



Radio Stations Facilitation of Public Enlightenment on Child Abuse Prevention Strategies in Port Harcourt Metropolis

EKE, Chigozi¹

Ph.D Students, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt
0921969259; chigozi_eke@uniport.edu.ng

GAMAGE, Suoyo Abo²

Ph.D Students, Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri
08033423734; gamagesuoyo@gmail.com

BUFUMOH, Akpoebi Alex³

Ph.D Student of Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rivers State
08037069791; alexymoh@gmail.com

OKE, Mopelola Modupeola⁴

Ph.D Students, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt
08035781256; mope.oke@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated radio stations facilitation of public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies in Rivers State. The objectives of the study were among others to ascertain the level of exposure of Port Harcourt residents to radio stations public enlightenment prevention strategies. The study made use of analytical descriptive survey design. The population of Port Harcourt according to National Bureau of Statistics in 2022 stood at 3,325,000. The sample size for the study was drawn using Taro Yamane mathematical formula. Based on this, the sample size was 400. The sampling technique adopted for the study was the stratified sampling technique. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaire copies in which 390 copies were found valid and used for analysis. The study made use of quantitative methods of analysis, percentages and frequencies were employed in data presentation and analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the Port Harcourt residents have listened and were exposed to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on child abuse through the radio stations. The study concluded that adequate information can help audience members to understand the core issues of child abuse enlightenment prevention and strategies campaign. This understanding in turn will enable effective reduction or curb child abuse, its effect and consequence which also ensures that audience members gain a favourable disposition towards it. The study recommended that radio stations should always ensure that messages on child abuse related issues are persuasive enough to discourage the act.

Keywords: Radio, public enlightenment, child abuse, prevention, strategies.

Introduction

Children are considered to be the backbone of a country. It is the right of every child to spend his/her childhood in a happy and safe environment. Thus, it becomes peremptory to provide a healthy, protective and positive environment to children for their overall growth. Child abuse is of worldwide concern, causing emotional, psychological and physical health issues among children which involves depression, suicide ideation, unwanted pregnancy and neurotic disorder. Child abuse is harmful to the normal growth of a child. The abused children have to face the problems of genital infection, depression, unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases and infections. Nigeria especially Rivers State is facing a steady rise in cases of child molestation, rape, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and exploitation due to the absence of adequate knowledge and prevention strategies on child abuse (Wilson, 2012).

Akinyemi (2013) sees child abuse as any act of misuse of a child in any form. It is situation where a child is not being provided the much needed necessities of life, where child is maltreated physically, emotionally and sexually which is detrimental to the future growth and development of such a child. Nwokedi (2016) describes the rights of a child as enunciated by the United Nations that every child is entitled to the right to love and understanding, adequate food and health, free education, play, an identity and special attention of the handicapped regardless of colour, sex, religion and nation or social origin. Lamentably, many people are not aware of the existence of these rights. Hence, the rise of child abuse in many countries and in Nigeria today. Also, Nwokedi (2016) posits that child abuse is an integral part of the modern world including African society and Nigeria in particular.

Development in public awareness campaigns do not follow a simple linear trajectory towards ever increasing sophistication or efficacy. Mass media have the power to create awareness of the problem of child abuse and raise the priority of the issue in the minds of people. It can create new attitudes in people and can offer awareness to aid in prevention strategies and treatment of child abuse. It means that the media can be a potent tools in the mobilisation and education of the people on the need to participate in the actualisation of the campaign against child abuse. Also, the broadcast media by their very nature are influential especially in issues of creating awareness, mass mobilisation and sensitisation, influencing public opinion and calling attention to issues in the society. Radio is unarguably the most popular medium of mass communication because of its unique characteristics. Not only that it is cheap to acquire and simple to operate but its beauty mostly lies in its ability to penetrate remote, inaccessible areas and to transcend linguistic and literacy barriers. However, with radio sets, people can access information on different subject matters within their immediate and distant environment. The miniaturised radio sets with multiple band receives are at the beck and call of most information-hungry people of the world today (Ekwueme, 2012).

