

**BBC *NEBOR MY NEBOR* AND RURAL HEALTH
COMMUNICATION IN RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT: It is believed that many Nigerians who live in rural areas suffer from preventable health problems. Communication ought to provide people with instructive health messages, which entertainment education promises. This paper focused on BBC Media Action *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama series in addressing rural health in River State. The paper had three objectives which were to find out the motivation, satisfaction and influence of the radio drama serial on rural health communication. The study employed the Entertainment Theory with the Uses and Gratifications Theory. We adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 4, 592, 588, drawn from the rural dwellers in Rivers State. It adopted the cluster and purposive sampling procedures with a sample size of 297, drawn from three communities in each of the Senatorial Zones – Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South East. The instrument for data collection was designed to have 11 items of which five were constructed in four-point Likert Scale format. The criterion for decision making was 2.5. The paper found out that language and presentation styles were the key variables motivating listenership giving the 53% when summed; an understanding of health issues, especially diarrhoea, personal hygiene and ORT gave the audience a sense of satisfaction as well as influenced their attitudes, favourably, giving the Average weighted Mean score (AWMS) of 3.36. The paper then concluded that BBC *Nebor My Nebor* is meeting its objective of rural health communication and recommended that the use of indigenous languages should be explored for subsequent programmes.

Keywords: Communication, Entertainment Education, Development, Health, Rural

Overview

Health is a very critical issue in every society and can be assessed by the life expectancy obtainable in a country. Presently, it is believed that the average life expectancy at birth in Nigeria is 54 years and more of the populace is domiciled in rural communities. Added to this, there is a troubling infant and maternal mortality rate – 86 per 1, 000 and 840 per 100, 000 live births, respectively (Muhammad, Abdulkareem & Chowdhury, 2017; Nwabughio, 2021). These figures underscore the place of rural health in the scheme of things.

The subject of rural health is one that should always attract attention to concerned minds given that every individual hails from one community or the other. Though, some country homes are no longer rural in nature, due to migration, industrialisation and civilisation, the greater percentage of places of origin are rural. It is believed that people in rural areas tend to live shorter than those in the urban areas (Rickards, 2016). And the argument is that people

living outside major cities are prone to die of diseases and suffer from certain disabilities, including dental and oral health problems, leading to higher mortality rate.

It has been noted that there is an increase in the deteriorating health conditions as one traverses cities and towns to local communities and remote areas. And part of the adduced reasons is the distance between rural areas and city centres (Pong, DesMeules, Lagace, 2009). It might not be so easy to ascertain what determines the health outcomes in rural areas because of its multidisciplinary nature, but there are common factors such as the nature of the environment, social infrastructure and occupations. Some individual factors, level of information and sociopolitical conditions equally influence rural health. One of the major sources of the problems too, is the shortage of health workers in rural areas. Although, it is given that more rural health workers are generally more likely to work in rural environments (62.5%) than urban health servicemen (16.5%). Ordinarily, this would imply that the rural health workers would also need to be motivated (Ebuehi& Campbell, 2011).

Entertainment education is the use of pleasure ridden programmes for the purpose of informing the audience. It is premised on the social learning theory where people are instructed through narratives and role models. As the audience identifies with characters, they tend to imitate the role played by the individuals (Bandura, 2002; Chung & Jain, 2011). It is therefore apparent to see people mimicking the lifestyle of some characters and persona in radio drama or television soap opera. One of such numerous radio drama series in Nigeria is *Nebor My Nebor*.

Nebor My Nebor is one of the radio drama series aired in Pidgin English by the British Broadcasting Corporation Media Action with the objective of passing social change messages to Nigerians. The goal of the BBC Media Action is to develop human capacity in public health issues as a means of ameliorating and addressing rural and urban health challenges. While different common issues featured in *Nebor My Nebor*, one of the dominating subjects has been on preventable killer diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea. The programme is aired on public stations in Rivers State: RSTV Port Harcourt and Treasure 98.5 FM, Port Harcourt, on Tuesdays, 6:30pm and 5pm, respectively, for half an hour. In one of the episodes, the audience was exposed to the need for proper medical care in taking drugs, use of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and zinc tablet in addressing diarrhoea.

