media campaigns provide not only information on economic opportunities but also practical advice, success stories, and resources to help Nigerian women overcome obstacles in achieving economic independence.

WIN's social media advocacy has the potential to influence many Nigerian women by reshaping their attitudes towards economic participation. Whiting (2022) supports this view, stating that digital activism is a powerful tool that has unlocked opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. In the same vein, Anyanwu, Okoro, Iheanacho and Obi (2021) write that "social media impacts both a woman entrepreneur's social efficacy and her social capital, ultimately resulting in feelings of empowerment that enable productivity gains in the entrepreneurial world. This impact happens because most social media "empowerment" campaigns focus on changing how women view themselves and build individual competencies and confidence in entrepreneurship and social networking.

The economic landscape in Nigeria has historically been challenging for women, with barriers such as limited access to financial resources, cultural norms, and educational gaps (Adediran & Bello, 2019). However, as WIN and similar organizations continue to influence public perception through social media, more Nigerian women could begin to explore economic opportunities, from small business ownership to larger corporate roles. WIN's emphasis on economic engagement not only addresses gender disparities but also supports national economic growth by empowering half of the population to contribute more fully to the economy.

Social media has become an influential platform for advocacy and social change, providing a space for organizations to promote economic empowerment messages to a wide audience. For many Nigerian women, economic participation remains hindered by socio-cultural limitations, lack of resources, and limited access to information. Organizations such as Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN) leverage social media to bridge these gaps, delivering messages aimed at empowering women to participate actively in economic activities (Anyanwu et al., 2021). WIN's initiatives encompass skill acquisition, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial

support, disseminated widely through digital channels to inspire positive attitudes toward economic involvement.

There is still limited empirical evidence on the actual impact of WIN's social media messages on Nigerian women's attitudes and participation in economic activities. While WIN's social media posts and campaigns may resonate with their online audience (Ahmad & Joseph, 2023), the extent to which they influence real-world economic behaviour among Nigerian women is uncertain. For instance, while social media provides a broad reach, it is unclear how effectively WIN's messaging translates into actual shifts in attitudes or increases in women's economic engagement in contexts where barriers remain. Moreover, there is a need to understand factors that might limit or enhance the effectiveness of these messages.

Despite these advances, Nigerian women still face significant barriers to full economic participation, including legal restrictions, limited access to capital, and societal expectations (Aina & Kazeem, 2020). WIN's work on social media addresses these issues by not only motivating women to engage in economic activities but also advocating for systemic changes. By using social media to bridge informational and support gaps, WIN offers both inspiration and actionable paths for women striving to overcome these challenges. In light of these efforts to empower women, it becomes imperative to examine how aware women generally are of WIN's social media messages as well as whether or not it impacts them. In a town such as Nsukka in Enugu State, where access to social media is likely high, since it is an urban environment, this research is especially important.

This study is therefore aimed at investigating the influence of WIN's social media messages on the attitudes and participation of Nigerian women in economic activities, focusing on women in Nsukka town in Enugu State. It seeks to examine not only the awareness and reach of these messages among women in Nsukka but also the extent to which these messages have translated into actual economic participation and the barriers that may still impede this progression. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the impact of Women Impacting Nigeria's (WIN) X (Twitter) messages on Nigerian women's attitudes and participation in economic activities, with specific focus on women in Nsukka town, Enugu State.

Objective of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of Women Impacting Nigeria's (WIN) social media messages on the attitudes and economic participation of Nigerian women, focusing on women in Nsukka town. However, this aim has been divided into the following specific objectives, which are to:

- iv. Assess the level of awareness of WIN's social media messages among women in Nsukka town.
- v. Evaluate the extent to which WIN's social media messages influence women's attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town.
- vi. Identify factors influencing women's awareness of and response to WIN's social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to guide this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of WIN's social media messages among women in Nsukka town?
2. To what extent does WIN's social media messages influence women's attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town?
3. What are the factors influencing women's awareness of and response to WIN's social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town?

Literature Review

Social Media and Gender Empowerment

Social media has become a powerful tool for gender empowerment, particularly for women in developing countries. The ability to connect with a broader audience, access resources, and mobilize for collective action has reshaped how women engage in social, economic, and political spheres. According to McCafferty (2013), social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable women to overcome traditional barriers such as geographic isolation and societal restrictions. These platforms provide women with opportunities to share

experiences, promote their businesses, and advocate for their rights in ways that were previously unimaginable. In the Nigerian context, social media serves as a vital tool for women who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream media and economic activities. With platforms like WIN's social media initiatives, women are encouraged to engage in business activities, learn new skills, and share success stories that can inspire others. As Baker (2017) argues, social media allows women to bypass patriarchal structures and assert their authority, contributing to a change in public attitudes toward gender roles. For example, Nigerian women entrepreneurs have used social media to expand their businesses beyond local markets to a global audience, showcasing the power of social media in empowering women economically.

Moreover, women can use social media to create support networks that challenge patriarchal norms and push for greater gender equality. The use of hashtags like #BringBackOurGirls and #HeForShe has demonstrated how social media can be used for social justice and advocacy, aligning with the goal of empowering women by amplifying their voices. Thus, social media has become a critical platform for reshaping societal attitudes towards women's economic roles, encouraging them to participate in previously male-dominated spheres (Baker, 2017).

Media Literacy and Women's Economic Participation

Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. For Nigerian women, media literacy is not only about consuming content but also understanding how to use media to improve their socio-economic conditions. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2018) reports that women with higher media literacy tend to make more informed decisions regarding their economic activities, such as managing finances, promoting businesses, and seeking employment opportunities.

The growing importance of media literacy among women in Nigeria is evident in how the digital landscape has transformed the way they engage with economic activities. Women can now use the internet to access online marketplaces, participate in e-commerce, or even run their own online businesses. For example, Nigerian women entrepreneurs often rely on platforms like Instagram and Facebook to market their products and services, reaching both local and international customers. The rise of digital platforms has also enabled women to access a range of professional development resources, such as online courses in business,

finance, and technology, which are crucial for economic participation (Ogundele, 2020).

However, as Ogundele (2020) notes, the level of media literacy among Nigerian women, especially in rural areas, remains a barrier to full economic participation. Women without the necessary skills to navigate digital tools may struggle to access the benefits of the digital economy. Programs aimed at improving media literacy, particularly those targeting rural women, are essential for bridging this gap and enabling women to harness the full potential of digital platforms for economic activities.

Women and Media Representation

The way women are represented in the media has a profound impact on their self-perception, their roles in society, and their participation in economic activities. Traditional media has often confined women to domestic roles, presenting them primarily as caregivers, wives, or mothers, which restricts their economic visibility and opportunities. Ikharo, Aghwadoma, Arikenbi and Ainakhuagbor (2024) argue that the media's portrayal of women in stereotypical roles serves to reinforce societal norms that limit women's potential in public and economic spheres.

However, over the years, there has been a shift in how women are represented in the media, particularly with the rise of social media platforms like those used by WIN. Empowering portrayals of women such as business leaders, entrepreneurs, and political activists have begun to challenge these traditional stereotypes. By showing women in various roles of influence, WIN's social media messages are reshaping how society views women's economic potential and participation. As Gill (2007) notes, positive media representations that portray women as active agents in economic activities can inspire others to follow suit, challenging entrenched gender norms and facilitating greater involvement in the workforce and business sectors.

Furthermore, social media enables women to create and control their own narratives. Women can showcase their achievements, discuss challenges, and advocate for changes in societal attitudes toward gender and work. WIN's role in providing a platform for these types of representations can be transformative, as it not only challenges existing stereotypes but also offers a space for women to take ownership of their economic identities. The visibility of women in leadership and entrepreneurial roles through social media could help dismantle barriers

to women's participation in economic activities, encouraging a broader societal shift toward gender equality (Gill, 2007).

Social Media Campaigns and Behaviour Change

Social media campaigns are powerful tools for effecting social change. By leveraging platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, organizations can reach vast audiences and influence attitudes and behaviours. According to Rice and Atkin (2013), media campaigns have the potential to change how individuals think about societal issues, and this is especially true when targeting issues like gender inequality and women's economic participation. For WIN, their social media messages serve not only as a source of information but also as a mechanism to encourage behavioral change among Nigerian women.

Social media campaigns that promote women's economic participation can help shift entrenched attitudes that view women's primary role as being confined to the home. By promoting stories of successful women entrepreneurs, highlighting the importance of financial independence, and providing information on how women can access resources for business, these campaigns inspire women to take action. Alhassan (2020) opined that women who were exposed to media campaigns focused on financial independence were more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and make informed decisions about their careers. WIN's social media messages aim to encourage Nigerian women to embrace economic opportunities and pursue self-reliance, ultimately changing how women perceive their role in the economy.

Social media campaigns also create a sense of community among women, where shared experiences and success stories can inspire others. These platforms serve as spaces for mentorship, networking, and mutual support, which are essential for women looking to succeed in economic ventures. The ability to connect with other like-minded women and access resources from these networks is vital for enhancing women's participation in the economy (Alhassan, 2020).

Review of Empirical Studies

Chiluwa (2022) on Women's online advocacy campaigns for political participation in Nigeria and Ghana, examines online advocacy campaigns by five women action groups in Nigeria and Ghana. Based on modern social movement theories, the study utilizes computer-mediated discourse analysis to qualitatively analyze the content of the websites and social media platforms of these groups. Findings show that social media provide women advocacy groups a voice that tend to defy intimidation

and the traditional patriarchal stereotypes to demand the rights of women to political leadership. Discourse structures of protest discourses include imperative statements or direct acts that demand change by all means. Through online activism, the advocacy groups extend their voices, and activities to reach national and international audiences and communities of people – also reaching out to the most vulnerable rural women and the underprivileged. However, only a small percentage of women in rural areas have access to the Internet, thereby limiting participation in online activism in cities and urban centers.

Similarly, Adekoya, Akintayo & Adegoke (2015) on “The role of radio in mobilizing women for political participation in Nigeria” examined the importance of women’s participation in politics and how the radio has been used to facilitate or improve participation. The survey research design was adopted and questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. Data collected from the field were analyzed, using simple frequency percentage table and charts. Results from the collected data revealed that radio indeed has positive impact in mobilizing women to participate in politics and with the right contents it can indeed become a potent medium in fostering development for women in politics in Nigeria. A lot of improvement beyond what presently obtained can still be achieved using the radio medium. All hands must be on deck irrespective of gender differences to propel the nation to a desirable political state. Based on this premise and the outcome of the analyzed data, the study recommended ways through which more female participation can be stimulated in the Nigerian political terrains.

Also, Ahmed et al. (2022) conducted a study on the role of social media platforms in raising awareness about women’s empowerment initiatives. Using a survey research design, data were collected from 600 women across urban and semi-urban regions in Nigeria. The findings showed that frequent exposure to interactive content on platforms like Facebook and Instagram significantly increased women’s awareness of empowerment campaigns. However, the study highlighted that lack of internet accessibility and digital literacy among some demographics posed barriers to awareness. It also emphasized the importance of employing influencers and localized content to ensure higher engagement with target audiences.

Eze and Nnaji (2021) also explored the factors affecting women’s awareness and engagement with social media campaigns on empowerment. The study used a mixed-methods approach, surveying 400 women from urban and rural areas in Southeast Nigeria. The findings

revealed that visibility of messages, including frequent posting and the use of visuals, was a significant determinant of awareness. Conversely, low publicity outside social media platforms and lack of multilingual messaging limited women's access and response to the campaigns. The study concluded that integrating offline promotion strategies and customizing content for diverse audiences could enhance both awareness and engagement.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed the assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Agenda Setting Theory to examine the role of Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN) social media messages on Nigerian women's attitudes and participation in economic activities. The Uses and Gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. The theory postulates that people put specific media content and medium to specific use in the hope of having some needs gratified. The theory seeks to explain the uses of media and the satisfactions derived from them in terms of the motives and self-perceived needs of audience members. Uses and gratifications theory basically stresses how and why the audience use the media (Klapper, 1963 cited in Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). In other words, it can be said that the theory argues what people do with media rather than what media does to people. The theory argues that people use the media to satisfy basic needs such as cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs and tension free needs.

People who want to satisfy *cognitive needs*, use media for acquiring knowledge, information, facts, etc. Among the audience, some have the thirst to acquire intellectual and academic knowledge. People also use the media to satisfy *affective needs*, which basically refers to emotional needs and to fulfil self-esteem needs (*personal integrative needs*) by reassuring themselves of their status. *Social integrative needs* refer to the need to socialize with family members while *tension free needs* are fulfilled when people use the media as a means to escapism from the real world and to relieve from tension and stress.

The Agenda-Setting Theory, on the other hand, was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory asserts that the media has the power to influence public perception by highlighting specific topics or issues, thereby setting the agenda for public discourse. It emphasizes that while the media may not dictate what people think, it significantly shapes what they think about by controlling the salience of

particular topics. According to McCombs and Shaw, this process is especially effective in areas where the public has limited direct knowledge or personal experience, making them reliant on media for information. In the context of social media, the Agenda-Setting Theory suggests that the prominence and visibility of content on platforms can determine the level of public engagement with specific topics.

Both the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Agenda-Setting Theory provide valuable insights into this study. The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains how women in Nsukka town might actively engage with social media to fulfill specific needs, such as seeking empowerment content or information about economic opportunities. Meanwhile, the Agenda-Setting Theory highlights how the visibility and prominence of WIN's social media messages influence the level of awareness and prioritization of economic participation among the audience. The theories reveal how individual media habits and the strategic presentation of content by WIN shape the effectiveness of social media as a tool for empowerment.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study consists of women residing in Nsukka town. Without a reliable database for the exact current population of women in Nsukka town, the Cochran formula for determining sample sizes for infinite populations was used to arrive at a sample size of 384 respondents. Multi-stage sampling was employed in three stages. At the first stage, the town was stratified into its three major communities: NruNsukka, Nkpunano, and IheNsukka. At the second stage, the sample size was evenly divided across the three communities ($384 \div 3 = 128$). Within each community, purposive sampling was used to administer the research instrument to only women who actively use social media. Structured Likert scale questionnaires were used for data collection, and two research assistants were employed to aid in the process. Data analysis was performed using frequencies, percentages and mean averages with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16).

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized for the study, with the response options assigned the following values: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The decision rule for this study states that if the mean average of a particular statement is greater than 3 ($\pm > 3$), the statement is to be accepted.

Conversely, if the mean average is less than 3 ($\pm < 3$), the statement is to be rejected.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Demography of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	0	0%
Female	384	100%
Total	384	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-24	94	24.5%
25-34	147	38.3%
35-44	76	19.8%
45-54	41	10.7%
55 and above	26	6.7%
Total	384	100%
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Trader	119	31%
Farmer	34	8.9%
Civil Servant	108	28.1%
Artisan	22	5.7%
Student	87	22.7%
Other	14	3.6%
Total	384	100%

The tables above describe the demographic distribution of respondents. The distribution of respondents according to sex shows that all respondents were female, aligning with the focus of the study on women in Nsukka town. Regarding age, the majority of respondents were within the 25–34 age group (38.3%), followed by those aged 15–24 (24.5%), while respondents aged 55 and above constituted the smallest group (6.7%). The occupational distribution revealed that traders, civil servants, and students made up the largest proportions of respondents (31%, 28.1%, and 22.7%, respectively), whereas farmers and artisans were fewer (8.9% and 5.7%), with only a minimal percentage (3.6%) in the "others" category. This distribution suggests a predominantly youthful and economically active female population engaging in diverse occupational roles.

Table 2: Level of awareness of WIN’s social media messages among women in Nsukka town

ITEMS	FREQUENCY					N	X (Mean)	SD	DECISION
	S A	A	N	D	SD				
I am aware of social media activities of Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN)	77	84	12	116	95	384	2.83	1.512	REJECTED
I frequently come across WIN’s posts or campaigns on social media platforms	14	43	12	115	199	384	1.85	1.154	REJECTED
I actively follow WIN on one or more social media channels	47	65	17	104	151	384	2.34	1.430	REJECTED
I learned about WIN's initiatives through social media advertisements or posts	60	72	19	138	95	384	2.64	1.413	REJECTED
I am aware that WIN uses social media messages to empower women and increase economic participation.	62	15	18	90	63	384	3.16	1.366	ACCEPTED
Cumulative Mean							2.6		

The table above is a Likert-scale analysis of the level of awareness of WIN’s social media messages among women in Nsukka town. Based on the statistical rule that mean averages above 3 are accepted while those below are rejected, the respondents rejected the first four statements, which assessed their general awareness of WIN’s activities, their frequency of exposure to WIN’s posts, active following of WIN’s social media, and recognition of WIN’s initiatives through advertisements or posts. However, the respondents accepted the fifth statement, with a mean of 3.16, indicating awareness that WIN uses social media to empower women and promote economic participation. With a cumulative mean of 2.6, these responses imply that the overall awareness of WIN’s social media messages among women in Nsukka town is low.

Table 3: Extent to which WIN’s social media messages influence women’s attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town

ITEMS	FREQUENCY					N	X (Mean)	SD	DECISION
	S A	A	N	D	SD				
WIN’s social media messages have inspired me to take steps toward economic independence	23	45	15	163	138	384	2.10	1.191	REJECTED
I feel motivated to participate in economic activities after engaging with WIN’s content online.	35	54	8	127	160	384	2.14	1.318	REJECTED
WIN’s campaigns on social media encourage me to explore new opportunities in my career or business	28	49	10	130	167	384	2.05	1.248	REJECTED
I believe WIN’s messages have positively influenced my mindset about women’s roles in the economy	17	31	7	182	147	384	1.93	1.058	REJECTED
The content shared by WIN has made me more confident in pursuing economic ventures	42	89	5	132	116	384	2.50	1.407	REJECTED
Cumulative Mean							2.14		

Table 3 presents analysis on the extent to which WIN’s social media messages influence women’s attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town. The respondents rejected all the statements presented, with mean averages ranging from 1.93 to 2.50, indicating that WIN’s social media messages have not significantly inspired them toward economic independence, motivated participation in economic activities, encouraged exploration of new career or business opportunities, influenced their mindset about women’s roles in the economy, or

increased their confidence in pursuing economic ventures. The cumulative mean average of 2.14 suggest that the perceived impact of WIN’s social media messages on women’s attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town is generally low.

Table 4: Factors influencing women’s awareness of and response to WIN’s social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town

ITEMS	FREQUENCY					N	X (Me an)	SD	DECISI ON
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
Low frequency of social media use limits my access to empowerment-focused messages from WIN.	38	96	13	132	105	384	2.56	1.376	ACCEPT ED
WIN’s social media content has low visibility and do not often pop up on timelines	194	157	6	19	8	384	4.33	0.895	ACCEPT ED
Lack of awareness of WIN’s activities limits my engagement with their economic empowerment messages	199	115	12	43	15	384	4.15	1.154	REJECT ED
The format or language of social media messages from WIN influences whether I notice and engage with them	28	59	8	154	135	384	2.20	1.269	ACCEPT ED
Low publicity outside social media platforms affects my awareness of WIN’s messages and tendency to	115	186	11	43	29	384	3.82	1.195	REJECT ED

seek them out.

Cumulative Mean

3.41

Table 4 shows analysis of the factors influencing women's awareness of and response to WIN's social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town. The respondents accepted the statements that low visibility of WIN's social media content, lack of awareness of WIN's activities, and low publicity outside social media platforms, hinder their awareness and response. However, they rejected the statements that low frequency of social media use, and the format or language of WIN's message significantly influenced their awareness or engagement. These responses indicate that the main factors affecting awareness and response to WIN's messages are related to the limited reach and visibility of WIN's messages online and low offline publicity, rather than the frequency of social media use or the presentation of the content.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of WIN's social media messages among women in Nsukka town?

Table 2 provides data on the level of awareness of WIN's social media messages among women in Nsukka town. The data analysis shows that respondents rejected statements related to their general awareness of WIN's activities, frequency of exposure to its posts, active following of WIN's social media, and recognition of its initiatives through advertisements or posts. The cumulative mean of 2.6 reveals that the overall awareness of WIN's social media messages among the women surveyed is low. This finding indicates a lack of widespread knowledge or interaction with WIN's social media campaigns among the target audience.

The low awareness of WIN's social media messages risks undermining the organization's goal of empowering women through economic participation. Enhancing the visibility and engagement of their content, particularly through interactive and relatable approaches, could address this gap. Ahmed et al. (2022) found that frequent exposure to engaging and localized social media content significantly boosted awareness of empowerment initiatives, supporting the idea that WIN could adopt similar strategies to increase their impact among women in Nsukka town.

This finding also relates to the assumptions of the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that media platforms, including social media, have the capacity to shape public awareness and priorities by directing

attention to specific issues. WIN's social media efforts aim to set an agenda for women's empowerment and economic participation. However, the low awareness observed suggests that WIN's campaigns may not yet have achieved sufficient prominence on the social media timelines of women in Nsukka town. This emphasizes the importance of strategic content dissemination and visibility to influence awareness effectively.

Research Question 2: To what extent does WIN's social media messages influence women's attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town?

This research question is answered in table 3, which addresses the extent to which WIN's social media messages influence women's attitudes toward economic participation in Nsukka town. All five statements, which assessed aspects such as inspiration toward economic independence, motivation for economic activities, and confidence in pursuing ventures, were rejected. This shows that the influence of WIN's social media messages on shaping women's attitudes toward economic participation is generally low.

This finding indicates that among women in Nsukka town, WIN's messages are not achieving the intended influence, possibly due to the low awareness previously observed. In contrast, Chilwa (2023) highlights how other advocacy groups in Nigeria and Ghana effectively used social media to amplify their campaigns and inspire participation by leveraging engaging content and reaching broader audiences. These differences may point to WIN's need to adopt more impactful and relatable strategies to improve the reach and reception of its campaigns.

WIN's inability to significantly influence women's attitudes may reflect its current position in the "agenda-setting process." The Agenda Setting theory suggests that media content prioritizes certain issues, shaping public perception and attitudes. If WIN's messages fail to capture attention or emphasize the urgency of women's economic participation, they are less likely to influence attitudes effectively. Enhancing the prominence and relatability of their campaigns could strengthen their position in influencing the economic discourse among women in Nsukka.

Research Question 3: What are the factors influencing women's awareness of and response to WIN's social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town?

Table 4 analyzes the factors influencing women's awareness of and response to WIN's social media messages on economic engagement in Nsukka town. The findings show that respondents accepted statements pointing to the limited visibility of WIN's social media content, lack of awareness of WIN's activities, and low offline publicity as key hindrances to their awareness or engagement. These results suggest that inadequate message reach and minimal offline promotion are the primary factors affecting awareness and response, rather than user habits or content presentation.

This finding aligns with the study by Eze and Nnaji (2021), which highlights the importance of message visibility in driving awareness and engagement with social media campaigns. Their research revealed that frequent posting and the use of engaging visuals improved campaign visibility, while low offline promotion and the absence of multilingual content hindered access. The findings from both studies suggest that WIN could increase its campaign effectiveness by enhancing the frequency and visual appeal of its content and integrating offline promotion strategies to reach broader audiences.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains this finding further by emphasizing the audience's active role in seeking content that satisfies their needs. For WIN's campaigns, this implies that increasing the accessibility and visibility of its messages, both online and offline, could better align with the audience's information needs and preferences. By addressing these factors, WIN could create more engaging and impactful content, enhancing awareness and encouraging women to respond positively to their empowerment initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the level of awareness of WIN's social media messages among women in Nsukka town is low. While there is some recognition of WIN's use of social media for women's empowerment, the overall exposure to and engagement with their content is insufficient. As a result, the impact of these messages on women's attitudes towards economic participation is minimal. Additionally, factors such as low visibility of content and lack of offline promotion were identified as significant barriers to increasing awareness and response. Therefore, for WIN's messages to have a greater influence on women's economic participation, it is essential to enhance the reach and visibility of their social media content and integrate more offline publicity efforts.

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

- iv. WIN should increase the frequency and visibility of its posts by collaborating with influencers and ensuring greater content reach, since the study found that there was low awareness of their social media messages.
- v. WIN should focus on using more engaging and visually appealing content to influence women's response to their social media messages, since it was found that the impact of their messages was low.
- vi. WIN should enhance its offline publicity efforts through collaborations with local organizations and community leaders, as the study showed that low publicity outside social media platforms is a factor limiting awareness and engagement with WIN's messages.

References

- Adediran, A., & Bello, K. (2019). The economic landscape for women in Nigeria: Barriers and opportunities. *Journal of African Studies*, 12(4), 567-582.
- Adekoya, O., Akintayo, R., & Adegoke, F. (2015). The Role of Radio in the Mobilization of Women towards Political Participation: A Study of Ogun State Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(24), 11-18.
- Ahmad, S.A. & Joseph, A.B. (2023). Social Media and Women Mobilization for Community Development. *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 7(3), 189-203.
- Ahmed, I., Musa, A., & Bello, F. (2022). The role of social media platforms in raising awareness about women's empowerment initiatives in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Media and Society*, 14(3), 45–60.
- Aina, O., & Kazeem, M. (2020). Legal and societal constraints on Nigerian women's economic participation. *Gender & Development Review*, 18(3), 145-162.
- Alhassan, S. (2020). Media campaigns for women's financial independence: A Nigerian perspective. *International Journal of Communication Studies*, 7(2), 56-72.
- Anyanwu, B. J. C., Okoro, L. N., Iheanacho, C. O., & Obi, J. I. (2021). Social Media and Women Economic Empowerment In Nigeria. *An Assessment of Women Empowerment*, 1, 45–52.

- Baker, A. (2017). Social media as a tool for women's empowerment in developing nations. *Global Media Journal*, 9(1), 34-49.
- Bode, L., & Vraga, E. K. (2018). See something, say something: Correction of global health misinformation on social media. *Health Communication*, 33(9), 1131-1140.
- Chiluwa, I. (2022). Women's online advocacy campaigns for political participation in Nigeria and Ghana. A qualitative analysis of women action groups' social media content, examining the intersection of gender, advocacy, and digital platforms. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 19(5), 465-484
- Dar, S.A. (2023). Unleashing Her Voice: How Social Media Empowers Women. *International Journal of Information Management*, 8(2), 7-14.
- Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(4), 1051-1079.
- Eze, K., & Nnaji, O. (2021). Factors influencing awareness and engagement with empowerment campaigns on social media among women in Southeast Nigeria. *Journal of Media Studies*, 12(2), 121-140.
- Haridakis, P., & Hanson, G. (2009). Social Interaction and Co-Viewing with YouTube: Blending Mass Communication Reception and Social Connection. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53, 317-335.
- Ikharo, S., Aghwadoma, E., Arikenbi, P.G. & Ainakhuagbor, A. (2024). Stereotypical portrayal of gender in mainstream media and its effects on societal norms: A theoretical perspective. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 5(1), 743-749.
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2018). *Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2018*. ITU Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.itu.int/en/publications> on November 12, 2024.
- McCafferty, D. (2013). Social media and women's economic empowerment. *Technology & Society*, 6(1), 34-42.
- Mahmud, S., & Yousaf, Z. (2022). The role of social media in advocating gender equality: A focus on African women's organizations. *Journal of African Gender Studies*, 6(3), 210-225.
- Ogbeifun, T., & Oboh, O. (2020). Social media advocacy for women's financial inclusion in Nigeria: A case of Women Impacting Nigeria (WIN). *African Journal of Development Studies*, 5(2), 78-89.
- Ogundele, A. (2020). Bridging the digital divide: Media literacy among Nigerian women in rural areas. *Journal of Communication & Development*, 14(3), 123-138.
- Rice, R. E., & Atkin, C. K. (2013). *Public communication campaigns (4th ed.)*. Sage Publications.

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2018). *Gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable development*. UNDP. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org> on November 11, 2024.
- Whiting, K. (2022). *International Women's Day: What is it, and why do we need it?* World Economic Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/03/internationalwomen-day-what-why-when/> on November 11, 2024.

**PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND COMPLIANCE
TO MEDIA MESSAGES ON CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS AND
ADAPTATION STRATEGIES IN RIVERS STATE**

**BRAIDE KENNETH VICTOR
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA**

Email: victorbraide024@gmail.CO08050935681

&

**B.N CHINWEOBO-ONUOHA, PHD
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA**

Email: blessing.chinweobo-onuoha@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The research paper examines public perception and compliance to media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The general objective of the study is to understand public perception and compliance to media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in rivers state. The population of this study are the residents of Rivers State (7,456,800) as projected by the national bureau of statistics. The research work is anchored on the risk perception theory and employs descriptive research methodology with a sample size of 385 respondents selected using a multi stage sampling technique–Stratified, simple random, proportionate and convenience sampling. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents and the results are presented in simple percentages and tables. The findings from the study shows that While most of Rivers state residents are moderately aware of climate change risks There is considerable skepticism about the relevance, persuasiveness, and ease of comprehension of climate change messages in Rivers state, suggesting a gap in tailoring messages to the target audience's needs and preferences. The study recommends the creation and implementation of focused campaigns to raise awareness of climate change by encouraging more active contemplation among Rivers State citizens by leveraging social media, digital platforms, and word-of-mouth networks. And involving local organizations, influencers, and community leaders in spreading knowledge about climate change risks.

keywords; Public perception, climate change risks, Adaptation strategies, media messages.

Introduction

Communication is a critical aspect of human interactions because it aids the success of interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and the interchange of knowledge and ideas. Communication can assist close the gap between scientific facts and public perception, allowing people to understand the importance and severity of these issues. According to Frameworks institute (2020), the way an issue is framed and communicated can significantly impact how people perceive and engage with it. It is acceptable to deduce that when addressing issues such as climate change, the message should be constructed so that it resonates with people's values, experiences, and concerns, motivating them to act.

The risks of climate change are multifaceted and could lead to a variety of negative impacts, such as more frequent and severe natural disaster like sea level rise, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, health issues, infrastructure damage, food insecurity, economic losses, and social and cultural impacts. (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration 2021). Jain (2021) opines that true perception helps individuals to make sound decisions. When people perceive issues correctly, they can evaluate the facts and potential outcomes accurately, leading to better choices. Misperceptions, on the other hand, can result in poor decisions with negative consequences.

Adaptation is a form of risk management, therefore there's a need for people to understand adaptive measures to help them navigate crisis when the need arises. The Environmental Resilience Institute (2024) states that a good comprehension of adaptation strategies enables proactive preparedness in people in anticipating potential crisis and take preemptive measures as this foresight can help reduce the impact of the crisis. Rivers State, Nigeria, faces numerous climate change challenges. (Ighedosa 2019) The oil output results in a gas flare. (Oyena & Sam 2020). In addition to oil exploration and extraction, artisanal refining of syphoned crude oil emits greenhouse gases during the process. Hundreds of artisanal refining sites in Rivers State have caused uncontrollable harsh weather conditions. Generally, climate change risk is being blamed on human activities in Rivers State.

Statement of the problem

Despite decades of climate change awareness campaigns and media messages, past efforts have failed to significantly shift public

perception and behavior in Rivers State. Currently, the state is experiencing increased flooding, erosion, and other climate-related disasters, yet public compliance with adaptation strategies remains low. Ideally, the public should be well-informed and actively engaging in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. However, the persistence of climate-related risks and low compliance rates suggest a significant gap in effective communication and public engagement. This study aims to investigate the public perception and compliance to media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers State, in order to bridge this gap and promote sustainable climate change adaptation practices.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to understand public perception and compliance of media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in rivers state. Specific objectives include:

1. To ascertain the level of awareness of climate change risks among Rivers State residents.
2. To find out the level of exposure to messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies among Rivers State residents.
3. To identify channels of exposure to messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies among Rivers State Residents
4. To ascertain the perception of messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers State
5. To find out the level of compliance to messages on climate change adaptation strategies in rivers state

Significance of the study

This study is significant because it will help media professionals identify effective channels and strategies for communicating climate change risks and adaptation strategies, media professionals can develop targeted and impactful campaigns to raise public awareness and engagement. This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on climate change communication, providing new insights into public perception and compliance in the context of Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings will provide valuable information for policy makers to develop evidence-based policies and programs aimed at promoting climate change adaptation in Rivers State. By understanding how to effectively communicate climate change risks and adaptation strategies, this study will contribute to increased public awareness, engagement, and

behavior change, ultimately reducing the vulnerability of Rivers State residents to climate-related disaster.

Conceptual Review

In simpler terms, communication refers to the process of sharing information, ideas, or messages between people or groups through various methods, such as speech, writing, or signals. This may sound simple, but communication is actually a very complex subject because the transmission of the message from sender to recipient can be affected by a huge range of things. These include our emotions, the cultural situation, the medium used to communicate, and even our location. (SkillsYouNeed, 2022, para. 1.).

Climate risk refers to the possibility that climate change will have a negative impact on human or environmental systems. This includes effects on people, livelihoods, health and well-being, economic, social, and cultural assets and investments, infrastructure, service delivery, ecosystems, biodiversity, and species. (EarthScan 2024). Climate change has raised the risk of heatwaves, droughts, and flooding in Nigeria. These extreme weather patterns have caused substantial environmental and economical repercussions. Egwu & Saint (2022). Flooding has been a major problem, with many parts of Nigeria experiencing severe floods that displace millions of people and do extensive damage to infrastructure (Stromsta 2024)

According to Francis (2024), Unusual and extreme weather conditions have disrupted crop seasons, resulting in massive losses for agriculture and worsening food security concerns. Fisheries, crops, and livestock may be damaged or rendered less productive. The ocean's acidification puts marine resources that feed billions of people at danger.

The Nigerian media has been chastised for falling behind in spreading awareness about the risks of climate change. Despite the serious consequences, media coverage has not been as forceful as required to mobilize public action. (Nwabueze et al 2015). Media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of climate change risks. Research indicates that media can effectively convey the scientific consensus on climate change, thereby influencing public opinion. Wikipedia (2024). However, the quality and quantity of media coverage have been criticized for not adequately addressing the urgency and complexity of the climate crisis.

Mahmud (2016) citing (Leiserowitz, 2006; Whitmarsh, 2008a) states that Climate change risk perceptions are commonly characterized as people's awareness of the causes of climate change and its negative consequences. It is vital to stress that perception is tightly defined in this context, with an emphasis on knowledge or familiarity with the subject. However, this research effort has broadened the definition of perception to include knowledge, which represents people's awareness of facts, concepts, and linkages related to the causes, consequences, and solutions to climate change. This definition of perception implies a deliberate comprehension of climate change and its accompanying risks, rather than a mere 'awareness' or 'familiarity' with the topic. Čeranić, G. Et al. (2023) states that it is necessary to take into account the general public's views on climate change. In order to tackle the problem of climate change, an analysis of the economy, social organization, and collective attitudes and values in a specific society is necessary. This assertion is particularly relevant to this research, as it emphasizes the need to understand public perception of climate change, which is a core focus of this study.

Climate change adaptation refers to the process of adjusting to the effects of climate change. According to (Rodríguez-González & Limones-Rodríguez, 2020; Kumar et al., 2022), Environmental concern, climate change awareness, perceived risk, perceived knowledge, financial self-efficacy, and social capital all contribute to a better grasp of climate change risks. Studies have indicated that these factors have an impact on both mitigation and adaptation activities at the household level. For example, higher degrees of environmental concern and climate change awareness are linked to a greater desire to engage in mitigation and adaptation behaviours. Perceived risk and understanding of the consequences of climate change are also important motivators for action.

According to Kumar & Rajan, (2023) some factors that promote understanding messages on climate change adaptation strategies are as follows:

- i. Access to Information and Education: Research constantly emphasizes the importance of having access to accurate information and education about climate change adaptation options. For example, researchers in South India discovered that farmers who had access to climate change information were more likely to use solutions such as crop diversification and soil and water conservation.

ii. Practical Experience and Demonstration Projects: Broadcasting successful adaptation tactics in action can be quite influential. Demonstration projects allow farmers and communities to see the benefits of specific adaptation approaches, which can increase adoption.

iii. Economic Incentives and Support: Financial incentives, subsidies, and other forms of assistance can make adaptation messages more appealing and feasible. According to research conducted in Ethiopia, access to loans and agricultural inputs had a substantial impact on farmers' compliance to adaptive techniques.

iv. Community Engagement and Collaboration: The most effective adaptation solutions are generally created and implemented at the community level. Involving local populations in the discussions, planning and decision-making processes can result in more effective and long-lasting solutions.

v. Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous traditions: Understanding and incorporating traditional knowledge and indigenous traditions into adaptation messages can help promote understanding on adaptation strategies. Many societies have long-held beliefs and practices that have helped them adapt to changing environmental conditions.

vi. Capacity Building and Skill Development: Training programs and seminars that provide individuals and communities with the skills and information required to undertake adaptation methods are critical. This includes instruction in areas such as water management, drought-resistant farming techniques, and disaster preparedness.

Methodology

The survey method was utilized as the research design for this paper, which involves sampling the opinions of several people using a questionnaire to collect data from a population in order to learn about their primary characteristics, which can then be generalized to the entire population. It was determined to be appropriate for a study aimed at providing the necessary population information to serve as the foundation for logical decision-making.

This research was carried out in Rivers state. The target population of this study is estimated at 7,476,800 individuals residing in River State, Nigeria as projected by the National Bureau of Statistics 2022. This population is diverse, encompassing various age groups, genders, and urban-rural divides, which necessitates a comprehensive sampling strategy to ensure representativeness.

To get the appropriate sample size for this study, using the Australian Calculator with the following entry, the formula thus;

Confidence Level: 95%

Population Size: 7,476,800

Proportion: 0.5

Confidence Interval: 0.05

Upper: 0.5

Lower: 0.45

Standard Error: 0.02

Relative Standard Error: 5.10

Sample Size= 385

Therefore, the sample size of this study will be 385 respondents.

The study utilized a multi stage sampling technique. This approach include: Stratified sampling, simple random sampling, Proportionate sampling and convenience sampling techniques at different stages.

stage one: Using the table to stratify Rivers State into 3 geographical strata.

Table 1 Stratifying Rivers State into three geographical strata.

STATE	GEOGRAPHICAL STRATA
RIVERS STATE	Riverine LGAs
	Upstream LGAs
	Central LGAs

State two: This study adopted simple random sampling technique because it enables each stratum to have equal opportunity to be selected randomly and independently of others. Therefore, two wards (1 urban and 1 rural) from each of the three local government areas that made up Rivers State were given equal opportunity to be randomly selected using the table below;

TABLE 2 (Selected two communities from each geographical Strata (1 urban and 1 rural area))

STATE	GEOGRAPHICAL STRATA	WARDS (Urban and rural)
RIVERS STATE	Riverine LGAs	Degema town, Abuloma
	Upstream LGAs	Akinima, Rumuekpe
	Central LGAs	Diobu, Aluu

STAGE THREE: Proportionate sampling technique will be used to select participants from the six wards. The aim is ensure that each ward is represented in the sample in proportion to its population size. Procedure: $\text{Ward Sample Size} = (\text{Ward Population} / \text{Total Population}) \times \text{Total Sample Size}$;

1. Degema town = $138,942 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 34$ Samples
2. Abuloma = $538,558 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 136$ samples
3. Akinima = $249,232 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 63$ samples
4. Rumuekpe = $249,467 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 63$ samples
5. Rumoodara = $162,350 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 39$ samples
6. Aluu = $188,930 \div 7,474,800 \times 385 = 50$ samples

STAGE FOUR: Within each ward, the study will employ convenience sampling to reach participants. This technique involves recruiting participants who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the study.

- Participants will be recruited from public areas, community centers, and local gathering places within each ward.
- Researchers will approach potential participants, explain the study's purpose, and invite them to participate.
- Participants will be included in the study if they meet the inclusion criteria and provide informed consent.

The data collection tool was a well-structured questionnaire titled "public perception and compliance to media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers state". The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A focuses on respondents' demographic data

such as their gender, age, and academic qualifications, whereas Section B is intended to stimulate responses from respondents by analyzing the data using the weighted Mean Score (MMS) of Four Likert Scale as designed by the researcher.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Description of respondents' characteristics

The study involved 385 respondents with diverse demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Figure 1). Most respondents were indigenes of Rivers State (66.2%), with Christianity as their predominant religion (68.8%).



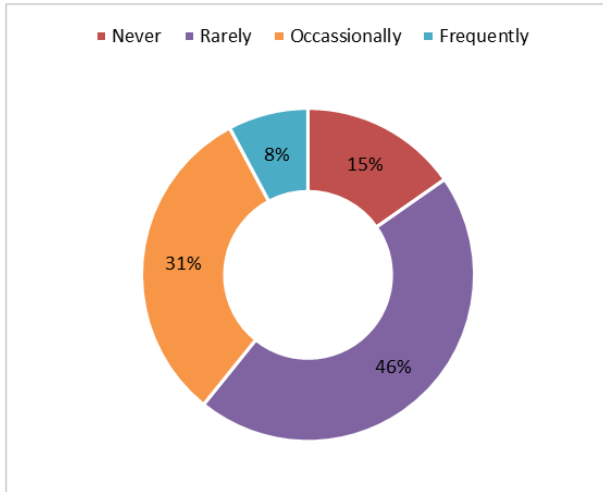
n=385

Figure 1: Characteristics of respondents in this study

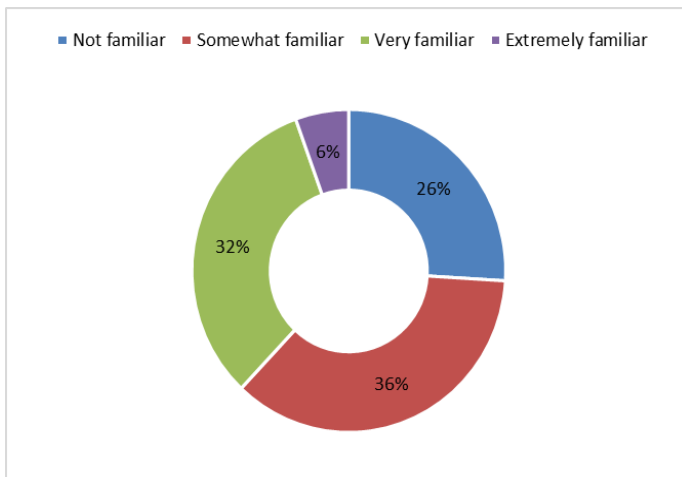
The majority of respondents (55.8%) were aged 18–30 years, suggesting that a significant portion of the sample consists of young adults. Also, respondents were predominantly married (46.5%), while a significant proportion of respondents had tertiary education (37.7%), which indicates a relatively well-educated sample overall. In terms of occupation, the largest group of respondents were unemployed (45.7%), followed by those who were self-employed (29.9%) and civil servants (24.4%). Thus, the cross-section of respondents represent diverse demographic and socio-economic groups,

with a significant presence of young adults, educated individuals, and predominantly Christian residents.

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of climate change risks among Rivers State residents?



(b)

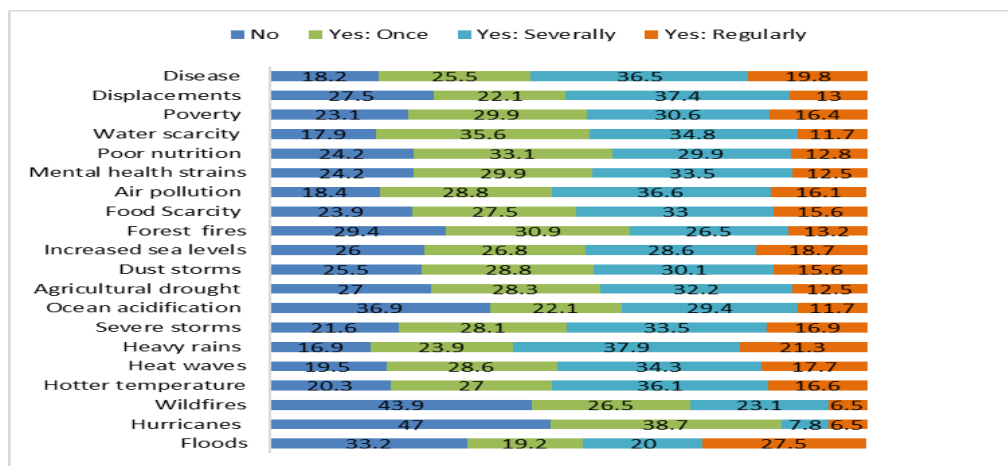


(a)

Respondents were asked about their familiarity with the concept of climate change risks and how often they think about these risks. Their responses are presented in Figures 2a and b.

n=385

Figure 2: (a) familiarity with climate change risks concepts (b) frequency of thinking about the risks. From the results of the data analyses, 88.1% of respondents reported experiencing climate-related events at least once. Also, Figure 2 shows that while majority of respondents (over 73%) are familiar with climate change risks, a significant awareness gap exists. Moreover, only a small minority frequently contemplate these risks, suggesting limited active engagement with the issue. In addition, respondents reported frequent exposure to climate-related events, including floods, hotter temperatures, heavy rains, heat waves, air pollution, and water scarcity (Figure 3).



n=385

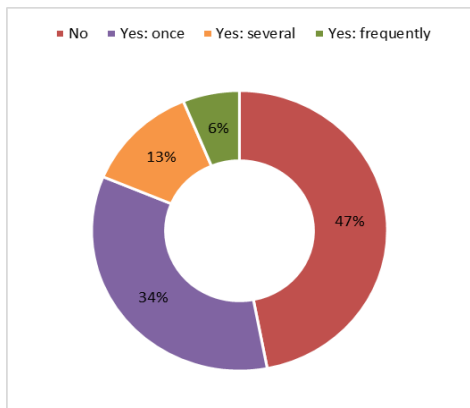
Figure 3: Frequency (%) of experience with climate-related events

Therefore, most residents of Rivers State have a moderate awareness of climate change risks and have directly experienced climate-related events like floods, heatwaves, and heavy rains, and their level of active engagement and consideration of climate change remains relatively low. These results suggest a gap in proactive climate change awareness and prioritization.

Research Question 2: What is the level of exposure to messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies among Rivers State residents?

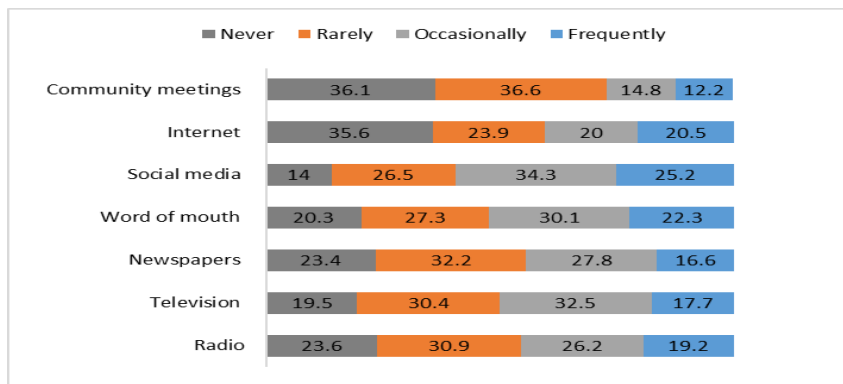
The following results show responses to questionnaire items 25 to 34 show the frequency of encountering climate change messages, sources of

information on climate change, and the levels of participation in climate change-related events (Figure 4 and 5).



n=385

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents by their participation in climate change-related event. The exposure to climate change information among Rivers State residents is relatively low as a significant proportion of the population either rarely (25.7%) or never encounters (24.9%) these messages. Only about 15.3% frequently encounter climate change messages, with 25.7% and 34.0% rarely and occasionally encountering these messages respectively. Similarly, participation in events or workshops is minimal, with about 47% of respondents indicating non-attendance at any climate-related event, suggesting a gap in community-level engagement or accessibility to such programs (Figure 4). Regarding respondents’ sources of information on climate change, the social media, word of mouth and internet are topmost channels (Figure 5).



n=385

Figure 5: Percentage responses of sources of climate change information

Thus, residents of Rivers State have limited exposure to messages about climate change risks with social media and word of mouth playing notable roles. Participation in climate-related events remains low, highlighting the need for targeted outreach and awareness campaigns.

Research Question 3: What are the effective channels of exposure to messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies among Rivers State residents?

Respondents indicated the climate change information sources they deemed effective. Their ratings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents’ rating on effective climate change information sources

Effective of listed media for receiving information on climate change	Not effective at all	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very effective	Mean	Remarks
Radio	28.1	37.9	21.3	12.7	1.19	Disagree
Television	19.5	31.2	29.6	19.7	1.50	Agree
Newspaper	22.6	31.7	28.8	16.9	1.40	Disagree
Social media	15.6	26.2	33.2	24.9	1.68	Agree
Word of mouth	20.5	31.9	26.2	21.3	1.48	Disagree
Internet	11.4	28.1	29.6	30.9	1.80	Agree
Community meetings	26.0	23.1	26.8	24.2	1.49	Disagree

n=385

The results in Table 1 shows that social media and the internet are the most effective channels for receiving climate change information, outperforming traditional media such as newspapers and radio. Also, community meetings and word of mouth have high prospects in terms of

effectiveness. The importance of leveraging technology and digital communication to enhance outreach efforts is highlighted by these findings.

Research Question 4: What is the perception of messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers State?

