

RIVERS STATE RESIDENTS' AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF NIGERIA INFO 92.3 AND TREASURE 98.5 FMS' COVERAGE OF CHOLERA OUTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, Cholera outbreaks have continued to be a significant public health concern in Rivers State, claiming lives, causing economic hardship, and precipitating social and political upheaval. The persistence of this disease despite various efforts to address it especially in an area like Rivers State where people are exposed to radio messages about the epidemics' preventive measures necessitated the study. This study sought to determine the level of awareness and perception as well as the influence of this coverage on the perception of Rivers State residents. Underpinned by perception theory, the study adopted the survey design. With a population of 8,002,111, a sample size of 384 was reached using the Meyer sampling size determination template. The multi-stage sampling involving purposive and random sampling techniques was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select two LGAs- Port Harcourt City, and Obio/Akpor. While Port Harcourt and Choba were randomly selected from these LGAs. The questionnaire which served as the primary source of data was structured using four-points Likert rating scale and analysed using mean criterion. Findings indicated that, Rivers State residents were highly aware of *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5* FMs' coverage of the cholera outbreak as the residents perceived the coverage to be informative and helpful. The study concluded that radio is a medium for disseminating health information and promoting behaviour

change, thus, showing a connect between awareness and perception. The researchers recommended among others that, radio stations should continue to prioritise health information, providing regular updates on preventive measures.

Key words: Cholera, Awareness, Perception, Coverage, Rivers State residents.

Introduction

The emergence of any disease to any country puts the media on their toes as they must contend with a lot of information dissemination, sensitisation, mobilisation, and advocacy. Scholars such as Ochonogor (2009) have argued that health awareness is very important for the general public to utilise appropriate health information that will serve as guides to their health behaviour. The argument is that health information is a key factor in changing the health behaviour of people exposed to the health messages. People are likely to exhibit health behaviour based on available information to them (Ochonogor, 2009). Health information in the media educates the public on health-related issues and raises awareness of certain diseases, conditions, and health risk factors that the media display information about and make people aware in order to prevent the spread of various diseases.

News coverage of health matters takes on considerable significance that has the potential to shape the impression of average citizens and powerful policy makers alike. The impact of news media coverage on health status and health policy has long been established (Kline, 2011). The variability in media coverage, encompassing content, methodology, and reporting patterns, is contingent upon a complex combination of factors, including issue salience, media imperatives, and audience predispositions, which collectively shape the dissemination and impact of health information.

Radio as a medium has a crucial role to play in every society; it

informs, entertains, educates and socialises members of the society through its health dissemination roles. It can draw attention to health issues thereby mobilising efforts to address them. Nwabueze, Ezeoke, and Obiora (2012) note radio's vital role in promoting global health programmes the world over. This is because people require accurate information on health measures, conditions, and government programmes (e.g., immunisation, vaccine coverage, disease prevention) to maintain good health, enabling them to address risk factors for communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Radio coverage of health issues among the rural and urban dwellers can create agenda for the public and the government in policy making and mobilisation so as to tackle such issues. It can contribute through effective health communication towards addressing these problems. Since the medium provides information to people at large so that there is acceptance of any idea to create interest (Usua, 2022). Though, radio has the power to pay attention to some issues at the expense of numerous others, some issues base on their level of importance to the audience at a point leaves radio with no option than to give necessary attention to them. Examples of such issues are health outbreaks of international concern such as Cholera.

Cholera was a devastating disease in the 19th century, claiming tens of millions of lives (WHO, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (2010), cholera still affects 3-5 million people globally and results in 100,000-130,000 fatalities annually, primarily in developing countries. It persists as both an epidemic and endemic threat in many parts of the world. Recently, Cholera outbreak engulfed Nigeria and Rivers State was not an exception as the outbreak in early 2025 in Rivers State, resulted in at least nine deaths and 41 suspected cases, primarily affecting the Andoni and Akuku-Toru Local Government Areas. The outbreak, reported around January and March 2025, was linked to contaminated water sources and poor sanitation, according to the State's Commissioner for Health, Adaeze Oreh (2025).

