



OWERRI RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF TELEVISION MESSAGES ON COVID-19 VACCINATION EXERCISE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined Owerri residents' perception of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise in Nigeria. The study was anchored on cultivation theory. The study adopted the survey research method; a sample size of 400 was drawn from the population, using Taro-Yemane's formula for determining the sample size. Multi-staged sampling technique was used and questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. Findings revealed that there is a positive perception of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise among residents of Owerri Metropolis. Also, there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by Owerri Residents. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended the need for the television broadcast media to air more frequently and consistently COVID-19 vaccination related messages through newscasts, advertisements, public service announcements and health talk shows.

Keywords: Perception, television messages, COVID-19, vaccination exercise, Nigeria

Introduction

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 virus in the late 2019 in Wuhan China and its spread across the world in 2020, the global community is yet to be free from the shackles of the virus. According to Reuben and Samuel (2021), the world has been in turmoil since the corona virus pandemic also known as COVID-19, which they added has redefined civilisation and social interaction. However, the media have not relaxed in the area of information dissemination. Various media channels/stations have been deployed in the campaign against the spread of the virus and the urgent need to be vaccinated to prevent the spread of the virus.

According to Onwubere and Mohammed (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic heralded an era of desperate information seeking and use. The mass media tried to meet this need by providing diverse coverage of stories about this pandemic to the public.

As explained by Reuben and Samuel (2021) the mass media are necessary tools for human development and stability. Therefore, it is expected that people's exposure to broadcast messages on COVID-19 would serve as part of solutions to the crisis. This is because exposure to broadcast messages is expected to bring about attitude change or increased publicity and knowledge of the virus. Public knowledge of the virus is expected to bring about attitude change, while attitude change will lead to compliance to the COVID-19 preventive measures.

Osakwe (2012) as cited in Reuben and Samuel (2021) explained that television is a powerful influence on people's perception. This is so because they believe it draws materials from the society, package them in the form of programmes and give them back to the same society as culture.

In the same vein, Adegoke (2013, p. 99) describes the electronic media, inclusively television as "a viable and veritable tool for creation of behavioural patterns, social values and acting as powerful agents for the transmission of such values related to norms, ethics and cultural heritage, that have both negative and positive effects on the audience..."

However, considering the swiftness and easy contraction of the virus, vaccines have been developed to curtail its spread and the media has been used as tool for the vaccination campaign exercise, just like the media was also massively used during the campaign on safety measures to influence audience compliance.

In Owerri, the Imo State capital, there currently exist two television stations (Nigerian Television Authority- Federal owned and Orient TV-State owned), in addition to other cable television channels like Channels, African Independent Television, Television Continental, Silverbird etc. It has been observed that at various points in time, these stations transmit messages/information on the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as it relates to the dangers and safety measures and currently, the need for individuals to get vaccinated.

It is however worrisome that despite the awareness and obvious dangers of the COVID-19 virus, a higher percentage of the country's population seems not to have received their first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccines yet according to reports from major health agencies in the country such as Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA). It is on this ground that this study was birthed. To find out Owerri residents' perception of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The sudden and unpleasant appearance of COVID-19 has posed very serious health, economic and social challenges to man's existence and the global community as a whole. The metamorphosing nature of this virus has forced individuals to sort for ways to eliminating or better still, curtailing the spread of the virus through health observing rules and development of vaccines, which were all brought to public domain through the media. However, the issues of misinformation and misleading information from various media sources have posed as challenge to the effective uptake of vaccines meant for this purpose. Information indeed is power and the source through which such information emanates from says a lot about the credibility of such message or information. Although, the Nigerian government has used the instrumentality of television to bring to awareness the free vaccines available to citizens and the need for vaccination by all, several reports have shown that a higher percentage of the citizens are yet to be vaccinated of the virus. The hesitation in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine by Owerri residents, could it be as a result of their awareness level or the perception they have about the vaccine? It is on this basis that this research work was conceived; to find out Owerri residents' perception of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To ascertain public awareness of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination exercise through the television media.
2. To examine Owerri residents' perception of the COVID-19 vaccination messages they receive through television.
3. To determine if there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri metropolis.

