

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF CONFLUENCE FM “HEALTH IS WEALTH” PROGRAMME ON DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTH IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the role of the “*Health is Wealth*” radio programme on Confluence FM 94.0 in addressing drug abuse among youths in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study was guided by Perception Theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The population of the study comprised youths in Lokoja, Ankpa, and Anyigba, from which a sample of 386 respondents was drawn using multistage sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that the “*Health is Wealth*” programme enjoys a moderate level of listenership among youths in Kogi State. 75% respondents generally perceived the programme as informative, clear, and credible in addressing issues related to drug abuse. The study further found that the programme positively influenced respondents’ knowledge and attitudes towards drug abuse, encouraging preventive behaviours and discouraging substance use. However, the impact of the programme was constrained by challenges such as poor radio signal in some areas, irregular listenership, lack of awareness of broadcast time, and competing media content. The study concluded that radio remains a powerful tool for health communication and behaviour change among youths, particularly in addressing drug abuse. It recommended, among others, that Confluence FM 94.0 should improve programme scheduling, increase audience engagement through interactive sessions, and enhance publicity of the “*Health is Wealth*” programme to maximise its reach and effectiveness among young people in Kogi State.

Keywords: Audience perception; Drug abuse; Health communication; Radio programme; Confluence FM; Youths.

Introduction

Health communication is an important part of communication that uses messages to inform, educate, and influence people’s decisions in ways that improve health. It uses different media platforms to shape what people know, believe, and do about health issues. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022), effective health communication can greatly improve public health by increasing awareness, encouraging behaviour change, and supporting positive social norms. Radio plays a very important role in health communication, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where many rural and semi-urban areas still have limited access to television and the internet. In Nigeria, radio is one of the main sources of information, especially for young people (Ikechukwu, 2018).

Drug abuse is the misuse or excessive use of legal or illegal drugs in ways that are harmful to a person's physical, mental, or social well-being. It has become a major public health problem

among Nigerian youths. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), millions of Nigerians use drugs, with young people between the ages of 15 and 35 being the most affected. In Kogi State, commonly abused substances include cannabis, tramadol, codeine syrup, rohypnol, and other locally available substances. Factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, curiosity, and stress contribute to the growing problem. Radio health programmes are important in addressing drug abuse because they provide education, raise awareness, correct misconceptions, and encourage healthy lifestyles. Through expert discussions and practical advice (Miller, 2018). Odorume (2021) also says that radio is a very important tool for improving public health knowledge in Nigeria. It helps to increase awareness, correct wrong ideas, and support positive behaviour change. By sharing expert opinions and real-life stories, programmes like *"Health is Wealth"* help fight drug abuse in Kogi State and other areas. Radio programmes like *"Health is Wealth"* can also influence society by encouraging drug users to seek help, preventing young people from trying drugs, and supporting public rejection of illegal drug sales. According to WHO Africa (2023), community radio programmes are very effective in reducing stigma and encouraging behaviour change among young people. However, problems such as fake information on social media, stigma against drug users, and lack of feedback channels can reduce how effective these programmes are. Because of this, it is important to understand how young people see and understand the *"Health is Wealth"* programme.

Statement of the Problem

Drug abuse among youths in Kogi State continues to increase despite efforts by government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and radio health campaigns (WHO Nigeria, 2023). Many young people are still affected by substance abuse due to factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, and misinformation (Ezeah & Uche, 2021; Manzo, 2021). Although Confluence FM 94.0 broadcasts the "Health is Wealth" programme to educate youths about the dangers of drug abuse, it is not clear whether the programme is effectively reaching its target audience or influencing their attitudes and behaviour. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of radio in promoting health communication. For example, Ezeah and Uche (2021) found that radio health campaigns can improve public awareness and encourage positive behaviour change when audiences consider the messages relevant and credible. Similarly, Manzo (2021) reported that radio programmes are effective in creating awareness about drug abuse among young people. However, these studies focused on the general role of radio and did not examine how youths perceive a specific health programme such as "Health is Wealth" on Confluence FM 94.0. They also did not focus on youths in Kogi State. This study addresses these gaps by examining the audience perception of Confluence FM's *Health is Wealth* programme on drug abuse among youths in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives

1. To assess the level of listenership of the *"Health is Wealth"* programme among youth in Kogi State.
2. To ascertain how the youth perceive the content and delivery of the programme in relation to drug abuse prevention.
3. To determine the influence of the *"Health is Wealth"* programme on the attitudes and behaviors of listeners toward drug abuse.
4. To identify the challenges faced by the audience in accessing the programme on Confluence FM 94.0.