Rivers State is one of the 36 states in Nigeria; located in the South-South geo-political zone and in the Niger Delta, of the old Eastern Region. It was created on May 27, 1967 and has its neighbouring states as Abia and Imo (north), Akwa Ibom (east), Bayelsa and Delta (west), with none southward. The state capital, Port Harcourt, is an oil rich metropolitan city; the commercial nerve center for the oil and gas industry. With a population of about 7,303, 900, Rivers State is ranked as the sixth largest population in Nigeria. It is home to diverse ethnic groups and languages including Igbo/Igboid, Ogoni, Ijaw etc.

Like Nigeria, she is blessed with abundant mineral and natural resources, yet poverty is one of the problems facing different administrations in the State. With a large amount of aquatic life, tropical rainforest and mangrove swamps, it also has vast arable land for food production. Rivers people are predominantly Christians and comparatively more literate than people from other states in Nigeria. The State's male and female literacy rate are put at 52.3% and 47.7%, respectively (UNESCO, 2017). The administration of Governor NyesomWike

made commitments to health issues to the point of allocating about 40 percent of its 2021 budget to the sector (Nsirim, 2021).

Given that many Nigerians who live in the rural areas suffer from preventable health problems; given that communication should provide the people with instructive health messages, which entertainment education promises, it is then germane to find out if the BBC Media Action *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama series has been able to address any rural health challenge in communities in River State, Nigeria. In other words, in what way has BBC *Nebor My Nebor* influenced rural health communication in Rivers State? This is the concern of this study.

Objectives

Given the aforementioned aim, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out what motivates listenership to BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State.
2. Find out what satisfaction people derive from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State.
3. Find out how BBC *Nebor My Nebor* has fostered rural health communication in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Drawing from the objectives stated above, the guiding research questions were:

1. What motivates listenership to BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State?
2. What satisfaction do people derive from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State?
3. How has BBC *Nebor My Nebor* fostered rural health communication in Rivers State?

Theoretical Frameworks

Entertainment theory was initiated by Dolf Zillmann. It is within the psychology of entertainment, postulated to delineate entertainment from persuasion, information and education. In its present conceptualisation, entertainment theory is perceived beyond exposure consequence to the point where entertainment is influenced, propelled and moulded by selected media products. The understanding is that the audience overlooks the possible effects of entertainment because they take it as a mere “feel good” experience (Bryant, Roskos-Ewoldsen & Cantor, 2003; Bryant & Vorderer, 2006). In actual terms, entertainment theory encompasses media contents that the audience is exposed to, motivated by, identifies with, and interacts with through parasocial experience. *Nebor My Nebor* is an entertainment programme that is designed with educative messages. It is expected that while the audience feels good about the show, they would inadvertently learn about health issues.

Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that one’s media use is akin to the expected satisfaction, needs, wishes and motives of the audience. It is submitted that Herzog gave impetus to the early conceptualization of the theory (Baran & Davis, 2009). Three types of gratifications from soap operas were identified as listening for mere emotional release, an opportunity for wishful thinking, and the advice obtained from listening to daytime serials. It is on this ground that the theory seeks to answer the questions: why do people use media? What do they use them for? This theory is apt for this paper because it is important to observe

that the audience of BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State has reasons why they listen to it and what they use the information and time of the programme for.

Communication and Entertainment Education

Communication is a shared meaning, an essential in every interaction between people whether as the source or the recipient. It is also seen that communication process is complete only when the shared meaning returns to the source after being decoded by the receiver. There must be commonality in the exchange of ideas. An effective communication process would mean that it does not only flow from those in authority to those being led but to also come from people at the lower rung of the society. That is, communication will be top-down and bottom-up, complementing each sphere (Okenimpkpe, 2010; Daniel 2013; Mukoro, 2013).

