



## **Influence of Mass Media on Youth Perceptions of Reproductive Health Issues in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Reproductive health is a significant public health concern for young people in Nigeria. Cultural taboos, limited access to trustworthy information, and a lack of youth-friendly health services leave many uninformed and make it difficult for them to make good decisions. Mass media play an important role here. Young people spend a lot of time on media, whether it's TV, radio, or social media. These channels shape their understanding of the world and what they know about their own health.

**Objective:** This study examined how mass media influence what young people in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State know and believe about reproductive health.

**Method:** A descriptive survey was conducted to assess young people's perceptions of reproductive health and the influence of media on their awareness. Using simple random sampling, 300 participants were selected and given structured questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, and tables to identify trends in awareness, media usage, and attitudes toward reproductive health.

**Result:** The results show that mass media strongly affect what young people know and think about reproductive health. When youths receive media messages on these topics, their knowledge improves. However, there's an important point, the messages are most effective when they are clear, easily accessible, and actually speak to young people in a language they understand.

**Conclusion:** Mass media play a major role in increasing awareness about reproductive health among young people. These platforms not only inform, they also shape the way youths think and understand these issues.

**Unique Contribution:** This study provides solid evidence on how exposure to media influences what young people in Eti-Osa know about reproductive health. It focuses on a specific Nigerian community, bringing new insight to the discussion.

**Key Recommendation:** Media organizations and public health agencies should design reproductive health campaigns that are clear, culturally sensitive and truly resonate with young people. This is how we can effectively communicate the message and support youths in making responsible health choices.

**Keywords:** Media influence, Reproductive health, Youth perception, Awareness, Eti-Osa, Lagos State.



## INTRODUCTION

Globally, reproductive health has emerged as a critical public health concern, particularly among adolescents and young adults. It encompasses a broad range of issues, including access to contraceptive services, family planning, comprehensive sexual education, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In Nigeria, similar to other developing countries, reproductive health challenges persist due to cultural taboos, limited healthcare infrastructure, and inadequate awareness, especially among youth populations (Isiugo-Abanihe, Odebiyi & Feyisetan, 2017).

Media platforms such as television, radio, print, and outdoor advertising have historically played significant roles in public health campaigns aimed at promoting healthy behaviors (Chemwaina, 2019; Nwafor et al., 2024). Nigeria, with its large and youthful population, faces unique reproductive health challenges, particularly in urban centers like Eti-Osa in Lagos State. Despite various media campaigns promoting sexual and reproductive health, access to accurate and youth-friendly information remains limited (Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria, 2017). This reality underscores the growing importance of evaluating how effectively media campaigns resonate with young audiences. There is a pressing need to understand how media influence youth awareness, attitudes, and behaviour concerning reproductive health in order to inform effective communication strategies and public health interventions.

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of reproductive health among Nigerian youth, significant barriers remain in Eti-Osa, Lagos. These barriers include cultural norms that discourage open discussions about sexuality, limited access to healthcare, and insufficient dissemination of accurate information (Ajayi & Nwokocha, 2018; Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2017). While the media are often utilised to inform and educate the public, the effectiveness of such efforts, particularly in reaching and influencing young people, is not well-documented. Reproductive health continues to be a major issue for young people in many developing countries, including Nigeria. Teenagers and young adults face significant risks, such as unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections, mostly because they lack sufficient access to reliable information and health services. Despite the existence of various health education programs and campaigns, many young people still have limited knowledge about reproductive health and safe sex (World Health Organization, 2020; United Nations Population Fund, 2021).

Mass media play an important part in delivering health information and shaping public opinion. Radio, television, newspapers, and digital platforms are capable of reaching large audiences with their messages. These media channels influence what young people know, how they feel, and how they behave (Muoneke & Nwafor 2024). Studies show that exposure to these messages increases young people's awareness of reproductive health issues and encourages safer practices (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010; Nwafor et al 2022). However, for the media to be truly effective, the messages must be easily accessible, clear, frequently delivered, and culturally appropriate.



In Nigeria, both government agencies and non-governmental organizations use the media to promote reproductive health awareness among young people. Yet, many youths still do not fully understand these issues. Mixed messages and persistent cultural taboos about sexuality remain significant barriers (Asekun-Olarinmoye et al., 2014; Nwafor et al., 2020). Even though some research has addressed reproductive health awareness on a broader scale, there is still a noticeable gap: there is limited information about how media actually influence young people's knowledge and attitudes within specific communities like Eti-Osa Local Government Area.

