Kwaghe International
Journal of Arts, Humanities and Religious Studies
ISSN : 1595-8027
Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney University, Dimensions, Lens, ResearchGet Scilit, Semantic, Google Scholar, Base etc
https://doi.org/10.58578/KIJAHRS.v3i1.9096

Attitude and Perception of Nasarawa State Residents towards COVID-19 Television Awareness Campaign

Musa Mathias & Gana Hope
Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria
mathiasmusa38@gmail.com; ghope@ibbu.edu.ng

Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Dec 28, 2025	Jan 22, 2026	Feb 3, 2026	Feb 8, 2026

Abstract

Television emerged as a key platform for COVID-19 awareness campaigns due to its wide reach, credibility, and capacity to convey complex health information through audio-visual messages. This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of residents of Nasarawa State toward television-based COVID-19 awareness campaigns, with specific attention to vaccination messaging. Anchored in agenda-setting theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate how television reportage on COVID-19 vaccination influenced public perceptions and health-related behaviors. The findings indicate that residents generally held positive and favorable perceptions of television coverage on COVID-19, particularly vaccination awareness campaigns broadcast by local and satellite stations. Television messages were reported to have positively shaped attitudes toward adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine, contributing to Nasarawa State's strong performance in national vaccination rankings. The study concludes that television awareness campaigns played a significant role in promoting compliance with public health measures during

KIJAHRS Journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

the pandemic and underscores the need to sustain and extend such media efforts to other priority health issues. It recommends that policymakers develop enabling policies that empower media organizations, especially television stations—to conduct proactive, regular health communication campaigns, thereby strengthening preparedness and response during future health emergencies.

Keywords: Television; COVID-19 Awareness; Health Communication; Public Perception; Nasarawa State

Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in late 2019 marked one of the most disruptive global public health crises in modern history. The rapid spread of the virus, coupled with high mortality rates and the absence of an immediate cure in the early stages, compelled governments and health authorities worldwide to adopt extensive public health communication strategies aimed at controlling transmission and safeguarding public health. Central to these strategies were mass media campaigns designed to inform, educate, and influence public attitudes and perceptions regarding preventive measures, including vaccination (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

In Nigeria, as in many developing countries, television emerged as a key platform for COVID-19 awareness campaigns due to its wide reach, credibility, and ability to communicate complex health information through audio-visual means. Television awareness campaigns provided audiences with information on the nature of the virus, modes of transmission, preventive protocols, and later, the development and rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. These campaigns often featured expert interviews, government briefings, public service announcements, and news reports aimed at encouraging compliance with health guidelines and fostering positive attitudes toward vaccination (Nwachukwu, Ajaero, & Ajaero, 2024).

Audience attitude and perception play a critical role in determining the success or failure of health communication campaigns. Attitude refers to the predisposition of individuals to respond favourably or unfavourably to a message, while perception involves how individuals interpret and make meaning of communicated information. In the context of COVID-19 television awareness campaigns, audience attitudes and perceptions

influence not only message acceptance but also behavioural outcomes such as adherence to safety protocols and willingness to be vaccinated (McQuail, 2010). When audiences perceive television messages as credible, clear, and relevant, they are more likely to internalise the information and act upon it.

Despite the extensive use of television for COVID-19 awareness, public responses to these campaigns have been mixed. While some segments of the population demonstrated positive attitudes and trust toward televised health messages, others expressed scepticism, fear, or resistance, often fuelled by misinformation, inconsistent messaging, and pre-existing distrust in government institutions (Solís Arce et al., 2021). Studies conducted in Nigeria indicate that although television significantly increased awareness about COVID-19, variations existed in how audiences perceived and responded to vaccination messages, particularly across socio-economic, educational, and cultural lines (Elgendy & Abdelrahim, 2021).

Furthermore, the proliferation of misinformation on digital platforms posed a challenge to television awareness campaigns, as conflicting narratives sometimes undermined the credibility of mainstream media messages. This information disorder influenced audience perception, leading to confusion and, in some cases, negative attitudes toward vaccination campaigns despite sustained television reporting (WHO, 2020). Consequently, understanding how audiences perceive and evaluate television awareness campaigns becomes essential for improving message design and effectiveness. Given the strategic role of television in health communication and the centrality of audience attitude and perception in shaping health behaviours, it is important to empirically examine how audiences interpret COVID-19 television awareness campaigns. Investigating audience attitudes and perceptions provides insight into the strengths and limitations of televised health communication and informs the development of more effective public health messaging strategies for future emergencies.

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on examining the attitude and perception of audiences toward COVID-19 television awareness campaigns. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to existing scholarship on media effectiveness in health communication and provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, broadcasters, and public health communicators on how television can be optimally utilised to promote positive health outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Public perception and opinion on any information is often influenced by several factors, one of which is the way and manner of presentation by the mass media. The mass media have been identified over time by different scholars to set agenda for public discourse (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). This postulation of the agenda-setting theory is credited to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw based on their seminal study published in 1972. The theorists opined that the media are the primary source of the pictures in the heads of the public "about the larger world of public affairs". The agenda-setting theory also draws from the assertion of Cohen (1963) cited in Yerima (2021) who observed that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". This is to say that the mass media reportage influence public opinion and public discourse significantly. Audiences are subtly forced to think about whatever the media projects repeatedly, sometimes even believing it hook, line and sinker. This potency of the media has made them to become a double-edged weapon with both positive and negative effects depending on who is using it for what. It is as a result of this that the mass media are seen as credible and effective platforms for any awareness campaign aimed at reaching the public (Olagbega, Santos & Thomas, 2020). The mass media were deployed by the Federal Government for the Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns to build people's trust in the vaccines rolled out globally to contain the spread of the deadly virus (NCDC, 2020).

