



## INFLUENCE OF RADIO PROGRAMME NEWS N MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION AMONGST RESIDENTS OF SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

**Ikpeama Chijioke John<sup>1</sup>, Anaba Nancy Nnenna<sup>2</sup>**

**and Kalu Amarachi Cecilia<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Clifford University.

Email: [chijiokejohnicj@yahoo.com](mailto:chijiokejohnicj@yahoo.com), Tel.: 08068434770

<sup>2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Clifford University.

Email: [anabann@clifforduni.edu.ng](mailto:anabann@clifforduni.edu.ng), Tel.: 07086100615

<sup>3</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Clifford University.

Email: [amarakalu88@gmail.com](mailto:amarakalu88@gmail.com), Tel.: 07030206567

### Cite this article:

Ikpeama C. J., Anaba N. N., Kalu A. C. (2024), Influence of Radio Programme News on Mental Health Communication amongst Residents of South-East Nigeria. British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research 4(1), 12-24. DOI: 10.52589/BJMCMR-RDVXCNGC

### Manuscript History

Received: 1 Nov 2023

Accepted: 4 Dec 2023

Published: 26 Jan 2024

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study was centered on the influence of radio programme news on mental health communication amongst the residents of South-East Nigeria. The study was able to discuss the concept of radio, the role of radio on general health, the concept of mental health, radio and mental health, radio and early signs of mental health disorders and the symptoms. It also discussed the causes of mental health disorder, the role of radio on the remedy to mental health challenges which include psychotherapy or talking therapies, medication, and self-help. The study also adopted the focus group interview method as the method of data collection which gave room for the researcher to carefully select 10 health professional personnels who came for a health conference in Enugu which is the central area of the people in South-East Nigeria. From the questions asked the participants which started with, if the residents of South-East are much aware of the radio news programme on mental health. Majority of the respondents stated that the people are much aware of the programme, as well stated that the programme has made them to be informed about the causes of mental health challenges as well as remedies for those who are already victims. It was concluded the influence of radio news programme on mental health communication amongst the residents of South-East Nigeria cannot be overemphasized as the programme awareness has made them to know the causes of the illness as well as the possible remedies for the victims. It was finally recommended that the communication professionals should take it upon themselves to use any mass communication means in order to constantly inform the people on how to avoid falling into the danger of mental health illness, as well as the remedies for those who are already victims through the help of the health professional advisers.*

**KEYWORDS:** Influence, radio, programme, news, mental health, communication, residence, South-East Nigeria.



## INTRODUCTION

Radio as a mass medium employs electromagnetic radio waves through transmitters and antennas, to disseminate information, education, and entertainment to listeners. Attributed to the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) and several other inventors in Europe and the USA; radio has developed since the 1890s to become one of the most widely used mass media in the world. It is argued that despite the immense popularity of television and the internet, radio remains the mass medium that reaches the widest audience in the quickest possible time. Statistics show that radio as a mass medium reaches over 5 billion people, representing 70 percent of the total world population (William N. Ryerson, President, Population Media Center). There are over 44,000 functional radio stations worldwide (The World Fact book, 2010. Central Intelligence Agency, USA). Predictions based on research findings by Nielsen and Deloitte in their technology, media and telecommunications predictions for 2019 shows that people aged between 18 to 34 will most likely spend more of their time listening to radio than watching television by 2025, (Zhow,2020).

Thus, currently in Nigeria, community radio together with more established state- and privately-owned radio stations, work together to disseminate public information to listeners in cities, towns and at the grassroots. Radio functions not just as a mass medium for disseminating general information and entertainment, but also in particular as a medium for disseminating public health information, as witnessed during the Ebola outbreak in 2014 and the current COVID-19 pandemic situation.

The public learns a lot about health in general as well as mental health challenges through the media, and the health information they have from the media can impact their behaviour (Gollust & Lantz, 2009) in various ways. This is because people routinely cite the media, after physicians and pharmacists, as the key source of information on new treatment methods for ailments (Cassels, Hughes, Cole, Mintez, Lexching & McCormack,2020). This indicates that most people become aware of health conditions and treatment through the mass media, particularly radio.