In response to the questionnaire item 45, a quarter of the participants (25.2 %) found climate change messages as ‘not relevant’, while only 35.2% deemed them ‘somewhat relevant’. Furthermore, 35.7 % of the respondents endorsed the climate change messages they received as convincing, indicating the need to improve the delivery of these messages. Similarly, less than half of the respondents (48.8 %) regarded the climate change messages they received to be clear and easy to understand, with more participants holding a contrary opinion on the comprehensibility of climate change messages in the state. These findings reflect significant variability in the perception of climate change messages in Rivers State.

Research question 5: What is the level of compliance to messages on climate change adaptation strategies in rivers state?

Respondents rated their compliance likelihood to climate change messages and the results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Likelihood to comply to climate change messages

Climate messages	change Not likely	Somew hat likely	Very likely	Extre mely likely	Mean	Remarks
Flood protection & flood control	10.1	27.8	27.3	34.8	1.87	Agree
Water management	11.7	25.7	30.6	31.9	1.83	Agree
Damage assessment post- disaster recovery	& 7.5	26.2	43.6	22.6	1.81	Agree
Evacuation plans emergency response	& 8.8	26.8	39.7	24.7	1.8	Agree

Early warning systems	14	23.4	35.1	27.5	1.76	Agree
Climate resilient building	12.5	26.5	34.3	26.8	1.75	Agree
Urban planning solutions	13.5	28.1	28.8	29.6	1.75	Agree
Climate informed healthcare	14.1	26.7	34.3	24.6	1.75	Agree
Drought management	16.1	22.1	34.8	27	1.73	Agree
Crop diversification & insurance programs	19	18.0	36.2	26.8	1.71	Agree
Mental health support & climate stress management	17.7	22.9	35.2	24.2	1.66	Agree
Control & surveillance of vector-borne diseases	11.9	29.4	40.8	17.9	1.65	Agree
Eco-based adaptation	13.8	33.5	37.9	14.8	1.54	Agree
Climate change education & awareness programs	17.7	30.6	37.1	14.5	1.49	Disagree
Heat stress prevention & treatment	14.8	35.3	37.4	12.5	1.48	Disagree
Soil conservation & irrigation	28.8	26.8	33	11.4	1.27	Disagree
Cumulative mean					1.68	Agree

n=385

Results in Table 2 show a widespread endorsement of the higher likelihood to adopt the listed climate change adaptation themes. Notably,

messages on flood protection and control are the most likely to be adopted, while soil conservation and irrigation are the least (Table 2). Furthermore, further findings showing motivation factors for adhering to preferred climate adaptation strategies are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Motivation for adhering to climate change adaptation messages

Motivation factors	Not motivated	Somewhat motivated	Highly Motivated	Very highly motivated	Mean	Remarks
Self-awareness on climate change risks	8.1	26.2	27.3	38.4	1.96	Agree
Personal experience and observation	7	22.9	37.7	32.5	1.96	Agree
Perceived risk	9.9	20.5	34.8	34.8	1.95	Agree
Economic incentive and support	13.5	11.9	40.5	34	1.95	Agree
Environmental concern	8.3	24.7	33.8	33.2	1.92	Agree
Social connections	13.8	21	29.4	35.8	1.87	Agree
Effective framing and consistent messages from the media	12.7	22.3	33.8	31.2	1.83	Agree

Financial self-efficacy	14	22.9	32.2	30.9	1.80	Agree
Mobilization via mass media	13.8	23.4	35.6	27.3	1.76	Agree
Cumulative mean					1.89	Agree

n=385

From the findings in Table 3, personal motivation factors such as self-awareness, personal experience with climate change, perceived risks, economic incentives and environmental concerns are topmost, while mobilization through mass media are the least motivating factors in adopting climate change messages among respondents. Therefore, most respondents demonstrated willingness to adopt climate change adaptation strategies, especially when motivated by personal experiences, perceived risks, and economic incentives.

Research question 6: What are the recommendations for effective climate change adaptation strategies in Rivers State?

Respondents endorsed listed recommendation in items 77 to 86 of the questionnaire used in this study. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Recommendations for effective climate change adaptation strategies in Rivers State

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Remarks
Strengthening local governance	64.9	23.1	11.9	Agree
Sufficient involvement in current legislation on climate adaptation activities	60.0	33.0	7.00	Agree
Waste management	58.4	29.4	12.2	Agree

Upgrading public health infrastructure	57.4	29.4	13.0	Agree
Encouraging stakeholders to collaborate	56.6	27.8	15.6	Agree
Incorporating climate change techniques into community development plans	55.8	32.2	11.9	Agree
Encouraging community participation	55.3	27.8	16.9	Agree
Encouraging active participation in climate adaptation decision making processes	54.8	29.9	15.3	Agree
Targeted interventions	50.9	31.7	17.4	Agree
Government assistance	50.6	32.5	16.9	Agree

n=385

Respondents mostly supported the role of local governance (64.9%) in facilitating effective climate adaptation, highlighting the need for locally tailored and responsive interventions, while government-led initiatives (50.6%) are the least endorsed, indicating that public trust and engagement with government adaptation efforts require improvements.

Conclusion

From the findings above, the following conclusions are drawn; While most of Rivers state residents are moderately aware of climate change

risks and widespread direct experiences with climate-related events such as floods, heat waves, and heavy rains, their active contemplation of climate change remains relatively low.

Residents of Rivers State have limited exposure to climate change risk messages, with social media and word of mouth being key sources of information and participation in climate-related events being low. Digital platforms, especially social media and the internet, are the most effective channels for climate communication in Rivers State, while traditional media and community-based channels lag in effectiveness.

There is considerable skepticism about the relevance, persuasiveness, and ease of comprehension of climate change messages in Rivers state, suggesting a gap in tailoring messages to the target audience's needs and preferences.

The level of compliance with climate change adaptation strategies in Rivers State is promising, especially strategies that align closely with immediate concerns with adoption of these strategies largely motivated by personal factors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, in order to improve on public perception and compliance to media messages on climate change risks and adaptation strategies in Rivers State, the following recommendations may be considered.

1. The Creation and implementation of focused campaigns to raise awareness of climate change by encouraging more active contemplation among Rivers State citizens by leveraging social media, digital platforms, and word-of-mouth networks. And Involving local organizations, influencers, and community leaders in spreading knowledge about climate change risks.
2. Improvement of Education and Communication on Climate Change risks by Creating a network for communicating about climate change risks and educational initiatives in schools, and also train local government officials
3. Boost Climate-Resilient Development and Local Governance: By ensuring that Rivers State's budgeting, policies, and development plans take climate change into account. Encourage collaborations between civil society organizations, the private sector, and the government.

4. Building and Encouraging Climate-Resilient Practices and Infrastructure: by putting climate-resilient infrastructure projects into action and encourage climate-resilient water management, disaster risk reduction, and agricultural practices.

5. Track, Assess, and Expand Climate Change Adaptation Initiatives by establishing a hub for climate change research and innovation, track developments, and assess efficacy.

References

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2021, August 13). Climate change impacts.

<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impacts>

Environmental Resilience Institute, Indiana University. (2024). Disaster preparedness and emergency response: Adaptation strategies. <https://eri.iu.edu/erit/strategies/disaster-preparedness-and-emergency-response.html>

Oyena, A.P., & Sam K. (2020). A review of the threat of oil exploitation to mangrove ecosystem: Insights from Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 22, e00961. doi: 10.1016/j.gecco.2020.e00961

Frameworks Institute. (2020). Order matters. <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/article/order-matters/>

Jain, R. (2021, September 30). Perception: Definition, importance, factors, perceptual process, errors. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/perception-definition-importance-factors-perceptual-process-jain-pmp>

Ighedosa, S. U. (2019). Climate change: Vulnerability of the Niger Delta region, in Nigeria. *International Journal of Environment and Climate Change*, 9(3), 1-156. doi: 10.9734/IJECC/2019/v9i1230156

SkillsYouNeed (2022) What is Communication? [online] Available at www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/what-is-communication.html (Accessed October 14 2022)

Rodríguez-González, A. B., & Limones-Rodríguez, R. (2020). Factors that Influence Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Action: A Household Study in the Nuevo Leon Region, Mexico. *Climate*, 7(6), 74. <https://www.mdpi.com/2225-1154/7/6/74>

- Kumar, P., & Rajan, S. C. (2023). Determinants of climate change adaptation strategies in South India: Empirical evidence. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7, 1010527. (<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sustainable-food-systems/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1010527/full>)
- Cipriani, E., Frumento, S., Grassini, S., Gemignani, A., & Menicucci, D. (2024). Do individual differences in perception affect awareness of climate change? *Brain Sciences*, 14(3), 266. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci14030266>
- Oyena, A.P., & Sam, K., (2020). ScienceDirect.comwww.sciencedirect.comA review of the threat of oil exploitation to mangrove ecosystem: Insights from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/>
- Nwabueze, C., Umeora, F. N. D., & Okika, E. (2015). Nigerian newspapers' coverage of climate change issues. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(17), 1857-7881 (Print), 1857-7431 (Electronic).
- Egwu, P., & Saint, E., (2022). Nigerian journalists and newsrooms are embracing climate journalism | Jamlab
- Stromstra, R., (2022). Climate Change, Disasters, Insecurity, and Displacement: The | Environmental Migration Portal
- Francis, T., Weather whiplash' cycles of floods & droughts imperil Nigerian farming.

**ASSESSMENT OF THE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING
HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES
IN ONICHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, EBONYI STATE.**

ELIJAH AKUMA
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
elijahakuma@gmail.com
07035321030

MARTINS N. EZUGWU
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
martins.ezugwu@unn.edu.ng
08061149589

BLESSING CHINWEOBO-ONUOHA
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
Blessing.chinweobo-onuoha@unn.edu.ng
08032161886

Abstract

The health conditions in rural areas have necessitated the study of communication strategies for conveying health-related messages effectively. This research assesses strategies for promoting health communication in Onicha Local Government, Ebonyi State. Using a focus group guide, 240 participants from 30 discussion groups (six per group) provided insights into the study. The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory served as the theoretical framework. Findings reveal that existing communication strategies in the communities are neither effective nor efficient. Discussants noted that these strategies fail to disseminate health information adequately, emphasizing the need for improvement. Local media and community health workers were identified as the most familiar and utilized communication channels. The study concludes that health communication strategies in Onicha Local Government require significant revamping to meet the health needs of rural dwellers. Recommendations include synchronizing local media (such as radio, town criers, and community leaders) with digital

communication methods to improve message dissemination. Additionally, establishing more health centers and training health personnel to work in rural areas is vital to addressing the adverse health conditions of these communities. This research underscores the importance of tailored, culturally relevant communication strategies to enhance health outcomes in rural settings.

Keywords: Assessment, Strategies, Promoting, Health Communication, Rural Communities, Onicha Local, Government, Ebonyi State

Introduction

Communication involves the exchange of ideas, information, signals, or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, seek information, provide information, or express emotions. It can occur one-on-one or among groups, either face-to-face or via communication devices. The process requires a sender (who encodes the message), a medium, and a receiver (who decodes it) (Kapur, R., 2020).

Communication is vital for interpersonal relationships and societal harmony. Effective communication starts with the sender choosing familiar media and language to ensure clarity. Understanding the audience's knowledge, age, culture, and beliefs is essential for message success, requiring research to tailor messages. Misaligned or poorly presented messages risk rejection or conflict (De Vries, 2020). Health communication promotes healthy behaviors and prevents diseases by providing accurate information. Health practitioners play a key role, using accessible media to connect with audiences, especially in rural areas. However, rural communities face challenges like limited resources, aging populations, and isolation (Nan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019). While traditional values foster resilience, they may hinder modern health practices, making improved communication channels essential for better health outcomes.

Ineffective health communication in rural areas, often ignoring cultural and literacy barriers, fosters mistrust and poor participation. With high health challenges and limited resources, tailored methods like visual aids, oral presentations, and traditional media are essential to improve health literacy and outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the strategies for promoting health communication in rural communities in Onicha Local Government Area, Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study aims to ascertain;

1. The existing health communication strategies in Onicha Local Government Area.
2. How the health communication strategies are used among the people
3. Rural communities' perceptions of the health communication strategies used.
4. If such strategies helped them understand health communications
5. If there are other strategies for promoting health communication preferred by the rural communities.

Research Questions

1. What are the existing health communication strategies in Onicha Local Government Area?
2. How are health communication strategies used among the people in Onicha Local Government Area?
3. What are the rural communities' perceptions of the health communication strategies used?
4. How have the strategies aided understanding of health communication in Onicha Local Government Area?
5. Are there other strategies for promoting health communication preferred by the rural communities?

Significance of the Study

This study is vital for enhancing health communication in Onicha Local Government Area by identifying effective strategies to address rural challenges and improve service delivery. It aids health professionals in overcoming obstacles and provides actionable recommendations. Academically, it advances rural health communication research, while practically guiding interventions and informing policymakers. Addressing communication gaps promotes healthy behaviors, disease prevention, and improved health outcomes.

Scope of the Study

This study will focus geographically on Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, covering its towns, including Isu (the headquarters), Onicha Igbo-Eze, Oshiri, Ukawu, and Aba-

Omego. The area spans 476 km² with a population of 236,828 (2006 census) and is known for farming crops like cassava, yam, and cocoyam. Recently, improved road access has boosted agricultural activities. Content-wise, the study will explore health communication strategies, their use, perception, and effectiveness in promoting health in the community.

Literature Review

As global interconnectivity expands, promoting effective health communication in rural communities has become essential to addressing their unique challenges. Tailored strategies are crucial for improving health outcomes in these areas. Building strong relationships with community members by understanding their concerns, listening actively, and using accessible tools like simple language and visual aids is a key approach, as highlighted by Vercher et al. (2021).

In 2019, a Yellow Fever (YF) outbreak in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, affected five LGAs, with 78 suspected cases and 17 confirmed (including 4 deaths, a 23.5% fatality rate). The outbreak, concentrated in Izzi LGA among children and young adults, was linked to low vaccination coverage (48%) and a high prevalence of *Aedes* mosquitoes, with larvae found in 90% of surveyed households (Strategic Health Development Plan, 2010-2015). Recommendations included state wide risk assessments, mass vaccination campaigns, vector control, and enhanced surveillance. Since 2015, the Ebonyi State Ministry of Health has strengthened outbreak management, including controlling cholera and Lassa fever outbreaks and offering free malaria treatment, significantly improving public health outcomes (Strategic Health Development Plan, 2010-2015).

Health communication strategies promote healthier behaviors through methods like local outreach programs with community leaders, social media campaigns, and mobile health tools such as medication reminders (Masquillier et al., 2023; Iyengar, 2020). Collaborations with local media and institutions, alongside mass media campaigns like "Tips from Former Smokers," expand outreach (Journal of Medical Internet Research, 2014). Health coaching further supports personalized management of conditions like diabetes (Journal of Medical Internet Research, 2017). These strategies tailor efforts to community needs, improving health outcomes (Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023).

Strategies like incentives, social marketing, and clinician-patient communication further improve outcomes. Incentives encourage preventive care, and social marketing uses audience-specific messages to

drive change (Lefebvre & Flora, 2015). Empathy and active listening foster trust in clinician-patient interactions (Street Jr., 2013). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) ensures health strategies meet diverse needs (Wallerstein, 2020). Together, these methods promote inclusive and equitable health communication.

Effective health communication strategies are essential for promoting health and preventing diseases, particularly in rural communities with limited access to resources. Tailoring messages to cultural beliefs and practices significantly improves understanding and adherence, as demonstrated by Purnell et al. (2016) and Brega et al. (2015). Strategies such as involving community members, leveraging technology like mobile apps, and enhancing health literacy have shown success in fostering health behavior change. For instance, Kim et al. (2017) highlighted how an app-based smoking cessation program improved adherence, while Fiscella et al. (2016) found that community health workers increased breast cancer screening rates among African American women.

Rural communities benefit greatly from using social media, mobile health tools, mass media campaigns, and community health workers to address healthcare gaps. Studies like those by Cui et al. (2018) and Schoenberg et al. (2017) underscore the impact of platforms like Facebook and radio campaigns in promoting healthy behaviors and raising awareness about preventive care. Integrating community-based participatory research (CBPR), as Wallerstein et al. (2018) suggest, further enhances these efforts by developing culturally appropriate strategies tailored to specific populations. By combining these approaches with clear, concise messaging and multiple communication channels, health outcomes in rural areas can be significantly improved.

Empirical Review

Hygeinus N. A. et al. (2018), in their study “Communication and Public Health Promotion in Nigeria,” examine the strategic role of communication in promoting public health. They observe that despite numerous interventions, Nigerians often prioritize curative measures over preventive ones. The authors advocate for greater emphasis on interpersonal communication, particularly through effective speech and active listening by health workers, as well as the use of mixed media for disseminating health messages. While the study provides valuable insights into health communication in Nigeria, it does not specifically

address the unique challenges of rural communities, a gap this research seeks to explore and address.

Nkanunye C. C, et al. (2017), assessed health communication strategies and their role in promoting health and well-being. The authors concluded that effective communication, such as health campaigns, newsletters, and media, can lead to significant behavioral changes. They identified health literacy and poor communication as barriers to the effectiveness of these strategies. Although their findings are relevant to health promotion broadly, they do not focus specifically on rural communities, leaving room for further research in this area.

Ifeoma Sophia Usuwa et al. (2020) studied Lassa fever (LF) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, examining residents' knowledge and risk perception. They found high awareness but poor understanding of symptoms and risk factors. Despite high risk perception, perceived benefits and barriers to prevention were low. While highlighting the need for tailored health communication, the study focuses on a specific disease rather than broader health communication strategies.

Also, Colby SE, et al. (2017), explored communication preferences for community health resources in various populations. It found that community members preferred to receive information through different channels, such as the internet, newspaper, and mail. The findings underscore the importance of understanding the preferences of target populations when designing health communication strategies, particularly for rural residents who may have varying access to different media.

Stella Aririguzoh et al. (2020) examined ICTs in improving healthcare in Nigerian rural communities, revealing limited access to online health information. They recommend increased internet access to support e-health adoption, aligning with SDG 3 on health and well-being. The study highlights rural challenges in accessing digital health resources, making it relevant to this discussion.

Theoretical Framework

This study will adopt the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory to guide its exploration of health communication strategies in rural communities. The DOI theory is particularly suited for this research due to its focus on the adoption of new ideas and innovations, which is essential when considering the unique needs and preferences of rural populations.

The theory's relevance lies in its ability to account for the distinct characteristics of rural communities. Rural populations often have limited

access to healthcare services and prefer receiving health information from trusted community leaders or local organizations rather than traditional healthcare providers. This preference is influenced by a history of fraud and exploitation by individuals posing as health professionals, which has led to a greater reliance on familiar, community-based sources of information.

Methodology

This study will use a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) research design, focusing on individuals aged 15-65 from rural communities. This design is ideal because it allows for in-depth data collection from a controlled and informed group. Given that many rural residents may have low literacy or limited English proficiency, FGDs provide an opportunity for guided, interactive discussions. The researcher, supported by assistants, will facilitate discussions in a language that is clear and understandable to ensure accurate responses.

The population for this study consists of residents in Onicha Local Government Area. The total population, according to the 2006 National Population Commission census, is approximately 236,828 people.

The study will employ a purposive sampling technique to select two rural communities from each of the five districts in Onicha Local Government, resulting in a total of ten rural communities. Three FGDs will be conducted in each community, with eight participants per group, totaling 30 focus group discussions with 240 participants. This approach ensures a diverse representation from each community.

Sample Size Determination for Districts and Communities for Data Collection

S/N	Districts	Communities	No. of FGDs	No. of Participants
1	Isu	Amanator, Isu-Achara	3	8
2.	Onicha	Amakoror, Ezika	3	8
3.	Oshiri	Isieke, Owom	3	8
4.	Ukawu	Amafia, Ebulike	3	8
5.	Aba-omege	Okaria, Ebusirike	3	8

The study involved selecting two rural communities from each of the five districts within Onicha Local Government Area, leading to a total of ten rural communities. For each community, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were planned, bringing the total number of FGDs to 30 across the entire study area. Each FGD was designed to consist of eight members, resulting in a total of 240 participants (30 FGDs × 8 members per group).

In summary, the research aimed to gather data from 240 participants through 30 focus group discussions conducted in rural communities within Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The purposive sampling approach ensured that rural communities were strategically selected, providing a rich platform for in-depth discussions with community members. The composition of the focus groups and the total number of participants were based on practical considerations for a comprehensive study.

Discussion of Findings

Existing Health Communication strategies	How health communication strategies are used among people	Rural communities' perceptions of the health communication strategies used	Impact of the Health Communication Strategies	Other strategies for promoting health communication preferred by the rural communities
Interpersonal communication (240)	1. To help understand symptoms of sicknesses and diseases (240)	Need revamping (127)	1. Have not been effective enough in addressing health matters (240).	Local media (480)
Community involvement (240)	2. To help encourage compliance to health instructions. (240)	Not effective (76)	2. Helped us take precautionary steps to avoid the uncontrollable spread of diseases in our community (146).	Community health workers (240)

Use of local media channels (240)	3. To help people identify available health information (240).			Equipped health centers (144)
Face-to-face interactions (240)	4. To help people locate where to receive health services (240)			
	5. To help the people to take precaution against certain sicknesses and diseases (240).			
	6. Serves as a means of updating the people on certain health information available for rural dwellers (240)			

Findings from focus group discussions in Onicha Local Government, Ebonyi State, reveal that rural communities are aware of existing health communication strategies, though they consider them largely ineffective. Participants highlighted strategies such as interpersonal communication, community involvement, and face-to-face interactions as the most common.

For instance, Nwoboro Celestine noted, *"There are quite a lot of health communication strategies used in our community, though they are not effective. Some include interpersonal communication, community involvement, and face-to-face interactions"* (Personal Communication, December 28, 2023). This aligns with Wallerstein et al. (2018), who emphasized the role of community-based participatory approaches in developing culturally appropriate strategies for rural areas.

Similarly, Chinedu Ani observed, *"Several strategies exist, but my challenge with them is their lack of consistency. Some, like interpersonal communication through churches, groups, associations, and local media channels, are mostly used"* (Personal Communication, December 28, 2023).

Secondly, the discussants unanimously agreed that the existing communication strategies, though not fully effective, have been beneficial. They reported using these strategies to understand symptoms, follow health instructions, access health information, locate healthcare services, take precautions against diseases, and stay updated on health

matters. They emphasized that enhancing these strategies could significantly improve health conditions in their communities.

Again, though diverse health communication strategies exist in the communities under study, but the people's perceptions reveal that the communication strategies are not effective and need revamping.

Also, the findings reveal that health communication strategies in the studied rural areas are largely ineffective, as noted by all 240 participants. However, 146 acknowledged that some strategies have helped them take precautionary measures against disease spread. While these efforts provide some health information, the strategies are insufficient in adequately addressing health needs. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of health messages and urged the government and NGOs to improve health communication in their communities.

The study highlights rural dwellers' preference for tailored communication strategies, including local media (town criers, community leaders, and radio), community health workers, and health centers. Radio was a key source of information: "I listen to the radio always because that is my source of receiving information" (OgbonneObasi, Personal Communication, December 30, 2023). Messages from local chiefs were also highly valued: "I hold in high esteem health information coming from our local chief" (AmaechiIgwe, Personal Communication, December 30, 2023). This supports Kreuter et al. (2018) on radio's role in promoting healthy behaviours and linking rural communities to healthcare.

The study reveals that health communication strategies in Onicha Local Government are largely ineffective. While town criers, radio, and community leaders are the most familiar and preferred by rural dwellers, these strategies need significant improvement, as respondents noted their limited impact.

Recommendations

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

1. Local media (such as radio, town criers and community leaders) should be carried along during health communication processes even as other strategies for health communication are incorporated into the communication system for effectiveness and efficiency.

2. More health centres and health personnel should be trained and sent to rural areas to help ameliorate the adverse health conditions of rural dwellers.
3. Constant health literacy programmes should be organized to help educate the rural dwellers on health matters.
4. Government and NGOs should intervene in the health condition of rural dwellers by making available health kits or equipment in the designated local health centres and also ensuring that this equipment are used to attend to the local dwellers.
5. Health organizations should also partner with communities to bring about sensitization and free treatments to cushion the adverse health conditions of the rural dwellers.

References

- Adaora Rosemary Ejikeme et al. Yellow fever outbreak in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, May-August 2019. *PAMJ - One Health*. 2022;7(18). 10.11604/pamj-oh.2022.7.18.32558
- Brega, A. G., Angst, D. B., Vega, R., Jiang, L., Beals, J., Mitchell, C. M., ...& Manson, S. M. (2015). Mechanisms underlying the relationship between health literacy and glycemic control in American Indians and Alaska Natives. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 98(2), 179-185.
- Chanchien Parajón, L., Hinshaw, J., Sanchez, V., Minkler, M., &Wallerstein, N. (2021).
- Practicing hope: Enhancing empowerment in primary health care through community-based participatory research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 67(3-4), 297-311.
- Chris, A. C. (2020). Analysis of Development Programmes as Strategies for Sustainable Economic Development in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities (IJRSS) ISSN: 2582-6220, DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS, 1(3), 26-to.*
- Colby S.E, Johnson AL, Eickhoff A, Johnson L. Promoting Community Health Resources: Preferred Communication Strategies. *Health Promotion Practice*. 2011;12(2):271-279. doi:10.1177/1524839909333055
- De Vries, G. (2020). Public communication as a tool to implement environmental policies. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 14(1), 244-272.

- Ebonyi State Government Strategic Health Development Plan (2010-2015) Iyengar, S. (2020). Mobile health (mHealth). In *Fundamentals of telemedicine and telehealth* (pp. 277-294). Academic Press.
- Jones, A. C., Geneau, R., & Connell, R. (2014). Rural health disparities: a global perspective. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 6, 1-7.
- Kegler, M. C., Alcantara, I., Haardörfer, R., Gemma, A., Ballard, D., Gazmararian, J. A., ...&
- Wooldridge, R. (2017). Dissemination of the Community Health Worker Diabetes Prevention Program to rural African American communities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(2), 290-297.
- KapurRadhika, (2020). The process of communication. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344187652_The_Process_of_Communication.
- Li, Y., Westlund, H., & Liu, Y. (2019). Why some rural areas decline while some others not: An Overview of rural evolution in the world. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 68, 135-143.
- Loganathan, S., & Kreuter, M. (2014). Audience segmentation: identifying key stakeholders for mental health literacy interventions in India. *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 13(3), 159-170.
- Masquillier, C., Van Royen, K., Van Pelt, P., Onsea, D., & Bastiaens, H. (2023). Development and implementation of a community health literacy hub, 'Health Kiosk'—A grassroots innovation. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 1069255.
- Moller, A. C., Merchant, G., Conroy, D. E., West, R., Hekler, E., Kugler, K. C., & Michie, S. (2017). Applying and advancing behavior change theories and techniques in the context of a digital health revolution: proposals for more effectively realizing untapped potential. *Journal of behavioral medicine*, 40, 85-98.
- Nan, X., Iles, I. A., Yang, B., & Ma, Z. (2022). Public health messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: Lessons from communication science. *Health communication*, 37(1), 1-19.
- Nutbeam, D., & Lloyd, J. E. (2021). Understanding and responding to health literacy as a social determinant of health. *Annu Rev Public Health*, 42(1), 159-73.
- Olla, P., & Shimskey, C. (2015). mHealth taxonomy: a literature survey of mobile health applications. *Health and Technology*, 4, 299-308.

- Ratzan, S. C., Sommarivac, S., & Rauh, L. (2020). Enhancing global health communication during a crisis: lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.
- Sallis, J. F., Owen, N., & Fisher, E. B. (2008). Ecological models of health behavior. In *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 465-485). John Wiley & Sons.
- Stella A., Lanre A., Idowu S., Thelma E., Olusegun O., Emmanuel O. A., (2021). *Achieving sustainable e-health with information and communication technologies in Nigerian rural communities*
Article: 1887433 Published 17 Feb 2021
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1887433>
- Street Jr, R. L. (2013). How clinician–patient communication contributes to health improvement: modeling pathways from talk to outcome. *Patient education and counseling*, 92(3), 286-291.
- Usuwa, I.S., Akpa, C.O., Umeokonkwo, C.D. *et al.* Knowledge and risk perception towards Lassa fever infection among residents of affected communities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria: implications for risk communication. *BMC Public Health* **20**, 217 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8299-3>
- Vercher, N., Barlagne, C., Hewitt, R., Nijnik, M., & Esparcia, J. (2021). Whose narrative is it anyway? Narratives of social innovation in rural areas—A comparative analysis of community-led initiatives in Scotland and Spain. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 61(1), 163-189.
- Vitale Brovarone, E., & Cotella, G. (2020). Improving rural accessibility: A multilayer approach. *Sustainability*, 12(7), 2876.
- Wallerstein, N. (2020). Commentary on community-based participatory research and community engaged research in health for journal of participatory research methods. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, 1(1), 13274.
- Wang, Y., Wang, L., Rasmussen, B., & Liang, Y. (2015). The effects of social media on college students. *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange*, 8(1), 1-14.
- Wogu JO. Mass media awareness campaign and the prevention of the spread of Lassa fever in the rural communities of Ebonyi state, Nigeria: Impact evaluation. *J Public Health Africa*. 2018;9:882.
- Wenzel, A. D., & Crittenden, L. (2023). Collaborating in a pandemic: Adapting local news infrastructure to meet information needs. *Journalism Practice*, 17(2), 245-263.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT
USING THE ACADA MODEL: OPINION OF UNIVERSITY OF
AFRICA MASS COMMUNICATION LECTURERS**

**IKADERINYO IBAMBO FUROMFAGHA, Ph.D
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA, TORU-ORUA (UAT), BAYELSA
STATE, NIGERIA**

Email: ikass2006@gmail.com. 08039316351

Orcid: 0000 -0003-0476-4430

&

**UKAMAKA, C. M. OZIOKO
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

Email: Ukamaka-c.ozioke@unn.edu.ng. 08069285425

Abstract

The monitoring and evaluation of development communication initiatives is crucial for impact assessment. It allows for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of these initiatives and their impact on the intended audience. ACADA model is a useful framework for monitoring and evaluating development communication initiatives. The study's objective was to investigate University of Africa lecturers' opinions on using the ACADA model in monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment in development communication initiatives. The study adopts the qualitative research design with focus group discussion as a data-gathering instrument. The study gathered opinions from mass communication lecturers at the University of Africa on the usage and effectiveness of the ACADA model for impact assessment. The results suggest that most lecturers found the ACADA model to be a comprehensive and practical tool for measuring the impact of development communication initiatives. They also highlighted the importance of integrating the ACADA model into the evaluation process for a more accurate and efficient assessment of impact. The study concludes that the ACADA model is a valuable tool for monitoring and evaluating development communication initiatives, and recommends its widespread adoption for impact assessment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Monitoring, Evaluation, Development, Communication, ACADA.

Introduction

If development communication initiatives are to maximize their usefulness to a project, they have to be carefully and effectively monitored and evaluated during pre and post-implementation, with simple practical information made available to development agencies, governments or management, or the sponsors of development programmes as needed. Shelar (2024) posits that “Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are pivotal processes in project management, aiming to improve outcomes and ensure accountability. However, the effectiveness of M&E hinges significantly on the communication skills of the professionals involved” (p.1).

It is possible to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of these initiatives as well as their effects on the target audience (stakeholders) through monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment. Velasco (FAO 2006) asserts that “Project or program monitoring looks at how the communication project or program is being implemented, specifically in terms of coverage and delivery. Data about program inputs, activities, and results are collected periodically or at specified times during implementation”.

According to the European Commission (2019, p. 1), “Evaluation should be a key component in any communication strategy. This principle is reflected in the Common Provisions Regulation 2021-2027 (CPR). Programme authorities have a legal obligation to assess the impact of their communication measures. Programmes shall indicate in a dedicated chapter on communication the relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation they intend to use (art. 17(3)(i))” The success of any development communication initiatives is now widely recognized to be dependent on effective monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment.

Monitoring and evaluation constitute two important components for impact assessment in development communication initiatives. For communication objectives to be realised during pre and post-implementation of development communication activity, there has to be effective monitoring and proper evaluation. It is an element of the project management process in the overall planning and implementation of development programmes. This is contingent on making an impact assessment of the programme. The lack of monitoring and evaluation in

the development communication programme or activity is problematic. In recognition of this, Velasco (2006) identified the following as importance of monitoring and evaluation “Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute the following to program implementation: Supply feedback that allows for better understanding of how the communication program is working; Help people responsible for specific tasks to make quick, informal decisions regarding operations for greater efficiency; Ensure most effective and efficient use of resources; Determine the extent to which program/project is having or has had the desired impact; and Help fine-tune or improve future program impact.

The ACADA communication model, an integrated communication plan, depicts the cyclical nature of planning in a reiterative dimension. This model's beauty is that it clearly and scientifically highlights the essential steps and procedures that must be followed to accomplish predetermined goals and targets. Different methods of impact assessment particularly in development communication programmes exist, however, this study takes a slightly different but unique approach. This is the gap this study fills. Therefore, this study was motivated by the need to examine the monitoring and evaluation of development communication initiatives for impact assessment using the ACADA model. The cyclical nature of the ACADA communication planning model, which is depicted in a reiterative dimension provides the necessary platform for monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. Examine the relevance of monitoring and evaluation in development initiatives.
2. Determine the effectiveness of employing the ACADA model in monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment in development communication initiative.
3. Find out the extent monitoring and evaluation could assess the impact of a development communication initiative.

Conceptual Review

Overview of Development Communication

In the annals of communication and media studies, what is today known as “development communication” is attributed to Quebral's work with the University of the Philippines Los Baños' Office of Extension and Publications evolved into today's College of Development

Communication, which in 1971 became the first to offer degree programs at the Doctorate, Masteral's and Undergraduate degree levels.

When one looks closely at the subject matter; development communication. We are looking at two things - media and development. The realisation that communication of knowledge and information is a sine qua none in the efforts to address the challenge of development. In this regard, development communication can be viewed as the strategic and purposive use of the processes and principles of communication aimed at achieving the development objectives of a society or a nation. Thinking along the above line of reasoning, Odoom (2020) asserts that:

Communication is critical in any development process. Beyond its role as an empowerment tool, communication is used to promote people's participation in development activities. Communication also helps to ensure that people have access to the information and knowledge needed to improve their lives. Particularly, citizens rely on knowledge and information in order to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic, cultural, political and technological changes. However, for knowledge and information to be useful in the development process, they must be effectively communicated to people. This brings to the fore the compelling relevance of development communication in development discourse. (p. 37).

Odoom (2020, p.41) further gave an insightful definition of development communication "Development communication is defined as the planned and systematic use of communication through inter-personal channels, ICTs audio-visuals, and mass media for social change".

According to UNICEF (2015), "communication lies at the centre of sustainable development. Communication for development (C4D) has to do with understanding people, their beliefs and their values. It involves engaging communities to identify problems, offering solutions and taking appropriate action"

Nora Quebral who is attributed as the founder of Development Communication defines it as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equality and the larger unfolding of individual potentials" (Quebral, 200, p.17). The extrapolation of the definitions above indicates that development communication is considered a strategic form of

communication aimed at transforming society to a greater height and creating opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential.

At this point, one cannot but enumerate the importance of development communication which includes: the provision of Information and Knowledge, mobilising the People, building consensus, making the development programmes understood and accepted, strengthening the decision process, facilitating intersectoral collaboration, and serve as a tool for human empowerment.

Development communication focuses on the utilization of communication to promote development. Development communicators, therefore, produce content related to development to achieve a common understanding among the stakeholders on the process of development and what is required of them. Development communication initiatives can never be effective in the absence of proper communication research, thus before development initiatives and strategy are conceived, there should be a proper baseline research conducted.

Periscoping the Terms Monitoring and Evaluation Monitoring

Project or programme monitoring examines the implementation of the communication project or programme, focusing on coverage, delivery, specification, and quality control. During implementation, information is gathered on programme inputs, activities, and outcomes regularly or at predetermined intervals. Similarly, Velasco (2006) conceptualises monitoring in this way “Monitoring /means watching, observing, checking, or keeping track of a process for a special purpose. The output of monitoring consists of observation and description of how the communication project/program is being conducted”. Velasco went further to inform that there are three types of monitoring “Monitoring is handy in three areas of program implementation:

- Management
- Evaluation
- Accountability

The ability to monitor for management allows communication program managers to monitor the program's implementation. This is especially crucial at the beginning of the program so that any feedback can be utilized to make the required adjustments.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of examining a subject (in this case, it is development communication programmes or activities) and rating it based on its important features. It is also the process of assessing the value- the act of considering or examining something to judge its value, quality, importance, extent, or condition. According to Velasco (2006) “Evaluation, on the other hand, means determining the value, significance, or worth of something through careful appraisal and study. It looks at the interpretation of data about the communication program's results or changes or impacts over time”. (Torres and Velasco 2005) inform that “Evaluation is generally looked at as an investigation designed to determine the effectiveness of the communication program in terms of meeting its objectives”

Velasco (2006) observed that “Evaluation entails the following:

- Distinguishing measured change in results of activities that can be attributed to the program intervention;
- Analyzing inputs and activities to determine their contribution to results; and
- Ascribing value judgment to data and information in general.

Assessing the impact of development communication initiatives using the ACADA model

The ACADA communication planning model as an integrated communication plan, depicts the cyclical nature of planning in a reiterative dimension. The ACADA communication model stands for Assessment Communication Analysis Design and Action. This model is viewed as a cyclical approach that starts with situational assessment, then moves on to communication analysis, design, and action, and then returns to assessment for communication initiative improvement and/or modification to meet predetermined communication objectives.

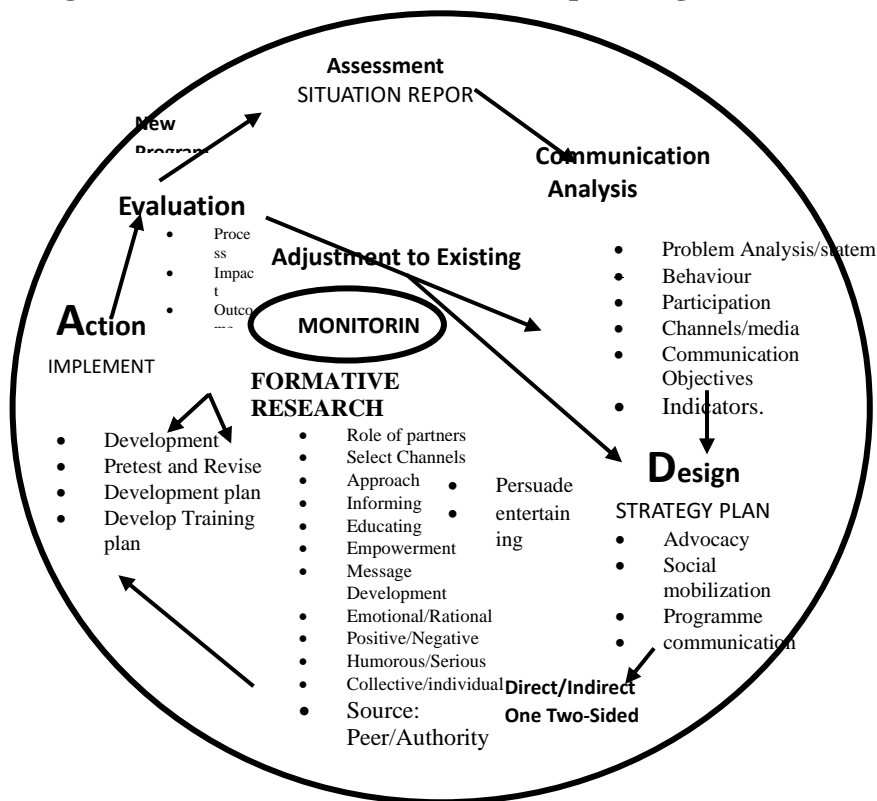
Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) conceptualise the ACADA model “development communication planning and implementation model that emphasizes thorough, realistic, practical and sustained communication approach to the evolution, design, and delivery of social change campaigns” (p. 83). Accordingly, Asadu (2012) asserts that “the pattern should offer them the opportunity of evaluating their efforts at the end”(p. 47).

As we've seen, a great deal of research goes into each step of the model, culminating in a communication strategy that would cater to the

participants' perceived needs. The scientifically highlighted and methodical steps make it an effective tool for monitoring and evaluating development communication programmes and activities for impact assessment.

This communication model consists of 4 interrelated, but cyclical stages. In a bid to understand them let us consider them in their natural occurrence.

Diagram of the ACADA communication planning model



Source: UNICEF Communication Handbook

The ACADA model is characterized by the following stages

1. Assessment

Assessment is the process of examination of the situation often based on research data or available information. As it relates to this study, assessment entails critical and objective study of the development communication initiatives. Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) state that “it

involves examining previous programmes to find out their strengths, weaknesses, challenges and issues that arose p. 84.

According to Ajia. (2003) cited in Okoro (2005), situation assessment, in broad terms, includes the following

- Review of programme status in terms of successes, failures/weaknesses, issues, and problems, as well as the identification of those problems/interferences that can be overcome through the application of communication interventions.
- Review of existing communication interventions through the compilation of communication, training, and learning materials; listing of the objectives of the information, education, and communication (IEC) materials and analyzing the implications of pre-test reports and evaluation studies; definition of intended beneficiaries/participants with regards to location, language, group, age, sex and socioeconomic status (SES).
- Review of existing behavioural/focus group data, attitudinal studies, and monitoring/ evaluation reports concerning prevalent practices/habits, economic systems, and socio-political relationships. Cultural values and religious belief systems; gender relationships and the status of children/the elderly.
- Identification of missing information such as: Which practices/behaviours need to be discouraged? Which of them needs to be modified? Which of them needs to be changed totally? Which practices/behaviours are close to the ideal behaviour? How can we encourage such practices/behaviours? By examining, in detail, the various facets of the situation, it becomes easier to have a well-informed view of the problem at hand

2. Communication Analysis

The starting point is to examine the issue at hand by finding answers to questions such as: What actions are people taking or avoiding that create a problem? Where and when does this action or lack of action occur? Who does this action or inaction influence? What impacts does the issue have? What could be the potential reasons for the issue? (Refer to Ajia, 2003.) Offering honest responses to these inquiries makes it simpler to articulate the issue from a clearer viewpoint.

Additional sub-steps in communication analysis include behaviour analysis, participant analysis, channels/media analysis, communication goals, and monitoring and evaluation measures.

Behaviour analysis highlights three distinct categories of behaviour, specifically:

- Ideal behaviours: Ideal behaviours refer to all behaviours that are capable of ameliorating a particular aspect of the problem.
- Current behaviours: Current practices/behaviours refer to the most prevalent behaviours/practices that are related to the problem
- Priority behaviours: priority behaviours designate feasible behaviours which are bound to have a major or significant impact on the problem (Ajia, 2003 *supra*).

In the study of behaviour analysis, we focus on inquiries like the ones below:

What actions associated with the issue are participants currently engaging in? Which ones resemble the ideal behaviours? Which ones clash with the intended behaviours? What obstacles exist to achieving desired behaviours? Is the lack of desired behaviours caused by a skills gap (insufficient skills required to carry out the behaviour) or a performance gap (for instance, current conditions and resources do not enable the learned behaviour)?

A key aspect of communication analysis is examining the participants. The focus of the investigation at this stage is the identification and analysis of stakeholders, partners, allies, and organizations that need to be included in the communication offering. Participant analysis is conducted to pinpoint individuals, groups, and institutions that can offer the necessary support for behavioural change in program communication, social mobilization, and advocacy efforts.

An additional essential aspect of communication analysis is the examination of channels/media. This is carried out to determine (a) the existing channels/media of communication that could effectively reach the target audiences, (b) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) associated with each channel, (c) the suitability and effectiveness of chosen channels concerning the message we aim to convey to the target audience, and (d) the accessible sources of information for individuals in a specific community.

Having completed the required analyses, we are now well-positioned to establish communication objectives, which consist of a clear statement of the intended or anticipated result that will guide our initiatives. These communication objectives must adhere to the SMART criteria—specific, meaning objectives should clearly articulate the intended result; measurable, indicating there must be standards for how results will be evaluated; appropriate, requiring objectives to be “culturally and locally acceptable”; realistic, implying that objectives

need to be attainable; and time-bound, which necessitates that objectives are to be accomplished within a designated time-frame.

An essential component of communication analysis is monitoring and evaluation, which seeks to oversee performance and determine the effects of a specific communication initiative. The approach involves deriving monitoring and evaluation indicators from the program's objectives and activities, and then categorizing these indicators into process, impact, and outcome sections. Concentrating on the immediate results of a particular program, process indicators address inquiries like Were the activities executed as intended? Were the tasks performed effectively? How effective was the administrative/logistic support? Impact indicators focus on the medium-term results of a specific programme. They offer details on how much a specific program goal has been accomplished. Outcome indicators focus on the lasting impacts of a specific program intervention. They offer details regarding the results of a specific intervention.

Design

After assessing the circumstances and the communication aspect, we are now ready to formulate a persuasive message that will drive the intended action. This begins with message creation, which includes (a) identifying message concepts that will lead to the intended behaviour change (b) choosing a communication method and (c) deciding on the message's appeal or tone. Messages should clearly specify, in unambiguous terms, the behaviors to encourage and emphasize the advantages of the behaviors being endorsed.

When choosing a communication strategy, it is crucial to focus on the informative, educational, empowering, entertaining, and persuasive elements to promote compliance. The selection of a particular message appeal or tone (e.g. positive or negative, rational or emotional, serious or humorous) should be guided by the characteristics of the behaviors being encouraged.

The design element highlights the importance of message distribution and training strategies. It plans the integrated communication strategy-planning matrix, which focuses on skillfully utilizing targeted messages and insights in advocacy, social mobilization, and program communication areas to encourage and maintain preferred behaviours. It is crucial to emphasize that, in message creation, the focus should be on the efficiency of message format and content to ensure that what is communicated is what is intended, what is intended is what is

comprehended, what is comprehended is what is acted upon, and what is acted upon leads to the intended result.

4. Action

Following the creation of the message, the subsequent phase, which notably signifies the final letter in the ACADA model, is action (execution plan). In this case, a communication plan is created according to the communication goals. The communication plan outlines how to carry out communication activities, considering our target audiences (participants).

To effectively implement a communication plan, it is essential to create an integrated communication strategy that addresses the appropriate methods within our communication continuum, focusing on advocacy, social mobilization, and program communication. Our job in this respect becomes simpler when we adhere to a sequential approach, as illustrated in a comprehensive communication strategy planning matrix.

Theoretical Framework

Development Media Theory

The communication theory that provides the intellectual framework for this study is the Development Media Theory. The development media theory, by Dennis McQuail (1987), calls for media assistance to the government and its efforts to achieve socio-economic development. This theory advocates for the media to project and promote development programmes, activities, and initiatives of society. Accordingly, Omolola (2020, p. 36) informs that “The development media theory propounded by Dennis McQuail (1987) solicits media support for the government and its initiatives to bring about socioeconomic development. The theory argues that until a country is well established and its social-economic development in progress, media must be helpful. Rather, than antagonizing the government, the media should help them in implementing their policies”.

Development media theory refers to using communication to facilitate social development in developing countries. It posits that mass media should support national development programs and nation-building (Tanveer, 2021, para1). As espoused by Omolola (2020) media’s support for development initiatives and help in implementing policies is fundamental and a prerequisite. One may ask what policies need implementation, the answer as it relates to this study is the development communication initiatives and policies. Implementation of projects

requires monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment, in this case using the ACADA communication model. Here lies the relevance of this study.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey method. Accordingly, Anyanwu, Okoro, Iheanacho and Obi (2017) argue that the “survey was considered appropriate because it allows for the study of people's opinions, and perceptions on a given issue of public interest”. The focus group discussion was used as the data collection method. The study's population consists of 8 lecturers, this population is considered too small for sampling hence census was chosen for the study. The focus group discussion was conducted with the 8 lecturers' of the Department of Mass Communication in the Convergence Studio, University of Africa, Toru-Orua. Among the lecturers were two Professors, one senior lecturer, three in the Lecturer 1 category, one lecturer 2, and one graduate assistance

Presentation of the Focus Group Discussion data

Question 1 is on the relevance of monitoring and evaluation in development initiatives.

The majority of the lecturers who participated pointed out that monitoring and evaluation are two relevant and necessary components of development communication initiatives for an impact assessment. Participants of the focus group discussion opined that communication impact is an indicator of the success and failures of any development communication programme. The impact determines the level of compliance and behaviour change, awareness level, and quantum of information at the disposal of both the beneficent audience/community and the development-providing institution, agency, or government.

Question 2 is the effectiveness of employing the ACADA model in monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment in the development communication initiative.

All participant lecturers unanimously agreed that the ACADA model is effective in monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment concerning development communication initiatives. They, however, adduced the following reasons for its effectiveness: the cyclical nature of the model, meaning that it ends where it began. It is reiterative which implies that lapses are discovered after monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment for redesign or adjustment. It is participatory and has a

well-established procedure, it involves research at any stage, and most importantly has the component of evaluation of success and failure after the last stage.

