



Impact of Radio Advocacy on the Reduction of Drug Abuse among Youths in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

¹Jesse Okedi, ²Godwin Bassey Okon, ³Fred Azubuikwe Amadi & ⁴Dike, Harcourt-Whyte

^{1&2}Department of Development Communication Studies, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

³Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

⁴Department of Broadcast Studies, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

¹<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4482-288X>

²<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5038-7464>

¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4042-7968>

²<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-1840-7975>

*Corresponding author: jesse.okedi@ust.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Background: The mention of Niger Delta rings a bell in Nigeria not just for its abundance of oil and gas reserves but also for the polluted environment, youths restiveness, violent crimes like kidnapping, cultism and militancy. The Niger Delta region has been at the receiving end of Nigeria's political cum economic quagmire with its attendant consequences on the youth population and high rate of drug abuse has been one of the motivating factors of such notoriety. Irked by the complex issues associated with the region, this study investigated the impact of radio advocacy on the reduction of drug abuse among youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Objectives: The objectives were to investigate the level of exposure to radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse among youths in Niger Delta region of Nigeria; determine their perception of the programmes investigate how the radio advocacy programmes have influenced drug use and abuse among youths in the area.

Method: The study adopted the descriptive survey design and a sample of 385 respondents were drawn from the population of youths between ages 15 - 46 residing in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom states, totaling 15,587,997. According to United Nations, Sixty percent of the population is made up of youths. That means 60 percent of which equals 9,352,798. The researchers employed proportionate sampling technique to be able to cover the three states under focus. To this end, Rivers State had 193 respondents for contributing 50.2 per cent of the study population, Akwa-Ibom State had 123 respondents for contributing 31.9 per cent of the population while Bayelsa State had 68 respondents for contributing 17.9 per cent of the population. The researchers utilised the convenience sample technique to reach the target respondents. The instrument used for this study was the questionnaire. The method for analyzing the data was using the Weighted Mean Score on a four point Likert Scale with a 2.5 decision rule.

Results: The research found that youths of the Niger Delta were very much exposed to radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse due to the high entertainment belt of the radio station being their bait, the youths perceived the radio advocacy on drug abuse as educative and engaging



considering the complexities of their age bracket and radio advocacy on drug abuse had affected the prevalence of drug abuse positively by bringing down the incidences of open display cum consumption of illicit drugs and influencing the enforcement efforts of security agencies. This implies that the construction of social reality theory applied in this study was effective to the extent that the audience members made meaning out of the radio advocacy contents on drug abuse and were influenced to refrain from drug abuse especially those that were not drug addicts.

Conclusion: This study concluded that society can chart a new course with the media setting the agenda. The radio can also be utilized to push positive agenda like stopping drug abuse among youths. It has also proven that the media do not operate in a vacuum but are subject to the various sociological, economic, religious and political configurations of the society.

Unique Contribution: This study has added voice to the growing call for a drug free society. It has proven the radio and indeed the media as a development partner in any society. It demonstrates that when the media promotes constructive social agendas, small changes can occur.

Key Recommendation: The study recommended that the radio should utilize other advocacy paradigms in order to make anti-drug advocacy programmes more appealing and invite more youths as guests on the programme. The study also recommended that every strata of the society from the government, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations to private individuals should collaborate to bring about the needed synergy that will tame drug abuse in the society.

Key Words: Drug abuse, Reduction, Youths, Niger Delta, Radio advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

The radio, as an electronic medium, is one of the most pervasive, effective and cheapest medium of mass communication available to man today. This is because radio comes in different shapes, modes and sizes that make it a device of choice to the average man. Its contents provide an opportunity for man to understand both his immediate and distant environment. The choice of radio by the audience members is predicated on its programmes being carefully designed and packaged to address the various issues in the society that warrants public attention. Recently, radio stations have now incorporated call in programmes into their bulletins that enable members of the audience to share their thoughts and seek clarifications on issues affecting the society. This has given effect to greater participation and indeed the democratization of the contents of radio broadcasting. The ability of the radio waves to travel far and wide with contents received through portable electronic devices simultaneously by the audience with minimal interference makes it a better choice within the broadcast industry. It is the portability of the electronic device that creates convenience in the manner of reception of radio programmes by the audience members.

