



PATTERN OF ACCEPTANCE AND ADOPTION OF MEDIA MESSAGES ON COVID -19 IN RURAL AREA

Lead Authors:

**Olanihun,
Sunday
Zechariah
&
Felix Olajide
Talabi**

Affiliation:

Mass
communica
tion
Department
Redeemer's
University
ede, Osun
State,
Nigeria.



Abstract

The aim of this study was to look at the pattern of acceptance and adoption of media messages on COVID -19 protocols among rural dwellers. It used Alajue village, Ede South Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria, as a case study. Built on Health Belief Model (HBM). Survey research design was used for the study. The sample size was made of 164 respondents via Cochran's formula. The finding shows that the respondents knew COVID-19 and believed it was a real pandemic. Results also revealed that Radio is the most accessible media medium useful in passing health information to rural areas. Another finding showed that most rural dwellers accepted media messages on COVID-19 but had a low attitude towards adopting the media on COVID-19 protocols. The researcher concluded that media messages and health information are vital in the fight against pandemics among rural dwellers; government needs to give more attention to the health situation of the rural areas the same way with the urban area dwellers. Radio is an effective medium of disseminating health information to the rural areas within the nation.

Keywords: Acceptance, Adoption, Media Messages, Covid -19 Protocols, Rural Dwellers.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals of all educational levels and social strata worldwide increasingly rely on information seeking, sourcing and fining as a fundamental life skill (Ahmed, 2016). Information to everyone in the society becomes a precious asset for every member within and outside of the community. As a result, information can be defined as any message or news that is vocal, views or



Read on-screen or paper that increases an individual's comprehension, knowledge or consciousness of actual events, things or situations that prepare one for life's complexities (Rowshon & Muhammad, 2016), availability of information is, therefore, the lifeblood of any civilisation and essential to both the public and the government as a platform on which meaningful decisions are being made and projected. The right to access information becomes a human right that encourages viable growth with social and economic advancement evident (Harande, 2009).

People in rural areas, like those in urban areas, require information just as much as city dwellers do (Rowshon & Muhammad 2016), and their patterns of information exposure, sourcing and seeking are all inclined by how much each group or individual values and needs access to vital information. According to Momodu (2002) cited in Ogar et al. (2018), rural dwellers across Nigeria need information generally, especially health information, education, employment opportunity, political, economic, agriculture, community development, crime, allied occupation, transport, safety, housing, land, legal, welfare, religion, among others. It is the lack of effective communication that hinders and affect the attainment of new skills. (Ifukor, 2013).

The health issue is a primary source of information for rural residents to meet their various needs (Oluwatoyi 2010; Chen et al. 2019). The coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19) in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, was declared in December 2019 and triggered a flurry of health difficulties and emergencies covered by numerous media sites. Pandemic status for this infectious illness was officially granted by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, because of the threat it presents to human health and the broader community and economy (WHO). The SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), identified by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDC) and now officially recognised as the cause of the pandemic (Gorbalenya et al., 2020), is a novel beta-coronavirus. According to the European Centre for Disease Control, Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause significant illness in both animals and humans (ECDC, 2020).

ECDC (2020) attribute the new coronavirus to a group of pneumonia issues in Wuhan, China. Meanwhile, the ECDC (2020) submit that the Coronaviruses are identified to cause patients respiratory severe infection with other diseases like MERS, SARS, and COVID-19. Since the epidemic's Outbreak was publicised, media channels have been obligated to cover it from many perspectives. Since the disease's emergence, the media, across all channels, has been reporting nonstop on its prevalence, fatality, and prevention measures. These



roles are well-known in the press (Adegbija, Fakomogbon, and Adebayo, 2013).

Although COVID-19 is one of the deadliest pandemics compared to Ebola, SARS, and MERS, its great transmissibility, globally, governments are concerned about virus transmission and speed. The WHO designated the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic after it expanded across numerous nations and affected many individuals. As of January 2022, the virus had killed 5,486,304 individuals and confirmed 305,914,601 cases globally, according to the WHO Dashboard. The covid-19 virus has caused the most deaths in nations like the United States (859,975), Brazil (620,091), India (483,936), Russia (316, 904), Mexico (300,334), Peru (203,019), and the United Kingdom (150,230). Esposito (2020) observes inflammatory COVID-19 coverage in the US, mainly on social media and other dubious sources that are tragically regarded as fact. On the health front, Fotheringham (2020) notes that Spain is one of the most afflicted countries. Uneven and decreased public health service resources are among the most high-profile causes for the situational analysis. "The pandemic is already exposing inefficiencies and unfairness," says Scott (2020).