Radio is one of the most effective media mobilization tools that reach the farthest areas of a country with programmes that rural, literate and non-literate audiences can relate to (Anatsui, 2014). The reason for this can be attributed to the medium's suitability for development communication and its relative simplicity, cheapness and ubiquity without dependence on electricity supply. An intriguing peculiarity of radio is the manner in which it encourages behavioural change among the populace. Change in behaviour is regarded as the most difficult goal to achieve, yet radio campaigns provide the only reliable communication system that reaches large portions of the population and thus constitutes a potent weapon in the behaviour-change process (Ezaka, 2017).



## Concept of Radio

Radio is the technology of signaling and communicating using radio waves. Radio waves are electromagnetic waves of frequency between 30 hertz (Hz) and 300 gigahertz (GHz). They are generated by an electronic device called a transmitter connected to an antenna which radiates the waves, and received by another antenna connected to a radio receiver. Radio is very widely used in modern technology, in radio communication, radar, radio navigation, remote control, remote sensing, and other applications. (Ellingson, 2016)

In radio communication, used in radio and television broadcasting, cell phones, two-way radios, wireless networking, and satellite communication, among numerous other uses, radio waves are used to carry information across space from a transmitter to a receiver, by modulating the radio signal (impressing an information signal on the radio wave by varying some aspect of the wave) in the transmitter. The sorts of information or messages which are being carried through this means include health education/ information, health awareness campaign which also deal with mental health communication. Thus, a beam of radio waves emitted by a radar transmitter reflects off the target object, and the reflected waves reveal the object's location. In radio navigation systems such as Global Positioning System (GPS) and Very high frequency Omnidirectional Range (VOR), a mobile receiver accepts radio signals from navigational radio beacons whose position is known, and by precisely measuring the arrival time of the radio waves the receiver can calculate its position on Earth. In wireless radio remote control devices like drones, garage door openers, and keyless entry systems, radio signals transmitted from a controller device control the actions of a remote device. (Serway, 2008)

Applications of radio waves that do not involve transmitting the waves significant distances, such as Radio Frequency (RF) heating used in industrial processes and microwave ovens, and medical uses such as diathermy and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines, are not usually called radio. The noun radio is also used to mean a broadcast radio receiver.

## Radio and Health

Radio effect on their audience is a complex phenomenon, the most cited of which is information and persuasion (Collins, Abeison, Pyman, Lavis, 2006). Accordingly, mass media (radio) is employed at all levels of public health in the hope that they engender the learning of correct health information and knowledge, the changing of health attitudes and values, and the establishment of new health behaviour (Catalan-Matamoros, 2011).

Consequent upon this, radio constitutes one of the many means through which citizens gain information relevant to their own health and well-being (Skuse, 2020). Thus, although there is a prevalence of new media technologies in the society, the traditional media like the radio, continues to render its impacts in stimulating community dialogue, national debates as well as providing the public with information and specialised training about health risks and disease prevention. (Anatsui, 2014). Radio can help fight against health illiteracy and promote awareness at the same time (Hoffman-Goetz, Donelle & Ahmed, 2014).

Mental health challenge is an illness caused by a different situations such as too much of thinking, child abuse, trauma or neglect, social isolation or loneliness, experience of discrimination and stigma, or racism. Others include social disadvantage, poverty or debt, bereavement, severe or long term stress and having a long-term physical health challenge.



Subsequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has characterized the mental health as a global challenge which different people from different part of the World face today, especially, the people living in the third world Countries such as Nigeria and declared it a Public health emergency of international concern. The spread of the challenge is unarguably taking the world unaware, thus leaving severely affected people to suffer devastating situation as well as complete depression.

In Nigeria, the reveal of the high manifestations of this mental health challenge through radio news programmes cannot be overemphasized, this is because, radio play a pivotal role in sensitizing the public on the causes of mental challenges and also the ways to avoid it from being traceable to us, (Oberiri, Bahiyah and Omar,2020).

Unlike other health challenges such as high blood pressure, low blood pressure and hypertension media coverage via Radio has highlighted mental health challenge as a unique threat, which further exaggerates panic, stress and the potential for hysteria in the general public. The mass media is considered a source of health information that can help to shape the way people act and react towards health issues (Asaolu , Ifijeh , Iwu, 2020). Mass media also helps to create awareness and mobilize members of the public to cooperate with health authorities in the fight against health challenges at any given time. The relationship between the mass media and the spread of health threats to the society.