The place of the media in informing, educating, correlating the society and transmission of cultural heritage from generation is no longer an issue for debate among academics (Okon, 2012; Hallin and Mancini, 2014; Ezeonyejiaku & Onyejelem, 2021). The media have remained in the forefront of reporting happenings in the society, defending society's ideals and highlighting possible problems plaguing society with a view to seeking lasting solutions to them from the members of the society. This is the reason some scholars aver that the media reflect the society within which they operates naturally. In fact, Okon (2012) avers that "the media do not operate in a vacuum but



is subject to the sociological, religious, cultural, political and economic conditions cum configurations of the society”, p. 31. This is because the happenings in the society form the basis for media reportage and operations, the media do not operate on conjectures but realism. The media cannot manufacture its content abstract from what is real and verifiable in the society. It is the reality, connectivity and verifiability of media content in synchronism with societal issues that determine media relevance as to how the people perceive or avail themselves to be exposed to the content of the media. This way, the media can be said to be setting societal agenda for the people to deliberate and inspire possible action from the societal standpoint.

The radio especially is known for its ability to break known communication barriers to reach the audience. This is because of its portability, ease of accessibility, audio preference, affordability, simplicity of language and flexibility in programming. Most people can easily use the radio to learn about several things in the society because the mobile communication system has incorporated the radio into its devices. Therefore, the mobile phones now serve as both radio device and a telecommunication device simultaneously. Consequently, media audiences are now at liberty to be able to access messages from both the print and electronic media through a conscious or passive effort on their parts because of information overflow. Without the media, the members of the society will be unable to maintain a continuous flow of animated information for driving economic progress, deliver on national development goals and stay in an environment that supports peaceful coexistence (Okunna, 2000).

The media set societal positive agenda, driving the audience members to give attention to hitherto silent issues plaguing the society like drug abuse. Drug abuse among the youths in the Niger Delta, have destroyed several families but such ravages are kept silent for fear of societal mockery. The radio is being called to action in this wise as they also serve as lubricants to the economy through the input of ideas from a wide range of professionals in various areas of human endeavour (Nwafor, Ezema, & Igwebuikwe, 2022).

Youths in Nigeria have been labeled with restiveness and other non-savoury nomenclature in recent times especially within the Niger Delta region. This is because of the rising cases of various crimes hitherto unknown to the society. The worse scenario is that these perceived crimes are being committed by the youths. There has also been an increase in the occurrence of random and frequent acts of violence and lawlessness, including things like hostage taking of prominent citizens and expatriate oil workers, as well as oil bunkering, arms insurgency, cultism, armed robbery and so on especially within the Niger Delta region. Nevertheless, youth restiveness is not a recent phenomenon but the dimensions it has taken in recent times points to a dangerous trajectory being towed by the youths who are supposed to be the leaders of the future (Obande-Ogbuinya, et al., 2024).

Hard drugs have done irreparable damage on several youths in Nigeria, nay, the Niger Delta. The effect of hard drugs on the life of the youths is so visible that many a time, whenever a youth is seen misbehaving, the phrase ‘*on colos, logo na your mate?*’ rent the air, meaning that the said youth is operating under the influence of hard drugs. The effect is such that many of them have become drug addicts to the extent that it will only take the grace of God to revive them. As



members of society watch helplessly, the youth population is gradually depleting due to the effect of drug on their psyche, action and behavior which has become anti-social in recent times (Onyejelem, Ezeonyejiaku, Nwafor & Nwodu, 2023)..

In Nigeria, drug abuse can be attributed to the major cause of insecurity and has been described as a national tragedy sitting above all other social vices in the country. Drug abuse has a devastating impact on the growth and development of the society. Apart from the chronic effect of drug abuse on the users, experts have also established a nexus between the menace and the rising insecurity in the country. According to the United Nations' office on drug and crime, UNODC, 14.4 per cent of Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 64, indulge in drug abuse and the most abused among them is cannabis. This ranks the country among countries with the high rate of drug abuse.