The responses to this question can be summarized in the following: deploying the ACADA model for monitoring and evaluation of impact assessment in a development communication initiative guarantees effective and efficient use of resources, provides an opportunity to fine-tune or improve development communication programme impact, it provides communication managers feedback that allows for better understanding of how the communication programme is working.

Question 3 addresses the extent monitoring and evaluation could assess the impact of a development communication initiative.

The majority of the lecturers believed that monitoring and evaluation can assess impact to a vast extent because the components determine the extent to which programme is having or has had the desired impact. Monitoring and evaluation could assess impact to a large extent, as they provide an opportunity to change direction where objectives are not met,

Discussion of findings

The results of the focus group data suggest that most lecturers found the ACADA model to be a comprehensive and practical tool for measuring the impact of development communication initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation are two essential components of impact assessment. Its effectiveness is a result of inherent potentials in the ACADA model such as its cyclical functionality, repetitive nature, participation, research, and evaluation. The findings also highlighted the importance of integrating the ACADA model into the evaluation process for a more accurate and efficient assessment of impact.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the ACADA model is a valuable tool for monitoring and evaluating development communication initiatives for impact assessment. Further, the study concludes that impact assessment through effective monitoring and evaluation are indicators for the success or failure of any development communication initiatives.

Recommendation

The study recommended the following

1. There should be a widespread adoption of monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment in development communication initiatives in Nigeria.
2. Due to the proven potency of the ACADA model for monitoring and evaluation for impact assessment, communication professionals of development agencies like the government, NGOs and interventionist agencies should make use of the ACADA model.
3. For development journalists to achieve the predetermined communication goal of any development, the ACADA model should be deployed for impact assessment.

References

- Anaeto, S. G. & Anaeto, M. S. (2010). *Development communication: Principles and practice*. Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.
- Anyanwu, B. J. C., Okoro, L. N., Iheanacho, C.O. & Obi, J. I. (2017). Social media and women economic empowerment in Nigeria: An assessment. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 1(1), 43-56.
- Asadu, C. A. (2012). *Anatomy of communication for development*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- European Commission (2019). *Communication monitoring evaluation*.
file:///C:/Users/o876/Desktop/Monitoring%20and%20evaluation%20source%20material
%20folder/communication%20monitoring%20and%20evaluation
- Nora, Q. (23 November 2001). "Development Communication in a Borderless World". Paper presented at the national conference-workshop on the undergraduate development communication curriculum, "New Dimensions, Bold Decisions". Continuing Education Center, UP Los Baños: Department of Science Communication, College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños. pp. 15–28.
- Odoom, D. (2020). Understanding development communication: A review of selected literature. *E- Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 37 – 48. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2020055>.

- Okoro, M. N. (2005). The ACADA model of communication for development: A morphological presentation. *International Journal of Communication*, 2, 209-217.
- Omolola, O. (2020). The normative theories of the press in the digital age: A need for revision. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 4(2), 27-36
- Shelar, V. (2024). *The essential role of communication in monitoring and evaluation*. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/essential-role-communication-monitoring-evaluation-shelar-phd--siu8f>
- Tanveer, A. (2021). *Development media theory (Mass communication theory)*. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/development-media-theory-mass-communication-theory/241823561>.
- Torres, C, S. & Velasco, M. T .H. (2005). Participatory monitoring and evaluation. *Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionist-ASEAN Sub – Region and College of Department Communication*. University of Philipines. Los Banos.
- UNICEF (2015) *Communication for Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/cbsc>/Accessed 21/10/19.
- Velasco, M. H. (2006). *Monitoring and evaluation of communication programs in natural resources management in agriculture (NRMA)*. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/4/a0406e/a0406e09.htm>.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

CHINWE, GRACEOKEKE

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

08066545632

Email: grace.okeke.pg94868@unn.edu.ng,

PROF. JOSEPH, O. WOGU

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

Email: joseph.wogu@unn.edu.ng; 08038726595, 07017604315

Abstract

This study delves into the important role of health communication in fostering grassroots development in selected rural communities in South East Nigeria. This research investigates how effective communication strategies contribute to improved health outcomes, thereby promoting overall community development. Through a survey research method, with a population size of 385 samples, the use of questionnaire through Google Form shared on social media platforms as well as the use of tables with frequencies and simple percentages which used a quantitative method in analysing and measuring the proportion between variables, the study examines the awareness, accessibility, and impact of health communication initiatives on issues such as disease prevention, maternal and child health, and sanitation. The findings reveal that well-tailored health communication campaigns, utilizing local languages and culturally relevant content, significantly enhance community engagement and compliance with health guidelines. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, low literacy rates, and cultural barriers often hinder the effectiveness of these efforts. The study highlights the need for sustainable, community-driven communication strategies that involve local stakeholders and leverage traditional and modern media to reach diverse audiences. By bridging the gap between health knowledge and practice, health communication not only improves individual and public health but also drives broader socio-economic

development at the grassroots level. The implications of these findings underscore the necessity of integrating health communication into rural development policies to achieve long-term health and development goals in South East Nigeria.

Keywords: Role, Communication Strategies, Health Communication, Grassroots Development, Rural communities

Introduction

In developing nations, effective health communication plays an important role in advancing grassroots development, particularly in rural communities where health challenges are often more pronounced. Health communication involves disseminating information, education, and messages tailored to influence knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, especially concerning disease prevention, health promotion, and community well-being. In rural areas, health communication can bridge significant information gaps, contributing to improved healthcare practices, heightened awareness, and better access to health services (Rural Health Information Hub, 2024). The need for effective health communication in rural communities is particularly pressing given the high rates of infectious diseases, maternal and child health challenges, and waterborne illnesses prevalent in these areas. Health communication provides a means to educate communities on preventive measures, encourage the adoption of healthier behaviours, and mobilize resources to address urgent health concerns. By focusing on the social and cultural aspects of rural communities, health communication can be tailored to ensure messages align with local populations, improving the effectiveness of public health interventions.

Rural communities in South East Nigeria face numerous health challenges, such as high rates of infectious diseases, malnutrition, and maternal and child mortality, often exacerbated by limited healthcare infrastructure, poor literacy rates, and traditional beliefs that may hinder modern health practices. Health communication is instrumental in these settings, providing a means to educate communities on sanitation, nutrition, immunization, and the prevention of communicable diseases. Studies have shown that targeted communication strategies, such as community-based campaigns, radio programs, and peer-led education, are effective in promoting behaviour change in rural contexts (Adesina et al., 2020; Okpoko & Aniwada, 2018). Grassroots development hinges not only on economic and infrastructural growth but also on the health and

well-being of the population, which forms the foundation of productive and sustainable communities. Effective health communication is essential in mobilizing communities toward self-sustained development, encouraging grassroots participation, and fostering local capacity in health management. Grassroots approaches, particularly in rural Nigerian communities, offer a unique opportunity to create culturally relevant health messages that align with local values and practices, making health information more acceptable and actionable (Aondowas et al., 2023).

Several barriers, including limited access to media, cultural barriers, and mistrust of outside sources, can hinder the effectiveness of health communication in rural areas. Yet, research underscores the potential of leveraging existing social structures, such as traditional leaders, local associations, and religious groups, to amplify health messages. These community structures serve as trusted information channels, enhancing the credibility and reach of health communication efforts (Moghalu, 2024; Maiwada et al., 2016). This study assesses the role of health communication in promoting grassroots development within rural communities of South East Nigeria. It examines the effectiveness of current health communication strategies, identifies the challenges faced, and explores the channels through which health messages are disseminated and received as well as aims to provide insights that can inform more effective health communication practices, supporting sustainable grassroots development and ultimately improving the health outcomes in these communities.

Statement of the Problem

Health communication plays a very important role in promoting public health and fostering grassroots development, particularly in rural communities with limited access to healthcare resources and information. In Southeast Nigeria, rural communities often face substantial health challenges, including high rates of infectious diseases, maternal and child health issues, and poor sanitation. Despite various public health campaigns and interventions, the impact of these programs has been limited, suggesting gaps in how health information is communicated and received. A significant issue in these rural areas is the lack of effective communication strategies that resonate with the cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts of the communities (Wogu et al., 2019). Many health campaigns are delivered in formats or languages that rural dwellers may not fully understand which reduces their effectiveness. Furthermore, traditional communication methods often compete with modern

communication channels, leading to confusion and mistrust. These problems are exacerbated by the limited infrastructure and resources available for delivering consistent health messages, which hinders the long-term impact of health communication efforts (Udochi-Nwachukwu et al., 2023).

Moreover, health communication efforts are frequently designed without sufficient community engagement, which may result in strategies that are not locally relevant or sustainable. This lack of community involvement in planning and executing health campaigns often leads to scepticism and resistance among the target population, weakening the effectiveness of the campaigns. For these communities, effective health communication is not merely about disseminating information but about fostering genuine community involvement and trust, which are essential for meaningful behavioural change and sustainable grassroots development (Ihekweazu et al., 2022).

In light of these challenges, this study seeks to assess the role of health communication in promoting grassroots development in rural communities in Southeast Nigeria. The research will examine how health communication strategies can be optimized to address local health challenges, increase community engagement, and foster sustainable development outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the role of health communication in promoting grassroots development within rural communities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to: Identify the most trusted and accessible channels of communication within rural communities in South East Nigeria that aid in disseminating health information; Assess the impact of health communication on behavioural change related to health practices, such as vaccination, hygiene, and disease prevention; Examine the role of health communication in fostering community-driven health initiatives and sustainable development in South East Nigeria; as well as Highlight challenges and barriers that health communicators face in reaching rural audiences in South East Nigeria.

Literature Review

Empirical review (Review of some selected, related studies)

In this section, the researcher will do an empirical review of some research studies that are related to the study at hand.

In the research work of Aondowase et al., (2023), on Mass Media and Health Communication Messages: Implications for Rural Development in the 21st Century Nigeria, the researchers aimed to assess the role of mass media in rural health communication and its implications for rural development in Nigeria. The authors sought to understand how effectively mass media conveys health messages to rural populations and what barriers might inhibit this communication's success. The research was anchored on the Agenda Setting Theory, which posits that media play a crucial role in shaping public perception by prioritizing certain issues, thereby setting the public agenda. This theory is relevant for examining how media channels influence rural awareness and health behaviour in the Nigerian context by highlighting specific health concerns. This study utilized a descriptive research design, focusing on qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to explore media effectiveness in rural health communication. Surveys were administered to a cross-section of rural community members, and focus group discussions were conducted to gain deeper insights into the perception of media health messages. The study also reviewed secondary data on health campaigns targeting rural audiences. The study found that mass media significantly contributes to raising awareness and educating rural communities on health issues, particularly through radio and television. However, it also identified significant challenges, such as language barriers, limited access to media in remote areas, and high levels of misinformation. While urban areas showed higher engagement with health messages, rural areas were less responsive due to infrastructure and accessibility issues.

The authors concluded that mass media have a pivotal role in promoting health education and behaviour change, essential for rural development in Nigeria. They argued that despite the challenges, mass media remain a powerful tool for health promotion, especially when messages are tailored to the cultural and linguistic context of rural audiences. The study further recommended that media campaigns should be conducted in local dialects and incorporate community-based media, such as local radio and community meetings. It also advocated for increased government investment in rural media infrastructure and collaboration with local leaders to ensure health messages reach the

intended audiences more effectively. The authors emphasized the need for media literacy programs in rural areas to combat misinformation. This review illustrates how, despite infrastructural challenges, mass media can be strategically utilized to enhance health communication, which is fundamental to improving rural development outcomes in Nigeria.

In his 1994 study, "The Role of Mass Media in Family Planning Promotion in Nigeria," Akinrinola Bankole examines how mass media influences family planning behaviours among Nigerian women. The primary objective is to determine whether exposure to family planning messages through mass media correlates with increased contraceptive use and a preference for smaller family sizes.

Bankole employs a cross-sectional analysis using data from the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). This approach assesses the relationship between media exposure and reproductive behaviours, considering both the direct effects of media messages and the broader context of reproductive preferences.

The findings reveal a positive association between exposure to mass media family planning messages and contraceptive use. Women who encountered these messages were more likely to use contraceptives and express a desire for fewer children compared to those unexposed. While the data doesn't conclusively establish causality, the strong correlation suggests that mass media campaigns effectively influence reproductive behaviour.

In conclusion, Bankole recommends the continuation and enhancement of mass media programs promoting family planning in Nigeria, given their apparent impact on encouraging contraceptive use and shaping reproductive preferences.

A study by Odorume (2015), on "Mass Media Health Communication: Imperative for Sustainable Health Development in Nigeria", explored the role of mass media in improving public health outcomes in Nigeria and highlighted the media's critical role in sustainable health development. The study aimed to: Examine the effectiveness of mass media in disseminating health information to the Nigerian public; Analyse the role of health communication in promoting sustainable health practices; as well as Assess the impact of media-driven health campaigns on public health behaviour, especially in rural areas with limited access to healthcare services. The study anchored on Development Media Theory, which emphasizes the media's role in supporting societal progress, particularly in developing nations. According to this theory, media should actively promote health and

development, serving as a channel to educate and empower citizens regarding health issues. The theory underscores that media can bridge gaps in health education, particularly in low-resource settings. The study employed a qualitative research approach using case studies of previous health communication campaigns in Nigeria, such as those focused on polio and HIV/AIDS. Odorume analysed media coverage, health communication materials, and government reports on health campaigns, identifying how these efforts were organized and their impact on the public. Additionally, the study conducted interviews with media practitioners and health officials to gain insights into the strategic planning of these campaigns. Odorume found that mass media campaigns significantly influenced public health behaviour and understanding. Particularly, Media campaigns enhanced awareness of diseases and preventive measures, which was critical for diseases with high transmission risks, such as HIV/AIDS and polio; Exposure to health information through radio, television, and newspapers contributed to behaviour change, with individuals adopting safer health practices; and Media, especially radio and television, had a broad reach across Nigeria, including rural areas, making it possible to disseminate health information to underserved populations.

The study further concluded that mass media plays an important role in advancing sustainable health development in Nigeria. Through effective communication, the media helps address health misconceptions, promote preventive practices, and encourage community involvement in health initiatives. Odorume, finally recommended that the government should invest more resources in health communication programs to make them sustainable; Health messages should be delivered in local languages and adapted to local cultural contexts to enhance their effectiveness; and that Health communication should not be limited to crisis periods; instead, there should be continuous public health education to build a culture of health awareness and preventive care. Odorume's work highlights that sustainable health development in Nigeria is achievable with consistent media engagement in health communication, tailored to the unique needs of diverse populations across the country.

Akpor's study on "Mass media and grassroots mobilization in Nigeria" (2013) in Aondowase, Udoudom, & Pam (2023), aimed to assess the role of mass media in addressing health challenges, particularly in rural Nigerian communities. Akpor sought to examine how mass media campaigns could increase awareness, promote preventive behaviours, and ultimately mitigate the spread of prevalent health issues such as malaria

and HIV/AIDS among rural populations. The focus was on understanding media's potential to shape health perceptions and influence behaviour change in regions often underserved by formal healthcare systems. His research was grounded in the Social Marketing Model, a theory often used to evaluate health promotion campaigns. This model posits that media campaigns when designed to resemble commercial marketing efforts, can influence public attitudes and encourage beneficial health behaviours. The study also incorporated aspects of Development Media Theory, which emphasizes the responsibility of media to contribute to social improvement and rural development, particularly in developing nations.

Akpor employed a mixed-methods approach that included both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys were conducted with rural residents to gather quantitative data on their media consumption habits, health knowledge, and behaviours related to malaria and HIV/AIDS. Additionally, qualitative interviews were held with local media professionals and healthcare providers to understand the challenges and strategies in producing and disseminating health-related media content. This approach provided both statistical insights and in-depth perspectives on media's effectiveness in health communication. The study found that radio was the most effective medium for reaching rural audiences, as it was accessible and understood by a large segment of the population. Radio programs, particularly dramas and public service announcements were successful in educating listeners about health topics and promoting preventive practices. For example, campaigns about using mosquito nets and preventive measures for malaria significantly increased listeners' awareness and reportedly influenced their behaviour positively. However, the study also identified barriers, such as limited funding for rural health media campaigns and insufficient training for local media personnel in health communication. These limitations hindered the frequency and quality of health-related media content.

Akpor concluded that mass media campaigns could significantly impact public health by raising awareness and changing behaviours in rural communities. The study emphasized that the success of these campaigns relied on their accessibility, cultural relevance, and frequency. It highlighted the importance of using local languages and culturally sensitive messaging to maximize the campaigns' effectiveness in rural areas. The study recommended that, Government and NGOs increase funding for health media campaigns targeting rural communities to ensure consistent, high-quality programming; Local language broadcasts should

be prioritized to make health information more accessible to non-English-speaking audiences; Training programs for media personnel be established to enhance their skills in health communication and content creation; as well as Community engagement initiatives should accompany media campaigns to reinforce messages through community health workers and local health events.

This research emphasizes the potential for mass media to contribute meaningfully to public health in rural settings, provided there is adequate support and strategic planning to overcome the operational challenges. Akpor's findings have implications for policymakers and public health advocates, emphasizing that accessible and culturally attuned media intervention are crucial to advancing health outcomes in underserved regions.

Theoretical Framework

This study, will therefore, anchor on two different theories which are Health Belief Model and Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Both theories provide insights into how health communication can influence behaviour and decision-making in rural communities, thereby fostering grassroots development.

Health Belief Model

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a psychological model developed in the 1950s by social psychologists in the U.S. Public Health Service to explain and predict health-related behaviours. This model posits that people's beliefs about health problems, perceived benefits of action, and barriers to action can predict health behaviours. The core constructs of the HBM include perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy (Rosenstock, 1974; Glanz et al., 2008). In the context of rural communities in South East Nigeria, the HBM provides a framework for understanding how local populations perceive health risks such as cholera, malaria, or other prevalent diseases and how these perceptions influence their health-seeking behaviours. For example, if individuals in these communities perceive a high risk of contracting cholera but also see significant barriers to accessing preventive care, health communication campaigns can be tailored to address these concerns by emphasizing accessibility and affordability.

According to Rosenstock et al. (1988), effective health communication should seek to increase perceived susceptibility and

severity while addressing perceived barriers. In applying this model, health campaigns can effectively encourage community members to adopt preventative measures and seek medical care, which promotes overall health and contributes to grassroots development.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Developed by Everett Rogers in 1962, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how new ideas, products, or practices spread within a society. Rogers identified five stages in the diffusion process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003). The theory also classifies adopters into categories—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards—based on their willingness to adopt new ideas. This theory is relevant to health communication in rural communities because it addresses how health practices and innovations can be introduced and adopted over time. In Southeast Nigeria, rural communities often rely on traditional beliefs and practices, which can create resistance to new health interventions (Yoder, 1997). By identifying influential community members who can serve as "opinion leaders" or "early adopters," health communication campaigns can leverage these individuals to facilitate wider acceptance of health interventions, such as vaccinations, sanitation practices, or new treatments.

Research has shown that social systems and communication channels significantly impact how quickly an innovation is adopted, especially in rural areas (Dearing & Cox, 2018). Therefore, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory highlights the need for targeted health communication strategies that take into account social networks, cultural norms, and the timing of messages to maximize impact at the grassroots level.

Therefore, the integration of the Health Belief Model and Diffusion of Innovations Theory will make health communication campaigns to be more effectively designed and tailored to meet the needs of rural communities in South East Nigeria. The HBM helps in addressing individual perceptions and barriers to health behaviour change, while the Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides insights into the social dynamics that influence how new health practices are adopted within communities. Together, these theories can guide the development of communication strategies that not only enhance health awareness but also promote sustainable grassroots development by empowering communities to make informed health decisions.

Research Methodology

This study intends to assess the role of Health Communication in Promoting Grassroots Development in parts of Rural Communities in South East Nigeria. The researcher decided to adopt the survey research method because it is effective in selecting samples, that is, subsets of the population that are representative of the entire population. Wimmer and Dominick (2005), state that "studies involving public perception or responses to an issue, and many 'impact studies,' often necessitate the use of a survey design." The questionnaire, used as the main measuring device in this study approach, turned out to be a highly effective instrument for gathering significant quantitative data.

The study's target demographic is the Southeast geopolitical region of Nigeria, which is made up of the five states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. According to the National Population Commission's (NPC) 2006 census, the Southeast region's population was expected to be 16,365,555. However, in order to estimate the present population for the years between 2006 and 2024, the researcher followed the recommendations made by Onwuamalam (2012). In this instance, the projected population growth was calculated using *the* UNDP's recommended 3.2 per cent annual growth rate.

" $P_p = G_p, P_i, T$ " is the projection formula, where:

The projected population is denoted by P_p , whereas the current population is denoted by G_p .

P_i = is the population growth index.

T = The amount of time between the sample's population and the study's year.

Using the values given: P_p equals G_p (16,365,555), P_i (3.2% or 0.032), and T (from 2006 to 2023, 17).

P_p is therefore equal to 9,426,559.68, that is, $16,365,555 \times 0.032 \times 18$.

According to this forecast, between 2006 and 2024, the Southeast geopolitical region of Nigeria saw a growth in population of around 9,426,559.68 people. In 2024, it is expected that the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria would have a population of 25,792,114.68 when this increase is taken into account with the 2006 population figure. Thus, a total population of 25,792,114 people in the areas are covered by this study. The National Statistical Service online Sample Calculator was used to arrive at the sample size of 385.

Findings

Google Form was used in administering the questionnaire through a social media platform, the researcher waited for a while before closing the form after getting a reasonable response rate. It should be noted that out of the 385 of the sample size, only 117 responses were gotten. On the other hand, the data collected in this study were presented and analysed using tables with frequencies and simple percentages. In analysing it, the quantitative method was used to measure the proportion between variables. The results from analysis were used to answer the research questions as well as draw inferences for the study.

Research Question One: What are the most trusted and accessible channels of communication within rural communities in South East Nigeria that aid in disseminating health information?

Table 1. The most trusted source for Health information

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Radio	7	6
TV	11	9.4
Community leader	13	11.1
Health worker	48	41
Family and friend	12	10.3
Social media	19	16.2
Print media (fliers, posters)	7	6
Total	117	100%

Table 2. Accessibility of communication channels to community members

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Very accessible	60	51.3
Accessible	47	40.2
Neutral	6	5.1
Not very accessible	4	3.4
Not accessible at all	0	0
Total	117	100%

Table 3. Reception of health information from local media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Very often	22	18.8
Often	27	23
Occasionally	54	46.2
Rarely	13	11.1
Never	1	0.9
Total	117	100%

Research Question Two: How impactful is health communication on behavioural change related to health practices, such as vaccination, hygiene, and disease prevention?

Table 4. Level of agreement with the statement: “Health communication has helped me understand the importance of vaccination.”

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	7	6
Agree	54	46.1
Strongly agree	56	47.9
Total	117	100%

Table 5. Health practices learnt or improved due to health communication

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Hand washing and hygiene	80	68.4 (100%)
Vaccination	63	53.8 (100%)
Safe drinking water practices	65	55.6 (100%)
Proper sanitation	62	53(100%)
Food safety	55	47 (100%)
Preventing mosquito borne-diseases	64	54.7 (100%)

Table 6. Change of health practices based on information received through health campaigns or health workers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Very likely	72	61.5
Likely	38	32.5
Neutral	4	3.4
Unlikely	3	2.6
Very unlikely	0	0
Total	117	100%

Research Question Three: What is the role of health communication in fostering community-driven health initiatives and sustainable development in South East Nigeria?

Table 7. Involvement of communities in health initiatives like sanitation campaigns, vaccination drives or awareness events

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Very involved	22	19
Involved	41	35
Somewhat involved	40	34.1
Not very involved	14	11.9
Not involved at all	0	0
Total	117	100%

Table 8. Level of agreement to the fact that health communication empowers ones community to take collective action in addressing health issues

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3	2.6
Neutral	11	9.4
Agree	61	52
Strongly agree	42	36
Total	117	100%

Research Question Four: What challenges and barriers health communicators face in reaching rural audiences in South East Nigeria?

Table 9. Barriers that affect the effectiveness of health communication in communities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
Limited access to communication channels (radio, TV, Internet)	61	51.7 (100%)
Cultural beliefs and misconceptions about health	68	57.6 (100%)
Low literacy levels	57	48.3 (100%)
Language barriers	35	29.7 (100%)
Lack of trust in health communicators	35	29.7 (100%)
Infrequent health campaigns	52	44.1 (100%)

Table 10. Health activities that would make health communication more effective in communities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage distribution
More frequent health campaign	81	68.6 (100%)
Use of local language	79	66.9 (100%)
Involvement of community leaders	66	55.9 (100%)
Improved access to media	60	50.8 (100%)
Better health education	69	58.5 (100%)

Discussion of Findings

It should be noted that against the sample size of 385, only 117 respondents attended to the questions of the questionnaire in Google Form sent to them through social media platforms.

Research Question One: What are the most trusted and accessible channels of communication within rural communities in South East Nigeria that aid in disseminating health information?

The statements in tables 1,2 and 3 were used to answer research question one. From the data gathered in table 1, most of the respondents (48) with the percentage of 41 % selected Health workers as their most trusted source for health information, while 60 respondents with the percentage of 51.3% in table 2 responded that communication channels were very accessible to them. And in table 3, 54 respondents with the highest percentage of 46.2% indicated that they receive health information from local media just occasionally.

Research Question Two: How impactful is health communication on behavioural change related to health practices, such as vaccination, hygiene, and disease prevention?

The statements in Tables 4, 5 and 6 were used to answer research question two. From the data gathered in Table 4, respondents (56 and 54) with the highest percentages of 47.9% and 46.1%, strongly agreed and agreed to the statement that Health communication has helped them understand the importance of vaccination. It should be noted here that in Table 5, respondents were allowed to select more than one option to the question given as it applies to them. From the data gathered in Table 5, all the respondents indicated that they have learnt health practices or improved on their health practices of hand washing and hygiene, vaccination, safe drinking water practices, proper sanitation, food safety and preventing mosquito-borne diseases based on health communication. While on table 6, the majority of the respondents (72 and 38) with percentages of 61.5% and 32.5% indicated that they are very likely and likely to change their health practices based on information received through health campaigns or health workers.

Research Question Three: What is the role of health communication in fostering community-driven health initiatives and sustainable development in South East Nigeria?

The statements in Tables 7 and 8 were used to answer research question three. From the data gathered in Table 7, very high percentages (19%, 35% and 34.1%) of respondents (22, 41 and 40) indicated that their communities get very involved, involved and somewhat involved respectively in health initiatives like sanitation campaigns, vaccination drives or awareness events. While in Table 8, the highest numbers of respondents (61 and 42) with the percentages of 52% and 36% indicated that they agree and strongly agree respectively that health communication empowers one's community to take collective action in addressing health issues.

Research Question Four: What challenges and barriers health communicators face in reaching rural audiences in South East Nigeria?

The statements in Tables 9 and 10 were used to answer research question four. It should also be noted here that respondents were allowed to select more than one option to the question given as it applies to them. Therefore, from the data gathered in Table 9, all the respondents indicated that the options provided in the question are barriers that affect the effectiveness of health communication in their communities. They include limited access to communication channels, cultural beliefs and misconceptions about health, low literacy levels, language barriers, lack of trust in health communicators and infrequent health campaigns. And finally, in Table 10, all the respondents indicated that the health activities given as options in the question would make health communication more effective in their communities.

Implication of Findings

1. Health workers emerged as the most trusted source of health information, emphasizing on the critical role of healthcare professionals in bridging the communication gap in rural communities. Their credibility and interpersonal connection can be leveraged for disseminating accurate health messages. Also, the majority of respondents found communication channels to be accessible, but their limited frequency of use, as indicated by occasional receipt of information from local media, suggests a need for more consistent and sustained health communication efforts through these accessible channels. Therefore, health campaigns should prioritize the active involvement of health workers and capitalize on accessible channels like local media to ensure frequent and timely dissemination of health information.

2. Health communication has significantly influenced understanding of vaccination and improved health practices like hand washing, sanitation, and mosquito-borne disease prevention. Also, the high likelihood of respondents changing their health practices based on received health information demonstrates the power of well-executed health campaigns in effecting behavioural change. Therefore, continued investment in tailored health communication campaigns that emphasize preventive health practices can amplify these positive outcomes, leading to long-term improvements in public health behaviours.
3. Many respondents indicated their communities were actively involved in health initiatives, and health communication was recognized as empowering communities to take collective action. This suggests that health communication fosters a sense of ownership and community participation, which are essential for sustainable grassroots development. Therefore, community-driven approaches should remain central to health communication strategies, because involving local leaders and stakeholders can strengthen communal efforts to address health challenges, creating a sustainable impact.
4. The study also highlights pervasive barriers such as limited access to communication channels, cultural beliefs, low literacy levels, language barriers, and frequent health campaigns, which hinder effective communication, and addressing these barriers requires a dimensional approach, including the use of local languages, culturally sensitive messaging, and increased frequency of campaigns. Therefore, policymakers and health communicators must design interventions that overcome these challenges by investing in infrastructure, incorporating cultural contexts, and improving the regularity of health communication efforts.

Conclusion

The study concludes that health communication plays a very important role in improving public health and fostering sustainable grassroots development in rural communities in South East Nigeria. Health workers are identified as the most trusted and effective source of health information, highlighting their central role in bridging communication gaps. Accessible communication channels, though underutilized, offer potential for consistent dissemination of health information.

Health communication has also demonstrated a significant impact on fostering positive health behaviours, such as vaccination, hygiene, and disease prevention, and empowers communities to actively participate in health initiatives. However, pervasive barriers like cultural beliefs, limited access to communication infrastructure, and infrequent health campaigns hinder its full potential. Addressing these challenges requires a dimensional approach, leveraging local resources and emphasizing community-driven strategies.

References

- Adesina, E., Adeloje, D., Falola, H., Adeyeye, B., Yartey, D., & Kayode-Adedeji, T. (2020). Health communication and behavioural practice towards ending Hepatitis B virus in Southwest Nigeria. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2020(1), 4969687. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/4969687>
- Akpor, E. D. (2013). Mass media and grassroots mobilization in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 4(3), 22-32
- Aondowase, S., Udoudom, U., & Pam, C. C. (2023). Mass media and health communication messages: Implications for rural development in the 21st century Nigeria. *International Journal of Emerging Media and Technology*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.58578/ijemt.v1i1.1885>
- Bankole, A. (1994). The role of mass media in family planning promotion in Nigeria (*DHS Working Papers No. 11*). Macro International.
- Dearing, J. W., & Cox, J. G. (2018). Diffusion of innovations theory, principles, and practice. *Health Affairs*, 37(2), 183-190
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2009). Legal notice on publication of 2006 census final results. *Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*, 2(96). National Population Commission.
- Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K. (2008). Health behaviour and health education: Theory, research, and practice. *John Wiley & Sons*
- Ihekweazu, V., Ejibe, U., Kaduru, C., Disu, Y., Oyebanji, O., Oguanuo, E., Anueyiagu, C., Obanor, O. O., Akande-Alegbe, A., Egwuenu, A., Ojumu, T., Abara, E. A., & Ochu, C. L. (2022). Implementing an emergency risk communication campaign in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria: Lessons learned. *BMJ Global Health*, 7(6), e008846. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-008846>
- Maiwada, A. M., Rahman, N. A. A., Abdurrahman, S., Mamat, N. M., & Ann-Walker, J. (2016). The Islamic religious leaders as health promoters: Improving maternal health in selected communities of

- Zamfara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Reproduction and Infertility*, 7(1), 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.jri.2016.7.1.102118>
- Moghalu, C. (2024, September 4). Engaging traditional and religious leaders for effective public health campaigns in Nigeria. *Economic Confidential*. Retrieved from <https://economicconfidential.com/2024/09/engaging-traditional-religious>
- Odorume, A. (2015). "Mass Media Health Communication: Imperative for Sustainable Health Development in Nigeria." *Journal of African Studies*, 4, pp. 1-4.
- Okpoko, C. C., & Aniwada, E. C. (2018). Investigating health communication interventions on three major illnesses in Nigeria. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, 1(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2018/v1i325798>
- Onwuamalam, I. A. (2012). *Research Methodology and Dissertation Writing for Health and Allied Health Professionals*. Owerri, Nigeria: *Springfield Publishers*.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations (5th ed.)*. Free Press. <https://books.google.com/>
- Rosenstock, I. M. (1974). Historical origins of the health belief model. *Health Education Monographs*, 2, 328-335
- Rosenstock, I. M., Strecher, V. J., & Becker, M. H. (1988). Social learning theory and the health belief model. *Health Education Quarterly*, 15(2), 175-183
- Rural Health Information Hub (2024). Health Communication. <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/health-communication>
- Udochi-Nwachukwu, A. P., Dada, S. O., & Nyashanu, M. (2023). The use of indigenous communication media for children's vaccination and immunization promotion in rural communities of Abia State, Nigeria. *Journal of Public Health and Primary Care*, 4(3), 162-167. https://doi.org/10.4103/jphpc.jphpc_7_23
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2005). *Mass media research: An introduction (8th ed.)*. Thomson Wadsworth.
- Wogu, J. O., Chukwu, C. O., Orekyeh, E. S. S., Anorue, L. I., Nwokedi, O., & Chukwu, L. C. (2019). Communicating health risk in Southeast Nigeria: The case of media campaign against viral hepatitis and its implication for health communication. *Medicine*, 98(25), e15847. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000015847>
- Yoder, P. S. (1997). Negotiating relevance: Belief, knowledge, and practice in international health projects. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 11(2), 131-146.

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF TELEVANGELISM AMONG SOUTHEAST RESIDENTS

**AJIBO DONATUS UCHENNA,
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
Email: tydon243@gmail.com
ORCID NO: 0009-0004-3616-8291**

Abstract

Many ministers aspire to preach the gospel on television, yet neither televangelism operators nor broadcasters fully understand how viewers engage with the content or the gratifications they derive. This study examined the uses and gratifications of televangelism among residents of Southeast Nigeria, focusing on Abia, Anambra, and Enugu States. Using a survey research method, data were collected through questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (frequencies and percentages). Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the findings revealed that 86% of viewers watch televangelism for spiritual fulfilment, yet its overall impact on residents is limited. While televangelism provides inspiration and religious guidance, the study found that many programs focus excessively on prosperity and personal popularity rather than genuine soul winning. Additionally, the study identified gaps in audience engagement, with some viewers feeling disconnected from the messages due to repetitive content, commercialization of faith, and lack of interactive participation. As a result, many viewers seek alternative sources for spiritual growth. The study recommends that televangelists expand their knowledge, conduct audience research, and prioritize content that fosters deeper spiritual connections. Additionally, broadcasters should improve program structure, integrate interactive elements, and emphasize messages of faith, morality, and community service to enhance engagement and impact.

Keywords: Christianity, Contents, Gratifications, Mass Media Audience, Televangelism, Televangelists and Television

Introduction

The mandate to spread the Gospel, rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20, Revised standard version (RSV), has driven evangelists to employ various strategies to reach audiences globally (Ekwueme, 2011).

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.....(Matthew 28: 18-20, RSV).

Since the mid-20th century, televangelism has emerged as a key method for disseminating Christian teachings, leveraging the mass media—particularly television, radio, and the internet—to connect with diverse audiences (Mokaya, 2015). Televangelism is a modern religious practice that integrates technology and media to produce, distribute, and consume religious content (Denson, 2011). Its roots date back to the 1930s in the United States, when Congress mandated broadcast license holders to air content in the public interest, including religious programming (Fore, 2007). Over time, televangelism evolved as television preachers like Archbishop Fulton Sheen and Rex Humbard used the medium to reach wider audiences (Mokaya, 2015). By the 1970s, paid religious programming had dominated the airwaves, marking a shift from free to monetized airtime.

Televangelism emerged after World War II as a deliberate effort by religious organizations to use mass media, such as radio, film, and television, to spread evangelical messages and win souls (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2012). Pioneered by figures like Billy Graham and Pentecostal evangelists, this approach combined broadcasts, literature distribution, and direct outreach, enabling global influence and establishing lasting networks in regions like Africa, South America, and beyond (Kay, 2009).

During the Cold War, Pentecostal evangelists capitalized on global opportunities, using creative campaigns and media to spread their message in regions like the Philippines, South Korea, and Latin America, while building networks and influencing politics, such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil establishing a vast media empire (Kay, 2009; Anderson, 2004). By the 1990s, Pentecostal and charismatic ministries worldwide leveraged broadcasting to grow their influence, from political engagement in the Philippines and Latin America to dramatic televangelism on platforms like the UK’s God Channel, contrasting with the BBC’s more restrained religious programming (Kay, 2009; Quicke & Quicke, 1992).

In countries like Australia, Ghana, and Sweden, Christian broadcasters are expanding the scope of religious programming, with Pentecostals and charismatics using a mix of local and international media to shape public consciousness and raise funds through testimonies and services (Kay, 2009). Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), founded in the U.S. in 1973, is the world's largest interdenominational Christian network, reaching millions through innovative programming and partnerships with evangelists like Benny Hinn (Kay, 2009; Melton et al., 1997). However, Pentecostal broadcasts rely heavily on fundraising telethons, but their effectiveness in attracting new followers is unclear, as research suggests they primarily reinforce existing beliefs, particularly among women without professional qualifications (Kay, 2009).

With the expansion of televangelism, especially via television and internet platforms, comprehending audience participation becomes imperative. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) provides a valuable framework for examining how people engage with televangelism to fulfil their spiritual, emotional, and informational requirements. Viewers may engage with religious programming for the reinforcement of religion, moral instruction, community engagement, or enjoyment. Though, Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1944) pioneered the development of uses and gratification theory (UGT) during World War II and initially focused on radio serial programmes (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwa-Uwaoma, 2016). The theory has three specific objectives. First, UGT attempts to explain how specific viewers use mass media to meet individual needs. Second, researchers endeavour to discover a viewer's underlying motives for using the media. Finally, theorists want to identify the positive and negative consequences of an individual's mass media utilisation.

Katz (1987) was the first researcher to employ the UGT approach by initially questioning what individuals do with mass media. Katz named a Bernard Berelson (1959, p.23) study that examined "a two-week newspaper strike, but from the individual reader's perspective". Katz found that while some readers felt compelled to do so for social or informative reasons, many individual readers used newspapers for diversion, relaxation, and entertainment. Katz's work demonstrates that different individuals can "use" the media in different ways.

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory, which also explains why people use certain media to satisfy needs, has been applied to study televangelism, showing that audiences engage with media for varied social-psychological benefits, as evidenced by the rise of Pentecostal

television use in countries like Nigeria after its media liberalization in 1992 (McQuail, 2010; Ihejirika, 2006). This form of evangelism blends religious content with entertainment, featuring preaching, singing, and discussions to engage viewers and encourage participation (Naggar, 2014). It caters to those unable or unwilling to attend traditional church services, offering spiritual engagement in the comfort of their homes (Chigbo, 2007). In Nigeria, televangelism is thriving, with TV stations airing sermons, gospel music, and live church services to diverse audiences. Nmai (1997) studied televangelism in Lagos, Nigeria, using survey research and the Uses and Gratifications theory to examine audience engagement. The author found that many Nigerians watch televangelism programs, favour sermons, and are unlikely to switch churches due to these broadcasts. He recommended better communication on financial contributions, noting viewers' willingness to support the programs, even modestly.

Televangelism stands apart from general religious broadcasting due to its reliance on audience support, charismatic leaders, and entertainment-driven approaches. Fundraising, often through merchandise sales, is central to sustaining these ministries (Schultze, 1999). Programs frequently feature captivating messages and sophisticated technology to attract and retain viewers (Kyle, 2010). However, critics argue that some televangelists prioritize commercial gains, diluting theological depth with sensationalism and entertainment (Kyle, 2010).

Despite these critiques, televangelism remains a powerful tool for evangelism. Its ability to bypass geographical and cultural barriers makes it effective for reaching millions instantaneously (Mokaya, 2015). Televangelists have also capitalized on the ritualized and instrumental viewing habits of audiences, catering to their needs for relaxation, companionship, and spiritual guidance (Rubin, 1984). The uses and gratifications theory offers insight into televangelism's appeal. This approach views audiences as active participants who use media to fulfil personal needs, from seeking information to finding spiritual solace (Frank & Greenberg, 1980). Televangelism meets both ritualized and instrumental viewing needs, blending entertainment with goal-oriented content to attract and retain viewers.

This study aims to explore how televangelism satisfies its audience's spiritual and emotional needs while navigating the complexities of modern media. By examining the evolution, strategies, and reception of televangelism, the research sheds light on its role in contemporary Christian practice and its potential for fostering spiritual

engagement in a technologically driven world. Television enhances the visibility and influence of churches and televangelists, serving as a promotional tool for gospel propagation, with televangelism leveraging its power to overcome political and cultural barriers to global evangelization (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Ihejirika, 2006). However, studies show that televangelism's audience is highly segmented, and while usage has increased, there is limited research on the specific uses and gratifications derived from these broadcasts, which this study aims to address. The general goal of this study is to examine the uses and gratifications television audience obtain from televangelism.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent to which residents of southeast expose themselves to televangelism programmes?
2. What do southeast residents do with the contents of televangelism programmes?
3. What gratifications do they derive from exposure to televangelism programmes?

Materials and Method

This study adopted survey research method. The study's population consists of 14,232,872 individuals who reside in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The region encompasses five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo.

Table 1

The table below shows the population of each state selected

S/n	States	2006 Population	2018 Population Estimate
1	Abia	2,833,999	3,922,254
2	Anambra	4,182,032	5,787,932
3	Enugu	3,267,837	4,522,686
4	Total	10,283,868	14,232,872

Therefore, **14,232,872** would become the population for the study

The study used a sample size of 385 respondents, calculated with the Australian Calculator provided by the National Statistics Service (NSS). A multi-stage sampling method was employed, following Asemah et al.'s (2012) approach, which involves selecting samples in stages.

Sampling Technique:

1. **Stage 1:** Simple random sampling was used to select three states from the five in Southeast Nigeria: Abia, Anambra, and Enugu.
2. **Stage 2:** Cluster sampling grouped each state into senatorial districts. From the nine senatorial districts, purposive sampling selected one district per state, prioritizing state capitals based on their urban orientation, media presence, educational institutions, and better TV reception.
3. **Stage 3:** Simple random sampling identified two LGAs from each senatorial district. A town was then randomly selected from each LGA.

Table 2: Structured approach for representative and methodical sample selection.

S/N	State	Senatorial District	Local Government Area	Towns
1	Abia state	Abia Central	Umuahia South Umuahia North	Ngodo Umuahia urban 1
2	Anambra state	Anambra North	Awka North Awka South	Amansea Ezinato
3	Enugu	Enugu East	Enugu East Enugu North	Abakpa Okpara Avenue

Proportional stratified sampling was used to allocate respondents from each state and LGA based on population size, ensuring representation as outlined by Ogbuoshi (2006).

The procedure is demonstrated below using the formula, $\frac{n}{N} \times \frac{S}{1}$

Where n= population of each stratum

N= total population

S= total sample size

Thus:

ABIA: $\frac{3922254}{14232872} \times \frac{385}{1} = 106$

$$\text{ANAMBRA: } \frac{5787932}{14232872} \times \frac{385}{1} = 157$$

$$\text{ENUGU: } \frac{4522686}{14232872} \times \frac{385}{1} = 122$$

Therefore, overall sample is 106+157+122 = 385

Accidental sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents who filled the questionnaire.

This study used a questionnaire as its data collection instrument. The researcher, assisted by three trained aides, self-administered the research instrument. This approach ensured a faster response rate and provided clarification for respondents when needed. Quantitative analysis employs frequency distribution tables and descriptive statistics to summarise the data and inferential statistics to draw conclusions.

Results

Research question One: What is the extent residents of southeast are exposed to televangelism?

Table 3: Responses of respondents on extent residents of Southeast are exposed to televangelism

	Responses	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Responses of Respondents on whether they own television set or have access to one	Yes	365	100%
	No	-	-
	Total	365	100%
Responses on type of programmes respondents prefer watching on television	Programmes	Frequency	Percentage
	Variety shows	39	11%
	News Programme	55	15%
	Documentaries	24	7%
	Music Video	64	17%

	Christian programmes	73	20%
	sports programmes	59	16%
	Films	51	14%
	Total	365	100%
Responses on how important religion is to respondents	Responses	Freq uenc y	Perce ntage (%)
	Very important	93	25%
	Somewhat important	157	43%
	Not very important	68	19%
	Not very important at all	47	13%
	Total	365	100%
Distribution on whether respondents have watched televangelism on television	Responses	Freq uenc y	Perce ntage (%)
	Yes	365	100%
	No	-	-
	Total	365	100%
Responses on the kind of televangelism programmes	Televangelism programme	Freq uenc y	Perce ntage (%)
	Church service Sermon	137	38%
	Gospel Music	65	18%
	Christian talk show	78	21%
	Christian drama/soap Opera	85	23%
	Total	365	100%

Extent respondents are exposed to televangelism	Response	Freq uenc y	Perce ntage (%)
	Very High	45	12%
	High	55	15%
	Average	158	43%
	Low	83	23%
	Very Low	24	7%
	Total	365	100%

Table 3 above illustrates that when asked if they own a television set or have access to one, every respondent indicated that they either own or have access to a television. Regarding the type of television programme respondents prefer to watch, the majority of respondents reported watching more Christian programs, accounting for 73 (20%) of the total. Music videos ranked second with 64 (17%), followed by sports programs with 59 (16%), news programme with 55 (15%), and films with 51 (14%). Variety shows and documentaries accounted for 39 (11%) and 24 (7%), respectively. Regarding the importance of religion to the respondents, the majority agree that it is somewhat important to them, with 157 (43%) and 93 (25%), respectively, indicating that religion is very important to them. Religion was not important to 68 (19%) and faith to 47 (13%) respectively.

Additionally, in terms of distribution based on whether respondents have watched televangelism on television, The table above confirms that every respondent has watched televangelism on television. Respondents provided feedback regarding the types of televangelism programs they have watched. Out of the 365 respondents, 137 (38%) indicated that the type of televangelism program they watch on television is church service sermons. This is followed by Christian drama/soap opera, which accounted for 85 respondents (23%), Christian talk shows, which had 78 respondents (21%), and 65 respondents (18%) who indicated that they watch gospel music on television. Consequently, the majority of respondents, 158 (representing 43%), expressed an average level of exposure to televangelism. Following this, 83 respondents (representing 23%) reported a low level of exposure to televangelism, 55 respondents (representing 15%) indicated a high level, 45 respondents (representing 12%) indicated a very high level, and 24 respondents (representing 7%) indicated a very low level.

Research question two: What do south residents do with the contents of televangelism programmes?

Table 4: Responses of respondents on what South residents do with the contents of the televangelism programme

Whether respondents has changed Denomination through Televangelism	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Yes	68	19%
	No	297	81%
	Total	365	100%
Preference of Televangelism Programmes to Church Attendance on Sundays	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Strongly prefer	40	11%
	Prefer	65	18%
	Disapprove	157	43%
	Strongly disapprove	103	28%
	Total	365	100%
Effectiveness of televangelism Programmes to Replace Church Attendance	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Very effective	51	14%
	Effective	36	10%
	Fairly effective	62	17%
	Ineffective	137	37%
	Very ineffective	79	22%
	Total	365	100%

The table above shows the respondents' responses to the question of whether they have changed their denomination reveal that only a small minority, 68 (19%), have changed their denomination as a result of watching televangelism programmes. Denomination through televangelism reveals that only a small minority, 68 (19%), changed their churches as a result of watching televangelism programs, while the majority, 297 (81%), did not change their churches as a result of viewing televangelism programs. Thus, preference of televangelism programmes to church attendance on Sundays when asked if they preferred watching televangelism programs over church attendance on Sundays, the majority (71%) of respondents said they didn't. Furthermore, when it comes to the effectiveness of televangelism programs as a substitute for church attendance, the majority of respondents believe that televangelism is not sufficiently effective to replace church attendance.

Research Question Three: What benefits do they derive from exposure to televangelism?

Table 5: Responses of respondents on benefits do they derive from exposure to televangelism

Distribution why respondents watch televangelism	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	For salvation	46	13%
	To feel close to God	73	20%
	To grow as a Christian	132	36%
	For spiritual guide	55	15%
	For behavioural guide	40	11%
	For relaxation	19	5%
	Total	365	100%
Distribution on the benefits respondents derive from	Benefits	Frequency	Percentage (%)

viewing televangelism			
	Religious benefits	313	86%
	Entertainment	38	10%
	no benefit at all	14	4%
	Total	365	100%

The table above indicates that the majority of respondents, 132 (36%), watch televangelism to grow as Christians. This is followed by 73 respondents (20%) who watch to feel close to God, 55 (15%) seeking spiritual guidance, 40 (13%) watching for salvation, another 40 (11%) seeking behavioral guidance, and 19 (5%) watching for relationship advice. However, the distribution of benefits that respondents derive from viewing televangelism is noteworthy. When asked about the satisfaction they derived from watching televangelism programs, a significant majority of respondents (86%) stated that they experienced religious satisfaction in one way or another, unlike those who merely enjoyed entertainment (10%) or reported "no benefit" at all (4%). The fact that 86% of respondents derived diverse religious or spiritual benefit from viewing the programs shows that televangelists are succeeding in their operation.