Communication is a common concept with varied and broad meaning owing to its tripod forms, channels and features, on one side; and its effects, on the other hand. The forms of communication could be verbal, nonverbal, texts, audio or visual; its channels could be through print, radio, television or social media; while its features could deal with credibility, sensation and vividness. This aspect of communication effects deals with the influence its tripod has on the audience leading to emotions, cognitions, behaviours and decisions. And by means of classification, communication could be interpersonal, group, organisational, mass, intercultural and international. As a discipline, it now involves the study in any of its major lines of journalism, advertising, public relations, film, broadcasting, etc. More so, out of it is the distinct field of health communication.

On the other hand, entertainment education is seen as the command of audience attention towards developmental efforts. Its focus is to keep the audience in a happy and exciting mood while dishing out vital information that would enable the people to contribute to their personal and collective growth as well as their environment (Singhal& Rogers, 2004; Moyer-Guse, 2008). To this end, entertainment education is a communication strategy built on parasocial interaction, persuasion, play, and object lessons as the audience may unwittingly emulate some of the behaviours featured in the entertainment programme. It can also be seen as an informal learning through fun that appeals to right thinking adults, even if they are not literate or educated enough.

Rural Health

An average rational mind would have to ask pertinent questions concerning the state of affairs in a given environment. For instance, why do people in one geographical area, nationality or region, live longer than others? It can be easily deciphered from the socioeconomic and natural conditions subsisting in an area. There is a problematic true picture that people who live in rural areas are commonly known to have issues that adversely affect the health conditions of their community. This includes: lower education levels, poorer employment rate and opportunities, poorer income levels, higher consumption of substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco etc.), and lower health literacy levels.

Even the poverty situation has been classed by Aboyade (1975) into three levels: the chronic poor (the very poor who face malnutrition and lack of food); the transient poor (bound to face poverty on the account of hash economic times); and special circumstances (caused by

disability, discrimination, conflict or psychosocial problems). Any of this group is bound to face peculiar health need in the rural areas. It is in view of this that a lot is expected of governments – Federal, states and local governments. Even community leadership has roles to play. It is argued that the obligatory role before the government would need openness, technology and committed leadership (Nnabuihe, Etemike&Odunze, 2015).

One means of determining what constitutes a rural area is how land resource is used. It is observed that in such places the predominant industry, agriculture (as well as pastoralism), use large chunk of land for its operation, in contrast to urban areas where land is a very scarce and expensive commodity. Again, a rural area has greater percentage of its populace engaged in a particular activity such as local market or farm activities. These attributes make the rural area to have a particular and unique lifestyle, culture, norms and values (Rickards, 2016). These identifiers obviously have direct or indirect effects on the health conditions of the people.

Rural health is seen as that which basically pays attention to population health as well as the improvement of health status. Its concern, over the years, has been on health infrastructure including facilities, services, programmes and providers of sound, simple, accessible and affordable healthcare (Gibbens, 2017). It is quite different from the application of urban health in rural environment because the conditions obtainable in rural areas are less insured, poorer and higher morbidity. Even those who live in the area are older, bound by strong cultural traits and relationships. It is because of the obvious like these that more effective health policy, informed by competent research exercise, is called for.

The experience in the living conditions of a people and the mortality rate are issues that crisscross race, gender, economic status, and age. It is believed that the death rate witnessed in rural areas, on account of neonatal, foetal and maternal, cannot be compared with those in urban places (Rickards, 2016). Yet, the people who dwell in rural settings have the same fundamental right to healthy living as those in urban areas. And given the interdependence nature of the people, the health services should be community focused. That is, integral to the values of the people and engaging them in the process of healthcare delivery (Gibbens, 2017).

A rural healthy community, therefore, would be one that is dynamic, changing, fair, and engaged. It will be such that diversity has value; people have a sense of inclusion, trust and respect; work is done as a team; and the overall objective is for the good of the community. It is in view of these that the call for a comprehensive, evidence-based improvement system, which would include appropriate intersectional approach with partnership for rural health development, is of necessity (Ebuehi & Campbell, 2011).