Be that as it may, there were multiple issues and perceptions among citizens in Nigeria surrounding the credibility and effectiveness of the vaccine and the vaccination process. Alternative narratives about the pandemic and the vaccines (rumours, conspiracy theories, misinformation) were numerous, complex and varied and were filling the information vacuum that remained in many places. However, the impact of these on the audience responses still appeared limited; for example, some persons who believed in conspiracy theories were still willing to be vaccinated. Local social norms may be more influential on people's actions than rumours or misinformation (Tulloch, 2021). Due to the varied nature of information that were circulated on the public place via both traditional and new media platforms, divergent opinions and perceptions abound about the Covid-19 vaccination. In order to counter these conspiracy theories that were making rounds almost unabated, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) launched a Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign to build public

trust towards enhancing acceptability and public compliance to the vaccination. Television stations, among other media outfits, were used because of their peculiarity and glamour in combining both video and audio to create awareness on Covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria. Therefore, this study aimed to know the perception of Nasarawa residents' and responses on television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to determine the public perception of television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns and responses among residents of Nasarawa State. However, the specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the public perception of television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns among residents of Nasarawa State.

2. To find out the attitude of Nasarawa state residents towards television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns.

3. To determine how the television reportage has influenced the response of the residents of Nasarawa State towards Covid-19 Vaccinations.

Conceptual Review

A review of concepts related to the study was considered to be paramount in order to provide a conceptual framework to the study

Concept of Broadcast media campaign

Broadcast media awareness campaigns represent a strategic communication approach through which radio and television platforms are deliberately used to inform, educate, persuade, and mobilise audiences on issues of public, social, health, political, or developmental importance. These campaigns are typically characterised by planned messaging, sustained exposure, and clearly defined objectives aimed at influencing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours within a target population. In many developing societies, including Nigeria, broadcast media remain critical instruments for awareness creation due to their wide reach, credibility, and accessibility across urban and rural populations (McQuail, 2019; Okunna & Omenugha, 2022).

Conceptually, broadcast media awareness campaigns are rooted in the normative role of the media as agents of social responsibility and development. The Social Responsibility Theory posits that the media have an obligation to serve the public interest

by disseminating information that promotes societal well-being, informed citizenship, and social change (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956; Christians et al., 2018). Awareness campaigns operationalise this obligation by translating complex social issues—such as health risks, environmental sustainability, civic participation, and security concerns—into simplified, audience-friendly messages that can be easily understood and acted upon.

The effectiveness of broadcast media awareness campaigns is closely linked to the Agenda-Setting function of the media. Agenda-setting theory explains how frequent and prominent coverage of specific issues increases their perceived importance among audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2014). Through repeated broadcasts, jingles, talk shows, documentaries, and public service announcements, awareness campaigns elevate particular issues onto the public agenda, thereby shaping what audiences think about, even if not necessarily what they think. In this sense, broadcast media campaigns play a pivotal role in prioritising public discourse and directing collective attention toward societal challenges.

Another critical conceptual underpinning of broadcast media awareness campaigns is the Knowledge Gap Theory, which suggests that individuals with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire information from the media more rapidly than those with lower status (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1970). Broadcast campaigns attempt to narrow this gap by using local languages, culturally resonant content, and repeated messaging formats to ensure inclusivity and comprehension across diverse audience segments. Radio, in particular, has been identified as a powerful medium for reaching marginalised and low-literacy populations, thereby enhancing awareness and participation in development initiatives (Myers, 2019; Moemeka, 2020).

From a persuasion perspective, broadcast media awareness campaigns also draw heavily on the principles of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), audiences process messages either through a central route, involving careful consideration of message content, or a peripheral route, relying on cues such as source credibility, repetition, and emotional appeal. Broadcast campaigns often combine both routes by presenting factual information alongside engaging visuals, celebrity endorsements, slogans, and music to maximise persuasive impact and message retention (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

In contemporary media environments, broadcast media awareness campaigns are increasingly integrated with other communication platforms, reflecting the logic of media convergence. While traditional broadcast channels remain central, campaigns are now designed to complement social media, mobile communication, and community-based outreach, thereby reinforcing message consistency and audience engagement (Jenkins, 2018; Adeyanju & Oso, 2021). This integrated approach enhances campaign visibility and allows broadcasters to sustain awareness beyond one-way communication, fostering feedback and audience interaction.

Despite their strengths, broadcast media awareness campaigns face conceptual and practical challenges, including message fatigue, limited audience feedback, political interference, and uneven access to broadcast signals. These limitations underscore the need for evidence-based campaign design, audience research, and continuous evaluation to ensure relevance, credibility, and effectiveness (Noar, 2016; Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2018). Nonetheless, within the communication scholarship, broadcast media awareness campaigns remain a vital conceptual framework for understanding how mass media contribute to public enlightenment, social change, and development communication.