Discussion

All respondents own or have access to television, and the majority watch more Christian programming. 157 (43%) of the respondents agreed that religion holds some importance for them. All the respondents agreed that they have viewed televangelism on television, and the type of televangelism program they watch most on television is church service sermon. However, the study found that the exposure of Southeast residents to televangelism is average. This finding is corroborated by Nmai (1997), who found that Nigerians are exposed to religious programs to a moderate extent. This finding is of considerable interest, particularly to those who may have thought that nobody or few people view televangelism programs. Nevertheless, most regular viewers are church members of the televangelist who have already been reached through other ways, without the content of these programs. Televangelists, whose primary target audiences may include those unfamiliar with

Pentecostalism and followers of other religions and Christian denominations like the Roman Catholics, may find this content lacking.

This shows that viewers are highly selective in their exposure to media fare. Most of them will expose themselves to information that corroborates their convictions or dispositions. They do resist unwanted influences. This is consistent with the findings of all uses and gratifications researchers (Blumler, 1978) and explains why respondents view televangelism occasionally. According to the research results, it has been established that a majority of Nigerians who have access to television sets are exposed to televangelism programs to an average extent. This study backs up the idea that the reasons people watch TV are connected, that there are instrumental and ritualised patterns in how people watch TV, and that these patterns can be applied to televangelism, which is a special kind of programming.

The findings of the study sought to know what Southeast residents do with televangelism. Finding suggests that viewers of religious television fare do not seem to always respond to the televangelists' call to viewers to join either their churches or other "living" churches. It was also found that respondents do not prefer viewing televangelism programmes to church attendance on Sundays and televangelism is not effective to replace church attendance. This shows that people do not actually heed the calls made by televangelists to change church and they are not using televangelism to replace Sunday church attendance. This finding is collaborated by Nmai (1997), who found that respondents would not change their church because of the televangelism programme. In this regard, televangelism appears to have failed perhaps in one of its cardinal objectives. However, this conclusion must be guarded with caution bearing in mind that the study design for this work did not provide for an examination of the hierarchy of the objectives of televangelism.

Additionally, the study sought to ascertain benefits Southeast residents derive from exposure to televangelism. The show reveals that Southeast residents view and use televangelism programs for a variety of reasons. Most viewers watch televangelism programs for spiritual reasons and feel gratified, while the remaining viewers split their time equally between relaxation and behavioural changes. Thus, televangelists seem to be succeeding in their endeavour. The faithful viewers found their expectations diversely fulfilled. The benefits include a profound understanding of God, a boost in faith, a closer relationship with God, and

a sense of spiritual fulfilment. This is a resounding success for televangelists.

This shows that the major reason why southeast residents view televangelism is for spiritual purposes and not for any other secular purposes. This makes the televangelists to be fulfilling the core mandate of its mission.

Also, satisfaction derived from televangelism programme viewing, show a great majority of the respondents (86%) indicated they derived religious satisfaction in one form or another, as opposed to mere entertainment or “no benefit” at all (14%). The fact that respondents derived diverse religious or spiritual benefit from viewing the programmes shows that televangelists are succeeding in their operation.

Conclusion

Televangelism, a blend of religion and entertainment, involves preaching, singing, and religious discussions on television, aiming to encourage faith and support for religious activities. The findings revealed that the primary impact of televangelism was reinforcing existing beliefs and convictions, with most viewers tuning in for religious reasons and experiencing spiritual gratification. While some watch for inspiration, others find value in the entertainment or motivational aspects of the programs. Viewership varies in frequency and purpose, reflecting the diverse roles televangelism plays in modern media culture.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion the study recommends that:

1. Televangelists should broaden their knowledge, conduct thorough research, and identify the specific needs of their audience. Whether the focus is on miracles, sermons, or messages of repentance, they should tailor their content to address these needs effectively, using the resources of the gospel. This will make televangelists to meet the religious needs of their audience all the time.
2. Televangelists should make the programme more genuine and interesting so that audience can watch the programme more often than occasionally. This can be done by introduction of interactive sessions. This can be in the form of question and answer session so that the congregation can ask questions relating to their faith. This will give those at home more opportunity to participate in the programme.

References

- Anderson, A. H. (2004). *An Introduction to global pentecostalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K. (2005) Anointing through the screen: Neo-Pentecostalism and Televised Christianity in Ghana. *Studies in World Christianity*, 11(1). From: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/swc.2005.11.1.9>
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K. (2012). Hearing, viewing, and touched by the Spirit: Televangelism in contemporary African Christianity, in Thomas, P. N. & Lee, P. (Eds.), *Global and local televangelism*, p. 126, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Asemah, S. E., Gujbawu, M., Ekharefo, O. D., & Okpanachi, A. R. (2012). *Research methods and procedures in mass communication*. Jos: Great Future Press.
- Asemah, E. S., Nwammuo, A. N. & Nkwa-Uwaoma, A. O. A. (2016). *Theories and models of communication: Revised Edition*. Jos: Jos university press
- Blumler, J. G. (1979) "The role of theory in uses and gratifications studies." *Communication Research* 6, 9-36.
- Chigbo, R. (2007). Nigerian Pentecostal theology in global perspectives. *Penteco Studies*, 7(2), 76-89
- Denson, S. (2011) Phenomenology and practice, Faith in Technology: televangelism and the mediation of the immediate experiences. *Leibniz Universität Hannover*, 2(4), 121-140
- Ekwueme, A. C. (2011). Media evangelism: A case for effective coverage of the rural areas. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, 3
- Fore, E. I. (2006). *The unknown history of televangelism*. Essay delivered at a conference of the German Broadcast Authorities in Dusseldorf, Germany
- Frank, R.E. & Greenberg, M.G. (1980). *The publicist use of television: who watches what and why?* Beverly Hill: Sage Publishers.
- Ihejirika, W. (2006). *From Catholicism to Pentecostalism: Role of Nigerian televangelists in religious conversion*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Katz, E. (1987). Communication research since Lazarsfield. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51, 525 - 545.
- Kyle, R. (2010). The electronic church: An echo of American culture. *Direction journal*, 39, 91-109

- McQuail , D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6thed.)California: SagePublication In
- Melton, J. G., Lucas, P. C. & Stone, J. R. (1997). *Prime-Time Religion: An encyclopaedia of religious broadcasting*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Mokaya, E. N. (2015). *Televangelism and the changing habits of worshippers in Nairobi County*.An Unpublished Research Project Presented to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of Nairobi.
- Naggar, S. (2014). The impact of digitization on the religious sphere: televangelism as an example, *Lancaster University Journal*, 6(6), 25-41
- National Statistical Service (2018). *Sample Size Calculator*. Retrieved from www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/sample+size+calculator
- Nmai, G. I. (1997). *Tele-evangelism in Nigeria: A study of its uses and gratifications*. Masters project report submitted to the department of mass communication University of Nigeria, Nsukka
- Quicke A. & Quicke, J. (1992). *Hidden Agendas: the politics of religious broadcasting in Britain 1987-1991*, Virginia Beach: Dominion Kings Grant Publications.
- Schultze, M. (1999). *Televangelism and American culture, assurance: A history of evangelicalism*. Boston: Beacon Press

**AFRICAN YOUTHS ON MISSIONS FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES FOUNDATION ADVOCACY THROUGH
CAPACITY BUILDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL
JUSTICE IN NIGERIA 2015-2024**

IFEGWULIVINGRICH PRINCE EZEIKPE, PHD, LL.B
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,
RHEMA UNIVERSITY NIGERIA, ABA
livingrichpe@gmail.com (08064058040)
orcid.org/0009-0006-4057-166X

Abstract

Human Rights are inalienable rights bestowed upon Man for the simple reason of being human being. These rights are to be promoted and protected in all States that are Signatories to the human Rights Charter. Nigeria being a Signatory to the Charter, pledged to promote, protect and preserve human Rights by granting justice when that rights is infringed upon. However, fears abound that Human Rights in Nigeria are far from being respected, and given justice to when violated, and is little or less advocated for in the first instance. Concerned about this, the paper studied African youths on Missions' Human Rights Advocacy through Communication and Social Justice in Nigeria 2015-2024. The study: (1) examines the extent to which Human Rights is advocated for in Nigeria (2) investigates the importance of advocacy for human rights and social justice in Nigeria (3) determines the level of social justice awarded to those whose fundamental rights are violated in Nigeria. The UN Human Rights Theory and the John Rawls' theory of Social Justice guided the research. The study adopted a mixed of documentary and quantitative methods of data collection and content analysis. Findings revealed a low level advocacy for human rights in Nigeria resulting in low level human rights awareness. Social injustice and inequality abound in Nigeria resulting in series of restiveness. The paper concludes that it is impossible for a State to survive under gross infringement of the rights that foster development, and recommends imbibing the doctrine of equal liberties and opportunities, and intervention studies

Keywords: Human Rights, Social Justice, Communication, Advocacy, Nigeria

Introduction

Human Rights are inalienable rights bestowed upon Man for the simple reason of being a human being. The United Nations Charter on Human Rights, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights- UDHR 1948, designated the rights as 'Fundamental' and 'Universal', to which all Signatory States have obligation to both respect, uphold, promote, protect, and preserve and granting justice to Victims, when the rights are infringed upon. This ground-breaking instrument set out human rights as rights due for Universal protection, including, the right to life, the right to liberty, the right to dignity of the human person, rights to freedom of speech, thought, expression, security, and freedom from cruel treatment.

Human rights advocacy and social justice are intricately connected, with human rights providing a framework for promoting human dignity, well-being, and empowerment. By accepting to be a Signatory to the United Nations (UN) Charter on Human rights, Nigeria, pledged to be guided by the instrument, to promote, protect and preserve human rights and granting justice to Victims when the rights are infringed upon. However, fears abound that Human Rights are far from being respected in Nigeria, with the heavily, pronounced and prevalent extra-judicial killings occurring in the State almost daily (Ifegwu-Livingrich, 2018, Human Rights Watch, 2020), enforced disappearances of innocent citizens, torture and ill-treatment of people by government agencies (Human Rights Watch, 2020, Amnesty International, 2022), restriction of the freedom of speech, expression, and assembly, violence against women and girls, plus the ever increasing corruption and impunity (Freedom House, 2022, UN Women, 2020, Transparency International, 2022), couple with the fact that Victims are far from being given justice to, when their rights are violated. Concerned about this, the paper studied African youths on Missions for Persons with Disabilities Human Rights Advocacy through Capacity building and Social Justice in Nigeria 2015-2024. The study specifically:(1) examines the extent to which Human Rights is advocated for in Nigeria (2) investigates the importance of advocacy for human rights and social justice in Nigeria (3) determines the level of social justice awarded to those whose fundamental rights are violated in Nigeria. The UN Human Rights Theory and the John Rawls' theory of Social Justice guided the research. The study adopted a mixed of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and content analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of human rights and social justice in Nigeria appears to be as just complex and multifaceted requiring immediate attention. Despite several efforts by human rights bodies, the State continues to loom in multiple human rights violations and social injustice resulting in worrisomely enormous restiveness occurring in rather regular basis in the Country. The question bothers on why the constant lack of respect for human rights, whether the mechanism adopted by human rights advocates lacks in the ability to cause effect or there are such challenges that beat imagination or that human rights and social justice is insignificant to Nigeria?

Research Questions

The study is poised to answer the questions:

1. To what extent is human rights advocated for in Nigeria?
2. What is the importance of the advocacy for human rights and Social Justice in Nigeria?
3. What is the level of Social Justice awarded to Human Rights Victims in Nigeria?

Objectives of the study

The study sets out to:

1. Examine the extent to which Human Rights is advocated for in Nigeria
2. Investigate the importance of advocacy for Human Rights and Social Justice in Nigeria
3. Determine the level of Social Justice awarded Victims of human rights abuse in Nigeria

Significance of the study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on human rights advocacy and social justice in Nigeria by providing in-depth understanding of human rights, the extent to which human rights and social justice have been advocated for, its awareness and advocacy in Nigeria, identifying the challenges facing human rights and social justice, the advocates, as well as identifying existing advocacy medium cum strategies adopted in Nigeria with view to identifying possible advocacy alternative. Practically, the study provides recommendations for human rights awareness and advocacy promoters which in turn will be useful for Nigeria's lawmakers and other Civil Society organisations and

stakeholders as the methods and strategies to promoting human rights awareness and advocacy in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The advocacy for human rights and social justice are intricately connected, with human rights providing a framework for the promotion of the dignity of the human person, the well-being as well as human empowerment. The theoretical framework adopted in this study is based on various theories and concepts to provide for a comprehensive understanding of advocacy for human rights and social justice in Nigeria. They include:

Human Rights Theory:

Human Rights theory is built on the believe that all human beings are born free and equal both in dignity and in rights (United Nations, 1948). Apparently, this theory has its root in the principles of universality, indivisibility, inalienability, and interdependence of human rights (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993). These rights are to be protected, promoted, preserved and respected by signatory States, are to be referred to as fundamental rights, which must be accorded all human beings equally and freely, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, colour, age, gender, state of origin (UDHR, 1948).

The John Rawls' Social Justice Theory

The John Rawls' theory of social justice places emphasis on the importance of promoting fairness, equality, and justice in the society (Rawls, 1971). This theory builds on the principles of distributive justice. It is aimed at reducing inequality and to promote social and economic justice.

Advocacy theory

Advocacy theory places emphasis on the importance of promoting and protecting human rights through advocacy and activism (bob, 2005). The theory is really premised on the principles of empowerment, participation, and accountability (Gaventa, 2006).

It is noteworthy that the key concepts of the theories adopted in this study are human rights, social justice and advocacy (United Nations, 1948, Rawls, 1971, Bob, 2005). These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of advocacy for human rights and social justice. These theories highlight the importance of promoting and protecting human

rights through advocacy and engagement, and are therefore considered most appropriate for this study.

Literature Review

The study reviews the variables in the study:

Human Rights:

Human Rights are as old as Human beings. It has a very long and evolving history, covering years of human existence on earth. These rights started with the right to obey the instructions of the Creator and spanned to giving names to other creatures; and whatsoever Adam called them that were the name thereof (Genesis, 2 verses 19-20). In his deep belief on human rights, as granted by nature, Hugo Grotius (1583-1648), explains that certain rights are inherent to man naturally, notwithstanding the position of Positive law. He listed the certain rights, to include, the rights to life, freedom from Slavery, right to self-defense, and protection of Civilians, and noted that,

The right to life must be protected as fundamental. Humans have inherent freedom. Individuals have the right to self-defense against unjust attacks, and sparing Civilians in War, is a precursor to present day humanitarian law.

Spanning through Ancient Civilisation, Ishay (2004) observes that human rights was in the Code of Hammurabi, Babylonian Law, in 1754, establishing that human beings are endowed with rights that must be respected and deserve social justice. Explaining human rights from Ancient Greek and Roman law, spanning from 500 BCE – 500CE, Ishay (2004) describes human rights as including rights, justice and equity given to human beings by nature.

Taking it from the contemporary era (1945 CE to present), the United Nations defines human rights as fundamental rights and freedoms inherent to every individual, regardless of nationality, ethnic origin, gender, age, language, religious inclination, or any other status. These rights have Universal Status, and are inalienable, and indivisible. These rights are basic, and all human being are entitled to them for the reason of being human (UDHR, 1948).

In his “Long Walk to Freedom”, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), is of the view that Human Rights are those Rights that are Fundamental to humanity. He noted that, to deny people their rights is to challenge their very humanity. Human rights are those rights inherent in Man,

inalienable, and apply to people equally, and whose violation must be treated as Crime against humanity (Power, 1970-Present).

In his summary of the meaning of human rights in the contemporary time, Abiodun (2013) believes that human rights are claims both individuals and groups have made on society. These claims have found appearance in impartial law at both the national and international levels, and serve as a means of measuring the conditions of human existence, outside of which it will be difficult for human being to enjoy living. He noted that,

Human rights, as a concept, have gained tremendous appeal and significance in our world of pluralism, diversity and inter-dependence because human rights are inalienable rights. The adoption of human rights, as fundamental rights by the United Nations through the Universal Declaration of human rights has made available a strong foundation for added development and globalization of human rights plus the significant attempts being made by the United Nations in formulating and consolidating human rights standards (International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights- ICESCR, 1966)

Discussing the categories of human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights-UDHR (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- ICCPR (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-ICESCR (1966) classified human rights into: Civil and Political Rights: These encompass, right to Life, liberty, and Security, Freedom of Speech, thought, and expression, Freedom from torture and Cruel treatment, Right to fair trial and justice, Right to participate in government; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-rights covers, right to Education, right to healthcare, right to Work and fair Compensation, right to Social Security and Assistance, right to Cultural identity, and Social and Collective Rights - right to Self-determination, right to development, right to Peace and Security, right to a Safe Environment, right to Cultural Heritage

This paper is of the view that human rights, both before the common era (BCE) and the common era (CE) are rights bestowed upon human beings from creation and that cannot be separated from human beings, because there are the very meaning of human beings, which trying to take them away from man will amount to challenging humans' very humanity. These rights are bestowed upon human beings for the simple reason that they are human beings. Human Rights include those essences in man whose influence has continued to shape laws, nationally,

Internationally, Politically, and paved the path for Social justice advocacies. Human Rights have Universal application, and to ensure the dignity of the human person, these rights must be respected, protected, and promoted, even as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights- UDHR 1948.

Social Justice

The concept of social justice is deeply rooted in the principles of equality, fairness, and human rights. Rawls (1971) see social justice as the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society. It points to the promotion of fairness, equality, and justice in society, with a focus on reducing inequality and promotion of social and economic justice. In corroboration, Sen(2009) agrees that Social Justice refers to the promotion of equality, fairness and human rights. It is that justice that aims at promoting and protecting human rights in a State (Oxfam, 2020).

Human Rights Advocacy

In its General Assembly, while clarifying on human rights and advocacy, the United Nations (1948) pointed out that human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that every individual is entitled to for the simple reason of being human, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or any other status. Human rights advocacy is the act of promoting and protecting human rights through activism, lobbying, and other forms of advocacy (Bob, 2005).

In its discussion on the criticality of human rights advocacy, Amnesty International (2020) pointed out that human rights advocacy is critical in promoting and protecting human rights not just in Nigeria but also globally. Cohen (2019) observes that human rights advocacy can take various forms including lobbying, campaigning, even litigation.

Existing Medium of Human Rights Advocacy

On the medium of human rights advocacy employed by past authorities, Tufekci (2017), Herman and Chomsi (2002), Freire (1970) observed three unique media of human rights advocacy adopted by human rights advocates:

1. **Social Media:** Tufekci (2017) pointed out that media has become a critical tool for human rights advocacy, giving room for advocates to reach a broader audience and mobilise support.
2. **Traditional Media:** Herman and Chomsky (2002) noted that traditional media such as newspaper and television are also

employed by human rights advocates to raise awareness and mobilize support.

3. **Community-based initiatives:** It is the opinion of Freire (1970) that community-based initiatives such as community organizing and activism are also employed by human rights advocates to promote human rights and social justice.

Existing Medium of Social Justice Advocacy in Nigeria

Extant literature on existing medium of social justice advocacy points Community Organizing, Policy advocacy, and art and Cultural activism.

1. **Community Organising:** Alinsky (1971) argued that Community organizing is critical medium employed by social justice and human rights to advance the cause of social justice in the Nigerian State
2. **Policy advocacy:** Jenkins (2006) strongly argued that Policy advocacy is also adopted by Social Justice and human rights advocates to push for respect for human rights and award of justice to victims.
3. **Art and cultural activism:** Duncombe (2002) concluded that art and cultural engagement have been tools in the hands of Social justice advocates, in the furtherance of social justice and human rights.

Existing Strategies for Human Rights Advocacy

Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Projects-SERAP (2020), Nigerian Human Rights Commission- NHRC (2020), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative- WRAPA (2020), Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism- PTCIJ (2020), Amnesty International (2020) have pointed to not less than five strategies adopted by human rights advocates to push for the protection of human rights in Nigeria:

1. **Litigation:** The likes of Femi Falana, adopt litigation as their safest strategy to challenge human rights violations in Nigeria, and holds perpetrators accountable. To evidence this fact, the socio-economic Rights and Accountability Projects has filed very many lawsuits against the Nigerian government to challenge human rights infringement, including the rights to education and health care services in the country (SERAP, 2020).
2. **Advocacy and Lobbying:** It has been argued that Human rights advocates in Nigeria have always made use of advocacy and lobbying as a strategy to influence policy and legislative changes.

The Nigerian human rights Commission has advocated for the passage of the National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Act, which seeks to strengthen the commission's powers to investigate and prosecute human rights abuses (NHRC, 2020).

3. **Community Mobilization and Engagement:** WRAPA (2020) explained that advocacy for human rights have been carried out in Nigeria through Community mobilization and engagement as a strategy to raise awareness and promote human rights at the grassroots level. For example how Women's rights advancement and protection alternative (WRAPA) has mobilized women in rural communities to advocate for their rights and challenge discriminatory practices against women.
4. **Media and Public Awareness:** The Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (2020) is certain that human rights advocates have used extensively the Media and public awareness in their struggle to promote human rights. For example, the Premium Times Centre for investigative Journalism has made use of investigative journalism to expose human rights abuses and thereby hold perpetrators accountable for the acts.
5. **International Advocacy and Solidarity:** The likes of Osai Ojigho have employed international advocacy and solidarity to mobilize international support and pressure the Nigerian government to respect human rights. Again, for example, the Amnesty International Nigeria has partnered with international Organisations to campaign against human rights violation in Nigeria and to pressure the Nigerian government to respect human rights (Amnesty International, 2020).

Advocacy Efforts in Nigeria

Following the review above, it can be deduced that Human rights advocacy groups in Nigeria have made significant push to promote and protect human rights and enthrone social justice in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024. These efforts cannot be said to have gone without some positive outcomes, especially when considered that some of the advocacy strategies adopted, example, providing trainings for security agencies, organized protests, petitions, lobbying, and others paved the path and influenced the government to actions such as:

- Approving a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in April 2023 which is a significant step towards promoting business and human rights in the State

- Adopting in January 14 2024 a National Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights 2024-2028. This plan outlines government's commitments to promoting and protecting human rights in the Country
- The passage of legislation that promotes human rights, such as the Violence Against persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015

Notwithstanding these creations issues of human rights violations and social injustices keep increasing daily as evidenced by series of practical human rights violations and social injustices perpetrated particularly by the Nigerian security forces without awarding remedy to the victims. Ifegwu-livingrich (2018), Amnesty International (2022) decried the vicious manner in which human rights and social justice is violated by government agencies, and laments that, it hurts the most as the perpetrators of human rights violations and social injustice in Nigeria are the very people instituted to protect and safeguard lives and property.

Challenges of Human Rights Advocacy in Nigeria

Advocacy for Human Rights is critical to promoting, protecting and preserving human rights in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2020). Unfortunately, human rights advocacy is confronted with a lot of challenges. Amnesty International (2020), International Council on Human Rights Policy- ICHRP (2018), Ifegwu-livingrich (2018), United Nations Development Programme-UNDP (2019), are in consensus that human rights advocacy in Nigeria faces huge challenges, especially from the Nigerian government and its agencies. These challenges include:

- **Government Repression:** Government repression is a key challenge confronting human rights advocacy in Nigeria. (Amnesty International, 2020) This is evidenced in several arrests, detention, and harassment by government security forces.
- **Social and Cultural Barriers:** Social and Cultural barriers are also main challenge human rights advocacy is confronted with in Nigeria (UNDP, 2019). Several complex social and cultural norm and values hinder the free flow of advocacy on human rights, to curb this advocates need to navigate them in order to effectively promote human rights in the Country.
- **Limited Resources:** Limited resources are a serious challenging facing human rights advocacy in Nigeria (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2018). Human rights groups in Nigeria often lack the resources needed to effectively advocate for human rights in the State.

- **Restriction of freedom of expression:** The Nigerian government constantly been accused of restricting freedom of expression, including the arrest and detention of journalists and activists (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020)
- **Intimidation and harassment:** Human rights defenders have regularly been intimidated and harassed including, facing death threats and physical attacks in Nigeria (Front line Defenders, 2020)

Challenges confronting Social Justice in Nigeria

Social justice is critical to promoting and protecting human rights (Oxfam, 2020) unfortunately, social justice faces enormous challenges in Nigeria, including:

- **Corruption;** The government of Nigeria and other non-state actors have constantly accused of diverting public fund for personal use (Transparency International, 2020). This embezzlement is usually unaccounted for.
- **Inequality:** In Nigeria the wealthy elite control a disproportionate amount of the wealth of the Country (Oxfam, 2020)
- **Poverty:** In Nigeria, Poverty is a main issue over 80 Million people live below \$1.90 a day (World Bank, 2020).

Gap in literature: While the scholarly brilliance of the authorities reviewed in this study is very well commendable both in their ability to stress on the existing human rights and social justice medium of advocacy, it was however discovered that they unwittingly failed to examine that advocacy through capacity building will go a long way advancing the push for human rights and social justice awareness and engagement in Nigeria, this is the contribution this study seeks to make. Apparently, focusing advocacy on just human rights issues, such as freedom of expression, torture or indignity of the human person, unlawful killings and others are as general, there is a need for more specific and in-depth advocacy on specific human rights issues, such as, advocacy through capacity building particularly for persons with disabilities (herein after referred to as Disability rights), as this will focus on the right to access government sponsored education, skill acquisitions, healthcare, employment, and others. Advocacy through capacity building, opens the door to specific women's rights issues such as, female genital mutilation, child marriage, and need for access to reproductive healthcare services.

Empirical Verification: Human rights violations and social injustice in Nigeria

In his work on extra-judicial killings and political crisis in Nigeria's fourth republic, Ifegwu-livingrich (2018) argued that cases of human rights violations and social injustice by the Nigerian internal law enforcement and security system abound (Amnesty International, 2022). Evidence indicates that their engagement in incidents often exacerbates the situation. The Nigeria Watch Database in 2014 showed how the Nigerian security forces caused fatalities in 59% of the lethal incidents where they intervened. Unfortunately, the more the Nigerian security forces intervened in cases the more peoples' human rights are violated, and the more social injustice plays out (AFENO, 2014). In corroboration, Omeiza (2016) observed that the Nigerian security agents, particularly the Police commit so much extra-judicial killings on constant bases. In 2016 alone, the Nigerian Police recorded over 40 extra judicial killings in the country.

Scholars have also argued that human rights violations and social injustice is always a sign of main defect within a society. Anytime the State is the perpetrator, the act directly violates the duty of the State to protect its Citizens' rights, right to life and others. This is indication of a grave structural problem within a government (Observer, 2016).

Recounting the log of abuses of the right to life, by Nigerian security, Ifegwu-livingrich (2018), noted that between 2015 and 2017 alone the Nigerian joint security engaged in seriously heinous human rights violations void of remedy for families of victims, including: Onitsha Massacre 2015, Aba Massacre 2016, Aba-Portharcourt Road Massacre 2016, Afara-UkwuIbeku Massacre 2017. Stone (2007) in an in-depth study on human rights violations in Nigeria discovered that, the Nigerian Police alone Violates the right to life of Nigerian people up to hundreds per year, and, in recent years, it has been thousands lives deprived of the right to life beside other rights deprived them. Most of the illegal killings by security officials were not reported to the National Human rights Commission (NHRC).

MORE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Human Rights Violations in Nigeria 2015-2024 reveal also the following recorded abuses:

Violation of rights to freedom of expression

In 2023 the Nigerian national Broadcasting Commission (NBC) fined 25 media outlets for their coverage of the 2023 general elections. In the same 2023 Chude Franklin Nnamdi was arrested for criticizing the governor of Anambra state on social media (Amnesty International, 2023). These acts of government amount to violation of human rights to freedom of expression and the press.

Unlawful Killings and Torture

In 2023, Mr. OnyekachiIbe was shot dead by a police officer for refusing to pay a bribe (Amnesty International, 2023). In the same 2023, MalamFaizAbdullahi died in police custody after being tortured during interrogation

Enforced Disappearances

In 2022MaduabuchObinwa was abducted by the Nigerian security agents and his fate remains unknown (Amnesty International, 2023) till date. In 2021ObioraAbgasmalo was abducted by gunmen and his fate remains unknown (Amnesty International, 2023).

Violence against Women and Girls

In 2024 over 200 school girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram fighters in Borno state. In 2023 cases of rape and murder were reported, including the rape of an eight-month's pregnant woman

Economic and Social Rights violation

In 2024 Economic reforms introduced in 2023 led to high inflation resulting in cost of living crisis. In 2023 the removal of the fuel subsidy led to a sheer rise in food prices and the cost of living.

The physical evidence of human rights violations and social injustice as stated above is just a representation of the various human rights violations in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024. The numbers are far from being exhaustive but only give an indication of the scope of the problem, for which there is need for alternative advocacy outlet in the country.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the systematic and scientific approach employed to carry out a research (Creswell, 2014). Thus this section covers research design, study area, population of the study, sample size, sampling

techniques, instrument for data collection, sources of data collection, validity of research instrument, reliability of the instrument, administration of the instrument, method of data analysis and decision rule.

Research Design: Research design refers the plan and structure of the research study (Bryman, 2016, Babbie, 2016). It is noteworthy that a well-designed methodology and research design are crucial to guarantee the validity and reliability of the research findings (Trochim, 2006).

The study, therefore, adopts a mixed-methods research design, namely, the combination of qualitative (documentary) and quantitative (Survey) methods of data collection, with thematic and content methods of analysis.

Qualitative Research Design: Documentary method was used to review and gather information from secondary data, including, existing literature, and official documents of the United Nations on Human rights abuse in Nigeria, documents from human rights organisations, documents from government agencies, Journals, books, and other sources. The survey and findings of extant literature on the issue under discuss was reviewed and found relevant for adoption into this research as part of the quantitative research of this study. Issues related to human rights and social justice was also reviewed, and made findings, as discussed in the latter part of this study.

Quantitative (Survey) Research Design:The choice of this design is help to identify attributes of a large population from a group of individuals. The design was suitable for the study as the study sought to examine subject matters using select media outlet in Nigeria as a case.

Population of the Study: This consisted of One hundred and thirty (138) Staff of selected Organizations in Nigeria. This was carried out in select organization in Nigeria. The choice of this study area was informed by its being the location in focus.

The select Organizations for this study are groups that have established reputation in the subject of the study. They carry out regular activities on the subject of this study and generate a mouth- watering responses.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques: based on the inability of the researcher to effectively study the whole Staff strength (Population) of the Organization, a representative number was chosen as the sample size population- One hundred and thirty staff was used as the sample size. 116

questionnaires were retrieved from the 138 questionnaires while the remaining 22 questionnaires were lost.

Sources of Data Collection: Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, primary data were obtained through questionnaires and personal interviews with both management and senior staff of select human rights and social justice advocates in Nigeria. This method was adopted to enable detailed and independent information not covered by questionnaires to be expressed by the respondents. Secondary data were obtained from published reports, journals, official documents, books, internets articles, and others. For analytical comparison of facts and proper compilation of facts and figures, survey of existing documents was considered important.

Instrument of Data Collection: Data were collected through questionnaires, carefully designed and administered to the respondents, and through personal interviews. On the whole, the questionnaires constituted the major instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contains sections A and B. section A contains personal information about the respondents. Section B is the main body of the questionnaire. This sections Seventeen (17) close ended questions through which the opinions of the respondents were expressed. The responses were measured by means of a four (4) category rating system (CRS), as follows:

Four Category Rating Systems

SA	Strongly	60
A	Agree	40
D	Disagree	10
SD	Strongly Disagree	6

Validity of Research Instrument: The validity of the research instrument was assessed by experts in the faculty of the Social Sciences, Department of Political Science, Rhema University Nigeria. Aba. These experts assessed the relevance of each item in relation to the objectives of the study, the research questions and variables to be tested, as well as the comprehensibility of each item in relation to the cognitive level of the respondents. They validated the instrument by effecting necessary corrections, examining the contents and ascertaining clarification of ideas as well as the appropriateness of the items.

Reliability of the Instrument: To determine the reliability of the instrument used in the study, the corrected questionnaire was administered randomly on selected staff of select Organizations in Nigeria. Tins approach was repeated with the same group after a two months period and the result obtained from the first and second pre-test were consistent therefore, the instrument is reliable.

Administration of the Instrument: The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the respondents during official hours at the offices. The exercise was carried out with the assistant of the head of operations of the organizations, which in turn helped in enhancing the return rate of above 70%.

Method of Data Analysis: Tables and simple percentage was used as technique of analyzing the research questions. Responses from the questionnaires were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage.

Ethical Consideration

The study adopted anonymity form of consideration in the online survey, in which participants were assured of anonymity to encourage them to be free to their honest ideas, opinions and experiences about human rights and social justice system in Nigeria 2015-2024.

RESULTS

Table 1: Statistics of field survey

Questionnaires issued	138
Questionnaires returned	116
Questionnaires not return	22

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Category	Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
Male	70	60.3%
Female	46	39.7%
Total	116	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Category	Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
PHD	50	43.1%
B.SC / HND	30	25.9%
M.SC	23	19.8%
OND	13	11.2%
Total	116	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4: Age Distribution of Respondents

Category	Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
0-20 years	29	25%
21-40 years	49	42.2%
41-60 years	25	21.6%
60 and above	13	11.2%
Total	116	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5: Department/ Units of Respondents

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Administration	65	56.1%
Operations	31	26.7%
Corporate affairs	20	17.2%
Total	116	100%

Source: Field Survey, by Researcher 2024

Table 6: Human Rights Violations and Social Injustice

Category	Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	51.7%
Agree	40	34.5%
Disagree	10	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	6	5.2%
Total	116	100%

Source: Field Survey by Researcher 2024

Table 7: Reported violation of the Right to Life by Nigeria’s Joint Security Forces 2015-2017

S/N	Violation of Right to life / Victims	Year	Perpetrators
1	Onitsha Massacre of IPOB Members	2015	Joint Security Forces
2	Aba Massacre of IPOB Members	2016	Joint Security Forces
3	Aba-Port Harcourt Road Massacre of IPOB	2016	Joint Security Forces
4	Comprehensive Secondary Sch Massacre Aba	2016	Joint Security Forces
5	Afara-UkwuIbeku Massacre	2017	Joint Military Forces
6	Zaria at ZakZaky’s Massacre of the Shiites	2015	Military Forces

Source: Compiled and tabulated by Researcher 2024, HJI (2004),News Express (2013), etc

Table 8: Violation of the Right to Life by Nigeria’s Security Forces 2015-2017

S/N	Location	Year	Victims	No Killed
1	Zaria at ZakZaky’s	2015	The Shiites	Abv 20
2	Onitsha	2015	IPOB	Ov 200
3	Comprehensive Secondary School Aba	2016	IPOB	Ov. 300
4	Aba-P/Harcourt Express Road	2016	IPOB	Abv 250
5	AfaraUkwuIbeku	2017	NnamdiKanu’s	Ov 28

Source: Socialscientia journal of the Social Sciences and Humanity (2018)

More Empirical Evidence: Human Rights Violations in Nigeria 2015-2024

Table 9:

Violation of freedom of Expression, 2023

Year	Incident	Description
2023	Fines on Media Outlets	The Nigerian national Broadcasting Commission (NBC) fined 25 media outlets for their coverage of the 2023 general elections.
2023	Arrest of Journalist	Chude Franklin Nnamdi was arrested for criticizing the governor of Anambra state on social media

Source: Amnesty International (2023)

Table 10: Unlawful Killings and Torture, 2023

S/N	Year	Incident	Description
1	2023	Police Shooting	Mr. OnyekachiIbe was shot dead by a police officer for refusing to pay a bribe
2	2023	Torture in Police Custody	FaizAbdullahi died in police custody after being tortured during interrogation.

Source:Amnesty International (2023)

Table 11: Enforced Disappearances

S/N	Year	Incidence	Description
1	2023	Abduction	MaduabuchObinwa was abducted by the Nigerian security agents and his fate remains unknown.
2	2023	Abduction	Obioraagbasimalo was abducted by gunmen and his fate remains unknown

Source: Amnesty International (2023)

Table 12: Violence against Women and Girls

S/N	Year	Incident	Description
1	2024	Kidnapping of School Girls	over 200 school girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram fighters in Borno state
2	2023	Rape and Murder	cases of rape and murder were reported, including the rape of an eight- month’s pregnant woman

Source: Amnesty International (2024)

Table 13: Economic and Social Rights

S/N	Year	Incident	Description
1	2024	Economic Reforms	Economic reforms introduced in 2023 led to high inflation resulting in cost of living crisis
2	2023	Fuel Subsidy Removal	The removal of the fuel subsidy led to a sheer rise in food prices and the cost of living.

Source: Amnesty International (2024)

DISCUSSION

The specific objectives of the study were to: (1) examine the extent to which Human Rights is advocated for in Nigeria (2) investigate the level of respect accorded human Rights in the Nigerian context (3) determine the level of social justice awarded to those whose fundamental rights are violated in Nigeria. The responses gotten from the respondents were analysed to explain with empirical evidence the initial claim of the study on the subject. A total of 138 closed ended questionnaires were issued out to respondents consisting of male and female from a defined academic background to sample their opinion on the claim of this study that despite all the seeming frantic efforts of the advocacy for human rights and social justice, fears abound that Human Rights is far from being promoted, protected and preserved and respected resulting in vicious injustices in Nigeria. Also to ascertain their opinion on the claim of the study that there is need to beef up advocacy for human rights and social justice that will eventually result in awarding remedies to Human Rights Victims or their families in the event the victim is extra-judicially killed in the cause of the violation of his rights

In table 6, the opinions of the respondents on:

- A) Whether human rights violation is still on the increase in Nigeria despite the efforts of human rights advocacy and whether the violation is impacting negatively on social justice in Nigeria, 60 respondents representing 51.7% strongly agree, 40 respondents representing 34.5% agree, while 10 respondents representing 8.6% disagreed, 6 respondents representing 5.2% strongly disagree.

The opinions of respondents on the need to beef up human rights and social justice advocacy in Nigeria embark on alternative form of communication strategies not examined by extant literature, followed similar responses.

- B) In corroboration tables 7 and 8 strongly agree that there is need to beef up advocacy for human rights and social justice in Nigeria, that human rights violation is on the increase in Nigeria, and there is little or no remedies awarded human rights victims in Nigeria. Agencies of the Nigerian government engage in constant extra-judicial killings with impunity, and not caring whether it violates the principles of due process (Kendall, 2002). Observer (2010) argues that when state officials deprive citizens the right to life or other rights directly violates the state's obligation to protect its citizens' rights including the right to life.

Tables 7 and 8 clearly show that between 2015 and 2017 alone were years of massacre of innocent Nigerian citizens in their numbers at different locations by government agencies void of damages to victims or their families. Victims who are killed outside the law were usually denied the right to be heard, this is a glaring deprivation of the right to fair hearing and right to life (Ojo, 1996).

Strength of the Study

In the context of the study, African Youths on Missions for persons with Disabilities Foundation Advocacy through Capacity building (being the independent variable) and Human Rights and Social justice (dependent variable) in Nigeria 2015-2024, the study examines the effect of advocacy through Communication- Capacity Building on human rights and Social Justice Outcome in Nigeria 2015-2024. The study will eventually lead to increased awareness, education, and mobilization of persons around human rights and social justice matters, which in turn, can result in changes in policies, practices, and behaviours that protect, promote, and preserve human rights and social justice in Nigeria.

To buttress this with example,

- Advocacy through Communication- Capacity Building, has the propensity to increase awareness about the importance of human rights and Social justice among Nigerian people
- The increase awareness realized will have the likelihood of leading to increased demand for human rights and social justice, which in turn result in putting pressure on policymakers and other change makers
- Resulting from these actions, policymakers and other changer makers in the society may more likely push for implantation of policies and embark on practices that promote human rights and social justice in Nigeria.

Flowing from the above therefore, the study examines the causal relationship between advocacy through Communication- capacity Building and human rights and social justice outcomes in Nigerian State.

Limitations of the Study

This study is not exhaustive especially as several factors hindered some of the goals of the researcher, including,

- Limited Scope: The study focused on human rights advocacy and social justice in Nigeria, and did not examine the subject in other countries. Also, the study focused on African youths on Missions advocacy through Capacity building form of communication as an added form of communication needed to chart the course of human rights advocacy in Nigeria,
- Limited sample size: the study had a limited sample size, which may not be representative of the entire population
- Insufficient finance to fund movement to places where other vital data could be collected, some questionnaires were not returned by respondents, while some interviews did not receive kind responses from the interviewed, others felt so scared identifying with the research basically given the Nigerian question- lack of security. However the limitation does not in any way reduce the quality of content in the study.

Implications of the study:

Notwithstanding the limitation of the study, holds a huge implication for the present day Nigeria for several reasons including,

- Promoting Human Rights and Social Justice in Nigeria: The study provides insights into how human rights and social justice can be

promoted, protected, and preserved through such effective communication strategy as capacity building advocacy

- Addressing power dynamics: The study recognizes the power dynamics involved in shaping public discourse and promoting human rights and social justice, which is critical in understanding the complexities of human rights and social justice advocacy in the State of Nigeria
- Improving understanding of human rights and social justice advocacy: This study provides an value-added understanding of how human rights and social justice are constructed, negotiated and administered through the social interactions and arrangements
- Informing Policy and Practice: The study provides recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on how to promote human rights and social justice in the Nigerian state.

Conclusion

Summary of key findings:

The study made findings based on the authorities reviewed including,

- Human rights advocacy groups in Nigeria have made frantic attempts to promote and protect human rights in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024
- The Social Media, Traditional media, and community-based initiatives, policy advocacy, art and cultural activism and community organising constitute the existing Human Rights and social justice advocacy outlets adopted by advocates (Tufekci, 2017; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Freire, 1970)
- Government repression, Limited Resources, and social and Cultural barriers constitute the major challenges confronting human rights advocacy in Nigeria 2015-2014
- Litigation, Advocacy and Lobbying, Community Mobilization and Engagement, Media and Public Awareness, International Advocacy and Solidarity are existing strategies employed by human rights advocates involving the likes of Femi Falana (SERAP), ChidiOdinakalu (NHRC), Saudatu Mahdi (WRAPA), DapoOlorunyomi (PTCIJ), OsaiOjigho (Amnesty International) in Nigeria
- There are enormous recorded cases of human rights violations by Nigerian government agencies and government repression of human rights advocates

- There are still levels human rights advocacy needs to attend to produce more positive results in social justice outcome

Significance

These attempts by human rights advocate groups in Nigeria have contributed to positive outcomes such as increased awareness and recognition of human rights and human rights advocacy matters in Nigeria, the creation of the Action plan on business and human rights and the National Action plan for the protection and promotion of human rights 2024-2028 which provides a framework for promoting and protecting human rights in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Going by the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

- Future research may examine human rights advocacy and promotion of human rights and social justice in the Nigerian State
- Technology and Promotion of Human Rights Awareness and advocacy in Nigeria
- Human Rights Organisations and Challenges of Human Rights Communication in Nigeria

References

- Aguda, T.A. (1980). Practice and Procedure of the Supreme Court of Appeal and High Court of Nigeria, London: Sweet and Maxwell
- Abiodun, J. D. (2013). Judicial Review for Human Rights Violations in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal. Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-3240 (Paper) ISSN 2224-3259 (Online) Vol.10
- Amnesty International (2020). Nigeria: Human Rights in Peril as police use excessive force. <https://Amnestyinternational.org>
- AmnestyInternational(2022).Nigeria.<https://amnesty.org/west-and-central-frica/nigeria/report>. Accessed 29 June 2024
- Amunnadi, C. (20121).Human Rights and Social Justice Abuses in Contemporary Nigeria Society: A Theological Appraisal. International journal of Management studies and Social Science Research, 3(2), 116-121
- Babbie, E. (2016). The practice of social research.Cengage Learning.
- Creswell, W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage Publications.
- Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods.Oxford University Press.

- Constitution Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Human Rights: chapters II and IV
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). De-marginalizing the intersection of race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist theory and Antiracist Politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1
- Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Center (2022). Human Rights Advocacy. <https://nigeriarights.gov.ng>
- Committee to protect Journalists. (2020). Nigeria: Journalist Omoyele Sowore arrested and charged with treason. <https://committeetoprotectjournalist.org>
- Diplock, LJ (1971). Jaundoo v Attorney General of Guyana (1971) A.C. (P.C) 972
- Duignan, B. (2024). Social Justice. Justice', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-justice>, accessed 26th May 2024
- Duncombe, S. (2002). Cultural resistance reader. Verso Books.
- Ezeanokwasa, J. O. (2024). Promoting and Sustaining Social Justice in Nigeria: An Insight from the Principle of the Common Good in Canon Law Jurisprudence. Journal of Customary and Religious Law, Vol. 1
- Front Line Defenders. (2020). Nigeria: Human Rights Defenders face intimidation and harassment. <https://frontlinedefenders.org>
- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Continuum
- Genesis (2, verse 19; 1, verse 26-27). Natural Rights. Holy Bible
- Haleem, M. (1983). The Domestic Application of International Human Rights Norms in Developing Human Rights Jurisprudence, The Domestic Application of International Human Rights Norms. London; Commonwealth Secretariat
- Hugo, G. (1583-1645). The Law of War and Peace. <https://usaid.gov/information>
- Human Rights Career (2024). What does Social Justice Mean?. <https://humanrightscareers.com>. Accessed 26 May 2024
- Human Rights Watch (2020). Nigeria: Events of 2019. <https://humanrightwatch.org/social.injustice/n>
- Herman and Chomsky (2002). Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media. Pantheon Books.
- Ifegwu-Livingrich, E. (2018). Extra-Judicial Killings and Political instability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *SociaScientia: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(3) 2018

- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Protection of Human Rights.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). Civil and Political Rights. UN.
- Ifegwu-Livingrich, E. (2017). Nigerian Legal System. Aba. Dei International
- Ishay (2004). Social Justice and Discrimination. <https://Social-justice>. Retrieved 25 July 2024, 12:23:30
- International Council on Human Rights Policy. (2018). Human Rights defenders in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. <https://internationaldefendersonhumanrightspolicy.org>
- Mandela, N. (1918-2013). Fundamental human rights, democracy, justice, reconciliation. <https://amnesty.org.uk>
- Nzarga, F. (2014). An analysis of human rights violation by the Nigerian security services. Journal Of Law, Policy and Globalization, Vol. 30, 2014
- Nmah, P. (2013). French revolution: A theory for revolution in Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. Journal of Religion & humanities, volume 1(5), 1-13.
- Nigerian National Human Rights Commission- NHRC (2022). Report on cases of torture and inhuman treatment between 2015 and 2018.
- NHRC.(2020). National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Act. <https://NHRC.org>
- Otega and Akpan (2024). Social Justice in Nigeria: Exploring the dialectics of Good governance and Socioeconomic development. <https://unidel.edu.ng/publications>. Pdf accessed 25 June 2024
- Oxfam. (2020). Nigeria's Inequality Crisis: Fueling the Boko Haram insurgency. India. Oxfam publications.
- Onalu and Okoye (2024). Social Justice in Nigeria. <https://socialwork.ubc.ca/social-justice-innigeria>. Accessed 1 May 2024
- Oyeyipo, T. A. (1999). Whether the Establishment of the National Judicial Council and the Set up will bring a lasting solution to the Perennial problems confronting the Judiciaries in this Nation, delivered at the 1999 All Nigerian Judges Conference held at International Conference Centre, Abuja 1-5 November
- Onwu, N. (1992). Human right and social justice: An Introduction in J. Okuoro Utome (Ed.) African Humanities Awka: Meshink Publishers.

- Ota and Okechukwu (2024). Human Rights. <https://Human-Rights-Justice> and advocacy. Retrieved 29 May 2024
- Oru, K. (2014). The reality of our existence. The Saviourities magazine: 2013/2014 Edition: The voice of truth is salvific. Enugu: Our Saviour Press. Socialworkers.org (n.d) Social justice. Accessed on 17th February 2020 from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/feature>
- Power, S. (1970). Democracy, Human Rights, Governance and Policy. <https://usaid.gov/administrator-samantha-power>
- PTCIJ. (2020). Investigative Journalism in Nigeria: <https://PTCIJ.org>
- Rawls, J. (1971). A Theory of Justice. Harvard University Press.
- SERAP. (2020). Litigation: <https://SERAP.org>
- Sen, A. (2009). The idea of Justice. Harvard University Press.
- Transparency International (2022). Corruption and impunity. <https://transparencyinternational>
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest. Yale University Press.
- Tilly, C. (2004). Social Movements, 1768-2004. Paradigm publishers
- Universal Declaration of Human rights (1948). Fundamental human rights. UN
- UN Women (2022). Women's and Gender Rights. <https://nigeriarights.gov.ng>
- WRAPA. (2020). Community Mobilisation and engagement: <https://WRAPA.org>
- World Bank. (2020). Nigeria Overview. <https://worldbank.org>

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER-DOCTORS ON HEALTH BEHAVIOR CHANGE AMONG UNN NSUKKA CAMPUS STUDENTS.