In Nigeria, the pandemic began with an Italian guy who came on February 28, 2020 (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control – NCDC, 2020). De facto, the infection has continued to spread across the country. The Nigerian Federal Government imposed a lockdown on Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) before extending it to the entire country to stop the virus from spreading. The way a media outlet reported on the pandemic in Nigeria has been dubbed 'infodemic' by most communication academics (Medford et al., 2020). "As the Nigerian Federal and State governments intensify efforts to detect and contain the epidemic, they would be concerned about the torrent of misinformation," writes Kazeem (2020).

Access to information and practical usage of details about covid-19 among individuals and groups is crucial because they can "inform family members and friends about a current situation on COVID-19, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 by taking preventative actions, such as today's watchword are "quarantine," "social distance," and "lockdown." In this framework, a lockdown largely means government measures used to restrict the movement of people and goods to prevent the spread of the infection. This information helps people abide by the policies on covid-19 set by the government. It also spells out how to find medical help and, by extension, teach their relatives about COVID-19 illness prevention, and so on" (Efe, 2020). This research seeks to find out the Pattern of Acceptance and Adoption of Media Messages on Covid-19 among Rural Dwellers in Alajue village, in Ede South Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria.



The study objectives were, therefore, to find out the level of awareness of rural inhabitants on Covid-19 protocol among Alajue residents, to also find out their preferred media source of information on COVID -19 protocol, to examine the believability of COVID-19 protocol message by rural dwellers within Alajue Village and lastly to know the level of adoption of COVID-19 protocol messages through the media by rural dwellers?

Literature review

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a significant setback in the world and its development system as it affected almost every continent of the world at virtually the same time. COVID -19, which broke out of Wuhan Province, China, during the winter period of 2019, became an emerging infectious illness to the globe (WHO 2020) and fashioned storm health difficulties problem crises for the media around to planet to report. (Regencia, Stepansky & Uras, 2020).

An official report by the ECDC (2020) noted that COVID -19 are a broad household of viruses that can initiate severe illness in human and animal organs. The World Health Organization WHO (2020) declared the virus a global pandemic necessitating a public health disaster response globally because of its fatal activeness in the human and animal systems and its high rate of infected people the alarming rate of fatality cases.

Presently, COVID -19 virus has spread to over 222 of the world's countries while the global cases record log keeps rising to as high as 318,063,410 with 5,533,565 deaths recorded as of 13 January 2022. According to the WHO, among this amount, the African continent has recorded 7,570,749 confirmed cases and 158,726 fatalities, with Nigeria having the total number of 249,586 cases authorised and 3,092 deaths from the virus (WHO 2022). Campaigns for health education in Nigeria across the 36 states and Abuja, the federal capital, focus mainly on the public. These efforts have been focused on information development and the altering of some misinterpretations that have been widely propagated between members of the community. Gbadamosi (2020) explains health education in the context of the pandemic as preventive actions like hand washing, social distancing, use of face masks thought to people to help avoid the ravaging effects of the virus.

Adequate information is one of the effective means of preventing epidemics like the Covid -19; it helps warn the public by creating helpful awareness and encouraging good hygienic living and promoting lifestyles that will help prevent the virus but improve wellbeing (Abu et al. 2020). Humans have a wide range of information needs in their daily actions. According to Reitz (2010), Information



need is the pungent gap that needs to be filled in the life of humans; it is the strong urge to know that is usually the drive to find answers to life's puzzles, humans by default, are information seekers.

Empirical findings in the area of information seeking and need behaviour people resident in rural areas on various matters such as health, politics, and economics brought about revealing results (Tabassum, Debayan, Asad & Firoz, 2020; Agunbiade & Onyibe, 2019; Abu, Smokey, Adjei & Ankrah, 2018; Adeyoyin & Oyewusi, 2015; Fatiregun, Isere, Dosumu, Ogar, Dika & Atanda, 2018; Ifukor, 2013; Kotorai, 2014; Meludu & Ajibade, 2008; Smokey & Adisah-Atta, 2017; Sonika, Vijay & Amarjeet, 2015;).

Previous studies found that people resident in rural areas are involved in information seeking in different subject matters and regions (Sokey, Adjei & Ankrah, 2018; Fatiregun et al. 2019, Kassim & Katunzi-Mollel, 2017; Adeyoyin & Oyewusi. 2015).