Concept of COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). First identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, COVID-19 rapidly evolved into a global pandemic, prompting unprecedented public health responses, social disruptions, and communication challenges worldwide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Conceptually, COVID-19 extends beyond a biomedical phenomenon to encompass social, economic, psychological, and communicative dimensions that have reshaped contemporary societies. From a public health perspective, COVID-19 is characterised by its high transmissibility, multiple variants, and varying degrees of severity ranging from mild symptoms to critical illness and death. Transmission occurs primarily through respiratory droplets and aerosols, making human interaction and mobility central factors in its spread (Güner, Hasanoğlu & Aktaş, 2020). These characteristics necessitated non-pharmaceutical interventions such as lockdowns, social distancing, face masking, and hygiene campaigns, alongside pharmaceutical responses including vaccination and antiviral therapies (Hale et al., 2021).

Conceptually, COVID-19 can be examined through the lens of risk and crisis communication. Risk communication theory emphasises the importance of timely, transparent, and credible information in enabling individuals to make informed decisions during health emergencies (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and health institutions relied heavily on mass media and digital platforms to communicate risks, preventive measures, and policy changes. However, inconsistent messaging, political interference, and scientific uncertainty often undermined public trust and compliance (Van der Meer & Jin, 2020; Malecki, Keating & Safdar, 2021).

Another important conceptual dimension of COVID-19 is the "infodemic," a term used to describe the overabundance of information—both accurate and false—that accompanied the pandemic (WHO, 2020). Social media platforms accelerated the spread of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and vaccine hesitancy, complicating public health efforts. The infodemic highlights the intersection between COVID-19 and media ecology, underscoring the role of media literacy, fact-checking, and responsible journalism in managing health crises (Cinelli et al., 2020; Allington et al., 2021).

Behavioural change is central to understanding COVID-19 responses. Health behaviour theories such as the Health Belief Model (HBM) explain compliance with preventive measures based on perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker, 1988). During the pandemic, individuals' willingness to adopt behaviours such as mask-wearing and vaccination was strongly influenced by risk perception, trust in authorities, cultural beliefs, and exposure to media messages (Bish & Michie, 2010; Lin et al., 2021). Thus, COVID-19 awareness campaigns sought to modify attitudes and behaviours through persuasive communication strategies.

Socio-economically, COVID-19 exposed and intensified existing inequalities. Vulnerable populations experienced disproportionate health risks, job losses, educational disruption, and limited access to healthcare services (United Nations, 2021). The pandemic also altered work practices, accelerating digitalisation, remote work, and online education. Conceptually, COVID-19 is therefore viewed as a "syndemic," interacting with social determinants such as poverty, housing, and access to information to shape health outcomes (Horton, 2020).

Health Communication

Kayode (2021) define health communication as the use of the mass and multimedia and other technological innovations to disseminate useful health information to the public, increases awareness of specific aspects of individual and health of the population as well as importance of health in development. Health communication is directed towards improving the health status of individuals and populations alike. It basically entails the use of various media platforms to disseminate health messages to the public to the end that the public health is enhanced. Health institutions and professionals make use of radio, television, newspaper, magazine, outdoor media and of a recent the social media to sensitize the public about diseases and the safety measures to be taken to be nipped in the bud. The whole gamut of health communication borders on enhancing health education for better health behaviour through the instrumentality of the media.

Kayode (2021) further averred that health communication encompasses several areas including edutainment or enter-education, health journalism, interpersonal communication, media advocacy, organizational communication, risk communication, social communication and social marketing. It can take many forms from mass and multimedia communications to traditional and culture-specific communication such as storytelling puppet shows and songs. Different programmes and strategies are being employed by the mass media to spread health information in order to reach the general public towards spurring positive health behaviours. This underscores the significance of health communication to the overall well being of the society.

Literature Review

Public perception of television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented global health crisis that necessitated rapid and sustained public health communication. As governments and health agencies introduced vaccination as a primary strategy for controlling the spread of the virus, mass media particularly television became central to disseminating vaccination awareness messages. Television reportage played a critical role in shaping public understanding of the safety, efficacy, and necessity of COVID-19 vaccines, thereby influencing public perception and behavioural responses toward vaccination campaigns.

Television has long been recognised as a powerful medium for health communication due to its extensive reach, audiovisual strength, and credibility among diverse audience segments. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, television remains one of the most trusted and accessible sources of health information, especially during emergencies when accurate information is urgently needed. Scholars argue that television reportage can significantly enhance public awareness, frame health risks, and influence attitudes by repeatedly exposing audiences to expert opinions, official guidelines, and persuasive narratives (Christensen et al., 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, television news and public service announcements became major platforms for explaining vaccine development processes, addressing fears, and correcting misinformation.

Empirical studies conducted within Nigeria indicate that public perception of television reportage on COVID-19 vaccination campaigns was largely positive. Elgendy and Abdelrahim (2021), in a study among residents of Nasarawa State, found that television coverage of vaccination awareness campaigns significantly contributed to public understanding of COVID-19 vaccines. The study revealed that a majority of respondents perceived television reportage as informative, credible, and influential in shaping their decision to either accept or consider vaccination. Importantly, a substantial proportion of respondents reported that consistent television reporting helped them make informed decisions about vaccination, suggesting that television played a persuasive and educative role during the campaign period.

