

Public Perception of the Influence of Polio Awareness Campaign on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices: A Study of Residents of Ohaji/Egbema

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This study examined the public perception of the influence of polio awareness campaign on the knowledge, attitude and practices of residents of Ohaji/Egbema. The study was anchored on the Health Belief Model (a psychological model that attempts to explain and predict health behaviours. This is done by focusing on the attitudes and beliefs of individuals). The study adopted the mixed method research design using survey and in-depth interview methods. The population of the study was 253,910 residents in Ohaji/Egbema. The Australian online sample size calculator was used to arrive at a sample size of 385 respondents for the survey aspect of the study, while 6 respondents were interviewed for the qualitative aspect of the work. The cluster and judgmental sampling techniques were adopted for the study. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Findings indicated that though, respondents' own radio and television sets both at home and at place of work which they regularly listen to, they rarely or never receive information on poliomyelitis. However, findings showed that respondents are well aware of polio and are well knowledgeable about polio. To this end, findings indicated that their knowledge of polio has had a positive effect on their attitude and practices with regards to poliomyelitis. Based on these findings, the study concluded that in some cases, to get the populace to react in a certain way is not necessarily a function of awareness campaigns. There seems to be a sense of duty in every human that swings into action at the break of epidemic like poliomyelitis. Given that respondents' knowledge of poliomyelitis is significantly related to their attitudes and practices towards eradication of the virus, the study recommended that a trend as such as the one in polio eradication has seen people come together for a common good should be adopted in combating future epidemic. KEYWORDS: Awareness, Attitude, Campaign, Influence, Perception, Polio,	Published On: 23 August 2025 Available on: https://ijiissh.com/

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that each year about a million infants and children die and three (3) million become deaf, crippled or mentally retarded because of infections from vaccine preventable disease. In Nigeria, these diseases contribute 10-20% of all deaths in infants and children (about 220,000 annually) (WHO, 2006 cited in Nanbur, Yimi, Gusen, Thangeswaran, & Nanvyat, 2019). Nigeria has an under-five mortality rate of 201/1000; and immunization coverage of 13%. It remains one of the polio hot zones along with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan; and also one of the 11 countries that accounted for 66% of the world's measles death (Nanbur, Yimi, Gusen, Thangeswaran, & Nanvyat, 2019).

Poliomyelitis is an acute infectious systematic viral disease affecting human and is of widely varying severity from a non-specific illness to almost irreversible paralysis or death due to polioviruses of serotypes 1, 2 and 3 infections. In rarely severe cases, death is often due to asphyxiation especially children below the age of five years, it has remained endemic in some parts of the world including Nigeria. Poliomyelitis has been ravaging many developing countries especially those in sub-Sahara Africa. The cumulated number of children with wild poliovirus recorded has been increasing astronomically especially in African continent and particularly in Nigeria (White and Fenner, 1994; WHO, 1997, 2000; Abdurraheem & Saka, 2004).

In 1988, the World Health Assembly launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which aimed to use large-scale vaccination with the oral vaccine to eradicate polio worldwide by the year 2000. Although important progress has been made, polio remains endemic in several countries. Also, the current control measures will likely be inadequate to deal with problems that may arise in the post-polio era. A panel convoked by the National Research Council concluded that the use of antiviral drugs may be essential in the polio eradication strategy (WHO, 1997, 2000; Abdurraheem and Saka, 2004; GPE, 2007; Agbeyegbe, 2007).

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The World Health Assembly in 1988, resolved to eradicate poliomyelitis from the world by the year 2000 and since then, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) of the World Health Organization (WHO) has led to a decline in global polio incidence, from an estimated 350,000 cases in 1988 to under 3,500 in the year 2000, with the last remaining global poliovirus reservoirs confined to parts of Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The American region (AMRO) of the WHO was certified as polio-free in 1994 as was the Western Pacific Region (WPRO) in 2000. However, there are obstacles to the global eradication which involve among others, vaccine derived polioviruses (VDPVs) in areas with low oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV) coverage. In addition, long term excretion of neurovirulent immunodeficiency-associated vaccine derived polioviruses (iVDPVs) can lead to poliovirus spread by contacts (WHO, 1997, 2000; Abdulraheem and Saka, 2004; Adu et al., 2007; GPEI, 2007; Agbeyegbe, 2007).