Development and Health Communication

Development as a concept has evolved through the years, having several connotations and denotations. But its basic is focused on growth, progress and change. Development is a purposeful socioeconomic change that transforms a society in a multidimensional way. It is a process of improvement on the living conditions of a people. This growth or change can be observed in the way people think and do things. Therefore, development is a continuous progress directed at complex goals that not only brings about tangible improvements, creates social amenities, ensure, human rights and privileges, as well as builds human capacity, but

also eliminates diseases in pursuit of sustainable health (Rogers, 1976; Haqqani, 2005; Asermah, 2010; Abuiyada, 2018).

On the other hand, as means of development, health communication is seen as the adoption of communication strategies to inform, educate and influence individual and community decisions that foster health (Community Guide in RHHub, n.d.). This deals with the various means available to a people in passing across health related messages in verbal and nonverbal means. The relevance of health communication as a new field of study that would enable one to understand issues that affect lifespan have been underscored by scholarly submissions (Thompson, 2014). It is therefore apt to say that health communication deals with the adoption of communication mechanisms to inform and influence personal choices that facilitate health. It attempts to change behaviours in a large-scale target audience concerning a particular health issue. This is why it is described as an art and technique of communication about health issues (DHHS, 2000; Schiavo, 2013; ACDC & NCI, 2019).

Health communication, as the concept suggests, is a fusion of health and communication with a view of helping people to live healthy through the means of communication. In this case, it will entail communication strategies that would create knowledge, inform attitudes and affect practices (KAP) concerning public health and personal hygiene. It is easy to perceive that the most affected aspect of communicating health would be health promotion and disease prevention measures. From health campaigns, people become aware of certain lifestyles and practices that would either make or mar their health conditions.

Health communication can be carried out at different levels of society. It could be at individual level, which is the most fundamental for people to know about how they can live without the external influence from others. Next is the social network, where an individual finds a connection with groups that can influence each other for good. Beside these, is the community level wherein institutions like schools, workplace, agencies etc. foster healthful living through policies and structures. The last phase is society, where individual behaviours are influenced by laws, values, economic and social factors (ACDC & NCI, 2019). Whenever there is effective health communication, development takes place on the people.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study is made up of rural dwellers in Rivers State, which is 4,592,588, that is, about 48% of the estimated 9,567,892. A sample size of 297 was adopted for the study using cluster and purposive sampling procedures. Three communities were selected from one LGA of each Senatorial Zone in Rivers – Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South East (i.e. 33 respondents per community). The instrument for data collection was designed to have 11-item self-constructed questionnaire. Data were presented in percentage tables and analysed through four-point Likert scale. The criterion for decision in the weighted mean score is 2.5 – any mean below that is insignificant (negative/rejected), whereas from 2.5 is significant (positive/accepted).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Objective 1: *To find out what motivates listenership to BBC Nebor My Nebor in Rivers State.*

Table 1: Most enjoyed aspects of BBC Nebor My Nebor radio drama.

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Language	98	33
Presentation Style	59	20
Message	53	18
Character	45	15
Story	39	13
All of the above	3	1
None of the Above	0	0
Total	297	100

Table 1 indicates that the audience enjoyed the language used in the programme more than any other aspect of it. This implies that the kind of language used, which was peculiar to the major ethnic groups and Pidgin English, caught their attention.

Table 2: Listenership frequency of BBC Nebor My Nebor

Listenership	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once a week	107	36
Three times in a month	89	29
Two times in a month	48	16
Rarely	45	15
Monthly	8	2.7
Total	297	100

In Table 2, it can be understood that more of the audience listened to the radio drama not less than three or four times in a month. This is a positive record for the programme.

Table 3: Reasons for listening to BBC Nebor My Nebor

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
All of the above	110	37
To learn about diarrhoea	80	27
To engage my free time	56	19
To understand personal hygiene	42	14
Others	9	3
None of the above	0	0
Total	297	100

From Table 3, it can be seen that a good number of the audience (27%) have the intention of learning about diarrhoea, but the greater ratio of the people also listen to the programme because of their free time while learning about diarrhoea and personal hygiene.