Media (in all forms) have embarked on all mediums to facilitate awareness and keep the public informed about the prevalence, fatalities, and preventive measures since the Outbreak (Akarika, Kieran & Aniekeme, 2020; Regencia, Stepansky & Uras. There is empirical evidence regarding media use for health and other purposes, including social media b (Aondover, 2020; Akarika, Sunmisola & Usman, 2019;). People are educated on many elements of pandemic prevention and management using social media such as COVID-19.

Similarly, previous research has shown how the media influence behaviour, including health (Babaleye, Ibitoye & Odorume, 2020; Monjok, Ulasi & Lee, 2019). According to the previous literature research, none of the studies examined Pattern of Acceptance and Adoption of Media Messages on Covid -19 Protocols Among Rural Dwellers in Alajue Village, Ede South Local Government Osun State, Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

Health belief model (HBM)

This study uses the Health Belief Model to predict protective health behaviour. Scientists utilise the Health Belief Model to predict health behaviours. Rosenstock (1950) adapted Becker's (1974) model for the model. The concept assumes that people's willingness to change their health habits is based on their health perceptions. The idea also argues that people adjust their behaviour based on their practicality and benefits vs costs, or a cost-benefit analysis. It is the job of all media to spread messages that educate and inform people worldwide. According to Ball-Rokeach, the press must provide crucial



information to attract individuals. Media messages educate and inform audiences about health, politics, economics, agricultural innovation, entrepreneurship, and social welfare programs.

Similarly, Ndolo, Eze, and Nwodo assert, citing Olujimi and Adekunle, "The media's primary duties include informing, educating, and organising people. They concur with Ndolo, Eze, and Nwodo, stating, "Positive attitude results from positive information. FAO and Hasbullah, referenced in Didiugwu, say Radio is still the best way to reach rural people. According to Oso, the 65-70 Rican population consists of rural residents with low literacy and a rural lifestyle. Also, he says that Radio, as a mass medium, can readily increase Nigerians' awareness of malaria prevention and treatment.

According to this theory, elites and non-educated will find health information when they are sick or at risk of being infected by a pandemic disease (perceived susceptibility) and that mild symptoms can increase its severity (perceived severity). A person who does not perceive physical changes as alarming tends to avoid getting health information until fewer indications and symptoms appear. When individuals realise the value of receiving early professional health information overrides imagined hurdles, they tend to seek it soon. Thus, an individual's attitude toward health information is determined by how they interpret it.

Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The instrument used for collecting data was the questionnaire from the residents of Alajue village Ede south, Osun State. The justification for the choice of the survey was due to its efficiency in getting the opinion of immense respondents with relative ease. The population was the residents of Alajue Village Ede south. The Cochran formula calculated the sample size of about 164 residents within Alajue Village. However, Cochran's formula is used for this research work because the total of the residents living within Alajue village was not found. Cochran's formula is one of the scientific methods usually used for both known and unknown population numbers. It is a more relevant, modern, and reliable measure of getting the desired sample in many research fields. The purposive sampling technique was adopted. Purposive sampling is a variant of the non-probability sampling technique that selects respondents based on specific criteria of the study objectives (Crossman 2018).

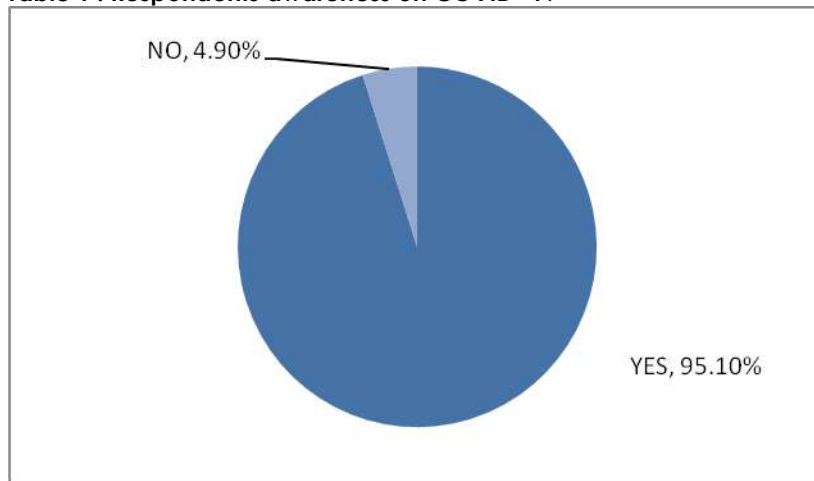
For this study, 164 residents within Alajue Village were purposively selected out of the entire villagers, based on the criteria that all were aware of COVID-19 and have access to health information surrounding it through the media (in all forms). At the same time, 142



