

# Using the Radio: Appraising NGO's COVID-19 Safety Awareness Campaign in Nigeria



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## Abstract

This study was carried out to ascertain if Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) residing in Edo State, were involved in creating safety protocol awareness on Covid-19 through the use of radio jingles. The researcher adopted the descriptive research method by using interviews to elicit descriptive data from three categories of respondents: radio stations, radio listeners, and NGOs. The findings of the study reveal that NGOs in Edo State have not placed jingles on the COVID-19 safety awareness campaign. "I can tell you that NGOs in Edo have not aired any jingle on Covid-19 safety protocols". In fact, I listen to the radio at any time particularly, Vibes FM, Benin City, KU FM, Benin City, ITV/Radio Benin City, and Rhythm FM, Benin City. This study concludes that NGOs in Edo State were naïve towards what ought to have been their key social responsibility to society. This paper holds substantial academic and applied contributions but also recognizes some limitations. First, the data are collected from a single Department of a public university in Edo State. Consequently, the outcomes of the study might not be widespread. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the researcher recommends that, for upcoming research, researchers should analyze NGOs involvement in the COVID-19 safety awareness campaign on a regional or national level rather than the state level. Focusing on a regional or national level could allow a larger sample size. One more recommendation is to conduct the investigation on diverse media forms where NGOs could probably broadcast the COVID-19 safety protocol awareness campaign.

**Keywords:** *Radio, NGO's, Covid-19, Safety, Campaign, Nigeria*

## Introduction/Literature Review

### Radio and Awareness Campaigns

The mass media of communication are powerful societal tools that influence human communication and behavior. Social scientists have researched extensively on the powerful influence of the mass media relating to behavioural change, agenda-setting, and status conferral. Ndolo (2005) sees the mass media as one of the institutions in society that produces knowledge. He also asserts that the mass media performs correlation functions by way of explaining and interpreting events, providing information for local and international consumption, transferring cultural heritage by communicating norms and values. They also entertainment and mobilized members of the public by way of promoting national interest and certain behavior during national

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crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Okinyi (2019, p.4) “media has an enormous impact on any society. The only gap is whether the media-induced changes are good or bad for the community. It is also a question on how long it takes for media and products to cause a change in the lifestyle of the people”. Pride, Ejomafuvwe, and Brickkins (2014) maintained that:

The mass media are universally acclaimed to be purveyors of information in various areas of news, entertainment, drama, soap opera, film, and features programmes among other offerings. The mass media serve as a very important tool in advancing public health goals, communicating issues pertaining to health through various media of mass communication (p.135).

Afolayan, Abuya, Kumyi and Adedowole (2011) assert that, media takes form and modifies the context in which health-related problems exist, even though they are themselves the products of the same social context. Studies have also revealed that health promotion activities are strongly linked with the social context. Suraj (2011) says that the mass media in the form of radio are effective ways to persuade the target audience to adopt new behaviours, or to remind them of critical information, besides informing the public about new diseases and where to seek help, they could keep the public updated on any critical or innovative development about the disease.

Radio has been seen as a powerful means of disseminating information on all subject matters to the mass media audience. The powerful influence of the radio over the years has been attributed to the ability of radio waves to traverse national boundaries. Other factors that give radio an advantage over other forms of the media include its portability, ability to translate messages in local languages and dialects, affordability, and alternative use of power. Sambe (2005,p.95) captures the unique characteristics of radio thus: “It is very effective in mobilizing people; hence it bypasses illiteracy and appeals to every individual person. Radio signals are received in many places within the primary service and bordering areas at the same time, thus it overcomes air and barrier. It reports what is happening now and what has happened”.

Biagi (2003, p.7) in his examination of the characteristic features of radio states that “today our memory of events that happened in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is directly tied to the radio. Radio gives its listeners an immediate record at the time when the world events demanded attention”. Today, radio is no longer limited to cars, transistors, motorbike, but even on our digital devices. Utulu (2012,p.68) cap it thus, “surprisingly, it is worthy of note that radio initially used to be the center of attention in the owners’ sitting rooms, but today this medium could be found in other places other than the sitting rooms that is, in the bedrooms, kitchen, workshops, stores, even in the vehicles, and so on”.