Literature Review

Concept of Radio Programmes

A radio programme is a planned and organised audio broadcast designed to inform, educate, entertain, or persuade a target audience. Radio transmits messages through electromagnetic waves, making it one of the most accessible and affordable mass media, especially in developing countries where access to television and the internet may be limited (Sambe, 2018; Idebi, 2018). Radio programmes may include news, interviews, discussions, music, documentaries, and health education, and they can be broadcast live or pre-recorded (Uyeh, 2017).

Broadcast programmes are developed to communicate ideas and information to either the general public or specific audience groups. Their primary functions include informing, educating, and entertaining listeners while promoting awareness and behavioural change on important social issues (Ugande, 2016). Health-related radio programmes, such as *Health is Wealth* on Confluence FM 94.0, use expert discussions, interviews, and public education messages to increase awareness of health challenges and encourage healthier lifestyles among listeners. Because of its wide coverage, affordability, and ability to broadcast in local languages, radio remains an important medium for public health communication in Nigeria.

Concept of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse refers to the harmful or inappropriate use of legal or illegal substances in ways that negatively affect an individual's physical, mental, emotional, or social well-being. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022), drug abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs, which may lead to dependence and serious health consequences. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023) describes drug abuse as the repeated misuse of substances in ways that cause physical, psychological, or social harm to users and those around them. Drug abuse among young people is influenced by several factors, including peer pressure, unemployment, stress, curiosity, poor parental supervision, and easy access to drugs (UNODC, 2023). The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2023) identifies commonly abused substances in Nigeria as cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based cough syrups, rohypnol, cocaine, heroin, and other locally produced intoxicants. The agency notes that drug abuse contributes to rising cases of crime, school dropout, poor academic performance, mental health disorders, and violence among youths. Recent studies also show that drug abuse is both a public health and social problem because its effects extend beyond the individual to families and communities. It reduces productivity, affects decision-making, increases risky behaviours, and places additional pressure on healthcare and security systems. Consequently, health communication interventions, particularly through radio, have become important strategies for creating awareness, correcting misconceptions, and promoting positive attitudes towards drug abuse prevention among young people (Eze & Omeje 2020).

Review of Empirical Studies

Mohammed (2019) investigated students' perception of the *A Daidaita Sahu* radio programme in Kano Metropolis. The study was anchored on the Information Behaviour Model (IBM) and

adopted a survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, while descriptive statistics were employed for data analysis. The study sought to determine students' level of exposure to the programme, examine their perception of its messages, and ascertain the relationship between gender and programme perception. The findings revealed that 94.7% of the respondents were aware of the programme, while 83.8% indicated that they were exposed to its messages. In addition, 74.8% perceived the programme as sincere and effective in promoting social reform, whereas 17% considered it political propaganda. The study concluded that audience perception and source credibility significantly influence message effectiveness and behavioural change. It recommended that media messages should be complemented with interpersonal communication to improve audience understanding. Although the survey design was appropriate for examining audience perception, the study focused on a religious and social reform programme among secondary school students in Kano State. It did not examine a health communication programme or issues relating to drug abuse among youths. Furthermore, the geographical setting differs from Kogi State. These conceptual and geographical gaps are what the present study seeks to address.

Saleh (2018) examined audience perception of the *Rai Dangin Goro* radio programme in Kano Metropolis. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and employed purposive sampling technique. The objectives were to determine the characteristics of the programme audience, assess audience perception of the programme, and identify the benefits listeners derived from it. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that female listeners constituted the majority of respondents (66%), while youths also formed the largest age group (66%). Respondents perceived the programme as educative, enlightening, and beneficial because it increased their understanding of social issues and provided practical solutions to societal problems. The study concluded that audience-centred radio programmes have the capacity to shape public behaviour and improve social awareness. It recommended greater audience participation and improvements in programme presentation. Although the study effectively examined audience perception of a radio programme, it focused on a general social enlightenment programme rather than a health communication programme addressing drug abuse. In addition, the study was conducted in Kano State, thereby creating conceptual and geographical gaps which the present study intends to fill by focusing on youths' perception of the *health is Wealth* programme in Kogi State.

Abdul (2016) investigated audience perception as a tool for creating awareness on girl-child education through KSMC Radio's *A Cece Su* programme in Kaduna State. The study adopted a survey research design to examine the programme's effectiveness in promoting awareness of girl-child education and increasing educational participation. Data were collected through questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that most respondents listened regularly to the programme. However, more than 60% of the respondents believed that increased programme broadcasts alone would not significantly improve school enrolment, as poverty remained a major barrier. The study concluded that media campaigns alone may not be sufficient to influence behaviour without addressing underlying social and economic challenges. It recommended increased airtime and improved programme content. Although the study examined audience perception of a radio programme, it focused on educational awareness rather than health communication and drug abuse prevention. Furthermore, it was conducted in Kaduna State, thereby leaving conceptual and geographical gaps that the present study seeks to address.

