



Awareness and Compliance with Rivers State COVID-19 Campaigns in Ikwerre Local Government Area

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Abstract

The study investigated the awareness and compliance to Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns in Ikwerre Local Government Area. COVID-19. The study was anchored on diffusion innovation theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 188,930 residents in Ikwerre Local Government Area. A sample size of 400 was drawn from the population using Taro Yamane Formula and a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and a test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Percentage and weighted mean scores were used to answer the research questions. The results showed that the people of Ikwerre LGA were conscious and both English, Pidgin and Ikwerre languages were accepted to have been used to convey COVID-19 messages to them. However, the compliance level was said to be very low. Thus, the study concluded that despite the acknowledgement of the presence of campaigns compliance to COVID-19 protocol was not successful in Ikwerre are LGA. The study recommended that the government and concerned authorities should endeavour to strengthen communication channels including media systems. This will aid in providing adequate and timely healthcare information and bridge the gap in poor rural compliance with health activities. Also, the elites and opinion leaders among the rural indigents should call for synergy between their area, the media and government at all levels to champion health sensitization programmes for the rural people of Ikwerre LGA against health challenges such as COVID-19 and others.

Keywords: Awareness, Compliance, COVID-19, Campaigns, Ikwerre Local Government

Introduction

The development of a society is intricately linked to the availability and accessibility of information and communication. Without effective communication, a society stagnates and becomes vulnerable to circumstances. Rural dwellers, residing in remote and underserved areas, face unique challenges, including limited access to modern mass media, language barriers, inadequate government support for development programs, high illiteracy rates, and rapid population growth. The lack of information and awareness among rural dwellers hinders national growth and development, particularly when it comes to socio-economic changes. Research has shown that rural communities often neglect health issues, attributing certain diseases to urban elites (Igwe, 2017). This mindset, fueled by a lack of sensitization and awareness campaigns, makes it challenging to implement health guidelines, such as those for COVID-19. While the government attempts to address these issues, more needs to be done to harness the power of mass media and redirect the mindset of rural communities towards progress and development. Awareness is a vital tool for knowledge, enabling individuals to stay informed about their surroundings and adapt to changes, thereby ensuring survival. Research has shown that rural communities are often plagued by diseases, superstition, poverty, lethargy, low income, and low productivity (Etang, 2005 in Igwe, 2017). These issues stem primarily from the government's lack of sustainable policies and actions towards rural transformation, neglecting the needs of rural dwellers. As a result, rural communities tend to rely on traditional methods of prevention and treatment, sceptical of modern healthcare systems.

Effective communication is essential for development, going beyond mere information sharing to facilitate participation and engagement (Choudhury, 2011). Development communication aims to introduce and accept changes,

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promoting individual and societal growth (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrade, in Oke, 2019). Awareness campaigns utilize various media channels, including television, radio, magazines, and newspapers, to disseminate information to diverse audiences. While newspapers and magazines cater to literate individuals, other media channels reach a broader audience, promoting inclusive development. The advent of technological devices has revolutionized communication through mass media channels, providing a platform for diverse perspectives and unbiased information. The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the way messages are transmitted, redefining the concept of mass communication. In recent times, mass media has emerged as a crucial tool for promoting development and driving change, with its impact extending to a vast audience. The "Transistor Revolution" has played a significant role in this expansion, with radio being a key instrument in reaching a wider audience. According to Sheree (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), has had a devastating impact globally, infecting millions and resulting in significant loss of life. The virus, first detected in Wuhan, China in December 2019, has spread rapidly, leading to a global economic lockdown and government-imposed isolation measures. Nigeria, like other affected countries, has been severely impacted, with the government and citizens struggling to cope.