Radio play pivotal roles in the dissemination of information, education and setting agenda for the public. This entails that people follow what they listen from in life order to leave in their society Intervention in Mental Health Challenge in Nigeria. Osakue (2020) in his own opinion reveals that radio is one of the most influential channels through which health information and education are being carried out in the society. Mental health conditions seem to be one of the most affecting health challenges that affect the people both young and old in the society. Especially in Africa, people with mental health challenges are denigrated; the society is not sympathetic with sufferers of mental illness. A lot of issues can trigger mental illness. These can be stress (economic stress, social stress, educational stress, and many more); hereditary factors; war and aggression; rape; spiritual factors, to mention a few. Therefore, there is the need for understanding and awareness creation among the people as one of the ways of addressing the problem. Owuamalam, (2020) also argues that television and radio media are very innovative and their innovativeness can be deployed in the area of putting mental health issue in the public discourse and calling for action. This is because, as modern means of Mass Communication, radio and television engender a technologically negotiated reaching-out or dissemination of information which naturally flows to all manner of persons regardless of their place of abode, class, political, social or religious orientations and persuasions. It further argues that although radio and television can readily provide friendly platforms for people to interact, with the intent of sensitizing and mobilising others to individually or collectively support identified social causes, their potentialities are yet to be fully explored in terms of programming, social responsibility as well as the maintenance of public good, with regard to creating awareness and understanding among the people toward remediating the prevalent problem of mentally challenged persons in Nigeria as well as South-East. To reverse this, the study calls for a greater nexusing of the broadcast media and mental health issues, through carefully designed radio programme news, to reduce the culturally placed stigma associated with mental illness and remediate the incidences of overt and covert mental health cases in Nigeria, as well as South-East.



## Concept of Mental Health

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). Mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others. From the perspectives of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and to create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. (Cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how one defines "mental health". Some early signs related to mental health problems are sleep irritation, lack of energy and thinking of harming yourself or others.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, poor mental health and mental illness are not the same. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person diagnosed with a mental illness can experience periods of physical, mental, and social well-being.

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term “mental health” to mean the absence of a mental disorder. Mental health can affect daily living, relationships, and physical health. However, this link also works in the other direction. Factors in people's lives, interpersonal connections, and physical factors can all contribute to mental health disruptions. Looking after mental health can preserve a person's ability to enjoy life. Doing this involves reaching a balance between life activities, responsibilities, and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety can all affect mental health and disrupt a person's routine.

Although the term mental health is in common use, many conditions that doctors recognize as psychological disorders have physical roots. The WHO stress that mental health is “more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.” Peak mental health is about not only avoiding active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness. They also emphasize that preserving and restoring mental health is crucial on an individual basis, as well as throughout different communities and societies the world over.

In the United States, the National Alliance on Mental illness estimate that almost 1 in 5 adults experience mental health problems each year. In 2017, an estimated 11.2 million adults in the U.S., or about 4.5% of adults, had a severe psychological condition, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2019), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. This definition, while representing a substantial progress with respect to moving





away from the conceptualization of mental health as a state of absence of mental illness, raises several concerns and lends itself to potential misunderstandings when it identifies positive feelings and positive functioning as key factors for mental health. In fact, regarding well-being as a key aspect of mental health is difficult to reconcile with the many challenging life situations in which well-being may even be unhealthy: most people would consider as mentally unhealthy an individual experiencing a state of well-being while killing several persons during a war action, and would regard as healthy a person feeling desperate after being fired from his/her job in a situation in which occupational opportunities are scarce.

People in good mental health are often sad, unwell, angry or unhappy, and this is part of a fully lived life for a human being. In spite of this, mental health has been often conceptualized as a purely positive affect, marked by feelings of happiness and sense of mastery over the environment. Concepts used in several papers on mental health include both key aspects of the definition, i.e. positive emotions and positive functioning. (Miles, 2010)

Keyes, (2008) identifies three components of mental health: emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being. Emotional well-being includes happiness, interest in life, and satisfaction; psychological well-being includes liking most parts of one's own personality, being good at managing the responsibilities of daily life, having good relationships with others, and being satisfied with one's own life; social well-being refers to positive functioning and involves having something to contribute to society (social contribution), feeling part of a community (social integration), believing that society is becoming a better place for all people (social actualization), and that the way society works makes sense to them (social coherence).