Earlier, Briggs, Abo and Promise (2025) analysed the 2024 cholera cases that occurred in the flood affected Local Government Areas of Rivers State and reported that Cholera epidemics in Rivers State are largely caused by flooding, and two important risk factors are older persons and delayed medical care. Anibueze (2008) point out the paramount importance of health, emphasising that its inherent value necessitates societal prioritisation and meticulous attention from governments globally.

One way the media can contribute to this effort is through broadcasting health-related programmes on radio. In Rivers State, there are a lot of health programmes ongoing on *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5* FM. Some of these programmes are *Health Safety Security and Environment*. Also, *Medic923* and *Health Matters* which air on Nigeria Info FM, Port Harcourt and Treasure 98.5 FM respectively, focus on health issues. The programmes combine one-man talk show with interview as content formats.

However, in spite of the public enlightenment programmes, there are still much number of Cholera cases in the state. This drew the attention of the researchers to determine the level of awareness and perception as well as the influence of this coverage on the perception of Rivers State residents.

Statement of the Problem

Cholera outbreaks continue to be a significant public health concern in Rivers State, Nigeria, claiming lives, causing economic hardship, and precipitating social and political upheaval. The persistence of this disease despite various efforts to address it through seminars, drug administration, and other measures at local, and state levels is alarming. Several factors contribute to the ineffectiveness of these efforts, including inadequate reach, irregular implementation, and corruption among personnel involved. These challenges underscored the need for innovative, sustainable and effective approaches to public health communication.

Radio, a widely accessible and affordable medium, has the potential to address these shortcomings as it educates and mobilises people on cholera prevention and treatment. Its ability to reach a vast audience, particularly in rural areas where other forms of media may be limited makes it an ideal platform for disseminating health information. The researchers observed that many residents of Rivers State may not have access to accurate and reliable information about cholera, its causes, symptoms, and prevention strategies. This knowledge gap can lead to risky behaviours and delayed treatment, exacerbating the spread of the disease. Hence, the need to investigate the role of radio in curbing cholera outbreaks among residents of Rivers State.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study included to:

1. ascertain the level of awareness of Rivers State residents of *Nigeria Info 92.3 FM* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of cholera outbreak;
2. establish the perception of Rivers State residents of *Nigeria Info 92.3 FM* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of cholera outbreak and;
3. identify the influence of this coverage on the perception of Rivers State residents of cholera outbreak.

Review of Literature **Radio and the promotion of health information**

Information has been severally defined as data that have been processed into a form that is meaningful and purposeful to the recipient or user and is real or perceived as of value in prospective decision making process (Aina, 2004). Ndukwe (2000) cited in Oziri, Unegbu & Ndulaka (2023) averred that information serves as a vital catalyst, facilitating the smooth functioning of governance, organisational operations, and individual

endeavours. It can be conveyed through various modalities, including spoken language, written text, nonverbal cues, visual media, and broadcast channels such as radio and television. Corroborating this notion, the World Health Organisation (2018) emphasised that timely, accurate, and culturally-sensitive information dissemination enables individuals to make informed decisions and adopt protective measures against health threats, thereby safeguarding themselves, their families, and communities.

Health information encompasses a broad spectrum of knowledge, spanning from individualised patient needs to generalised public health education (Wasike & Tenya, 2013). It exists on a continuum between health education and health promotion, as posited by Adeyoyin and Oyewusi (2015), and includes updates on global health initiatives and organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). A dual perspective on health information, as offered by Nwafor-Orizu and Onwudinyo (2015) and the Institute for Information Law and Policy (2015), characterises it as both a vital component of overall well-being and a determinant of the right to attain optimal health standards, including access to relevant information.

Radio is a potent medium for disseminating health information, capable of influencing awareness, attitudes, and behaviours (Uwom & Oloyede, 2014). During health crises, radio plays a key role in mass mobilisation and public enlightenment, prompting action against emerging diseases (Duhe & Cho, 2009). As a primary source of health information, radio shapes societal awareness and understanding of health issues. Studies have shown that many patients rely on radio more than other sources for general health information (Dolan et al., 2004). Corroborating, Agbana and Usman (2014) mention that the role of radio in health reportage would go a longway in putting health issues in the minds and lips of everyone, as a significant source of health-related information and can shape the way we think about and discuss health issues. More so, radio coverage may influence

individual health decision and also help to prevent bad health and lead to changes in public policy and public perception (Stryker et al., 2008).

