

INFLUENCE OF RADIO NIGERIA “HEALTH WATCH” PROGRAM IN SUSTAINABLE MATERNAL AND CHILD CARE PRACTICES AMONG RURAL YOUNG MOTHERS’ IN OHAJI/EGBEMA, IMO STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study centers on the influence of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program in sustainable maternal and child care practices. This is because of the persistent increase in maternal death and infant mortality especially in rural areas. Despite the provision of radio awareness campaigns on maternal and child care practices. The objectives of the study, among others, were to: find out young mothers’ in Ohaji/Egbema level of awareness of sustainable maternal and child care practices through exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program and also examine the influence of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program on young mothers’ engagement on maternal and childcare practices. The study was anchored on Health Belief model. The study adopted a survey research approach. Wimmer and Dominick’s calculator was used to determining the sample size of 383 from the population of 117,288. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. Findings revealed that there was low level of awareness on sustainable maternal and child care practices through Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program among young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema at 51.2%. Also, it was revealed that Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program do not influence young mothers’ engagement towards maternal and child care practices at 44.7%. In essence, finding indicated that poor network signal, high level of non-educated women, poverty and lack of specific program on maternal child care practices were factors hampering the effectiveness of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program in influencing young mothers attitude towards embracing maternal and child care practices at 90.8%. Therefore, it was recommended that health care providers should adopt incorporate community engagement, town-hall meetings, opinion leaders, traditional communication systems that are peculiar to the people in order to provide them with adequate information that will influence their engagement in sustainable maternal and child care practices.*

Keywords: *Child Care, Influence, Health Watch, Maternal Care, Practices, Radio Nigeria, Sustainable*

I.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Nigeria has been grappling with infant and maternal mortality health challenges especially in the rural areas. This ugly menace appeared to be unabated as the country loses daily about 2,300 under-five-year-olds and 145 women of childbearing age. This makes the country the second-largest contributor to the under-five and maternal mortality rates in the world. A woman’s chance of dying from pregnancy and childbirth in Nigeria is 1 in 13. The deaths of newborn babies in the country occur within the first week of life, mainly due to complications during pregnancy and delivery, reflecting the close link between newborn survival and the quality of maternal care. Although, many of these deaths are preventable, the coverage and quality of healthcare service in Nigeria pose a severe threat to the survival of women and children (UNICEF, 2010 cited in Ekwe & Oluwtoyin, 2017). Hence, improving health care is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly which, is geared towards ensuring healthy living and promote good wellbeing for all of all ages.

To achieve this aim, many nations across the world have realized the importance of communication as an intervention needed to reduce and prevent maternal and child mortality and hence improve maternal, and child care practices. The media play a role in its impulsive tendency to direct and redirect the course of attitudinal change and building public perception towards societal affairs. WHO (1998), cited in Kogah (2009, p.103) notes that “the mass media are often used to promote health and prevent diseases. The mass media reach a large number of people quickly with new information over a sustained time; help legitimize discussion of

public issues and build up support for programs and activities, and reinforce new learning and new behavior. Receivers of mass-mediated communication get planned and unplanned, long and short term effects. Okoro, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2015) maintain that the media are essential stakeholders in the war against disease. The ability of the mass media to reach a widely scattered, huge mass audience at the lowest cost possible make them useful tools for health behavior change communicators. The media can be said to have played their roles in preventing infant and maternal mortality as they most times air programs like talk-shows, documentaries, and panel discussion on this subject yet, infant and maternal mortality have remained prevalent (Ekwe & Oluwoyin, 2017).

