ASSESSMENT OF NCDC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN CREATING AWARENESS ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG RESIDENTS OF BENUE STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed NCDC communication strategies in creating awareness on covid-19 pandemic among residents of Benue State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was anchored on the agenda setting theory, theory of protective motivation theory (PMT), constituency theory and perception media theory respectively. The population of the study was 4,253,641people from three senatorial zones of Benue State. Four (4) research questions were generated. Stratified sampling was used to select eight hundred and seventy nine (879) respondents. Questionnaire was adopted for data collection. The data generated from the study were analyzed using frequency or descriptive statistics tables. It was found that: among the communication strategies of NCDC are radio, television, SMS/IVR, social media and NCDC call centres were used to create awareness about COVD-19 pandemic.; radio, television, SMS, social media/internet, call center and Presidential Task Force (PTF) were used for effective communication strategies by NCDC in combating COVID-19 pandemic. It was also found that the most effective and preferred channel of communication for creating awareness was radio/television, SMS/IVR messages, social media, NCDC call centres and daily briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF). Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that there is a need to ensure that public communications go beyond generating awareness to engaging the public on topical issues.

Key words: NCDC, Covid-19 Pandemic, Health Communication, Rumour Management

Introduction

The effects of communication more than ever before has played its role on the world in recent times in the area of health and safety communication beginning from the final days and months of the year 2019 up until date. According to Mark, (2020, p.8) affirmed that beyond the use of science and medicine, communication technology played gigantic center role in the execution of measures in the combating and curbing of the Corona Virus Pandemic which broke out in late 2019.

It is pertinent to offer that the current outbreak of the Corona Virus known as COVID-19 is one of the many identified forms of corona viruses the world has yet known. According to the World Health Organisation, "Corona Viruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illness in animals and humans". In late 2019, it was beyond the feelings from a nightmare when China announced the outbreak of a new strain of this virus, called COVID-19 (Dambo & Wokocha, 2020).

What has been made known to the world is that the virus first broke out in Wuhan, China and quickly spread around the world, with Italy, Spain and the United States recording the most cases of confirmed deaths. No doubt, governments around the world today rely mostly on communicating life saving measures to the

publics- such as implementing social distancing guidelines, stay at home and work from home orders, lockdowns in some major cities around the world and many more (Kundishora, 2017).

Needless to say, that communication strategies would be all but ineffective if the people do not properly digest the shared information in the most intended ways. These views were also shared by (Buomprisco, Ricci, Perri, & De Sio, 2020), when they averred that communication measures are ineffective, then the threat of the virus to people and societies escalates even beyond a usual stage of average.

The world over, various centers for diseases controls have been put in place even since before the break of the Corona Virus pandemic, (COVID-19), and these centers have reported over the years to have saddled with the enormous responsibility of handling any such disease or outbreaks of pandemic that could or might surface to harm humanity. In Nigeria, the Nigeria centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is saddled with such responsibilities, apart from the scientific control and management of such outbreaks, but also of awareness creation, as well as to mobilize its resources to respond to the outbreak of various diseases.

One would safely say that NCDC has been modeled after the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which has been the case for many other developing nations around the world. However, detecting and responding to infectious disease outbreaks has long presented a major public health challenge in Nigeria, given the enormous size and complexity of the country, a task that definitely calls for an enormous strategy of mass communication.

One would recall that several large infectious disease outbreaks have been reported in Nigeria, some, according to Mona, (2019, p.12) includes: the yellow fever outbreak in 1986 and 1987 that affected 9,800 and 1,249 people,

respectively, the large meningitis outbreak in 1996 with 109,580 cases and 11,717 deaths, cholera outbreaks in 2001 and 2004, as well as the meningitis outbreak in 2017.

Mona, (2019) gathered further that somewhere between these years was the much acclaimed successful response to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), in September 2014 which saw authorities issue stringent communication patterns, guidelines and warnings to the masses for the best practices and codes of conducts at the time.