Chibueze Nnaemeka Njoku¹
Mass Communication Department,
Abia State University, Uturu.
njokunnaemekac1@gmail.com

Innocent Paschal Ihechu (PhD)²
Mass Communication Department
Abia State University, Uturu.
madinopas@yahoo.com

Nebo Eunice Chiegbuodo³
Mass Communication Department
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.
neboeunicechiegbuodo@gmail.com

Abstract

The wide spread of social media has positively influenced how health information is communicated, especially through influencer doctors (medical professionals) who use media platforms like X, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, etc. to engage a large audience. This study analyzed the impact of social media influencer doctors on health behavior change among Nsukka Campus Students (UNN). A structured survey was conducted with 400 students to evaluate their consumption of health content on social media from influencer doctors and its correlation with changes in their health behaviors such as dieting, exercising, preventive care, etc. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between frequent engagement with influencer doctors' content and the adoption of healthier behaviors. Furthermore, the survey results show that confidence in the legitimacy of influencer doctors is a significant factor in behavior change, agreeing with other studies on the significance of trust in digital health communication. Also, the study recommends government engagement with social media influencer doctors as a public health disease prevention mechanism. The study concludes that social media influencer doctors when trusted, can effectively promote health.

Keywords: Influencer, Doctors, Health Behavior, Content, Social media, Platform

Introduction

Social media has different uses, and one is its widely acknowledged as an effective tool for the spreading of health information that influences people's lifestyles and behaviors (Moorhead et al., 2013). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X are effective channels for sharing health-related information and interventions because of their widespread reach, accessibility, and interactive features (Merchant et al., 2014).

Over the last few years, social media platforms have transformed the dissemination and consumption of health information by initiating a unique platform for health promotion and behavior change through influencers (Moorhead et al., 2013; Maher et al., 2014). There are many influencers on the SM platforms, and amongst them are 'influencer-doctors', who are certified medical professionals who reach out to their audience through their different SM handles to offer health advice, thereby utilizing their online presence and influence (Attai, 2016). They have mass followers who always engage with them by commenting on their posts on health practices. They have considerable influence over their audience, especially among the younger demographics, who often appreciate and adore them. They are often recognized by their authoritative presence, credibility, and breadth of medical expertise (Eckler & Kalyango, 2015). This is a significant development given the prominence of SM in the lives of young adults, who regularly depend on it for other communication (like sharing pictures, meeting friends), and networking activities.

Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) posit that "social media platforms are a significant part of students' lives," and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), presents a perfect environment to examine the impact of 'influencer-doctors' on health behaviors due to its varied student body and vibrant social media presence. According to Omekwu et al. (2014), "a good number of UNN students are active on social networking platforms," and this means that as they navigate through their timelines, they will stumble across different messages by these doctor influencers whom they supposedly will always learn from. Also, given the range of health-related problems, such as poor dieting, mental health disorders, infections, bad lifestyle choices, stress, etc., faced by university students, it is important to look into how well influencer doctors can help improve

their health-related behaviors (Wang et al., 2015). This study examines how social media platforms can help improve university students' health-related behavioral problems through influencer-doctors.

Statement Of The Problem

Since the origin of social media, there has been a change in how people relate to and influence one another (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). One of the uses of social media is being an effective tool for the spreading of health information which influences people's lifestyles and behaviour (Moorhead et al., 2013).

According to research, 61% of social media users find relevant influencers who provide satisfying information about different items and ideas on social media, and amongst them are doctor influencers who offer professional health information in an appealing and instructive manner (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). Influencer doctors have the potential to induce health behaviour changes, especially among the new generation of youths, who make up a considerable number of university students. Among this generation, 43% prefer to discover new products or services, including health-related content, through social media influencers, while 32% make decisions based on these influencers' recommendations (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024).

More so, studies also show that social media influences health behaviour, with 60% of users reporting changes to their health habits due to online information (Fox & Duggan, 2013). And 72% of online health seekers report having trust in the information provided by online healthcare professionals (HINTS, 2019).

Regardless of these figures showing the rise of doctor influencers, there is no empirical evidence to show their specific impact on health behaviour among Nigerian university students, particularly at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) campus. This gap poses a significant issue, as effective health interventions require an understanding of the mechanisms driving behaviour change. Despite the widespread assumption and belief of a positive relationship between influencer content and audience engagement, the impact of this relationship on students' health behaviours, such as adopting healthier diets, exercising regularly, or adhering to medical advice, remains unclear. Therefore, this study aims to investigate and establish the impact of social media influencer-doctors on the health behaviour of UNN Nsukka campus students. It seeks to determine if students trust these

influencers and if social media medical health advice effects behaviour change.

Research Objectives

- a. To determine the percentage of UNN Nsukka campus students who watch and read health-related content by influencer Doctors on social media.
- b. To determine the impact of social media influencer doctors' health related content on behavior change among UNN campus students.

Research Questions

- a. What percentage of UNN Nsukka campus students read and watch health-related content by Influencer Doctorson social media?
- b. Does being exposed to health-related content by influencer doctors on social media cause behavior change among UNN Nsukka campus students?

Review Of Literature

Conceptual Review:

Social Media and Health Communication: Social media has become a powerful tool for health communication in recent years, as it provides a forum for public health initiatives, health education, and the encouragement of healthy lifestyle choices (Moorhead et al., 2013). Health communication is becoming more participatory, extensive, and instantaneous due to the widespread usage of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube(Freeman et al., 2015). These platforms have improved health communication by reaching various demographics, offering live or real-time information, and promoting community development and user-generated content. They allow public health organizations to communicate with individuals directly and are progressively replacing traditional media gatekeepers and facilitating more individualized outreach.

Notwithstanding the numerous benefits of social media to health communication, it poses some challenges. One of the most pressing concerns is the ease with which content may be shared on social media, incorrect or misleading health information can swiftly spread, potentially causing injury.A good example can be drawn from, the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation about the virus and vaccinations disseminated widelyon social media, contributing to vaccine reluctance and the

proliferation of conspiracy theories (Loomba et al., 2021). Another challenge it poses is the varying quality of health information available on social media. Unlike traditional media, where experts verify contents before broadcast or publication, social media allows anybody to share health-related information, regardless of qualification. This can make it difficult for consumers to differentiate between legitimate and untrustworthy sources of information. The lack of control and oversight on social media platforms exacerbates the situation (Chou et al., 2020).

Social Media and Influencer Doctors: Influencer doctors are a breed of medical practitioners who combine clinical experience with the wide reach of social media. These doctors often use their platforms on social media where they enjoy huge followership to educate the public on various health-related topics, including wellness recommendations and refuting medical myths. The popularity of influencer doctors stems from their ability to make difficult medical knowledge understandable, personal, and engaging (Househ, 2019). For example, Dr. Chinonso Egemba (@Aporoko Dr. on X), Dr. Kelechi Okoro (@healthertainer on Instagram), Dr. Nurudeen Shotayo (@FirstDoctor on X) etc, have amassed hundreds of thousands of fans by breaking down medical topics in a fun and understandable manner.

Influencer doctors can greatly impact public health by positively changing health behaviors and attitudes through their social media handle, especially during critical public health crises. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous influencer doctors performed essential roles of sharing virus knowledge, supporting vaccination, and fighting misinformation (Basch et al., 2020). Their capacity to communicate quickly and engage with many of the public made them important allies in the fight against the pandemic.

While the contents of these influencer doctors are effectively positive, some challenges come with it. Some impostors create catfish accounts for phony reasons, like seeking financial benefits by promoting items or services on commission. Others may want to mislead the public for ideological purposes, such as spreading anti-vaccine ideas or other health disinformation. In other situations, these accounts may be part of a larger effort to disrupt public health campaigns or create confusion during health crises (Cheng & Koh, 2020).

Health behaviour challenges among university students: University students are at a critical point in their lives, they are at the point where

they manage to navigate towards having a sound education and growing into maturity. This phase can be characterized by severe health-related behavioural issues that might influence their general well-being and academic achievement. Some of them are;

- a. **Poor eating habits**; some undergraduates find it difficult to maintain a balanced diet due to busy schedules with their studies, limited financial resources, and the availability of unhealthy food options. So they are exposed to poor dietary habits, such as consuming high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and skipping meals, which can lead to weight gain, nutritional deficiencies, and other health issues. Research shows that students with poor dietary practices frequently experience decreased academic performance and overall health problems (Adebiyi, Ojo, & Oduola, 2020).
- b. **High level of stress**; Academic burdens, social obligations, and personal obstacles that revolve around university students contribute to this. Chronic stress can cause mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, lowering pupils' academic performance and general well-being. Effective stress management methods and support networks are critical for students who have these challenges (Iheanacho, Uzochukwu, & Eze, 2019).
- c. **Substance abuse**; Substance addiction, particularly the use of alcohol and other substances, is a serious issue among university students. The availability and social acceptance of these substances encourage their abuse, which can impede academic performance, lead to addiction, and cause long-term health concerns. (Okafor, Ifediora, and Chukwu, 2022).
- d. **Irregular sleep patterns**; many students have inconsistent sleep habits owing to academic pressures, social activities, and lifestyle choices. Poor sleep quality can harm cognitive functioning, academic performance, and general health (Eze & Akpan, 2020). Promoting excellent sleep hygiene and managing sleep problems are critical to improving students' health and academic performance.
- e. **Sexual health behaviours**; Problems with sexual health, such as unsafe practices and insufficient knowledge, are common among university students in Nigeria. These problems may impact students' general well-being and result in health consequences (Iwuanyanwu & Eze, 2021). This requires comprehensive sexual health education and easy access to medical services is crucial to overcome.

Addressing these health behaviour challenges that are popular among university students requires a holistic approach, and getting daily tips

from influencer doctors from their social media handles will go a long way in curbing them.

Empirical Review

Social media used as a platform for disseminating health information has changed some individuals perspectives, especially young adults, on how to engage with health content. This review examines some empirical evidence on the impact of social media influencer-doctors on health behavior change, particularly among university students.

a. Influence of Social Media on Health Behaviors

Research reveals that social media platforms are increasingly used for health promotions Whelan and Crawford (2017) found that 80% of studies reported positive outcomes for health promotion interventions using social media (p. 243). Another research work that studied how effective social media is in teaching healthy lifestyles, by Harris S. E et al (2019) mentioned that 40% of studies used media platforms to deliver health promotion interventions (p. 273). This exposes that social media can be an effective medium for teaching and inculcating healthy lifestyles among university students, which includes improved eating habits and increased physical activities. Students who follow trusted influencers and are exposed to their health-related content are more likely to be influenced by them and adopt their proposed better health practices. Moreover, another study by the World Health Organization (2019), reveals the potential of social media to promote public health, particularly in disease surveillance and health education. According to their global action plan, social media platforms can effectively disseminate accurate health information, promote healthy behaviors, and support health research.

b. Credibility of Influencer-Doctors

The credibility of influencers is crucial to their ability to influence health behavior change. Influencers with medical credentials and experience (such as doctors or health experts) tend to influence their followers more. According to Influencer Marketing Hub (2022), 72% of the younger generation who use social media trust social media influencers for health advice, especially when the influencers are recognized as experts in their professions. This conclusion is noteworthy for university students, many of whom belong to this generation, cohort and are thus more inclined to rely on social media influencer doctors, for advice on health problems.

c. Gaps in Research on Nigerian University Students

There is limited empirical research focused on Nigerian university students regardless of the growing body of literature on the global impact of social media influencers on health behaviour. Studies have yet to investigate the localized impact of influencer doctors on health behaviours in Nigeria. Given the rising use of social media among Nigerian youth, with 38% of the population having internet access as of 2023 (Statista, 2023).

Empirical evidence as reviewed above reveals that social media influencer-doctors play a critical role in promoting health behaviour change among young adults, particularly through their ability to foster trust and engagement. While global studies highlight the positive impact of these influencers, further research is needed to explore their specific effects on Nigerian university students.

Theoretical review: This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory (SLT). This theory explains how people can learn and adopt behaviours through observing others, imitating and reinforcing. The theory has its core components as;

1. **Observational learning:** That people learn by imitating certain behaviors they observe.
2. **Modeling:** People tend to adopt certain behavior advocated by those they hold at high esteem.
3. **Self-Efficacy:** People will have confidence in adopting and performing behaviors.
4. **Reinforcement:** This component explains how consequences of behavior influence learning and adoption.
5. **Cognitive process:** This explains how people process information, think and make decisions in regards to the information.

The idea focuses on the reciprocal relationships between personal variables, behavior, and environmental effects. Students at UNN Nsukka may watch health behaviors modeled by social media influencer doctors, which will shape their attitudes and actions towards health practices.

Methodology

A survey design was employed for this research work, data was fetched through questionnaires as the research instrument. The study was conducted within the premises of the University of Nigeria Nsukka campus, to both male and female students who read and ticked their options as the answers to the questions on the questionnaire. The entire students of the University of Nigeria Nsukka campus comprised of

33,441 students (UNN Academic Planning Unit, 2017) formed the population of this study. Philip Meyer's (1973) previously established sample size calculations for populations ranging from 1000 to infinity at a 95 percent confidence level were utilized to determine the appropriate sample size of 370 students. However, because a larger sample size reduces the margin of error in statistical analysis (Cochran, 1977), 400 participants from the campus population were taken as the sample size for this study. 'Convenient sampling' procedure was employed as the sampling technique because prospective respondents could be easily seen, approached, and administered the questionnaire regardless of their departments and levels in school. The study enlisted the aid of four research assistants, who were assigned to distribute questionnaires to the respondents and collect them. The collected data was presented and analyzed with the use of SPSS software, and the results were summarized in tabular forms.

Hypothesis

To help address this issue from the statistical perspective, two hypotheses were formulated for test:

Hypothesis 1 If students at UNN Nsukka campus are on social media platforms like X, YouTube and Instagram, they will read and watch content by influencer doctors.

Null Hypothesis: Students at UNN Nsukka campus do not watch the content of influencer doctors they trust, regardless of their presence on social media like X, YouTube, and Instagram.

Hypothesis 2: If students at UNN Nsukka campus watch and read content by influencer doctors they trust, it will change their health behaviour.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant change in the behaviour of UNN Nsukka campus students who read and watch the content of influencer doctors they trust.

Data Presentation

The following analysis is based on data gathered from a questionnaire distributed to students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus. 10 of the 390 questionnaires distributed to respondents were incomplete, and 25 were not returned.

Table 1. DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	Male	208
	Female	182
Age	16-20	168
	21-25	175
	26-30	46
	31 and above	1
Academic Level	100 level	75
	200 level	36
	300 level	121
	400 level	107
	500 level	51

From the table above, data gathered shows there were more female respondents to their male counterparts, and from the age range listed in the questionnaire, students who are between 21-25 years responded more to the questionnaire more than students who fall in other age ranges. While more respondents of this study are in their 3rd year in school.

Table 2. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

How often do you use social media	Never	0
	Daily	320
	Several times a week	49
	Once a week	0
	Rarely	21
Which social media platform(s) do you use the most	Facebook	118
	Instagram	113
	X or twitter	47
	Youtube	63
	Tiktok	29
Do you follow any doctor or healthcare professional on social media	No	160
	Yes	230
How often do you come across health-related posts or videos by influencer doctors on social media	Never	0
	Very often	134
	Occasionally	151
	Rare	75

Which of the following types of health-related content have you seen on social media by influencer doctors	Physical fitness and exercise	0
	Nutrition and dieting	56
	Mental health and wellness	0
	Disease prevention	23
Health related content you have seen on social media by influencer doctors.	Sexual and reproductive health	44
	All of the above	267

Data shows that 83% of the respondents use social media daily, while 12% use it several times a week, and 5% use it rarely. Among social media platforms, 34% primarily use Instagram, followed by 30% on Facebook, 17% on YouTube, 11% on Twitter, and 8% on TikTok. Regarding health professionals on social media, 58% of respondents follow doctors or healthcare providers, while 42% do not. Health-related posts by influencer doctors are frequently encountered, with 35% seeing them very often, 46% occasionally, and 19% rarely. For content type, 68% of respondents have seen all listed health topics, with 11% noting sexual and reproductive health, 14% nutrition, 8% each for physical fitness and disease prevention, and 4% for mental health content. This data suggests influencer doctors reach a broad audience, enhancing awareness on various health topics.

Table 3. HEALTH BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Have you ever made any changes to your health habits based on advice from a social media influencer doctor	No	46
	Yes	344
If yes, did it improve your health and wellness	No	52
	Yes	338
To what extent has health-related content by influencer doctors impacted your overall health awareness	Not at all	31
	Very much	0
	Moderately	151
	Slightly	208
On a scale of 1-5, how would you	Not credible	25
	Slightly credible	79

rate the credibility of health information shared by influencer doctors on social media	somewhat credible	222
	Credible	29
	Very credible	35

The data above reveals that most of the respondents (88%) have adjusted their health habits based on advice from social media influencer doctors, which means that the influencers have a strong influence on health-related behaviour.

Among the respondents, almost all 338, felt that these adjustments caused improvements in their health and wellness, suggesting that influencer doctors may play a positive role in motivating healthier choices. In terms of health awareness, responses varied: while 8% of the respondents reported no impact from influencer doctors' health content, most respondents felt some degree of influence.

About 39% perceived a moderate impact, and 53% reported a slight impact on their overall health awareness. This suggests that influencer doctors contribute meaningfully to health awareness, though for many, the influence may not be highly transformative. Regarding the credibility of health information shared by influencer doctors, the data shows a small portion (7%) viewed the information as "Not credible," while 20% found it "Slightly credible." The largest segment, at 57%, rated it as "Somewhat credible," indicating that most respondents approach this information with a degree of skepticism. A smaller group considered it "Credible" (7%) or "Very credible" (9%), showing that while influencer doctors are trusted by some, a majority may still seek additional sources or verification for health advice received through social media.

Overall, this data illustrates that while social media influencer doctors can affect health behaviours and awareness, their perceived credibility is moderate, reflecting a balance between influence and cautious engagement from the audience.

Table 4. FACTORS INFLUENCING HEALTH BEHAVIOR

What motivates you the most to follow health-related content from influencer doctors	Peer recommendations	18
	Trust in the influencer doctors	61
	Personal health concerns	66
	Popularity of the content	39
	Easy access of the information	106

	Others..... specify	0
How confident are you in making health-related decisions based on information from social media doctors	Not confident	6
	Very confident	0
	Somewhat confident	216
	Confident	168
Do you believe social media influencer doctors play a significant role in promoting healthy behaviors among students	No	37
	Yes	353

The data for the 4th section in the questionnaire indicates that 42% (106) of respondents are motivated to follow health-related content from influencer doctors because of ‘easy access to information’. Personal health concerns drive 26% (66) of respondents, while 24% (61) are motivated by trust in these influencers. A smaller portion, 15.4%, follow due to the popularity of the content, and only 7.1% are influenced by peer recommendations. No respondents indicated additional reasons in the “others” category.

Regarding confidence in making health-related decisions based on information from social media doctors, respondents who are somewhat confident are 64%, while 50% feel confident. 1%, are not confident, and no respondent was very confident in their decision-making.

Finally, regarding the perceived role of influencer doctors in promoting healthy behaviours, 91% of respondents believe these influencers play a significant role in encouraging healthy behaviours among students, whereas 9% disagree.

In summary, easy access to information (42%) and personal health concerns (26%) are the leading motivators for following health content. While respondents show varying levels of confidence, the majority view influencer doctors as positively influencing student health behaviours.

To properly test the hypotheses of this study, an examination of the relationship between ‘the dependent variable and the independent variables for hypothesis 1 was conducted using a multiple linear regression analysis as seen below.

Table 5. HYPOTHESES 1

Dependent Variable: Do you follow any doctor or healthcare professionals on social media					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	46.431 ^a	7	6.633	52.867	.000
Intercept	28.109	1	28.109	224.035	.000
Age	.188	1	.188	1.499	.222
AcademicLevel	4.520	1	4.520	36.025	.000
HowOftenSocialMediaIsUsed	4.098	2	2.049	16.331	.000
HowOftenyoucome AcrossPostsByDoctorsOnSocialMedia	19.075	2	9.538	76.018	.000
HowOftenSocialMediaIsUsed * HowOftenyoucome AcrossPostsByDoctorsOnSocialMedia	1.322	1	1.322	10.535	.001
Error	47.928	382	.125		
Total	230.000	390			
Corrected Total	94.359	389			
a. R Squared = .492 (Adjusted R Squared = .483)					

The data in the above table indicate that media usage ($p < .001$), how often respondents come across posts by doctors ($p < .001$) and academic level ($p < .001$), are important predictors of following doctors and healthcare professionals on social media. Anda 49.2% variance, which is good enough to mean that these factors are important predictors of students' engagement with influencer doctor content. The data also shows a significant relationship in the interaction between social media use and the frequency of seeing doctors' posts, which suggests that how effectively social media is used in following healthcare professionals is dependent on how often students encounter posts from doctors. So, students at UNN Nsukka campus who are active social media users will frequently see health posts from influencer doctors and are more

likely to follow and engage such posts by influencer doctors, especially as their academic level increases.

To statistically test the second hypothesis posed for this study, a regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of exposure to influencer doctors' content on modifications in health habits. As seen in the table below.

Table 6.HYPOTHESIS 2

Dependent Variable: Have you ever made any changes to your health habits based on advice from a social media influencer doctor					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	29.551 ^a	7	4.222	146.298	.000
Intercept	11.281	1	11.281	390.925	.000
Age	1.212	1	1.212	42.014	.000
AcademicLevel	.064	1	.064	2.227	.136
HowOftenyoucomeAcrossPostsByDoctorsOnSocialMedia	13.842	2	6.921	239.850	.000
ConfidenceInTakingHealthDecisionBasedOnInfoFromInfluencerDoctors	2.144	2	1.072	37.153	.000
HowOftenyoucomeAcrossPostsByDoctorsOnSocialMedia * ConfidenceInTakingHealthDecisionBasedOnInfoFromInfluencerDoctors	.259	1	.259	8.960	.003
Error	11.023	382	.029		
Total	344.000	390			
Corrected Total	40.574	389			
a. R Squared = .728 (Adjusted R Squared = .723)					

The data above shows that age $p < .001$, how often respondents come across influencer doctors' posts $p < .001$, and confidence in making health decisions based on information from influencer doctors $p < .001$ are

significant with the respondents who make changes from influencer doctors' advice on social media. The data also shows that the interaction between how often respondents come across posts by doctors on social media and confidence in making health decisions based on influencer doctors' posts is significant. The approximately 72.8% of the variance explained by the model, is a high explanatory power indicating that the variables effectively predict whether students are likely to change health behaviours based on influencer doctors' content.

Simply put, the findings show that UNN students are more likely to make health changes when they frequently engage with and trust the messages of influencer doctors on social media.

Findings Of The Study

The findings of this study show a lot about social media, influencer doctors, and exposure to health information on social media, which affects health behaviour change.

Thus, this study reveals that social media influencer doctors make impact in the health behaviour change among UNN Nsukka campus students because they frequently visit social media platforms daily. Table 2 provides the data which shows that almost all the respondents 320 (83%) visit different social media platforms daily and a good number of them 134 (33%) and 151 (46%) often and occasionally come across health messages on social media. This means that being on social media regularly exposes one to health-related messages from the supposedly 'doctor influencers'. This affirms findings from other studies (Whelan and Crawford, 2017. & Harris S. E et al 2019) that were captured in the earlier part of this study. Their studies posit that a good number of youths (students) use the social media, which makes the social media an effective tool for health intervention schemes.

Also, the findings of this study align with almost the principles of the Social Learning Theory, which anchored this study. From Table 2, we can see that a high percentage (83%) of the respondents visit their different social media platforms daily, and a good number of them 267 (68%) see different health tips from influencer doctors, which completely agrees with the 'observational learning' that the SLT advocates. Thus, making social media the right environment where people can learn good health lifestyles by watching videos and imitating what they have seen.

Table 2 also shows that most of the respondents (230) follow influencer doctors on social media, which means they students see them as models they look up to. This agrees with another component of the

SLT, that people tend to adopt certain behaviours advocated by those they hold in high esteem.

Table 4 provides the data which supports the confidence aspect of the SLT, and reveals that 49% of the respondents are confident, while 63% of them are somewhat confident of the posts and health tips they get from influencer doctors on social media. This means self-efficacy comes into play while adopting and imitating behaviors and making the findings of this study to a great length supports the components of the SLT.

For the hypotheses posed for this study, findings as seen in Table 5 strongly support the first hypothesis which is, 'If students at UNN Nsukka campus are on social media platforms like X, YouTube, and Instagram, they will read and watch content by influencer doctors'. The table shows that except for age, all the variables featured in the table have significant relationship. The interaction between social media use and exposure to doctors' posts further reinforces the hypothesis, suggesting that high social media engagement and frequent exposure to healthcare content are crucial for following influencer doctors. Therefore, this study rejects the null and accepts hypothesis 1 of this study.

The second hypothesis: 'If students at UNN Nsukka campus watch and read content by influencer doctors they trust, it will change their health behavior', is strongly supported by the findings of this study. Table 6 shows significant results for frequency of exposure and confidence in influencer doctors' advice indicating that regular interaction with the influencers' content, trust, and credibility play essential roles in predicting health behavior changes. Additionally, the significant interaction between exposure and confidence further supports the hypothesis by highlighting that trust and visibility have an amplifying effect on the likelihood of behavior modification. Also, like the first hypotheses, this study rejects the null but accepts hypothesis 2.

The two hypotheses supported by the findings of this study show that social media influencer doctors' posts influence and affect behavior change among UNN Nsukka campus students who are on social media.

Recommendations

The usefulness of the social media cannot be overemphasized. If certified doctors who are on social media offer health tips to their followers regularly, it will help their followers form and live a better the lifestyles. It will make getting a reasonable health information for a healthy lifestyle a click away for many.

So this study recommends:

1. The Ministry of Health should find a way to work with influencer doctors and use their platforms as a mechanism to combat the high spread of infectious diseases and promote a healthy lifestyle to the public. With the impact these influencer doctors have on their followers, engaging them during health epidemics will surely prove positive in limiting the widespread of diseases, especially among the youth.
2. Sensitization programs on this subject should be carried out in rural areas for secondary school students to allay them of the fear of not trusting and believing in health messages from influencer doctors on social media.
3. Broader studies should be carried out on this to know how effective influencer doctors are in the behaviour change of university students in the different regions and the country at large.

References

- Adebisi, A. O., Ojo, S. A., & Oduola, A. A. (2020). Dietary habits and nutritional status of university students in Nigeria. *Journal of Nutrition and Health Sciences*, 8(1), 45-52.
- Basch, C. H., Hillyer, G. C., & Jaime, C. (2020). COVID-19 on TikTok: Harnessing an emerging social media platform to convey important public health messages. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 33(3). <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2020-0111>
- Cheng, L., & Koh, C. (2020). Combating disinformation in social media: A review of defamation and fake news in Singapore. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 15(S1), 199-217. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2020.15>
- Chou, W. Y. S., Oh, A., & Klein, W. M. P. (2020). Addressing health-related misinformation on social media. *JAMA*, 320(23), 2417-2418. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2018.16865>
- Eze, P. A., & Akpan, I. O. (2020). Sleep patterns and academic performance among university students in Nigeria. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 29(4), 123-130.
- Househ, M. (2019). The use of social media in healthcare: Organizational, clinical, and patient perspectives. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 252, 243-246. <https://doi.org/10.3233/978-1-61499-951-5-243>
- Huo, J., Desai, R., Hong, Y.-R., Turner, K., Mainous, A. G., III, & Bian, J. (2019). Use of social media in health communication: Findings from

- the Health Information National Trends Survey 2013, 2014, and 2017. *Sage Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073274819841442>
- Iheanacho, T. C., Uzochukwu, B. S. C., & Eze, E. E. (2019). Stress and its impact on academic performance among university students in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Psychological Research*, 11(3), 155-162.
- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2022). 72% of Gen Z trust social media influencers for health advice. Retrieved from <https://influencermarketinghub.com>
- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2023). 120 social media statistics for 2023. Retrieved from <https://influencermarketinghub.com>
- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2024). 35 influencer marketing statistics shaping 2024. Retrieved from <https://influencermarketinghub.com>
- International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity. (2021). The effect of social media interventions on physical activity and dietary behaviors in young people and adults: A systematic review. Retrieved from <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com>
- Iwuanyanwu, V. M., & Eze, A. E. (2021). Sexual health practices and challenges among Nigerian university students. *Journal of Sexual Health*, 11(2), 110-119.
- Loomba, S., de Figueiredo, A., Piatek, S. J., de Graaf, K., & Larson, H. J. (2021). Measuring the impact of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation on vaccination intent in the UK and USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(3), 337–348. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01056-1>
- Moorhead, S. A., Hazlett, D. E., Harrison, L., Carroll, J. K., Irwin, A., & Hoving, C. (2013). A new dimension of health care: Systematic review of the uses, benefits, and limitations of social media for health communication. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(4), e85. <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.1933>
- Okafor, M. A., Ifediora, C. S., & Chukwu, R. N. (2022). Patterns of substance abuse among university students in Nigeria: Implications for intervention. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 57(4), 523-533.
- Statista. (2023). Internet penetration in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://statista.com>
- Whelan, J., & Crawford, D. (2017). Social media and health promotion: A review of the literature. *Health Promotion International*, 32(2), 239-248. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daw052>
- World Health Organization. (2019). Global action plan for healthy lives and well-being. World Health Organization.

**SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AS PUBLIC RELATIONS
AGENTS FOR ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT AND
EMPOWERMENT AMONG YOUTHS IN UNIVERSITY OF
NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

Chinatu Amarachukwu Iroegbu¹
chinatu.iroegbu.233510@unn.edu.ng¹
+2347067278989

Gregory Ezeah (Ph.D)
gregory.ezeah@unn.edu.ng²
+2348037728393

Victor Ifegwu-Mbonu³
Victor.ifegwu-mbonu.197210@unn.edu.ng³

Abstract:

In the last decade, there has been a rise in the number of social media influencers in Nigeria, significantly reshaping the public relations (PR) landscape in the country. This development has presented new opportunities for youth engagement and empowerment. By utilizing the digital platforms most frequented by Nigerian youth such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, these influencers have become important voices and influences in shaping the perceptions of youths on issues. This paper examines the role of social media influencers as key PR agents in youth engagement and empowerment. The research was guided by the Uses and Gratification theory and social influence theory. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of youth response and qualitative interviews of influencers. Frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the questionnaire responses, while the personal interview data was analysed on a question-by-question basis. Findings from the study highlight key strategies that influencers deploy to build trust and engage young audiences. The study also highlights challenges with influencer-driven PR including lack of authenticity, misinformation, and over-commercialization. Based on these findings, it was recommended that there should be a collaboration between PR professionals and influencers to mitigate the challenges faced by influencers. In addition, influencer relations and marketing should be introduced as a new PR curriculum by higher institutions to equip young

PR professionals. By leveraging the power of digital platforms and the credibility of social media influencers, PR efforts can pave the way for meaningful youth engagement and sustainable community development in Nigeria.

Keywords: social media, influencers, youth empowerment, strategies, public relations.

Introduction

The emergence of technological tools and inventions has revolutionized the media landscape and birthed ideologies and systems thought impossible. One such technological invention is social media. Social media, popularly called "new media", "digital media", or "internet media", refers to applications and websites that enhance the creation and sharing of content and user engagement in social networking (Diesing, 2013). Social media platforms have played important communication roles over the years, linking people together for information sharing, discussions on salient matters and analysing the viewpoint of others.

In recent years, however, the pervasive influence of social media platforms has triggered a profound transformation across various facets of society, fundamentally altering the landscape in which individuals navigate their professional trajectories. This digital revolution has notably impacted the youth demographic, characterized by the emergence of digital natives, adolescents and young adults who have grown up immersed in the digital age. (Gopal, 2012). Social media has passed beyond the limits of being a medium of communication and entertainment to being an indispensable tool for youth development and empowerment.

With the rise of social media comes the birth of social media influencers. According to Duffy (2020), social media influencers are a subset of digital content creators defined by their significant online following, distinctive brand persona, and patterned relationships with commercial sponsors. To earn income, they hype branded goods and services to their communities of followers; such promotional communication takes the form of information, advice, and inspiration. Because influencers brand endorsements are integrated into their existing arsenals of visual, textual, and/or narrative content, their persuasive communication is widely understood as more "authentic" or "organic" than traditional paid advertising. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not

surprising that influencer marketing has witnessed an astonishing uptick in recent years. This is in line with Freberg et al. (2011) characterization of social media influencers as a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media. More recently, Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) described social media influencers as people who, through personal branding, build and maintain relationships with their followers on social media and have the ability to inform, entertain, and influence their followers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours.

Public Relations is an evolving industry that has undergone a remarkable transformation as a result of the integration of new technologies and the broader reach of globalization (Brunner & Smallwood, 2019). Social media has revolutionised crisis management approaches in public relations (Akdeniz, 2020). The traditional method of crisis communication employed channels like press releases and interviews; the contemporary era allows for a swift and direct response through social media. Again, the corporate social responsibilities aspect of public relations has also not remained stagnant to the changes as in today's society, consumers are increasingly cognizant of businesses' impact on the world and are more inclined to support companies that align with their values and contribute positively (Tkalac Verčič, 2021).

In Nigeria, opinion leaders in online communities, now known as influencers, have been able to penetrate the visible areas such as political advocacy (Bring Back Our Girls campaign) and voting patterns or behaviour (#votefight, #electionnotwar, #sorosoke #endsars). The existence of social media influencers has become so prevalent in Nigeria's online community that there are now more than thousands of self-acclaimed and established online influencers with millions of followers on the Nigerian online community (Bello, 2018). This phenomenon has become very significant given the number of internet users in Nigeria today, which, according to the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC) report, the number of internet users was released as marginally 98.3 million (Nigeria Communications Commission, 2018).

Influencer relations is where public relations and social media interconnect. The communications and PR industries have evolved tremendously as a result of the power of social media. Influencers play a major role in that evolution. The aim of this paper, however, is to examine the role of social media influencers as key public relations agents in youth engagement and empowerment.

Statement of Problem

Existing studies on the subject of social media focus on the impact of social media on the youths, how social media affects the academic performance of youths, the role of social media on youth awareness and engagement, etc, but there a lack of sufficient research on the role of social media influencers on youth empowerment and enlightenment. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how social media influencers and influencer-driven campaigns promote youth empowerment and achieve social change. This study seeks to ascertain the role influencers play in bringing about youth empowerment and enlightenment in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies social media influencers use to build trust and create authentic engagement with Nigerian youth?
2. What is the impact of influencer-driven public relations campaigns on youth empowerment and participation in social change?
3. What are the challenges faced by influencers when engaging young audiences, and what is the effect on influencer-driven PR campaigns?

Literature Review

Social Media Influencers

As social media continues to grow in use, it has developed into a platform for influencing the actions and decisions of users. This is usually referred as social media influencing and is carried out by users who have substantial following. According to Borchers (2019), social media influencers (SMIs) comprise different roles, some of which have traditionally been occupied by separate actors. SMIs can serve the roles of moderator, content distributor, creative content producer, community manager, strategic advisor, and event host. Combining these roles into just one actor opens new opportunities for strategic communication. These roles, as well as other functions that SMI performs for organizations, can also help define the concept of SMI more precisely. Thus, from a strategic communication perspective, social media influencers (SMIs) can be considered external actors who have established many relationships of specific quality with organizational stakeholders and influence them through content generation, content dissemination, interaction, and individual appearance on the social web.

Types of Influencers

Social media Influencers fall into different categories based on their number of followers. Olagboye (2023) highlighted four types: nano-

influencers with 1,000 to 10,000 followers, micro-influencers with 10,000 to 100,000 followers, macro-influencers with 100,000 to 1,000,000 followers, and mega-influencers with at least 1,000,000 followers.

Furthermore, Fuller (2020) stated that nano-influencers are great for highly targeted, community-oriented campaigns, and they are reasonably priced; micro-influencers are suitable for generating high engagement rate conversions; macro-influencers are great for expanding visibility and trust in particular industries; mega-influencers or celebrities for large-scale, well-publicised brand awareness initiatives.

Social Media Influencers and Youth Empowerment

Influencers can spark social impact more than many people think. The influence is getting wider at the local or global levels, with millions of impressionable followers who tend to imitate others. The influence of the influencers in this quantity is as great as the relationship between a huge forest fire and the size of the spark that ignited it. Influencers have a high ability to persuade others, and some of them have close relations with the decision-making authorities. Therefore, everyone who enters the world of influencers is required to employ even a small part of his influence to work in the field of public reform, and for this to be an essential part of his program. Influencers in society also have a role in leading these societies by using the language of dialogue and calm in solving all problems, repelling damage and restoring an atmosphere of trust (Al-Rasheed, 2023).

Influencers' communication is persuasive, especially since they use different techniques and strategies to make effective and persuasive arguments. In other words, they are employed in a persuasive speech to obtain benefits, and everyone must use them to achieve success in his persuasive speech. Persuasion techniques are designed to sell a product, idea, concept, or suggestion (Gifu et al. 2014). In line with this, Perloff (2017: 8), defines persuasion as: "...a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviours regarding an issue". In other words, persuasion is based on just trying to convince others to change their attitudes on something, but it would be necessary to consider that addressees are always going to be able to decide if they want to have their attitude changed.

Social Media Influencers as Key Public Relations Agents

Influencers as important social media figures have become key agents and tools for Public Relations campaigns. According to Borchers

and Enke (2021), their participation increases brand awareness, creates product reviews, generates publicity, quickly spreads information and creates believable and authentic content.

From a public relations perspective, it is also interesting that influencers are currently acting as gatekeepers, given their central role in deciding information flows, and are becoming both senders of and channels for messages (Navarro et al., 2020). In fact, Herzig, Mass and Roitman (2014) argue that they can “disseminate interesting content, ideas or opinions to others, hoping to stimulate some intended reactions by potential readers, e.g., be endorsed, followed, cited, or even trigger an active discussion” (p. 46), which applies to commercial environments but also to other fields such as political communication. Probably for this reason, many PR professionals believe that using influencers can, in some cases, be more effective nowadays than standard advertising and traditional press releases, as many consumers now trust and/or listen to the latter less than to influencer-created content (Tworzydło et al. 2019).

Nevertheless, of course, it should also be noted that the implementation of the influencer figure in public relations campaigns is a relatively new trend. Therefore, managing their correct incorporation into communication strategies can be challenging for PR companies. As Wolf and Archer (2018) state, “the dynamics of influencer engagement present major challenges to even the most experienced PR professionals, due to the rapid rise of individual influencers, changing business models, and only slowly evolving best practice approaches to the evaluation of influencer engagement” (p. 502).

These new challenges involve supervising (and working in a beneficial way with) people who can share, send, copy, extract or comment on content relating to recommendations to large communities (Navarro et al., 2020). Furthermore, PR companies are continuously trying to find effective metrics to determine who are the most influential players, how far conventional metrics apply to new media, and what tools are lacking for measuring influencers' abilities (Gillin, 2008). Despite all these factors, public relations professionals seem to be up for that challenge, as they see “a potential in using influencers in activities associated with communication” (Tworzydło et al., 2019), and consider it a growing trend to which the discipline should adapt, and which it should even try to embrace.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted a combination of the Uses and Gratification theory and Social influence theory to further explain how social media influencers utilise digital platforms for public relations strategies aimed at youth empowerment. Dennis McQuail (2010) defined a theory as a set of an idea of varying status and origin, which seeks to explain or interpret some phenomenon.

Uses and Gratification Theory

McQuail (2010) states that the uses and gratifications approach is quite suitable for new media studies, especially in terms of comparison and definition, and that studies in this direction are following an increasing trend. Therefore, these studies result in the addition of new gratifications to explain how individuals use social media.

Propounded by Katz et al. (1974), the Uses and Gratification theory is a sociological theory that describes the reason behind an individual's selection and use of media to satisfy specific needs. The theory of uses and gratification sees the use of communication tools as a process of need satisfaction and tension and accepts the audience as individuals who are active, rational, resistant to influence, and making choices according to their wishes (Erzurum, 2022, p. 112).

In the context of the research, youths are drawn to influencers to fulfil their needs for information, entertainment, social interaction and personal identity, and as these influencers create content to meet these needs, an enabling environment is created for youth engagement and participation in social change.

Social Influence Theory

The central theme of social influence theory, as proposed by Kelman (1958), is that an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and subsequent actions or behaviours are influenced by referent others through three processes: compliance, identification, and internalization. Kelman (1958) posited that social influence brings about changes in attitude and actions and that changes may occur at different "levels."

From the aforementioned explanation of the theory, influencers act as opinion leaders who shape people's opinions, perspectives and views through their content. In other words, influencers bring about youth empowerment by creating content which seeks to impact the attitudes, behaviour and cognition of their followers towards taking action.

Methodology

This study made use of a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of youth response and qualitative interviews of influencers. The population of this study constitute of University of Nigeria Nsukka students making up a population of about 36, 000 students, as affirmed by the Academic Planning Unit, University of Nigeria Nsukka.

A population of 35, 129 is indeed a large number to study within the time frame of this research and given this, a presentation of the population in small groups becomes necessary. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique and using the Australian calculator, the sample size of 380 was generated . For this study, two major instruments were used for data collection - questionnaires and personal interviews. Frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the questionnaire responses, while the personal interview data was analysed on a question-by-question basis. The three (3) individuals interviewed are : Kathryn Clement, Val Okafor and Bethel Onyemachi.

Kathryn Esther Clement is an award-winning spoken word artist, a remarkable individual who has left an indelible mark on the world through her artistry and inspiring work as a spoken word poet, inspirational writer, content creator, and purpose coach. With a unique ability to captivate audiences with her words and touch the depths of their souls, Kathryn has emerged as a powerful voice in the realm of self-expression and personal growth. Through her awe-inspiring performances, compelling writings, captivating content, and transformative coaching, Kathryn has touched the lives of countless individuals, leaving an indelible impression on their hearts and minds. Her words are not mere ink on paper or sound in the air; they are catalysts for personal growth, instruments of empowerment, and agents of social change. With her unwavering dedication to her craft, Kathryn Esther continues to inspire, uplift, and ignite the flames of purpose within the hearts of all who encounter her work.

Val Okafor is a Youth development professional with a decade of proven experience empowering Africa's young population. He is renowned as a transformational speaker and social innovator. He's the CEO of The Val Okafor Company, a Nigerian Youth SDGs Champion, African Change Makers Fellow, Commonwealth Open Source Leaders, YALI West Africa Fellow and Fela Durotoye Leadership Network Ambassador. He has earned widespread recognition including the prestigious Award of Achievement from the 234 Project in Texas, USA.

Bethel Onyemachi is a thought leader who has revolutionised the social media space with through his skills as a social media strategist and a keynote speaker. He has trained on social media Ads skills empowering them to make money and impact from what they know and do. He delivers value in the area of growth, brand building, influence, skills, leadership and personal development.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents response on the statement: Social media influencers help raise awareness about important youth-related issues

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Strongly Agree	152	40%
2.	Agree	77	20.3%
3.	Neutral	35	9.2%
4.	Disagree	73	19.2%
5.	Strongly Disagree	43	11.3%
	Total	380	100

Note. Data collected from the field survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents, 60.3%, agree that social media influencers help raise awareness about important youth-related issues while 30.5% think otherwise.

Table 2: Respondents' response to: How likely are you to take action (e.g., join a campaign, donate, advocate) based on a social media influencer's content?

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Very likely	193	50.8%
2.	Somewhat likely	55	14.8%
3.	Neutral	15	3.9%
4.	Unlikely	51	13.4%
5.	Very unlikely	66	17.4%
	TOTAL	380	100

Note. Data collected from the field survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents, 65.6%, agree that they are likely to take action based on social media influencers' content, while 30.8% think otherwise.

Table 3: Respondents' response to: Do you believe that social media influencers have a positive impact on youth empowerment in Nigeria?

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Yes	293	77.1%
2.	No	87	22.9%
	TOTAL	380	100

Note. Data collected from the field survey, 2024

Table 3 depicts that 77.1% of respondents believe that social media influencers have a positive impact on youth empowerment, while 22 don't agree with the statement..

Table 4: Respondents' response on: What is the biggest challenge you see in influencer-driven PR campaigns?

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
1.	Misinformation	225	59.2%
2.	Lack of authenticity	101	26.6%
3	Over-commercialization	54	14.2%
	TOTAL	380	100%

Note. Data collected from the field survey, 2024

Table 4 depicts that 59.2% of respondents believe that influencer-driven PR campaigns are usually filled with misinforming content, 26.6% of respondents see a lack of authenticity in influencer-driven PR campaigns, while 14.2% of respondents believe that influencer-driven PR campaigns are usually over-commercialized.

Responses from Interviews

In line with this goal, an interview was conducted with purposively selected social media influencers.

Those interviewed include:

1. Kathryn Esther Clement with 93,000 followers
2. Bethel Onyemachi with 23, 000 followers
3. Val Okafor with 15,000 followers

Interview question 1: What strategies do you use to build trust and maintain an authentic connection with your young audience, and how do you think these strategies contribute to their engagement and empowerment?

Kathryn Esther Clement: I use writing and creating inspiring content to draw people's attention to pressing issues going on in society.

Bethel Onyemachi: I adopt a content creation strategy that encompasses written, video, reels and Facebook Ads to reach out to youths on social media.

Val Okafor: I empower youths through teachings, live sessions on Facebook and videos of my leadership activities to inspire youths.

Interview question 2: Can you share an example of a campaign or initiative you were involved in that successfully empowered or engaged youth? What do you think made that campaign impactful?

Kathryn Esther Clement: Using my content creation strategies, I successfully achieved youth mobilization for the JPI Conference and 360° conference targeted at empowering the youth for social change.

Bethel Onyemachi: As a Facebook Ads expert, I help organizations and brands run Ads aimed at creating visibility for youth development programmes and initiatives.

Val Okafor: As a youth development professional, I have pioneered leadership and entrepreneurship programmes designed to inspire, challenge and transform youths into high-impact leaders. I equip young leaders with 21st-century skills for global impact.

Interview question 3: What challenges do you face when trying to influence and engage young audiences in positive and empowering ways, and how do you address these challenges?

Kathryn Esther Clement: Empowering youths to attend virtual conferences that will enlighten their minds and get them meaningfully engaged is usually filled with so many hurdles as a result of the low attention span of youths.

Bethel Onyemachi: The influencer space is becoming saturated, with many individuals becoming influencers and trying to reach similar target audiences.

Val Okafor: The young audience in Nigeria is diverse, with people coming from different tribes and ethnic groups; hence, influence cannot happen through a one-size-fits-all strategy.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the strategies social media influencers use to build trust and create authentic engagement with Nigerian youth?

Interview question 1 provides data on the strategies social media influencers use to build trust and create authentic engagement with Nigerian youth. The data analysis shows that the majority of the influencers utilize content-creation strategies to disseminate information to their followers. This content can be written, video or images. This is in line with Herzig, Mass and Roitman's (2014) argument that social media influencers can “disseminate interesting content, ideas or opinions to others, hoping to stimulate some intended reactions by potential readers, e.g., be endorsed, followed, cited, or even trigger an active discussion”. These strategies, when internalised by youths, establish the influencers as opinion leaders capable of shaping their opinions, and perspectives. This aligns with Kelman's 1958 social influence theory.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of influencer-driven public relations campaigns on youth empowerment and participation in social change?

To determine the impact of influencer-driven public relations campaigns on youth empowerment and participation, data from questions 1 to 3 of the questionnaire were used. From Table One, it is seen that the majority of the respondents, 60.3%, agree that social media influencers help raise awareness about important youth-related issues while 30.5% think otherwise. This is in tandem with Al-Rasheed (2023), who believes that influencers in society also have a role in leading these societies by using the language of dialogue and calm in solving all problems, repelling damage and restoring an atmosphere of trust.

From Table 2, the majority of the respondents 65.6% agree that they are likely to take action based on social media influencers' content while 30.8%, think otherwise. Drawing from this, the uses and gratification theory comes into play as it sees media users as active content consumers hence the ability of influencers to persuade youths into taking action. Herzig, Mass and Roitman (2014) argue that they can “disseminate interesting content, ideas or opinions to others, hoping to stimulate some intended reactions by potential readers, e.g., be endorsed, followed, cited, or even trigger an active discussion”. To this end, Gifu et al. 2014 posit that Influencer communication is usually persuasive, and with this persuasion technique, a product, idea, concept or suggestion can be sold. With this, people begin to comply with influencers' content by taking

action. This also aligns with the position of Olajojo (2020) that the informativeness of the influencer's post, the facilitative nature of the content, and the persuasive strategies used to impact how followers receive the message passed across to them.

Table 3 depicts that 77.1% of respondents believe that social media influencers have a positive impact on youth empowerment, while 22% don't agree with the statement. With this response, it isn't out of place for Al-Rasheed (2023) to state that influencers can spark social impact more than many people think. Their influence is getting wider at the local or global levels, with millions of impressionable followers who tend to imitate others.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by influencers when engaging young audiences, and what is the effect on influencer-driven PR campaigns?