However, such a perspective of mental health, influenced by hedonic and eudaimonic traditions, which champion positive emotions and excellence in functioning, respectively, risks excluding most adolescents, many of whom are somewhat shy, those who fight against perceived injustice and inequalities or are discouraged from doing so after years of useless efforts, as well as migrants and minorities experiencing rejection and discrimination. The concept of positive functioning is also translated by several definitions and theories about mental health into the ability to work productively, and may lead to the wrong conclusion that an individual at any age or in a physical condition preventing her/him from working productively is not by definition in good mental health. Working productively and fruitfully is often not possible for contextual reasons (e.g., for migrants or for discriminated people), which may prevent people from contributing to their community. (Heary, 2017)

Jahoda (2020), states that mental health is subdivided into three domains: self-realization, in that individuals are able to fully exploit their potential; sense of mastery over the environment; and sense of autonomy, i.e. ability to identify, confront, and solve problems. Murphy, argued that these ideas were laden with cultural values considered important by North Americans. However, even for a North American person, it is hard to imagine, for example, that a mentally healthy human being in the hands of terrorists, under the threat of beheading, can experience a sense of happiness and mastery over the environment.

The definition of mental health is clearly influenced by the culture that defines it. However, as also advocated by Vaillant (2017), common sense should prevail and certain elements that have a universal importance for mental health might be identified. For example, in spite of cultural



differences in eating habits, the acknowledgement of the importance of vitamins and the four basic food groups is universal.

### **Radio and Mental Health**

Aihevba (2020), reveals that an intervention campaign on Mental Health Challenge challenged persons, should be encouraged by Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, Agencies, Media Organizations as well as hospitals both private and Government established ones in order to sensitize and inform the people on how to avoid mental health challenge or get rid of it for those who are already passing through the situation. In addition, WHO report on mental challenges in 2021 opines that we must be mindful of opportunities to initiate change. Even if not implemented immediately, the everyday steps we take eventually will have a positive and lasting impact, bringing us that much closer to our ultimate goal– a greatly enhanced state of world mental health (Rosalynn Carter in the International Women Leaders for Mental Health, 2002). The germaneness of the above quote is rested on the fact that across all epochs the issue of mental health has always affected virtually all strata of the human society. The poor, the rich, the black, the white, the old, the young, celebrities, peasants, leaders, followers, and many more have been victims of one form of mental illness or the other at one time or the other. The Bible, the holy writ of the Christians in the book of Samuel (1 Samuel 16:14; 1 Samuel 18:10) notes that at a time in history King Saul of Israel had a mental health challenge, which came in bouts of madness. Amidst, the glitz, glamour, glitterati of Hollywood, some of its all-time greats such as Whitney Houston, Marilyn Monroe, Michael Jackson, to mention a few, have had to contend with one form of mental health challenge or the other. Many ‘ordinary people’ in the backwaters of communities in first, second and third world countries have been confronted or are still confronting different forms of mental issues. What is really mental illness? What is the global situation? , Nigeria scenario like? And, what have been the main role of the radio news programme in terms of awareness creation and the provision of support systems for mentally ill persons in South as well as Nigeria.? These are some of the issues this study has set for itself. Mental illness can be described as a state where the reasoning pattern of person is altered in such a way that may cause discomfort to the person and/or his or her neighbours. It is synonymous with terms such as psychosis, lunacy, insanity. It is when an individual goes off the ark that he or she is said to be insane or mentally challenged. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states that mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning (2012).

Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life. Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, dysthymia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder. Apart from these wild kinds of mental illness, there are milder forms such as minor depression, anxiety neurosis, seasonal affective disorder, minor sleeping disorders, among others. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) asserts that “mental illnesses can take many forms, just as physical illnesses do. Mental illnesses are still feared and misunderstood by many people...” (2012). However, NAMI (2012) points out that “mental illnesses are treatable.”