It is significant to say that Nigeria has had to address emerging public health threats, such as increasing antimicrobial resistance, and increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases and high maternal mortality rates, this is why the establishment of the NCDC is indeed more justifiable now than when it was conceived in 2007. The value of the NCDC to the country became most obvious from its role in the coordination of the response to the 2014 EVD outbreak in Nigeria and coordinating the support that Nigeria provided to the Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia during the EVD outbreak in those countries.

According to Mona, (2019), this outbreak and the need for strong, country-led coordination become the basis for further growth of the Nigeria Center for Disease Control. Notably, NCDC now takes the front seat in preventing and preparing for public health emergencies, and in managing the surveillance and reference laboratory architecture for Nigeria.

Be it on the basis of science, or on the basis of effective communication strategies, the NCDC regardless has been commended for its operations in managing the pandemic since the first reported case on January 28 (Akinmayowa & Amzat, 2020). For example, a Forbes article in 2020 had the heading "What the US Could Learn from Nigeria's Response to COVID-19 Corona Virus Outbreak'. However, the same report highlighted existing

challenges, including the spread of myths among citizens and even government organizations, and this further presents more areas for the use of communication for mitigation (Worldometer, 2020).

The use of communication to chat a good course can be challenging in times of panic and disputes, especially when other sources of information presents more palatable information presented to audience members for seemingly quicker and unrealistic solutions. Mark, (2020) averred that one of the toughest challenges in the fight against this global pandemic is that it is happening when it is exigent for people to spot fake news, which provokes fear and exploits vulnerabilities.

For instance, Mark (1998) cited in Okoronkwo (2020), further asserts that due to the spread of unfounded information, most Nigerians do not believe the Corona Virus disease exists in the first place, and this is the case for many people even in developed nations. However, it could be gravely opinionative to state that continuous rigorous communication and behavioral change campaigns are crucial even for the rest of the fight against the virus.

The role of the mass media including television, radio, prints and in recent time's social media has remained indispensable in taming and eradicating pandemics. Information on positive public health practices such as social distancing, hand washing, respiratory hygiene and government policies in tackling outbreaks has often been disseminated via these media (Collinson, 2015). It is in the wake of the unfolded events surrounding the outbreak and spread of the Corona Virus Disease, (COVID-19) and the rapid responses from the authorized Nigeria Center for Disease Control that this study seeks to uncover the communication strategies the NCDC used in creating awareness to many uninformed Nigerians about all sides and faces of the virus.

Statement of the Problem

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) created a global health crisis with a global impact. The NCDC's efforts to build communication and their provision of daily updates on the disease to the public through modern media are commendable. The mainstream media's ability to communicate the dangerousness of the disease without spreading fear and panic has been significant in fighting the spread of the virus and mitigating its impact.

Global health organizations such as the World Health Organization have suggested that, the flexibility and ubiquity of media technologies should be harnessed to increase the public's adherence to the safety measures to combat the of COVID-19. Although, social media have been used by many individuals and organization in the sharing of COVID-19 and its related information, little is known about the communication strategies used by NCDC in creating awareness on Covid-19 on residents of Benue State. It could be observed that modern media is not adequate in the scheme of things because most low-income people do not own televisions and radios, and where some do; the language used may not be understood. Meanwhile, the urgency adopts several communication strategies to spread awareness has not waned. In previous outbreaks such as the Ebola outbreak in 2014, local and state authorities were often negatively perceived among the population.