Radio as a broadcast media, is expected to play the role of improving and changing social, cultural, political, and technological thinking, which will, in the long run, have positive results on the process of rural development. This sensitive role expected to be played by radio is not far from the fact that it shows special qualities in disseminating information. Radio is so powerful that it brings political, economic and social and health news to any community or group of communities faster than other mediums (Asemah, 2011). Today Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program is being aired every Monday at 5.30 in the evening. It is a half hour program on health, fitness and other health related matters. It features different doctors with different background to discuss health issues. It equally features some health organizations activities and how it impacts positively on Nigerians. One can as well contribute to the program by sending text messages to 08050793755 and email to health watch @ radio Nigeria.net. The producer of the program is Uzoma Ogbonna. Thus it becomes necessary to understand the impact of this program in creating awareness towards the realization of maternal and child care practices among rural young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema. It is to this end that this study examined the influence of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program in sustaining maternal and childcare practices among young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Childbirth presents the highest health risk among young mothers. This is because of the high level of maternal and infant mortality rates in Nigeria. The most vulnerable groups in this regard are children and their mothers. The complications resulting from pregnancy and childbirth have made it inevitable that younger mothers are supposed to be given adequate medical attention. However, the most potent weapon against the high rate of mortality in childbirth is information. Hence starting from the first trimester, young and expectant mothers are to be exposed to all the necessary information from the healthcare givers and the mass media. Following this, Radio Nigeria has established "Health Watch" program which uses informed advocacy and communication aimed at seeking better access to healthcare in Nigeria. It provides informed commentary and in-depth analysis at enlightening and sensitizing young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema of health issues with special emphasis on maternal and child care practices. To effect this change, there are many radio health programs designed to educate the public about the need to live a healthy life. These radio health programs include Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program. However, it appears that the producers of these programs do not know whether to attribute the prevalence of maternal and infant mortality among women in Ohaji/Egbema to inefficiency of radio health message delivery to reach the target audience. Also, they do not know whether to blame it on women's predispositions towards vital instructions and teaching adopted in improving maternal and child care practices.

Although, it is believed that any radio health programs aimed at improving the condition of the people must have all it takes to increase knowledge, change attitude and enhance practice of good healthy living among young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema. This is because, the entire exercise will amount to futility, if there is no significant change in the attitude of those exposed to radio health programs. The question is: What is the influence of "Health Watch" program in influencing maternal and child care practices among young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State level of awareness of maternal and child care practices based on exposure to Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program.
2. Examine young mothers' level of knowledge of maternal and child care practices through Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program.
3. Ascertain the influence of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program on young mothers' engagement on maternal and child care practices.
4. Identify the factors affecting the influence of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program on young mothers' engagement on maternal and child care practices

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Effectiveness of Radio in Maternal and Childcare Practices

Ekwe and Oluwtoyin (2017) found that majority of the respondents were aware of the causes of infant mortality and radio occasionally air programs on infant mortality. Also, it showed that radio performs some specific roles geared towards preventing infant mortality, but the message is not delivered because of hindrances like language, culture and boring health programs.

Hajara (2014) studies “media awareness and utilization of antenatal care services by pregnant women in kano state Nigeria” and found that the dominant theme was the use of radio as the major source of information on ANC services as well as other sources like health workers and social gatherings among others; the pregnant women demonstrated good knowledge and awareness of ANC services but some of them do not attend ANC even though they are aware while others are not even aware at all, of the importance of utilizing ANC services. Also, it was found that pregnant women preferred media programs in which a health expert discusses ANC and maternal health issues; their preferred timing for the ANC programs is 4.00 pm; and they shared substantial challenges that tend to inhibit their media usage, which influences ANC utilization.

Again, Mluleki, Thendo, Lesego, Cassandra, and Sathiya (2015), investigated factors influencing the use of maternal healthcare services and childhood immunization in Swaziland. They concluded that certain factors influencing maternal healthcare and childhood immunization include: woman’s age, parity, media exposure, wealth quintile, and residence. These factors affected the use of maternal and child health services differently.

Similarly, Akkomah, Adebayo, Arogundade, Anyanti, Nwokolo, Inyang, Oladipupo, and Mereniku(2014) concluded that pregnant women who listened to mass media campaigns were more likely to adopt strategies to protect themselves from malaria.

With this, Abhulinhen-Iyoha(2012) examined the determinants of cord care practices among mothers in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that: Beneficial cord care practice increased with increasing maternal educational status. The best predictors of beneficial cord care practices are the maternal level of education and infant’s sex; the use of more harmful cord care practices was more common among others who delivered outside the teaching hospital, and most mothers were aware of hygienic/beneficial cord care practices. The choices of cord care methods eventually practiced by mothers were influenced mainly through the disposition of nurses.

