

The Theatre and Health Education: Impact of Social Media-based Short Drama in Combating COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Nigeria

Alidu, Samuel Ojonugbede
Department of Theatre Arts, Kogi State University, Anyigba
Email: asamuel@kogistateuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

Introduction: Nigeria has a long history of vaccine hesitancy and the same scenario is playing out regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. Many people are skeptical in taking the vaccine because of different rumours about its efficacy as well as safety.

Objective: The goal of this study was to determine the impact of social media-based short drama in reducing vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria.

Methodology: This study was a quasi experimental design involving 470 social media users. The respondents were divided into control and treatment groups. The treatment group was exposed to four short drama series of 30 minutes each for a period four weeks while the control group were not. The questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection while independent t-test was used to analyse collected data. Results were presented in tables.

Results: The result of the study showed that before the intervention, respondents in both groups reported high COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. However, after the intervention, respondents in treatment group reported low COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and indicated readiness to take a dose of the vaccine. However, respondents in the control group did not significantly improve on their vaccine intake intention.

Conclusion: It is concluded that social media –based short drama series could be efficient in reducing vaccine hesitancy in developed countries like Nigeria.

Contribution: This study has provided empirical evidence for understanding the effectiveness of short drama series in combating the challenge of vaccine hesitancy in developing countries.

Recommendation: It is suggested that health workers and policy makers should consider the use of social media-based short drama series in addressing the problem of vaccine hesitancy in developing countries.

Keywords: drama, hesitancy, Nigeria series, social media, vaccine,

Background

COVID-19 is used in reference to the outbreak of severe respiratory disease which broke out in 2019 in Wuhan-China. The quickness with which the disease spreads together with the fact that it is a killer disease raised feeling of fear across the world. There was what can be described as global panic. The Chinese Government quickly swung into action through the provision of health care facilities with a view to ensuring that the health emergency was quickly tackled. Two medical facilities were completed in just ten days in Wuhan, a city in China where the outbreak was first reported. According to the report,

a total of 1,000 workers and 100 machines worked without stopping to achieve this feat (Pulse, 2020).

The World Health Organization announced the name COVID-19 in February, 2020 in reference to coronavirus disease. The objective, according to the Director general of WHO, Tedros Adhanom is to suggest an appropriate name that describes the virus without attributing it to any location, individual, persons or group. This, Tedros notes, is to avoid any form of stigmatization. Since then, COVID-19 has been used in reference to corona virus disease.

As at July 1, 2021, the total number of confirmed cases globally was 181,722,790 with 3,942,233 deaths. In Africa, WHO puts the total number of confirmed cases at 4,035, 208. In Nigeria, there has been a total of 167,543 cases have been confirmed while 2,120 deaths have been recorded. (WHO, 2020) Nigeria is among the countries that have reported confirmed cases of COVID-19. The index case in Nigeria was said to be imported by an Italian who was in Nigeria for a short business trip in Lagos, Nigeria. It is important to clarify here that in confirming the first case; the commissioner of Health in Lagos state Prof Akin Abayomi did not disclose the name of the Italian (*Nation Newspaper*, 2020) This may be a deliberate attempt to avoid stigmatizing, unlike what happened in 2014 when a Liberian, Patrick Soya imported Ebola in Nigeria.

It is important to note here that even before Nigeria recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19, information about the disease was made public on social media platforms. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Youtube, among others carried information about the disease. Users made efforts to share information about COVID-19 among them with a view to ensuring that people have adequate awareness and knowledge about the disease so as to demonstrate the required attitudes. Also, when the Federal Ministry of health released a press statement regarding a confirmed case of COVID-19 in Nigeria and further suggested the required health behaviour from Nigerians, the press statement was shared on different social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, among others.

Therefore, since the outbreak of COVID-19, social media platforms have been found useful as channels to create awareness about issues related to the disease. These platforms have also been used to educate users on issues related to COVID-19. The overall essence is to ensure that Nigerians have the right health behaviour toward the disease. Typically, users share messages about the disease which they have come across from other sources. Social media platforms have also been used to debunk rumour about the disease. For example, The African Independent Television (AIT) had in February carried a story that a Nigerian from Lagos contracted the disease and was requesting 100 million naira from the Federal Government; else, he was going to spread the disease to other citizens. The story said that the man in question was a taxi driver who conveyed a victim from Lagos to Ibadan. The man did a short video debunking the TV report. The video was posted a different social media platforms. The essence of social media messages on COVID-19 is to create awareness, improve knowledge on the disease and influence public health behaviour. The critical issue here is that even though social media platforms have been utilized to communicate issue related to the virus, it is not clear if this results to awareness, knowledge as well as influence the health behaviour of users. Not investigating the impact of social media on awareness, knowledge and behaviour

modification vis-à-vis COVID-19 will denied stakeholders holders in health promotion in Nigeria relevant information regarding the role of social media in information sharing during public health emergencies. A study corroborates that considering the devastating impact of COVID-19, there is need to understand the role that proper information circulation can play in promoting relevant health behaviour (Ale, 2020). Other researchers(Gever & Ezeah, 2020; Odii *et al.*, 2020; Olijo, 2020; Onuora *et al.*, 2020) share the same view.