This study addresses that gap. It examines the extent to which mass media shape young people's understanding and perceptions of reproductive health in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State. Understanding this will help improve the use of media in communicating essential health information to young people.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate level of exposure to media messages on reproductive health among young people in *Eti-Osa* Local Government Area of Lagos State
2. Evaluate the perception of reproductive health issues among young people in *Eti-Osa* Local Government Area of Lagos State
3. Determine the relationship between exposure mass media and perception of reproductive health issues among young people in *Eti-Osa* Local Government Area of Lagos State.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Reproductive health issues such as contraception, STI prevention, and sexual education continue to be influenced by stigma and misconceptions among youth. According to Adebayo (2019), despite global efforts to promote awareness, cultural and social norms often treat discussions about reproductive health as taboo. Similarly, Agha (2009) and Aghamelu (2013) note that many societies perceive young people as too immature to participate in reproductive health decisions, thereby restricting their access to essential services. However, research indicates that comprehensive sexual education equips young people with the knowledge needed to make responsible decisions (Airhihenbuwa, 2020).

The stigmatization of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections further discourages youths from seeking health services. These issues are frequently interpreted as moral failures rather than health concerns, resulting in discrimination and limited access to care (Akene, 2019; Akinkugbe, Onyemelukwe, & Saka, 2010).

Traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers have historically contributed to shaping public discourse on reproductive health. Through news coverage and entertainment



programmes, these media platforms bring attention to issues such as contraception, STIs, and teenage pregnancy, thereby promoting awareness and encouraging dialogue (Bartlett, Devinney, & Pudlowski, 2016; Butler, 2000; Caron, 2019; Nwafor et al., 2020). Television programmes and radio talk shows are particularly important in areas with limited internet access, serving as accessible sources of health information (Kennedy & Karanja, 2017; Kreps, 2015; Aligwe et al 2018). Nevertheless, some media portrayals reinforce stereotypes or fail to represent diverse youth experiences, which may lead to misinformation or disengagement from important health messages (Obamiro, 2008; Jaffer, Amrallah & Abdulla, 2009).

The emergence of digital media has expanded reproductive health education through online platforms that enable peer learning, advocacy, and access to reliable information (Gane & Beer, 2018; Soola, 2020). However, the spread of misinformation and the digital divide continue to create disparities in health literacy among youths (Raingruber, 2014). Studies further show that reproductive health awareness among youths is shaped by education, cultural beliefs, and societal norms, with gaps in comprehensive sex education contributing to low reproductive health literacy in many developing countries (UNICEF, 2015; WHO, 2006; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Venu & Arora, 2015).

Berlo's SMCR model explains that reproductive health information is transmitted from senders such as media or health professionals through communication channels to youth audiences, but factors such as stigma, misinformation, and limited access can distort the message and reduce its effectiveness (Krough & Nonaka, 2015).

Etim (2006) describes the S.M.R.E. model as a linear communication framework emphasizing the Source (S), Message (M), Receiver (R), and Effect (E). This model explains communication in terms of an input-output process, involving message creation, transmission, reception, and interpretation. While it captures the basic mechanics of communication, it does not fully address the dynamic and interactive nature of modern communication, especially feedback loops, which are critical in health communication efforts.

Kreps (2015) views health communication as both a theoretical and practical field focused on improving healthcare delivery through effective interpersonal and mediated communication. It is particularly concerned with identifying communication barriers in healthcare and offering strategic interventions and policy recommendations for better health outcomes.

Health communication operates across different levels, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and mass communication, with the latter being a primary focus of this study. As such, health communication is understood here as the structured examination and application of communication techniques to raise awareness, influence attitudes, and foster behavioural change toward better health practices among individuals and communities.

According to the social responsibility theory, media professionals are ethically bound to ensure that their health-related content is accurate, balanced, and socially responsible. Satcher et al.



(2000) outlined key elements for evaluating the effectiveness of such campaigns, including accuracy, reach, repetition, and cultural competence.

Ethical dilemmas in health communication include the use of fear, stigmatization, or exaggeration to influence behavior (Guttman & Salmon, 2004). Issues such as stereotyping, doctor-patient confidentiality, gender representation, and the right balance between public interest and individual rights must be carefully navigated. Masse and Williams-Jones (2012) argued that health communication, by its nature, proposes normative health behaviours, which may inadvertently marginalize or stigmatize non-compliant groups.