Given the data so derived for objective One, it can be understood that the language adopted and the style of presentation are the key variables motivating listenership to *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State, given that 53% indicated both. The message equally motivated them fairly. Furthermore, a lot of the listeners do so in order to learn about diarrhoea, use their spare time and understand more about personal hygiene.

Objective 2: *To find out what satisfaction people derive from BBC Nebor My Nebor in Rivers State.*

Table 4: Audience satisfaction from BBC *Nebor My Nebor*

Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
All of the above	86	29
Better understanding of health issues	81	27
Education about the society	65	22
A means of escape (worries)	36	12
Source of laughter	28	9.5
Others	1	0.5
Total	297	100

From Table 4, the respondents submitted that the greatest satisfaction derived from *Nebor My Nebor* involved better understanding of health issues and education. This means that the programme was changing their way of thinking.

Table 5: Message contained in *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama

Messages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diarrhoea first aid	104	35
Right medication	98	33
Healthy lifestyle	56	19
Neighbourliness	21	7
Participation	15	5
Relationship	3	1
Total	297	100

In Table 5, it can be understood that two messages, diarrhoea first aid and right medication, were the major ones identified by the respondents as contained in the *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama, respectively.

Table 6: Relevance of the themes in BBC *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama

Item	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	WMS	Remark
The messages in <i>Nebor My Nebor</i> are important to my community needs.	112	165	7	13	970	3.26	Accepted

The data in Table 6 highlights that respondents are in consonance that the messages in BBC Nebor My Nebor are important to their communities. It summed up to a weighted mean score of 3.26 and was accepted because it was above the criterion.

In response to objective Two, concerning the satisfaction people derived from BBC Nebor My Nebor in Rivers State, the respondents were satisfied with the health issues treated, especially how to relate with the problem of diarrhoea and learn about the society, given the 69% and 87% put together for the first three options chosen in Tables 4 and 5 respectively.

Objective 3: *To find out how BBC Nebor My Nebor has fostered rural health communication in Rivers State.*

Table 7: The purpose for listening to *Nebor My Nebor*

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Options A to D	123	41.5
More information on ORS	74	25
Giving first aid on diarrhoea	57	19
Personal hygiene	37	12.5
None of the mentioned	6	2
Total	297	100

The responses in Table 7 indicate that the audience used the *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama for all the mentioned purposes including knowledge about ORS, diarrhoea first aid and personal hygiene.

Table 8: Impact of the radio drama on rural health

S/N	Item	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	WMS	Remark
8	More persons learn diarrhoea prevention in Nebor My Nebor.	124	147	7	19	970	3.26	Accepted
9	The radio drama has enabled people to practice proper children waste disposal habit.	125	159	3	10	993	3.34	Accepted
10	I now wash my hands and that of children after toileting because of Nebor My Nebor message.	155	129	5	8	1,025	3.45	Accepted
11	Nebor My Nebor has encouraged us to improve in cleaning our environment.	142	141	5	9	1,010	3.40	Accepted
Average Weighted Mean						3,998	3.36	Accepted

The data in Table 8 indicate that more of the respondents have been influenced into proper health practices concerning diarrhoea, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. It generated an average weighted means score of 3.36, which is positive and was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

*Factors that Motivate the Audience to Listen to *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State*

Language is a powerful means of communication. From the data gathered in the field work, it was clear that the audience were at home with the language employed for *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama in Rivers State. It was Pidgin English – the common form of English adopted by many Nigerians, especially those in the South-South. The interaction between the major characters, Jugunu, who identifies with the Yoruba lifestyle; Mallam Gimba, the hilarious Hausa man; Mama Ngozi, the voice of a typical Igbo woman; Innocent, Gogo, and Gladys all add to blend with the various speech mannerisms of people from Akwalbom and Rivers States.