This is because Nigeria was on the brink of wiping out polio. The effort is how to eradicate poliomyelitis through the efficient and purposeful national immunizations programme but a critical way to help people respond to opportunities and challenges in their environment is through information and knowledge provision that will lead to behaviour change. Most of the efforts made to eradicate polio and improve the health behaviour of people living in rural areas come in form of campaigns which serve as a mechanism through which messages are communicated from experts in a particular field to the people who can be helped by the messages. It is also a process of intervening in a systematic or strategic manner with either media (print, radio, telephony, video and the internet) or education (training, literacy, and school) for the main purpose of positive social change which could be economic, personal, social, cultural or political (McPhail, 2009).

Polio campaigns have become necessary to ensure that children do not grow up paralyzed. McPhail (2009) emphasized the urgent need of using effective campaign to bring positive messages and information that could improve less developed countries such as Nigeria. Thus, mass media has become an indispensable agent of change and transformation. Media scholars and policy makers alike are unanimous that information constitutes the critical variable in the equation of behaviour change (Rogers 1963, Levner 1962, Schranm 1964, Anaeto & Anaeto 2010).

To eradicate polio completely, governments and non-governmental organizations made considerable part of communications investments and activities to mass media, high-level political advocacies, and some largely events-based attempts at social mobilization and campaigns such as the Kick Out Polio campaign, Polio Campaign etc. (Lahariya, 2007). In 2003, the majority of communication budgets in the three major endemic countries (India, Nigeria, Pakistan) were allocated to mass communication efforts (Taylor, 2003). These efforts seem to have continued on the vaccination aspects. As the fourth estate of the realm and lots more, the mass media have the task of informing, educating and generally ensuring that important, health and life-saving information is made available to the people. Poliomyelitis eradication campaigns is one of such issues that ought to have gained high priority in Nigerian media agenda.

Acting on this, various mass media in Nigeria have championed the polio eradication campaigns such as, 'the polio campaign', 'the kick polio campaign' and so on. In spite of these campaigns being floated across the mass media in Nigeria, recent records of polio outbreak in Nigeria rubbishes all the efforts that Non-governmental organization (NGO's) government and individuals made to ensure that Polio is stamped out completely. Could it be that the mass media is not doing enough to increase the awareness level of polio eradication campaigns, or could it be a problem of fundamental flaw on the part of the campaigns? It is however expected that the people will act in conformity to the messages contained in the campaign, such as immunizations, when a campaign of this nature is floated in the media. It is based on these that this study investigates the influence of Radio Polio campaigns on the knowledge, attitude and practices of residents of Ohaji/Egbema.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- 1 Examine the level of awareness of polio campaigns among residents in Ohaji/Egbema;
- 2 ascertain the source of information about polio and its eradication amongst the residents of Ohaji/Egbema;
- 3 examine the knowledge level of residents of Ohaji/Egbema of Poliomyelitis; and
- 4 find out Ohaji/Egbema residents' perception of polio awareness campaigns

LITERATURE REVIEW THE NEED FOR POLIO AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

According to Onuekwe (2013) concluded that participants that watched the documentary film demonstrated better understanding of polio, developed a higher sense of knowing the severity of polio infection, and were more likely to accept polio vaccination than those who were not exposed to the documentary film.

In relation to this, Rehman, Sahir, Yaqoob, and Zulfiqar (2017) identified that highest potential factor which affecting polio eradication programme is poor routine EPI with beta value of (-0.80). The study was carried out in 115 Union councils of District Okara by targeting 88 respondents through simple random sampling.

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In the same vein, Thompson and Tebbens (2017) concluded that Eradication efforts for vaccine-preventable diseases need to create performance expectations for countries to immunize all people living within their borders and maintain high coverage with appropriate interventions.

Also, Onyenweze(2010) found as follows that: CHS was available in the three PHC in Enugu Urban. All of the eight components of CHS except exclusive breast-feeding were utilized effectively. The trend of immunization services utilization over the years 2000 – 2007 was full of fluctuations. Maternal Demographic factors studied: Age, parity, occupation and educational attainment had no statistical relationship to the level of use of available CHS. Availability of medical personnel in the neighborhood 77.15 percent, ignorance of need of CHS, 40.06 percent, cultural belief 25.83 percent, bad attitude of health care provides 18.54 percent and procrastination of immunization/clinic days 13.58 percent were socio-economic factors that affected level of utilization of available CHS.