These characteristics have also placed the radio in an advantageous position which makes it a preferred medium for media awareness campaigns. Media campaigns are created to get a message to a target audience and to try to influence the behavior of the audience in some desired way. A Media campaign is defined as the universe of measures in order to fulfill an explicit objective. They are series of harmonized messages or other advertising efforts placed on the media, purposely designed to achieve a certain goal or objective. According to Yusuf (2019,p.2) “mass media campaigns simply put are verbal or non-verbal communication drafted in form of spot announcements, jingles, or

short messages that reach members of the public through channels of communication which can be radio, television, and social media" Ugande (2007,p.40) states that "public awareness campaigns are particularly concerned with awareness generation or creation. The mass media, especially broadcasting are often the main media of campaigns. This is due largely to the perceived power of the mass media to create awareness in societies about development interventions. This strategy strongly believes in the view that to change behavior, the first step should be awareness creation".

Without a doubt, many nations have utilized the radio to create awareness on several issues and changed citizens' perceptions, and also mobilized them to support social change. Okinyi (2019) writes about the powerful influence of radio on the social mobilization of rural Kenyans and states that the Pamoja FM station played a crucial role in the post-election violence by educating the people on the need to embrace peace. He also attributed the success of radio for social mobilization to its ability to create the diversity of opinions and voices on air through openness to participation from all sectors on all topics.

Bora (2012) gave a brief account of the power of radio in creating awareness and mobilization in India. Bora further stated that in 1948 Mahatma Gandhi utilized the radio for its freedom struggle, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak also used the media to disseminate their socially relevant messages. According to Bora, in 1946 United Nations Organization (UNO) also established the United Nations Radio with the aim to promote peace and security. Bora also gave examples of researches that have been conducted on the use of radio for the social campaigns to include the works of AEGES, 1795; Greenholm, 1975; Hall, 1972; Contractor, *et al*, 1984 and Starosta and Merriam, 1986. Ugande (2007) also examines the place of radio in awareness creation and behavior change. In his work, he explained the power of radio to create awareness from the perspective of entertainment education. He stated that in Tanzania, *Twende na Wakati* a radio programme funded by UNFPA was found very effective in stimulating interpersonal peer communication arising from listening to the programme. It was discovered that those who listen to the programme discussed family planning with their spouses than those who do not listen to the programme. In his narrative, he also states that success was made in Viet Nam "Window of Love" radio awareness programme that was used to educate adolescents on the sensitive aspects of reproductive health. Bora (2012, p.62) also captures the impact of radio awareness in India and states that "All India Radio (AIR) took the lead in mounting a publicity campaign of all types of developmental messages from family planning to a high-yielding variety of seeds, vaccination among others to such an extent that some of the rice or wheat varieties widely came to be known as Radio Rice or Radio Wheat"

In Nigeria, Ezugwu and Nzekwe(2015) examined radio campaigns on the health behavior of women in South-Eastern Nigeria, and in their study, it was found that several campaigns have been organized by Non-Governmental Organizations such as The Wellbeing Foundation, LEAH Foundation, Pink Pearl Foundation, Breast Cancer Association of Nigeria(BRECAN); and Care Organization for Public Enlightenment. However, research findings have also shown that some health issues have not been brought to the attention of the public. Ndolo, Eze and Nwodo (2015) in their study assert that South-Eastern Nigerian women do not know much about cervical cancer due to lack of awareness. Parrish-Sprowl (2012,p.214) research seems to provide an answer to the

poor or low awareness of cervical cancer by Eastern Nigerian women. According to him "in Africa, as in most of the developing world, the use of radio for rural development in general and for health education, in particular, has mainly been based on the Rural Broadcasting Programme model rather than on the more appropriate interactive and audience-oriented Rural Broadcasting model". Nwodu and Ukozor (2003) gave a supporting account of the failure of radio jingle in changing attitude and behavior of the people of Obollo and Umueze Owerre of the old Imo State who resisted Imo Rural electrification project during the leadership of Chief Samuel Onunaka Mbakwe as the Governor of Imo State. According to Nwodu and Ukozor, it was obvious that the indigenes of these communities needed something else other than the electricity project. This confirms the fact that those who designed the radio jingle or campaign messages for the rural electrification project did not take into consideration an appropriate interactive and audience-oriented rural broadcasting model. These researchers, however, concluded that the indigenes of Obollo and Umueze Owerre later accepted the project when a more interactive communication approach was adopted.