questionnaires were retrieved and adequately analysed. A self-developed questionnaire developed from literature was used to collect data. The questionnaire was structured in five different sections labelled A, B, C, D, E. Exposure to Information on Covid 19, types of medium, the believability of messages and level of adoption of Covid-19 protocols messages were addressed respectively in each section. Data are presented using pie chart and discussed with a pie chart according to the study objectives.

Findings

Table 1 : Respondents awareness on COVID -19

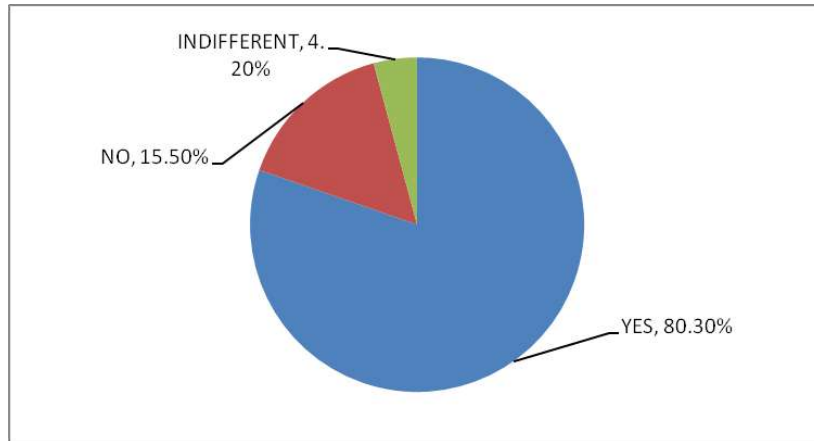


Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1: The table above depicts that 95.1% of respondents are aware of COVI-19 while 4.9% of the respondents are not aware of COVID-19.



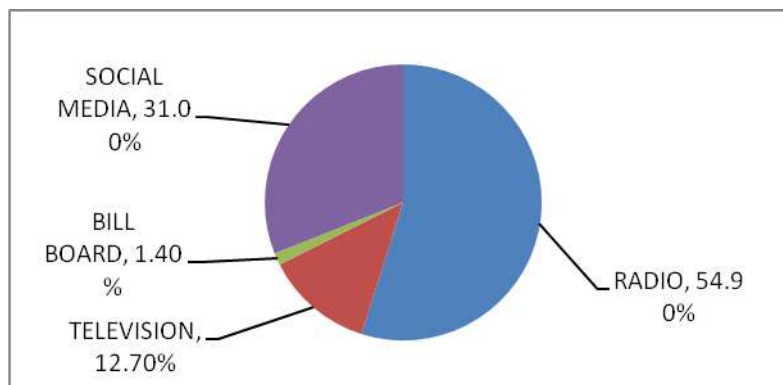
Table 2 : Respondents believe on COVID -19



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2: The table depicts that 80.3% of the respondents believed that COVID-19 is real while 15.5% of the respondents still don't believe in the pandemic and 4.2% don't know what to stand for in between their decision on COVID-19. A significant number of the respondents believe that COVID-19 is real.

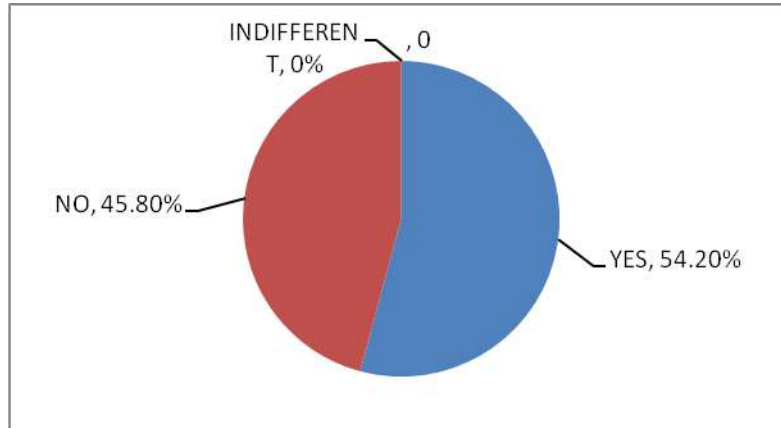
Table 3: Medium at which respondents receive Information on COVID -19 information protocol



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3: The above analysis shows that 54.9% of the respondents received COVID-19 information protocols through Radio, while 1.4% received it through billboards.