In corroborating this, Abdullahi (2015) observed that for there to be a sustained acceptance of polio vaccines through routine immunization, polio information programmes must take account of the social norms of parents who are resistance to polio immunization in polio endemic regions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Health Belief Model framework that seeks to explain health behaviours. The HBM was first developed in the 1950s by social psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock and Kegels working in the U.S. Public Health Services. The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a psychological model that attempts to explain and predict health behaviours. This is done by focusing on the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. The model was developed in response to the failure of a free tuberculosis (TB) health screening programme. Since then, the HBM has been adapted to explore a variety of long- and short-term health behaviours, including sexual risk behaviours and the transmission of HIV/AIDS, and most recently the Ebola killer virus. The HBM was spelled out in terms of four constructs representing the perceived threat and net benefits: perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers. These concepts were proposed as accounting for people's "readiness to act." An added concept, cues to action, would activate that readiness and stimulate overt behaviour. A recent addition to the HBM is the concept of self-efficacy, or one's confidence in the ability to successfully perform an action. This concept was added by Rosenstock and others in 1988 to help the HBM better fit the challenges of changing habitual unhealthy behaviours. The relevance of this theory to the study is that it will help people to understand the severity of a given health problem like Polio and also inform them of how susceptible they are towards contracting the virus. If they release this, based on clue of actions (which is contained in most campaigns), the people will know exactly what to do and what not to do to, the need for the polio immunization and in any given health issue. The Polio campaigns are targeted towards making people proactive in making sure that their children are immunized. This is also the tenet of the HBM which seeks to prevent the spread of health problems by 'sensitizing' the people about the disease.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is suitable for this study, considering the fact that it allows the researchers to sample views and opinions of Ohaji/Egbema residents on polio awareness campaign and knowledge and attitude of the people. In the aspect of the survey design, population of this study includes residents of Ohaji/Egbema who are within the age bracket of 20-69 years. After the projection, the population used for the study is 253,910

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question one: What is the level of awareness of polio campaigns among residents of Ohaji/Egbema?

Findings indicated that majority of the sampled population of residents of Ohaji/Egbema have heard of poliomyelitis and that they know what the virus is all about, considering the fact that those who say they have heard about it constitute 100% of the sampled population. However, findings further suggest that awareness of poliomyelitis virus amongst the residents of Ohaji/Egbema could not have been from respondents preferred medium. This is evident from table 17 that 63% apiece of the respondents indicated to rarely/never receive information about polio from their preferred medium. The implication is that whereas majority of the respondents own TV (87.8%) and radio sets (64.4%), a 52.7% frequency at which respondents receive information from medium of preference, still information about polio isn't one of them. If it was, it would have been ineffective given that it takes a sustained campaign that firing at all cylinders to be half effective enough to cause changes. In collaboration with the findings of this study, the study of Anorue (2012) entitled, "Influence of Avian Influenza Awareness Campaign on residents of Nsukka LGA in Enugu indicated that majority of the sampled population of the Nsukka people have heard of the disease called avian influenza and that they know what avian influenza is all about, considering the fact that those who say they know what it is all about constitute 74.74% of the sampled population. Though, the study of Anorue is on Avian Influenza, it is however worthy of note that awareness level of respondents as it concerns endemic disease is usually on the high side. Thus, it is safe to say that if respondents could be

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aware of one endemic disease, they probably would be aware of another. In this case, the findings of both studies have eliminated such probability to solidify the possibility.

Research Question two: What are the sources of information on polio amongst the residents of Ohaji/Egbema?

At this point, residents of Ohaji/Egbema are aware of poliomyelitis. However, findings show that the source of polio information was not their preferred medium. Findings also, reveals that majority of the respondents from the sample studied had health workers, friend and relatives as their other sources from which they got aware of polio. Table, 47(12.5%) respondents receive information all the time from their preferred medium, 151(40.2%) respondents receive most of the time, 132(35.1%) receive information some of the time, whereas 43(11.4%) respondents rarely receives information. However, 3(8%) can't say for sure how often they receive information from preferred medium. This implies that majority of the respondents receive information regularly from their preferred medium. The table above shows that 18(4.8%) respondents always receive information about polio from their preferred medium, 11(2.9%) respondents receive information about polio most times from their preferred medium, 89(23.7%) respondents sometimes receive information about polio from their preferred medium, whereas 100(26.6%) rarely receive information about polio. However, 137(36.4%) respondents never have received information about polio from their preferred medium, while 21(5.6%) can't say for sure if they have received information concerning polio from their preferred medium.