In recent times, cases of child abuse are on the increase and perilous nature of this menace has grown in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State that there are so many media messages facilitating public enlightenment prevention strategies. To draw adequate attention to child abuse, Treasure 98.5 FM has “Let’s talk about it with edition on child abuse; Radio Rivers 99.1 FM has “Health and Life Style”; Rhythm 93.7 FM has “Rhythm Formula” and Nigeria Info 92.3 has “Amebo Zone with edition on child abuse”. All these programmes are for daily tips on healthy living and fight against child abuse. How these messages on prevention strategies have been deployed by radio stations to further the cause of child abuse is the primary concern of this study. It is therefore the thrust of this study to assess the radio stations public enlightenment prevention strategies towards the fight against child abuse.

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse has become one of the social maladies bedeviling Nigeria in different levels, especially, Rivers State. Despite all the provisions of extant laws in the country, many children in River State are still subjected to mental abuse, physical harm, neglect, child labour, child trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation. The child abuse have manifested in all socio-economic classes, religion, ethnic and cultural groups. Child abuse encompasses physical, psychological, sexual abuse and neglect. Exposure to child abuse has a negative

impact on the development of child and cause short-term and long-term health, emotional, cognitive, academic and social difficulties. The effects of child abuse are anxiety, guilt feelings, negative feelings and it affects the society when the young derelicts become kidnappers and arm robbers. Most dare-devil criminals today were the young delinquents of yesterday. Regrettably, despite government regulations, decrees, enactments and laws on child's right, child abuse still persists.

The child abuse continues to rise and the abused children are continually being neglected by the family and society due to lack of awareness and public enlightenment prevention strategies. This lends credence to the fact that public health has in recent times becomes a subject of planetary concern. The least that mass media can do in this regard is to vigorously raise attention to the plausibility of the logic of awareness and drive for action (preventive strategy) through messages. In other words, the ideology of preventive strategy offers the mass media as a veritable platform for message awareness. Hence, this study is sets to examine the radio stations facilitation of public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the radio stations facilitation of public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

4. Ascertain the level of exposure of Port Harcourt residents to radio stations public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies;
5. Examine Port Harcourt residents adherence to radio stations public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies; and
6. Determine if the radio stations played any role to reduce the rate of child abuse in Rivers State through the public enlightenment.

Literature Review

Concept of Child Abuse

Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or negligence of a child or children. It could be any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child. Child abuse includes assaulting a child or thrusting any other form of deliberate injury to a child; sexually or allowing a child to be sexually abused; bullying by another child; a labour practice that takes advantage of a child; or exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child emotionally or psychologically (YEDI, 2015). Child abuse simply means the mal-treatment of a child by an adult person that harms or endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health, development or well-being (Queensland Government, 2017). Child abuse is broadly defined in many states as any type of cruelty inflicted upon a child, mental abuse, physical harm, neglect, and sexual abuse or exploitation. A child who has been abused or neglected may experience a range of problems, such as relationship difficulties, lack of trust of adults, emotional outbursts (or retreat), low performance at school, depression, anxiety, and anger (Criminal, 2018). Violence, abuse and exploitation of children, physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children have come to be recognized as crimes against children. Child abuse have a devastating consequence on children's development and societies (OAK Foundation, 2014).

Empirical Review

Agbo and Chukwuma (2015) conducted a study on audience assessment of the Nigeria Television Authority's contributions towards the eradication of child trafficking in South-East, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were among others to find out the extent to which South-East residents were exposed to NTA's programmes. A survey research method was used to execute the study using a sample size of 400. The study found that the residents of South-East Nigeria were to a large extent exposed to NTA's programmes and reports on child trafficking. Also, that NTA's reports and programmes on child trafficking have to a little

extent, raised the knowledge of most respondents and majority of the respondents believe that NTA's programmes and reports were not persuasive enough to discourage the practice of child trafficking in South-East Nigeria. The study recommended that that NTA should see it as a social responsibility to properly raise public knowledge on the evil of child trafficking in South-East Nigeria. Also, that NTA should review her programmes/messages on child trafficking to ensure messages on child trafficking are persuasive enough to discourage the act.