Nigeria like many other developing nations grapples with a lot of developmental issues with health crises taking the lead. Umukoro (2016, p.1) in his review of the Ebola Virus outbreak and its solution in Nigeria asserts that "Africa grapples with the world's most serious public health crisis". This is but an obvious fact, like Nigeria, the giant of Africa is roundly battered with health-related problems. Malaria has been ravaging Nigeria since the pre-colonial days to date being the greatest killer of infants. Semiu (2012) states that one of the most pronounced problems in Africa is the menace of malaria, with about 3000 children who die of malaria every day in Africa. In Nigeria, malaria constantly ranks among the five most common causes of death of children. Studies have shown that African children under five years and pregnant women are most at risk of malaria. Fatally afflicted children often die less than 72 hours after developing symptoms. Efforts at eradicating malaria in Nigeria have brought many media campaigns championed by NGOs, Government Agencies, and International Organizations. Among the notable campaign is the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) christened Global Malaria Action Plan (GMAP) a blueprint of various strategies, scientific, and communication to be adopted for a malaria-free world. United Nations through its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out a mandate to all nations of the world to achieve certain goals which malaria eradication is one. World Health Organization (WHO) in her contributions to combating this deadly disease has encouraged research by some organizations such as Tropical Disease Research Control (TDR), Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and MALARIA NO MORE. Other notable organizations for the fight against malaria include Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which also assists in the Global Malaria Plan. Africa Union (AU) also supports Roll Back Malaria; AU launched Roll Back Malaria in 1998 and was co-sponsored by United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP).

Besides malaria is cancer, this deadly disease has killed many Nigerians particularly women. Ezugwu and Nzekwe(2015,p.191) citing Cancer Statistics Worldwide (2012) state that "cancer accounts for 13% of all deaths registered globally and 70% of that figure occurs in middle and low-income countries of which Nigeria is among breast cancer killed one in every 25 Nigerian women. It is estimated that in every 100,000 Nigerian women, 116 of them have breast cancer". There are other diseases affecting the health of

Nigerians such as Lassa fever, HIV/AIDS, Polio Meningitis, Ebola, SARS, Anthrax, Cholera, Bubonic plague, Influenza, Small Pox, Chicken Pox, Tuberculosis, and Typhoid fever.

While Nigeria is still battling with these numerous diseases, Covid-19 showed up in March 2020. This novel ailment COVID-19, according to UNICEF as cited in Egielewa, Ate and Ngonso (2020) "Corona viruses are part of the large group of zoonotic viruses which are transmitted from animals to humans through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person that is generated through coughing, sneezing and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus". Its symptoms are similar to that of malaria, a common disease in the Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria. The symptoms may include fever, cough, pneumonia, breathing difficulties, and kidney failure. This disease is also presumed to be a new strain of corona viruses and was discovered in Wuhan, China in 2019. Since its strong presence in Nigeria, in the later part of March 2020, the Federal Government as well as the States have placed a ban on movement of people and restricted social gathering and interaction from March to early October 2020. The ban which serves as safety measures against Covid-19 includes a social association, mobility, non-essential economic, school, and religious gathering. Due to the colossal damage done by the spread of the virus on the economy of Nigeria, many jingles have been sponsored by media organizations (AIT, Channel, ITV/Radio) and the Federal Government through its agency for disease control, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) spelling out the safety measures to be taken to avoid being infected by the virus. While the above mentioned bodies have produced jingles on the safety precaution (protocols) on Covid-19 which according to World Health Organization the practice is summed up thus:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet away from others if you must go out in public. Wear a cloth face covering to cover your mouth and nose when around others and when you must go out in public. The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected. Don't place one on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away after use. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve, not your hands. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, computers, phones, keyboards, sinks, toilets, faucets and countertops. Source: <https://www.redcross.org>

There are several Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria including health Non-Governmental Organizations. Some of them include: Enterprise Development Services (EDS);

Council of Nigerian People and Organizations Ajegunle Community Partners for Health (AJCPH); Alcohol Prevention Youth Initiative, AIDS Alliance in Nigeria, Best Foundation Community Child Education, Breastfeeding Promotion and Counselling Group (BPCG) Care for Youth Future Initiative, Center for Education on Population, AIDS and Drug Abuse, Destitute Careers and Rehabilitation Center of Nigeria, Earth Rights Environmental Network Initiative and Family Health and Population Action Committee. Others are: Gender and Child Care Advancement Initiative, Global Community Health Foundation, Healthcare Essentials for the Disadvantaged Foundation, Health Initiatives for Safety and Stability in Africa and Campaign against Spread of AIDS (Source: <https://infoguidenigeria.com/ngos-in-nigeria/>).