Hypotheses

H0: There is no relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri metropolis.

H1: There is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri metropolis.

Review of Related Literatures

Television and Covid-19 Vaccination Exercise in Nigeria

Television has a very crucial role in building any society. It has changed the world a lot that we cannot lay aside its presence. In this pandemic time, television can be used as source of information, as media plays a valuable role in everyone's life...television has robust power to make how we see the world, as it is also flexible that it could influence the people in a large extend (Shalvee, 2020).

Gever and Ezeah (2020) assert that the most suitable way to creating awareness and educating the masses during a pandemic is through coverage. This is implemented through regular reporting of public health issues, suggesting appropriate health behaviours and recommending policies that will help in curtailing the spread of a pandemic. Krause et al (2020) confirms that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been abundance of information, with nearly every channel covering the latest development.

Iheanacho et al (2021, p. 82) explains that media campaigns have been employed to influence several health behaviours among the public. Typical campaigns have placed messages in media that reached great number of people, most frequently through television or radio. Hornik & Yanovitzky (2003) further explained that the broadcast media have high tendency to change behaviour of the public either directly or indirectly concerning particular health behaviour.

In Nigeria, just like the global society, the dangers associated with the uprising of the COVID-19 virus have forced several media campaigns to be launched to help in curtailing the spread of the virus. According to Olapegba et al (2020) as cited in Iheanacho et al. (2021, p. 83), there were several campaign launched by civil societies and government agencies among others to awaken the consciousness of people towards protecting their health. Some of these campaigns were COVID-19 and your health of Groove 98.1 FM Owerri and some other public enlightenment jingles on COVID-9 aired by broadcast stations such as Channels, TVC, NTA, Imo Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) etc.

Margolis et al. (2019) asserts that traditional media channels are likely adhering to high quality sources, sharing fact-based information linked to governmental health care, or academic data and reports and are clearly crucial channels to promote immunisation programmes. Piltch-Loeb et al (2021, p. 11) on

the other hand agrees that traditional media (like television) should continue to promote vaccination information to their viewers and readers since Puri et al (2020) believes that the control of COVID-19 is largely dependent upon its uptake.

However, how information channels are perceived by the public and which channels are used to receive information about both COVID-19 and the vaccine will determine the likelihood of achieving satisfactory levels of vaccine uptake. This however is in tandem with Ale (2020) as cited in Asogwa (2021) who explains that accuracy of information about COVID-19 is an important requirement towards combating its spread.

Empirical Review

Piltch-Loeb et al. (2021) examined the effects of information channels on COVID-19 vaccination acceptance. Their findings showed that the majority of respondents are using traditional media to obtain information on the COVID-19 vaccine in some way (86%) and use of traditional media sources was found to increase the likelihood of vaccination. In particular, obtaining information from television, both local and national newspapers increased acceptance of vaccination (regardless of how much the channel is trusted).

Iheanacho et al. (2021) conducted a study on “Influence of COVID-19 broadcast media campaigns on the health consciousness of Owerri Residents. The researchers employed the survey research method. From the population of 555,500 of Owerri Urban residents, 384 sample size was derived using Survey Monkey online sample size calculator. The multi-staged sampling technique was used and questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. The analysis of their findings revealed that an average of 85% of Owerri residents to a large extent is exposed to broadcast media campaigns on COVID-19 as it relates to their health.