Answers to this question are obtained from data collected from interview question 3 and table 4. The interviewed social media influencers pointed out several challenges they face while getting youths and young individuals to take action. Some of these challenges include the short attention span of youths, saturation of the influencer space and industry and the diverse nature of the Nigerian youth audience which necessitates content diversification and multiple strategies to enlighten them. Hence why Gillin, 2008 believes that PR companies are continuously trying to find effective metrics to determine who are the most influential players, how far conventional metrics apply to new media, and what tools are lacking for measuring influencers in relation to PR activities. These challenges faced by influencers have an effect of misinformation, lack of authenticity and over-commercialization on influencer-driven campaigns. To this end, Karin (2019), points out that there are ethical issues associated with social media influencers such as lack of respect, bad influence, racial or sexual discrimination, harassment, breaking the law, accusing or discrediting others, greed, deceptiveness and inaccurate information, encouragement of atrocities, and lastly maintaining body ideals or shaming different body appearances.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The emergence of new media technology has disrupted the media space with a reaching effect on the Public Relations industry. This, if not well mitigated will cause a breach in information flow from PR professionals to the public. Hence, this paper sought to understand the role social media

influencers face as key PR agents in ensuring youth empowerment and engagement in Nigeria. With this study's contribution to the growing body of literature on digital communication for development by providing a framework for integrating influencer strategies into broader public relations, efforts aimed at youth empowerment can be achieved. Findings from the study show that social media influencers act as opinion leaders who shape the views and perspectives of youths by utilizing engaging written and video content to persuade youths to take action for social change. Notwithstanding the positive impact of influencer-driven campaigns, these social media influencers face a lot of challenges which invariably impact influencer-driven campaigns. Some of such challenges are misinformation, lack of authenticity, over-commercialization, etc.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

- i. Structured partnerships should be encouraged between PR professionals and social media influencers to co-create authentic campaigns that align with organizational and youth needs.
- ii. Organizations that choose to use influencer-driven campaigns for youth empowerment and enlightenment should endeavour to research the influencer and their platform to ensure that they are a good fit for the information they wish to disseminate.
- iii. There should be an inclusion of Influencer Relations and marketing in the PR academic curriculum of higher institutions. This will prepare and equip PR scholars to better handle the demands of the digital society. This will ensure that the practice of public relations is still in the hands of professionals who truly understand the laws and ethics of the profession.

References

- Akdeniz, E. (2020). Weber's charismatic leadership in times of crisis. *Journal of International Social Research*, 13 (73).
- Al-Rasheed, T. F. (2010). Influencers and their role in community service. Retrieved from <http://www.tfrasheed.org/ara/?p=445> on October 13, 2024.
- Babbie, E. (2007). *The practice of social research* (11th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Bello, B. (2018). Social media influencers in Nigeria: How they make it to the top. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/amp/s/ideaslane.com/2018/04/20/social->

- [mediainfluencers-in-nigeria-how-they-make-it-so far/amp/](#) on November 21, 2024,
- Borchers, N. S. (2019). Social media influencers in strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 13(4), 255-260. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1634075> on November 15, 2024.
- Borchers, N. S., & Enke, N. (2021). Managing strategic influencer communication: A systematic overview on emerging planning, organization, and controlling routines. *Public Relations Review*, 47(3), 47. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102041> on November 21, 2024.
- Brunner, B., & Smallwood, A. (2019). Prioritizing public interest in public relations: Public interest relations. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 8(3), 245-264.
- Dhanesh, S. G., & Duthler, G. (2019). Relationship management through social media influencers: Effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement. *Public Relations Review*, 45 (3), 101765.
- Diesing, J. (2013). *Social media: A solution to declining youth engagement in politics* (Master's thesis, University of Otago).
- Duffy, B. E. (2020). *The international encyclopedia of gender, media, and communication*. Wiley. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119429128.iegmc219> on November 21, 2024.
- Erzurum, F. (2022). Uses and gratification theory. In Ö. Özer (Ed.), *Mainstream media theories* (pp. 109-128). Ankara: Siyasal Publishing House.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92.
- Fuller, B. (2020, June 22). The pros and cons of influencer marketing. Retrieved from <https://www.oviond.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-influencer-marketing> July 18, 2024.
- Gillin, P. (2008). New media, new influencers, and implications for the public relations profession. *Journal of New Communications Research*, 2 (2), 1-10.
- Gîfu, D., Teodorescu, M., & Ionescu, D. (2014). Pragmatical rules for success in persuasion. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 37, 18-28. Retrieved from

- <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ilshs.37.18> on November 18, 2024.
- Gopal, K. V. (2012). Search engine optimization tool for advertising in India. *The International Journal's Research Journal of Economics Business Studies*, 1(3), 68-77.
- Herzig, J., Mass, Y., & Roitman, H. (2014). An author-reader influence model for detecting topic-based influencers in social media. *Proceedings of the 25th ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media*, 46-55.
- Karin, E. (2019). Social media influencers and social media platforms' ethical obligations from a user perspective. *Jönköping University*.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37 (4), 509-623. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109> on October 18, 2024.
- Kelman, H. C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization: Three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(1), 51-60.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- National Communication Commission. (2019). *Nigeria: Number of internet users 2017-2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria/> on November 21, 2024.
- Navarro, C., Moreno, A., Molleda, J., Khalil, N., & Verhoeven, P. (2020). The challenge of new gatekeepers for public relations: A comparative analysis of the role of social media influencers for European and Latin American professionals. *Public Relations Review*.
- Olagboye, S. (2023, November 13). Influencer marketing and its impact on e-commerce sales in Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.statsmetrics.ng/article/influencer-marketing-and-its-impact-on-ecommerce-sales-in-nigeria> on November 12, 2024.
- Olaajo, O. (2020). Impact of Nigeria's social media influencers on their followers in online communities. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 1(2). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.47851/naujocommed.v1i2.81> on November 21, 2024.
- Perloff, R. M. (2017). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st century*. Routledge.

- Tkalac Verčič, A. (2021). The impact of employee engagement, organisational support, and employer branding on internal communication satisfaction. *Public Relations Review*, 47(1). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102009> on November 12, 2024.
- Tworzydło, D., Zyczynski, N., & Wadja, M. (2019). Influencers as support for public relations campaigns. *Marketing of Scientific and Research Organizations*, 31, 131–150. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2478/minib-2019-0016> on November 21, 2024.
- Wolf, K., & Archer, C. (2018). Public relations at the crossroads: The need to reclaim core public relations competencies in digital communication. *Journal of Communication Management*, 22(4), 494-509.

INTERSECTION OF MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.

By

**Obiora Chukwumba, PhD.(ORCID ID: 0009-0002-1021-5104)
+2348095479795**

ochukwumba@gmail.com/chukwumbao@veritas.edu.ngVeritas
University, Abuja.

Obumneme Eze (ORCID 0000-0002-3714-6260)+2348066559952
obumnemeezee@gmail.com/ezee@veritas.edu.ngVeritas University,
Abuja.

Abstract

As media continue to play pivotal role in shaping public perception, their power in polarising or building cohesion in communities take the centre stage. Over time, the trend of media messaging having integrity test deficiencies has become a concern. In effect, the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation in media messaging poses a threat to societal stability. This paper explores the basis and application of media literacy and critical thinking in pushing back integrity deficient messaging in the media. It sets the introduction of five “W”s and “H” to media consumers as a tool to upgrade media literacy and critical thinking as a major objective. It is anchored on two theories: the Critical Media Literacy theory by Douglas Keller and Jeff Share and the Participatory Media theory by Henry Jenkins. The paper utilizes the mixed methods research design, applying quantitative survey and qualitative Focus Group among staff and students of Veritas University, Abuja. From a population of 7354, (Registry, Veritas University, 2024), the Taro Yamane statistical formula was used to get the sample size for the survey. The sampling reflected both stratified and random. Purposive sampling served for the Focus Group. For data collection, the questionnaire instrument was used, applying closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. Data presentation was made in statistical tables. The major findings include: (i) Over 63% of the respondents have not at any time used the five “W”s and “H” as a tool to test the integrity of messaging in media. (ii) Over 69% of the respondents are aware that information of suspect integrity is a regular feature of mainstream legacy media even if they appear not to question it. (iii) An overwhelming 98% of the respondents are not aware of any specific handy tool to test the integrity of message in the media. Recommendations for (i) public awareness campaigns; (ii) identifying community thought leaders to initiate training on five “W”s and “H” as

handy tool to test information integrity in communities; (iii) embedding media literacy in education systems are proposed as a remedy and pathway to critical thinking and community resiliency.

Keywords: media literacy, critical thinking, sustainable, communities.

Introduction

Media has become an inseparable part of daily life, influencing human opinions, beliefs, and behaviours on a global scale. Communities rely on media for information, yet this information is often filtered through biased or manipulative lenses. Scholars have suggested that critical thinking and media literacy potentially offer antidotes to misinformation and disinformation. As digital media continues to shape public discourse, strengthening media literacy and critical thinking remains a crucial endeavour.

Research indicates that misinformation is not merely a result of ignorance but is deeply tied to cognitive biases, political motivations, and digital engagement patterns, (Kahneman, 2012). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Pro-media literacy scholars believe that its adaptation offers the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media in various forms (Potter, 2018). Media literacy enables individuals to critically engage with information and discern misinformation, which directly impacts community sustainability.

On the one hand, critical thinking skills speak to the cognitive ability to objectively analyse and evaluate issues to form reasoned judgments (Paul & Elder, 2019). It fosters informed decision-making, reducing the spread of misinformation and increasing participatory governance in communities. But on the other hand, digital access and media exposure to which individuals have access to influences their ability to develop media literacy and critical thinking (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). In field of learning, particularly the higher levels of education, the process is often linked to stronger critical thinking skills and a greater ability to interpret media content accurately (Facione, 2011). Scholars have contended that community engagement in media initiatives drive the promotion of fact-checking, participatory media, and grassroots journalism can impact media literacy and collective critical thinking (Aufderheide, 1993). The key dependent variables in this study include:(i) Community Resilience and Access to Reliable Information - The level of access to credible media sources influences community resilience. When individuals have media literacy skills, they are more capable of

distinguishing reliable sources, which in turn helps in disaster preparedness and crisis response (Koltay, 2011).

(ii) Informed Decision-Making and Digital Media Exposure - Exposure to diverse media content can either enhance or hinder decision-making. High digital literacy reduces susceptibility to misinformation, leading to better personal and communal decisions (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

(iii) Civic Engagement and Media Platforms - Social media platforms serve as catalysts for civic participation. However, the nature of engagement is dependent on the ability to critically evaluate content, ensuring participation is constructive rather than misinformed (Dahlgren, 2009). (iv) Media Consumption Behaviour and Educational Background - Individuals with higher education levels tend to develop stronger media literacy and critical thinking skills, enabling more discerning consumption of media content (Potter, 2010).

(v) Misinformation Resistance and Algorithmic Influence - The extent to which individuals resist misinformation is influenced by the algorithms governing their online content exposure. Awareness of algorithmic biases aids in mitigating echo chambers and misinformation spread (Pariser, 2011).

(vi) Social Cohesion and Media Representation - Representation of diverse communities in media impacts social cohesion. Critical media literacy allows communities to challenge stereotypes and advocate for inclusive narratives (Silverstone, 2007). (vii) Policy Adoption and Governmental Support - The implementation of media literacy policies is influenced by governmental priorities. Countries that integrate media literacy into educational curricula experience higher levels of civic awareness and participatory governance (Hobbs, 2010).

The relationship between these variables can be considered as catalysts for building sustainable communities. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, especially through digital platforms, poses a significant threat to societal stability. Irrespective of best intentions, wherever the identified elements of cognitive limitations occur in media consumption, can a single tool of reflective personal inquiry expose the defect in information use? This paper seeks to determine if the introduction of the five “W”s and “H” media tool to media consumers solves the literacy and critical thinking gaps observable in media exposure.

Objectives

- (i) To determine if the introduction of five “W”s and “H” to media consumers is able to moderate literacy and critical thinking gaps in media use by communities.
- (ii) To find out if media consumers in university communities are inclined to question the appropriateness of the messages consumed in media.
- (iii) To understand if media consumers in university communities are aware of any tool with which to obtain independent insight on media messages they are exposed to.
- (iv) To make a connection between human inquiry, media access and proliferation of misinformation in communities.

Literature Review

Media is a powerful tool that shapes societal values, identities, and discourses. Hall (1997) emphasizes that media represents and frames issues in ways that influence public perception. This framing, particularly when skewed or biased, can either strengthen or weaken the fabric of communities. With the rise of digital media, information spreads rapidly, making it easier for both factual content and misinformation to circulate, with significant consequences for societal cohesion (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, understanding how media constructs and disseminates narratives is crucial for community resilience.

Media literacy involves understanding how media is produced, analysing the content critically, and recognizing its influence on culture and politics (Kellner & Share, 2019). Critical thinking complements media literacy by empowering individuals to evaluate media content logically, question underlying assumptions, and identify biases or misinformation (Livingstone, 2018). As communities engage with media, these skills become essential in discerning accurate information and resisting media manipulation, thereby fostering informed and cohesive societies.

In an era dominated by digital media, the ability to critically engage with information has become a crucial skill for individuals and communities. Media literacy extends beyond the traditional understanding of evaluating credibility; it involves recognizing the ways in which misinformation, propaganda, and cognitive biases shape public perception and discourse (Hobbs, 2021).

Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship

A growing body of research suggests that media literacy education must evolve to address the complexities of digital misinformation and

propaganda. Hobbs (2021) argues that media literacy programs should aim to equip media consumers to recognize manipulative tactics used in digital propaganda. Similarly, Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) examine how viral misinformation, such as the “Pizzagate” conspiracy during the 2016 U.S. elections, thrives in digital spaces where emotional engagement often outweighs factual accuracy. They contend that misinformation is not merely passively consumed but actively shared due to its sensationalist appeal, underscoring the importance of digital literacy in fostering civic responsibility.

Social Media and the Spread of Misinformation

Research has demonstrated that exposure to untrustworthy online sources is neither accidental nor evenly distributed. Guess et al. (2020) found that 27% of American adults visited at least one unreliable news website during the 2016 election cycle, with older adults being particularly susceptible. Furthermore, Lewandowsky et al. (2017) argue that misinformation thrives in the “post-truth” era, where individuals engage in motivated reasoning—seeking out information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs rather than evaluating facts objectively. They provide case studies on climate change denial and anti-vaccine rhetoric to illustrate how misinformation can be politically or ideologically motivated, reinforcing the urgent need for media literacy programs that counteract cognitive biases.

The Role of Education in Strengthening Media Literacy

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the skills needed to critically analyse media messages. Livingstone et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of integrating media literacy education in schools, particularly in the context of children’s online data privacy. Their study, which involved interviews with children aged 9–16, found that many young users were unaware of how their personal data was being tracked and used for targeted advertising. Buckingham (2019) expands on this argument, criticizing the failure of policymakers to implement comprehensive media literacy programs despite growing concerns over digital misinformation. He asserts that media education should extend beyond “spotting fake news” to encompass critical engagement with entertainment, advertising, and political messaging.

Cognitive Heuristics and Critical Thinking

The human brain often relies on cognitive shortcuts (heuristics) when processing information, leading to susceptibility to misinformation (Metzger & Flanagin, 2021). Their research demonstrates that people tend to trust highly shared or emotionally resonant content without verifying

its accuracy. Kahne and Bowyer (2017) further illustrate this phenomenon by conducting an experiment where students were exposed to politically charged misinformation and asked to fact-check the claims. They found that students with prior media literacy training were more likely to correctly identify false information, reinforcing the importance of equipping individuals with critical thinking skills to resist partisan distortions.

Education systems are responsible for preparing students to become informed citizens who can engage critically with media (Silverblatt, 2015). Incorporating media literacy such as with awareness and understanding of the five “W”s and “H” as a possible tool for decoding media messaging, encourages students to become active participants in information consumption, empowering them to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Studies have shown that curricula that integrate media literacy not only enhance students’ understanding of media but also improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Kellner & Share, 2019).

Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information spread unintentionally, while disinformation involves the deliberate dissemination of false information to deceive (Livingstone, 2018). Media literacy can act as a remedy by providing individuals with the tools to critically assess information sources, distinguish between fact and fiction, and reduce the harmful impacts of such content on communities.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on two theories, namely, the Critical Media Literacy theory whose proponents are Douglas Keller and Jeff Share and the Participatory Media theory whose proponent is Henry Jenkins. The Critical Media Literacy theory extends traditional media literacy by incorporating a critical theory approach, which emphasizes understanding how media messages are constructed, the ideologies they promote, and the power structures that shape them.

The Critical Media Literacy theory encourages the questioning of dominant media narratives and challenges the social and political implications of media representations. It is particularly relevant to fostering critical thinking and resilience in communities, as it highlights the role of media in shaping public consciousness and the need for individuals to become informed media producers, not just passive consumers.

Kellner and Share (2019) argue that CML equips individuals with the

tools to critically assess media content and its societal implications, making it a powerful framework for building resilient communities capable of resisting misinformation and divisive media narratives.

Jenkins (2006), in regards to the Participatory Media theory explores the shift from passive consumption of media to active participation by audiences. This theory is particularly relevant in the digital age, where users create, share, and collaborate on content via social media and other platforms. This participatory engagement is key to building resilient communities, as individuals and groups can create media that reflects their values and challenges dominant, potentially harmful narratives.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts the mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods to explore the relationship between media literacy, critical thinking, and sustainable community development. The rationale for this approach is to triangulate data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and cognitive processing regarding media messages and sustainability issues.

Population and Sampling Strategy

The population of the study is the entire students and staff (academic and non-academic) of Veritas University, Abuja, amounting to 7354. According to Yamane, (1967), the statistical formula for sample size determination:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &1 + N(e)^2 \\
 &= 1 + 7354(0.05)^2 \\
 &= 1 + 7354(0.0025) \\
 &= 1 + 18.385 \\
 &= 19.385 \\
 n &= \frac{7354}{19.385} \\
 n &\approx 379.2 \\
 n &= 379
 \end{aligned}$$

For a population of 7354 with a 5% margin of error, we arrived at a sample size of 379 with regards to the survey method whereas for the Focus Group Discussions we set up 4 focus groups, each with six participants. The study focused on undergraduate, postgraduate students as well as academic staff in the Social Sciences Faculty of Veritas

University, Abuja. This choice is strategic because students and academic staff in the social sciences are likely to have prior exposure to the subjects of this inquiry.

Sampling Technique:

A multi-stage sampling approach was adopted:

- **Stratified Sampling:** The faculty was divided into strata based on the following disciplines, Mass Communication, Economics, History and International Relations, Political Science and Diplomacy.
- **Random Sampling:** From each stratum, students were randomly selected to ensure representation.
- **Purposive Sampling (for Focus Groups):** Students who demonstrate keen interest in media literacy, critical thinking, or sustainability, identified through interactions with course lecturers in the specific Departments were screened and picked for focus group discussions. Lecturers were equally picked purposively from the Departments within the Faculty.

Data Collection Methods

For survey, and quantitative data collection, the questionnaire instrument was used applying closed-ended and Likert-scale questions covering demographics, media consumption patterns, media literacy assessment, awareness of the five “W”s and “H” value of news, critical thinking skills, and sustainability awareness. The questionnaire instrument was administered in person data analysis was by descriptive statistics for frequency distribution, and percentages as well as inferential statistics to examine relationships, as well as regression analysis to test the role of the dependent variables on the independent variable.

Focus Group Discussions

This came handy in order to explore the participants’ deeper perspectives on how media literacy and critical thinking shape their understanding and engagement with sustainability issues. The instrument was the structured discussion guide, with each taking 60 minutes and scoping the following: introduction, media exposure, cognitive processing, community engagement, challenges and recommendations.

Data Analysis: The study adopted the narrative synthesis which is the storytelling method that amplifies and illustrates key insights.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Availability of information of suspect integrity in legacy media

Responses **Frequency**
Percentage %

Highly regular	23	6.07
Regular	201	53.03
Rare	175	46.17
Never	0	0
Total	379	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 2: Availability of information of suspect integrity in online/social media

Responses **Frequency** **Percentage %**

Highly regular	224	59.11
Regular	151	39.84
Rare	4	1.06
Never	0	0
Total	379	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 3: Familiar with handy tools to test information integrity

Responses **Frequency** **Percentage %**

Aware	0	0
Not aware	373	98.42
Have used one	0	0
Doesn't matter	6	1.58
Total	379	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 4: Have you used the five “W”s and “H” as tool to test information integrity before?

Responses **Frequency** **Percentage %**

Yes, I have	0	0
No I have not	242	63.89
Don't know	135	35.64
5”W”s & “H”		
Doesn't matter	2	1.05
Total	379	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024

The data available shows that public view about integrity of information in legacy media (the traditional media which make up print newspapers and magazines, terrestrial and cable televisions, and radio stations) is almost sharply divided between those who question the integrity of information therein and those who associate information in the legacy media with credibility. Whereas 175 respondents, representing over 46% believe that integrity is rare in information delivered from legacy media, 201 respondents, representing over 53% believe that there is regular appearance of information of integrity in legacy media.

Strikingly different view of the social media platforms was recorded regarding the integrity of information released. A total of 224 respondents, representing 59% believe information of integrity in social media platforms is highly regularly unavailable while another 154 respondents, representing 39% believe that the unavailability of information of integrity in social media is a regular feature. This puts the public perception of the integrity-deficient status of social media as concerning.

The foregoing is bad enough, but worsened by the unfolding data from respondents which shows that a whopping 273 respondents, representing over 98% are not aware of any handy tools to test the integrity of information in the media before consuming. By inference, this suggests that amid the growing concerns about proliferation of integrity challenged information in the media, nearly all consumers of media information are not aware of a handy tool to test which information is fit for consumption and which is not.

Another combined 377 respondents, representing over 98% reported they have no idea how the five “W”s and “H” could be used as a tool to check the integrity of information in the media.

Findings

The study made the following findings: (i) Over 63% of the respondents have not at any time used the five “W”s and “H” as a tool to test the integrity of messaging they are exposed to. (ii) A little over 69% of the respondents are aware that information of suspect integrity is a regular feature of mainstream legacy media even if they appear not to question it. (iii) An overwhelming 98% of the respondents are not aware of any specific handy tool to test the integrity of message in the media. (iv) Strikingly, over 63% of the respondents are not aware of five “W”s and “H” while another 35% state that they never used the tool to test the integrity of information they consume in the media. The Focused Group

sessions seem to be somewhat differently nuanced, with participants agreeing that application of critical interrogation of media messaging by consumers can significantly reduce the spread of misinformation in communities. A preponderance of participants also made a connection between deeper understanding of the nature of the media and a likelihood to interrogate messages in the media. Drawing from this reasoning a significant number of the participants accepted that current educational curriculum may be inadequate to promote media literacy and critical thinking at a time that community exposure to media messaging is on the rise.

Conclusion

The exposure of communities to media messages is on a steady rise as digital and mobile technologies continue to shape how people interact with media. Inevitably, for communities, the steady gaps in the test of integrity in media messages shape the realities for individuals and increase the potential vulnerability of communities. There is a consensus that individuals deserve to learn the nature of the media as a way to bolster their cognition, critical thinking and ultimately improve their capacity to interrogate media messages. As a potential tool to advance media literacy and critical thinking among media consumers, the five “W”s and “H” are Media literacy and critical thinking, awareness is low and the set skills to apply it is not readily available.

Recommendations

This study, following the identified findings made the following recommendations:

- (i) That public authorities, particularly the National Orientation Agency and allied public institutions in states should undertake public awareness campaigns on media literacy;
- (ii) That agencies and policy implementers should approach their schedules by identifying community thought-leaders to initiate training on five “W”s and “H” as handy tool to test information integrity in communities;
- (iii) That Education Ministries, agencies should endeavour to embed media literacy in education systems as a remedy and pathway to critical thinking and community resiliency.
- (iv) Governments should prioritize the inclusion of media literacy in national educational standards, ensuring that students from primary to tertiary levels acquire critical media skills.

- (v) Media literacy should be embedded across different subjects, encouraging students to critically engage with media in diverse academic contexts.
- (vi) Educators should be trained in media literacy to effectively teach critical thinking skills and address misinformation in the classroom.
- (vii) Governments and educational institutions should develop digital tools and resources that promote media literacy, ensuring that communities can access and engage with critical media education.

References

- Aufderheide, P. (1993). *Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy*. Aspen Institute.
- Buckingham, D. (2019). *The media education manifesto*. Polity Press.
- Facione, P. A. (2011). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. Insight Assessment.
- Guess, A. M., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 US election. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 472-480. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0833-x>
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- Hobbs, R. (2021). *Mind over media: Propaganda education for a digital age*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2017). Educating for democracy in a partisan age: Confronting the challenges of motivated reasoning and misinformation. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 3-34. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216679817>
- Koltay, T. (2011). The media and the literacies: Media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(2), 211–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710393382>
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the “post-truth” era. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6(4), 353-369.
- Livingstone, S., Stoilova, M., & Nandagiri, R. (2020). Children’s data and privacy online: Growing up in a digital age. *London School of*

- Economics and Political Science*. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/projects/childrens-privacy-online/Childrens-data-and-privacy-online-report.pdf>
- Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people, and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 9(4), 671-696.
- Livingstone, S. (2018). Media literacy, digital literacy, and the Internet. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of media education futures post-15* (pp. 17-29). Routledge.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- Metzger, M. J., & Flanagin, A. J. (2021). Cognitive heuristics and the online misinformation crisis. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 65(4), 523-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2021.1965113>
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the internet is hiding from you*. Penguin.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2019). *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. Pearson.
- Potter, W. J. (2018). *Media Literacy*. SAGE Publications.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9-20.
- Silverblatt, A. (2015). *The essential elements of media literacy education*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Wals, A. E., & Benavot, A. (2017). Can we meet the sustainability challenges? The role of education and lifelong learning. *European Journal of Education*, 52(4), 404-413.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

**INFLUENCE OF INNOVATION AND ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY ON DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNICATION INTERVENTIONS AMONG STUDENTS OF
ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

By

Uchechukwu Jonathan Eze
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Ezeuchej120@gmail.com

+2348062552140

<http://orcid.org/0009-0008-6517-4294>

Chinyere I. Madukwe, Ph.D,
Humanities Unit
School of General Studies, UNN
chinyere.madukwe@unn.edu.ng
08035666097

Abstract

This work looked at influence of innovation and artificial intelligence technology on development communication interventions among students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The research tried to ascertain how these technologies are shaping students' access to and interaction with development communication content, their perception of AI's role in development discourse, and the overall effectiveness of these interventions in fostering meaningful engagement and positive change among them. Diffusion of Innovations was the theory used. The survey research design was employed. The population of the study was made up of all the students of ESUT, while a sample size of 380 was determined, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The sample was picked from the university students aged 18 and 45 years in 200 - 400 levels in five faculties and two departments in each of the faculties in the university, randomly by adopting the multi-stage sampling technique. Findings show among others that, innovative technologies, including social media, and virtual reality, have significantly improved university students' participation in development communication programs. It was recommended that inter alia, development communication providers should leverage on AI and innovative tools to bring more development communication interventions to the doorsteps of university students.

Keywords: innovation, AI, development communication, influence

Introduction

In recent years, innovation and artificial intelligence technology have become central to numerous sectors, including education and communication. As these technologies continue to reshape how information is shared, processed, and understood, their integration into development communication particularly within academic environments has sparked considerable interest. According to Jha and Koshy (2021), among undergraduates, these tools simplify complex developmental messages into digestible formats, thereby fostering better understanding and participation in communication campaigns.

Development communication, which seeks to address social and economic issues through the strategic use of communication, stands to gain significantly from innovations that enable more targeted, interactive, and effective interventions. As stated by McPhail (2009), development communication involves strategic information dissemination aimed at facilitating social change and improving quality of life.

Kumar et al. (2019) described artificial intelligence as an interface for infinite possibilities and information, which may be limited by personalized strategies. Furthermore, Jarrahi (2018) interpreted the word as a collection of tools, tactics, and processes utilized within a work setting to benefit enterprises as well as the people they serve. Among undergraduates in universities, these technologies offer tools that can enhance critical thinking, foster engagement, and facilitate the dissemination of essential information in ways that are accessible and adaptable to diverse audiences.

Empirical evidence from universities in Enugu State highlights the transformative impact of AI-driven communication interventions. In a study by Nnamani et al. (2022), AI-enhanced campaigns on sexual and reproductive health recorded higher participation rates among students compared to traditional methods. Similarly, Ezeagu (2020) noted that mobile applications and gamification significantly improved students' engagement with environmental sustainability initiatives. And Enugu State University of Science and Technology is increasingly incorporating AI-driven tools and innovative technologies into their communication strategies, enabling students and faculties to experience a transformation in the way developmental information is conveyed and understood.

In this context, development communication interventions may include educational campaigns, social awareness programs, and community engagement efforts, all aimed at addressing issues such as health, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic

empowerment. By leveraging AI and innovative technologies, these interventions can achieve greater reach, effectiveness, and impact. On the other hand, despite its potential, the adoption of AI and innovative technologies in development communication faces challenges such as limited digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and ethical concerns. Ekwueme et al. (2023) emphasize the need for capacity building among undergraduates to maximize the benefits of AI tools.

However, the extent to which innovation and AI technology impact undergraduates' understanding and engagement with development communication in Enugu State University of Science and Technology remains largely under-researched. This study focuses on the students in this university, aiming to investigate how exposure to and use of AI technologies influence their engagement with development communication interventions. By examining this relationship, the study seeks to offer insights into the opportunities and challenges presented by these emerging technologies and provide recommendations for optimizing their use in higher education development communication efforts.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, innovation and artificial intelligence have significantly reshaped the environment of development communication. These technologies hold the potential to streamline, personalize, and amplify communication efforts aimed at addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. However, despite their transformative capabilities, there is a limited understanding of how innovation and AI impact development communication interventions among university students, particularly within the Nigerian context. In Enugu State University of Science and technology, AI and innovative technologies could greatly influence students' access to information, engagement with development issues, and involvement in social change initiatives.

The integration of AI-driven tools such as chatbots, predictive analytics, and data-driven content targeting in development communication may shape students' understanding, awareness, and active participation in development programs. However, there are questions regarding how well these technologies are being harnessed, their accessibility to university students, and the degree to which they actually enhance comprehension and engagement. Moreover, the use of such technologies may introduce challenges, such as information overload, potential bias in content delivery, and dependency on AI tools, which may

affect students' critical thinking and ability to assess information critically.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the influence of innovation and artificial intelligence technologies on development communication interventions among these students. Specifically, it will investigate how these technologies are shaping students' access to and interaction with development communication content, their perception of AI's role in development discourse, and the overall effectiveness of these interventions in fostering meaningful engagement and positive change among the university students.

Research questions

1. What is the level of exposure of students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology to development communication interventions?
2. How do students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology perceive the role of AI and innovation in enhancing their understanding of development communication initiatives?
3. What are the development communication interventions that students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology are take part in?

Justification and significance of the study

The fast progress of intelligent machines and innovation-powered technology has fundamentally altered several industries, development communication, inclusive. In the field of education, AI-powered solutions and new communication tactics are critical for improving knowledge transfer, interaction, and learning procedures. However, it is unclear how these tools affect development communication initiatives among students at Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). Given the importance of development communication in raising consciousness, changing behaviour, and promoting prosperity in society, comprehending the function of artificial intelligence and innovation in this setting is critical.

This research sheds light on way students engage with as well as evaluate AI-powered development communication initiatives. It will likewise uncover possible barriers in digital knowledge, availability, and artificial intelligence's ability in communicating developmental messages. In the end, this work will assist administrators, educators, and communication professionals in optimizing the application of artificial intelligence and innovation in development communication, ensuring that digital breakthroughs match with academic and developmental goals.

Literature review

AI in education and communication

AI has revolutionized educational and communication paradigms, offering tools that enhance content creation, delivery, and engagement. According to EdTech Magazine (2022), AI-powered platforms personalize learning experiences, bridging communication gaps between students and instructors.

It is interesting to know that the development of AI has advanced fast in the last few years, resulting in uses across a variety of fields, including healthcare (Xu et al. 2021) and academics (Zawacki-Richter et al. 2019). And, Bengio et al. (2021), noted that artificial intelligence algorithms can be programmed to replicate the way humans think and do everyday tasks with vast volumes of information.

As hinted by Yang, (2022), artificial intelligence's capacity to carry out automated jobs, handle massive amounts of data, and deliver accurate predictions will continue to transform different parts of our everyday existence. During the last few years, university education has seen tremendous infiltration of pervasive technological devices, notably in both academia and research (Yusuf & Tambuwal, 2018). Chan and Hu (2023) in Yusuf et al. 2024, investigated undergraduates' opinions on GenAI in higher institution of learning. Result showed that undergraduates showcase a warm attitude regarding technological innovations such as ChatGPT, embracing their help in scholarly exercises.

Innovative technologies such as social media, mobile applications, and virtual reality have proven to be effective in amplifying development communication interventions. Studies indicate that the use of WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram has significantly increased awareness of campaigns focusing on public health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability (Agwu, 2020). Undergraduates, being active users of these platforms, are exposed to innovative and interactive content that stimulates critical thinking and drives action (Nwafor & Okoro, 2018).

AI Roles in Development Communication

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence and innovative technologies has redefined communication processes, particularly in the context of development communication. As revealed by Vinuesa, et al. (2020), a well-founded public dialogue about AI is key to creating an environment of careful stewardship for the development of AI technologies

AI technologies, including chatbots and natural language processing tools, streamline the design and dissemination of messages targeted at university students. For instance, ChatGPT and similar tools are utilized to provide real-time feedback, answer queries, and personalize engagement in developmental campaigns. Obi and Eze (2021) argue that such tools reduce communication barriers, enabling students to access information in their preferred languages and formats, thereby enhancing inclusivity.

Innovation in development communication

The purpose of innovative communication in development is to foster integration or coherence between the desires of the government and those of the citizens.

(Yanti, Putra & Amaliah, 2024).The term innovation implies something novel, anything that has not existed before and has a significant impact on everyday life or the marketplace (Zerfass & Huck, 2007).Innovation planning should be viewed as an incorporated, collaborative, and adaptive approach that must be systematically designed, monitored and aided by interaction in a very basic fashion (Zerfass & Huck, 2007).

The goal of development projects is to meet the demands of individuals, particularly remote inhabitants. Development coordinators must thus assure the involvement of villagers in the entire aspect of local planning, execution, as well as tracking and assessing of the success of development programs affecting them (FAO, 2006) in (Imoh, 2013).To become productive, development communication must consider all of the variables that define or affect rural communities' lifestyle and working circumstances (Imoh, 2013).

Development entails adjustments in interconnections with the inward tangible, as well as the surrounding socioeconomic and political context rather than being driven by it, a transition from weakness to strength (Imoh, 2013). It focuses on citizens, their emancipation, and self-sufficiency. Its mission is to better the lives of individuals by preserving and enhancing their ideals, viewpoints, and traditions so as to promote fairness, liberty, and long-term growth. This approach, sometimes referred to as the multiplicity model, emphasizes that growth must be particular to the circumstance. Each culture is diverse in its historical, socio-cultural, and economic situations, and no generic framework is

suitable, hence a variety of techniques will have to be adopted, depending on each society's basic circumstances (Yoon, 2003).

Development Communication Interventions

Development communication interventions are strategic communication activities that aim to facilitate social transformation, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable development. These interventions are implemented in a variety of areas, including education, healthcare, farming, management, as well as the preservation of the environment. A few examples of development communication interventions are discussed below.

Behaviour Change Communication

Behaviour change communication is a planned and comprehensive method of communication that combines representation as well as mobilizing of the society to effect and maintain improvements to social standards, viewpoints, information, and habits at various tiers of society, including persons, families, groups, and the national levels (Akuiyibo et al., 2022). BCC has been shown to be a successful strategy for avoiding and lowering the threat of infectious illnesses such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and Covid-19 (Verelst et al., 2016; Purwaningsih et al., 2015).

Behaviour modification is an essential part of health communication and has been used as an intervention tool for a variety of health issues. Persistent illnesses, lung ailments, HIV virus-induced AIDS disease, and animal infections can all be averted by health communication campaigns that efficiently drive beneficial behavioural development (Ngigi & Busolo, 2018). Overall, four key behavioural risk variables add greatly to the increasing hazard of high blood pressure and diabetes amongst individuals. They include lifestyle habits such as tobacco consumption, an improper nutrition and obesity, physical inaction, as well as hazardous alcohol consumption. Understanding of these risk indicators is crucial in facilitating the embracing of beneficial lifestyle behaviours (Akuiyibo et al., 2022).

Behaviour change communication (BCC) has an essential part in healthcare environments as well as healthcare systems in reducing the incidence of both transmissible and nontransmissible illnesses (Nancy & Dongre, 2021). It posits that information creates views, which in return drive conduct. Education solely is insufficient to induce alteration in behaviour since the intended group needs a link to effective preventative

interventions (Park, 2019). According to Koenker et al. (2014), systematically tailoring information and strategies enables BCC to zero in on particular persons, households, or areas in order to optimize the effectiveness of healthcare measures.

Participatory Communication

Participatory development communication is the utilization of the mainstream media as well as conventional and personal means of communication to strengthen societies in their attempt to seek answers to their developmental obstacles and objectives (Ibuot et al. 2021). It is a fundamental procedure for getting parties along for collaboration in the effort of tackling the environmental issues and working to achieve the elevation of a durable social transformation among the people (Kheerajit & Flor, 2013).

As stated by Melkote and Steeves (2001), participatory communication (PC) is people-centred, embraces numerous problems, identifies community needs, involves members of the public, promotes independent thinking, encourages negotiations, provides an environment for both sides of messengers to share ideas, and leads to collaboration. Enhancing the involvement of individuals in decision-making and accountability allows for the distribution of innovative social concepts to large audiences and enhances the interchange of viewpoints across all aspects of society (Zikargae et al., 2022).

Simply put, development projects will be unable to translate to a reform unless there is ongoing, culturally and socially suitable interaction between development agents and clients, as well as within the target population (Servaes, 2008). In basic terms, a conventional means to communication hampered community involvement and engagement. In contrast, the participatory model prioritizes individuals or recipients over the government. The participatory method regards the recipients as vital players in the growth effort (Anani-Bossman & Blankson, 2023).

Risk Communication and Crisis Management

Crisis communication is risk communication geared towards a severe, abrupt threat, like the spread of a lethal illness (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018). People require knowledge in order to arrive at educated judgments and act in manners that will assist them prevent uncertainties and dangers (Fung et al. 2011; Chang, 2012). Overall, the control of natural disasters and public health emergencies consistently involves an essential communication element in the shape of cautions, risk

communications, evacuation alerts and communications about self-esteem, updates on symptoms and healthcare services, as well as so many others (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

The capacity to execute diverse natural hazard preventive measures might be limited by the general population that may be accustomed to anticipating a more suppression oriented–only reaction. As a result, there is the necessity to analyse both the public's reaction to these options and how to successfully convey the need for adaptable safety tactics to individuals in areas under threat (Steelman & McCaffrey, 2013).

This thorough comprehending of risk communication covers both inside interaction within the risk management company or security framework, concentrating on dangers along with safety challenges, as well as external conversation between the company and its third-party participants, like the citizens, regarding risks and dangers (Rabe et al. 2024).

Notwithstanding its relevance and rising organizational attraction, research on emergency risk communication infrastructure, methods, and comprehensive behaviours is scarce (Frost et al. 2019; LeBlanc et al. 2017). Furthermore, regardless of researchers' significant attempts to improve risk communication techniques, the connection between scholarly knowledge and practical implementation is still poor (Rabe et al. 2024).

Social Marketing

In particular, social marketing seeks to improve positive lifestyles and good health among individuals, groups, and societies (Bhat et al., 2019). To become successful, social marketers need to consider themselves to be educators, behavioural scientists, and activists at certain points. The kind of the public health or social issue and the setting in which the public health or social issue occurs should decide the approaches. For instance, if social marketers are worried regarding the broader issues linked to tobacco advertising and usage, they will have to act more than providing programs for quitting smoking which just deal with personal drive. Cigarette-related societal issues would be terminated if nicotine manufacturing and sale are put to a stop (Wymer, 2017).

Social marketing has made significant contributions to addressing health challenges because it seeks to offer benefits by addressing healthcare-related practices as well as accomplishing defined psychological targets for general welfare (Behnampour et al., 2021; Donovan, 2011) (Akbar et al. 2022). Although social marketing is

maturing, tremendous effort and development remains to be done. Constant progression towards advancement can enable social marketers be accepted and appreciated more effectively for their essential abilities, competence, experience, integrity, and selflessness. Complementary measures should be maintained and properly sponsored (Kassirer et al. 2019).

In all, if an infectious substance or deficiency is the main root of a social or public health concern, the government must respond. Government intervention is frequently necessary because huge amounts of resources or novel rules and regulations have to be introduced to solve a public health or social issue (Wymer, 2017). Thus, the field of social marketing continues to encounter obstacles that must be solved in order for it to progress. We argue that certain of these issues should be raised to the position of a risk, implying that if these obstacles are not adequately handled, the profession will not only cease to develop but may experience reverses (Akbar et al. 2021).

Entertainment-Education

The concept of mixing entertainment with education in a style that both captivates and teaches extends back to hundreds of years of storytelling, particularly in cultures where deep oral traditions serve as official as well as unconventional methods for helping children through their socialization stages. Entertainment education has been praised as a powerful and affordable medium for imparting health-related knowledge (Carpena, 2024).

It is a blend of information alongside escape, in every instance referred to as "infotainment", which seeks to boost the effectiveness of beneficial social communications to people using a deliberate setup to leave long-lasting impressions on their minds via the instrumentality of humorous moments and other enjoyment systems, thus enabling the audience analyse information in ways that cannot be done by an obvious outright instructive technique (Nasir et al. 2022).

Several of the Entertainment-education concepts in academia originated from the Western cultures and are founded on research conducted in laboratories detached from the setting within which Entertainment-education initiatives are executed (Wang & Singhal, 2021) in (Frank & Falzone, 2021). Overall, entertainment-education is growing and is embracing a variety of fresh possibilities, which includes intriguing electronic mediums and multimedia (Frank & Falzone, 2021).

Theoretical framework

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Propounded by Everett Rogers, this theory explains how innovations are adopted and spread within a social system. It highlights factors influencing adoption, including perceived advantages, compatibility with existing values, simplicity, trialability, and observable results.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory is useful for examining how AI and innovative communication technologies are accepted and utilized by university students. It helps to understand the rate of adoption, barriers to acceptance, and the characteristics of students who adopt these technologies for accessing development communication interventions.

Methodology

This work adopted the survey research design. A survey can be said to be the research design where views of respondents are elicited to generate data that provide solutions to a set of research problems. Thus, Survey was utilized in this research because it was employed to gather data regarding the views of university students on Influence of innovation and artificial intelligence technology on development communication interventions among students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology

The population of this work was made up of all the students in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). An official figure from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu placed the population at 28,000.

The sample size of 380 was determined, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It is essential to determine a sample size since it was impractical to investigate every component of the population for this study. The sample was picked from the university students aged 18 and 45 years in 200 - 400 levels in five faculties and two departments in each of the faculties in the university in question, randomly by adopting the multi-stage sampling technique. The five Faculties were: Social Sciences, Engineering, Education, Management Sciences and Environmental Science.

Under the faculty of Social Sciences, departments of Political Science and Economics were selected. In the faculty of Engineering, Computer and Chemical Engineering departments were chosen. Also, in the faculty of Education, the departments of Business Education and Education Management were selected. Furthermore, in the faculty of

Management Sciences, the departments of Mass Communication and Public Administration were picked. Lastly, in the faculty of Environmental Science, the departments of Urban and Regional Planning and Building Technology were chosen. Two of the departments in the five faculties selected, had 38 respondents, making it a total of 380 sample size.

The research instrument for this study was the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of mean and tables with percentage was employed to analyse the research questions. A four-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with assigned values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively were also adopted for ease of statistical analysis. Thus, the benchmark for the study was, 2.5.

Research question one: What is the level of exposure of students in Enugu State university of Science and Technology to AI and innovative technologies in development communication interventions?

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	RATING
1	Fully exposed	301	53	26	-	3.7	Accepted
2	Exposed	199	83	65	33	3.1	Accepted
3	Undecided	42	52	175	111	2.1	Rejected
4	Unexposed	12	32	148	188	1.7	Rejected
5	largely unexposed	8	12	158	202	1.5	Rejected

Research question two: How do students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology perceive the role of AI and innovation in enhancing their understanding of development communication initiatives?

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	RATING
1	AI tools, such as chatbots and personalised recommendation systems, aid my understanding and reception of	318	42	11	9	3.8	Accepted

	development communication messages.						
2	I utilise innovative technologies like social media platforms, virtual reality, and mobile applications to engage in development communication.	201	148	19	12	3.4	Accepted
3	Inadequate digital literacy, lack of trust in AI and lack of technological infrastructure limit undergraduates' engagement with development communication.	189	141	32	18	3.3	Accepted

4	Undergraduates who are exposed to AI-driven interventions have higher level of engagement with development communication than those who utilise the tradition communication approaches.	123	102	71	84	2.7	Accepted
---	---	-----	-----	----	----	-----	----------

Research question three: What are the development communication interventions that students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology take part in?

ITEM STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	RATING
Road safety campaigns	192	174	14	-	3.4	Accepted
Outreach programs on HIV/AIDS	208	163	9	-	3.5	Accepted
Awareness programs on contraception	196	121	40	23	3.2	Accepted
Anti-smoking campaigns	188	156	36		3.4	Accepted

Discussion of findings

The table one above with the research question: What is the level of exposure of students in Enugu State university of Science and Technology to AI and innovative technologies in development

communication interventions, shows that these students are indeed well exposed to AI and innovative technologies as it concerns development communication interventions. This finding is in line with that of Nnamani et al. (2022), which in a study, revealed that Ai-driven program on sexual and reproductive health witnessed higher participation rates among students compared to traditional methods. In the same vein, Ezeagu (2020), hinted that mobile applications and gamification significantly improved students' engagement with environmental sustainability initiatives.

Results in table two above, show that AI and innovation improve the understanding of development communication initiatives of the respondents. Corroborating this finding, Jha and Koshy (2021), assert that among undergraduates, these tools simplify complex developmental messages into digestible formats, thereby fostering better understanding and participation in communication campaigns.

The findings in table number three, show that the respondents do take part in development communication interventions. Supporting these findings, Nnamani et al. (2022), in an investigation, reported that a campaign on sexual and reproductive health, recorded a higher turnout of university students.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

AI-driven tools, such as chatbots and adaptive learning platforms, have increased accessibility to development communication content, enabling students to interact with personalized and contextually relevant messages.

Innovative technologies, including social media, and virtual reality, have significantly improved university students' participation in development communication programs.

University students do take part in development communication programs.

Recommendations

1. Universities should invest in digital literacy programs to equip students with the skills needed to effectively engage with AI and innovative technologies.
2. Improved technological infrastructure, such as reliable internet and access to digital devices, is essential to support the adoption of AI-driven interventions.

3. Development communication providers should leverage on AI and innovative tools to bring more development communication interventions to the doorsteps of university students.

References

- Agwu, F. (2020). Social media and development communication: Impacts and prospects. *Journal of Communication Research*, 12(4), 45-56.
- Akbar, M. B., Foote, L., Lawson, A., French, J., Deshpande, S., & Lee, N. R. (2021). The social marketing paradox: challenges and opportunities for the discipline. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*. 19:367–389. doi.org/10.1007/s12208-021-00308-0
- Akbar, M. B., Garnelo-Gomez, I., Ndupu, L., Barnes, E., & Foster, C. (2022). An analysis of social marketing practice: Factors associated with success. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 39:4, 356-376, DOI: 10.1080/07359683.2021.1997525
- Akuiyibo, S., Anyanti, J., Amoo, B., Aizobu, D., & Idogho, O. (2022). Effects of behaviour change communication on hypertension and diabetes related knowledge, attitude and practices in Imo and Kaduna States: a quasi-experimental study. *BMC Public Health* 22:715 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13139-3>
- Anani-Bossman, A., & Blankson, I. A. (2023). Participatory communication for sustainable development: A study of the access project in Ghana. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-41401-5_3
- Behnampour, M., Shams, M., Hassanzadeh, R., GhaffarianShirazi, H., Naderi, H., & Kariminejad, Z. (2021). Using social marketing to persuade Iranians to donate blood. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07359683.2021.1940786>
- Bengio, Y.; Lecun, Y.; & Hinton, G. (2021). Deep learning for AI. *Commun. ACM*, 64, 58–65. [CrossRef]
- Bhat, S. A., Darzi, M. A., & Hakim, I. A. (2019). Understanding social marketing and wellbeing: A review of selective databases. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers*, 44(2), 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090919861010>
- Carpene, F. (2024). Entertainment-Education for better health: Insights from a field experiment in India. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 60:5, 745-762, DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2024.2312832
- Chan, C. K. Y., & Hu, W. (2023). Students' voices on generative AI: Perceptions, benefits, and challenges in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00411-8>
- Chang, C. (2012). News coverage of health-related issues and its impacts on perceptions: Taiwan as an example. *Health Commun.* 27:111–23.