Though it is an established fact that radio is a powerful medium for awareness creation and that it has been utilized to create health awareness by some NGOs in Nigeria as well as used to create awareness in other climes, it is not yet clear if NGOs in Nigeria used the radio to create safety protocol awareness during the outbreak of COVID-19 as index cases keep increasing. Nigeria's index case report from NCDC as of 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 in summary is presented thus:

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, 212 new confirmed cases and 3 deaths were recorded in Nigeria. Till date, 61194 cases have been confirmed, 52304 cases have been discharged and 1119 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The 212 new cases are reported from 8 states- Lagos (85), Oyo (72), FCT (21), Ogun (11), Plateau (11), Katsina (6), Kaduna (5), Osun (1) (Source: NCDC microsite).

### **Methodology/Materials**

This study, therefore, is aimed at investigating if NGOs in Edo State used radio jingles to create Covid-19 safety awareness or not. The research would measure the success of the campaign through maximum audience exposure and impact (behavioral change). This is determined on the programme schedule, if it was placed on primetime slot and broadcast regularly and sequentially and if the message content listed the safety protocols as outlined by WHO. The researcher used descriptive survey method to obtain views and opinions from three (25%) radio stations in Benin City, Edo State (ITV/ Radio, Glass House, Airport Road, Benin City, Vibes FM, GRA, Benin City, and Bronze FM, Aduwawa, Benin City) out of the 12 radio stations in Edo State, and three NGOs: Achievers Wellness Global, African Women Empowerment Guild, and Edo Civil Society. However, we could not ascertain the numbers of registered NGOs in Edo State. All efforts to get this data from Edo Civil Society which serves as the umbrella body to NGOs failed. Four (36%) academic staff of Mass Communication Department, Edo University Iyamho who have taught students in the Department were purposively selected from 11 lecturers including service lecturers. The choice of these respondents is determined by the variables under consideration in this study and was purposively selected. Four research questions were framed for the study. Question 1&2 were designed for radio listeners (respondents) from whom the result would reveal if NGOs have placed radio jingles on safety protocol awareness campaigns, the success or failure of the campaign. Question 3 was framed to ascertain the importance attached to the awareness programme by the NGOs and was meant to be answered by radio stations

and the selected NGOs. Question number 4 was designed for NGOs only. The questions were:

1. What is the extent of exposure of members to radio jingles on Covid-19 safety protocol by NGOS?
2. What kind of impact does the campaign has on the audience (Behavioral Change)
3. What timeslot is given to the jingle (awareness campaign) on radio?
4. Do you (NGO) placed Covid-19 safety awareness jingle on radio and what is the frequency of the placement?

## **Results/Discussion of Findings**

### **Descriptive Analysis of Data**

Below are the data obtained from the respondents based on the four framed research questions

### **Responses from the Audience (radio listeners) Evaluating NGOs Radio Jingle on Covid-19 Safety Protocol Awareness Campaign**

#### **Respondent 1**

I can tell you that NGOs in Edo have not aired any jingle on Covid-19 safety protocols. In fact, I listen to radio every time particularly, Vibes FM, Benin City, KU FM, Benin City, ITV/Radio Benin City, and Rhythm FM, Benin City. I do not also know if anyone has been influenced by any jingle since I have not personally heard any on the radio.

#### **Respondent 2**

The part of Edo in which I reside is not really known for specific radio stations except for some stations one connects to online. I believe many old people in this area are still using their transistor radio. They possibly will certainly have a divergent view from mine. I will say yes! Radio jingles on COVID-19 have influenced my attitude positively to take safety precautions against COVID-19. I also know many other persons that have been so influenced.

#### **Respondent 3**

I have not really seen jingles sponsored by NGOs. I listen to Edo Broadcasting Service radio but not regularly, only in my car while driving. I will say twice a week. Time is irregular but mainly in the afternoon between 2 and 5 pm. I have not been influenced by the jingle since I have not listened to any and I can also say that no one has been influenced.