Uwom and Oloyede (2014) assert that adequate health information and knowledge are essential prerequisites for maintaining optimal health. Individuals require access to information on healthy lifestyle practices, disease prevention, health conditions, and government-sponsored healthcare initiatives. The radio plays a pivotal role in disseminating this information, fostering awareness, facilitating information exchange, and mobilising the populace towards achieving national health objectives, thereby catalysing societal transformation.

Radio health message campaigns have proven efficacious in developing countries, particularly when complemented by posters and other mass media, enabling widespread dissemination to diverse audiences. The specialisation of radio stations by demographic characteristics, such as age, taste, and gender, facilitates targeted audience segmentation. Radio's capacity to effectively convey health information can significantly influence individuals' awareness, attitudes, and behaviours (Uwom & Oloyede, 2014). According to Diedong (2013), radio plays a pivotal role in promoting health knowledge and shaping public understanding of medicine and science. Its responsibility in health enlightenment lies in its ability to educate, sensitise, and mobilise people through information dissemination. Radio reports and messages are regarded as integral sources of public policy, contingent upon the selection and presentation of issues.

Cholera and its perception

Cholera is a naturally occurring, epidemic-prone disease caused by the comma-shaped, rod-like, motile, gram-negative bacterium *Vibrio Cholerae* (Kaper, 1995). Characterised by acute watery diarrhea, vomiting, muscle cramps, and severe dehydration, cholera is transmitted via the ingestion of food, water, or other substances contaminated with *Vibrio*

Cholerae. This ancient disease, reported globally, is associated with significant morbidity and mortality rates. While infants of nursing mothers with previous exposure to cholera may possess temporary immunity, the general population is universally susceptible.

This infectious disease is estimated to afflict 2-4 million individuals annually in endemic regions (Ali et al., 2012), with a historical record of seven major pandemics globally since the early 19th century (Faruque, Albert & Mekalanos, 1998). The first six were caused by toxigenic strains of classical (CL) biotype, serogroup 01, which was reported to have originated from India, while the current 7th is caused by V. cholerae of the EI Tor (ET) biotype (Zhang, 2014). In Africa, the majority of cholera cases between the early 1990s and 2013 were reported in Nigeria, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, and South Africa. Nigeria documented its first cholera outbreak in a village near Lagos on December 26, 1970, with 22,931 cases and 2,945 deaths (WHO, 2012). A combination of biological and cultural factors significantly influences the attainment of optimal health outcomes.

In cholera-endemic countries, prevalent myths and misconceptions surrounding the disease's ethology can hinder control efforts. The behaviours of the general population and specific risk groups significantly influence both disease transmission and containment. During epidemics, public health authorities rely on the public's willingness and ability to adhere to recommendations, including personal hygiene practices, vaccination, prophylaxis, quarantine, travel restrictions, and closure of public facilities. An important factor influencing adoption of precautionary behaviours is risk perception (Brewer et al., 2007; Sjoberg, 2000), which encompasses perceived personal vulnerability and likelihood of disease threat. Perceived vulnerability, combined with perceived severity, constitutes perceived threat (Onno et al., 2009). Individuals with high perceived threat of cholera – believing infection is likely and consequences severe – are more likely to

adopt protective behaviours. However, risk perception is just one determinant among many influencing protective actions.

The varied approaches to controlling cholera epidemics in Africa are often influenced by local beliefs, such as attributing the disease to 'miasma' (bad air), 'anger of the gods', witchcraft, or 'black magic' (Mertem, 2013). These perceptions impact disease management. In Nigeria, recurrent cholera outbreaks could be mitigated if predisposing factors and ethology were better understood. However, responses often remain reactive, lacking sustainable practices, leading to repeated outbreaks in urban and rural areas, particularly during rainy seasons. Recently, cholera outbreak rocked Rivers State leading to the death of not less than 10 persons.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on perception theory.

Perception theory

The Perception Theory, propounded by Berelson and Steiner in 1964, posits that mass media messages are subject to individual interpretation, leading to varied responses among audience members. The theory acknowledges the complexity of message interpretation, suggesting that achieving desired attitudes, beliefs, or behavioural changes can be challenging. Decoding, the process of receiving and interpreting messages, involves perception and processing of stimuli through the senses (Severin & Tankard, 2000). This highlights the limitations of mass communication, where the message's effectiveness depends on the receiver's interpretation.