Sharma and Gupta (2017) examined the role of mass media in health education in Rajasthan, India. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to investigate

the effectiveness of mass media in promoting health awareness and behavioural change. Data were collected through mixed research methods and analysed using descriptive techniques. The findings revealed that mass media played a significant role in increasing public awareness of health issues, with television being perceived as the most effective medium for health communication. The study concluded that mass media have considerable influence on public health education and recommended increased use of media platforms for health promotion. Although the study provided valuable insights into health communication, it examined mass media generally rather than focusing specifically on radio programmes. It also did not investigate drug abuse prevention or audience perception of a particular health programme among youths. Moreover, the study was conducted outside Nigeria, thereby creating contextual and geographical gaps which the present study intends to bridge.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Perception Theory, which is attributed to Berelson and Steiner. The theory explains how individuals select, organise, interpret, and retain information received from the media based on their personal experiences, beliefs, attitudes, values, and cultural background. It argues that people do not respond to media messages in the same way because perception is influenced by individual differences rather than by the message alone (Anaeto, Osifeso, & Onabajo, 2008). Perception Theory is built around four major concepts: selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention. Selective exposure suggests that individuals choose the media and messages they want to consume based on their interests and existing beliefs. Selective attention explains that people pay attention only to messages they consider important or relevant to them. Selective perception holds that audiences interpret media messages according to their existing attitudes and experiences, while selective retention suggests that individuals remember information that is meaningful and consistent with their beliefs and are more likely to forget messages, they consider irrelevant.

The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how youths in Kogi State receive, interpret, and respond to messages on the health is Wealth programme on Confluence FM 94.0. Although the programme is designed to educate listeners about the dangers of drug abuse, its effectiveness depends largely on how the audience perceives its content, credibility, presentation, and relevance. Youths who consider the programme useful and trustworthy are more likely to pay attention to its messages, remember the information, and adopt positive attitudes towards drug abuse prevention. Conversely, those who perceive the programme as uninteresting or not relevant may ignore its messages and experience little or no behavioural change. Despite its relevance, Perception Theory has some limitations. The theory focuses mainly on how individuals process and interpret media messages but pays less attention to external factors such as peer influence, family background, unemployment, social environment, and economic conditions, which also affect drug abuse among youths. In addition, the theory assumes that audience perception alone determines behavioural outcomes, whereas behaviour is often influenced by several interacting psychological and social factors.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The survey approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of quantitative data on respondents' opinions, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding the programme. The study population comprised listeners of the *Health is Wealth* programme in Kogi State, with emphasis on youths in Lokoja, Ankpa, and Anyigba. Although Kogi State has an estimated population of 4,750,115 (National Bureau

of Statistics, 2025), the selected communities, with a combined population of 975,500, constituted the accessible population for the study due to their strong reception of Confluence FM 94.0 and the high prevalence of youth-related drug abuse concerns. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error. The sample was proportionally distributed across the study areas using Bourley's proportional allocation formula, resulting in 109 respondents from Lokoja, 147 from Ankpa, and 144 from Anyigba. A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, purposive sampling was used to select the three study locations based on their accessibility to the radio station and relevance to the study. Second, proportional sampling ensured equitable distribution of questionnaires according to the population of each area. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select eligible respondents who listened to the programme, giving every qualified participant an equal chance of selection. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting mainly of close-ended Likert-scale items. The questionnaire's validity was established through expert review by the project supervisor and specialists in communication and media studies. Reliability was assessed through a pilot study involving 20 respondents outside the study area, and the instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above considered acceptable. Questionnaire were administered directly by the researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary, to maximize the response rate and ensure respondents understood the questions. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The collected data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency distributions and simple percentages, and the results were presented in tables to facilitate clear interpretation and discussion of the findings.

Data Presentation

This section presents the findings obtained from the analysis of the 386 valid questionnaire returned by respondents. The data are presented using frequency tables and simple percentages in line with the objectives of the study.

Table 1: Showing Extent of Listenership of *Health is Wealth* Programme

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often	96	24.9
Often	124	32.1
Occasionally	98	25.4
Rarely	48	12.4
Never	20	5.2
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings indicate a high level of listenership of the *Health is Wealth* programme among youths in Kogi State. More than half of the respondents reported listening to the programme frequently, suggesting that the programme enjoys a reasonable audience reach. However, a notable proportion of respondents listen only occasionally or rarely, indicating the need to improve audience reach and regular listenership.

Table 2: Showing Perception of Programme Content

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very informative	132	34.2
Informative	148	38.3
Fairly informative	64	16.6
Not informative	28	7.3
Not sure	14	3.6
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results show that respondents generally have a positive perception of the programme's content. Most participants considered the programme informative, implying that it is successful in communicating health information on drug abuse in a manner that is useful and understandable to its audience.