#### **Respondent 4**

To some extent, I think NGOs in Edo State have placed safety jingles on Covid-19. They have deployed radio medium which has a combination of reach and frequency as advantages. When I am in Benin I always tune in to Independent Radio, especially in the evening hours. But I do not think their jingle has influenced anybody.

### **Responses from Radio Stations on NGOs Involvement in Awareness Creation on Covid-19 Safety Protocol**

**1. ITV/Radio (Glass House, Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State)**

I can assure you that no jingle has come to our station from any NGO. On our own, we have produced and aired jingles on Covid-19 with the aim of creating public awareness on Covid-19 safety. The content of the message is on social distancing, use of facemask, hand sanitizers, and hand washing. We air this awareness jingle daily on our radio station as well as our TV. It usually comes up during *Man Around Town* programme from 8:00 am to 10:00 am and *Rush Hour* from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm daily. We also air the jingle in-between the news at noon.

**2. Radio Nigeria (Bronze FM, Aduwawa, Benin City, Edo State)**

We searched our advert log to find out if any NGO brought radio jingle on Covid-19 safety protocol awareness but we found none. On our own part, we have produced such jingle since April 2020 a month after the outbreak was announced. In fact, it was the GM herself who voiced the jingle and since April we have constantly aired the jingle six times a day until the last week of September 2020 when we stopped.

**3. Vibes 93.7 FM, (GRA, Benin City, Edo State)**

As an Assistant General Manager (Commercial) I do know that no NGO has brought any jingle on Covid-19 safety protocol awareness to us at Vibes 93.7 FM during the period. Most jingles came directly from the Edo State Government and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

**Responses from NGOs on their Involvement in Using Radio Jingle to Create Safety Awareness**

**1. Achievers Wellness Global**

No.2 Boundary Road, Off Airport Road, Benin City, Nigeria.

Covid-19 has been a thing of concern to all of us but truly we have not thought of producing any jingle to create awareness on the safety protocol. However, our concern about the health of the people is centered on giving free health talks on achieving wellness, general body checks, how to prevent and overcome diseases such as High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Rheumatism, Bone Disease, Body Pain, Infertility, and Prostrate Problem. This NGO is also interested in Eye Care and Child Health.

**2. African Women Empowerment Guild**

[www.awg.ng.org](http://www.awg.ng.org)

Covid-19 is a well-known case to all of us but primarily our focus is on women and children. Though we have not also done any jingle on Covid-19 not to talk of safety protocol awareness on the radio. You know that such a campaign requires funding. The area we have considered in this NGO which we have conducted research on is Mental Health and Psychological Support to members of the society on Covid-19.

**3. Edo Civil Society**

Kings Square, by No. 1 Upper Sakpomba

Decline comment

**Summary**



This study was carried out to ascertain if Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) residing in Edo State, were involved in creating safety awareness on Covid-19 through the use of radio jingle. The researcher adopted the descriptive research method by using interviews to elicit descriptive data from three categories of respondents: the radio listeners (members of the public drawn from the Department of Mass Communication, Edo University Iyamho), radio stations situated in Edo State, and NGOs situated in Edo State as well. The findings of the study reveal that NGOs in Edo State have not placed jingles on the Covid-19 safety protocol awareness campaign.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study clearly revealed that NGOs in Edo State have not placed jingles on the Covid-19 safety protocol on the radio. But on the contrary, radio stations have produced and placed jingles on Covid-19 safety awareness.

### **Limitations**

Though the paper holds substantial academic and applied contributions, it recognizes some limitations. First, the data are collected from a single Department of a public university in Edo State. Accordingly, the outcomes of the study might not be widespread. In addition, the major respondents of the survey who were supposed to evaluate the NGOs involvement are few academics and radio stations. As a result, the results could not be generalizable to different demographic clusters. That is, this research was conducted by small sample size (radio listeners, radio stations, and NGOs) which may not permit the generalization of its findings.

### **Future Research/ Recommendations**

The pioneering nature of the article may provide a pathway for upcoming research that might analyze NGOs' involvement in Covid-19 safety protocol awareness creation on a regional or national level rather than the state level. Focusing on a regional or national level could allow a larger sample size. One more recommendation is to conduct the investigation on diverse media forms where NGOs could possibly broadcast the Covid-19 safety protocol awareness campaign.

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