The World Health Organization (2020) classifies COVID-19 as a member of the coronavirus family, which ranges from common cold to severe acute respiratory syndrome. The incubation period is between 2-14 days, with symptoms ranging from asymptomatic to severe pneumonia, which can be fatal. Common symptoms include fever, dry cough, fatigue, and shortness of breath, among others. The rural dweller's awareness and compliance with the Coronavirus preventive and vaccination campaign cannot be effective without the behavioural or attitude change of the citizens affected. It's not easy to change or influence the attitude of others, it takes a wide range of time to understand and adapt to the prevailing system. It is on this premise that Asadu (2012) asserts that behavioural change communication cannot take place without adjusting behaviourally by value belief and attitude. Similarly, according to Mitchell and Chaman-Ruiz (2007) state changing behaviour is particularly critical in development programmes...people must have a base of knowledge and a positive attitude about the reform and a motivation to change current practices and this behaviour can support development. Conversely, when the people are not given adequate awareness and sensitization on any reform it becomes difficult for the people to adapt to such a change, this is because behavioural change is a process and not a lifestyle. In every social change and human compliance to the change, communication must be considered a vital factor to activate its full purpose and realization. As Moemeka, in Oke (2019) observe development efforts cannot be successful without planned communication because its flow determines the direction and pace of the dynamic social development. On a similar note, communication creates avenues for the exchange of information, building bridges for the exchange of knowledge, linking different viewpoints, creating commonness amongst different stakeholders of the development process and enabling them to negotiate with other actors with contrasting perceptions and interests (Amardeep & Kameswari, 2007. p.12).

According to Balit (1998), knowledge and information are the basic ingredients necessary for people to respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes that occur within an environment. He further stressed that knowledge is the least expensive input for rural development however, knowledge and information will not make meaning until they are communicated. Aneato and Aneato (2010) state that communication is important and becomes useful only when people are appropriately informed. However, mass media are important for the development of families, communities, villages etc. The media can change people's attitudes and educate people on new knowledge and behaviour.

Communication is the most common way of sharing data, thoughts and mentalities. To share means to give or get a piece of something or to expect something in a like manner. It implies that the sender and the receiver are both effective in the share of ideas and meaning. The media in this term are veritable tools that convey knowledge to a people. The media in this regard are the application of technology to systematically communicate with or reach a mass audience. It is regarded as the basic and easiest means of communicating with a dispersed audience, inter-personally audience and in groups. The most notable types of mass media today include Radio, Television, Newspapers, Magazines and Internet also known as new media. The importance of the mass media to this end is that the media serves as an effective tool for campaigns which aim at exposing a high proportion of the rural dweller's health conditions. The media take advantage of its channel and coverage to fascinate health awareness by adopting instruction messages for anti-health. Mass media campaigns are essential owing to their ability to efficiently communicate information to a large and heterogeneously dispersed audience simultaneously. The media campaign can bring about positive changes

in health habits and prevent negative changes in health-related behaviour across a large number of individuals in society (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik 2010).

Furthermore, Austin and Husted (1998) argue that in the process of communicating health-related information to its audience, mass media campaigns utilise different channels, namely, the print media, the electronic media (television and radio) and the social media (internet). The mass media has an enormous role to play in the rural informative system so as to keep them abreast with current developments. In a similar view, Nwaerodu and Thompson (2007) there is a high level of illiteracy and a low level of education among the rural populace in Nigeria. Mass media through publications in newspapers and magazines, as well as programmes on radio and television can educate the illiterate rural masses on issues of politics, economy and social importance to nation-building. The media programmes can surface as health education on childbearing and proper spacing, child-care education, antenatal and postnatal education, immunization schedules tips, basic hygiene, simple first aid tips, access to the healthcare system, and knowledge on nutritional food, balanced diets and physical fitness. This day's live shows and promotions events such as dramas and puppetry are adopted for educating and informing a targeted public on health-related matters and best hygiene practices as recommended by the World Health Organization. It is, however, worthy of mention that each of these channels has its pros and cons as they are being used as tools for health communication. It is therefore advised by Austin and Husted (1998) that professional communicators should design their media messages in such a way that the target audience will appropriately interpret and elicit the right and proper feedback. Thus, it will be imperative at this medium to briefly unravel some of the channels that can be adopted for health communication;