There was also an appeal to the elite class in the use of Queens English. This was portrayed in the role played by Tony and Nurse Ene, who had the command of sound English language. It was very easy for *Nebor My Nebor* to catch the attention of an average Nigerian because one can almost see oneself in the drama. The accents employed in the language expression were also powerful. There is no doubt that language does have a motivating force. It was one of Cookey's (2012) recommendations that when radio drama serials are adopted into the local languages, they can attract more audience attention and motivate listenership. This is one of the positives *Nebor My Nebor* seems to have made in adopting Pidgin English and the use of peculiar ethnic based lifestyles.

Face-me-i-face-you (housing pattern in which the next door neighbor is opposite or beside one's own door) is one of the modes of living common among the lower class in Nigeria. Mama Ngozi and Iye were neighbours to Mama Ejiro, whose baby (Kalif) they had to take care of in her absence, only because they lived in a face-me-i-face-you apartment. The motif of personal hygiene, as one of the motivations for listening to the radio drama, can be easily identified in the prologue and epilogue of each episode, "...with soap and clean water". With this introduction and closing, the audience is given a sense of direction of the programme. Like Bryant, Roskos-Ewoldsen & Cantor (2003) would say that with Entertainment theory, the audience can gain instructive information while enjoying media entertaining programmes.

It can also be seen that the people identified the reasons for listening to BBC *Nebor My Nebor*. There is no community or individual who would be comfortable with diseases and to learn that there is an entertainment programme that teaches them tips on rural health practices, was cheering. This was demonstrated in the responses of the people (Table 3) where they admitted that they learnt about diarrhoea, used their free time, and understood more about personal hygiene. Herzog (1944), Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) had submitted in the Uses and Gratifications Theory that for the purpose of learning something new and helpful, the audience would consciously tune into a programme. *Nebor My Nebor* is one of such programmes that the audiences tuned in and obtain useful information about rural health.

*Satisfaction People Derive from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in Rivers State*

One of the major challenges in rural health issues is the kind of orientation and perception prevalent among people. In the absence of adequate and proper information, people are bound to fill up the gap with erroneous views. Thus the ability of *Nebor My Nebor* to redefine

and change the way of thinking about some rural health issues is remarkable. For instance, in one of the radio drama episodes, it became obvious that the *Nebor My Nebor* community had misinformation about the treatment and use of ORT. Were it not to be so, how could Ngozi, in Scene Five of the episode, eat the coconut she ought to have prepared for Kalif's first aid and poured the coconut's water away? For Ngozi, the coconut water was not good for children as it could make them foolish, "mumu" (i.e. stupid). For these poorly informed rural dwellers, "*kokonut water no gud for small pikin*". One can then appreciate the fact that (in Table 4) *Nebor My Nebor* was able to change the people's way of thinking about some rural health issues.

In Scene Nine of the same episode, another satisfaction derivable from *Nebor My Nebor* could be seen where the audience is given some moral lessons about decent behaviour. Gogo, the mother of Prince, cautioned him against taking laws into his hands in a bid to address his grievances. "How could you go to the health centre like a common thug?" she asked. "I only went to tell Charles Sylvester that I'm not going to let him take my throne away from me", he answered. Gogo used the opportunity to advice Prince on why he should not allow youthful exuberance to control his decisions and actions. Goldstein, Usdin, Scheepers and Japhet (2005) have demonstrated that Soul City media campaign could bring about desirable changes in the life of people in the community on certain issues, even on HIV prevention, violence against women and the use of contraceptives. Therefore, the use of BBC *Nebor My Nebor* to influence people's behaviour is a creative exercise.

Part of the findings from the study is the audience knowledge about the type of messages promoted in BBC *Nebor My Nebor*. They were able to identify diarrhoea first aid, right medication and healthy lifestyle as the top three themes in the radio drama, respectively. These three themes had 87% of the responses, which is high enough to buttress the fact that the people perceive rural health information from it. And more importantly, if the greatest percentage of the voices could be on diarrhoea first aid, and the weighted mean score of how important the messages were to the community was *positive*, given the 3.26 response (Table 6), it is reasonable to conclude that BBC *Nebor My Nebor* is living up to its objective for rural health communication. This finding strengthens McQuail (2010) assertion in the Uses and Gratifications Theory that the audience is rather active than passive in communication process in that their choice of media content is directed at specific goals. The rural dwellers in Rivers State listen to *Nebor My Nebor* because of the messages they get from it.