Table 3: Showing Influence on Knowledge of Drug Abuse

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	138	35.8
Agree	142	36.8
Undecided	54	14.0
Disagree	36	9.3
Strongly disagree	16	4.1
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings suggest that the programme has made a significant contribution to improving respondents' knowledge of drug abuse. The majority agreed that listening to the programme enhanced their understanding of the causes, dangers, and prevention of drug abuse, demonstrating its educational value.

Table 4: Showing Challenges in Accessing the Programme

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor signal	92	23.8
Inconvenient timing	88	22.8
Lack of awareness	64	16.6
Busy schedule	78	20.2
No challenge	64	16.6
Total	386	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The analysis reveals that technical and accessibility issues remain the major barriers to programme listenership. Poor radio signal and inconvenient broadcast time were identified as the most common challenges, indicating that improving transmission quality and scheduling could enhance audience participation and programme effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and existing literature. The discussion focuses on four key areas: the extent of youths' listenership of the *Health is Wealth* programme, their perception of the programme's content and presentation, the programme's influence on attitudes towards drug abuse, and the challenges affecting access to the programme.

The first objective was to determine the extent to which youths in Kogi State listen to the *Health is Wealth* programme on Confluence FM 94.0. The findings revealed a relatively high level of listenership, as more than half of the respondents reported listening to the programme often or very often. This suggests that the programme has established a reasonable audience among youths and serves as an important source of health information on drug abuse. However, a proportion of respondents indicated that they rarely or never listened to the programme, suggesting that some youths are still not consistently exposed to its messages. This finding agrees with Mohammed (2019), who found that radio programmes enjoy high audience reach because of their accessibility and ability to communicate in familiar languages. It is also consistent with Saleh (2018), who reported that youths frequently listen to radio programmes because of their educational and entertainment value. The finding supports Perception Theory, particularly the concept of selective exposure, which explains that audiences deliberately choose media content they consider useful and relevant to their needs.

The second objective examined how youths perceive the content and presentation of the *Health is Wealth* programme. The study found that respondents generally viewed the programme as informative, credible, and easy to understand. This positive perception suggests that the programme is successfully communicating health messages on drug abuse in a manner that is meaningful to its audience. The finding is consistent with Baran and Davis (2015), who argued that audiences respond more positively to media messages that are clear, relevant, and credible. From the perspective of Perception Theory, this finding reflects selective perception, whereby audiences interpret and accept messages that align with their beliefs, experiences, and information needs.

The third objective sought to determine the influence of the *Health is Wealth* programme on youths' knowledge and attitudes towards drug abuse. The findings indicate that the programme has a positive educational influence, with most respondents agreeing that it increased their knowledge of the dangers of drug abuse and encouraged positive attitudes towards avoiding substance abuse. This suggests that the programme is achieving one of its primary health communication objectives by promoting awareness and encouraging behavioural change. The finding is consistent with Ude-Akpeh (2017), who found that radio anti-drug campaigns significantly increased awareness of the dangers associated with substance abuse among youths. The finding further supports Perception Theory, particularly the concept of selective retention, which explains that audiences are more likely to remember and apply messages they perceive as relevant and beneficial.

The fourth objective was to identify the challenges youths face in accessing the *Health is Wealth* programme. The findings revealed that poor radio signal, inconvenient broadcast time, busy schedules, and inadequate awareness of the programme are the major barriers limiting regular listenership. These challenges suggest that although the programme has the potential to influence youths positively, its effectiveness may be reduced when target audiences cannot consistently access its broadcasts. This finding agrees with Abdul (2016), who found that

programme effectiveness declines when audiences experience difficulties accessing broadcasts or are unaware of programme schedules. Within Perception Theory, these challenges are associated with selective attention, since audiences can only pay attention to media messages when they are accessible and available at convenient times.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the “*Health is Wealth*” programme on Confluence FM 94.0 plays an important role in drug abuse awareness and education among youths in Kogi State. The programme has contributed to improving knowledge about the dangers of drug abuse and has positively influenced the attitudes of many young listeners. It is also evident that radio remains a powerful and accessible medium for health communication, especially among youths in Lokoja, Ankpá, and Anyigba. However, despite its effectiveness, the programme’s impact is limited by challenges such as poor access, irregular listenership, and lack of awareness of broadcast schedules. These limitations reduce the extent to which the programme can achieve full behavioural change among its audience. Therefore, while the programme is effective in raising awareness and shaping attitudes, its full potential is yet to be maximised due to accessibility and exposure constraints.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Confluence FM 94.0 should increase publicity for the “*Health is Wealth*” programme to improve awareness of its broadcast time and content among youths.
2. The station should consider repeating key episodes or providing rebroadcasts to reach listeners who may miss the original transmission.
3. More interactive sessions such as phone-in programmes, youth discussions, and testimonials from recovered drug users should be included to increase audience engagement.
4. The programme should be scheduled at more convenient times for youths, especially students and working-class listeners.

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