Both newspapers and magazines are forms of print media and it is said to be print-based and often regarded as one of the traditional media systems. The print media include newspapers, magazines, books, and comics or graphic novels. Originally, the sophisticated type-setting technologies necessary for creating printed material were exclusively accessible to affluent publishers. This however has become a thing of the past with the evolution of software for desktop publishing and print-on-demand publication services. With the more advanced technology presented by the internet revolution, printing has become easier with Direct on Computer (DC). For the purpose of this study, newspapers and magazines will be briefly discussed as members of other print media families. According to Sadman et al. in Okunna and Omenugha (2012) is "an unbound publication issued at regular intervals, which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures". Among myriads of issues on which the newspapers carry information, are news, advertisement, politics, education, science and technology, religion, commerce etc. As correctly pointed out in Alozie (2009) the regular daily newspaper carries much more information than the radio and television. This assertion may however be disputable with the present reality occasioned by the new social media revolution. Newspapers could be published daily or weekly. It could be published locally, regional and national. Another very important member of the print media family is the magazine. The magazine as described by Alozie (2009) is a bound printed publication which contains news and other forms of information on a wide range of recent and past events. Magazines are usually published weekly or monthly, magazines are like newspapers only that they are better packaged, bound together, smaller in size and contain in-depth, better research and investigated news behind the news. Both newspapers and magazines are basically for the literate citizens and not for the other citizens who lack the pedigree of literacy.

Broadcast media is one of the traditional communication media in the electronic genre. It is simply the application of electronic-assisted technology in the distribution of audio and video content to a large and dispersed audience irrespective of location within the same area of coverage. Originally the term 'broadcasting' was used in terms of sowing of seeds on farms by casting and scattering them over the farm land. There are several advantages committed to the broadcast media, as it allows ease of information dissemination to heterogeneously large and scattered audiences simultaneously without regard to literacy, especially by its appeal to both the auditory and visual senses. The most popular broadcast media are the radio, television and the internet. The internet was the last to emerge, that's why the internet is called the emerging media. The internet accommodates the radio, television and print forms of journalism in its capacity and it is easy to start up by willing and interested members of the society. The internet form of broadcasting doesn't truly prove professionalism in journalism, this is because it is open for quacks and highjacks of the profession.

The print media was originally the main mass media channel with the newspaper, the invention of the radio years later became the darling of the mass media. Thus the Radio became the principal medium of news for the public during wars as well as for sports and entertainment. Nevertheless, the television after its invention became the most effective

type of mass media with its appeal to the audio-visual senses of the audience. Subsequently, it was formerly used for the dissemination of news content and thereafter, for live shows and other several captivating programmes (Baran 2009). Radio has the ability to disseminate information to a large audience at ease and at low cost, especially in these contemporaneous times, radio can be used without subscription and electricity to raise awareness and it is often regarded as an effective medium for health education and rural awareness made easy. It was therefore in this regard that various scholars posit that radio has been used for various purposes in different countries; India uses it for rural development education; Swaziland and Nicaragua use it for public health education; the Philippines for nutrition education; Sri Lanka for family and health education while Trinidad and Tobago uses it for the promotion of breastfeeding awareness (Nwaerandu & Thompson 2007). Radio and Television also provide interactive opportunities with the audience through their call-in and comment programmes. And as succinctly Television has a wide influence on its audience as it affects not only the perception of the audience but also the attitudes to what to believe such as the desire for products and brand preferences.

New media is the internet and the Internet is mostly an interactive mass communication medium which describes this channel as a "network of networks". This form of communication has speed enough to reach out to its audiences, it plays in versatility and possesses interactive features. The internet has quickly evolved to become the nucleus of the mass media as it has systematically incorporated all the principal mass media thus, birthing a novel term, "convergence of mass media". This coinage is predicated on the ability of the internet to provide websites for all the mass media types such as news websites, television broadcasts websites, websites for print media houses and internet radio sites (Hauer, 2017). Since the invention of the Internet, Tim Berners-Lee (1989) the World Wide Web and the Internet has greatly and speedily endeared itself into the hearts of the general public as the all-time most effective medium in mass media due to its speed and higher digital technology in the dissemination of data. The New Media is an interactive two-way communication with users being the active producers of content and information (Nwodu, 2015).

The emergence of new social media is a major phenomenon that has undoubtedly transformed the interaction, communication and sharing of information between and amongst people throughout the world in the 21st century. It is important to point out here that social media is not a new concept. It has been evolving since the dawn of human interaction. However, it's also worthy of note that the 21st century brought about the emergence of new forms of social media networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, SMS, MMS, E-mail, Online Forum, Websites and other Online based media with their attendant modified functions that make them easier, cheaper and faster for the user which aim at making human habitation easier and meaningful.

