
The Attitude of Rural Dwellers to Open Media Campaign on the Prevention and Treatment of Malaria in Eruwa

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Abstract

The study examined the Attitude of rural dwellers to open media campaigns on the prevention And treatment of malaria in Eruwa. The sense Extension Theory provided the theoretical framework for the study. The descriptive research method was adopted while 10 respondents comprising farmers, artisans, civil servants, low-income workers, and students were purposively selected. The interview guide was used to source data. Data collected were presented and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. Findings from the study revealed that most of the respondents agree to open media campaigns giving them deeper knowledge on how to prevent malaria; findings also reveal that all the respondents are aware of open media campaigns on treatment and prevention of malaria. The study recommended that there should be more open media campaigns on the treatment and prevention of malaria and that government and non-governmental bodies should invest more in open media campaigns on the treatment and prevention of malaria.

Keywords: Malaria, Open Media, Campaign, Treatment, Prevention

Introduction

In Africa, malaria costs approximately \$12 billion in terms of loss of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year and has slowed the pace of economic growth by 1.3% per year as a result of lost lives and low productivity (WHO, 2016). In 2012, an estimated 207 million people suffered from this preventable and treatable disease, with about half of the

global population still at risk of transmission (Odigbo, 2016). There is a large disparity in the pattern of malaria; while the global malaria prevalence indicates that an increasing number of countries in Asia and South America are being able to approach elimination, countries in sub-Saharan Africa on the other hand remain the most endemic region accounting for about 90% of the global malaria-related deaths.

The malaria burden is most entrenched among the poorest communities who often lack adequate knowledge about the causes, consequences, and capacity to afford treatment and adopt preventive measures (Bartoloni & Zammarchi, 2012). Added to the affordability and behavioural issues, are the demographic and gender dimensions which are usually less frequently talked about.

Several programmes have been designed over time for the control of malaria. The reduction in the incidence and mortality rates of malaria has been uneven globally despite several interventions targeted at its control (CDC, 2018). In Nigeria, the gains of these control efforts have been demonstrably insignificant, reversed, or stalled. Case management and vector control through the use of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLIN) and indoor residual spraying (IRS) remain important components of malaria control strategies in Nigeria.

Multi-dimensional approaches have been employed to promote the use and uptake of malaria prevention and treatment. In Nigeria, open media campaigns have been used for sensitization, especially among pregnant women on the benefits of regular Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITNs) use. Print and electronic media have been prominently used in behavioural change communications in many developing countries. Other forms of communication in the community such as health literacy (through community drama, religious institutions), paper (poster, billboard, newspaper), and digital (television, radio) media have been found to serve

as important vehicles for the transmission of health knowledge and have been the subject of researches as public health behaviour modification tools. However, the evidence is sporadic for African countries and not much is known about the influence of open media on malaria prevention and treatment.

Statement of the Problem

Malaria is often considered a disease of the poor and has been associated with communities. The majority of people living in remote villages rely on traditional small-scale farming and have limited household income. Families of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are less likely to seek health care early, leading to delayed malaria diagnosis and increased symptom severity. Delays in malaria treatment often lead to increased transmission. Moreover, the scarcity of funds influences household priorities, and purchasing bed nets and other preventive measures is not prioritized. Furthermore, limited sources of income coupled with modest employment opportunities lead to villagers migrating to malaria-endemic areas, potentially exposing them to malaria. The seasonal back-and-forth movement of potentially infected migrants from high-risk malaria areas, coupled with the presence of the vectors locally can trigger malaria transmission in the community.

The cost-effectiveness of Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITNs) relative to other forms of malaria prevention and treatment also makes it a better option for malaria prevention especially among residents of rural communities, people with poor access to health facilities, and people with low socioeconomic status. To promote the use and uptake of these malaria prevention strategies, open media campaigns have been initiated to sensitise the general public, on the effectiveness and long-term benefits of correct and consistent use of Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITNs). Given the barriers to the success of malaria control interventions, this study aimed to explore the attitude of rural dwellers to open media campaigns on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the attitude of rural dwellers toward opening a media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. examine the level of awareness to open a media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa;
- ii. examine the effectiveness of an open media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa.

Research Questions

- i. What is the level of awareness to open a media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa?
- ii. What is the effectiveness of an open media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa?

Concept of Open Media Campaigns

Open media campaigns are orchestrated efforts that use open channels of communication to reach a broad audience. The term "open media" refers to any medium that is accessible to the public at large. This includes traditional outlets like newspapers, television, and radio, as well as digital platforms such as websites, social media, and streaming services.