Statistically, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, says that over fourteen million persons in Nigeria are into drug abuse out of which the youths account for over fifty per cent. The agency therefore proposed that those seeking to get married and the persons seeking admissions into tertiary institutions would be made to undergo drug test as a way of preventing calamity in the society. With a fifty per cent ratio of youths being into drugs, it can only get worse if the trend is not halted. Halting the trend in this case cannot be done with violence because drug abusers are the masters of the art/act. Only a conscious re-orientation championed by the media can help in this regard and radio is most suited for the task.

Several studies have been carried out on the Niger Delta youths as to their supposed violent reaction to situations but none has pointed to drug abuse as a possible cause of such reaction. For example, Deedenwii (2018) focused on the impact of the media on creating awareness on drug abuse in Rivers State alone, Ezenyi (2015) focused on the role of the radio in combatting drug abuse among undergraduate students in Enugu State University, Ude-Akpeh (2017) did an evaluation of NDLEA Radio Campaign influence on drug abuse among youths in Onitsha metropolis and so on. All of these were restricted to one locality or another. The present study took on three states along the same geographic belt.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aimed to appraise how radio advocacy has been able to influence the youths that are neck deep into drug abuse in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the extent of youths' exposure to radio advocacy against drug abuse in the Niger Delta;
2. Determine how youths of the Niger Delta perceive radio advocacy programmes against drug abuse;
3. Examine the influence of radio advocacy on the reduction of drug abuse in Niger Delta.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Social Construction of Reality Theory (SCRT). The SCRT according to McQuail (2010), refers to an abstract term for a very broad and influential tendency in the social sciences, sparked off especially by the publication of Berger and Luckman (1967), in their book, *Social Construction of Reality*. In effect, it can also be referred to as ‘Social Constructionism’ where meaning is a function of a social system’s values and aspiration and not just an abstract imputation since the media reflects society naturally (Okon, 2012; Hallin and Mancini, 2014). In essence meaning creation in the communication process depends largely on the society and its accepted template for such meaning given the assigned linguistic codes. It means that the same words will most likely mean different things to different people at different times. It shows that meaning is not static but dynamic and a function of who said what, to whom and where was it said. With these variables, meaning becomes the making of not just the speaker but that of both the speaker and the listener through inter-activity.

McQuail (2010) argues that the roots of Social Constructionism stems from the symbolic interactionism of Blumer (1969) and phenomenological sociology of Schutz (1972). “In this work, the notion of society as an objective reality pressing on individuals is countered with alternative (and more liberating) view that the structures, forces and ideas of society are created by human beings, continually recreated or reproduced and also open to challenge and change... Social reality has to be made and given meaning (interpreted) by human actors”, p. 100. This is opposed to the fixated mindset that meaning is simply intrinsic and inherent in the linguistic codes used for expression. Rather, meaning is a function of both verbal and non-verbal codes sieved through the lens of a social system at any given time that makes it real rather than abstract.

In effect, McQuail’s argument is that meaning in communication within the society is not fixated on conditions that are predetermined but dynamic to the extent that time, place and who is speaking determine the meaning per time. It also means that meaning is negotiated between the encoder and decoder through a feedback mechanism that allows both parties to agree on a common ground determined by their background and frame of reference. It also means that within the communication process, the participants try to linguistically paint a picture of their intentions but what becomes the value of such a picture is a function of the agreed terms between the participants according to the dictates of context, time, culture and geography. In effect, for meaning to be anything of worth, human intelligence must be involved to interpret, agree, counter and/or affirm the linguistic codes used within the communication process be they verbal or non-verbal. This puts man at the centre of every communication process as both the initiator and ultimate beneficiary of the possible outcome. It means that meaning is constructed in the human mind through communication. Communication here then becomes man’s effort at understanding his immediate environment through verbal and non-verbal expressions as his mind sees it.



According to McQuail (2010), the main propositions of the Social Construction of Reality Theory are that (a) society is a construct rather than a fixed reality – this makes change possible at any given time and this change will be driven by the people through their narratives (b) media provide the materials for reality construction – by permitting the articulation of societal thoughts, the media midwifes discourses that spur members of the society to action (c) meanings are offered by media, but can be negotiated or rejected – the media only moderates the thoughts but cannot decide what society do with it because ultimately, the will to act or not to act resides with the people (d) media selectively reproduces certain meanings – by focusing on certain issues in the society and leaving out the others, the media selectively brings societal consciousness to such issues to the detriment of the ones left out - and; (e) media cannot give an objective account of social reality (all facts are interpretations) – the media is not an arbiter in its own right but a channel for people to express ideas and thoughts about issues in the society, the media only helps to collate the thoughts and call public attention to them.