The emergence of these new forms of social media evidently transformed many aspects of human communication. Thus, today social media have become a natural part of the everyday lives of people all over the world. For instance, the global digital overview put presently 4.39 billion social media users in 2019, with the worldwide total growth rate at 288 million (9%) since January 2018. The report further revealed that 3.26 billion used social media on mobile devices in January 2019, with a growth of 297 million new users representing a year-on-year increase of more than 10 percent (wearesocial.com). The arrival of these new media platforms has continued to change the way people communicate with each other or one another around the world. For example, mobile phone penetration rates, in particular, have resulted in a plethora of ideas for new media platforms aimed at bridging the information divide between the well-connected and the disconnected (Unwin, 2012). Nwodu (2015) see social media as internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with one another in discussion, generate choice content, distribute and search for information online for personal use. Social media creates room for public opinion over nagging issues making around the society and some form of responses, solutions and comments from the same online community to address the public debate.

Diffusion Innovation Theory

Diffusion of Innovation Theory was propounded by B. Ryan and N. Gross in 1943; and was Everrtt, M. Rogers in 1962. This theory was perceived as Step Flow Theory and as an expansion of Lazarsfeld's original idea of Two Step Flow Theory. This theory was also regarded as one of the Limited Effect Theories of the media. Rogers used the word "Early Adopters" to this theory. The thrust of innovation diffusion theory is to establish how ideas and discoveries spread to members of a social system; it centres on how innovations, new ideas and practices can become popular and pervasive throughout a system. This theory gives a limited role to the mass media so as to accommodate other members of society such as that early adopters who are directly influenced by media content while others adopt information after they have been influenced by others. According to Ineji (2019), the Diffusion of Information/ Innovation theory is premised on how ideas, information or social practices that are relatively new, permeate a society or transcend from

one particular society to another. This theory underscores the exceptional strength and active role of the media in the influence of individual members of society and the potential of diverse channels of communication for changing behaviour. The innovation theory recognises the importance of group participation and its assigned limited role of creating awareness in the media, while the key players, known as the early adopters and change agents in the diffusion process are adjudged to play the most crucial role in influencing the adoption of innovation. The call of this theory is to create an individual behavioural change and ideas that the transmission of information is the key to the process of social change.

Furthermore, Diffusion Innovation Theory focuses on creating awareness and innovation as a point recommendation of Rogers, that change agents lead diffusion efforts by moving into the rural communities and directly influencing the early adopters and opinion leaders on new ideas, new government policies and health threats such as the case of COVID-19 pandemic. The reason for this choice of theory was to present that the media is not all powerful to this end otherwise the none educated ruralites will not understand the media content in totality like the case of COVID-19. In other words, the media adopts the opinion leadership channel to push its information to its target. Ukaegbu (2018) asserts that diffusion of innovation is "the process by which innovation is rested through certain channels over time among members of a social system" while innovation is "an idea, practice or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption". Diffusion of innovation involves the mass media and interpersonal communication channels. Mass media channels are veritable tools for disseminating information on innovation and influencing people to adopt the innovation. Ndimele and Kasarachi (2016: Okunna,1999) argues on the role of diffusion of innovation and that opinion leaders play a very crucial role in the flow of mass media messages because they represent the norm and values of their group, followers and their social categories and through their influence, the values of the groups are protected against external forces. The interesting thing in this type of communication is that the intelligent and influential people in the society use their ability for leadership to carry other low-esteem members of the society along by feeding them with a direct source of media messages on daily occurrence or a topical issue. Thus, people of this kind are held in very high esteem in their groups or social categories because of their level of intelligence and awareness of media discourse. However, the significance of this theory is in the ability to guide scholars to explain how important decisions are reached instead of acting impulsively to them. The theory analysis explains how mass media and interpersonal relationship changes the behaviour of humans what they think and how they act. However, the relevance of this theory to the subject matter is that the theory will guide the subject matter on how to reach out the new innovation and change to the rural dwellers directly or through opinion leadership of the community and focused area, as it has been the role of the media in influencing human behaviour and changing society.