Similarly, research conducted among residents of Owerri, Nigeria, found that television messages on COVID-19 vaccination were generally well received by audiences (Owerri Residents' Perception Study, 2023). Respondents indicated that televised health messages increased their awareness of vaccination schedules, benefits, and safety precautions. These findings reinforce the argument that television remains a strategic channel for public health campaigns, particularly in contexts where interpersonal communication and digital media may be limited by infrastructural or literacy constraints.

Beyond Nigeria, broader media studies provide supporting evidence that mainstream media coverage significantly shapes public perception of vaccines. Christensen et al. (2022) observed that increased visibility of vaccine-related content in mainstream media during the pandemic corresponded with heightened public engagement and discussion around vaccination. This suggests that television reportage does not merely

transmit information but also sets the agenda for public discourse by determining which health issues receive prominence and sustained attention.

However, the literature also cautions that public perception of television reportage is not uniformly positive. Studies have shown that inconsistent messaging, sensational framing, or politicisation of health issues in news coverage can undermine public trust and contribute to vaccine hesitancy (Scientific Reports, 2024). When television reportage amplifies controversy or conflicting expert opinions without adequate contextualisation, audiences may develop confusion or scepticism toward vaccination campaigns. This underscores the importance of responsible framing and reliance on credible health authorities in television reporting.

Further evidence suggests that the influence of television reportage extends beyond perception to actual health behaviours. Research from other African contexts, such as Tanzania, indicates that trusted media sources, including television, played a crucial role in improving vaccine awareness and acceptance, especially when messages were reinforced by health professionals and community leaders (PubMed, 2025). In Nigeria, Nwachukwu, Ajaero, and Ajaero (2024) similarly found that mass media messages on COVID-19 significantly influenced public attitudes and compliance with health recommendations, highlighting the behavioural implications of effective media communication.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in the existing literature. Many studies focus broadly on mass media or digital platforms without isolating television reportage as a distinct area of analysis. Additionally, much of the research relies on cross-sectional survey designs, limiting understanding of how public perception evolves over time. There is also limited exploration of how specific elements of television reporting—such as tone, framing, source credibility, and frequency—shape audience interpretation of vaccination messages.

In summary, existing literature demonstrates that television reportage played a significant role in shaping public perception of COVID-19 vaccination awareness campaigns. Evidence from Nigeria and other contexts indicates that audiences generally perceived television coverage as credible and informative, contributing to increased awareness and favourable attitudes toward vaccination. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of television reportage depends largely on the quality, consistency, and framing of messages. These findings justify continued scholarly attention to television as a vital tool in health

communication, particularly for designing effective vaccination awareness campaigns in future public health emergencies.

Public attitude to television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns

The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent need elicit favourable attitude and for effective public health communication to support vaccination awareness and acceptance across diverse populations. As vaccines emerged as a primary strategy for controlling the spread of the virus, governments and health agencies relied heavily on mass media to educate the public about vaccine safety, efficacy, and availability. Among the various media platforms, television reportage played a particularly significant role due to its wide reach, perceived credibility, and ability to combine visual and auditory messages. Assessing the effectiveness of television reportage in COVID-19 vaccination awareness campaigns is therefore essential for understanding how media interventions contribute to public health outcomes during crises.

Television has historically been recognised as an influential tool in health communication, capable of shaping public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Its effectiveness stems from its capacity to present expert opinions, real-time updates, and persuasive narratives that simplify complex medical information for mass audiences. During public health emergencies, television reporting often performs agenda-setting and framing functions by prioritising health issues and defining how they are interpreted by the public (Christensen et al., 2022). In the context of COVID-19 vaccination, television reportage frequently featured health experts, government officials, and frontline workers, which enhanced message credibility and reinforced public trust in vaccination campaigns.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria demonstrates that television reportage was effective in promoting COVID-19 vaccination awareness. Akase and Mathias (2024), in their study among residents of Nasarawa State, found that regular exposure to television reports on vaccination campaigns significantly improved public knowledge and positively influenced attitudes toward vaccine uptake. The study revealed that a large proportion of respondents relied on television as their primary source of information about COVID-19 vaccines and reported that televised messages helped them make informed decisions regarding vaccination. This suggests that television reportage functioned not only as an

informational channel but also as a persuasive medium capable of shaping public health behaviour.

Similarly, studies examining television messaging in other Nigerian cities report comparable outcomes. Research conducted among residents of Owerri indicated that television messages effectively increased awareness of vaccination schedules, benefits, and safety guidelines, thereby enhancing public readiness to participate in vaccination exercises (Owerri Residents' Perception Study, 2023). These findings reinforce the argument that television remains a vital platform for reaching heterogeneous audiences, particularly in contexts where digital media access may be uneven.

Beyond Nigeria, broader studies on media effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic support the role of television in improving public awareness and engagement with vaccination campaigns. Christensen et al. (2022) observed that increased coverage of vaccines in mainstream media was associated with heightened public attention and discussion, indicating that sustained television reportage helped normalise vaccination as a collective public health responsibility. In sub-Saharan Africa, traditional media such as television and radio were consistently ranked among the most trusted sources of COVID-19 information, contributing to higher awareness levels and reduced uncertainty about vaccination (Mchome et al., 2023).