Adedeji-Adenola et al (2022) carried out a survey on “Factors influencing COVID-19 vaccine uptake among adults in Nigeria. A cross sectional online nationwide study was conducted from April to June, 2021 among Nigerian adult population using the snowballing method. Descriptive analysis was used to summarise the data. Univariate and multivariate analysis was used to identify the predictors of COVID-19 uptake among the respondents. A P Value <0.05 was considered significant. Findings from their study showed positive population level impact of awareness of COVID-19 vaccination in Nigeria. Findings from their study further showed the main source of COVID-19 vaccination information were the media (television, radio and newspaper), health workers and social media platforms. Most of the respondents showed positive perception towards the effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing COVID-19 disease, but there were issues as to whether scientists have discovered a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine or if the Nigerian government had assured the safety of the vaccine. Almost half of the participants showed fear of the side effects of the vaccine. The proportion of willingness to get vaccinated in the study was high among the participants and most of them were health workers.

In a study by Wakefield et al (2014), on how the mass media is utilized in the campaign to change certain health behaviour, it was revealed that the mass media campaigns can cause positive changes or prevent negative changes in health related behaviours among people. Also, another study by Olapegba et al (2020) on COVID-19 knowledge and perceptions in Nigeria, showed that the traditional media (Television/Radio) are the most common source of health information about COVID-19.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on cultivation theory.

Cultivation theory (or cultivation analysis) suggest that television cultivates in people a sense of reality which makes people accept what they watch as real. The audio-visual sound effect used as well as the ‘drama of TV programmes make people believe what they watch as real (Akakwandu, 2020).

This theory also posits that television is partially responsible for shaping or “cultivating viewers” conception of social reality. Notable Scholars associated with the cultivation theory are George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, Nancy Signorelli etc. (Konkwo, 2003, p. 180).

The relevance of this theory to this study lies on fact that television is an indispensable tool to man’s social existence, especially as it relates to information gathering. Considering the objectivity placed on information dissemination by television media compared to other media, especially social media (where control is minimal or none at all), people tend to trust information they see and hear on television and accept it as the social reality. Therefore, the on-going COVID-19 vaccination campaign exercise on television broadcast media gives viewers the conception of social reality.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research method. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that survey allows for the study of people’s opinion on a given issue of public interest (Okalla et al.,2022) According to Ihejirika & Omego (2013, p. 75) “Survey is one of the most popular methods used today to gain knowledge of things, people and events in their natural world.” The purpose according to Nwafor et al. (2013) is usually to describe systematically the facts, qualities or characteristics of a given population, events or areas of interest concerning the problem under investigation.

Population

The population of this study included all adults (from the ages of 18 and above) who resides in Owerri Metropolis and are consumers of television media contents. Our choice of adults as the focus population was informed by the fact that adults constitute the active consumers of television news based contents/programmes. The total number of such persons according to the United Nations-world population prospects in Owerri for 2022 is 945,000. Owerri consist of three (3) Local Government Areas; Owerri Municipal, Owerri North and Owerri West.

Sample Size

Sampling is the selection of some members or elements from the population for actual investigation or study (Ohaja, 2003). The sample size for this study was 400. This size was arrived at using Taro Yemmane’s formula for sample size selection.

Sampling Technique

The researchers adopted the multi-staged sampling technique. Firstly, the stratified sampling technique was used to systematically stratify the study area into the three (3) LGAs that make up Owerri: Owerri Municipal, Owerri North and Owerri West. Secondly, the researchers used the simple random sampling without replacement approach to further break the sample into smaller units/areas. We used this technique to select a random sample from the population. We didn’t want the data for any given item to appear twice in the sample, so we used simple random without replacement. In other words, once we have selected a particular city to be included in the sample, it is not returned back to the selection bowl, just so that there won’t be any chance of selecting that city to be included again; so that others can also have the chance of being selected. Moreso, the simple random sampling was used to select three areas each from the three LGAs to represent the entire population. At this stage, each of the stratified areas were split and put in a bowl. Three cities were randomly selected in each of the strata. Our choice of choosing three cities was to ensure uniformity for each of the LGAs for the study, considering the fact that the LGAs are three. Below

were the selected areas: Owerri Municipal: Owerri Municipal city, Ikenebgu, Wetheral/Tetlow; Owerri North: Amakohia, Egbu, & Orji and Owerri West: Nekede, Umuguma & Ihiagwa. The final stage adopted purposive sampling to focus on adults who view television and who are knowledgeable of the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccine exercise. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with the help of three research assistants. Data obtained were analysed using simple percentage for the respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to research questions. Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 392, representing 98% were returned and found usable for the study. 5, representing 1.25% were not considered usable for the study and the remaining 3, representing 0.75% were not returned. However, the mortality rate of 2% does not affect the study because it is insignificant, compared with the return rate of 98%, thus the copies were considered good to represent the population for the study.