Here, we see how the activity rather than passivity of man determines meaning in a communication process as can be gleaned from the propositions of this theory. It therefore follows that by the postulations of this theory as stated by McQuail:

- a. Every society is prone to change and this change is dependent on the actions and inactions of the members of the society.
- b. The media can only midwife societal change through its content and offerings. Meaning that people are exposed to the media and react either positively or negatively to its content for the good of the society.
- c. The media offers perspectives on issues but what eventually becomes of such issues is what the members of the society decide and not otherwise.
- d. The verdict? – the media cannot give an objective account of societal reality since media attention to issues is restrictive and perspectival. This is especially as what is news is first the decision of the reporter before the concurrence of the editors.

Okedi and Amadi (2020) aver that the social construction theory explains the phenomenon by which people cooperatively and constructively generate meaning through interactions among them. These interactions are based on their understandings of the world around them, the culture they grew and learned from and the current realities that make such learning effective. It is within these fringes that the advocates of the theory believe that meanings in communication are developed in cooperation with others rather than being decided separately by a single individual within the communication process. Recently, several related terms have gained popularity, including co-construction or joint construction (used to emphasize people working together), constitutive (used as a synonym, as in the constitutive approach), inter-activity, interpellation and the shortened version construction (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009; Amadi, 2017).



CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Radio as Advocacy Tool for Drug Abuse

Radio is an audio medium for disseminating information to a large, widely dispersed and heterogeneous audience. The process of transmitting messages via electrical waves is known as radio (Onyejelem et al., 2023). To put it another way, sound may be sent and received through these waves (Sambe, 2008, p.75). The term "radio" is defined by Idebi (2008, p.1) as "the process of delivering and receiving communications across the air utilizing electromagnetic waves." It also refers to the action of broadcasting programmes for the purpose of allowing people to listen to them. Radio, according to Sambe (2008), is the method of transmitting messages by electrical waves to receiver electronic devices. The victims of drug abuse are widely dispersed and those of them hiding their addiction can listen to the radio without interference. This makes the radio the most suitable tool for advocacy against drug abuse because, the people can listen to it from their little corner and get all the information they need to be free from the scourge (Njoku, et al., 2024).

Radio can also be thought of as an electronic wave-based medium for transmitting and receiving communications over the air. It also refers to the action of broadcasting programmes with the purpose of allowing others to listen to the programs that are being transmitted (Idebi, 2008, p.1). It can also be defined as the broadcasting of programmes for the general public to hear. It is a method of transferring sound over a long distance using electrical signals (BBC English Dictionary, 1992, p.946). Radio, according to Apuke (2014), is one of the most significant forms of communication. People use radio to convey spoken words, music, and other communication signals over the air to any location on the planet. Music, news, conversation, interviews, sports event descriptions, and advertisements are now included in radio broadcasts. People listen to car radios on their way to work and during their free time to listen to their favorite programs on the radio. In addition to delivering news, radio is used by airline pilots, astronauts, construction workers, police officers, sailors, and others who operate in a number of fields to communicate quickly. To learn about the weather, scientists transmit radio waves into the sky.

According to Apuke (2014), radio has the following characteristics:

- (1) The radio is a relatively portable instrument that may easily be carried about. Radio's mobility allows people to listen to it no matter where they are.
- (2) It is a mass medium: Radio broadcasts can reach people all over the world.
- (3) Transient messages: Radio transmissions are short-lived. They're on the move all of the time.
- (4) Audio medium: Radio is a one-sided medium, which means you can only hear it and not see it or the people in the studio. It's a limited sensory experience because it solely appeals to the sense of hearing.
- (5) Radio operation necessitates talent. To work well, it necessitates the combination of many talents. Its operation necessitates the presence of reporters, sound engineers, and other professionals.