Oke (2019) conducted a study entitled "Using New Media for Development in Rural Nigeria". The aim of the study was to evaluate the developmental challenges of rural Nigeria and how the new media can help project and shape the nagging situation of the people over a period of time and the study adopted qualitative approach in addressing issues. However, this study sought to find out the process by which the new media influences development in rural Nigeria. McQuail (2011) describes new media as a desperate set of communication technologies that share certain features. Shinkafi (2016) termed the media as technological determinism a view that a society's technology influences and drives the development of its social structure and cultural value, shaping how individuals in a society think, feel, and act. Thus, the media drives human interaction, creates social change and brings about transformative shifts in the society that is no longer in doubt. The study explores areas where new media can be applied in rural development agriculture, prior to the oil boom in Nigeria agriculture was the settlement point of the Nigerian economy but today agriculture is seen as an alternative to oil it has remained the principal engine of growth (Oke, 2017 in World Bank, 2008). They further posit that agriculture remains fundamental to poverty reduction and economic growth in the 21st century. A substantial number of Nigerians live and farm in rural areas with little or no economic and social infrastructure and services.

Statement of the Problem

Research has consistently shown that rural residents make up approximately 65% of Nigeria's population. Despite the population of the rural dwellers which should attract development at most healthcare facilities and health awareness for the people it seems that there is a lagging behind in the provision of their amenities by the relevant authorities. It is against this backdrop that this study is anchored on, more so, the need to identify the potential lacunar and indices that will lead to ascertaining the level of awareness and compliance to Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The study also will investigate the nature to which the COVID-19 protocol was adhered to in the area.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to evaluate awareness and compliance with Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns in Ikwerre Local Government Area. The objectives are to:

1. Investigate the level of awareness among the rural people of Ikwerre Local Government Area on Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns
2. Find out the language used to convey the COVID-19 campaign message to the people of Ikwerre Local Government Area.
3. Investigate the level of compliance to Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns and protocol by the residents of Ikwerre Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What is the level of awareness among the rural people of Ikwerre Local Government Area on Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns?
2. What language was used to convey the COVID-19 campaign message to the people of Ikwerre Local Government Area?
3. What is the level of compliance to Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns and protocol by the residents of Ikwerre Local Government Area?

Methodology

The research design adopted was a descriptive survey. The descriptive survey design was chosen to collect data from a well-defined population and describe the present condition of the population using variables under investigation. The population of the study was 265,400, derived from the projected population of the Ikwerre Local Government Area. A sample size of 400 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, and a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was adopted to select participants. The instrument for data gathering was a questionnaire, the questionnaire was divided into three sections, eliciting demographic information, psychographic data, and open-ended questions. The instrument was tested for reliability using the test-retest method, and a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was established. Data collection involved distributing questionnaires to participants, and 395 out of 400 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. The data was analyzed using percentages, tables, weighted mean scores, simple percentages,

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness among the rural people of Ikwerre Local Government Area on Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns??

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on level of awareness among the rural people of Ikwerre Local Government Area has on Rivers State Covid-19 Campaign?

S/N	Items	N	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	I am conscious of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign	395	2.78	1.21	High Level
2	The campaign helps me to understand the need to receive vaccination against COVID-19	395	2.62	1.37	Low Level
3	COVID-19 requires three inoculations, first, second and third to complete the dosage	395	2.52	1.22	Very Low Level
4	The COVID-19 vaccination may cause some allergies in some people	395	3.20	1.03	Very High Level
5	I am not aware of any form of vaccination against COVID-19	395	2.37	0.78	Low Level
	Grand Mean		2.70	1.12	Low Level

The primary discovery from Table 2 on the level of awareness among rural residents of Ikwerre Local Government Area indicates that, on average, respondents generally agreed with statements concerning COVID-19 awareness and vaccination. Notably, they demonstrated awareness of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, understanding of the

necessity for COVID-19 vaccination, and concerns about potential vaccine-related allergies. However, there was disagreement regarding the belief that Covid-19 vaccination requires three inoculations. The overall grand mean suggests a low level of agreement with these awareness-related statements.

Research Question 2: What language was used to convey the COVID-19 campaign message to the people of Ikwerre Local Government Area??

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of the language used to convey the campaign messages to the people of Ikwerre Local Government Area.

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
11	English was the predominant language used for conveying Covid-19 protocols and vaccination information to the people, as perceived.	3.57	0.50	Agreed
12	Pidgin language appeared to be the medium for conveying COVID-19 protocols and vaccination messages to the people.	3.52	0.50	Agreed
13	The Ikwerre language was perceived as the means of communication for Covid-19 protocols and vaccination information to the people of Ikwerre L.G.A.	3.55	0.50	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.55	0.50	Agreed

The major finding in Table 3 is the widespread agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of language in conveying information about COVID-19 protocols and vaccination during the campaign. Participants generally found English, Pidgin, and Ikwerre languages to be successful in communicating these messages. While a few individuals expressed slight uncertainty, the overall consensus suggests that the campaign achieved successful communication in multiple languages.