However, the literature also suggests that the effectiveness of television reportage is influenced by message quality, consistency, and framing. While accurate and well-structured reporting enhances public confidence, inconsistent or sensationalised coverage may generate confusion and scepticism. Studies examining vaccine hesitancy in Africa indicate that exposure to conflicting media narratives can undermine trust and reduce the persuasive impact of vaccination campaigns (Solís Arce et al., 2021). This implies that effectiveness is not inherent to television as a medium but depends on professional journalistic standards and alignment with public health expertise. Furthermore, research shows that television reportage is most effective when integrated into broader communication strategies. Nwachukwu, Ajaero, and Ajaero (2024) found that mass media messages, including television broadcasts, significantly influenced public attitudes toward COVID-19 when combined with perceived personal risk and trust in health institutions. This suggests that television works best as part of a multi-level communication approach

that reinforces messages through interpersonal networks, community engagement, and institutional credibility.

Existing literature demonstrates that television reportage was largely effective in advancing COVID-19 vaccination awareness campaigns, particularly in raising public knowledge, shaping favourable attitudes, and supporting informed decision-making. Empirical studies from Nigeria and other regions indicate that television's reach and credibility made it a valuable tool for public health communication during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of television reportage depends on the accuracy, framing, and consistency of messages, as well as their integration into wider health communication strategies. These insights highlight the continued relevance of television in vaccination awareness campaigns and underscore the need for strategic media planning in future public health emergencies.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda Setting Theory

The development of the agenda-setting theory is credited to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw based on their seminal study published in 1972. The two researchers had earlier studied the 1968 US presidential election in Chapel Hill, North Carolina comparing news coverage of public issues in the news media and public issues esteemed by electorates as most important. They were thereby able to empirically demonstrate that the agenda of issues prominent in the news media tend to become prominent among the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). While McCombs and Shaw's study may have formalised the theory and the coinage of the term "agenda-setting function of the media", the origin of the theory predates their study. An early sketch of the theory is linked to Walter Lipmann, whose 1922 book, *Public Opinion*, and specifically the opening chapter titled "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads", advanced the argument that the media are the primary source of the pictures in the heads of the public "about the larger world of public affairs". The agenda-setting theory also draws from the assertion of Bernard Cohen (1963) who observed that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p. 120).

The agenda-setting theory is basically about the causal relationship between media agenda and public agenda. Rather than directly tell the public to consider one issue as more important than another, the media set agenda by giving preferential treatment to issues in their coverage (Zhu & Blood, 1997). In similar vein, Grossberg, Wantella, Whitney and Wise (2006) affirm that the media cue the public to see certain issues as important by the prominence such issues are given and "by both the extensiveness of stories in a given day and duration of coverage over time" (p. 367). The process by which media agenda starts and leads to public agenda is captured by Defleur (2010) in the following propositions:

1. The press (news media, in general) *selects* a number of issues, topics, and events from its continuous surveillance of the environment to process and report daily as "the news".
2. Because of limited space and time, and because of journalists' convictions as to what is "newsworthy", many issues and topics are *ignored* and do not become part of the news.
3. The press gives each of the news stories selected greater or lesser *prominence* in its reports by assigning it a particular position, or giving it more or less space or time, in its print or broadcast news presentations.
4. The selection of stories presented, with their different levels of prominence, space and time, forms the *news agenda* of the press.
5. Therefore, when the public attends to these news reports, they will perceive the order of prominence assigned by the press in its agenda of stories and will use it to decide on a parallel *personal ranking of importance* of the issues and topics that make up the news.

Agenda setting theory is a suitable theoretical underpinning for this study because the theory states that public opinion and perception is influenced by whatever issue the media give prominence to. Therefore, the public perception of Television reportage of covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign will to a great extent depend on the level of prominence it was given by the media. It is this propensity of the media to emphasis certain attributes of an issue as well as giving it salience that shapes how the public perceive, understand and form their opinions concerning such issue.

Research methodology

Descriptive survey method was used for this research because surveys can produce reliable and useful information. They are especially useful for collecting information on audiences (Wimmer & Dominic, 2009). This design therefore, enabled the researcher to sample the public perception of TV reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign

and responses among residents of Nasarawa State. The population of this study consists of people within Nasarawa State. Nasarawa State has the population of about 2,523,400 people according to National Bureau of Statistics (2023). However, the research shall focus on one Local Government area from each senatorial district of the State to represent the entire state; this is due to the reason being that the nature of this research requires members of the residents that are most likely exposed to television messages more frequently in order to get the best of their responses. The population of the study is summarised in the table below;

Population of Study

S/N	Senatorial District	LGA	POPULATION
1	Nasarawa South	Lafia	445,300
2	Nasarawa West	Keffi	124,900
3	Nasarawa North	Akwanga	151,100
	Total		721,300

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

Simple random sampling technique was adopted for this study in order to allow for equal chances to the research respondents. A sample size is a representative part of population used for the study whose results will be generalized on the whole population (Okoli, 2011).

The sample of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1967) formula with 95% confidence level and 0.5 margin error in order to avoid sampling error. The calculation formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

Where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute numbers in formula:

$$n=\frac{721,300}{(1+721,300(0.05)2)}$$

$$n = \frac{721,300}{(1 + 721,300(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{721,300}{(1 + 1803.25)}$$

$$n = \frac{721,300}{1804.25}$$

$$\frac{721,300}{(1 + 1803.25(0.05)2)}$$

$$n = 399.77$$

$$n = 400$$

After calculating the sample size by substituting the numbers into the Yamane formula, the numbers of sample is 399.77 persons. In order to obtain reliable data, researcher has approximated the sample size to 400 persons

Data Presentation

The analysis and presentation is based on the data obtained from the questionnaire administered from the field work through the instrument of questionnaire. Below is a tabular presentation of the data obtained.