Severin and Tankard (2000) emphasise three processes influencing mass communication: selective exposure, selective attention, and selective retention. Selective exposure refers to the tendency of individuals to engage with messages aligning with their existing attitudes, while avoiding discordant ones. This concept stems from Festinger's (1959) cognitive dissonance theory, which suggests people reduce dissonance by seeking

consonant information.

Selective attention involves focusing on message aspects that align with existing attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours, while avoiding contradictory sections. This selective processing influences how individuals interpret and respond to messages, often reinforcing pre-existing views. Also, selective retention is the tendency for the recall of information to be influenced by want, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. Thus, the selective processes can be thought of as four rings of denseness, with selective exposure as the outmost ring, followed by selective attention, and finally selective retention.

Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2008) point out defence mechanisms against undesired information: selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention. These processes allow individuals to filter out contradictory information, influencing message effectiveness. This underscores the complexity of communication, where receivers actively shape message interpretation. In relation to this study, the way and manner in which residents perceive radio coverage of Cholera in Rivers State goes a long way in influencing them.

Empirical review

Anorue, Ugboaja and Anedo (2021) researched “Influence of mass media health interventions on prevention and control of Cholera in selected States of South-East, Nigeria.” The study investigated the influence of mass media health interventions on the prevention and control of cholera in selected states of South-east, Nigeria. Findings indicated a high level of awareness among respondents regarding communication interventions, primarily disseminated through interpersonal channels (family and friends), followed by radio (19.2%). The researchers concluded that respondents are well-informed about cholera danger signs and recommended process-oriented campaigns to enhance prevention efforts. While Anorue, Ugboaja

and Anedo (2021) study was carried out in the South-east of Nigeria, the current study was situated in South-South and the periods of the studies were different. Similarly, both studied the media and residents awareness of cholera outbreak.

Ekuma (n.d) study focused on “Use of radio in the fight against incessant Cholera outbreaks in Ebonyi State.” This study which investigated what radio with its enormous power can do to put a stop to the disease, adopted the social responsibility and agenda setting theories. Findings showed that radio played a significant role in shaping the health life pattern of its audience in general but the health policy makers do not liaise with radio health programmers during disease outbreak like cholera. Therefore, this study recommended that there should be synergy between radio health programmers and health policy makers, if the battle against cholera outbreaks in Ebonyi state must be won. Both studies examined the use of radio to curb Cholera epidemics, however, the studies differed in their objectives, theories, and area of study.

Similarly, a study by Mpazi and Mnyika (2005) on “Knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding cholera outbreaks in Ilala Municipality of Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania. The study assessed the level of knowledge about cholera causes, symptoms, and prevention methods, evaluate attitudes towards cholera preventive and containment measures, the adoption of hygienic practices, and identified gaps to inform targeted interventions for cholera control. The study which was guided by the Health Belief Model, revealed that despite having knowledge and positive attitudes towards cholera prevention, hygienic practices lagged behind. While these studies focused on the media and the menace of Cholera Outbreak, the differences between the empirical study and the current study were in the theories, time frame and geographical location of studies.

Methodology

The study employed a survey design. This design was deemed appropriate as the sample is taken from a human population in order to determine their primary features which can be generalised to the whole population. The population for the study was made up of all residents from the selected local government areas in Rivers State. According to the National Population Commission of Nigeria and National Bureau of Statistics, 2022 projected census figures, estimated the population of Obio/Akpor residents in Rivers State to be 665,000 and Port Harcourt as 774,600. The 2026 projection of the population census at 2.3% growth rate is 1,506,582. The multi-stage sampling involving purposive and random sampling methods was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select two LGAs- Port Harcourt City, and Obio/Akpor. These LGAs were chosen because, historically, they are the most populous in the state, coupled with the fact that Obio/Akpor, earlier had recorded high Cholera burdens. Thus, given the resurgence of the disease in other LGAs in the state, there is need to assess the awareness and perception of the residents of these LGAs who reside in the state and exposed to radio as a medium of information. Two towns were randomly selected from both LGAs. The towns were Port Harcourt from Port Harcourt LGA, and Choba from Obio/Akpor. Using the Meyer sampling size determination template, 384 sample size was used for the study. The study adopted a questionnaire to gather primary data, analysed results using a Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). A mean criterion of 2.5 was used as a threshold, with means above 2.5 accepted and those below rejected. Thus, data for this study were presented in tables of frequency and analysed in percentage using descriptive statistics.