Research Question three: To what extent are the residents of Ohaji/Egbema knowledgeable about Poliomyelitis?

Findings show that respondents agreed respectively that polio may cause paralysis at 75.3%; agreed respectively that polio is transmitted through contaminated water and food at 80.1%. The implication of the findings is that majority of respondents are well at home with what polio is how it spreads or who is the most vulnerable amongst them. This by extension arms the residents of Ohaji/Egbema with the necessary arsenal to combat polio by knowing and understanding what the virus is and how it can be prevented. Therefore, it is safe to say that residents of Ohaji/Egbema are well knowledgeable when it comes to polio.

The findings of this study on the knowledge level of residents in Ohaji/Egbema is in line with the findings of Onuekwe (2013), in his study entitled, 'Entertainment-Education and Behaviour Change: An Impact Assessment of a Polio Documentary Film in Northern Nigeria. A study which aimed at assessing the impact of an entertainment-education documentary film for communicating polio vaccination to noncompliant households to accept polio vaccination using the experimental field survey and focus group discussion, found out that participants that watched the documentary film demonstrated better understanding of polio, developed a higher sense of knowing the severity of polio infection, and were more likely to accept polio vaccination than those who were not exposed to the documentary film.

Research Question four: How do the residents of Ohaji/Egbema perceive polio based on the information they receive from sources?

Findings to research question four show that majority of the respondents from the sample studied think that the messages and information on polio from their preferred medium is as important as eradicating the virus. That 91% of the respondents sampled agreed to the importance of polio information received from their preferred medium is indicative of what their perception is as regards to polio and its eradication. In contradiction to these findings is the study of Abdullahi (2015) entitled, "Polio Immunization Social Norms in Kano State, Nigeria: Implications for Designing Polio Immunization Information and Communication Programs for Routine Immunization Services." According to the study of Abdullahi, findings interpreted using social norms theory suggest that for there to be a sustained acceptance of polio vaccines through routine immunization, polio information programs must take account of the social norms of parents who are resistance to polio immunization in polio endemic regions. By implication, to make any head way in the polio eradication exercise, the perception of parents should be the focal target of polio information programs. This further suggests that in Abdullahi's study, the perception of respondents about polio is on the negative side and this is largely because of their social norms which perhaps frown at orthodox medicine. Also, the fact that the characteristics of the area of his study is different from the characteristics of this particular study clearly suggests differences along ethnic and religious lines currently in existence in Nigeria. Therefore, for an awareness campaigns to be sustained and effective, these factors should be taken into cognizance.

CONCLUSION

The study found out that residents of Ohaji/Egbema are well aware and knowledgeable about poliomyelitis, but this awareness and knowledge were not received through mass media.

However, their awareness and knowledge of polio gotten from other sources influenced their attitudes and practices in the eradication of polio. Given this fact, the study concludes that in some cases, to get the populace to react in a certain way is not necessarily a function of awareness campaigns. There seems to be a sense of duty in every human that swings into action at the break of epidemic like poliomyelitis. Findings indicated that though, respondents' own radio and television sets both at home and at place of work, which they regularly listen to, they rarely or never receive information on poliomyelitis. However, findings showed that respondents are well aware of polio and are well knowledgeable about polio through friends and relatives as well as health

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centers/practitioners. To this end, findings indicated that residents of Ohaji/Egbema knowledge of polio has had a positive effect on their attitude and practices with regards to poliomyelitis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Given that 63% apiece of the respondents indicated to rarely/never receive information about polio from their preferred medium, the study recommends that relevant authorities and FMH should intensify efforts in informing especially the rural dwellers about polio
2. Given that respondents' other sources of information remained the health workers, friends and relatives, continuous contact should be made and kept with these health workers in addition to updating their knowledge level on the virus.
3. Findings showed that respondents are knowledgeable about the poliomyelitis virus. With regards to this, the study recommends that efforts on should be sustained in this angle and to continually churn out modalities to ensure that respondents are up to date.
4. Given that respondents hold a positive view of poliomyelitis eradication, efforts should be sustained that respondents' perception is not swayed.

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