Ojiakor, et al., (2020) carried out a survey on effectiveness of radio programmes in campaign against child abuse in Imo State. The objectives of the study among others were to identify the extent to which Imo State residents were aware of child abuse through Darling 107.3FM. The survey research method was used for the study. The sample size was 385. Multistage sampling technique was adopted to reach out to respondents. The sample size derived using Australian online sample size calculator. The findings revealed that Imo State residents were aware and the programmes that centre on child abuse and in turn improved their knowledge to a moderate moderately on the issue of child abuse.

Sharma (2020) did a study on the role of media in creating awareness on child sexual abuse among school students. The objective of the study was to examine students' awareness level of child sexual abuse which includes the "Good Touch Bad Touch." The study adopted survey method and data collection was done through the use of questionnaire from 100 respondents of a school from a city of Punjab, constituting 20 respondents from each class, selected through convenient sampling. The findings showed that the media failed to create awareness on child sexual abuse among children.

Theoretical Framework

The agenda setting and social responsibility theories underpinned this study. The agenda setting theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972/1973. The tenet of this theory is that media may not tell audience what to think but media may tell audience what to think about. According to Ngoa (2012) this theory profoundly came about "during the period 1950s and 1960s when researchers became dissatisfied with the limited effects model. Specifically, the theory resulted from a study conducted by Shaw and McCombs pertaining to the 1967 presidential election in the United States of America (Akakwandu, 2012). Ekeanyanwu (2015) in his view contends that agenda setting is where the mass media is accredited with the power to set the agenda of the topic for discussion" (p.115). This means that it is what the media want us to think about that they project to the public as an important issue and at the end of the day, it appears important in the eyes of the public (Ozuru & Ekeanyanwu 2013). The agenda setting theory is relevant in this study because the degree of prominence or importance, quantity or frequency of reporting or broadcasting attached to a story or event such as child abuse by the media (whether print or electronic) that would determine greatly how the public would see or value an event. Such events, story or situation where the media particularly the electric media, give awareness and attention on child abuse issues as well as going further through their reportage on the social religious and cultural implications of child abuse that the public would better appreciate the concept. The imputation here is that the media play drums and when they play their drums, audience begins to dance to the tune of their music. It is however imperative to note that the issues raised by the media change from time to time because the society is dynamic.

Also, the social responsibility theory is an offshoot of libertarian theory, in that the press "recognizes that it has a responsibility to society to carry out its essential functions" (Hassan, 2013, p.170). So social responsibility rests on free press acting responsibly. Nwabueze (2014, p. 15) summarises the social responsibility theory of the press "as a theory developed to check the excesses of a free press." The theory posits that as much as the press is free to operate in any society, such freedom should carry certain responsibilities or simply the press freedom does not mean the press should do as it pleases. It should operate in recognition of societal needs and aspiration, be a watchmen, widen horizon, focus attention,

create a climate for development, partake in the decision process and touch all facets of human existence. The relevance of social responsibility theory to this study is that, since it is genuinely the responsibility and/or duty of the press to freely inform the members of the society, it is then part and parcel of this responsibility or obligation of the press or the media to bring to the public issues on child abuse in the society with a view to exposing those perpetrating the act. This will go a long way in not only sanitizing the system but also making society a better place. Without proper framing, representation and indeed, reportage of child abuse as a crime. It would continue to bestride the society and this would no doubt be seen as an indictment on the press for non-performance.