BBC Nebor My Nebor Fostering of Rural Health Communication in Rivers State

The findings in the study revealed the aspects of the people's lives that have been influenced by BBC *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama. Put together, forty-eight percent (48%) of the responses indicated that they had more knowledge about ORS, how to administer diarrhoea first aid and how to carry out personal hygiene. There is more danger when an opportunity of ORS is missed out because it is the quick intervention that can be offered under an emergency situation. To learn of this is good and to learn of it from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* is apt.

Further findings in the study were seen in the Likert Scale where four items were featured (Table 8), which were on the impact of BBC *Nebor My Nebor* on rural health. It generated an average weighted mean score of 3.36 and was accepted because it is above the criterion. The underpinning was that the radio drama serial enabled more persons to learn about diarrhoea

prevention, practice proper children waste disposal habits, wash hands after toilet use, and improve on environmental cleanliness. There is therefore no doubt that the programme has influenced the people on rural health issues, since the respondents were able to identify with the aforementioned. To this end, BBC *Nebor My Nebor* is not just an entertainment radio drama serial but has also proved itself as an effective means for communicating rural health messages to the audience.

In similar vein, Cookey (2012) described “One Thing at a Time” as an edutainment radio drama serial for which it was noted as means for social development initiative. Radio entertainment programmes can be effectively employed to pass social change messages to the people. The finding from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* agrees with the scholar’s submission as well as expands the Entertainment Theory as being effective in entertaining and educating the audience. There is always room for media contents to be modelled into preferred package of information, education and entertainment, in one dose.

Conclusion

The issue of health is a very critical phenomenon in every society. It is more a subject of concern in rural environments like Nigeria where development is still nascent. The lack or absence of basic infrastructure including health care has exacerbated chances of diseases. It is therefore inherent in communication efforts to be channelled towards social change. Entertainment programmes have been effective in changing perceptions and attitudes towards social issues. The use of BBC *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama serial as a means of rural health communication is a strategic and positive approach in reaching rural dwellers with health messages. The objectives the study were to ascertain what motivates listenership to BBC *Nebor My Nebor*; the satisfaction people derived in it; and the influence of the radio drama serial on rural health communication in Rivers State. The study was built on the Entertainment Theory as well as Uses and Gratifications Theory. It adopted the descriptive survey design. A sample size of 297 was drawn through cluster and purposive sampling technique from an estimated population of 4,592,588. The instrument for data gathering was constructed with 11-item design of which five of them were in the four-point Likert Scale with 2.5 as criterion for significance rating. From the findings of this paper, it can be concluded that:

1. The people were motivated to listen to the programme because of the language adopted, which was majorly Pidgin English; the presentation style that portrayed some ethnic origins, given the 53% of both factors, put together; and the knowledge they gathered from being entertained in the radio drama.
2. The audience derived satisfaction from BBC *Nebor My Nebor* in that it afforded them the opportunity to learn about health issues, especially diarrhoea, given the 69% indices as well as understand their society better, factoring the 87% responses, put together, while using the programme to spend their free time.
3. The people’s orientation about the prevention and treatment of diarrhea was influenced positively, given the 3.36 AWMS. The programme also afforded them the opportunity to know what to do about rural health issues such as personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness. It is therefore apt to say that the BBC *Nebor My Nebor* radio drama met its objective in reaching the people with rural health communication.

Recommendations

From the findings of the paper, it is recommended that:

1. Subsequent programmes can be packaged in the indigenous tongues of the people given that they were motivated more by the subject of language.
2. There should be equal consideration of minor ethnic groups in the characterisation rather than playing up only some of the major ethnic groups that may not be largest audience in some of the rural areas.
3. The episodes should be packaged to place more emphasis on care patterns for various rural health problems with greater concern on preventive lifestyles than treatment.

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