

Effects of radio messages on family planning usage among rural women in Ogun state Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of radio messages on family planning usage among rural women in Ogun State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Agenda-Setting Theory, the research explores how exposure to radio programs influences awareness, perceptions, and adoption of contraceptive methods. A qualitative research design was employed, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 24 rural market women across two local government areas. Data were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that radio is the most accessible and trusted medium for disseminating family planning information, with most participants reporting first learning about contraceptives through radio programs. Frequent exposure enhanced awareness, reshaped attitudes, and motivated adoption of methods such as injectable contraceptives, intrauterine devices, and condoms. Programs featuring medical professionals were found to be particularly persuasive, while dramatized formats were valued for their entertainment and educational appeal. Despite these gains, cultural resistance, misconceptions, and personal inhibitions continue to limit full utilization of family planning services. The study concludes that radio remains an effective platform for reproductive health communication in rural Nigeria but recommends more diverse programming, sustained collaboration with health stakeholders, and complementary community outreach to reinforce behavioral change. The study suggests that mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research method should be employed with the use of questionnaire to complement the Focus Group Discussion and Interview to study related concept for more generalization.

Keywords: Radio broadcasting, Family planning, Contraceptive usage, Rural women, Health communication.

1. Introduction

Radio is one of the reliable media platforms for communication of information across the globe. In Nigeria, radio plays a critical role in information dissemination, public enlightenment, and social mobilization, particularly among rural dwellers who often have limited access to electricity, the internet, and other modern communication technologies (Ajisafe, 2021). Radio has become a

reliable medium for news and education due to its low cost, ease of use, and capacity to connect with widespread audiences, particularly in areas with low literacy rates and limited infrastructure (UNESCO 2022). Beyond providing information, radio also creates a sense of companionship for listeners and fosters emotional connections, further strengthening its influence as a medium for social change.

One area in which radio has been strategically employed is in the promotion of family planning. Family planning involves the ability of individuals and couples to determine the number and spacing of their children through the use of contraceptive devices, medications, or medical procedures (World Health Organization, 2019). It has numerous benefits, including the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, prevention of unsafe abortions, improvement of women's health and empowerment, and contribution to sustainable population growth (Olubodun, Balogun & Ogunsilu, 2020). Despite these benefits, Nigeria continues to record high fertility rates, with a significant proportion of women of reproductive age either not using or inconsistently using modern contraceptive methods (Sanni, Sanni, Akeju, Onyeagwaibe & Ahamuefula 2025).

Several initiatives have been launched to increase awareness and acceptance of family planning across Nigeria. Both government agencies and non-governmental organizations have sponsored health communication programs on radio, recognizing its ability to penetrate rural areas more effectively than other media (Anyanwu, Nzotta & Orji, 2020). Past campaigns such as the popular "Wait for Me" initiative, as well as more recent programs sponsored by DKT International Nigeria and the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN), demonstrate the enduring reliance on radio for reproductive health messaging (Opaleke, Okoji & Olayioye, 2023). However, despite decades of exposure to family planning campaigns, challenges such as cultural resistance, misconceptions, and limited accessibility to contraceptive services continue to hinder adoption, particularly among rural women.

Radio remains a powerful tool for disseminating health information and

promoting family planning in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities where other forms of media are less accessible. Numerous programs, including *Walwalar Kowa* on Cool FM Abuja, *Your Contraceptive Options* on Gotel FM, *E Wa Ko Gbon* on Bond FM Lagos, and *Yan Ifetosomobibi Laayo* on OGBC Abeokuta, have been specifically designed to raise awareness about contraception and child spacing. Similarly, the "Wait for Me" campaign of the late 1980s highlighted the use of broadcast media in advancing family planning education. These interventions underscore the strategic role of radio in health communication.