Table 1: Are you aware of the existence of Covid-19?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	286	72.5%
Partially aware	65	16.5%
I am not aware	43	11.0%
Total	394	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The implication is that most of the respondents are aware of the existence of Covid-19 as affirmed by 286 respondents representing (72.5%) of the entire respondents.

Table 2: How long do you know of COVID-19 now?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
2years	75	19.0 %
3years	260	65.9 %
1year	34	8.7%
Less than 1 year	20	5.1%
Not at all	5	1.3%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 2 implies that most of the respondents have known about the existence of Covid-19 for 3years long as revealed by 260 respondents representing (65.9%) of the entire respondents.

Table 3: Do you know about the W.H.O./NCDC COVID-19 safety protocol?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	115	29.2%
Partially	274	69.6 %
No, I don't	5	1.2%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 4.3 shows that most of the respondents are partially aware about the existence of W.H.O./NCDC COVID-19 safety protocol? As revealed by 274 respondents representing (69.6%) of the entire respondents.

Table 4: Do you know about COVID-19 vaccination exercise?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
No, I don't	34	8.7 %
Partially	76	19.3 %
Yes	284	72.0%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 4 This implies that a good number of respondents have a good knowledge of COVID-19 vaccination exercise? As affirmed by 284 respondents representing (72.0%) of the entire respondents

Table 5: Do you receive regular information about COVID-19?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	268	68.1 %
No	126	31.9%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that most respondents receive regular information about COVID-19? As revealed 268 respondents representing (68.1%) of the entire respondents.

Table 6 if you have accessed Covid-19 information from TV Channel before, kindly indicate the TV channel

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Satellite based channels	332	84.2 %
Nasarawa based channels	62	15.8%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that majority of the respondents used Satellite based channels in accessingCovid-19 information on TV as revealed by 332 respondents representing (84.2%) of the entire respondents

Table 7: The information I receive about Covid-19 on television is authentic

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	78	19.8%
Agree	299	75.9%
Strongly Disagree	7	1.8%
Disagree	2	0.5%
Neutral	8	2.0%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that a good number of respondents agreed that Covid-19 information that they received on television was authentic and has helped in convincing them and other people on doing the needful on Covid-19 as revealed by 299 respondents representing (75.9%) of the entire respondents.

Table 8: I believe the Covid-19 vaccination awareness I received on television.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	83	21.0%
Agree	297	75.4%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6%
Disagree	3	0.7%
Neutral	1	0.3%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that a good number of respondents strongly agreed that they believe Covid-19 vaccination awareness they received on television as revealed by 297 respondents representing (75.4%) of the entire respondents.

Table 9: The information I received about Covid-19 vaccination on television is convincing enough to enable me take an informed decision.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	73	18.5%
Agree	287	72.8%
Strongly Disagree	23	5.8%
Disagree	8	2.0%
Neutral	3	0.9%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that a good number of respondents agreed that information they received about Covid-19 vaccination on television is convincing enough to enable them take an informed decision as revealed by 287 respondents representing (72.8%) of the entire respondents.

Table 10: The Covid-19 vaccination awareness I watched on television has cleared my doubt over fake news from unofficial sources

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	91	23.1%
Agree	240	60.9%
Strongly Disagree	43	10.9%
Disagree	20	5.1%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Total	394	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

This implies that a good number of respondents agreed that Covid-19 vaccination awareness they watched on television has cleared their doubt over fake news from unofficial sources as revealed by 240 respondents representing (60.9%) of the entire respondents.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the study is devoted to discussing the findings of the study in order to answer the research questions earlier raised to guide the study.

What is the public perception of television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns and responses among residents of Nasarawa State?

To answer this research question, some questions were drafted in the research instrument to ascertain the perception of the residents on Television reportage of Covid-9 vaccination awareness in Nasarawa State. The study showed that majority of the respondents had good knowledge about Covid-19 safety protocol and were also well informed about Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign. More so, majority of the respondents also had positive and favourable perception abut Covid-19 vaccination awareness owing to regular and adequate information from local and satellite TV stations. The TV stations through their reportage as shown in diverse programmes were highly instrumental in framing positive and favourable perception of the residents about Covid-19 vaccination exercise. The findings of this study are in consonance with the findings of Apuke and Omar(2021) which also revealed that TV stations paid adequate attention to the issues of COVID-19 thereby giving it adequate coverage. Asemah, David and Akpabio

(2022) conducted a research on *Perception of Media coverage of Corona virus outbreak in select Local Government Areas in Edo state*. They found out that majority of the respondents have knowledge of coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria and that the respondents mostly assessed COVID-19 messages through television reportage. This is to say that Nigerian television stations were at the vanguard of Covid-19 campaign awareness.

What is the attitude of Nasarawa state residents towards the television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaigns?