Research Question 3: What is the level of compliance to Rivers State COVID-19 campaigns and protocol by the residents of Ikwerre Local Government Area?

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation on the level of compliance that has been achieved by the people on COVID-19 campaigns

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	The level of compliance was a large number of people	2.40	1.38	Low level
2	The level of compliance was a small number of people	2.58	1.10	Low level
3	An average number of people of Ikwerre LGA were vaccinated	2.22	1.38	Low level
4	LThe levelof compliance is zero	2.39	1.11	Low level
5	The compliance level is undecided	2.40	1.24	Low level

The information from Table 3 indicates a perceived low level of compliance with COVID-19 campaigns and protocol in Ikwerre L.G.A. Respondents suggest that a significant portion of the community shows limited adherence to recommended measures, including vaccination. The overall impression is that there is room for improvement in promoting compliance within the surveyed population.

Discussion

The data presented in Table 1 provides valuable insights into the awareness of COVID-19 among rural dwellers in Ikwerre LGA. The results show that the respondents are conscious of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, with a mean rating of 2.78. They also agree that the campaign helps them understand the importance of vaccination, with a mean rating of 2.62. However, there is disagreement regarding the number of doses required, with a mean rating of 3.20. The respondents are aware of potential allergies caused by the vaccination, with a mean rating of 2.52. Additionally, they are aware of some form of vaccination against Covid-19, with a mean rating of 2.37. The grand mean of 2.70 indicates a general agreement with the statements, showing a certain level of awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. These findings align with the study by Akarika et al. (2020),

which investigated media sensitization and citizens' awareness of Coronavirus information in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study highlighted the importance of media channels in providing awareness about coronavirus information. Overall, the results suggest a good level of awareness among rural dwellers in Ikwerre LGA but also indicate areas for improvement, such as clarifying the number of doses required for vaccination.

Table 2 interviewee made it explicate that the languages used for conveying COVID-19 campaign were Ikwerre, pidgin and English language, the Ikwerre language succeeded more because it is the local dialect of the people. Pidgin language was next in line since it is more or less a Nigerian common language anyone from any part of the country could understand. Thus, the English language was mainly used by the literate members of the locality only.

Table 3 shows that the views of the interviewee on the compliance level of COVID-19 campaigns and protocol were quite low in the Ikwerre Local Government Area. The notion of the people was clear that the government of Rivers State and media organizations did not capture the interest of the rural people in their programmes but rather focused more on the urban cities such as Port Harcourt metropolis. The compliance level was low according to the respondents of the Ikwerre local government area, only those who were privileged to COVID-19 campaign messages and the literate members of the society complied with the protocol to an extent.

Conclusion

The study awareness and compliance to COVID-19 campaigns in Ikwerre Local Government Area was about the investigation of the population area and to ascertain their level of awareness and compliance to COVID-19 campaigns and protocol. The study adopted three research questions that aided the findings. Diffusion of innovation theory anchored the study and the findings of the study recognize media sensitization efforts and the effectiveness of various channels provide a positive outlook on awareness-building initiatives. However, the low level of compliance with recommended COVID-19 preventive measures signals a critical area for improvement, emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance adherence. Furthermore, identified constraints such as belief system issues, illiteracy, poverty, language barriers, and cultural backgrounds underscore the need for tailored approaches to address these challenges. The study offers valuable insights for policymakers and health authorities to develop specific strategies that can effectively raise awareness, improve compliance, and overcome barriers in the unique context of rural communities in the fight against COVID-19.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on rural dwellers' awareness and compliance to the Rivers State COVID-19 campaign in Ikwerre Local Government Area, the following recommendations can be made:

1. The government and concerned authorities should endeavour to strengthen communication channels including media systems. This will aid in providing adequate and timely healthcare information and bridge the gap in poor rural compliance with health activities.
2. The government should improve the standard of rural healthcare centres and supply of quality manpower service delivery. This will help cushion the effect of health outbreaks like COVID-19 in rural areas.
3. The elites and opinion leaders among the rural indigents should call for synergy between their area, the media and government at all levels to champion health sensitization programmes against health challenges such as COVID-19 and others.

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