A lot of issues can trigger mental illness. These can be stress (economic stress, social stress, educational stress and so on); hereditary factors; war and aggression; rape; spiritual factors, to mention a few. In most communities, especially in Africa, people with mental challenges are denigrated; the society is not sympathetic with sufferers. Therefore, there is an urgent need for understanding and awareness creation among the people of South-East Nigeria in order for them to be aware of mental health challenges and the ways by which it can be addressed in our society at large. This study will use the South-East Nigeria situation of mental health challenge; with regard to the interventionist role the broadcast media especially the radio have played and are still playing is believed to make a significant role in creating awareness and providing support systems for the mentally challenged, as a template for discussion. Severally and copiously, the media the radio and other means of communication such as television, film and print [RTFP]) have been noted for their ability and capacity to create awareness and mobilise efforts as regards social causes, removal of the scales of ignorance from the eyes of people, rallying of citizens for national development, localization of the global and globalization of the local, putting the challenges of child abuse, child rights, HIV/AIDS as well as other socioeconomic and socio-political issues on the front burner of public discourse in different parts of the world at different Omoera & Okhakhu, (2018); Okhakhu and Omoera, Okhakhu, (2019) in their view of this topic state that the media, specifically radio have been able to put the issue of mental illness in some communities such as Nneobi and Aguleri in Anambra State of Nigeria in the public domain and mobilise concerned governmental organizations' (GOs'), nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs') and other stakeholders' attention, with a view to remediating the challenge.

### **Radio and Early signs of Mental Health Disorders**

Radio being an instrument of Mass communication and mobilization play pivotal roles in disseminating news about early signs and symptoms of mental disorder in our society. However, there is no exact physical test or scan that reliably indicates whether a person has developed a mental illness. However, some radio stations through their Hour of Health programmes go a long way in educating the people on how they should look out for the following as possible signs of a mental health disorder: Withdrawing from friends, family, and colleagues, avoiding activities that they would normally enjoy, sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or too little, feeling hopeless, having consistently low energy, using mood-altering substances, including alcohol and nicotine more frequently, displaying negative emotions, being confused, being unable to complete daily tasks such as getting to work or cooking a meal, having persistent thoughts or memories that reappear regularly, thinking of causing physical harm to themselves or others, hearing voices, experiencing delusions. (Schildbach, 2018).





## Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of mental illness can vary, depending on the disorder, circumstances and other factors. Mental illness symptoms can affect emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Thus, some radio news programmes try to present some of the examples of signs and symptoms include: Feeling sad or down, Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate, Excessive fears or worries, or extreme feelings of guilt, Extreme mood changes of highs and lows, Withdrawal from friends and activities, Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping, Detachment from reality (delusions), paranoia or hallucinations, Inability to cope with daily problems or stress, Trouble understanding and relating to situations and to people, Problems with alcohol or drug use, Major changes in eating habits, Sex drive changes, Excessive anger, hostility or violence, Suicidal thinking. Sometimes symptoms of a mental health disorder appear as physical problems, such as stomach pain, back pain, headaches, or other unexplained aches and pains. (Novella, 2010)

## Causes of Mental Health Disorder

Knapp, (2011) states that mental illnesses, in general, are thought to be caused by a variety of genetic and environmental factors:

**Inherited traits:** Mental illness is more common in people whose blood relatives also have a mental illness. Certain genes may increase your risk of developing a mental illness, and your life situation may trigger it. Environmental exposures before birth. Exposure to environmental stressors, inflammatory conditions, toxins, alcohol or drugs while in the womb can sometimes be linked to mental illness.

**Brain chemistry:** Neurotransmitters are naturally occurring brain chemicals that carry signals to other parts of your brain and body. When the neural networks involving these chemicals are impaired, the function of nerve receptors and nerve systems change, leading to depression and other emotional disorders.

Genetic family history can also increase the likelihood of mental health conditions, as certain genes and gene variants put a person at higher risk. However, many other factors contribute to the development of these disorders.

Having a gene with links to a mental health disorder, such as depression or schizophrenia, does not guarantee that a condition will develop. Likewise, people without related genes or a family history of mental illness can still have mental health issues. Mental health conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety may develop due to underlying, life-changing physical health problems, such as cancer, diabetes, and chronic pain.

## Role of Radio on the Remedy to Mental Health Challenges

The role of radio on the remedy for mental health challenge cannot be over emphasized. This is because, radio, play useful roles in sensitizing the public on how to get rid of mental health issues, when they are being challenge of it through its sensitization programmes such as your health which takes place in Broadcasting Corporation of Abia (BCA) which goes a long way in informing the victims on how to overcome the situation in their lives. If you have any signs or symptoms of a mental illness, see your primary care provider or a mental health professional.