Findings from the study revealed that the television reportage from local and satellite stations on Covid-19 vaccination exercise were very effective in that the information did not only go viral but that it also elicited commensurate attitudes and actions which include the keeping of Covid-19 safety protocols by the audience. The attitude of Nasarawa state residents to television campaign on COVID-19 has proven to be very convincing as it did not only spur the residents about the need for safety protocol/vaccination but also counteracted conspiracy theories the residents were previously exposed to from informal sources about Covid-19 vaccination. The videos, pictures, updates and statistics on Covid-19 updates from different TV stations demonstrated beyond every iota of doubt the authenticity of the television reportage about Covid-19. This finding uphold the submission of Nwanguma&Anorue (2015) and Asemah et al.(2022) that repeated exposure to media campaigns increases knowledge about the virus and results to behavioural change towards the disease. Health Belief Model (HBM) may have also offered justification for this high level of adoption in view of its position that people's action compliance with messages on disease prevention and control is dependent on their perceived health threat, susceptibility, severity, benefits and efficacy of the media to address their health information needs. This means that residents of Nasarawa state perceived coronavirus as a severe health threat recognised their susceptibility and adopted the television reportage via the Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign which they observed to be credible and informative, thereby helping to its prevention and control.

How has the television reportage influenced the response of the residents of Nasarawa State?

The study discover that the television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness has influenced the disposition, perception and reaction of the respondents to adhere to precautionary measures given through the media by health experts in order to avoid falling

victims to the deadly virus. The reactions of the majority of the respondents were as a result of the Covid-9 awareness campaigns that were launched on television. Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign was incorporated into virtually every television programme ranging from adverts and even integral part of news presentation, talk show and discussion programmes with experts, documentary programmes, commercials/public service announcements and drama/musical presentations tailored with Covid-19 vaccination awareness messages to keep residents abreast on the developments around the globe and what to do to forestall the spread of the virus. The covid-19 television reportage influenced the respondents subtly and forcefully to achieve the purpose intended. The proactive television reportage on Covid-19 has contributed greatly to the success recorded in containing the spread of the virus even against the prediction and expectations of the Western world; the likes of Bill Gates predicted that Africa will be littered with dead bodies. However, proactive reportage measures were taken by the media most especially the television stations to launch an aggressive campaign against the virus from the point index case was reported in Lagos to post Covid period.

This finding corroborates the findings of Asemah et al who also found out in their study that majority (237 or 64%) of respondents in select LGAs of Edo State said the television coverage of Covid-19 awareness has positive influence on them, especially their health behaviour. In addition to this, the findings of John(2023) agreed with this study. The results indicated a high level of public awareness from the media messages as 89.08% of respondents heard about COVID-19 from the media messages, 87.74% believed that media messages about the pandemic increased their awareness of it and 90.81% of respondents got influenced by the media messages to adjust to safety protocols against the disease. Majority of the respondents (75.49%) were satisfied with the overall performance of the media in their sensitization campaign. While 49.03% benefitted to a very large extent from the media messages, 44.01% benefitted to a large extent. It is apposite to say the television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness was successful to have elicited the intended response of influencing the residents to adhere to the messages communicated.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the findings of this study, it can be deduced that the public perception of television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness among residents of

Nasarawa State is positive and favourable. The Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign aggressively launched by television stations in the state and other satellite stations have influenced the residents of the state positively to adhere to Covid-19 safety protocols as well as taking Covid-19 vaccine thereby earning the state the highly coveted and commended position of ranking topmost in the vaccination exercise in Nigeria. This is to say that the television reportage of Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign in Nasarawa state was not just effective was also successful to achieve the purpose intended. The place of television reportage in achieving this great feat of influencing the residents to take the Covid-19 vaccine cannot be overemphasised however stated. The TV stations in light of the agenda setting role of the mass media have demonstrated the power of the media to bring about a desired behavioural change in the society. It is also glaring to say that television reportage can shape the perception of the public as clearly demonstrated in this study. As Cohen once noted that the media may not successfully tell us what to think but are always successful in telling us what to think about thereby influencing the perception of the audience.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings of this research, the following recommendations are provided below in order to improve the public attitude and perception of television reportage on Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign among residents of Nasarawa State.

1. There is the need for the media most especially television stations to sustain and extend the efforts made in Covid-19 vaccination awareness campaign in reporting other health issues.
2. Policy makers need to come up with bespoke policies that will empower the media to carry out regular health communication campaigns. This will ensure that proactive measures are taken during health emergencies as in the case of Covid-9 pandemic.
3. There is the need for continuous close partnership between the media and health experts to keep the public abreast about safety health practices.

References

Adebayo, A. A., Olatunji, R. W., & Adekunle, A. I. (2021). Media coverage and public awareness of COVID-19 in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies, 13*(3), 357–372.

Adeyanju, A. M., & Oso, L. (2021). *Media, audience and social change in Nigeria*. Stirling-Horden Publishers.

Allington, D., Duffy, B., Wessely, S., Dhavan, N., & Rubin, J. (2021). Health-protective behaviour, social media usage and conspiracy belief during the COVID-19 public health emergency. *Psychological Medicine, 51*(10), 1763–1769.

Apuke, O. D., & Omar, B. (2021). How do Nigerian newspapers report COVID-19 pandemic? The implication for awareness and prevention. *Health Education Research, 35*(5), 471–480. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyaa031

Asemah, E. S., Gujbawu, M., Ekhareafo, D. O., & Okphanachi, R. A. (2012). *Research methods and procedures in mass communication*. Great Future Press.

Asemah, E. S., Nwamuo, A. N., & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O. A. (2022). *Theories and models of communication* (2nd ed.). Jos University Press.