Many people did not consider these authorities to be trustworthy sources of information. There are no differences in this pandemic's case; there are conspiracy theories that accuse state governments of claiming Covid-19 cases to access aid money. Conspiracy theories and mistrust often lead to hostility to health workers and refusal to seek necessary help. There are widespread rumors that some people experiencing symptoms similar to that of the coronavirus disease are deliberately not seeking professional medical services for

fear that they may be used as guinea pigs for testing vaccines. When there is a lapse in communication, the tendency for such a communication void to be filled by unreliable sources increases. Ignoring rumors and hoping that they dispel on their own is not the best approach. Again, there is no much empirical findings on this topic in Benue State. It is against these problems that the researcher seeks to assess NCDC communication strategies in creating awareness on covid-19 pandemic among residents of Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will suffice:

1. What are NCDC's communication strategies in creating awareness about the novel corona virus disease among Benue residents?
2. How is the effectiveness of the communication strategies employ by NCDC for combating covid-19 in Benue State?
3. What are the most effective/preferred channels of communication for the purpose of creating awareness on covid-19in Benue State?
4. What is the perception of Benue residents on the communication strategies employed by NCDC in combating covid-19 in Benue State?

Review of Literature

Health communication remains one of the most reliable pieces of information during times of emergencies, pandemics and other disturbing seasons. Several researches have beamed the searchlight on its importance, processes and methods that bring the publics to a general acceptance free obligation to the call for meaningful actions.

Bowen (2013) asserted that media messages convinced Cameroonians to use a treated net to prevent the spread of malaria. This outcome suggests a positive relationship between health media messages and healthy behavior. Contrary to this outcome, others studies have found that

media overconcentration on panic reporting during the Ebola outbreak in Ghana increased the fear among the public and health care workers. It also made some to flee from isolation centers, and suspicious patients in dire need of medical attention were also abandoned (Iddrisu, 2018).

Basch et al. (2014) investigated how three widely read newspapers covered Ebola in the United States. It was later found that the media primarily focused on death tolls, with less emphasis on educating the readers on the critical aspect of the Ebola epidemic. With regard to studies conducted in Nigeria, Uwom and Oloyede (2014) studied newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria with a focus on the *Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers.

The study asserts that even though health issues were well reported in the media, most of the news were reported using straight news format and there was less prominence allocated to the issue of health. Straight news here means stories that report only the most essential information in a concise and impartial manner.

Recent evidence has however shown that media coverage has been an effective way to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Zhou et al., 2020). Mutua and Oloo Ong'ong'a (2020) studied international news media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus was on BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, and people's daily. The results showed that the media played a vital role in providing information on the initial stages of the outbreak, which influenced public perceptions of the disease and contributed to curtailing the spread.

This is contrary to the opinion of Basch et al. (2020), their work helped to analyze Google videos from January to February 2020 and found death rates as the most common topic mentioned across all videos. Pertinent information regarding preventive measures received little attention, suggesting that most of the videos missed the chance to encourage and promote coping strategies and health-

sustaining behavior. With regard to Nigeria, Gever and Ezeah (2020) investigated media coverage of COVID-19 in Nigeria with a focus on TV, Radio, and Newspapers. The study was convinced that the sampled Nigerian media outlets had less emphasis on the issues of COVID-19 before the first case was announced in Nigeria. However, after cases were reported, the media had an upsurge in its interest and reportage.

In order to properly cover all sides of health communication, especially in times of pandemics and other surged chaos, Belch and Belch, (2018) suggested an integrated communication approach which was referred to as the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) to be adopted for reporting any crucial information to the public that requires significant adherence and compliance with media messages.

From inception, studies have since reviewed the literature on a number of research works relating to NCDC, Covid-19, communication strategies and awareness creation on issues of pandemic. One of many such studies include that of Ehondor and Unakalamba (2021) examined public awareness and engagement of Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)'s social media use for crisis communications during the Coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria. It also assessed the influence of communication towards public positive behavioural adjustments. The study data was gathered via a survey of 400 citizens and Facebook users and analysed using excel and SPSS. The study found public awareness of the NCDC social media communications during the outbreak; there was also a public behavioural adjustment to NCDC's recommended preventive behaviours. However, there was a low engagement in NCDC's crisis communication via Facebook. The study reveals a high level of public uncertainty about NCDC Facebook communications and a change in public opinion about the Coronavirus. This study concludes that this situation could result from competing information about the