Findings

From the demographic data analysis, 145 (49%) representing the highest number of respondents were within 21-30 years. This shows their level of maturity and knowledge ability regarding the subject matter. More so, the analysis on the respondents' exposure to the subject matter indicated that all the respondents sampled agreed that they listen to radio and have heard of cholera prevention measures via *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM*.

Table 1: Mean (x) analysis of the level of awareness of Rivers State residents on *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of cholera outbreak

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	WMS	Decision
1.	As a Rivers resident, I am aware of <i>Nigeria Info 92.3</i> and <i>Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria.	62 246	27 834	30 60	0 0	3.0	Agreed
2.	I regularly listen to <i>Nigeria Info 92.3</i> and <i>Treasure 98.5 FM</i> programmes that discuss cholera outbreak in Nigeria.	62 248	62 186	247 494	0 0	2.5	Agreed
3.	<i>Nigeria Info 92.3</i> and <i>Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria is widespread and easily accessible.	30 120	48 744	72 184	0 0	3.0	Agreed
4.	I have heard <i>Nigeria Info 92.3</i> and <i>Treasure 98.5 FM</i> jingles or announcements about cholera prevention and control in Nigeria.	62 248	278 834	30 60	0 0	3.0	Agreed

The findings in Table 1 suggested that the widespread and easily accessible nature of radio made it possible for the residents to come across jingles and announcements about Cholera prevention and control. Confirming radio as an effective medium for disseminating information about public health issues, particularly in reaching a wide audience.

Table 2: Mean (x) analysis of the perceptions Rivers State residents' hold of *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of Cholera outbreak

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	WMS	Decision
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria is informative and helpful.	62 248	278 834	30 60	0 0	3.0	Agreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria is sensationalized and exaggerated.	30 120	62 186	247 494	30 30	2.2	Disagreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria is credible and trustworthy.	30 120	340 1020	0 0	0 0	3.0	Agreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria is biased and one-sided.	30 120	30 90	308 616	0 0	2.2	Disagreed

From the results in Table 2, findings showed the importance of accurate, informative, and trustworthy reporting as Rivers State residents perceived *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of the cholera outbreak in Nigeria to be informative and helpful.

Table 3: Mean (x) analysis of the influence of this coverage on the perception of Rivers State residents of Cholera outbreak

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	WMS	Decision
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria has increased my concern about the disease.	62 248	246 744	30 60	30 30	2.9	Agreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria has made me more aware of the risks and consequences of the disease.	154 616	154 462	30 60	30 30	3.1	Agreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria has influenced my opinion about the government's response to the outbreak.	30 120	277 831	62 124	0 0	2.9	Agreed
<i>Nigeria Info 92.3 and Treasure 98.5 FM</i> coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria has made me more likely to take preventive measures against the disease.	123 492	215 648	62 124	0 0	3.1	Agreed

The data above showed that *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of the cholera outbreak had a significant influence on the perception of Rivers State residents. As the coverage played a crucial role in educating and sensitising the public about the cholera outbreak, and thus, contributed to promoting positive health behaviours.

Discussion of Findings

To provide answer to the first objective which was on ascertaining the level of awareness of Rivers State residents of *Nigeria Info 92.3* and *Treasure 98.5 FM* coverage of cholera outbreak an analysis was done, as shown in Table 1. Findings indicated that Rivers State residents were highly aware of the coverage of the cholera outbreak in Nigeria, particularly from *Nigeria Info FM* and *Treasure FM*. Many claimed they often listened to programmes discussing the cholera outbreak and heard radio jingles and announcements about cholera prevention and control. The widespread and easily accessible nature of radio coverage of the cholera outbreak was also acknowledged by the respondents. Underscoring the fact that radio is an effective medium for disseminating information about public health issues, particularly in reaching a wide audience.