- (6) It's competitive: with the expansion of radio stations, it's safe to assume that radio has become a fiercely competitive sector, necessitating catchy programming to compete with other stations.
- (7) It is mobile: The radio's mobility distinguishes it; it may be readily transferred from one location to another without causing stress.
- (8) Public: Radio content (messages) is handled and treated in a public manner.
- (9) Impersonal in nature: The sender-receiver relationship is impersonal in nature.

The radio broadcast can be recorded and uploaded to the internet for subsequent listening, and podcasts are becoming increasingly popular. Radio stations can be supported in both non-commercial and commercial ways, for example, by a government or an organization. Part of a station's funding can come from non-commercial sources, while the balance comes from advertising. Because radio stations are now broadcast on a variety of platforms, including social media, advertising money can be collected on these platforms as well. All of these make radio a veritable tool in the fight against drug abuses among youths in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

METHOD

For the purpose of this study, the researchers employed the descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised all youths between ages 15 - 46 resident in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa-Ibom states. The 2024 projected census figures from the National Bureau of Statistics for the states are shown below.

State	Population
Rivers State	7,817,866
Akwa-Ibom State	4,979,400
Bayelsa State	2,790,731
Total	15,587,997

According to United Nations (n.d), Sixty percent of the population is made up of youths. That means 60 percent of 15,587,997 which equals 9,352,798. The sample size of 384 for the study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The researchers employed proportionate sampling technique to be able to cover the three states under focus. To this end, Rivers State had 193 respondents for contributing 50.2 per cent of the study population, Akwa-Ibom State had 123 respondents for contributing 31.9 per cent of the population while Bayelsa State had 68 respondents for contributing 17.9 per cent of the population. The researcher utilised the convenience sample technique to reach the target respondents. The instrument used for this study was the questionnaire. The data was presented in simple frequency tables with percentages. The method for analyzing the data was analysed using the Weighted Mean Score on a four point Likert Scale with a 2.5 decision rule.



RESULTS

What is the extent of youths' exposure to radio advocacy against drug abuse in the Niger Delta?

Table 1: Extent of youths' exposure to radio advocacy against drug abuse in the Niger Delta

S/N	Extent of youths' exposure to radio advocacy against drug abuse in the Niger Delta	SA	A	D	SD	Fx	WMS	Decision
1	Actively exposed	185	80	60	40	1,185	3.2	Agreed
2	Selectively exposed	205	90	60	10	1,280	3.5	Agreed
3	Not exposed at all	40	50	210	65	795	2.2	Disagreed
4	Always exposed	145	125	40	55	1,080	2.95	Agreed
5	Rarely exposed	255	95	10	5	1,330	3.6	Agreed
6	None of the above	20	30	250	65	735	2.0	Disagreed

Source: Survey Data 2024

The table above shows that the youths of the Niger Delta are exposed to advocacy programmes on radio against drug abuse in varying degrees depending on their location at any given time. This also means that there is a high awareness rate about drug abuse among youths in the Niger Delta region.

Research Question Two

How do youths of the Niger Delta perceive radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse?

Table 2: Niger Delta youths' perception of radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse on radio

S/N	Niger Delta youths' perception of radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse on radio	SA	A	D	SD	Fx	WMS	Decision
1	Informative	80	185	40	60	1,015	2.7	Agreed
2	Educative	90	205	60	10	1,105	3.0	Agreed
3	Comical	10	50	210	95	705	1.9	Disagreed
4	Provocative	145	125	40	55	1,090	2.9	Agreed
5	Coherent	100	250	10	5	1,175	3.2	Agreed
6	Embarrassing	20	20	240	85	705	1.9	Disagreed

Source: Survey Data, 2024

The table above shows that youths in the Niger Delta perceive anti-drug campaign messages as coherent, informative, educative and provocative. This shows that apart from being exposed to the contents, they internalize it to make meaning out of it. This also gives vent to the fact that despite their exposure to such advocacy programmes or contents, many of the youths are still involved, trying to get involved or have refused to let go of their drug use habit.



Research Question Three

In what ways has radio advocacy influenced the reduction of drug abuse among youths in Niger Delta?