Open media campaigns are a versatile and influential tool for disseminating information and influencing public opinion. They leverage various forms of media to communicate messages to a wide and diverse audience, making them effective in promoting change, raising awareness, and achieving specific goals. By understanding the core components and best practices associated with open media campaigns, organizations, and individuals can harness the power of open media to reach their target audiences and achieve their objectives.

Significance of Open Media Campaigns

The significance of open media campaigns to malaria treatment and prevention is substantial, especially in regions where malaria remains a prevalent and deadly disease. These campaigns play a crucial role in the fight against malaria by addressing various aspects:

Awareness and Education: Open media campaigns are instrumental in raising awareness about malaria, its causes, symptoms, and prevention strategies. They educate the public, including those in remote and rural areas, who may have limited access to healthcare resources and information.

Behavior Change: These campaigns aim to change behaviors related to malaria prevention. By disseminating information on using bed nets, seeking prompt treatment, and eliminating mosquito breeding sites, they encourage individuals to adopt healthier practices, which can significantly reduce the risk of infection.

Treatment Promotion: Open media campaigns promote the importance of seeking timely and appropriate treatment for malaria. They emphasize the significance of early diagnosis and the use of effective antimalarial drugs, reducing the severity and mortality of the disease.

Community Engagement: Effective campaigns engage with communities and encourage active participation in malaria control efforts. They involve local leaders, healthcare workers, and community members in spreading the message and mobilizing resources.

Advocacy: These campaigns can advocate for increased funding and support for malaria control programs, both at the national and international levels. By highlighting the impact of malaria and successful prevention strategies, they contribute to policy changes and resource allocation.

Reducing Stigma: Open media campaigns can help reduce the stigma associated with malaria. By portraying malaria as a common and treatable disease, they encourage individuals to seek care without fear of discrimination or social isolation.

Scaling Up Interventions: Media campaigns can be used to promote the mass distribution of mosquito nets, the use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs), and indoor residual spraying, thereby increasing the coverage of preventive interventions.

Tracking and Reporting: Through these campaigns, health authorities can encourage individuals to report malaria cases and symptoms, allowing for better tracking of disease prevalence and facilitating rapid response efforts.

Global Cooperation: Malaria is a global issue, and open media campaigns play a role in fostering international cooperation and support for malaria control and elimination efforts.

Behavior Sustainability: Malaria campaigns are not just about initial behavior change but also about sustaining these behaviors over time. Regular messages through open media can help in maintaining prevention practices.

Malaria

The term 'malaria' originated from the Romans; although that was not the name they called it in ancient Rome. It used to be called 'ague', 'intermittent fever', 'swamp fever', 'Roman fever', and 'death fever' (Heggenhougen, Hacketha and Vivek, 2003:22) according to the authors, "Malaria or "bad" or evil (mal) air (aire) was a name derived from the miasma theory of causation. Most African communities similarly have different terms to describe the disease. Among the people of southwest and southeast Nigeria, malaria is called locally *ibà*. In south-eastern and

south-western Nigeria there is what is termed “ordinary” and “yellow”, “cold”, “colored”, “wet”, “dry” and “shaking” malaria (Brieger, 1994, 1996, Okeke and Okafor, 2008: 219). In the southwest, there is what is called *ibà apón'ju* (yellow fever), the type that colors the eyeballs yellow, *akọ ibà* (severe malaria), *ibà apón'tò* (that colors the urine deep yellow), *ibà réfunréfun* (typhoid) and *iba rékúrékú* (relapsing fever). There is also the ordinary *ibà* associated with headache, shivering, cold, etc.

World Health Organisation (2010) describes malaria as a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected mosquitoes. The infected Anopheles mosquitoes, called "malaria vectors," bite mainly between dusk and dawn. There are four types of human malaria: Plasmodium falciparum, Plasmodium vivax, Plasmodium malaria, and Plasmodium ovale. While Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax are the most common, Plasmodium falciparum is the most deadly. However, some cases of human malaria have also been identified with Plasmodium knowlesi – monkey malaria that occurs in certain forested areas of Southeast Asia (WHO, 2010). The official body responsible for coordinating Nigeria's response to the malaria challenge is the Nigerian National Secretariat of Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership which is known as the National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) office.

Malaria Situation in Nigeria

Malaria is Nigeria's most significant health problem accounting for 25% of under-5 mortality, 30 % of childhood mortality, and 11 % of maternal mortality (Federal Ministry of Health and National Malaria Control Programme, n.d: 1). About 50 % of the population is projected to have at least one episode of malaria annually while children aged below 5 years (about 24 million) will have two to four attacks of malaria within the same period. Federal Ministry of Health and National Malaria Prevention Programme, (2010: 1) posits that malaria is responsible for an estimated 300,000 deaths per year in Nigeria, and nearly 110 million cases of the disease are reported in a year.