Also, Egube (2013) studied neonatal jaundice and its management: knowledge, attitude and practice among expectant mothers attending antenatal clinics at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital Benin City, Nigeria. The study found that expectant mothers attending mothers’ antenatal clinics at UBTH had good knowledge of the treatment and complication of NNJ, but inadequate knowledge of the causes and danger signs of the condition; their attitude and practice towards the management of NNJ was good.

In the same vein, Ezeah, Apeh, Omerigwe, Ojo (2014) examined Breast cancer campaigns among women in Benue State: when knowledge does not translate to practice. The findings revealed the majority of women in Benue State are exposed to breast cancer campaigns, and awareness level of women and about breast cancer is relatively high. It was revealed that knowledge of breast cancer among Benue women is superficial as genetic testing is quite a new subject to most of the respondents and Benue women have a negative attitude towards breast cancer early detection campaigns.

In the same vein, Ojiakor (2017) investigated the responsiveness of Anambra State civil servants to exclusive breastfeeding campaign. The findings have revealed that there is a possible intervention situation in the Anambra state civil service as mothers are aware of EBF but need education and knowledge of the extent that they can identify the specific and general benefits of the behavior. By so doing, they will be motivated to change. From this study, it has been revealed that for civil servants in Anambra state, work and organizational policy do not prevent them as they have six months for their baby, which is also the essential requirement for the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Concerning this, Omoera (2010) studied on broadcast media in family planning matters in rural Nigeria: The Ebelle Scenario. The study revealed that radio and television stations, through specific programs, have helped in the dissemination of relevant information on family planning in rural settings just as they have purportedly done in an urban centers’ in Nigeria.

In line with this, Sirawoo (2017), in a study on the effect of rollback malaria campaign on the use of long lasting insecticide-treated net by pregnant women in Rivers State, found out that 53% of pregnant women are aware of radio campaigns on the use of Long Lasting Insecticide-treated bed nets. It was also revealed that 61% of radio campaigns have helped reduce incidents of malaria during pregnancy.

Again, Olusegun, Wasuu, and Olajide (2014) evaluated polio vaccination awareness, broadcast messages among Hausa communities in Ogun State. The findings showed that radio and television had been used to create awareness, for polio vaccination only during the administration; both are practical tools to convey useful information about vaccination among Hausa communities in Ogun State and; the level awareness about polio vaccination among the respondents is low.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Health Belief Model. This model was developed in the 1950s by Geoffrey Hochbaum, with further work done on it by Becker, Haefner and Maiman in 1977. It is a model that addresses personal knowledge and beliefs and used in health promotion to design intervention and prevention programs with the focus on assessing health behavior of individuals through the examination of perceptions and attitude which someone may have towards disease and negative outcome of certain actions (Nsude, 2015). It is believed that its intent is to promote the behavior change process. This could be in the form of a conversation with a friend or a television and radio program or counseling. The model explained why sometimes people do not respond positively to health campaigns, despite the benefits derivable from the promoted interventions. The relevance of the Health Belief Model to this study is that effective radio messages on maternal and childcare practices should be able to sustain behavioral changes and assist in explaining the casual factor why women do not positively respond to health campaigns by the media. The model is therefore relevant in explaining the health behaviors of women. It also explained the behavior of women in rural communities.

Research Method

The survey method was used for this study, considering that the views of young mothers were sought. The method provided this study with an opportunity to obtain the opinion and views of young mothers as to how they feel about radio as a tool for achieving sustainable maternal and child healthcare programs. Available records from the National Population Commission (NPC) (2006) showed that the population of women in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government, Imo State is 90,287, although, thirteen years have gone since the census figure was published. Thus, the current population of women in Ohaji/Egbema LGA Imo State as projected to reflect the time of this study is 117,288, using UNDP's population extrapolation index of 2.28% per annum. From this population, 383 was determined to be the sample size using Wimmer and Dominick's calculator. In determining the sample size, the Wimmer and Dominick calculator statistical formula, was used as follows:

Sample Size Calculator

Confidence level:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 95% <input type="radio"/> 99%
Margin of error (%):	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="5"/>
Population size:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="117288"/>
Sample size needed:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text" value="383"/>

The multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used in this study, considering the fact that Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State consists of 3 districts namely, Egbema North, Ohaji West and Ohaji East respectively, with 12 council wards or clusters. It is from these wards or clusters that the sample for this study were drawn. Also, the quota sampling technique was used in selecting two council communities from each district to ensure equal representation of the different districts. The selected communities were as follows: Umunwaku and Assa, –Ohaji West; Umuokanne and Umuapu- Ohaji East; and Obokofia and Umuorji-Egbema. Purposive sampling technique was used in the administration of the questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to reflect the research focus directly. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS in simple percentages and frequency tables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 383 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State. Out of this, three hundred and sixty nine (369) were found usable, whereas the remaining fourteen (14) were not used.