Table 4: Influence of radio advocacy on the reduction of drug abuse among youths in Niger Delta

S/N	Influence of radio advocacy on the reduction of drug abuse among youths in Niger Delta	SA	A	D	SD	Fx	WMS	Decision
1	Increased awareness about drug abuse matters	90	205	60	10	1,105	3.0	Agreed
2	Spurred community action against drug use cum abuse in the area	10	50	210	95	705	1.9	Disagreed
3	Some drug users cum abusers have discontinued the use of drugs	145	125	40	55	1,090	2.9	Agreed
4	No effect on drug users cum abuse	20	20	240	85	705	1.9	Disagreed
5	Reduction in open display of drug use by victims.	80	185	40	60	1,015	2.7	Agreed

Source: Survey Data, 2024

The above table shows that radio advocacy has moderately influenced the reduction of drug abuse by creating more awareness about drug abuse within the region, influenced some drug users into abandoning drug use and summarily reduced the open display of the use of illicit drugs by the drug addicts. This means that the society is very aware of the menace of drug abuse among youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

Question One: What is the extent of youths’ exposure to radio advocacy against drug abuse in the Niger Delta?

The result from the query showed that the youths of the Niger Delta were exposed to advocacy programmes on radio against drug abuse in varying degrees depending on their location at any given time. This also means that there is a high awareness rate about drug abuse among youths in the Niger Delta region. In fact, from the qualitative data, it was explained that because of the wide reach of the radio stations, it gives them an edge in reaching out to the audience members. This was because, the signals were also very clear in reception and people like clear signals. And, most of the programmes on radio actually target the youths especially through music. We are a ‘more music less talk’ station and youths like music and other forms of entertainment on radio. This makes the youths to stay glued to our station for entertainment.

The radio has never been in doubt as a tool for reaching a wide range of audience members. Its portability, affordability and accessibility distinguishes it as a preferred medium reaching out to the people. According to Sambe (2015):

Radio broadcasting has remained the most effective mass communication medium available to man mainly due to the low cost of



radio sets and the fact that radio programming in Nigeria today is increasingly accommodating the local languages of the respective audiences of the numerous stations spread across the country. The ability of the radio to reach a wide heterogeneous audience with messages simultaneously also stands as a point of choice, p. 10.

Other factors, which make radio more effective than other media of mass communication, include its portability and availability in homes. Radio broadcasting is an effective tool of mass mobilization and the socialization of a people culturally, politically and economically. It is a potent factor in the enhancement and acceleration of the overall societal development.

The radio station performs several functions and in the process and affects Nigerians variously. One of such is information. It provides information about local, national and international events and conditions. It also finds out about relevant events and conditions in immediate surroundings. Radio gives advice on practical matters, opinions and complex issues to help facilitate their decision-making; it satisfies curiosity and general interest of the audience members. The radio as a medium of mass communication correlates the different parts of the society through its content. It explains, interprets and comments on the meaning of events and information. Sambe (2008) avers that, “it provides support for established authority and norms. It serves as an agent of socialization: it acts as consensus building, set the agenda, confers status and co-ordinate separate activities within the society”, p. 47.

The radio transmits cultural heritage from generation to generation. In this way, the medium has the ability to communicate norms, rules and values of a society from one generation to another or from the society to its newcomers. It expressed the dominant cultures and recognizes sub-cultures and new culture developments. It therefore forges and maintains commonality of values. Moreover, radio stations provide a very special form of entertainment which appeals to the sense of reality of the public. After the hectic daily activities, it provides amusement, diversion and means of relaxation, it also provides escape from our daily problems and concerns, it reduces social tension and fosters unity among members of the society (Sambe, 2008).

Question Two: How do youths of the Niger Delta perceive radio advocacy programmes on drug abuse?

The data showed that youths in the Niger Delta perceive anti-drug campaign messages as coherent, informative, educative and provocative. This shows that apart from being exposed to the contents, they internalize it to make meaning out of it. This also gives vent to the fact that despite their exposure to such advocacy programmes or contents, many of the youths are still involved, trying to get involved or have refused to let go of their drug use habit. This justifies the application of the social construction of reality theory to the study with its tenets being played out in the responses got from the respondents.