Demographic analysis of the data collected showed that 173 (44.1%) were females, while 219 (55.9%) were males. In the age category, 71 (18.1%) were within the age range of 18-24, 77 (19.6%) were within the age range of 25-30, 80 (20.4%) were within 31-35, 108 (27.6%) were within 36-40 and 56 (14.3%) were within the age range of 41-50 and above.

In the marital status category, 145(37%) indicated single, 202 (51.5%) indicated married, 15(3.8%) indicated divorced and 30 (7.7%) indicated widowed. For the educational qualification category, 51(13.0%) obtained WASCE/NECO/GCE, 78 (19.9%) obtained OND/NCE, 123 (31.4%) obtained HND/BSC, 82 (20.9%) obtained MSC/PHD and 58 (14.8%) indicated others.

Table 1: Extent to which the public is aware of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination campaign exercise through the television broadcast media?

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	121	30.9%
High extent	110	28.1%
Moderate extent	88	22.4%
Low extent	62	15.8%
Very low extent	11	2.8%
TOTAL	392	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis on table 1 above shows that 30.9% of the respondents are to a very high extent aware of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination campaign exercise through the television broadcast media. This however implies that the respondents are very aware of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination campaign exercise through the television broadcast media.

Table 2: Public perception to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign message they receive through the television broadcast media

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Positively	132	33.7%
Negatively	84	21.4%
Ignore	91	23.2%
Indifferent	85	21.7%
TOTAL	392	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2 analysis shows that 33.7% of the respondents have positive perception to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign message they received through the television broadcast media. The implication is that information conveyed through the television broadcast media can be trusted to a large degree and this positive perception can also influence high vaccine uptake.

Table 3: Ascertains if there is a relationship between television broadcast message on COVID-19 vaccination campaign message and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri Metropolis.

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	355	90.56%
No	37	9.44%
TOTAL	392	100%

Source: Field , 2022

Analysis on table 3 above reveals 90.56% of the respondents believe that there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri Metropolis. This implies that the number of vaccinated persons in Owerri Metroplolsi have come across message on COVID-19 vaccination through the television broadcast media and this message spur them to get vaccinated or may serve as a motivating source for vaccination by others.

Test of Hypothesis

Table 4: Contingency table for relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri Metropolis.

Response	Male		Female		Total
	fo	(fe)	fo	(fe)	
Yes	224	217.3	131	137.7	355
No	16	22.7	21	14.34	37
Total	240		152		392

Figures in brackets are the expected frequencies.

$$fe = \frac{TR \times TC}{GT}$$

R1 C1 = $\frac{240 \times 355}{392} = 217.3$

R1 C2 = $\frac{240 \times 37}{392} = 22.7$

R1 C3 = $\frac{152 \times 355}{392} = 137.7$

R2 C1 = $\frac{152 \times 37}{392} = 14.34$

Table 5: Chi-Square test on hypothesis

Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	$\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$
224	217.3	6.7	44.89	0.2065
16	22.7	-6.7	44.89	1.9775
131	137.7	-6.7	44.89	0.3259
21	14.34	6.66	44.36	3.0934
392				5.6033

Calculated X² Value = 5.6033

Degree of Freedom (df) = (R-1) (C-1). On table 4, there are 2 rows and 2 columns.