Nigeria's commitment is evident in its National Reproductive Health Policy (FMOH, 2001) and the National Policy on Health and Development of Adolescents and Young People (FMOH, 2007). These policies emphasize youth-friendly services, collaboration with NGOs, advocacy, and capacity building. However, assessments show that adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) services are still fragmented, especially in rural areas, with limited access to trained personnel and integrated support systems (USAID, 2010).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, a method appropriate for large populations and suitable for gathering data through tools like questionnaires and interviews while applying relevant statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014). The target population comprised youths in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State, estimated at 983,515 by the National Population Commission (NPC, 2021).

To determine the appropriate sample size, the researchers applied Taro Yamane's 1967 formula. Using this method, the calculated sample was approximately 400 individuals. However, due to constraints in time and resources, the team selected 300 respondents. These participants were chosen through simple random sampling to ensure the process remained fair and unbiased throughout the region.

A structured questionnaire served as the main data collection tool. It was divided into four sections: demographic information, media exposure, reproductive health knowledge, and attitudes. Both closed and open-ended questions were included to gather clear as well as in-depth responses. Experts in mass communication and public health reviewed the questionnaire for clarity and relevance before the main survey. A pilot test with 20 youths from outside Eti-Osa produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency.

The researchers used descriptive statistics, mainly frequency counts and percentages to summarize the data and identify trends in awareness and attitudes. This method helped reveal which media platforms were most influential and how they shaped young people's perceptions of reproductive health.



Prior to conducting fieldwork, the team obtained ethical approval. Participants were informed about the study’s purpose and provided their informed consent. All responses were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

**RESULT**

**Objective 1: To investigate the level of exposure to media messages on reproductive health among young people in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State**

Variable	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Very exposed to reproductive health messages	280	93.4
Moderately exposed	10	3.3
Not exposed at all	10	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Study, 2026.**

A large proportion of respondents (93.4%) reported frequently seeing or hearing media messages about reproductive health. Only 6.6% said they had little or no exposure. This shows that young people in Eti-Osa have easy access to reproductive health information from various media sources. The media are effectively reaching their intended audience. Since so many young people are already engaged, mass media campaigns have significant potential to influence their knowledge and attitudes about reproductive health. This widespread exposure provides a strong foundation for public health initiatives.

Objective 2: To evaluate the perception of reproductive health issues among young people in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Variable	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Have adequate knowledge and positive perception	260	86.7
Uninformed and indifferent	20	6.7
Have limited knowledge and need more education	20	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Study, 2026.**

Most respondents, around 87% demonstrate a strong understanding and a positive outlook regarding reproductive health. However, a smaller portion, about 13%, either lack sufficient knowledge or require additional support. So, while many young people appear to grasp these concepts, there are still some who have not fully embraced them. Continued education and value-based messaging are important for bridging these gaps and reinforcing healthy behaviors, particularly for those who are less informed or appear disengaged.

**Objective 3: To determine the relationship between exposure to mass media and perception of reproductive health issues among young people in Eti-Osa Local Government Area**

Level of Media	Positive	Negative/Indifferent	Total
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Exposure	Perception (%)	Perception (%)	Respondents
High exposure	240 (85.7)	40 (14.3)	280
Moderate exposure	8 (80.0)	2 (20.0)	10
Low/No exposure	5 (50.0)	5 (50.0)	10
Total	253 (84.3)	47 (15.7)	300

**Source: Field Study, 2026.**

Examining the cross tabulation, a clear pattern emerges: increased media exposure correlates with more favorable views on reproductive health. Among those with high exposure, 85.7% held positive perceptions, compared to only 50% among those with little or no exposure. This indicates that greater media contact does more than slightly enhance understanding, it significantly improves positive attitudes as well. This is not a minor observation; it confirms that frequent, reliable, and engaging media content is crucial in influencing how young people perceive and approach reproductive health.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed the prevailing public perception regarding the role of the media in raising awareness among youths about reproductive health issues in Eti-Osa Local Government Area. The results align with previous research that has established a strong connection between media influence and youth engagement with reproductive health information. Specifically, the study found that young people primarily receive reproductive health information through digital media platforms. This suggests that digital platforms have become essential sources of information for this demographic.

**Level of Exposure to Media Messages on Reproductive Health:** The findings reveal that nearly all participants, 93.4% regularly encounter reproductive health messages through various media channels. These messages are not only present but are actually reaching young people in Eti-Osa. Chemwaina (2019) and Soola (2020) have pointed out that mass media, particularly digital and social platforms, play an essential role in promoting health awareness. Our results support this view. Likewise, Akarika (2019) observed that platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have become major sources of health information for Nigerian youths. This suggests that media channels are effective in reaching young audiences. However, despite this high level of exposure, questions remain about whether the messages are clear, consistent, and capable of driving meaningful behavioural change over time.