Idawarifagha (2014) notes that radio stations act as agent of social mobilization of the public. This function refers to the ability of the media to promote national interests and encourage certain behaviours especially during times of national crisis. It advances national interest in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work, religion and sports. It also mobilizes the populace



against dictatorial policies and regimes. This is part of the reason the radio is being primed as one of the leaders in the fight against drug abuse in the Niger Delta area. No society will survive the dangers of drug abuse if left unchallenged for a very long time.

Media content are coloured by societal dynamics and the style of the media overtime in representing issues in the society sometimes reflect societal sentiments and ultimately becomes accepted (Hallin and Mancini, 2014). Media content is an ongoing conversation between members of the society and the media house and this conversation transfers the values of the society from one generation to the other through the passage of time. Here, the press serve as the pathway for the influence or promotion of specific attitudes (like adhering to the rule of law instead of turning to violence to seek redress), to motivate and foster the perpetuation of positive behavioural patterns and to act as a form of creative expression.

Question Three: In what ways has radio advocacy influenced the reduction of drug abuse among in Niger Delta?

The data showed that radio advocacy had moderately influenced the prevalence of drug abuse in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria by creating more awareness about drug abuse within the region, influenced some drug users into abandoning drug use and summarily reduced the open display of the use of illicit drugs by the drug addicts. This means that the society is very aware of the menace of drug abuse among youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

This finding sees expressing in the findings of Okoye, Agbim, Ohaji, Etumnu, Okodogbe and Odionyenma (2022). The researchers found that the level of awareness among respondents towards mass media campaigns against drug abuse was moderate. Further findings showed that mass media efforts had not been effective in reducing the menace of drug abuse among undergraduates in Imo State's tertiary institutions. As a result, it was concluded that mass media campaigns were ineffective in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates of higher institutions in Imo State.

Deedenwii (2018) found that the mass media had enormous role to play in combatting drug abuse among youths in the society. He hinted that the media should take a stand on not advertising products that were narcotic and addictive despite the possible revenue such advertisements were bound to accrue to them. To him, that was a better corporate social responsibility practice to the society other than engaging in endless discussions and campaigns on drug abuse. Stopping the advertisement of products alone cannot solve the problem of drug abuse because the people will get the product whether it was advertised or not. Advertising the product makes it more open to scrutiny and pressure can be mounted on the manufacturers to review it.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that the media, including the radio, have adhered to the same format and style of presentation for a number of programmes that call for greater innovation than the typical programme. Even though young people in the Niger Delta region are exposed to content about drug abuse, this exposure has only had a moderate impact on the prevalence rate of drug abuse, lowering the open display of illicit drug use and encouraging



security agencies to increase the number of people arrested for drug-related offenses. But this has worsened the drug abuse mantra of the youths as they now device more ways not to be caught hence, creating another problem of secrecy which hinders societal efforts at tackling the drug problem. The youths are exposed to different media but are mostly hooked to the social media at their conveniences. This presents an opportunity for advocacy on drug abuse to be streamed on social media channels through music and other forms of entertainment programmes crafted for that purpose. Ultimately, all strata of the society need to collaborate in the fight against drug abuse while the radio stays at the front to coordinate. As can be seen, the journalistic inertia of different advocacy paradigms that had been unbundled for print media also caught the electronic media especially the radio as was the case in this study.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were preferred in the light of the findings of the research:

1. The radio should broaden the scope of conversation on drug abuse to include the areas untouched and uncovered. This should include testimonies from survivors of drug abuse in order to create more effect on the society.
2. The radio should engage more youths on the advocacy programmes on drug abuse. This will make the youths to be more interested in the programmes.
3. The various strata of the society including the government, religious bodies, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and so on, need to collaborate to tackle the challenge posed by drug abuse. The radio can be the driver through coordination of efforts/information but the members of society must rise up because that is where the action takes place.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions.

Jesse Okedi and Prof. G. B. Okon conceived the study, including the design, Dr H. W. Dike coordinated the collation of the data, and Prof. F. A. Amadi handled the analysis and interpretation,



while Jesse Okedi did the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Availability of data and materials.

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request. The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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