Social media platform are, arguably, the greatest miracles of the 21st century. They have shaken the 21st century society to its foundation. Social media platforms have broken the monopoly that traditional media like radio, TV, newspaper and magazine once enjoyed. They have completely liberalized the media industry. Social media platforms have made communication cheap, fast, easier and with capacity to carry more message elements. Social media platforms have provided voice to the hitherto voiceless. They have broken the boundaries of class in communication. Social media platforms have made society truly a global village. Events in one country are easily communicated to other countries. There is no hiding place for anybody or country. As communication tools, social media platforms are can be defined as Internet-based media that ensure instance meaning sharing between and among people. Messages from social media platforms can come in different forms like text, audio, video, picture, illustrations, symbol, among others. This makes these channels of communication suitable for all kinds of communication.

There is evidence to suggest that social media use will continue to increase globally. For example, statistics on global social media usage point to the fact that as of 2019, there was an improvement of 9.1% Internet users in Nigeria year-on-year. The report adds that up 4.388 billion Nigeria make use of the Internet. Also, there was 2% increase in the number of mobile phone users in Nigeria with 24 million making use of social media. With regards to duration of social media use, Nigerians spend between 3 hours 17 minutes, which is above than the world average of 3 hours 14 minutes (Pulse, 2020). This goes to show how active Nigerians are on social media platforms. The report also showed that Facebook and WhatsApp are the two most popular and used social media platforms in Nigeria. Therefore, in this study, the researchers were limited to Facebook and WhatsApp.

Social media has led to a phenomenon of short drama that are usually posted online by armature. Although these dramatized messages are usually posted on different social media platforms, less attention has been paid in examining the impact of short drama series on vaccine hesitancy. Aderibigbe *et al.* (2013) define drama as a performance that tells a story with the use of action and dialogue. According to Bason (2005), drama is a mode of learning that is aimed at increasing self-awareness of the voice, body as well as mind. Bason add further that drama can serve as an instrument of motivation. A drama is short when it is less than an hour. Drama series on the other hand refers to different episodes of drama that focus on a particular issue. Drama can serve as an instrument of advocacy through behaviour change. With this in mind, it can be said that drama can serve an instrument to combat vaccine hesitancy that is deeply rooted in Nigeria. This assumption is supported by evidence in literature (Jegade, 2007; Nasir, 2014; Yahya, 2007). Dalrymple (2006) in study argues that drama can serve as an instrument of social change. Hee-Joo and Jae-Sub (2008) in a study reported that drama has the capacity to influence human behaviour. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H1: Social media-based drama series will be effective in reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria.

Methodology

To carry out this study, the researcher utilized a quasi experimental design. The decision to apply the quasi experimental design was because it is better suited for studies that seek to measure the impact of interventions that are conducted on humans out of the laboratory. The participants for the study include 470 social media users who were recruited with the use of respondents driven chain referrals. This type of sampling technique entails selecting respondents through recommendations. The earlier respondents were sampled through social media announcements that were pasted on Facebook.

The respondents were randomly categorized into control (235) and treatment (235) group. Participants in the treatments group were exposed to a series of short drama via WhatsApp. The drama sought to encourage respondents to make themselves available for the COVID-19 vaccination. Participants in the control group were not exposed to the drama. The aim was to test the effectiveness of the drama serious. The drama series were designed and validated by experts in theatre arts. The researcher utilized the questionnaire to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had a total of 20 items and its response format was a four-point likert scale. The instrument was validated by three experts in theatre arts. Also, its reliability was done through a test-retest approach that led to a correlation coefficient of .78, showing that instrument was reliable. The researcher made use of independence t-test in the analysis of data for the study.

Results

There was 92% return rate for the study for the control group and 91% for the treatment group, thus leading to an average return rate of 92% which was considered sufficient for analysis. The result of the hypothesis testing is presented in the tables below:

Table 1: Baseline test of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the sample

Groups	Treatment group		Control group		Df	Not Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy	34.3	.96	35.3	.87	3	.67

The researcher computed Table 1 above to ascertain the baseline COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the respondents who took part in the study. The result of the study revealed that both respondents in the control and treatment did not significantly differ as they score high regarding their COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. The implication of this result is that without an intervention, respondents in the study had high vaccine hesitancy. To determine the impact of the intervention, Table two was computed as shown below:

Table 2: Mean and t-Test Results on the Impact of the Intervention

Groups	Treatment		Control group		Df	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy	6.4	.43	34.9	.47	9	.02

The aim of computing Table 2 above was to test the impact of the study's intervention in reducing vaccine hesitancy among the respondents. The result of the study showed that participants in the treatment group reported a significant reduction in their COVID-19 vaccine while their counterparts in the control group did not significantly change. The implication here is that short drama series were effective in reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the sample studied. The result of the study supports the hypothesis in this study.