Df = (2-1) (2-1)

= 1 × 1 = 1df

At 0.05 of significance and 1 degree of freedom, the critical value is 3.841.

Test Result

In view of the fact that the calculated Chi-Square value (5.6033) is higher than the Chi-Square table value (3.841), the research hypothesis was accepted. The import is that there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri Metropolis. However, responses to the research question revealed that 90.56% of the respondents believe that there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri Metropolis. The research hypothesis therefore received statistical support of the data collected as used for the test.

Discussion of Findings

The study was on Owerri residents' perception of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise in Nigeria.

In eliciting the needed response, three research objectives and a hypothesis were formulated.

The first objective was to ascertain public awareness of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination exercise through the television media. Findings revealed that a higher percentage of the respondents 121 (30.9%) indicated a very high level extent awareness of the COVID-19 vaccination exercise through television. This however implies that the public is very aware of the COVID-19 vaccination exercise through television. This study supports the assertions by Gever and Ezeah (2020) that the most suitable way to creating awareness and educating the masses during a pandemic is through coverage. This finding is in line with that of Iheanacho et al. (2021) that an average of 85% of Owerri residents to a large extent is exposed (aware) to broadcast media campaigns on COVID-19 as it relates to their health. This however implies that, the most effective way of creating awareness, especially on health related issues is through the television media.

Research question two was to examine residents' perception of the COVID-19 vaccination messages they receive through television. Findings showed that a higher percentage of the population 132 (33.7%) perceived positively the COVID-19 vaccination campaign messages they receive through the television media. This implies that there is a positive connection of television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and this positive perception can serve as a spark for the actual uptake of the vaccine, irrespective of how they see the vaccine. The cultivation theory comes to play here. The cultivation theory or analysis suggest that television cultivates in people a sense of reality which makes people tend to trust information they see on television and accept it as the social reality. This also support the findings of Adedeji-Adenola et al (2022) that the main source of COVID-19 vaccination information were the media (television, radio and newspaper) and that most of the respondents showed positive perception towards the effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing COVID-19 disease.

The third objective was to determine if there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination and actual uptake of the vaccine by residents of Owerri metropolis. Also a hypothesis was tested to find out if there is a relationship. This finding revealed that there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by Owerri residents. 355 (90.56%) believed there is a relationship between television broadcast campaign messages on COVID-19 vaccines and actual uptake of the vaccine by Owerri residents, 37 (9.44%) believed there is no relationship. However, the research hypothesis received statistical support of the data collected as used for the test, showing that there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination exercise and actual uptake of the vaccine by Owerri residents. This however implies that, the more people receive information relating to COVID-19 vaccination through television, the more likely they are to receive the vaccine. This finding is in tandem with that of Piltch-Loeb et al (2021) which showed that majority of the respondents are using traditional media to obtain information on the COVID-19 vaccine in some way (86%) and use of traditional media sources was found to increase the likelihood of vaccination. In particular, obtaining information from television, both local and national newspapers increased acceptance of vaccination (regardless of how much the channel is trusted).

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, we conclude that the television broadcast media is an indispensable tool in the COVID-19 vaccination exercise. A higher percentage of the population indicated their awareness of the COVID-19 vaccination majorly through the television broadcast media and their perception of the messages

was positively high. Also there is a relationship between television messages on COVID-19 vaccination and actual uptake of the vaccine by Owerri residents.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. COVID-19 vaccination messages should be frequently conveyed through newscasts, advertisements, public service announcement and talk shows as this will constantly serve as reminder to the public.
2. Management of television media should organize health-based shows or programmes, where health professionals are invited to talk about the need for all citizens to be vaccinated against the virus and the need to continue to take precautionary measures against the spread of the virus.
3. Since a higher percentage of respondents have positive perception of television media contents, therefore, television media professionals should leverage on this and slot at intervals information on the COVID-19 vaccines at the peak of captivating programmes. This will help sustain and keep the information fresh on the mind of viewers and hopefully spur them to get vaccinated.

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