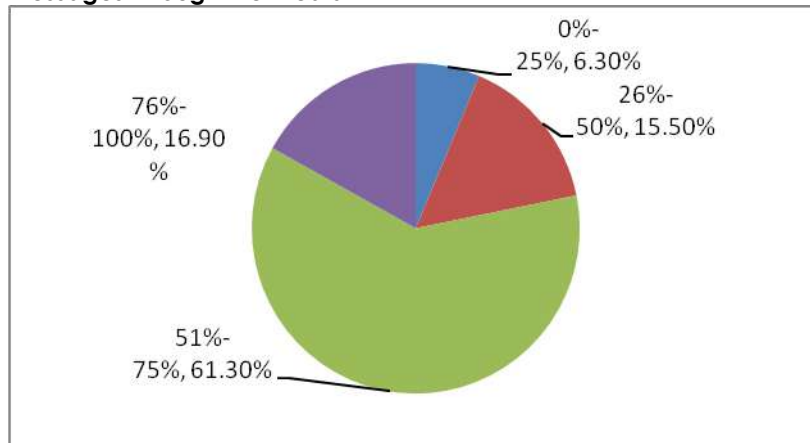
Table 4: Respondents believe on COVID 19 protocol message from the media



Source: Field Survey, 2022

SECTION D, Table 5: Analysis from the above table shows that 54.2% of the respondents believed COVID-19 protocols messages from the media while 45.8% didn't believe COVID-19 protocols messages from the media.

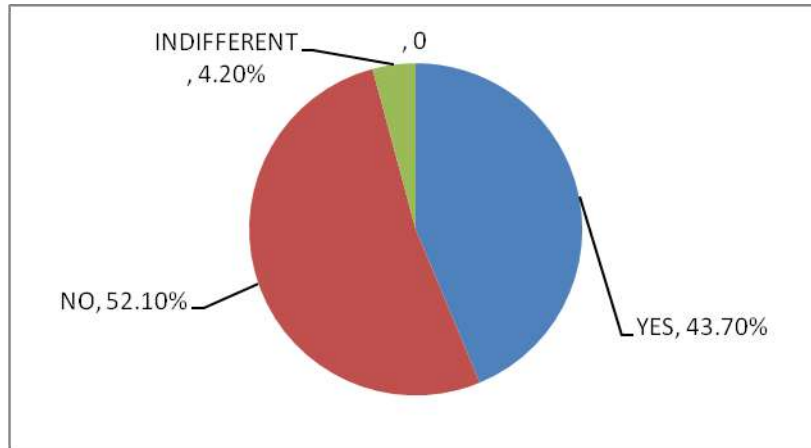
Table 5: Percentage at which respondents believe COVID 19 protocol messages through the media



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 5: From the above table, 61.3% of the respondents that fall between 51%-75% believed COVID-19 protocol messages through the media, 16.9% that fall between 76%-100% also complement the stand of the majority above the average belief on COVID-19 protocol messages through the media. It shows that many residents of the study believe the COVID-19 protocol message through the media.

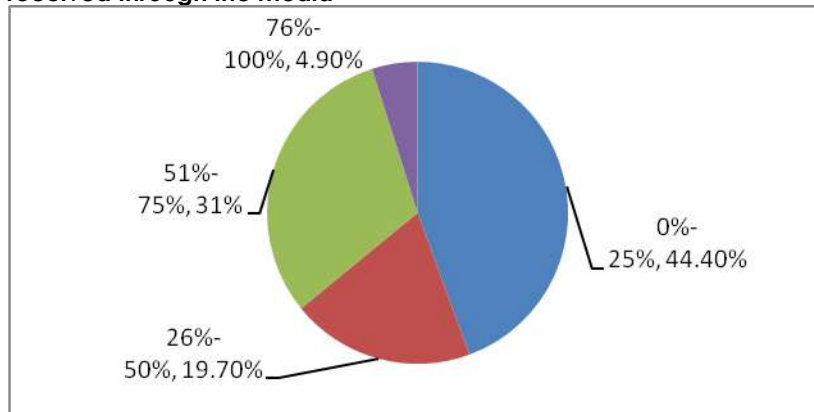
Table 6: Respondents' adoption of COVID -19 protocol messages received from the media