Coronavirus on social media during the COVID outbreak and recommended further studies in this area. Findings are helpful for health communication policy reviews, strategic crisis communication assessments, appraisal of similar agencies, and further research. The reviewed study is related to the present study as it examined public awareness and engagement of Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). However, the reviewed study differs with the present study on the premise that the study under review intended to examine public awareness and while the present study intends to assess NCDC communication strategies in creating awareness on covid-19 pandemic. Again, the previous study was carried out in a different location while the present study will be carried out in Benue State, Nigeria. With the differences mentioned, there is a gap created which the present study seeks to fill.

Theoretical Framework

This study has identified four main theories to help buttress the point or points been made through the work. Theoretically, the study is anchored on the Agenda Setting theory, Theory of Protective Motivation Theory (PMT), Constituency Theory and Perception Media Theory respectively. However, the agenda setting theory takes centre stage.

Agenda Setting Theory

This study is anchored on agenda setting theory which is propounded by Lippmann (1922) and developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The agenda setting theory is a theory that discusses on how the mass media influences in making a certain issue as a public agenda. The public agenda is the main focus or prime issue which the members of the society or public concern about. In portraying the influence of mass media, Lippmann gives an example of individuals who supposed to be enemies while their countries are at war. Instead of becoming enemies, without having access to information about the war through media, those individuals are able to live

harmoniously in a secluded island. Lippmann indicates on how mass media can set a particular agenda which can influence the opinions of the public. However, he never uses the term "agenda setting theory" in his book. Nevertheless, he did generate the foundation for the agenda setting theory.

Under the agenda setting theory, the mass media is believed not to possess the ability to set the public agenda especially in matters of opinions or attitudes. However, the mass media has a particular access in contributing to or influencing the audience's perceptions, values, focus and priorities. With such influence from the mass media, the media audiences tend to form their own opinion or focus on those issues that are considered as worthy of inclusion on their mental agendas.

Agenda theory is related to this study because one of the essential roles of the media is to alert the society on issues that affect peaceful coexistence of people. Through media programmes, information on the outbreak of killer diseases can be brought to the knowledge of the people. In setting the agenda for the public, the media can collaborate with relevant government health agencies like the NCDC to educate the people on the mode of transmission and prevention of health-related issues. Within the context of this study, the media have been performing these essential roles since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Through their various programmes, the media have been able to draw the attention of the public to the dangers of the pandemic and safety measures to be adopted to contain its spread.

Research Methodology

The research adopted the survey design approach for this work. According to Nworgu (2015), a survey research design is a study that aims to collect data and describe in a systematic manner the characteristic qualities or facts about a certain phenomenon.

The population of the study was limited to the entire residents of Benue State. This is with the reason that there are many residents from all works of life residing in the area, and as such presents a veritable area of study. The population spreads to all three senatorial zones of the state.

According to the National Population Commission (2017) Benue state is populated with about 4,253,641people coming from the three senatorial zones of Benue North-West, Benue North-East and Benue and Benue South zones.

The sample consists of eight hundred and seventy-nine (879) respondents drawn from the three (3) Senatorial district of Benue State representing 5%% of the 4,796,083 population of Benue residents. According to Okorodudu (2013), the sample size must be representative of the parameters of the population of interest. The minimum sample values of 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%, 30% and above, may be used and considered as appropriate and adequately serve as representative sample size of a given population.

The final selection of the respondents was done using simple random sampling. They were selected to ensure that all the three (3) senatorial district were represented proportionately. The sampling fraction formula was used by dividing the sample size of 879 by the population of 4,796,083 which yielded a fraction of 0.5. Thus:

Sample Fraction (SF)$= \frac{879}{4796083} =0.5$ (5%). This helped to arrive at 313 for Zone A, 296 for Zone B, and 270 for Zone C respectively.

Stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents in all the three (3) senatorial zones of Benue State. The researcher would distribute a total of 406 copies of the questionnaire to cater for many that may not be returned, thus:

At North-West, 134, At North-East, 134 and at the South zone, another 134 copies of the questionnaire. In the end, the researcher administered a total of 408 copies of the questionnaire. These numbers

were arrived at based on the population distribution of residents in Benue state.

The research instrument of data collection in this study was the questionnaire. Data was collected through the personal administration of the questionnaire. Data obtained for this study was presented using tabular formats and expressed in percentage scores.

Analysis

The researcher administers a total of 879 copies of questionnaire to respondents out of which 36 copies of questionnaire (4.10%) were not returned while 843 copies of questionnaire (95.90%) were returned and analyzed.

Research Question 1: What are NCDC's communication strategies in creating awareness about the novel corona virus disease among Benue residents?

Table 1: Simple Percentages on the NCDC's Communication Strategies in Creating Awareness about the Novel Corona Virus Disease among Benue Residents

s/no	Item Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
1	Use of radio and television platforms	258(30.6)	280(33.2)	142(16.8)	163(19.3)
2	Use of SMS and IVR messages and those hosted on "on-demand platforms" sent by telecoms.	258(30.6)	280(33.2)	142(16.8)	163(19.3)
3	The use of social media and internet platforms	258(30.6)	280(33.2)	190(22.5)	115(13.6)
4	The use of NCDC call centres	258(30.6)	325(38.6)	97(11.5)	163(19.3)
5	Daily press briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF)	306(36.3)	280(33.2)	142(16.8)	115(13.6)

Results here show that, 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed with radio and television platforms as a NCDC'S communication strategy, 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 142 responses (16.8%) disagreed while 163 responses (19.3%) strongly disagreed. Item 2 result also indicated that, 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed with the use of SMS and IVR messages and other hosted on "on-demand" were equally regarded as communication strategy, 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 142 responses (16.8%) disagreed while 163 responses (19.3%) strongly disagreed. Item 3 results show that, 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed on the use of social media and internet platforms, 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 190 responses (22.5%) disagreed and 115 responses (13.6%) strongly disagreed. Item 4 results reveal that, 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed with the used of NCDC call centres, 325 responses (38.6%) agreed, 97 responses (11.5%) disagreed and 163 responses (19.3%) strongly disagreed. Item 5, 306 responses (36.3%) strongly agreed with daily press briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF), 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 142 responses (16.8%) disagreed while 115 responses (13.6%) strongly disagreed. The result implies that among the communication strategies of NCDC are radio, television, SMS/IVR, social media and NCDC call centres used to create awareness about COVD-19 pandemic.

Research Question 2: How is the effectiveness of the communication strategies employ by NCDC for combating covid-19 in Benue State?

Table 2: Simple Percentages on the Effectiveness of the Communication Strategies employed by NCDC for combating Covid-19 in Benue State

s/no	Item Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
6	The use of radio and television platforms effectively give us information in combating covid-19	258(30.6%)	280(33.2%)	152(18.0%)	153(18.1%)
7	The not everybody do get the SMS from NCDC concerning covid-19	258(30.6%)	295(35.0%)	142(16.8%)	148(17.6%)
8	Information on covid-19 is effectively pass to us through social media and internet platforms	303(35.9%)	280(33.2%)	142(16.8%)	118(14.0%)
9	We have not been getting feedback from the call center to enable us combat convid-19	110(13.0%)	334(39.6%)	261(31.0%)	138(16.4%)
10	The daily press briefing by Presidential Tax Force (PTF) gives us enough information to combat covid-19	111(13.2%)	389(46.1%)	182(21.6%)	161(19.1%)