Asemah, E. S., Sarah, T. S., & Akpabio, J. (2022). Perception of media coverage of coronavirus outbreak (in select local government areas) in Edo State, Nigeria.

Bish, A., & Michie, S. (2010). Demographic and attitudinal determinants of protective behaviours during a pandemic. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 15*(4), 797–824.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). What you need to know about variants.

Christensen, B., Laydon, D., Chelkowski, T., Jemielniak, D., Vollmer, M., & Bhatt, S. (2022). Quantifying changes in vaccine coverage in mainstream media as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak: A text mining study. *JMIR Infodemiology, 2*(1), e34805.

Christians, C. G., Glasser, T., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K., & White, R. (2018). *Normative theories of the media: Journalism in democratic societies*. University of Illinois Press.

Cinelli, M., Quattrociocchi, W., Galeazzi, A., et al. (2020). The COVID-19 social media infodemic. *Scientific Reports, 10*, 16598.

Cucinotta, D., & Vanelli, M. (2020). WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic. *Acta Bio Medica, 91*(1), 157–160.

Elgendy, M. O., & Abdelrahim, M. E. A. (2021). Public awareness about coronavirus vaccine, vaccine acceptance, and hesitancy. *Journal of Medical Virology, 93*(12), 6535–6543. https://doi.org/10.1002/jmv.27199

Güner, R., Hasanoğlu, I., & Aktaş, F. (2020). COVID-19: Prevention and control measures in community. *Turkish Journal of Medical Sciences, 50*(SI-1), 571–577.

Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R., et al. (2021). A global panel database of pandemic policies (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker). *Nature Human Behaviour, 5*, 529–538.

Horton, R. (2020). Offline: COVID-19 is not a pandemic. *The Lancet, 396*(10255), 874.

Jenkins, H. (2018). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide* (Updated ed.). NYU Press.

John, S. G. (2023). *Impact of media messages on containment of coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria*. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10099961/

Lin, Y., Hu, Z., Alias, H., & Wong, L. P. (2021). Knowledge, attitudes, impact, and anxiety regarding COVID-19 infection among the public. *Frontiers in Public Health, 9*, 566.

Malecki, K. M. C., Keating, J. A., & Safdar, N. (2021). Crisis communication and public perception of COVID-19 risk in the era of social media. *Clinical Infectious Diseases, 72*(4), 697–702.

McCombs, M. (2014). *Setting the agenda: Mass media and public opinion* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda setting functions of the press. In D. A. Graber (Ed.), *Media power in politics*. Congressional Quarterly Inc.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1993). The evolution of agenda setting research: Twenty five years in the market place of ideas. *Journal of Communication, 43*(2), 58–67.

Mchome, Z., Richards, E., Ndyetabula, D., & Mushi, V. (2023). Media trust and COVID-19 vaccine acceptance in sub-Saharan Africa. *BMC Public Health, 23*, 1124. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15790-5

McQuail, D. (2019). *McQuail's media and mass communication theory* (7th ed.). Sage.

Moemeka, A. A. (2020). Development communication in Africa: Promise and reality. *Journal of African Media Studies, 12*(2), 145–160.

Myers, M. (2019). *Radio and development in Africa: A concept paper*. BBC Media Action.

NCDC. (2021). *COVID-19 information center*.

Noar, S. M. (2016). An audience–channel–message–evaluation framework for health communication campaigns. *Health Promotion Practice, 17*(3), 331–337.

Nwachukwu, C. A., Ajaero, C. K., & Ajaero, I. D. (2024). Effects of mass media messages, perceived susceptibility and self-rated health on public attitude towards COVID-19 in Nigeria. *BMC Public Health, 24*, 20442.

Okunna, C. S., & Omenugha, K. A. (2022). *Introduction to mass communication* (4th ed.). New Generation Books.

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. Springer.

Reynolds, B., & Seeger, M. W. (2005). Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model. *Journal of Health Communication, 10*(1), 43–55.

Rosenstock, I. M., Strecher, V. J., & Becker, M. H. (1988). Social learning theory and the health belief model. *Health Education Quarterly, 15*(2), 175–183.

Scientific Reports. (2024). Media consumption patterns and public attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccination. *Scientific Reports, 14*, 77408.

Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four theories of the press*. University of Illinois Press.

Solís Arce, J. S., Warren, S. S., Meriggi, N. F., et al. (2021). COVID-19 vaccine acceptance and hesitancy in low- and middle-income countries. *Nature Medicine, 27*, 1385–1394. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-021-01454-y

STV News. (2020). Covid-19 campaign: Achievements, challenges and way forward. *News Night*.

Tichenor, P. J., Donohue, G. A., & Olien, C. N. (1970). Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 34*(2), 159–170.

Tulloch, O. (2021). *Data synthesis: COVID-19 vaccine perceptions in Africa: Social and behavioural science data*.

United Nations. (2021). *The socio-economic impact of COVID-19*. United Nations.

Wakefield, M. A., Loken, B., & Hornik, R. C. (2018). Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *The Lancet, 376*(9748), 1261–1271.

Wimmer, R., & Dominick, J. (2009). *Mass media research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Thomson Wadsworth.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

World Health Organization. (2020). *Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: Promoting healthy behaviours and mitigating the harm from misinformation*. World Health Organization.

World Health Organization. (2021). Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants [Preprint]. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3968388