Methodology

This study adopted an analytical descriptive survey design. The researcher adopted the survey research design. This method was considered suitable because it allows for the study of people's opinions and perceptions on given issue of public interest or concern (Nkwam-Uwaoma, et al., 2021). The population of Port Harcourt Metropolis according to National Bureau of Statistics in 2022 stood at 3,325,000, a 4.86% increase from 2021. The sample size for the study was drawn using Taro Yamane mathematical formula. Based on this, the sample size was 400. The sampling technique adopted by the study was the stratified sampling technique. The justification for stratification was based on the assertion of Ihejirika and Omego (2013) that "stratification of the universe assures for more representation of every segment of the population" (p.91). The stratification was done according to the streets in the Port Harcourt metropolis such Emenike, Macauley, Nembe, Emenike, Obodu, Bende, Ndoki, Ekwe, Ikwerre among others. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaire 400 copies and 390 copies of the questionnaire were found valid and used for data analysis. The study made use of quantitative methods of analysis, percentages and frequencies were employed in data presentation and analysis.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What is the level of exposure of Port Harcourt residents to radio stations public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies?

Table 1: Radio Stations Respondents Listened to most

Options	Number for Respondents	Percentage (%)
Radio Rivers 99.1Fm	67	17
Rhythm 93.7Fm	104	27
Nigeria Info 92.3 FM	139	36
Treasure 98.5 Fm	80	20
Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 1 revealed that many of the respondents listened to Nigeria Info 92.3 Fm. This was followed by Rhythm 93.7Fm, Treasure 98.5 and Radio Rivers 99.1Fm respectively.

Table 2: Radio Public Enlightenments Respondents are exposed to

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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Child labour	65	16
Child trafficking	50	13
Child abuse	77	17
All of the above	198	51
None of the above	0	0
Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents were exposed to all the radio public enlightenments on Child abuse, child labour and child trafficking.

Table 3: Description of Radio Public Enlightenment on Child Abuse Prevention Strategies

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very highly exposed	16	4
Highly exposed	80	21
Exposed	152	39
Less exposed	142	36
Not exposed	0	0
Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table 3 showed many of the respondents were exposed to radio public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies. By implication of this finding, it means that many of the respondent were exposed to radio public enlightenment on child prevention strategies.

Research Question 2: How do the Port Harcourt residents adhere to radio stations public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies?

Table 4: Acceptance of Radio Public Enlightenment on Child Abuse Prevention Strategies

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very much	31	8
Much	155	39
Not very much	184	47
Little	14	4
Not at all	6	2

Total	390	100
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Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 4 indicated that many of the respondents believed and accepted not very much to radio public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies. By implication of this finding, it means that many of the respondents accepted much to the public enlightenment on child abuse prevention strategies.

Table 5: Description of respondents to Child Abuse Public Enlightenment Prevention Strategies on Radio

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very high	15	4
High	110	28
Average	146	63
Fair	11	3
Poor	8	2
Total	390	100

Source: Filed survey, 2022.

Table 5 revealed that majority of the respondents described their response to child abuse public enlightenment prevention strategies on radio with respect to their attention as average.

Research Question 3: Have the radio stations played any role to reduce the rate of child abuses in Port Harcourt?

Table 6: Influence of Radio Public Enlightenment Prevention Strategies on Port Harcourt Residents' Attitude

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very high	15	4
High	105	27
Average	251	64
Low	11	3
Very low	8	2
Total	390	100

Source: Filed survey, 2022

Table 6 showed that many of the respondents agreed that with regards to child abuse, the influence of radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on their attitude is average. This was followed by the respondents that the influence of the public enlightenment were high.

Table 7: Radio Public Enlightenment Prevention Strategies role in reducing Child Abuse

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Positively	151	39
Negatively	-	-
Not at all	239	61
Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table 7 above indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that radio public enlightenment prevention strategies roles in changing their attitudes toward child abuse did not help them at all, while 39% of the respondents said it helped them positively.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The data analysed in tables 1 to 7 provided the platform for this discussion which was purely done in relation to the research questions. Each of the tables handled and addressed a given research question.

Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of Port Harcourt residents to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on child abuse?