Source: Field Survey, 2022

SECTION E, Table 7: Analysis from the above table shows that 52.1% of the respondents did not adopt COVID-19 protocols message through the media while 43.7% adopt it and 4.2% don't have a direct stand. It indicates that many residents within this study jurisdiction did not adopt the COVID-19 guideline procedure

Table 7: Percentage of adoption of COVID-19 protocol messages received through the media



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 7: Analysis from the above table shows that 44.4% of the respondents that fall between 0%-25% did not adopt COVID-19 protocol messages through the media, 19.7% that fall between 26%-



50% also complement the stand that they did not adopt COVID-19 protocol messages through the media.

Result and discussion

Finding from table 1 depicts that about 95.1% of the entire respondents are fully aware of the COVID-19 pandemic because of its infectiousness and great alarming response that was put in place by World Health Organization (WHO) (Zhong et al. 2020) and health education campaigns organised by Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC,2020). It validated the effect of all the programs of NCDC as a body creating awareness on the COVID-19 to the ruler dwellers. This was also in line with (Harande 2009), who states that for sustainable development and economic growth, access to information must be treated as a fundamental human right.

The finding also further reveals that about 80.3% of the entire respondents believed that COVID-19 is real due to the awareness they are exposed to on the pandemic. It was in line with the study of Efe (2020) that found out that information needs especially about emerging news on Covid-19, how to prevent it and how to get help as the pandemic surged, and to find out what government policies were put in place.

The finding indicates that media in all forms were used among residents of Alajue Village to get information on the pandemic. The study also found that Radio and social media were the most used and accessed information platforms. It is shown by the data, which showed that 54.9% of the study respondents used Radio as a medium through which they have access to COVID-19 information protocols, followed by social media platforms that indicated that 31. 0% generated information through social media. From the finding, Radio is an effective tool for disseminating health information to rural dwellers. Many people who settle in rural areas have high accessibility and trust to radio programs and information about the pandemic.

It resonates with the findings of FAO cited in Didiugwo, who found that for rural settlers, the best and most reliable medium to communicate to them is Radio because of its reach and ease of accessibility. The finding also shows that 54.2% of the respondents believed COVID-19 protocols message from the media in Alajue Village, mainly through the various radio programs, which indicated that the rural dwellers within Alajue village have access COVID protocols messages through the media. Radio as a communication medium assisted the information dissemination of COVID-19 among the rural dwellers within Alajue Village.



The finding also correlates with the theoretical framework and the Health Belief Model (HBM); the model predicts the result of people's exposure to health information. Finally, the findings also show that with all the information the rural dwellers within Alajue Village were exposed to through the Radio and other mediums of communication 50.7% of the respondents did not adopt COVID-19 protocols message through the media, which also indicated that 44.4% of the respondents that fall between 0%-25% did not adopt COVID -19 protocol messages through the media as a security measure. This was not in line with the health education protective measures given by the NCDC, such as the washing of hands regularly social distancing, among others (NCDC, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings revealed that most respondents are aware of COVID -19 protocols message through the radio various program and have believed in the information they have access to on the COVID-19 pandemic protocol message. Findings also showed that there was poor acceptance of information on the physical measures to curb Covid 19, such as wearing face masks, washing hands, and distancing oneself from other people. Results show that even though respondents have access to COVID-19 protocols, messages didn't adopt mostly all the COVID-19 protocols messages as a security measure got through the media. The study also found that Radio was used to obtain information more than other mediums among residents of rural areas for messages on Covid 19. The study also surprisingly showed that the level of accepting and using those messages from Radio was low. This thus forms the study recommendation, which is:

1. The government should prioritise the use of traditional media to reach rural people during a pandemic like this because these sources are available and closer to them.
2. Equal priority should be given to information dissemination and execution between the urban and rural people for further effectiveness of obeying health instructional information.
3. The same ways the government used to invest money in health practitioners working in the urban area should be the same method they are going to be using for the rural area too for everyone to be equal in terms of health management.
4. During a pandemic, health messages on Radio should be more widely adopted, and attention should be devoted to official sources of information such as COVID-19 among rural inhabitants to give them more trusted and credible information.
5. The employment of community health officials, opinion leaders, and rural chiefs as efficient communication sources for rural dwellers should always be employed and empowered for effective communication to rural inhabitants.



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