The finding was consistent with the study by Anorue, Ugboaja, and Anedo (2021), which found a high level of awareness of communication interventions on cholera prevention and control among respondents in selected states of South-East Nigeria. However, while their study found that interpersonal communication channels were the primary source of information, the current study found that radio was a significant source of information about the cholera outbreak. This difference may be attributed to the specific context and population of the studies. Nevertheless, both studies highlighted the importance of effective communication in promoting awareness and education about public health issues. The perception theory

also gave credence to the findings of this study. According to this theory, people actively interpret and process information based on their individual experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. The fact that Rivers State residents were highly aware of the coverage of the cholera outbreak suggested that they have been able to process and interpret the information provided by the radio stations.

The second research objective was to establish the perception of Rivers State residents of *NigeriaInfo* 92.3 FM and *Treasure* 98.5 FM coverage of cholera outbreak, and the finding that Rivers State residents perceive radio coverage of the cholera outbreak as informative and helpful was consistent with those of Ekuma (n.d) which focused on “Use of radio in the fight against incessant Cholera outbreaks in Ebonyi State. As it indicated that radio played a significant role in shaping the health life pattern of its audience in general. These studies have further highlighted the importance of radio as a credible and trustworthy source of information about public health issues.

According to the perception theory, people actively interpret and process information based on their individual experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. The fact that respondents trust the coverage from *NigeriaInfo FM* and *Treasure FM* suggested that they have been able to process and interpret the information provided by the radio stations in a positive way, in this case, the respondents' perceptions of the radio coverage were overwhelmingly positive. By providing accurate, informative, and trustworthy reporting, these radio stations played a critical role in promoting public awareness and education about health issues. This is particularly important in the context of cholera outbreaks, where timely and accurate information would help to prevent the spread of the disease and promote positive health behaviours.

The study's findings on the influence of radio coverage of the cholera outbreak on Rivers State residents' perception showed that radio coverage of cholera outbreak in Nigeria has made the residents to be more aware of the risks and consequences of the disease as they were more likely to take

preventive measures against the disease. These findings were consistent with existing research on the role of media in public health communication.

Research has shown that media coverage can increase awareness and concern about health issues, shape opinions, and promote positive health behaviours. For instance, Akello and Parker (2021) found that media initiatives were successful in increasing awareness and encouraging behavioural changes during cholera outbreaks. Also, a study on the 2014-2017 cholera outbreak in South Sudan showed the crucial role of media coverage in setting the agenda for public discussion and influencing the importance people ascribed to the issue (Jones et al., 2020).

Theoretically, individuals actively interpret information based on their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. These studies have found that people are more likely to adopt preventive behaviours when they perceive a health threat as serious and believe the recommended actions will be effective. In the light of the foregoing, radio has been identified as an effective medium for promoting public awareness and education about health issues, particularly in developing countries. For example, a study in Tanzania found that radio programmes effectively increased knowledge and promoted positive health behaviours among listeners. However, some studies have also found that media coverage can have negative effects, such as promoting fear and panic, as seen during the 2016 Zika virus outbreak in Brazil (Barros & Silva, 2017).

In sum, findings from the study showed majority of the respondents agreed that the coverage has increased their knowledge, motivated them to practice good hygiene, and boosted their confidence in preventing cholera. As respondents acknowledged that they have learned about cholera prevention measures through radio coverage of the outbreak. Thus, the role of the media in promoting public health education and behaviour change is well-documented. These studies have consistently shown that media coverage can increase knowledge and awareness about health issues, shape opinions, and promote positive health behaviours.

Conclusion

This study is significant as the findings indicated that residents were highly aware of the coverage of cholera outbreaks, perceive it as informative and helpful, and have benefited from the coverage in terms of increased knowledge and adoption of preventive measures. The study's results have a crucial impact for public health communication strategies, as it reaffirmed the importance of radio as a medium for disseminating health information and promoting behaviour change.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that given the high level of awareness and positive perception of radio coverage among residents:

- Radio stations should continue to prioritise cholera outbreak coverage, providing regular updates and information on preventive measures.
- Health authorities should leverage radio stations to disseminate public health information and promote behaviour change, particularly in rural areas where access to other forms of media may be limited.
- In order to maintain the trust and credibility of residents, radio stations should ensure that the information they broadcast about health generally is accurate, up-to-date, and credible.

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