Discussion

This study was conducted to determine the impact of short drama series in reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among a Nigerian sample. The result of the study revealed that before the experiment was conducted, the respondents reported high COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. This outcome is in conformity with previous studies (Jegade, 2007; Nasir, 2014; Yahya, 2007) that have shown that Nigeria has a high level of vaccine hesitancy. High level vaccine hesitancy is not good for a third world nation like Nigeria that has many diseases and epidemics. Vaccines are typically required to improve the body immunity and make it less vulnerable to outbreaks. Unfortunately, convincing people to accept vaccines and make themselves available for vaccination has been an uphill task.

Another aspect of the finding is that short drama series were found to be effective in reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the sample. This is because after the intervention, participants in the treatment group reported a significant reduction in their COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. What this means is that social media based short drama series could be effective in promoting vaccine acceptance in less developed countries like Nigeria. This study has extended previous studies (Dalrymple, 2006; HeeJoo & JaeSub 2008) that have highlighted the impact of drama on behaviour change by examining how short drama series could be useful in reducing vaccine hesitancy. This addition could be useful for future debate on the impact of drama as well as how to addressing the problem of vaccine hesitancy.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The conclusion in this study is that there is high COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria hence the need to come up with ways of addressing the problem of vaccine hesitancy. This study equally concludes that short drama series are effective tools for addressing the problem of vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria. This study has made practical as well as scholarly contributions. Practically, this study has provided evidence-based understanding regarding the effectiveness of theatre as a communication intervention for addressing the problem of vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria. This information could prove helpful to health workers, policy makers as well as policy advocates. Scholarly, the study

has enriched literature related to the impact of drama on behaviour change. It is suggested that health workers and policy makers should consider the use of social media-based short drama series in addressing the problem of vaccine hesitance in developing countries. It is also recommended that further researchers should test the impact of short drama series on other aspects such as security awareness, environmental practice as well as learning.

References

- Aderibigbe, A. A, Nwanne, B.U, Aliede, J.E, (2013). Educational Broadcasting. Lagos, National Open University of Nigeria.
- Ale, V. (2020). A library-based model for explaining information exchange on Coronavirus disease in Nigeria. *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1,1-10.
- Basom, J. (2005). Drama Advocacy Statement. Retrieved from <http://sandievanakenee410.weebly.com/drama-advocacy-statement.html>
- Dalrymple, L (2006). Has it made a difference? Understanding and measuring the impact of applied theatre with young people in the South African context. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 11(2), 201–218. doi:10.1080/13569780600671070
- Gever, V. C., & Ezeah, G. (2020). The media and health education: Did Nigerian media provide sufficient warning messages on coronavirus disease? *Health Education Research* doi:10.1093/her/cyaa020
- HeeJoo H. & JaeSub L. (2008). A Study on the KBS TV Drama Winter Sonata and its Impact on Korea's Hallyu. *Tourism Development, Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24:2-3, 115-126, DOI: 10.1080/10548400802092593
- Jegade, A. S. (2007). *What Led to the Nigerian Boycott of the Polio Vaccination Campaign?. PLoS Medicine*, 4(3), e73doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0040073
- Nasir, S., Aliyu, G., Ya'u, I., Gadanya, M., Mohammad, M., Zubair, M., El-Kamary, S. (2014). *From Intense Rejection to Advocacy: How Muslim Clerics Were Engaged in a Polio Eradication Initiative in Northern Nigeria. PLoS Medicine*, 11(8), e1001687-. doi:10.1371/journal.pme
- Nation Newspaper, (2020). Nigeria records first case of coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://thenationonlineng.net/nigeria-records-first-case-of-coronavirus/>
- Odi, A. Ngwu, O., Aniakor, C., Owelle, C., Aniagboso, C., Uzuanwu, W. (2020). Effect of COVID-19 lockdown on poor urban households in Nigeria: Where do we go from here? *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1-12.
- Ogbonne, I. (2020). Cutting the head as cure for headache: Exploring the economic impact of Niger Delta Militancy on host communities. *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1,1-10
- Olijo, I. (2020). Nigerian media and the global competition on a COVID-19vaccine: Do media reports promote contributions from African countries? *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2 (1), 1-16.

- Onuora, Torti, N., Ezeah, G & Gever, V. C. (2020). Effect of dramatized health messages: Modeling predictors of the impact of COVID-19 YouTube animated cartoons on health behaviour of social media users in Nigeria. Accepted for publication in *International Sociology*.
- Pulse, (2019). Here is how Nigerians are using the internet in 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.pulse.ng/bi/tech/how-nigerians-are-using-the-internet-in-2019/kz097rg>
- World Health Organization (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report 24. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200213-sitrep-24-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=9a7406a4_4