**Perception of Reproductive Health among Youths:** A significant majority of respondents, 86.7%, demonstrated good knowledge and positive attitudes toward reproductive health. Nevertheless, 13.4% either lacked understanding or showed indifference. This suggests that while most young people are aware of the basics, some may still lack the deeper insight or confidence needed to act on this knowledge. This observation aligns with findings by Ajayi and Nwokocha (2018) and Isiugo-Abanihe et al. (2017), who noted that cultural taboos and conflicting messages often impede genuine engagement with reproductive health education. Adebayo (2019) also highlighted that while awareness campaigns increase knowledge, stigma and moral judgments



continue to hinder open discussion and practical action. Therefore, even with high media exposure, converting awareness into sustained behavior change remains a challenge.

Relationship between Media Exposure and Perception of Reproductive Health Issues: The research identified a clear association between high media exposure and more informed, positive attitudes toward reproductive health. Participants who frequently encountered media messages on this topic were generally more knowledgeable and open-minded compared to those with less exposure. This finding supports the Media System Dependency Theory by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), which posits that individuals depend more on media when seeking information about crucial issues like health. Studies by Noar (2006) and Kreps (2015) similarly show that repeated exposure to reliable health information enhances public understanding and involvement.

Taken together, these points indicate that media, especially digital platforms, plays a significant role in raising awareness and shaping attitudes among young people. However, as Butler (2000) and Caron (2019) caution, media messages must be ethical and culturally sensitive to prevent misunderstanding or negative reactions. Since youths are highly engaged with new media, utilising interactive, fact-based methods could significantly improve reproductive health literacy in Nigeria.

In summary, the results demonstrate a direct correlation between frequent exposure to mass media messages and improved knowledge of reproductive health issues. Still, awareness by itself is insufficient. Around half of the young people surveyed admitted to being careless about reproductive health, despite their knowledge. This points to the need for reframing messages so that information leads to action, not just awareness. Incorporating entertainment-education, social campaigns, and genuine community discussion may help bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour.

These findings support the argument by Center, Siegel, and Jemal (2021) that social media's broad reach among youths offers significant opportunities for deeper engagement on reproductive health issues. To achieve real impact, communication strategies should combine the reach of digital media with grassroots, culturally relevant initiatives such as school-based programs and community outreach. In this way, the media can move beyond simply informing and contribute to building a generation that is both knowledgeable and proactive about their health.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examines how young people in Eti-Osa Local Government Area perceive reproductive health information from the mass media. The findings reveal that mass media continue to play a significant role in how youths gain knowledge about reproductive health. Whether through radio, television, newspapers, or digital platforms, these media sources influence what young people know and understand about subjects like sexual health, family planning, and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections.



Consistent exposure to these messages helps many youths acquire important information. However, the study notes that the amount young people learn is highly influenced by how clear, relevant, and accessible the information is. When reproductive health messages are communicated effectively, young people not only become more informed but also develop more accurate views of these issues. Nevertheless, certain barriers exist. Cultural sensitivities, misinformation, and a lack of youth-oriented programming can reduce the impact of media messages and slow down positive behavioural change.

The study does more than point out the challenges, it also emphasizes that mass media have a strategic role in public health education and social development. When the media provide accurate and current information, they have the ability to change attitudes and promote healthy choices among youths. Enhancing the reach and quality of mass media as a means of reproductive health communication gives young people in Lagos State a better opportunity to understand these issues, leading to improved health outcomes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study recommends that:

1. Media organizations should take a more active role in providing reproductive health information to young people through programs that are clear and mindful of local culture.
2. Government health agencies, schools, and media organizations should collaborate to sustain reproductive health awareness campaigns targeting youths.
3. Combining various media platforms, radio, television, print, and digital, expands young people's access to reliable reproductive health information.
4. Encouraging youth-friendly communication helps young people in Lagos State better understand reproductive health issues and inspires them to make responsible decisions.

## **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. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest.

#### **Authors' Contributions.**

Ifedayo Akinwalere and Olanrewaju Arisoyin conceived the study, including the design, so and Daniel Gbolahan Akinrinola collated the data, and handled the analysis and interpretation. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

#### **Data availability statement.**

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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