- Donovan, R. (2011). Social marketing's mythunderstandings. *Journal of Social Marketing*, 1(1), 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20426761111104392>
- EdTech Magazine. (2022). *AI in education: Personalizing learning and communication.* Retrieved from [edtechmagazine.com] (<https://www.edtechmagazine.com>).
- Ekwueme, C., Okoro, J., & Nwankwo, P. (2023). *Challenges in adopting AI for development communication in Nigeria.* *African Journal of Technology Studies*, 8(1), 22-34.
- Ezeagu, O. (2020). *Innovative technology for environmental sustainability campaigns.* *African Communication Review*, 6(4), 78-91.
- FAO, (2006). *Communication for Rural Development in Mexico*, at <http://www.fao.org/docreps>.
- Frank, L. B. & Falzone, P. (2021). *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63614-2>
- Frost, M., Li, R. C., Moolenaar, R., & Xie, R. Q. (2019). Progress in public health risk communication in China: Lessons learnt from SARS to H7N9. *BMC Public Health*. 19(Suppl 3):475.
- Fung, T. K., Namkoong, K., & Brossard, D. (2011). Media, social proximity, and risk: a comparative analysis of newspaper coverage of avian flu in Hong Kong and in the United States. *J Health Commun*. 16:889–907.
- Ibuot, U. P., Majemu, S. A., & Nwantah, F. (2021). Participatory development communication: An audience-Centered initiative. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*. DOI No.: 10.24940/theijhss/2021/v9/i6/HS2106-030
- Imoh, G. O. (2013). Application of development communication in Africa's rural development- need for a paradigm shift. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol.1, No.4, pp.15-33.
- Jarrahi, M.H. (2018). Artificial intelligence and the future of work: Human-AI symbiosis in organizational decision making. *Bus. Horizons*, 61, 577–586. [CrossRef]
- Jha, S., & Koshy, V. (2021). *AI in education: Bridging communication gaps.* *International Journal of Education and Development*, 17(2), 89-102.
- Kassirer, J., Lefebvre, C., Morgan, W., Russell-Bennett, R., Gordon, R., French, J., Suggs, L. S., Lee, N., & Biroscak, B. J. (2019). Social Marketing Comes of Age: A Brief History of the Community of Practice, Profession, and Related Associations, With Recommendations for Future Growth. *Social Marketing Quarterly*. DOI: 10.1177/1524500419866206
- Kheerajit, C. & Flor, A. G. (2013). Participatory development communication for natural resources management in Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. Report of the 13th International Educational Technology Conference. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences* 103, 703 – 709.

- Koenker, H., Keating, J., Alilio, M., Acosta, A., Lynch, M., & Nafu-Traore, F. (2014). Strategic roles for behaviour change communication in a changing malaria landscape. *Malaria Journal* 13:1. Doi: 10.1186/1475-2875-13-1
- Kumar, V.; Rajan, B.; Venkatesan, R.; & Lecinski, J. (2019). Understanding the role of artificial intelligence in personalized engagement marketing. *Calif. Manag. Rev.* 61, 135–155. [CrossRef]
- LeBlanc, T. T., Kosmos, C., & Avchen, R. N. (2017). Evolution of public health emergency management from preparedness to response and recovery: Introduction and contents of the volume. *Am J Public Health.* 107(S2):S118–S9
- Lundgren, E. R., & McMakin, A. H. (2018). *Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks: 6th Edition.*
- McPhail, T. L. (2009). *Development communication: Reframing the role of the media.* Wiley-Blackwell.
- Melkote, S. R., & Steeves, H. L. (2001.) *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and practice for Empowerment.* SAGE Publication, New Delhi
- Nancy, S., & Dongre, A. R. (2021). Behaviour change communication: Past, present, and future. *Indian J Community Med.* 46:186-90. DOI: 10.4103/ijcm.IJCM_441_20
- Nasir, T. O., Oladeji, F. O., & Akinboye, A. J. (2022). Education through Entertainment in Contemporary African Society: An Examination of Wale Adenuga’s “Super Story” in Select Divisions of Ibadan, Nigeria”. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies.* doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v10n.1p.231
- Ngigi, S., & Busolo, D. N. (2018). Behaviour change communication in health promotion: Appropriate practices and promising approaches. *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development* DOI No. : 10.24940/ijird/2018/v7/i9/SEP18027.
- Nnamani, A., Okafor, K., & Anike, G. (2022). AI-enhanced health communication campaigns among Nigerian undergraduates. *Journal of Development Studies,* 14(3), 112-127.
- Nwafor, C., & Okoro, E. (2018). Youth engagement in development communication through social media. *Nigerian Journal of Media Studies,* 10(2), 56-70.
- Obi, P., & Eze, M. (2021). Artificial intelligence in development communication: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Emerging Technologies,* 9(1), 33-46.
- Onuekwe, C. E. (2015). Entertainment-Education and behaviour change: An exposition of theories and models applied in a study on impact assessment of a polio documentary film in northern Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Research,* Vol. 7, No. 1, 199 – 217

- Park, K. (2019). *Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine*. 25th ed. Jabalpur: Banarasidas Bhanot.
- Purwaningsih, P., Quraniati, N., & Efendi F. (2015). The effectiveness of behavioural change communication (BCC) program to change HIV/AIDS related behaviours on construction workers. *Int J Med Sci Public Heal*. 4(12):1661. <https://doi.org/10.5455/ijmsph.2015.01042015338>.
- Rabe, L., Sataøen, H. L., Lidskog, R., & Eriksson. M. (2024). Making risk communication in practice: dimensions of professional logics in risk and vulnerability assessments, *Journal of Risk Research*, 27:3, 389-403, DOI: 10.1080/13669877.2024.2328199
- Reynolds, B., & Seeger, M. W. (2005). Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model. *Journal of Health Communication*, 10:43–55. DOI: 10.1080/10810730590904571
- Servaes, J. (2008). *Communication for development and social change*. Delhi.
- Steelman, T. A., & McCaffrey, S. (2013). Best practices in risk and crisis communication: Implications for natural hazards management. *Journal of the International Society for the Prevention and Mitigation of Natural Hazards*. DOI 10.1007/s11069-012-0386-z
- Verelst, F., Willem, L., & Beutels, P. (2016). Behavioural change models for infectious disease transmission: a systematic review (2010–2015). *J R Soc Interface*. 13((25):20160820. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2016.0820>.
- Wang, H., & Singhal, A. (2021). Mind the gap! Confronting the challenges of translational communication research in entertainment-education. In L. B. Frank & P. Falzone (Eds.), *Entertainment-education behind the scenes: Case studies for theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wymer, W. (2017). Social marketing strategy and industry involvement. *Journal of Social Marketing*, 7(3), 297-304. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-11-2016-0074>
- Xu, L.; Sanders, L.; Li, K.; & Chow, J.C.L. (2021). Chatbot for health care and oncology applications using artificial intelligence and machine learning: Systematic review. *JMIR Cancer* 7, e27850. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Yang, W. (2022). Artificial intelligence education for young children: Why, what, and how in curriculum design and implementation. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 3, 100061. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100061>
- Yanti, F., Putra, A. E., & Amaliah, E. (2024). Innovation communication in local potential development Coffee Village in Lampung Province. In *The First Annual International Conference on Social, Literacy, Art, History, Library, and Information Science*, KnE Social Sciences, pages 1–17. DOI 10.18502/kss.v9i12.15808
- Yoon, C. (2003). *The Age of Information in Involving People, Evolving Behaviour*. New York: UNICEF Publication.

- Yusuf, A.; Pervin, N.; & Román-González, M. (2024). Generative AI and the future of higher education: A threat to academic integrity or reformation? Evidence from multicultural perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00453-6>
- Yusuf, A.; Pervin, N.; & Román-González, M. (2024). Generative AI and the future of higher education: A threat to academic integrity or reformation? Evidence from multicultural perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00453-6>
- Zawacki-Richter, O.; Marín, V.I.; Bond, M.; & Gouverneur, F. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education—Where are the educators? *Int. J. Educ. Technol. High. Educ.* 16, 39. [CrossRef]
- Zerfass, A. & Huck, S. (2007). Innovation, communication, and leadership: New developments in strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. DOI: 10.1080/15531180701298908
- Zikargae, H. M., Woldearegay, A. G., & Skjerdal, T. (2022). Empowering rural society through non- formal education: An empirical study of environment and forest development community projects in Ethiopia. *Heliyon* 8(3):1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09127>

ROLE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN IBAJI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE

Attah Udeh Samuel

No 7B University Market Road, Nsukka, Enugu State.

Email: attahsamuel021@gmail.com

Phone No: 09062158923

Abstract

Effective communication is the backbone of an entrepreneurs for a successful business operation there by promoting economic growth and development. Strategic communication is what keeps things moving forward smoothly for entrepreneurial success. The study examines the impact of effective communication on economic growth and development in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State, with a focus on empowering entrepreneurs. The correlation between entrepreneurial success and economic growth and development is a nonnegotiable. However, effective communication strategies is a must requirement for entrepreneurial success. The research aims to investigate the relationship between communication strategies and entrepreneurial success, as well as the role of communication in fostering economic development. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining surveys, interviews, and focus groups with entrepreneurs and stakeholders in the area. The findings shall also reveal the effective communication strategies and its impact on entrepreneurial success, and economic growth and development. From the findings, the study recommends that, there is a need to develop a comprehensive Communication Strategy for Entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area in order to enhance their business growth. Secondly Entrepreneurs should invest in communication skills training to improve their ability to effectively communicate with stakeholders. Finally, implementation of policy interventions should be made to support entrepreneurship, such as tax incentives, grants and access to finance.

Key words: Entrepreneurs, Empowering, Communication, Strategies, Economic Growth and Economic Development.

Introduction

The correlation between entrepreneurial success and economic growth and development is a nonnegotiable. However, effective

communication strategies is a must requirement for entrepreneurial success. Effective communication serves as the driving force behind economic transformation, bridging gaps and unlocking new opportunities. It fosters collaboration among key stakeholders, facilitates informed decision-making, and amplifies the voices of marginalized communities. Our communication initiatives span advocacy campaigns, innovation, sustainable tourism, and economic development, aiming to raise awareness about critical socio-economic issues and propel progress toward sustainable development goals. By harnessing a range of communication strategies, we strive to inspire behavioral change, disseminate vital information, engage stakeholders, and cultivate constructive dialogue."

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development (Śledzik, 2013). It refers to "a dynamic process whereby an individual called "entrepreneur" or a group of individuals either explores or establishes and operates business opportunities in order to produce additional products and deliver new services to the market" (Auschra et al., 2019). In essence, it is disruptive, as it requires a high innovation level and intervenes at a high risk-taking level to build new business models that reshape what was once the dominant model, this is what Schumpeter (1935) described as "creative destruction". This latter is an evolutionary process within capitalism that "revolutionizes the economic structure from within, constantly destroying the old, constantly creating the new" (Moloi and Marwala, 2020, p.01).

Entrepreneurial empowerment is essential not only to shape the mindsets of people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are central to developing an entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurship provides individuals motivation, knowledge and skills necessary for launching a successful venture company (Cho, 2018).

"Community development empowers communities to reach their full potential through effective communication. This enables collaborative effort, engaging citizens, especially marginalized groups, in development initiatives. Communication facilitates collective change, shifting focus from individual to community-centered participation and equity.

In rural development, communication involves exchanging information, knowledge, and skills through various channels (radio, print media, telephones, internet) to improve livelihoods. The goal is to promote participation, mobilization, decision-making, awareness, knowledge sharing, and behavior change.

Statement of Problem

Effective communication is the backbone of an entrepreneurs for a successful business operation there by promoting economic growth and development. Strategic communication is what keeps things moving forward smoothly for an entrepreneurial success (Munteanu and Maciuga 2021). This kind of communication serves as the foundation that holds teams, shareholders, and customers together, ensuring that everyone works towards common objectives (Markovic and Salamzadeh 2018).

Despite the critical role of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and development, entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State face significant challenges in communicating their needs, accessing information, and navigating institutional environments. The prevalence of inadequate communication strategies, limited access to information and communication technology (ICT), and poor networking opportunities hinder the potential for entrepreneurial growth and economic development in the region. It is against this backdrop that this study is conceptualized to examine the impact of effective communication on economic growth and development in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State, with a focus on empowering entrepreneurs in the study area to bridge the gap in existing literature.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this research work is to examine the roles of effective communication on economic growth and development in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State with a focus on empowering entrepreneurs.

The specific objectives are to;

1. Examine the roles of effective communication on entrepreneurial growth in Ibaji Local Government Area
2. Examine how communication strategies can enhance economic development in Ibaji Local Government Area
3. Assesses the current state and challenges of entrepreneurship in Ibaji Local Government Area?

Significance of the Study

Belows are some of the significance aspect of the study;

- The key significance of the study is to improved communication strategies among entrepreneurs in Ibaaji Local area of Kogi Stata and Nigeria as a whole. It provides insights for entrepreneurs to

develop effective communication strategies, enhancing their business operations and relationships with stakeholders.

- The study aims to promote Economic Growth and Development by enhancing entrepreneurial success thereby contributes to the economic growth and development of Ibaji Local Government Area as well as Nigeria at large.
- Empowering Entrepreneurs with the necessary knowledge and skills for effective communication, thereby promoting entrepreneurial success and well-being.
- Contribution to Communication Theory: The study also contributes to the deep understanding of effective communication in business contexts and advancing communication theory and research.

Literature Review

Communication, the bedrock of business, is the most indispensable of all entrepreneurial skills. An entrepreneur's ability to transmit information helps both clients and customers feel they can communicate with and ultimately trust in the business. Communication is more important today than in previous years partly because the business and market conditions are more complex. The development of an effective communication strategy and its implementation can provide a number of benefits to an entrepreneurs and its business, such as keeping customers motivated and engaged, and sharing clear, consistent messages with customers in a timely manner that in turn help with business productivity (Charles, 1998).

Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a vital component of any economy, contributing significantly to job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction, and income generation for governments and individuals (Dickson, Solomon, & Weaver, 2008). Its importance to economic growth and development cannot be overstated (Keister, 2005). Entrepreneurship is a key source of employment generation, with entrepreneurial activities having a positive impact on national economies and the quality of life for citizens (Adejumo, 2001).

Entrepreneurship encompasses more than just starting a business. It involves a process of identifying opportunities, allocating resources, and creating value by addressing unmet needs or capitalizing on opportunities for change (Ayandike, Emeh, &Ukah, 2012). At its core,

entrepreneurship is about innovation, transformation, and the creation of economic goods and services.

The Concept of Empowerment

Kabeer (2001) explained empowerment as the expansion in people's capacity to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. The position of Malhotra, Venneman & Kishor (1995) concurs with the definition by emphasizing that the definition highlights a transition from relieve powerlessness to a greater equity in the exercise of power and as such differentiate "empowerment" from the general concept of "power" as espoused by dominant individuals or groups. They argue further that to be considered empowered, youth themselves must be significant actors in the process of change. That is, youth must engage in agency. For example health and development strategies may support or enable youth's empowerment but they cannot provide empowerment as if they were health services or commodities themselves.

The concept of Effective communication

The word Effective means perfect or very well or the best Effective communication is the process of exchanging information, thoughts, and emotions in a way that ensures the message is clearly understood and received. It involves both speaking and listening, and it's about more than just conveying information.

According to (Berlo, 1960; Shannon & Weaver, 1949), effective communication is the process of sending exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, opinions, and messages between individuals, groups, or organizations in a clear, concise, and understandable manner. It involves the transmission, reception, and interpretation of information, as well as the exchange of feedback to ensure mutual understanding (Beebe & Masterson, 2012).

Relationship between effective communication and economic growth and development:

Numerous studies demonstrate the positive relationship between effective communication and economic growth and development:

1. Improved Business Performance: Effective communication enhances business performance, leading to increased productivity, profitability, and competitiveness (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000).

2. Increased Foreign Investment: Countries with effective communication infrastructure attract more foreign investment, stimulating economic growth

3. Better Governance: Effective communication promotes transparency, accountability, and good governance, essential for economic development (Kaufmann et al., 2009; Transparency International, 2020).

4. Enhanced Innovation: Communication facilitates the exchange of ideas, driving innovation and economic growth

Effective communication contributes to economic growth and development through several mechanisms

1. **Information Dissemination:** Communication facilitates the dissemination of information, reducing information asymmetry and promoting informed decision-making

2. **Network Effects:** according to Granovetter, (1973), Communication enables the creation of networks, fostering collaboration, cooperation, and economic growth.

3. **Trust and Cooperation:** Effective communication builds trust and cooperation among stakeholders, essential for economic development

4. **Institutional Development:** Communication influences institutional development, promoting the creation of effective institutions that support economic growth (North, 1990; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

"The Relationship Between Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth

Entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a vital driver of economic growth and development. Over the past three decades, countries that experienced significant poverty reduction have also seen a remarkable resurgence in entrepreneurial activity (Naude, 2013). The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a renewed focus on supply-side economics, small firms, and entrepreneurship due to stagflation and high unemployment.

To understand the link between entrepreneurship and economic growth, it's essential to decompose the concept of entrepreneurship (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). Having examined entrepreneurship, economic growth, and economic development individually, we can now explore their interconnectedness.

The positive relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth, first proposed by Schumpeter, is well-established. An increase in entrepreneurs leads to increased economic growth, driven by their innovative activities and skills. Schumpeter identified five cases of innovative activity:

1. Introducing new or unfamiliar goods or quality.

2. Implementing new, untested production methods.
3. Discovering new markets or expanding existing ones.
4. Developing new sources of supply.
5. Creating new organizational structures or management practices.

Importance of Communication Strategies for entrepreneurial Development in Ibaji Local Government of Kogi State.

Effective communication plays a vital role in the development of entrepreneurial rural communities Ibaji local government area of Kogi state. It provides a platform for community members to voice their concerns, express their needs, and actively participate in decision-making processes. Through effective communication, rural communities can bridge the gap between themselves and different stakeholders, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses, allowing them to convey their perspectives and realities. By encouraging dialogue, effective communication fosters understanding, empathy, and cooperation among community members and stakeholders. It establishes an environment where diverse opinions are welcomed and respected, leading to inclusive decision-making processes. As a result, rural communities can have a say in matters that directly affect their lives, such as infrastructure development, resource management, and social policies.

Effective communication is essential for rural development. It facilitates knowledge sharing within and outside rural communities, empowers marginalized groups, and enhances the capacity of communities to identify and address their own development priorities (Field, 2005).

Knowledge sharing: Effective communication enables the exchange of local knowledge, culture, and practices, while also providing opportunities for accessing external expertise and information. This exchange of knowledge empowers rural communities to address their challenges and develop innovative solutions.

Empowerment: Communication strategies play a crucial role in transforming social dynamics within rural communities. By promoting engagement and active participation, they empower marginalized entrepreneurs and indigenous communities, to have a voice in decision-making processes. This empowerment leads to a more democratic, inclusive, and equitable society. Additionally, communication strategies foster social cohesion, strengthen community networks, and build trust among community members.

Capacity building: Effective communication enhances the capacity of rural communities to identify and address their own development

priorities. By providing opportunities for reflection, learning, and interaction, communication strategies enable communities to identify their needs, challenges, and available resources. They also facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and success stories, inspiring communities to implement similar initiatives and adapt them to their specific contexts.

Communication Challenges in Rural Nigeria

According to Adediran, Opadiji, Faruk, and Bello (2017), effective communication is vital for human interaction. However, in rural area in Nigeria like Ibaji Local Government Are, communication can be difficult because of various factors like inadequate infrastructure, cultural disparities, and low levels of literacy. These obstacles can impede the progress of rural entrepreneurs, invariably affecting economic growth and development in the same study zone.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies demonstrate the positive relationship between communication and entrepreneurial success. Conceptual frameworks linking communication to entrepreneurship emphasize the role of communication in accessing resources, building networks, and navigating institutional environments.

Mukelabai & Jackson (2021) studied the effects of effective communications on organizational performance using the systems theory. A quantitative approach was used to describe and analyse data collected for the study from 88 respondents. A questionnaire was used to identify factors affecting effective communication based on systems theory. Descriptive analysis and Pearson's correlation were used to analyse the results. The results for H_1 showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.642 which is statistically insignificant if the (sig. 2-tailed) < 0.05 indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between management and channel of communication used. However, the results from H_2 indicated that there was a relationship between channel of communication used and effective communication with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.041 at (sig. 2-tailed) < 0.05 . Lastly the correlation results from H_3 showed that effective communication has a positive effect on organizational performance.

Alobele, (2023) studied Communication Strategies for Enhancing Community Development and Participation in Rural Communities in Nigeria. The study focuses on the importance of employing effective

communication strategies to enhance community development and participation in rural areas of Nigeria. Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Social Capital Theory were discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of communication strategies for community development. The research methodology employed in the study involves an extensive review of relevant literature sources, utilizing a synthetic analysis approach to identify patterns, themes, and key findings. The study proposes a number of communication strategies including participatory communication, integrated communication platforms, and capacity building in order to overcome these challenges. The findings highlight the importance of effective communication in bridging the gap between rural communities and stakeholders, promoting understanding and cooperation, and enabling inclusive decision-making processes.

Nweze (2019) examined the Role of Development Communication in the Development of Nigeria's Economy using historical method. Findings made from historical survey and analysis shows that development communication has been playing many roles toward development of Nigeria's economy. In view of this, it is recommended among others that Nigeria government should give financial supports to Nigerian mass media institution to enable it get better equipped for development communication in the interest of economic development in Nigeria.

Princi (2024) examines the Role of Effective Communication in the Growth and Development of Business Activities. The author noted that: in the realm of marketing and customer relations, effective communication is paramount. A well-crafted communication strategy sets businesses apart, attracts customers, and builds brand loyalty. Fast, efficient communication tools in today's digital age fuel growth by enabling rapid decision-making, problem-solving, and seamless collaboration across geographically dispersed teams. He concluded that, effective communication is a critical driver of business growth, transcending its traditional role as a support function to become a strategic necessity. By cultivating understanding, trust, innovation, and efficiency, robust communication underpins organizational success.

Theoretical Framework

The theory suit for this work is **The Shannon-Weaver model**. Communication theories, such as the Shannon-Weaver Model, highlight the importance of effective communication in business. The **Shannon-Weaver model** is one of the first and most influential models of communication. It was initially published in the 1948 paper "A

Mathematical Theory of Communication" and explains communication in terms of six basic components. The Shannon-Weaver model is based on the idea that communication is a linear and one-way process that involves six elements: a source, a transmitter, a channel, a receiver, a destination, and noise. The source is the person or entity that has a message to communicate. The transmitter is the device or medium that encodes the message into a signal that can travel through the channel. The channel is the path or medium that carries the signal from the transmitter to the receiver. The receiver is the device or medium that decodes the signal back into a message that can be understood by the destination. The destination is the person or entity that receives and interprets the message. Noise is any interference or distortion that affects the quality or clarity of the signal or message. In my word, the noise here refers to as externality that may likely affect the quality of message from the source to the receiver. The Shannon–Weaver model is graphically illustrated in figure 1 bellow.

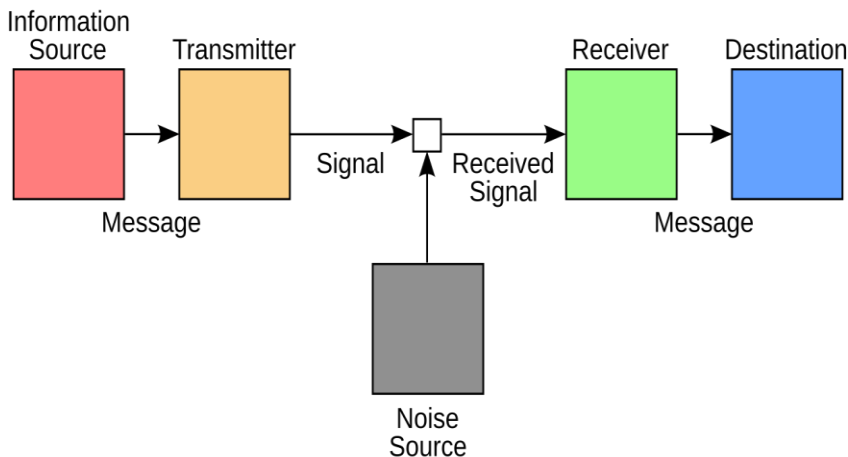


Fig. 1: The Shannon–Weaver model
Sources: google

Justification

The Shannon-Weaver model has several advantages for communications planning. First, it provides a simple and clear way to identify and analyze the key components and factors of any communication process. It helps to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the sender (the entrepreneur) and the receiver (the audience or customers), and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the transmission and reception of the message. Second, it helps to identify and reduce the sources and types of noise that can

affect communication, such as physical, semantic, psychological, or cultural noise. It also helps to choose the most appropriate and reliable channel and medium for delivering the message, depending on the context and purpose of communication. Third, it can be applied to various forms and levels of communication, such as interpersonal, group, organizational, mass, or digital communication. It can also be adapted and modified to suit different situations and scenarios, such as crisis communication, public relations, marketing, or education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining survey research with case studies.

The study used a survey research design. According to Check & Schu (2012), survey research is "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions". This type of research design allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation.

The study was conducted in Ibaji Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State with headquarters at Onyedega. Ibaji LGA is located between latitude 7° 00' - 8° 50' N and longitude 7° 30' - 8° 00' E. It has ten council wards with an estimated population of 127,572 people comprising 64,423 males and 63,149 females (NPC, 2006).

The council wards are grouped into three districts; Onyedega, Unale and Ujeh. The land is a very fertile flood plain, suitable for agriculture and fishing. Most Ibaji people are entrepreneurs and they also produce rice, yam and cassava in large quantities. National Population Commission (NPC), Nigerian population census 2006 analysis, 2006.

The population of the study comprises the entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State. According to Churchill & Brown (2007), population refers to all the individuals or objects that meet certain requirements for membership in the overall group. Those who qualify are then referred to as the population elements. Cooper & Schindler (2003) also noted that, a population is the total collection of elements about which we wish to make inferences. The population that would be considered for this study includes entrepreneurs from Ibaji Local Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

The study employed multi-stage sampling technique to randomly and proportionately select entrepreneurs engaged in production, food & beverages making, agriculture (farming, poultry, rice and yam) and trading (produce marketing) in Ibaji.

Five (5) wards would be randomly selected out of the existing ten wards (10) in the study area. These wards include; Analo, Odeke, Ejule, Akpanyo And Onyedga ward. These wards are selected due to large number of entrepreneurs in the study area. Simple random technique was used to randomly select a total sample size of 500 entrepreneurs from the study zone

Multi-Stage Sampling Technique

To select a representative sample from Ibaji Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State, this study employed a multi-stage sampling technique.

Stage 1: Cluster Sampling

Ibaji LGA into 10 clusters (corresponding to the 10 council wards) and Randomly select 5 clusters (wards) using simple random sampling (SRS)

Stage 2: Stratified Sampling

- Within each selected cluster (ward), stratify the population into two strata:

1. Males (64,423)
2. Females (63,149)

- Allocate sample size proportionally to each stratum

Stage 3: Systematic Random Sampling

Within each stratum, use systematic random sampling to select participants from every 10th household/business/entrepreneur

Sample Size Determination

- Estimated population: 127,572
- Desired precision: 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error
- Sample size calculator or formula (e.g., Cochran's formula) yields a sample size of 384

Table 1: Sample Distribution

s/n	Selected wards from the study area (Ibaji LGA)	Sample size for the study
1	ANALO	50
2	ODEKE	100
2	EJULE	74
4	AKPANYO	80
5	ONYEDEGA	80
	TOTAL	384

- 5 selected clusters (wards): $384 / 5 = 76.8$ (round to 77) participants per cluster
- Male stratum: $64,423 / 127,572 \approx 50.5\%$ of sample (195 participants)
- Female stratum: $63,149 / 127,572 \approx 49.5\%$ of sample (189 participants)

This multi-stage sampling technique ensures representation from various wards and stratifies the sample by gender, providing a reliable and generalizable sample for the study.

Primary data was collected with aid of self-developed structured questionnaire via face-to-face interview. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher alongside trained enumerators in the selected wards of Ibaji local government area. A pre-test was conducted on the questionnaire to ascertain its quality, suitability and usability; use the findings of the pre-test to fine-tune the questionnaire; and checkmate the adequacy of respondent.

The qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis was used to analyze the data generated. While the qualitative method was used to give interpretation to the data generated, the quantitative method was used to analyze the data using frequency distribution tables.

Analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics provided simple summaries about the sample that was measured, while the inferential statistics is used to derive conclusion from the data. Using 4-likert scale. The decision rule will be base on accepting the weighted mean of 2.5 and above and rejecting less than 2.5 and below.

Results

The data collected was analyzed to correspond with each research question. Therefore, frequency distribution tables were used in relation to the demographic and psychographic data to display the respondents' opinions and views.

Description of Sample

Demographic data

Table 2: Gender distribution of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	195	50.5%
Female	189	49.5%
Total	384	100

Analysis of the table above shows that 50.5% of the respondents are male while 49.5% of the respondents are female.

Table 3: Age distribution of the respondents

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-99	111	27%
30-39	135	36%
40-49	76	21%
50& above	60	16%
Total	384	100%

Table 4.3, shows that 135(36%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 30-39. Following that, 111(27%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 20-29, 76 (21%) are within the age bracket of 40-49 while 60 (16%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 50 and above.

Table 4: Research Objective 1: How does effective communication influence entrepreneurial growth in Ibaji Local Government Area?

S/ N	Items	S	A	S D	D	Weighted Mean	Decision rules
1	Communicate with stakeholders (customers, suppliers, partners)	200	180	3	1	3.50	Accepted
2	Effectiveness of communication skills improve entrepreneurial growth	80	300	4	0	3.19	Accepted
3	Effective communication led to increased sales and revenue	210	170	0	4	3.35	Accepted
4	Communication in your business decision-making process	100	249	25	10	3.14	Accepted

From table 4 above, 80% of respondents (200+180) agree/strongly agree on the importance of communicating with stakeholders. Similarly, 95% of

respondents (80+300) agree/strongly agree that effective communication skills improve entrepreneurial growth. While 95% of respondents (210+170) agree/strongly agree that effective communication leads to increased sales and revenue. Communication in business decision-making with Weighted mean of 3.14 also imply that 87% of respondents (100+249) agree/strongly agree on the importance of communication in business decision-making.

Table 5: Research Objective 2. What communication strategies can enhance economic growth and development in Ibaji Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	S	A	SD	D	Weighted Mean	Decision rules
1	Attend communication-related training or workshops for capacity building	250	107	-	27	3.51	Accepted
2	Utilizing technology for business communication through Video conferencing/Instant messaging, networking	79	290	10	5	3.13	Accepted
3	Advertising as one of the communication strategies for entrepreneurial success	202	156	11	15	3.41	Accepted
4	Effective communication plays vital roles in business innovation	211	169	1	3	3.53	Accepted

Table 5 above indicate that, 95% of respondents (250+107) agree/strongly agree on the importance of communication training for capacity building while 5% and below disagreed the assertion that effective communication training has no significant effects of business growth. 90% of respondents

(79+290) agree/strongly agree on utilizing technology for business communication.

Regarding advertising, 92% of respondents (202+156) agree/strongly agree on advertising as a vital communication strategy to boot or enhance entrepreneurial success. For effective communication in innovation, 96% of respondents (211+169) agree/strongly agree that effective communication plays a vital role in business innovation.

Table 6: Research Objective 3: What is the current state and challenges of entrepreneurship in Ibaji Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	S	A	S	D	Weighted Mean	Decision rules
1	Inappropriate communication channel to access fund	80	281	20	3	3.13	Accepted
2	Lack of appropriate communication channels do affective business	301	79	2	2	3.51	Accepted
3	Lack of infrastructure are the major challenges facing business in the area	209	170	0	4	3.35	Accepted
4	Lack of access to information on business opportunities and resources	22	60	15	1 2 5 0	1.88	Rejected
5	Lack of strategic communication support services to enhance your business growth	79	290	10	5	3.13	Accepted

From table 6 above, Inappropriate communication channel to access funds with the Weighted mean of 3.13, that is, 90% of respondents (80+281) agree/strongly agree that inappropriate communication channels hinders access to funds, and also 95% of respondents (301+79) agree/strongly agree that lack of suitable communication channels affects

business operation in the study area. Similarly, 95% of respondents (209+170) agree/strongly agree that infrastructure deficiencies are major challenges confronting entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State. 55% of respondents (22+60) disagree/strongly disagree that lack of access to information for business opportunities and resources is not significant issue in the study area. While 90% of respondents (79+290) agree/strongly agree that lack of strategic communication support hinders business growth in the Ibaji.

Discussion Of Finding

Findings support the importance of effective communication in enhancing entrepreneurial success. Comparison with existing literature highlights the need for context-specific communication strategies. Implications for policy and practice include:

Research question 1: the result from the weighted mean scores indicate a positive attitude towards the importance of effective communication in entrepreneurial growth. It worth note that entrepreneurs in this area, valued the importance of communicating with stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and partners, this invariably leads to high productivity/sale there by increase revenue, that foster growth and development. This is in line with the work of Princi (2024) who examine the role of Effective Communication in the Growth and Development of Business Activities, noted that “a well-crafted communication strategy sets businesses apart, attracts customers, and builds brand loyalty”. He further explained that efficient communication tools in today's digital age fuel growth by enabling rapid decision-making, problem-solving, and seamless collaboration across geographically dispersed teams. He concluded that, effective communication is a critical driver of business growth, transcending its traditional role as a support function to become a strategic necessity The results suggest that effective communication is highly valued among entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area, and it has a significant impact on their business growth and decision-making processes. In the same vein, Alobele (2023) noted that, empowering entrepreneurs with effective communication strategies bridging the gap between rural communities and stakeholders, promoting understanding and cooperation, and enabling inclusive decision-making processes. Mukelabai & Jackson (2021) stated that effective communication has a positive effect on organizational performance.

Research question 2: The results from table 5 highlight the importance of communication-related training, technology adoption,

advertising, and effective communication in driving business innovation and entrepreneurial success in Ibaji Local Government Area. The summary of the result suggested that the need to; (i) Provide communication training/workshops for entrepreneurs, (ii) encourage technology adoption for business communication, (iii) develop effective advertising strategies and (iv) emphasize effective communication in business innovation. This is because ,95% of respondents strongly agree on the importance of communication training for capacity building while 5% and below disagreed the assertion that effective communication training has no significant effects of business growth. 90% of respondents strongly agree on utilizing technology for business communication. Regarding advertising, 92% of respondents agree on advertising as a vital communication strategy to boot or enhance entrepreneurial success. For effective communication in innovation, 96% of respondents agree that effective communication plays a vital role in business innovation.

Research question 3: The results from table 6 highlight key areas for improvement to support entrepreneurial growth in Ibaji Local Government Area, particularly communication channels, infrastructure, and strategic communication support. The result indicates that entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area face challenges related to communication, infrastructure deficiencies are major challenges confronting entrepreneurs in the area. 55% of respondents disagree/strongly disagree that lack of access to information for business opportunities and resources is not significant issue in the study area. While 90% of respondents agree that lack of strategic communication support hinders business growth in the Ibaji area. The above result is in junction with the views of Adediran, Opadiji, Faruk, and Bello (2017), who noted that in rural area in Nigeria, communication can be difficult because of various factors like inadequate infrastructure, cultural disparities, and low levels of literacy. These obstacles can impede the progress of rural entrepreneurs, invariably affecting economic growth and development.

Summary and Conclusion

Empowering entrepreneurs with adequate and effective communication strategies is a pathway to entrepreneurial success. Effective communication stands as the bedrock of entrepreneurial success, business growth and development, intricately woven into every aspect of organizational life. By cultivating a culture of openness, transparency, and collaboration, businesses can unlock the full potential of their workforce,

drive innovation, and foster enduring relationships with customers, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders. As businesses navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected and competitive landscape, communication excellence will remain a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable entrepreneurial success, economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship development can foster economic growth and development primarily by generating employment and foster the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This study demonstrates the critical role of effective communication in empowering entrepreneurs and driving economic growth in Ibaji Local Government Area. Recommendations provide a roadmap for stakeholders to support entrepreneurship and economic development

1. From the finding, there is a need to develop a Communication Strategy for Entrepreneurs in Ibaji Local Government Area should develop a comprehensive communication strategy to enhance their business growth.
2. Entrepreneurs should invest in communication skills training to improve their ability to effectively communicate with stakeholders.
3. Establish business incubators to provide resources and support
4. Implement policy interventions to support entrepreneurship, such as tax incentives, grants and access to finance.

References

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Crown Business.
- Adediran, Y. A., Opadiji, J. F., Faruk, N., & Bello, O. W. (2017). Issues and challenges of rural telecommunications access in Nigeria. *Journal of Information Technology Impact*, 17(1), 1-12.
- Adejumo, D. (2001). Entrepreneurship and economic development. *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 13(1), 1-12.
- Akerlof, G. A. (1970). The market for lemons: Quality uncertainty and the market mechanism. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 84(3), 488-500.
- Alobele , I. A. (2023) *Communication Strategies for Enhancing Community Development and Participation in Rural Communities*

- in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Information Systems & Technology Research* 11(3):26-40, July-Sept, 2023
- Ayandike, M. N., Emeh, Y. E., & Ukah, U. (2012). Entrepreneurship: A veritable tool for economic development. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation*, 1(1), 1-12.
- Bartlett, C. A., & Ghoshal, S. (1989). *Managing across borders: The transnational solution*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Brennan, N. M., and Doris M. M. (2018) "Do firms effectively communicate with financial stakeholders? A conceptual model of corporate communication in a capital market context." *Accounting and Business Research* 48(5): 553-577.
- Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural holes: The social structure of competition*. Harvard University Press.
- Charles, K. (1998) *Peak Performance the art of communication*. Black enterprise. *International Digital Organization for Scientific Research* ISSN: 2579-0773 Idosr Journal of Arts And Humanities 4(1):126-136, 2019.
- Chesbrough, H. W. (2003). *Open innovation: The new imperative for creating and profiting from technology*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Coase, R. H. (1937). The nature of the firm. *Economica*, 4(16), 386-405.
- Dickson, P. H., Solomon, G. T., & Weaver, K. M. (2008). Entrepreneurial selection and success: Does education matter? *Journal of Small Business Management*, 46(3), 357-376.
- Dunning, J. H. (2000). The eclectic paradigm as an envelope for economic and business theories of MNE activity. *International Business Review*, 9(2), 163-190.
- Field, J. (2005). *The role of communication in rural development*. *Journal of International Development*, 17(6), 821-838.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. Free Press.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2000). Managing your innovation's dark side. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(1), 166-173.
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2020). *ICT Development Index*.
- Naude, W. (2013). *Entrepreneurship and economic development*.

- Nwaeze, S.(2019). *The Role of Development Communication in the Development of Nigeria's Economy*. Department of Mass Communication Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki
- Princi, T. (2024) Role of Effective Communication in the Growth and Development of Business Activities. *Research Association For Interdisciplinary Studies*. Latvia,
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*. Harvard University Press.
- Wennekers, S., & Thurik, R. (1999). Linking entrepreneurship and economic growth.

**HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMIC TECHNOLOGY
AS A TOOL IN PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATION
AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS ON HEPATITIS B IN SOUTH-EAST
NIGERIA**

Dr Robert C. E Ezeanwu
robert.ezeanwu@unn.edu.ng
Orcid: 0000-0002-4996-7111

Dept of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
08037467968

Dr Olanrewaju A. Mgboji
olanrewaju.mgboji@unn.edu.ng
Orcid: 0000-0003-3379-9528

Dept of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Corresponding author 08063291728

Dr Ibiere Tom Coockey
Ibiere.cookey@unn.edu.ng
Orcid: 0000-0002-9647-490X

Dept of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

Modern society relies on effective and efficient communication with the media informing the general public. This study evaluates the use of social media algorithmic technology as a tool for public health communication about hepatitis B Virus (HBV) awareness campaign in South East Nigeria using Enugu and Ebonyi states as study areas. The research utilized the survey method which is usually employed to assess attitudinal, demographic and psychographic underpinnings. The population of study is 7,709,813 from which a sample size of 385 was drawn using the Australian Calculator. The multi-staged sampling was utilized and the questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. Findings indicate that majority of respondents agreed that campaigns on social media and algorithms enabled pop-ups on hepatitis B increased their knowledge and provided more information about hepatitis B virus than they previously had. The study recommends that challenges of cost of access and lack of dedicated public health communication sites should be handled by relevant government agencies and stakeholders to increase ease of access and to provide verified public health information sites. This

would help increase verified and supportive public health information sources to dispel information from unverified wrong information sources.

Keywords: Awareness, Algorithms, Hepatitis B, Public Health, Social Media,

Introduction

Our society relies on effective and efficient communication with the media at the epicentre of informing multiple aspects of individual lives including their access to health information. Communication is at the heart of who we are and has intrinsically become a vehicle for public participation and enlightenment. Ikhioya (2019); Abrams & Maibach, (2008) note that communication offers social support which may be linked to positive behaviours. This implies that the process of health behavioural change or development is hardly successful without communication (Mbaka, 2013). Communication as occasioned through the mass media play important roles in disseminating information and in creating health awareness that is of benefit to diverse members of the society.

Public health communication refers to creative messages or strategically assembled media symphonies purposely created to improve awareness, inform or cause behaviour change in the targeted audience (Atkinson, Vallely, Fitzgerald, Whittaker & Tanner, 2011). Thus, effective 'public health' communication utilizes various channels so that information and communication messages can be frequently disseminated to specific audiences. Petrescu, Raducu, Soare & Purcarea (2021) highlighted the importance of behaviour modification as the topmost preventive solution to the spread and control of diseases like hepatitis B (HBV). When the appropriate media are utilized, different audiences can be reached with certain kinds of media which will help to persuade and motivate them to be involved and improve health-behaviour. Invariably, the key to early detection of the disease may lie in the life-saving information disseminated to members through the mass media. Salvin & Maheema (2021) agree that the role of the mass media is encapsulated within its capacity and capability to instruct, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination. Ududo (2008) observes that frequent projection of issues about (hepatitis B) can become major health problem by the media can inculcate in the audience knowledge of all that cancer entails.

It is no news that the art of “old models” of journalism appears to be diminishing in the digital age which can be adduced to be a result of the fact that most old journalistic styles of gathering information and dissemination of news are expensive, time-consuming, potentially disappointing and unpredictable. Social media analytics help provide quantifiable measures of reach through digital campaigns which highlight contents that resonate with the target audience (Holloway 2019). Recently, most health educators are fast adopting social media platforms which allow for quick and easy dissemination of information from diverse stakeholders (NCCDH 2017). Abrougui (2016), notes that new media (social media) not only allow users to produce and distribute content easily, but also empowers them to access diverse viewpoints making them serve as the backbone of social, economic and cultural life in many societies.

Many social media sites, news, entertainment and information platforms and search engines utilize rank user generated content. In addition to making certain people and posts visible and others invisible to users, algorithms calculate public opinions by defining trends, suggesting friends and identifying products one may be interested in purchasing (Krikemeier, Boerman, Bol, 2021; Gillespie, 2014; Mager, 2012). Algorithms are the instructions embedded in social media comprised of software which are sets of instructions that direct a computer to do a specific task. They are components of software that make up information and communication infrastructures, (McKelvey, 2014). As a computational routine which involves issues of representation and inclusion, algorithms can define and control the circulation of information within the media, (Gagrcin, Naab & Grub, 2024). Public health communications send messages through social media to disseminate information which utilizes the new algorithmic technology to educate and inform people about health issues. This study will evaluate the need to harness social media as a tool in public health communication awareness campaign of hepatitis B (HBV) in South East Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Research evidence indicates that the mass media have long been used in the promotion of good health practices and the prevention of various social and health problems (Saraf & Malamurugan, 2018). The problems of health sensitization in a diverse, heterogeneous developing society like Nigeria can pose several challenges to health specialists.

Invariably, the intentional use of new technology, more precisely social media with its algorithms could be a key strategy in helping to solve or reduce these challenges. Interventions incorporating social media channels hold considerable potential for health promotion and address some of the limitations observed by traditional media by helping to increase individual participation and customization (Kite, et al 2023; Levac & Sullivan, 2010). This portends that more and more consumers will turn to the internet (social media) for health-related information. However empirical evidence does not show any significant relationship between social media use in public health and actual preventive outcomes in health promotion messages in Nigeria. To this end, this study seeks to ascertain the use of social media as a tool in public health communication awareness campaigns for hepatitis B (HBV) in South East Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Examine the level of exposure to public health social media algorithmic messages on hepatitis B among residents of South-East Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain if social media has increased knowledge of public health social media algorithmic messages on hepatitis B prevention and control among residents of South-East Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

The Centre for Disease Control (2016) defines hepatitis disease as a situational inflammation of the liver organ while Hepatitis-B is a *Hepadnavirus* that infects the liver cells which can be classified into 6 distinct types namely A, B, C, D, E and G with different modes of transmission, affecting different people. Hepatitis B virus (HPV) attacks the liver cells and can lead to liver failure, cirrhosis (scarring) or cancer of the liver. The liver processes nutrients, filters blood, stores energy and fights against infections. Hepatitis therefore connotes the infection or inflammation of the hepatocytes, as evidenced by abnormal liver Function Tests (LFT'S) (Hall, 2007). The virus is transmitted through contact with blood, semen, vaginal secretions and bodily fluids (Ajuwon, Yujuico, Roper, Richardson, Sheel & Lidbury, 2021). On other hand alcohol, prescription medications and drug abuse are predominant non-infectious causes, while viruses and bacteria are key infectious casual factors (Adesina, Oyero, Adeyeye & Oyesomi, 2017). Hepatitis B virus is 100 times more infectious than Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) virus and patients can present with acute symptomatic disease or

have an asymptomatic disease that is identified during screening for the (Tripathi & Mousa, 2023).

Ajuwon, et al (2021) concur that hepatitis infection is referred to as a silent killer because many infected persons may not realize that they are carriers for as much as 10 years. Also like in the case of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), there are healthy carriers who show no symptoms of hepatitis B who are also unaware of their health status thereby making them potential risk to others (Eredoro & Egbochukwu, 2017). The degree of HBV endemicity often correlates with predominant mode of transmission with very low minimum infectious dose that practices such as sharing toothbrushes or razor blades can transmit infection. Thus awareness, willingness and early identification of health status can help reduce the transmission through treatment with anti viral medication.

The incidence of the disease is increasing with 254 million people living with chronic hepatitis B infection in 2022, also approximately over 5% of the world's population positive carriers of the surface antigen of hepatitis B (WHO, 2024). This implies that the disease has enormous impact on health and the national economy of many countries with highly variable and unpredictable disease severity. Odusanya, Alufohai, Menrice, Wells, Weil & Ahohkhai (2005), submit that studies revealed that HBV is common in developing countries. Critically, Sub-Saharan Africa has high endemicity with more than 50 million people affected by the disease (Burnett, Francios & Kew, 2005). Agada (2016) also notes that the pandemic nature of the disease indicates that it is fast getting out of control with one in ten Nigerians being infected. Related studies like; Adesina, Okorie, Oyero, Adeyeye & Oyesomi (2017); Abdullahi, Sani, Umar & Yusuf (2016); indicate that hepatitis B infection remains a major public health concern in Nigeria with a carrier rate of between 9% to 39%.

Bessinger, Katende & Gupta (2004) also sought to examine the influences of behaviour change communication on campaigns on knowledge and use of condoms for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections in target areas in Uganda. Results indicated that individuals who reported being exposed to media messages were at least twice likely as those with no exposure to condoms as a means to avoid HIV/AIDS.

Omerigwe (2012) researched on the influence of breast cancer campaigns on knowledge, attitude and practice among women in Benue State, Nigeria. Findings revealed high level awareness of the campaign

and superficial knowledge about breast cancer causes, symptoms and genetic testing. Also, attitude is noted to be influenced by strong emotional and psychological beliefs. However, findings explain that awareness about campaign programmes does not guarantee exposure to the programmes rather individual dispositions and credibility of sources do. The study recommends the need for preventive rather than curative measures in breast cancer management.

Some health media campaigns identified cultural practices as hampering the effectiveness of media campaigns. Kehinde, Mohd & Mustafa (2014) conducted a study on HIV/AIDS Cultural Practices in Nigeria: An Implication for HIV/AIDS Preventive Communication Campaign. The study sought to examine the subtle links between cultural practices and beliefs and the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The study found that socio-cultural environment and structural contexts are responsible for the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The study advocates that campaign planners should try to make culturally acceptable programmes that relate to the people's behaviour and practices.

In a related study, Ghahramani, de Courten, & Prokofieva (2022) on the potential of social media in health promotion beyond creating awareness: an integrative review. Findings indicate that results showed that 10 studies (55.5%) adopted quantitative methods and five studies (27.7%) used mixed methods and three studies (16.6%) used qualitative methods. Facebook and YouTube were used more for intervention purposes to change health behaviour. Twitter and Instagram were used more to observe the trend of changes in health behaviour. Overall, the results show that though social media has potential in promoting behaviour change, the estimation of this change in the long term lies outside the scope of social media health campaigns. The employed measures usually target immediate behaviour or social media engagement rather than addressing the change on a behavioural level.