Most mental illnesses don't improve on their own, and if untreated, a mental illness may get worse over time and cause serious problems. There are various methods for managing mental health problems. Treatment is highly individual, and what works for one person may not work for another. Some strategies or treatments are more successful in combination with others. A person living with a chronic mental disorder may choose different options at various stages in their life. The individual needs to work closely with a doctor who can help them identify their needs and provide them with suitable treatment. (Deci, 2008)

Treatments can include:

### **Psychotherapy, or talking therapies**

This type of treatment takes a psychological approach to treating mental illness. Cognitive behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, and dialectical behavior therapy are examples. Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, and some primary care physicians carry out this type of treatment. It can help people understand the root of their mental illness and start to work on more healthful thought patterns that support everyday living and reduce the risk of isolation and self-harm. (Gigi, 2014)

### **Medication**

Some people take prescribed medications, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anxiolytic drugs. Although these cannot cure mental disorders, some medications can improve symptoms and help a person resume social interaction and a normal routine while they work on their mental health. Some of these medications work by boosting the body's absorption of feel-good chemicals, such as serotonin, from the brain. Other drugs either boost the overall levels of these chemicals or prevent their degradation or destruction. (Kennedy, 2016)

### **Self-help**

A person coping with mental health difficulties will usually need to make changes to their lifestyle to facilitate wellness. Such changes might include reducing alcohol intake, sleeping more, and eating a balanced, nutritious diet. People may need to take time away from work or resolve issues with personal relationships that may be causing damage to their mental health. People with conditions such as an anxiety or depressive disorder may benefit from relaxation techniques, which include deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness. Having a support network, whether via self-help groups or close friends and family, can also be essential to recovery from mental illness. (Decety, 2014).

### **Focused Group Interview Responses of the Selected Respondents from the Residents of South-East Nigeria**

The researcher adopted the Focused Group Interview Method in order to elicit information from health professionals from South-East who came for a conference at Enugu being the central place for South-Easterners, and two health professionals were conveniently chosen to represent each State from the five Eastern States, making it a total of ten (10) participants.

Thus, the participants were asked if the residents of South-East are really aware of radio programme news on mental health communication. seven (7) out of the ten (10) professional



participants stated that the residents of South-East are much aware of radio programme news on mental health communication, while the other three (3) participants stated that some good number of residents are not much aware of the radio programme news on mental health communication.

The participants were also asked how radio programme news on mental health communication affect the residents of South-East Nigeria. Then seven (7) respondents out of the ten (10) unanimous stated that radio programme news had greatly affected mental health issues amongst the residents as they are well informed and educated on the causes and solutions to mental situations amongst the residents. While the other three (3) participants revealed that not every resident in South-East Nigeria is much aware of radio programme news on mental health issues in the region. Therefore, has not really impacted or educated them well on mental health situations in the region.

The participant group was also asked if the radio programme news on mental health communication has informed or sensitized the residents on the causes of mental health illness and possible solutions or preventions to them. Eight (8) participants out of the ten (10) stated that radio programme news on mental health communication has gone a long way in informing and sensitizing the residents of South-East on the causes of mental health illness and the possible solution or prevention in the society through the regular news communications, while the other 2 stated that it has, but not everybody in the zone is aware of the news programmes and therefore, that the news communication should be improved so that everybody in the zone will be much aware of the awareness.

Finally, the participants were also asked another means through which the radio can inform the residents of South-East about the mental health communication.

Six (6) out of the ten (10) pointed out that it will be through advertising, announcements and jingles, while the last four (4) stated that it will be through drama, campaign, documentary and talk-shows which will make the programme more obvious to the residents of the zone rather than limiting it to only news communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that the influence of radio programme news on mental health communication amongst the residents of South-East Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is because from the responses of the participants of the selected focus group members, radio programme news has gone a long way in educating the residents on the causes of mental health conditions.

It was also concluded that the radio programme news communication on mental health communication amongst the residents of South-East Nigeria has also played a role in informing and educating the people on how to prevent mental health illness as well as possible solutions if one unfortunately becomes a victim of the illness.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that health professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, public health scientists as well as community health scientists should endeavour to always educate the people on the need to avoid anything that can lead to mental health illness amongst them as it can be avoided through appropriate sensitization. Communication professionals should also take it upon themselves to use any Mass Communication means in order to constantly inform the people on how to avoid falling into the danger of mental health illness as well as remedies in getting rid of it perhaps, they fall into it through the help of the health professional advisers.

Finally, Ministry of Health in each of the five (5) states in the South-East should take it as a priority in releasing funds to media professionals in order to do a regular campaign and jingles that will educate the people on the causes of mental health illnesses, effects on health as well as possible remedies to those who are already victims in the society.

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