Results above show that, 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed with the use of radio and television platforms which effectively give residents information in combating responses representing g COVID-19 pandemic, 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 152 responses (18.0%) disagreed while 153 responses (18.1%) strongly disagreed. Item 7 results review 258 responses (30.6%) strongly agreed that not everybody got SMS from NCDC concerning COVID-19, 295 responses (35.0%) agreed, 142 responses (16.8%) disagreed while 148 responses (17.6%) strongly disagreed. Item 8 reveals that, 303 responses (35.9%) strongly agreed that information on COVID-19 is effectively pass to Benue residents' social media and internet platforms, 280 responses (33.2%) agreed, 142 responses (16.8%) disagreed and 118 responses (14.0%) strongly disagreed. Item 9 results indicate that, 110 responses (13.0%) strongly agreed that they have not been gotten SMS from NCDC concerning COVID-19, 334 responses agreed, 261 responses (31.0%) disagreed and 138 responses (16.4%) strongly disagreed. Item 10 results also indicates that, 111 responses (13.2%) strongly agreed that the daily briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF) gives them enough information to combat COVID-19. The result implies that among effectiveness of the communication strategies of NCDC for combating COVID-19 are use of radio, television, SMS, social media/internet, call center and Presidential Task Force (PTF).

Research Question 3: What are the most effective/preferred channels of communication for the purpose of creating awareness on covid-19in Benue State?

Table 3: Simple Percentages on the most Effective/preferred Channels of Communication for the Purpose of Creating Awareness on COVID-19 in Benue State

s/no	Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
11	We prefer information from radio and television platforms	53(6.3%)	182(21.6%)	369(43.8)	239(28.4)
12	We do not like information from SMS and IVR messages	85(10.1%)	306(36.3)	252(29.9%)	200(23.7%)
13	We prefer information from social media platforms hence everyone uses facebook, twitter among others	69(8.2%)	321(38.1%)	292(34.6%)	161(19.1%)
14	We do not need NCDC call centres since they are always not picking their calls.	95(11.3%)	316(37.5%)	189(22.4%)	243(28.8%)
15	We prefer daily press briefing by Presidential Tax Force (PTF)	31(3.7%)	365(43.3%)	257(30.5%)	190(22.5%)

Table 3 shows simple percentages on the most effective/preferred channels of communication for the purpose of creating awareness on COVID-19 in Benue State. Table results reveal that 53 responses representing 6.3% strongly agreed that they preferred information from radio and television platforms, 182 responses (21.6%) agreed, 369 responses (43.8%) disagreed, 239 responses (28.4%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, item 12 results reveal that, 85 responses (10.1%) strongly agreed that, they do not like information from SMS/IVR messages, 306 responses (36.3%) agreed, 252 responses (29.9%) disagreed and 200 responses (23.7%) strongly disagreed. Also, result of item 13 reveals that, 69 responses (8.2%) strongly agreed that they preferred information through social media such as facebook, twitter among others, 321 responses

(38.1%) agreed, 292 responses (34.6%) disagreed and 161 responses (19.1%) strongly disagreed. The result of item 14 reveals that, 95 responses (11.3%) strongly agreed that they do not need NCDC call centres hence they cannot pick their calls, 316 responses (37.6%) agreed, 189 responses (22.4%) disagreed while 243 responses (28.8%) strongly disagreed. Item 15 indicated that, 31 responses (3.7%) strongly agreed that, they preferred daily press briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF), 365 responses (43.3%) agreed, 257 responses (30.5%) disagreed and 190 responses (22.5%) strongly disagreed. The result implies that most effective and preferred channel of communication of creating awareness was radio/television, SMS/IVR messages, social media, NCDC call centres and daily briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF).

Research Question 4: What is the perception of Benue residents on the communication strategies employed by NCDC in combating covid-19 in Benue State?