Research Question One: What is young mothers' in Ohaji/Egbema level of awareness of maternal and child care practices through Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program?

According to tables 1 below, majority of the respondents who are mainly rural dweller have access to radio program. The table 2 below indicates that a good number of the respondents who are actually women do not listen to Radio Nigeria. The table 3 below shows that radio listeners (women) in Ohaji/Egbema are not aware of this program. Table 4 indicates that majority of the respondents cannot say specifically their level of awareness to maternal and child care practices through exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch”. What this means is that women have not been exposed to “Health Watch” program.

Table 1: Shows respondents view on whether they have radio set

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	277	75.1
No	92	24.9
Total	369	100.0

Table 2: Shows respondents view on whether they listen to Radio Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	139	37.7
No	230	62.3
Total	369	100.0

Table 3: Shows respondents view on whether they are aware of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Agree	95	25.7
Disagree	18	4.9
Not sure	256	69.4
Total	369	100.0

Table 4: Shows respondents’ view on their level of awareness on maternal and child care practices based on their exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch”

	Frequency	Percent
Valid High	48	13.0
Minimal	93	25.2
Low	13	3.5
Not at all	26	7.0
Can't say	189	51.2
Total	369	100.0

Research Question Two: What is young mothers’ in Ohaji/Egbema level of knowledge of maternal and child practices based on exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch”?

In answering the research question, table 5 and 6 below were relied upon. The finding that majority of the respondents agreed that the extent to which Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” broaden their knowledge is low. The result in the table above shows that majority of the women were not able remember or mention any of the maternal and child care practices. Which implies that most women in rural areas do not understand what maternal and child care practices entails.

Table 5: Shows respondents view the extent to which Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” have broaden their knowledge of maternal and child care practices

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Large extent	40	10.8
Moderate extent	78	21.1
Low extent	181	49.1
Not at all	41	11.1
Can't say	29	7.9
Total	369	100.0

Table 6: Show respondents view on whether they can mention any of the maternal and child care practices discuss in this program

	Frequency	Percent
Roll back malaria	22	6.0
Immunisation program	47	12.7
ORT program	0	0.0
Valid Exclusive breast feeding	11	3.0
Antenatal care	38	10.3
No idea	251	68.0
Total	369	100.0

Research Question Three: Does exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” influence young mother’s engagement in maternal and child care practices?

In responding to this, table 7 below was relied upon. Finding showed that 44.7% representing majority of the respondents were held no definite opinion on the influence of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program on them.

Table 7: Show respondents view on whether their exposure to Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” influence their engagement on maternal and child care practices

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	92	24.9
No	112	30.4
Not sure	165	44.7
Total	369	100.0

Research Question Four: What are the factors affecting the influence of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program on young mothers’ engagement in maternal and child care practices?

In responding to this table below shows that 90.8% representing majority of the respondents agreed that poor network signal, high level of illiteracy, poverty as well as lack of specific program on maternal and child care practices were that major factors affecting the influence of Radio Nigeria health watch program on young mother’s utilization of maternal and child care practices.

Table 8: Respondents’ view on factors that are likely to affect the influence “Health Watch” program on young mothers’ engagement in maternal and child care

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Can’t say	34	9.2
Poor network signal	126	34.2
High level of illiteracy	79	21.4
Lack of specific maternal and child care program	55	14.9
Poverty	75	20.3
Total	369	100.0

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research question was on level of awareness of maternal and child care practices through Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program. Findings indicated that majority representing 51.2% of the respondents held no definite view on their level of awareness on maternal and child care practices through Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program. This is because those of them that own radio set do not listen to Radio Nigeria at 62.3% and as such were not aware of Radio Nigeria “Health Watch” program at 69.4%. Although, 75.1% had radio set given the fact that radio is portable and easy affordability among rural women. The implication is that most women listen to radio for entertainment while doing their house chores. This be could that most women are not interested in listening to news especially network news from Radio Nigeria which is responsible for low

exposure to this station. Knowing well that Radio Nigeria programs are always informing and educating radio listeners. This reveals that women pay little or no attention to Radio Nigeria program. But rather prefer listening to other radio stations that are airing different programs of interest to them at the same time.