In terms of regional spread, National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP), National Population Commission (NPC), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and ICF International et al. (2016) indicate that the South-West zone had the highest malaria prevalence in 50% followed by the North Central (49%), and North-West (48%), while the lowest prevalence zones were South-East (28%), North East (31%), and South-South (32%). Similarly, results of the 2015 Malaria Indicator Survey (National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) et al., 2016) indicate that malaria prevention, was highest in the North-West (91.3%) and lowest in the South-West (56.8%) just as the ownership of an Insecticide Treated Net (ITN) was also highest in the North-West (90.8%) and lowest in the South-West (53.0%). In terms of ownership of Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets (LLIN), the South-West also came last at 53.0% among the six regions while the North-West recorded 90.6%.

The South-West also has the lowest record in terms of net ownership per household, for any of the three categories; 'any mosquito net' (1.0%), 'ITN' (1.0%), and 'LLIN' (1.0%) compared with the North-West that recorded 2.4%, 2.3%, and 2.3% respectively for the categories. The 2015 Malaria Indicator Survey (MIS) also evaluated the ownership of one net for two persons in the household and still the South-West came last among the six regions with a record of 24.9% across the three categories. The South-West record was also lower than the 74.7% national figure of net ownership among rural dwellers in the country. In terms of net ownership per household, the national percentage for rural dwellers was 1.8% across the three categories; 'any mosquito net', 'ITN', and 'LLIN' compared with 1.0% in the South-West. For ownership of one net for two persons in the household under the survey, the national figure for rural dwellers was 39.6%, 38.1%, and 38.0% respectively for the three categories compared with 24.9% for the South-West across the categories.

The Survey also exposed the poor state of the utilisation of mosquito nets as preventive measures against malaria in the South-West. For instance,

the percentage of respondents from the region who 'slept inside any mosquito net' the night preceding the MIS was 22.7% compared with 55.1% in the North-East and 45.9% in the North-West while those 'who slept inside an ITN' was 21.1% in the South-West, 54.4% in North-East and 45.4% in North-West. For those 'who slept inside an LLIN' in the same period, the figure for the South-West was 21.1% compared with 54.3% in the North-East and 45.4% in the North-West. The percentage of respondents from the South-West 'who slept inside an ITN last night or in a dwelling sprayed with Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) in the past 12 months according to the survey was 21.7% compared with 54.7% in North-East and 47.2% in North-West. For the percentage of respondents 'who slept inside an ITN' the South-West record was 36.0%, the only instance it did not record the lowest among the regions as it led the South-East which has 31.3%.

Theoretical Framework

All media and communication techniques aimed at achieving desired effects such as persuasion and change in the cultural, political, or economic behaviour of an individual operate on existing media effects and communication theories. The investigation of the challenges militating against the efficacy of media and communication techniques in the campaigns for malaria prevention and cure is therefore examined within the framework of the Sense Extension Theory. The problem of inefficacy is associated with both dependent and independent variables of the study which is against the tenets of the Sense Extension Theory.

According to Nwagbara (2006), the Sense Extension Theory is also known as Marshal McLuhan's theory of 1964, based on his ideology that "the medium is the message." The theory holds that the media channels have personal and social consequences which are an extension of the audiences' senses, and that the media channels can shape and control the scale and the form of human association and action. Larson (1992) captures Marshal McLuhan's exact words as he puts it: "The message of

any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs or, in briefer terms, the medium is the message.”

The theory implies in the context of this study that media channels and their communication techniques used in malaria preventive and curative campaigns reflect the realities that cause malaria and advise the audience to work against the causes and accept the cure as projected. The theory further implies that the consumers of the campaign messages are bound to accept or reject the message appeals based on the self-knowledge of the audience and the prevailing conditions within their society. The theory also implies that the malaria preventive and curative campaign messages are an extension of our human senses.

Methodology

Study Design

This study is conducted to examine the attitude of rural dwellers toward opening a media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa. For this study to be appropriately done, the descriptive survey research design using the qualitative method was used.

Study Population

The population of the study comprises farmers, Artisans, Civil servants, low-income workers, and students who are indigenes of Eruwa in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. Two respondents were selected for each category making a total of 10 respondents.

Sample and Sampling technique

The sample size is made up of 10 respondents who are farmers, Artisans, Civil servants, students, and low-income workers from Eruwa in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents to be interviewed.