Table 4: Percentage Responses of the Perception of Benue Residents on the Communication Strategies Employed by NCDC in Combating COVID-19 in Benue State

s/no	Item Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
16	In addition to radio/television, SMS, Social media and daily briefing, outdoor media should also be applied	111(13.2%)	389(46.1%)	182(21.6%)	161(19.1%)
17	The use of radio/television, SMS, Social media and daily briefing sent enough information to us.	111(13.2%)	389(46.1%)	182(21.6%)	161(19.1%)
18	Social media and internet platforms seem to be better than any other communication strategies.	126(14.9%)	178(21.1%)	286(33.9%)	253(30.0%)
19	The use of NCDC call centres seems not to circulate enough information to combat covid-19.	4(0.5%)	197(23.4%)	338(40.1%)	304(36.1%)
20	Daily press briefing by Presidential Tax Force (PTF) is a better way of circulating information to the public.	4(0.5%)	192(22.8%)	348(41.3%)	299(35.5%)

Findings here reveal that 111 responses (13.2%) strongly agreed addition to radio, television, SMS, social media, daily briefing, outdoor media should be applied, 389 responses (46.1%) agreed, 182 responses (21.6%) disagreed and 161 responses (19.1%) strongly disagreed. Item 17 results show that, 111 responses (13.2%) strongly agreed that, the use of radio/television, SMS, social media and daily briefing sent enough information to us, 389 responses (46.1%) agreed, 182 responses (21.6%) disagreed and 161 responses (19.1%) strongly disagreed. Item 18 result reviews 126 responses (14.9%) strongly agreed on social media and internet platform are better than any other communication strategies, 178 responses (21.1%) agreed, 286 responses (33.9%) disagreed and 253 responses (30.0%) strongly disagreed. Item 19 result show that 4 responses (0.5%) strongly agreed that the use of NCDC call centres was better for combating COVID-19, 197 responses (23.4%) agreed, 338 responses (40.1%) disagreed and 304 responses (36.1%) strongly disagreed. Item 20 result indicates that 4 responses (0.5%) strongly agreed that daily briefing by Presidential Task Force (PTF) was better enhanced for combating COVID-19, 192 responses (22.8%) agreed, 348 responses (41.3%) disagreed and 299 responses (35.5%) strongly disagreed. The result implies that outdoor media should also be included for NCDC communication

strategy, use of radio/television, SMS, Presidential Task Force (PTF), social media/internet and daily briefing sent

Discussion of Findings

The following findings were made as it was discussed:

Findings indicated that among the communication strategies of NCDC are radio, television, SMS/IVR, social media and NCDC call centres used to create awareness about COVD-19 pandemic. The finding is in line with Mbuk and Herbert (2017) who identified Folk Media, Mass Media, Little Media Strategies, Outdoor and Transit Media Strategies among others are NCDC communication strategies.

Findings also reveal that, respondents perceived that outdoor media should also be included for NCDC communication strategy, use of radio/television, SMS, Presidential Task Force (PTF), social media/internet and daily briefing sent enough information to target audiences in Benue State. Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014) stated that ''communication may fail if the source delivers a piece of information which challenges the belief of the receiver, any message that is contrary to what the receiver has already known and is used to, is likely to be rejected.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it has been established that the communication strategies used in creating awareness on covid-19 pandemic among residents of Benue State are radio/television, SMS, Presidential Task Force (PTF), social media/internet and daily briefing sent enough information to target audiences in Benue State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
Lessons from previous COVID 19 outbreaks should be used to prepare for future outbreaks, especially in the context

enough information to target audiences in Benue State.

of emergencies that require rapid response. The Nigeria government should also understand that health is a process and it should be treated as such. A situation where campaigns are stopped immediately after each health pandemic will not help any country; it should be a continuous exercise. The government should also find a way to turn the attention of its citizens to such messages buy using other media of communication such television adverts and radio jingles.

Relying on some public observations, there are suggestions for the NCDC to do more to re-sensitize the society, reduce information monotony—meaning to diversify information/communication style, increase communications on preventive measures rather than the number of infected persons and death.

During Covid 19, there was usually an influx of information. Amid the competing information and intense social media conversations, there is a need to ensure that public communications go beyond generating awareness to engaging the public.

The government should also make the SMSs interactive. There could be a quiz on the information being passed where gifts can be won and also citizens can also ask important questions.

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