The transformation in technology especially regarding information and communication generation, processing, storage and dissemination witnessed in the 21st Century has been unprecedented (Peng & Wang, 2023; McQuail 2005). The advent of social media represents a change from a unidirectional model of communication to a multidirectional model of communication, where audience members are actively engaged in communication and are not just receivers of information, (Thackeray, Beiger, Smith & Wagenen, 2012). These innovations have opened up new social media platforms and today social

media contents are no longer created by only individual software developers, but made through collaboration and participation where users combine to contribute (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, all the content on YouTube and Facebook is not made by developers but by users of the sites.

Social media are considered the most interactive of all social communication media because it is engineered to support modes of interpersonal, mass and computer-mediated communication (Spurgeon, 2008). Furthermore, he notes that interactivity is a major criterion of comparison between “old” mass media and “new” digitally networked media. Although social media networking sites cannot be said to have replaced “old” media, they have enhanced the functioning of existing means of communication (Petrescu, Raducu, Soare, & Purcarea, 2021; Cranston & Davies, 2009). Social media can take the form of message boards and forums; podcasts; wikis; video; blogs; photograph hosting sites; music hosting sites; news sites, articles, debates, tagging, microblogs or a combination of most or all of these (Lefebvre, 2011). Since information breaks almost at the speed of light and audience members depend on the media to get the scoop importantly, many social media houses, especially the online media have devised a means to match up the speed with modern technology that can enhance their production. Hence, the deployment of automated algorithmic filter bubbles that assist social media sites in sorting, sifting and content in the digital space (Odongo, 2024).

Unarguably social media has become an integral part of the public health conversation. How social media can best be harnessed to achieve effective public health outcomes is a topic of much discussion and study. Ghahramani, de Courten, & Prokofieva (2022); Korda & Itani, (2013), Chou, Prestin, Lyons & Wen (2013); Lefebvre & Bornkessel, (2013), all examined the effectiveness of and implications of using social media and other digital media in health promotion and disease prevention endeavours and found mixed and evidences of the efficacy of its impact on public health communication. Studies by He, Cao, Liu, Wu & Zhang (2022): Fox & Duggan (2013) found that over 60% of US older adults reported using the internet stating that they have looked online for health information in the past year. With the number of social media users steadily growing, social media present an opportunity to reach audiences who may prefer to receive health information through these channels (Park, Rodgers & Stemmie, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

The Health Belief Model (HBM) attempts to explain and predict health behaviours by focusing on the attitude and beliefs of individuals. This theory was propounded by Geoffrey Hochbaum in the 1950s and notes that individuals are likely to accept health interventions if they believe that they may be susceptible to that particular health condition, if the condition is noted to have serious consequences and if the gains of taking positive action would reduce individual or general susceptibility to the health condition. Health Belief Model postulates that the individual's beliefs about health problems (prostate cancer), perceived gains of action (treatment) and obstacles to action (problems/poor diagnosis, management or treatment) and self-efficacy (knowledge) explain engagement of its lack thereof in health-promoting behaviour. The core assumptions of the HBM theory rest on the fact that an individual's health-related behaviour relies on the individual's perception and compliance in the following critical areas, severity of the potential disease, individual's susceptibility to the disease, gains of carrying out recommended health action, costs and obstacles in carrying out the recommended health action. The Health Belief Model is related to this study because the theory helps to predict changes in human behaviour and assumes that individuals are likely to accept health interventions if they are exposed to factors like hepatitis B public health communication that hold positive health benefits (National Cancer Institute, 2005).

Methodology

The survey research was adopted for this study. This is given to its suitability to a research of this nature. Singh (2006), notes that survey is concerned with attempts to determine the status of a phenomenon under investigation. The survey was considered most suitable for this study because surveys are highly useful in the field of social/behavioural science and areas that involve human action (Okoro, 2004).

Population

The population of this study comprised of all Nigerians in South East Nigeria. However, all states in the region cannot be studied, therefore the researcher conveniently selected Enugu and Ebonyi States. According to the 2006 population census, the population of the two states was 5,444,784 – Enugu 3,267,837 and Ebonyi 2,176,947. To arrive at an accurate population that could reflect the current size of the two states,

the researcher adopted the prediction of the National Population Growth Rate which is 3.2% as espoused by the National Bureau of Statistics. Therefore in 2018, the projected population of Enugu is 4,627,260 and Ebonyi is 3,082,553; bringing the total of the population under study to 7,709,813.

Table 1: Breakdown of the population under study

State	2006 Population	Growth rate per year	Growth rate in 13 years	Total population
Enugu	3,267,837	104,571	1,359,423	4,627,260
Ebonyi	2,176,947	69,662	905,606	3,082,553
Total				7,709,813

Sample Size

The sample size of this study was 385. The sample size arrived at using the Australian Calculator to determine the appropriate sample for the study. Therefore having cued in the external figure a sample size of 385 was obtained from the calculation at a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5.0%.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique utilised is the multistage sampling. Two states in the South East region (Enugu and Ebonyi) and the capital of each state were purposively selected as the area where the copies of the questionnaire were administered. The capitals of both states were chosen because they may have more internet penetrations/social media use than other areas of their respective state. This made them better chanced to give more information that could help solve the research questions raised in the study.

In stage two to ensure proportional representation in assigning copies of the questionnaire based on projected population of the selected states, the Bowley Proportional Method was utilized. The formula is $nh = (Nh/N)*n$ Where nh is the sample size stratum: nh is the population size for stratum h ; Nh is total population size; n is the total sample size. The calculations were thus Enugu 231 and Ebonyi 154 total 385. At the fourth stage, households/buildings in the registration areas were visited and random sampling was used in sharing copies of the questionnaire to any adult (asked to complete the questionnaire).

Table 2 showing selected INEC Registration Areas

SELECTED TOWNS/REG AREAS

Ebonyi State
 Abakiliki, Ebonyi
 Ezillo I, Umuhuali
 Akaeze Ishiagu, Obinagu

Enugu State
 Abakpa I, Trans- Ekulu
 Oduma I, Okpanku
 Amala, Ezimo Agu

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire guide. The use of this instrument was made necessary as a result of the nature of the data required for a justifiable and empirical treatment of the research. The survey instrument was the questionnaire which contained both open-ended and close-ended question, allowing the respondents options to provide and express their opinions and responses. 385 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher and two other research assistants while applying the rule of self report (which allows the respondent to indicate whether they use social media) while administering the questionnaire. The instrument was also subjected to face validation by 3 other experts in health communication. In addition the instrument was subjected to test-retest method with respondents who were not part of the original sample and 5 errors were observed and modified. Data gathered from the pilot testing were analyzed and certified reliable for the study with the Guttman scale of co-efficiency of reproducibility at 0.87 (87%) which was considered high as proof of reliability. The study was conducted in cities where people were always on the move which may have hampered respondent’s objective responses to the questionnaire. However, because of the sensitivity of the subject under research and depth of this study, qualitative data could have added to offset the shortfall of the instrument. To elicit information from the respondents, 385 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in the selected states and 350 copies were recovered. Below are the analyses from the 350 recovered questionnaires.

Research Question 1: What is the level of exposure to social media public health social media algorithmic messages on hepatitis B among residents of South-East Nigeria?

Table 3: Access to social media algorithmic messages

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	350	100
No	0	0
Total	350	100.0

Table 3, question 1 represents the respondent’s access to social media algorithmic messages on hepatitis B virus. The table shows that all respondents 350 (100%) had access to the social media algorithmic messages.

Table 4: Social media platform that carried the most algorithmic messages about hepatitis B

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	160	45.7
Twitter	52	14.8
WhatsApp	80	22.8
Instagram	11	3
YouTube	3	1
Non	45	12.7
Total	350	100.0

Table 4 indicates that Facebook 160 (45.7%) carried the most algorithmic messages on hepatitis B).

Table 5: Frequency of exposure to social media algorithmic campaigns

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Frequent	155	44.2
Frequent	122	34.9
Sometimes	23	6.6
Not Frequent	5	1.4
Not at all	45	12.9
Total	350	100.0

From Table 5, question 3 above there is clear indication that majority of the respondents 155 (44.2%) stated Very Frequent and 122 (34.9%) respondents stated Frequently agreed that they have been exposed to hepatitis B through social media algorithmic campaigns and respectively.

Table 6: Awareness of hepatitis B social media algorithmic campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	305	87.1
No	45	12.9
Total	350	100.0

Table 6, question 4 revealed that majority of respondents 305 (87.1%) respondents were aware of the hepatitis B social media algorithmic campaign.

Table 7: Types of messages exposed on social media

Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
News on the outbreak	84	24
Spread of the disease	78	22.3
Contractions/suspicious statistics and news	105	30
Online gossip and rumours	12	3.4
Online broadcast about prevention and control	18	5.1
Intervention news	8	2.3
Non at all	45	12.9
Total	350	100.0

Table 7, question 5 sought to find out the types of messages respondents were exposed to on social media. Majority of respondents 105 (30%) were exposed to contractions/suspicious statistics. While 8 (2.3%) saw the messages on intervention news.

Research Question 2: Ascertain if social media algorithmic media has increased knowledge of hepatitis B prevention and control among residents of South-East Nigeria.

Table 8: Do you know about social media algorithms?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	180	51.4
No	109	31.1
Can't say	61	17.5
Total	350	100.0

Table 8, question 6 shows that majority 180 (51.4%) respondents noted 'Yes' while 109/31.1% and 61/17.5% stated 'No' and 'Can't say' respectively.

Table 9: Respondents knowledge about hepatitis B before seeing any social media algorithmic media campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	36	10.3
No	314	89.7
Total	350	100.0

Table 9, question 7, data indicates that majority 314 (89.7%) respondents stated ‘No’ that they had no knowledge before seeing media campaigns on social media.

Table 10: Has social media algorithms increased knowledge of preventing hepatitis B?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	305	87.1
No	45	21.9
Total	350	100.0

Table 10, question 8 shows that majority 305 (87.1) respondents indicated that they had received more information and increased their knowledge through social media.

Table 11: Has social media algorithms increased knowledge on the control of hepatitis B?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	224	64
No	71	20.3
Can’t say	55	15.7
Total	350	100.0

Table 11, question 9 shows that majority of respondents 224 (64%) noted ‘Yes’

Discussion of Findings

The main contribution of this study is to evaluate the use of social media as tools of public health communication. The research used awareness and knowledge about hepatitis B awareness media campaigns as a case in point to measure social responsiveness.

Research question one sought to examine the level of exposure to social media public health algorithmic messages on hepatitis B among residents of South-East Nigeria tables 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 were used to answer

the question. Findings indicate that majority of respondents were exposed to hepatitis B public health algorithmic campaign messages through social media. This implies that a large percentage of respondents made use of social media to get health news and information. Findings are in tandem with the conclusion of Senam & Okonji (2021) study which affirmed that social media has become an important part of people's lives. The conclusion on awareness finds fulfilment in Wogu, Chukwu, Orekyeh, Anorue, Nwokedi & Chukwu (2021) study which concluded that people now depend on social media for health information and orientation using a more interactive platform.

Research question two ascertained if social media algorithms have increased knowledge of public health messages on hepatitis B prevention and control among residents of South-East Nigeria. To ascertain this, the researcher used questions 6, 7, 8 & 9 were used to answer the question. A considerable number of respondents agreed that the social media messages increased their knowledge and provided information about the virus. These findings agree with the views of Pourkarim, Van Espen, Thijssen, Van Ranst, & Pourkarim, (2019); Greene & Kasselheim (2010); Lane & Twaddell (2010) who noted that as much as 60% of internet users seek health information from the internet before going elsewhere for information. Additionally, Alaridah, J. et al (2023); Kim, Eng, Deering & Maxfield (1999) found that quality health information sources improved the user's accuracy in answering health related questions.

Conclusion

Despite the problems occasioned by issues in the use of social media in Nigeria, it has been revealed that awareness and knowledge about hepatitis B were relatively high. Inherent in most of the results across board was that algorithmic media has the potential to enhance speed, reduce editorial burdens, engender content appeals and remove human sentiments in news propagation. That is to say that, the future of public health communication in Nigeria will increasingly become more effective with the use of social media by stakeholders in the health sector. Critically, there exists the need for health stakeholders to harness algorithmic technology to ensure that they get credible, genuine, and even more sensitive information into circulation to ensure behavioural change. Majority respondents were optimistic that social media can be more effective in this regard. Findings also noted that majority of the respondents use health information they source from social media. In the case of hepatitis B awareness and knowledge and the degree to which

respondents use social media constantly to prevent the spread of the virus gave a lot of credence to the usefulness of social media in health communication. Information on disease prevention and control should direct specific actions and also be strategically designed and not left to the mercy of purveyors of user-generated content. The study notes that it is also important for social media users to bear in mind that health information on social media is not an alternative to face-to-face medical consultations. Therefore it is equally important to always confirm the health information one gets on social media with offline medical professionals before application to avoid harmful effects that can lead to death.

References

- Abdullahi, I. Sani, N. Umar, A. & Yusuf. (2016). Awareness and knowledge of Hepatitis B among nursing mothers in metropolis, Bauchi State Nigeria. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 6(1), 53-57.
- Abroms, L. C., Maibach, E. W., (2008). The Effectiveness of Mass Communication to Change Public Behavior. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29: 219-234.
- Abroms, L.C. & Maibach, E.W. (2008). The effectiveness of mass communication to change public behavior: *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29: 219-234.
- Abrougui, A. (2016). *How Algorithms Decide What is Newsworthy and what is Not: Archives and News Literacy*.
- Abuhashesh, M.Y.; Al-Dmour, H.; Masa'deh, R.; Salman, A.; Al-Dmour, R.; Boguszewicz-Kreft, M. & AlAmaireh, Q.N. (2021) The Role of Social Media in Raising Public Health Awareness during the Pandemic COVID-19: An International Comparative Study. *Journal of Health Informatics* November 2021 8(4):1-19. DOI: [10.3390/informatics8040080](https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics8040080)
- Adesina E. A, Okorie N., Oyere O., Adeyeye B. K., & Oyesomi K. (2017). Media Reportage and Audience Perception of Hepatitis Disease in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Health Science*, 19 (10), 68-77.
- Agada. D. (2016, March). Dangers and realities of hepatitis. Paper presented at the meeting of Federal College of Education, Abeokwuta.

- Ajuwon, B, Yujuico, I., Roper, K., Richardson, A., Sheel, M. & Lidbury, B. (2021). Hepatitis B virus infection in Nigeria; A systematic review and meta-analysis of data published between 2010 and 2019. *BMC Infect Dis.* 2021 Oct. 30;21(1);1120. Doi:10.1186/s12879-021-06800-6.
- Alaridah, J., Joudeh, R. M., Al-Abdallat, H., Jarrar, R. F., Ismail, L., Juma'ah, M., Anajjar, Z., Alzyoud, E., Battah, Z., Battah, A., Alshami, M. & Abu-Humaidan, A. H. A. (2023). Knowledge, Attitude and Practices towards hepatitis B infection among health care students- A nationwide cross-sectional study in Jordan. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2023, 20(5),4348; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054348>.
- Anand, S., Gupta, M. & Kwatra, S. (2013). Social media and effective health communication. *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research* Vol. 2(8), 39-46.
- Atkinson, J., Vallely, A., Fitzgeral, L., Wittaker, M. & Tanner, M. (2011). The Architecture and effect of participation: A systematic review of community participation for communicable disease control and elimination. Implications for malaria elimination *Malaria Journal* 10 (1), 225-257. Retrieved February 26, 2019 from <http://www.nelliportally.fi>. Academic Search Premier.
- Burnett, R., Francois, G., & G. (2005). Hepatitis B virus and human immunodeficiency virus co- infection in sub-saharan Africa: A call for further action .*Liver Int.*, 25, 201-213, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14783231.2005.01054.x>
- CDC, (2016). Three infectious diseases related to travel. Retrieved from: www.nc.cdc.gov/-yellow-book/2012/chapter-3-infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/hepatitis-b.html.
- CDC, (2023). Centre for Disease Control. Mortality in the United States 2023. NCHS Data Brief. <https://www.cdc.gov>.
- Chou, W. S., Prestin, A., Lyons, C., & Wen, K. (2013). Web 2.0 health promotion: Reviewing the current evidence. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103, 9-18.
- Daramola, I. (2003). *Introduction to Mass Communication*. 3rd Edition. Lagos. Rotham Press.
- Eredoro, C. O & Egbochukwu, O. O. (2017). Awareness and opinions about hepatitis B amongst secondary school teachers in Irepodun Local government area of Kwara State Nigeria. *Health Sci J*. Vol. 11. No. 5:530.<https://www.itmedicalteam.pl>

- Fox, S., & Duggan, M. (2013). Pew Research Centre's internet and American life project. Health online 2013. Retrieved from <http://pewinternet.org/Preports/2013/Health-online.aspx>.
- Gagrcin, E., Naab, T. K. & Grub, M. F. (2024). Algorithmic media use and algorithmic literacy: an integrative literature review. *New Media & Society*, 0(0). Open access <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241291137>
- Ghahramani, A., de Courten, M. & Prokofieva, M. "The potential of social media in health promotion beyond creating awareness: an integrative review". *BMC Public Health* **22**, 2402 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-14885-0>
- Gillespie, T. (2014). Algorithmically Recognizable: Santorum's Google problem and Google Santorum Problem. *Information Communication & Society*, 20(1). Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1199721#abstract>.
- Guatam, S. R. & Kumar (2016). Mass media for health communication and behavioural change: A theoretical framework. *Journal of Media and Social Development*. Mysore.uni.ac.in.wwwugcupefa2.com. vol. 4. Iss. 3. (2-10).
- Hall, G.F. (2007). A.B.C.D.E, G: an update. *Ethn Dis*. 2007 Spring;17(2 Suppl 2): S2-40-5. PMID: 17684813.
- He, W., Cao, L., Liu, R., Wu, Y. & Zhang (2022). Factors associated with internet use and health information technology use among older people with multi-morbidity in the united states: findings from the National Health Interview Survey 2018. *BMC Geriatrics* **22**. Article number 733 (20220 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-022-03410-y>).
- Holloway, G. L. (2019). Effective HPV vaccination strategies: what does the evidence say? An integrated literature review. *Journal of paediatric nursing*, 44, 31-41.
- Ikhioya, G. O. (2019). Impact of effective health communication strategies in Nigerian health care delivery system. *EAS J Humanit Cult Stud*. East African Scholars Publisher, Kenya. Doi:10.36349/EASJHCS.2019.v01i05.001.
- Ingwu, J. & Mgboro, B. (2017). Effects of Nurse-Led Educational *International journal of multidisciplinary research*.

- Kaplan, M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business horizons*, 53 (1), 59-68. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003.
- Kim, P., Eng, T., Deering, J., & Maxfield, A. (1999). Published criteria for evaluating health related websites: Review. *British Medical Journal*, 318, 647-649.
- Kite, J., Chan, L., MacKay, K., Corbett, L., Reyes-Marcelino, G., Nguyen, B., Bellew, W. & Freeman, B. (2023). A model of social media effects in public health communication campaigns: stematic review. *J Med Internet Res* 2023; vol.25:e46345. Doi:10.2196/46345.
- Kolowale, I., Kehinde, J., Adegboyega, T., Chinenenwa, A. & Tejuosho W.(2015). The use of appropriate communication channels to understand life threatening diseases: A study of viral hepatitis infection among Onikolobo residents in Abeokuta, Nigeria. *Advances in infectious Diseases*, 5, 189-195.
- Korda, H., & Itani, Z. (2013). Harnessing social media for health promotion and behavior change. *Health Promotion Practice*, 14, 15-23.
- Krikemeier, S., Boerman, S. C., & Bol, N. (2021). How algorithmic systems changed communication in a digital society. Vol 9, No 4. *Media and Communication. Pen Access Journal*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i4.5005>.
- Lefebvre, C. (2011). Integrating cell phones and mobile technology into public health practice: A social marketing perspective. *Health Promotion Practice*, 10(4), 490-494.
- Levac, J. J., & Sullivan, T. (2010). Social media and its use in health promotion. *Interdisciplinary journal of health sciences*. Vol. 1, (1) pp 49-57.
- Mager, A. (2012). Algorithmic ideology: How Capitalist Society Shapes Search Engines. *Information, Communications & Society*, 15(5).
- Mbaka, C.A., (2013). Influence of the Nigerian 2006 census campaigns on perception of and attitude to the census exercise by civil servants in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Research*. April 5(1) 119-137.
- McKelvey, F. (2014). Algorithmic Media Need Democratic Methods: Why Publics Matter. *Canadian Journal of Communication*. 39(4): 597+. Retrieved from <http://www.fenwickmckelvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2746-9231-1-PB.pdf>.

- McQuail, D. (2005). *Mc Quail's mass communication theory*. (5th Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- National Collaborating Center for Determinants of health (2017). *Public health use of digital technology to advance health equity*. St. Francis Xavier University.
- Naveena, N. (2015). Importance of mass media in communicating health messages: An analysis. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20 (2), 36-41.
- Ndolo, I. S. (2005). *Mass media systems and society*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Noar, S.M. (2006). A 10-year Retrospective communication or research in health communication mass media campaigns: Where do we go from here? *Journal of health communication: International perspectives*, (11) 1, 21-42.
- Odongo, M. (2024). Health communication campaigns and their impact on public health behaviours. *Journal of Communication* 5 (2): 55-69. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.47941/jcomm.1980>.
- Odusanya, O.O., Alufohai, F.E, Menrice, F.P., Wells, R., Weil, J. & Ahohkhai, V. I. (2005). Prevalence of hepatitis B surface antigen in vaccinated children and control in rural Nigeria. *International Effects Dis*. Vol. 9(3), 139-143.
- Ohai, R. (2012). Cervical cancer...A threat to womanhood. Retrieved February 14, 2019 from <http://www.thenationonline.net/12011/index.php/health148757> – Cervical Cancer a Threat to Womanhood.html/.
- Okoro, N. (2004). *Mass communication research, issues and methodology*, Nsukka; AP Express Publishers Ltd.
- Omotowo, I.B., Meka, I.A., U.N., Okoli, V.E., Obienu, O., Nwagha, T., Ndu, A.C., Onongugo, D.O., Onyekonwu, L. C. & Ugwu, E.O. (2018). Uptake of Hepatitis B vaccination and its determinants among health care workers in a tertiary facility in Enugu, South - East, Nigeria. *BMC Infectious disease*, 18, 288.
- Pariser, E. (2015). Data-driven Revelation. Epistemological Tensions in Investigative Journalism in the Age of Big Data. *Digital Journalism* 3(3). Retrieved from <http://dio.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.976408>.
- Peng, L. & Wang, J (2023). Algorithm as recommending source and persuasive health communication: effects of source cues, language intensity and perceived issue involvement. *Health Communication*, 39 (4), 852-861. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2023.2242087>.

- Petrescu, D. G., Raducu, R., Soare, C. & Purcarea, V. L. (2021). The role of communication in changing behaviours. Vol. CXXIV. No 2/2021. May. *Romanian Journal of Military Medicine*.
<http://www.revistamedicinamilitary.romania>.
- Pourkarim, M., Van Espen, L., Thijssen, M., Van Ranst, M., & Pourkarim, M. (2019). How adequate social media management supports the viral hepatitis elimination program. *Hepatitis Monthly*. DOI: 10.5812/hepatmon.69791.
- Salvin, P. & Maheema, R. (2021). The role of the media. *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Security Studies*. Doi:10.1007/978-3-319-74319-6_277
- Santas, T. & Kente, J. S. (2020). Exploring the surveillance Role of the mass media in public Awareness on Covid-19 in Nigeria. *TJCMS Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, Vol 3; No 2.
- Saraf, R. A. & Malamurugan, J. (2018). The role of the mass media in health care development: A review article. *Journal of Advanced Research in Journalism & Mass Communication*, 05 (01) Doi: 10.24321/2395.3810.201807
- Senam, N. & Okonji, C. (2021). The use of social media platforms on Awareness Creation tools for the Hepatitis B Virus in Lagos. *International Journal of Research and Innovation (IJRISS)*. Volume V, Issue II. DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS.2021.5201
- Sharkiya, S. H. (2023). Quality communication can improve patient centred health outcomes among patients: a rapid review. *BMC Health Serv Res* 23, 886 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-09869-8>
- Spurgeon, C. (2008). Advertising and new media. New York: Routledge.
- Thackeray, R., Beiger, B. L., Smith A. K., & Wagenen S. B. (2012). Adoption and use of social media among public health departments. *BMC Public Health*, 1(2), 2-42.
- Tripathi, N. & Mousa O. (2023). Hepatitis B. Statpearls. Treasure Island. National library of Medicine, National Cancer for Biotechnology Information.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK555945/>
- Udodo, A.J. (2008). Knowledge, attitudes and practice of cervical cancer and media social responsibility; *International Journal of Communication*. Vol. (2) 364-373.
- Wogu, J. O., Chukwu, C. O., Orekyeh, E., Anorue, I., Nwokedi, O. & Chukwu, C. L. (2021). Communicating health risk in SouthEast Nigeria: the case of media campaign against viral hepatitis and its

implication for health communication. *Medicine* 98 (25):e15847.
DOI:10.1097/MD.0000000000015847

World Health Organisation, (WHO, 2024) Global Hepatitis Report.
Action for access and low-and middle-income countries.
<https://www.who.int>.

REVITALISATION OF FOLKTALES AS AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE IGBO YOUTHS

Ebele Stella Ire, PhD
Department of Broadcasting,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University of Port Harcourt
Mobile Phone: 09061922062
Email: eby4christ2002@gmail.com

Chinyere I. Madukwe, Ph.D,
Humanities Unit
School of General Studies, UNN
chinyere.madukwe@unn.edu.ng
08035666097

Abstract

Folktales, rich in cultural heritage, were channels of moral instruction, community values, and historical consciousness. This paper premised on historical approach and development theory, discusses the revitalisation of folktales as agent of social change among Igbo youths. In the past, folktales, as part of oramedia, noticeably served important communication and entertainment functions to youths in Africa, including those in Igbo land. Time was, when elders in Igbo land would gather children by moonlight to tell stories that teach morals. These folktales were either based on fiction or real-life events. Sometimes, the stories involved natural or supernatural elements displaying interactions of animals, humans, or spirits. In the 1980s, folktales were aired on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) through a programme known as 'Tales by Moonlight'. This programme had children gathered around the storyteller, and at the end, the children shared the moral lessons learnt from each tale. Today, amidst new media-induced globalisation and cultural dilution, this system of folktales seems to have been eroded, perhaps, leading to the numerous social ills plaguing Igbo land. There is therefore a need for Igbo youths to reclaim and reinterpret these folktales to strengthen their cultural identities, combat societal malaise, and re-awaken social consciousness. Hence, this paper advocates for the revitalisation of folktales through intentional radio, television and social media programming to recreate folktales.

Keywords: Community values; Cultural heritage; Folktales; Igbo Youths; Oramedia; Social change, Moral instruction.

Introduction

Folktales, an aspect of oramedia, and age-long traditional means of imparting culture, values, norms, morals of a people to their younger generation have been on the tail-end of decline. Folktales are parts and parcels of African cultural system especially in Igboland. No one can claim as the originator of the tales being told by the folks, hence, they can be said to be owned by the community. The narratives are simply handed down orally from generation to generation. Although each ethnicity has their unique tales but all are geared towards building a society with sound moral values as well as inculcating the traditions/culture of a particular society in their young folks. Folktales, though entertaining in nature, communicate messages in social settings. The messages are very educative and informative.

In the pre-colonial Igbo society, parents or elders usually gather children around fire or under moonlight after dinner, when all the day's domestic chores were completed to tell stories. This period comes with a unique atmosphere, so quiet that a pin drop or echoes from distant neighbouring communities could be heard. The children would always eagerly await this time thereby rushing to complete their portions of domestic chores on time. It was one of the moments the parents and elders interact with their young folks. Reiterating Igbara's view as cited in Nsereka and Iyalla (2018), storytelling provides an interactive platform for children and their parents or elders where the children would normally ask questions and share opinions based on the moral lessons in the story. The stories were either based on fictions or real life events. Sometimes, the stories involved natural or supernatural elements displaying interactions of animals, humans or spirits. In fact, storytelling is an essential part of communication across cultures, more especially in the Igbo socio-cultural setting. The people's culture, world-view, philosophy, ideas, thought processes, values, beliefs are embedded in their folktales.

In Igbo traditional setting, folktales were used to instill morals, wisdom, political consciousness and inclinations as well as enforce social change among the younger generation. The stories are always entertaining in nature. They are made to have happy endings or reflect the triumphing of good deeds over evil. Most times, the antagonists in the tales must reap whatever they sow in the end. Moreover, most of Igbo folktales are embodiment of multiplicity of themes with both human and non-human

actors. The non-human actors are made to portray human realities within the confines of their own natural unique characteristics.

Going down the memory lane, around 1980s to mid 90s, folktales were aired on the national television-The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) stations through a programme known as 'Tales by Moonlight'. The variety of the story lines cuts across different Nigerian cultures such as Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The programme had children gathered around the story teller and at the end, the listeners shared the moral lessons gained from each tales. Humans and sometimes puppets were used as actors even if the story was centred on animal kingdom or spirits. Today, this cultural heritage have been battered by western culture and civilisation amidst other factors via the New Media as the youths have lost interest in folktales. This paper is an attempt to support the revitalisation of folktales among the Igbo youth of Nigeria, through intentional radio, television and social media programming such as content creation, skits, dance drama amongst others. This will go a long way to instill cultural values and ethics which are being eroded by the influence of western culture in Igboland.

The Problem

Noticeable among the Nigerian youths today, the Igbo youth in particular, is a total deviation from the traditional inclinations, values and norms. The present Igbo society is so devoid of moral ethics and values that even human life has become meaningless. This moral decadence has eaten deep into the fabrics of our society such that there is a need to retrace our steps back to our age-long traditions that enabled functional morality among the youths.

In the past, the Igbo folktales as stated earlier were avenues of instilling moral values, and norms in the younger generation. The storytelling was passed down from generation to generation through the word of mouth. Folktales are parts and parcels of Igbo cultural heritage. But today, folktales seem to be gradually moving into extinction as families no longer have time for such leisure. The consequences are reflected in the daily happenings in the Igbo society today. Additionally, the Igbo language and culture are also in danger of extinction. The above scenarios call for a revitalization of Igbo language and culture.

Recently, a social media influencer on tiktok, Brainjotter, reenacted the story of *mbe* (tortoise) and *enyi* (elephant) by the music legend, Mr. Mike Ejeagha, which set the media agog with retelling of the story and its associated leg dance. A veteran journalist, Mr. Rufai Oseni's

interpretation of the story on social media brought people to understand its alignment to the Nigerian politics of today. Therefore, it is believed that the Igbo folktales which were previously used to inculcate cultural values and moral traits in their younger generation can still be reenacted to gradually serve the same purpose today. Therefore, this study advocates the revitalization and use of the Igbo folktales through intentional media programming as an agent of social change.

The objectives

This paper seeks to advocate for the revitalization of the Igbo folktales as an agent of social change among their youths. The objectives include:

1. to establish the features of Igbo folktales
2. to identify various themes in the Igbo folktales that make them potent tools for social change
3. to advance the use of Igbo folktales as agent of social change among the Igbo youths.

The literature review and the theoretical framework

This study is built within the frameworks of development and social development theories. Development theory embodies a set of models and frameworks that explicates the processes and elements influencing social, economic and cultural development in individuals, communities and the societies in general. The principles provide a guide in understanding the intricacies of development and supply strategies for bringing social change and reducing moral decadence in the society today to its barest minimum. Development communication gears towards the use of communication and media to produce positive behavioral change and economic enhancement. It covers a variety of approaches and media which folktale is part of it.

On the other hand, social development theory is characterized by social interactions with the sole aim of bringing qualitative change in the society. It lays emphasis on the role of culture, language and social interaction in shaping or reshaping individuals as well as societal idealized social norms and values. The Igbo youths social development is more or less dependent on cultural norms and values of their society leading to diverse outcomes.

Nsereka and Iyalla (2018, p.522) opine that what drives social change is ‘increasing awareness leading to better organization’ continuing, they note “when society senses new and better opportunities

for progress, it develops new forms of organization to exploit these new openings successfully”. The retelling of the story of the tortoise and the elephant by the music legend Mr. Mike Ejegha through folk music and its dramatic turn orchestrated by the social media influencer, Brainjotter brought a new angle to folktales. This new format of storytelling shows that folktales could be repackaged in such a way to appeal to the interest of the modern youths while achieving the intended goals.

Several researches have been done on folktales across cultures from different perspectives. Chukwukere (1986) as cited in Eze (2022) carried out a study on the relationship between children moral upbringing and folktales. She opines that folktales can be used to inculcate acceptable cultural norms and values in children. She suggests that the narratives should be tales that involves traditional values and concepts. She further intones that not only would the children be told the stories with moral lessons, belief system and myth but also, should be made to know the consequences of choosing the wrong pathways.

Nkoli and Okoye (2016) in their work on folktales and Igbo youth development calls for the revitalization of Igbo folktales, lament the fast disappearing of Igbo folktales due to invasion of foreign culture and tradition. They further lament that the lack of much interest and efforts by prominent Igbo personalities in reviving the interest of Igbo people especially the youths to Igbo folktales. Consequently, some Igbo cultural values, norms and beliefs are moving to extinction. Thus, they suggest a revitalization, modernization and digitization of Igbo folktales. This they believe would redirect the Igbo people especially the Igbo youths in Nigeria and those in diasporas to appreciate Igbo folktales.

Nsereka and Iyalla’s (2018) study is an appraisal of folktales in the socio-political development of Engenni communities in Rivers. The research anchors on development communication and social development theories. The study data was generated from interviews and Focus group discussion. Engenni folktales were categorized within contexts and meaning that redirect socio-political realities and still hold sway for socio-political development of the communities. They assert that African cultures including folktales are endangered as the youths have no interest in the art due to the advent of the new media. Therefore, they suggest that government in collaboration with relevant stakeholders should put in place a strategic programme to ensure the revitalization of folktales/storytelling in Engenni.

Obika and Eke (2021) in their study on realities of Igbo folktales examine stories with animal characters and realities in their portrayals.

They posit that stories based on animal characters should not be seen as fabricated tales. Based on their analysis, such stories communicate realities as animals relate intelligently and have social organizations in the same ways as man.

Eze (2022) in her study on “the sequence of Igbo folktale as a revelation of the Igbo philosophy of life” decries the state of Igbo folktales in the present age. She reiterates the fact that the degeneration of Igbo folktales results from the influence of western culture leaving in its wake a dearth of Igbo culture and philosophy. Her study is an attempt to establish the relevance of folktale in unraveling the philosophy of the Igbo drawing insights from the tales of *Ọjaadịlị* and *Ọmalịnze*. The study adopts the structural analytic approach of Vladimir Proop. The findings of her study portray the Igbo as race which believes in hard work. This race eulogises industriousness and has insatiable quest for wealth. The study also reveals the belief of the Igbos that good name is better than silver and gold. The researcher thus suggests the teaching of indigenous literature and culture in schools to foster and restore the Igbo cultural heritage.

A common factor transcends most of the studies above which is the dying state of African cultural heritage especially the folktales. As observed from the reviewed literatures, the major cause of the culture endangerment is the invasion of the western culture on African tradition through the media. Hence, there is a serious need to revive the folktales as they had helped in directing the youths to the right path from time immemorial.

Methodology

Survey design was adopted for this study. Consequently, the survey approach was used in collection of relevant stories from library works in addition to the researcher’s introspection.

Features of Igbo folktales

Igbo folktales have rich diverse features reflecting several concepts such as the people’s culture, norms, values as well as their language. Naturally, storytelling known as folktales is passed down from generation to generation through the word of mouth. It is a communal art which has the gathering of children and young adults around the storyteller. Folktales are community owned as they have no known author. Notwithstanding the characters involved in the story, the realities are cultural based as they expressed the owners’ belief system. Prior to the advent of western education, which led to the documentation of Igbo

folklores, folktales were purely based on oral communication. Nkoli and Okoye (2016, p. 2) capture these characteristics thus, the

presentation of folktales was usually done during the moonlight night. This encouraged moral development of the children as well as communal living among the people. Folktales are normally told in the evening after the evening chores. Children normally sit round the fire side in their father's "obi" or in their mother's hut to listen to folktales. Normally the elders, their father or mother tells the story. Children then turns in telling their own stories. These storytelling sessions normally take place in the evening after the evening chores.

In traditional Igbo society, adults and children performed their normal business such as farming, trading and fishing in the day time. Igbo people were and still are very industrious. They believe in hard work and raised their offspring in that mentality. Therefore, in normal Igbo society, one can hardly find anybody at home during the day time except the elderly and the sick. The dusk is thus considered as their leisure time when all works including domestic work are deemed to have been completed. This period was allotted to storytelling and other forms of relaxation or entertainment.

Another feature of Igbo folktales is embedded in the art of the storytelling. The tales usually start with an introduction such as *n'obodo umu anumanu* (in the animal kingdom) or *n'obodo ndi mmuo* (in the land of the spirits) showing that events of the story happened in an unnamed place. Usually, this happens in the case of stories involving non human actors. The stories that involve humans always have a known place whether real or fictitious, for example, *n'obodo Iduu n'oba* (fictitious', in the land of Iduu and Oba). Nevertheless, whether the storyline involves existing or non existing place, the realities of human society are depicted in the story. Pejore (2005), cited in Nsereka and Iyalla (2018) notes that initially, the folktales create in the mind of the listeners an imaginary world. Later on, a sober reflection on the stories enables the listeners to link the folktale world to the real world. Folktale therefore portrays the realities of a given society. The story lines directly or indirectly teach the younger generation the acceptable norms and values of their society.

Igbo folktales as a part of pop culture contain folk music. Traditionally, every folktale is accompanied by a song which the storyteller in the course of telling the story teaches the listeners its chorus. Once the storyteller sings the solo, the audience is expected to chant the chorus. The solo and its chorus occur at every point of the story. The songs are not only entertaining but also help the audience in recalling the story. Mbah and Mbah (2007) in Nkoli and Okoye (2016, p. 2) write:

a stylistic feature of akuko ifo, which needs close examination is the style of presentation of ifo tales. The first unifying force in ifo is the use of songs with choric refrains to mark the points of intense emotion of the drama of the narrative. Quite often, the songs are prophetic in the sense that they foretell the future. They warn characters about what could befall them. They suggest approaches to the solution of some problems in the future. Songs of this type are usually realized in some prophetic animals especially birds.

The Igbo folktales are embedded with varying themes. Prominent among the themes of Igbo folktales, according to Nkoli and Okoye's (2016) is "evil acts do not pay". There are also themes that portray myths, communal life of the Igbo people, Igbo history and origin, reward of good over evil, hard work pays, respects for elders and tradition, the benefit of wisdom, ancestral spirit and supernatural powers, courage and strength, among others. The essence of these themes in the folktales is for posterity sake, moral upbringing and communal living. In the following section, we would discuss the themes that make folktales potent as an agent of social change among the Igbo youths.

Furthermore, the language style of folktales is very simple for easy understanding by the audience. It is not tainted with proverbs as young people may not be conversant with the meanings. Using proverbs in telling stories may require interpretation for better understanding thereby daunting the soul of the art. Storytelling in any society is interactive in nature. The story teller at the end of each story stops to ask questions which the audience are expected to answer. Prominent question is always about the moral lessons in the story. The questions on the moral lessons of the story help the audience to gain insight into how to live as a good individual and bonafide member of the society.

Themes in the Igbo folktales

As noted earlier, Igbo folktales are inundated with numerous themes. They represent many parts of life of the Igbos. However, the focus of this study is on the theme (s) that enhances positive behaviour among the Igbo youths. Let's examine some of the themes in the Igbo folktales:

The theme of morality, ethics and justice

Many folktales in traditional Igbo society teach moral lessons, acceptable behaviours and repercussions for wrong living. In the story of 'why the tortoise has a rough back' who chose to answer 'all of you' in order to finish the food meant for him and his friends, the birds. Another of such stories is 'the greedy farmer'; 'the tortoise and the drum'; 'the farmer and his two wives', etc. These stories teach the dangers of greed, deception and selfishness. The stories of tortoise in most cases centre on the attitude of cunning, greed and selfishness which inculcate in the children and young adults the fear of repercussions resulting from such acts. They would invariably grow up with such fears which would deter them from trending such paths. On the other hand, the story of 'the honest woodcutter' teaches that honesty, integrity and hard work have their rewards. The tales of 'the three little pigs' expresses the importance of hard work. In that story, only the house built by the hardest working pig among the three survived the wolf's attack. The tales of 'why the hawk carries the chicken' partly addresses the dangers of not honoring an agreement and reckless living.

The theme of love and communal living

There are many Igbo folktales that portray the importance of love and communality. Among which are the stories of 'mother hen and her chicks' which teaches about unity, cooperation and love. The story of 'the village and the stranger' reveals the essence of hospitality, respect and communal solidarity. Contrarily, the story about 'the farmer and his sick wife' emphasizes the danger of nonchalant attitude towards the plight of one's neighbours and friends.

The theme of wisdom and courage

The stories of 'the tortoise and the traveller' teaches wisdom while that of 'mbe, nwa aniga' eulogises bravery, determination and resilience. The tales of 'the brave hunter' portrays strength, courage and defence of one's society. 'Ojadili' is another of Igbo folktales which celebrates bravery and courage.

The theme of respect and obedience

The story of 'the old woman and the children' reflects the reward for respecting the elders in our society. The tales was about three children who met an old woman, who could not walk straight because of the load

she was carrying. The only child who stopped to greet and carried the woman's firewood to her house had his sick mother healed as a result of the help he rendered to the old woman. The story of 'Obaledo' who flaunted her parents' order to stay indoors, went outside and met a evil spirit who stole her beauty and gave her ugliness in return, expresses the fruit of disobedience. Another tales that teaches the negative effect of the disobedience is that of 'the beautiful girl who rejected many suitors and ended up marrying a spirit. Although, she later gained her freedom as a result of her respect to the spirit's mother.

The themes in the Igbo folktales highlighted above buttress the fact that storytelling plays a crucial role in the upbringing of children, helping to mould them into responsible and cultured citizens to the benefit of the communities and larger society. Nnadi (2020, p. 318) writes:

Among the Igbo of Nigeria, folktales constitute the moral and ethical component of the people's culture and philosophy. They constitute the traditional beliefs and customs passed orally, either during moon light or around the fire at night. Folktales are very germane in the inculcation of appropriate knowledge to the younger generation. The central knowledge which is the culture- the constitution of the behavior of the people and contains what the people consider moral excel of existence.

Citing Akubuiro, Nnadi (2020) further posit that through folktales "young ones were taught manners, customs and were imbued with the attitude and values basic to their culture". Folktales are therefore powerful tools for changing the moral decadence observed among the Igbo youth as well as impact the right values.

The Media as tools for revitalization of Igbo Folktales

The importance of leveraging on the power of the media as veritable tools for reorientation of the Igbo youths in today's Nigeria cannot be over-emphasised. The eroding state of the Igbo folktales and the decay in the society were not sudden but gradual. The journey began in the colonial era. Colonialism has negatively impacted Igbo folktales through the subtle disruption of traditional storytelling via religion, which ascribed folktales as a pagan practice. The colonial rulers also introduced an educational system that denigrated and neglected African language and traditional values which led to the brainwashing of African children to

neglect both their language and traditional values including folktales. They further introduced written records in which they tell their own stories making African stories sound barbaric. Folktales thus, lost their cultural and natural flavor, with the replacement of the communal lifestyle with individualistic centred life. The theme of Igbo folktales began to wear off as western theme and culture were introduced in the tales. Nevertheless, writers like Chinua Achebe tried to restore and preserve the Igbo language and culture including folklore through literary works.

Igbo folktales were also endangered through cultural imperialism via the media. The African media has become a dumping ground for western contents. The consumers of these contents including Igbo youths began to see our language and culture, even folktales as old fashioned. The exposure of Nigerian youths particularly Igbo youths to western biased media has led to cultural diffusion of enormous proportion, causing Igbo folktales to lose its appeal to majority of Igbo youths. However, despite the negative impact of the media on the youths, the right steps can still be taken to redirect and impact positive changes on the youths.

In the past, both national and state radio and television stations have folktales as part of the programme schedules. Children, youths and elders gathered around the television or radio to listen to folktales in those days. Today, the traditional media can recreate these moments through refocused programmes. The national programme, “tales by the moonlight” can be restored and modified to relate stories in indigenous Nigerian languages rather English. This is in consonance with the opinion of Nkoli and Okoye (2018, p. 7) that “undoubtedly, contributions of experts in media houses are highly needed in revitalizing the Igbo folktales”.. Ikwubuzo (2008) in Nkoli and Okoye (2018, p.7) is also of the opinion that: “children’s television programmes like the “Tales by the Moonlight” relayed on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) network programme should be encouraged, sponsored and modified in such a way that the stories can be told in Nigerian languages especially in Igbo language;...”

Social media platforms have proliferated, giving people including young people in Nigeria unparalleled platforms for exchange of information, knowledge and ideas. They provide space for interaction. Social media such as Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, the X (twitter), Instagram, Blogs and website can be harnessed to proliferate and propagate Igbo cultural heritage. Recently, it was observed that the social

media proved to be more successful in reaching mass audience than the traditional media. These days you can count the number of people that still watch television for entertainment programmes including news. Social media thus, can be said to have taken over the media field. Research has shown that children and youths spend more time on social media than their books. Therefore, social media can be used to push the folktales back to the society, as the documentation of folktales in the media has provided wider global audience which would help to ignite interest in Igbo folktales. The social media being quite engaging could facilitates sharing of the folktales and defining the meaning behind every story just as Mr. Rufai Oseni did to the trending story of the tortoise and the elephant (*enyi na aga na anyi so gi n'azu...gwogwogwo ngwo*). Mr. Oseni explained this story in line with political deception by the political elites which marks the Nigerian political scenario.

Conclusion

This study in its quest for the revitalization of folktales as an agent of social change among the Igbo youths examined the features and characteristics of Igbo folktales, categorized the themes in Igbo folktales and examined the media as tools for revitalization of Igbo folktales. It suggests that traditional media should restore interest of the youths in Igbo cultural heritage through act of inclusion of folktales in their programmes. It further suggest that social media, based on their characteristics can be used to bring back folktales to the society and encourage the younger generation to learn and appreciate our rich cultural heritage. However, there is need to modernize the folktales to suite the taste of the modern youth without the stories losing their essence.

Recommended strategies for the revitalization of Igbo folktales

There are some possible initiatives that can be put in place to make the reviving of Igbo folktales successful. One of such initiatives is digital storytelling. Digital storytelling involves the use of animated videos, podcast, interactive websites, online documentation, virtual reality, digital comics to retell the Igbo folktales. Secondly, platforms should be created in all social media handles following each specified format that would be dedicated to showcasing the Igbo cultural heritage including folktales. The Igbo curriculum planners can work with the government to include folktales as a literary genre in schools' curriculum especially in the Eastern part of the country. Finally, social media

influencers of Igbo extract can help to create skits or comedies with folktales revealing their meanings just like Brainjotter's 'gwogwogwo ngwo' challenge. This would go a long way in recreating and spreading the folktales faster in Nigeria and across the globe. As the skits circulate, consumers would start reading meaning into it, then the society, particularly the youths could be subtly transformed thereby restoring sanity in the society.

References

- Chukwukere, F. (1985). Functions of Igbo folktale in child upbringing. An unpublished B.A. long essay. Nsukka: Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria.
- Eze, E.A. (2022), The sequence of Igbo folktale as a revelation of the Igbo philosophy of life. *International Journal of Advancement in Education, Management, Science and Technology*, 4(3), 82 – 91.
- Ikwubuzo, I. (2008). Igbo oral: Literature and the Igbo youths today: What literacy legacy for posterity in Ikwubuzo I., Ohiri – Aruche, C. & Nnabuihe, C. (Eds.), *Udezuluigbo: A Festschrift in Honour of Sam Uzochuwku*. Lagos: Green Olive Publishers.
- Mbah, B. M. & Mbah, E. E. (2007). *Azuonye: Lecture on Igbo literatures and stylistics*, Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Nkoli, M.N. & Okoye, A.N. (2016). Igbo folktales and Igbo youths development: The need for revitalisation of Igbo folktales. *Mgbakoligba, Journal of African Studies*, 6(1), 1-9.
- Nnadi, C.C. (2020). Integrative values of folktales: Igbo folktale example. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 5(9), 317-323.
- Nsereka, B.C. & Iyalla, A.B. (2018). An appraisal of folktales in the socio-political development of Engenni communities in Rivers state. *UniUyo Journal of Humanities (UUJH)*, 22(2), 519-532.
- Obika, A.N. & Eke, O. (2021, February 24). Realities in Igbo folktales. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349570525>.
- Pejore, D. (2005). *Folktales and education: Role of Bhutanese folktales in value transmission*. Centre for Bhutan Studies, 47-73.