Instrument of Data Collection

This study made use of key informant interviews. The instrument that was used to gather data for the key informant interview is the interview guide. Data from the in-depth interview was gathered through the use of an interview guide. The guide was constructed by the researcher and contained lists of questions that were asked from the interview.

Methods of Data Presentation and Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used to identify and report the themes generated from the data using Braun and Clarke's method

Results

The results of the interviews (n=10) including illustrative quotes of the participants are presented. The participants included farmers(n=2), students(n=2), low income workers(n=2), Artisans(n=2) and Civil Servants(n=2). The central concept of open media campaigns and the prevention and treatment of malaria are discussed. Two themes were identified.

Awareness

All the participants (n=10) are aware of of open media campaign on malaria treatment and prevention in the Eruwa community. Most of them stated some of the campaigns they have come across. One of the participants said that one of the campaigns he came across was the distribution of printed materials carried out in collaboration with healthcare workers.

"I have come across an open media campaign on malaria treatment and prevention. There was a man who is now late that used to talk about malaria and also did advertisement in partnership with health workers."

With regards to open media campaigns, the farmers said they don't hear about these campaigns when they go to the bush for farming except when

they are told. Although they said that open media campaigns are mostly carried out by the community health workers where they also distribute treated mosquito nets. Some of the participants stated that they have come across open media campaigns on the prevention and treatment of malaria on the radio and marketplace.

Most of the participants opined that they come across these campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention often. According to the participants, some are scheduled on a monthly and quarterly basis.

" These campaigns are organized in different communities that made up Eruwa and are organized monthly and sometimes quarterly as the case may be."

Effectiveness

All the participants agree that the open media campaigns helped them to be informed about malaria and how to treat and prevent it.

"Yes, the open media campaigns have an impact. Information is very important. One might not know how they get malaria or what causes malaria. With the information being passed by these campaigns, they help a lot and teach how to make use of mosquito nets as well."

Most of the participants highlighted that they resort to traditional management of malaria which involves the use of local herbs such as "agbo" as it is what is mostly available to them and what they can easily afford. One of the participants commented:

"We take herbs and medicines that are given to us by professionals when they come. We prepare herbs ourselves but I mostly take drugs on a personal basis whenever I have malaria".

The participants pointed out that, with open media campaigns, they have a deeper knowledge of how to prevent malaria. One of the participants stated:

“The campaigns already have an impact because they teach us how to prevent malaria. They also give treated mosquito nets and drugs”.

However, all the participants highlighted the need for government and non-governmental bodies to invest more in open media campaigns that seek to address malaria treatment and prevention as they are proven to be effective.

“The government and non-governmental bodies should take malaria very seriously because when you go to the U.S., they fight malaria seriously. So the government and non-governmental bodies should take it seriously to preserve the lives of its citizens”.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness to open a media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa?

Findings revealed that all the respondents are aware of open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention. It was also revealed that most of the respondents have come across different open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention. Findings also showed that most of the open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention are carried out by community health workers. It was also revealed from the findings that open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention are done every month.

The findings corroborate the assertion of the literature review which states Open media campaigns are a versatile and influential tool for disseminating information and influencing public opinion. They leverage various forms of media to communicate messages to a wide and diverse audience, making them effective in promoting change, raising awareness, and achieving specific goals. By understanding the core components and best practices associated with open media campaigns, organizations, and

individuals can harness the power of open media to reach their target audiences and achieve their objectives.

Research Question Two: What is the effectiveness of an open media campaign on the prevention and treatment of malaria in Eruwa?

Findings revealed that all the respondents agreed to open media campaigns helping them to be informed on malaria and how to treat and prevent it. Data obtained showed that most of the respondents resort to traditional management of malaria. Findings also revealed that most of the respondents agreed to open media campaigns giving them deeper knowledge on how to prevent malaria. From the findings, it was revealed that all the respondents agree that government and non-governmental bodies should invest more in open media campaigns on the treatment and prevention of malaria.

The findings corroborate the assertions of the sense extension theory which states that "the medium is the message." The theory holds that the media channels have personal and social consequences which are an extension of the audiences' senses, and that the media channels can shape and control the scale and the form of human association and action. Larson (1992) captures Marshal McLuhan's exact words as he puts it: "The message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs or, in briefer terms, the medium is the message."

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that indigenes of the Eruwa community are aware of open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention. Also, open media campaigns are effective in the prevention and treatment of malaria.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are thereby made;

- There should be more open media campaigns on the treatment and prevention of malaria.
- Government and non-governmental bodies should invest more in open media campaigns on malaria treatment and prevention.

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