The second research question was on respondents' level of knowledge of maternal and child care practices based on exposure to Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program. Finding indicated that majority of the respondents are not knowledgeable about maternal and child care practices like immunization program, roll back malaria program, ORT program, antenatal care program, exclusive breastfeeding, among others hence, they were not able to remember and recall most of the maternal and child care practices. This finding is in accordance with the Health Belief Model, which asserts that information about maternal and child care practices help young mothers to identify the nature and shape of any health issues.

The research question three examined the influence of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program on young mothers' engagement on maternal and child care practices. Findings revealed that this program does not influence young mothers' engagement in maternal and child care practices. It is a clear indication that Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program does not influence respondents' engagement in maternal and child care practices because of most of them do not listen to this program and as such held no definite opinion on the influence of this program on them. This has resulted to continuous mother and child death. The implication is that this program has little or influence on young mothers' adoption of the practice of maternal and child care. According to Health Belief model personal knowledge and beliefs are used in health promotion to design intervention and prevention programs with the focus on assessing health behavior of individuals through the examination of perceptions and attitude which someone may have towards disease and negative outcome of certain actions (Nsude, 2015). However, this finding contradicted the earlier studies conducted by Egube (2013) and Ankomah, et al. (2014) concluded that expectant mothers' attitude and practice towards the management of neonatal jaundice was good and adoption of the strategies to protect malaria.

Lastly, research question four investigated factors affecting the influence of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program on young mothers' engagement in maternal and child care practices. In responding to this table below revealed that 90.8% representing majority of the respondents agreed that poor network signal, followed by high level of illiteracy, poverty as well as lack of specific program on maternal and child care practices were key factors affecting the influence of Radio Nigeria health watch program on young mother's utilization of maternal and child care practices. The implication is that poor quality program delivery has remained a major problem of Radio Nigeria right from its inception which affected respondents' listenership of "Health Watch" program. The uneducated who are domicile in the rural areas do not understand health related issues discussed because of the language of the program. The high rate of poverty among rural dwellers has made it difficult for women to afford quality health during pregnancy and for their new born babies. It is clear that "Health Watch" program is cut across all health related issues and as such lead to inadequate reportage of maternal and child care practice. Ekwe and Oluwtoyin (2017) concluded that radio performs some specific roles geared towards preventing infant mortality, but the message is not delivered because of hindrances like language, culture and boring health programs.

IV. CONCLUSION

Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program do not significantly influence young mothers' engagement on maternal and child care practices. This is because most women in rural villages are not exposed to this program which indicates the unpopularity of the program among them. Young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema, Imo State are not knowledgeable of maternal and child care practices and as a result were not able to recall some of the maternal and child care programs that were discussed in the Radio Nigeria "Health Watch". However, it was revealed that poor network signal, high level of non-educated women, poverty and lack of specific program on maternal child care practices are factors hampering the effectiveness of Radio Nigeria "Health Watch" program in influencing young mothers attitude towards embracing maternal and child care practices.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are made:

1. To create awareness on sustainable maternal and child care practices radio program on health related matters should take drama and edu-entertainment format in order to lure the attention of women to such programs, considering the fact, most women use radio for entertainment purposes.
2. To broaden the knowledge of people, especially, the rural dwellers, specific radio health program on maternal and child care practices should be established and made compulsory for all radio stations in Nigeria in order to have a wider reach in educating and enlightening women on the need to utilize sustainable maternal and child care practices.
3. To influence the participation or engagement of women on maternal and child care practices, stakeholders in health sector should incorporate community engagement/town-hall meetings, African traditional

communication systems, opinion leaders, interpersonal communication with health personal in shaping and molding the attitude and behavior of rural dweller positively towards embracing health care practices.

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