Table 1 to 3 were prepared to answer research question one. The results revealed that the Port Harcourt residents have listened and were exposed to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on child abuse through the radio stations to a moderate level. This finding corroborates the study of Agbo and Chukwuma (2015) who found that the residents of Southeast were to a large extent exposed to NTA's programmes and reports on child trafficking. Also, the findings uphold the finding of Ojiakor, et al., (2020) that Imo State residents were aware to a moderate extent on child abuse programmes in radio campaign. This study equally refutes the finding of Sharma (2020) that media failed to create awareness on child sexual abuse among children. It is important to note that the social responsibility theory upon which this study is anchored, gives backing to the findings of the study. The theory posits that much as the press should be free to operate in any society such freedom should carry certain responsibilities or simply the press freedom does not mean the press should do as it pleases. It should operate in recognition of societal needs and aspiration, be a watchmen, widen horizon, focus attention, create a climate for development, partake in the decision process and touch all facets of human existence. However, since it is genuinely the responsibility and/or duty of the press to freely inform the members of the society, it is then part and parcel of this responsibility or obligation of the press or the media to bring to the public issues on child abuse in the society.

Research Question Two: How do the Port Harcourt residents adhere to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on child abuse?

From the tables 4 and 5, the findings showed that the respondents believed and accepted not very much to the manner in which they adhered to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies on child abuse. Though, the public enlightenment prevention strategies with respect to their attention was very educative and impactful but, their adherence to radio public enlightenment prevention strategies was on the average. This finding is in tandem with the study of Ojiakor, et al., (2020) that the radio programmes in campaign against child abuse in Imo State improved the knowledge of the residents to a moderate extent. Also, the finding aligns with the finding of Agbo and Chukwuma (2015) who revealed that the Nigeria

Television Authority's programmes and reports help in raising the knowledge of most residents of Southeast. The findings are supported by the agenda setting used in this study. According to Ekeanyanwu (2015) in his view contends that agenda setting is where the mass media is accredited with the power to set the agenda of the topic for discussion" (p.115). This means that it is what the media want us to think about that they project to the public as an important issue and at the end of the day, it appears important in the eyes of the public

Research Question three: Have the media played any role to reduce the rate of child abuses in Port Harcourt?

In tables 6 and 7 respectively. Responding to this, the Port Harcourt residents agreed that with regards to reduce child abuse, the radio played an average role and that in changing of Port Harcourt residents attitude towards child abuse, the radio public enlightenment prevention strategies did not help at all. This study agrees with Agbo and Chukwuma (2015) when they found out that majority of the respondents believe that NTA's programmes and reports were not persuasive enough to discourage the practice of child trafficking in South-East Nigeria. Finally, the agenda setting theory that underpinned this study is in consonance with this finding. The theory states that the idea or information which people have about public issues tend to be proportionate to the amount of emphasis place on such issues by the media. That is the way the media see and regard issues is the same way the masses would regard such issues.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the study concluded that radio precipitates widespread awareness and as such served as a veritable medium for social mobilisation. Radio stations under study demonstrated less competence in creating child abuse exposure. These radio stations should create more public awareness programmes to enlighten the public of the problem effect and consequence of child abuse. Exposure in this regard precipitates knowledge especially as they border on core issues of child abuse.

Descriptively, therefore, without a good understanding orchestrated by exposure, the core issues of child abuse will be lost on listeners. The inference therefore is that adequate information can help audience members to understand the core issues of child abuse enlightenment prevention and strategies campaign. This understanding in turn will enable effective reduction or curb child abuse, its effect and consequence which also ensures that audience members gain a favourable disposition towards it.

Drawing from the underlying notions of the agenda setting theory and social responsibility theory, the stations studied significantly abdicated on a normative web of functionality embellished in information and education. However, campaign on the subject matter lacked depth. By inference, therefore, the child abuse enlightenment was not intensive and extensive.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the study, the following recommendations have been made.

1. Campaigns should be designed such that they will have rudiments of the issues that form the subject matter of such campaigns. In this way, many people will see the need to key into the highlights of the message themes.
2. Radio stations should show greater commitment and passion for campaigns by ensuring a steady running pulse of frequency.
3. Radio stations should always ensure that messages on child abuse related issues are persuasive enough to discourage the act.

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