Despite these efforts, family planning uptake remains relatively low in many rural areas of Nigeria. Cultural beliefs, religious convictions, and persistent misconceptions about contraceptives have continued to discourage rural women from embracing modern family planning methods. This gap between exposure to radio campaigns and actual behavioral change raises critical questions about the effectiveness of radio messages in influencing reproductive health practices. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the effect of radio messages on family planning usage among rural women in Ogun State, Nigeria, with particular focus on awareness creation, program influence, and practical adoption of contraceptive methods.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of radio messages on family planning usage among rural women in Ogun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- Assess the impact of radio in creating awareness of family planning and contraceptive use among rural women in Ogun State.
- Examine the influence of radio programs on perceptions and practices of family planning and child spacing.

- Determine the extent to which radio is useful in promoting positive attitudes and behavioral change towards family planning among rural dwellers.

Research Questions

- How do rural women in Ogun State describe the role of radio in creating awareness about family planning and contraceptive use?
- In what ways do radio programs shape rural women's perceptions and practices regarding family planning and child spacing?
- How do rural dwellers perceive the usefulness of radio in promoting positive attitudes and behavioral change toward family planning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Broadcasting

Broadcasting, particularly radio, has long been recognized as one of the most powerful tools for mass communication and social development. Originally derived from the agricultural practice of scattering seeds widely, the concept of “broadcasting” was later applied to mass media to describe the wide dissemination of information (Darji & Yadav 2024). Radio remains unique in its ability to reach vast, heterogeneous audiences at relatively low cost, making it especially relevant in rural and low-resource communities (Emmanuel 2024).

Radio is often described as the most accessible and participatory medium in Africa due to its affordability, portability, and ability to transcend barriers of illiteracy and geography (Ajisafe 2021). In Nigeria, where literacy rates are uneven and infrastructural challenges persist, radio serves not only as a medium of information but also as a platform for education, entertainment, and cultural preservation (Emmanuel 2024). Historical accounts trace radio in Nigeria back to the 1930s, when the Radio Distribution Service relayed BBC programmes, highlighting its

colonial roots before evolving into an indigenous instrument of communication and development (Ramadhani, Ataqiya, Haris, Law & Royi, 2022).

2.2 Challenges of Radio Broadcasting

Despite its enduring relevance, radio broadcasting faces structural and operational challenges. Scholars note that in many developing contexts, programming often follows a top-down, “giver-taker” model that limits community participation (Mubita, Libati, & Mulonda, 2017). In Nigeria, the pre-deregulation era was characterized by government monopoly, political interference, and underfunding, while post-deregulation challenges include commercialization, cultural imperialism, weak regulation, and declining programme quality (Comfort & Faith 2021).

The rise of digital media has also disrupted traditional broadcasting. Technology firms are redefining audio content delivery, creating new competition for radio (Song 2024). Additionally, Nigeria's digital migration has faced delays due to financial and infrastructural barriers (Juliana 2024). These challenges underscore the need for innovation and adaptation if radio is to sustain its role as a developmental medium.

2.3 Prospects of Radio Broadcasting

Despite these obstacles, radio continues to thrive as a medium of influence. Its low cost, flexibility, and resilience ensure that it remains central in Africa's communication landscape (Emmanuel 2024). Community radio, in particular, has demonstrated strong potential in promoting participatory development by enabling rural populations to engage with issues central to their lives, such as agriculture, health, and gender relations (Emmanuel 2024).

Radio's role in health communication is particularly notable. By operating on batteries or solar power, radio reaches populations without access to electricity or

the internet, making it a critical tool for addressing health information gaps in rural areas (Shailashree & Lokesh 2025). Scholars argue that integrating rural radio strategies into broader development policies could strengthen its impact on health and population outcomes (Shodipe, Sanusi, Talabi, & Adelabu 2024).

2.4 Family Planning and Contraception

Family planning, defined as the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number and spacing of children (WHO, 2019). The benefits of family planning include reduced maternal and infant mortality, prevention of unsafe abortions, improved women's health, and socioeconomic advancement (Olubodun, Balogun & Ogunsilu, 2020). However, in Nigeria, uptake of modern contraceptives remains low, particularly among rural women, due to cultural resistance, religious beliefs, and misinformation (Fasanu, Fasanu, Adeyemo, Awodele, Olabode, Isawumi, Oyewole, & Olaitan 2025).

Radio has been strategically used to address these barriers by raising awareness, dispelling myths, and encouraging behavior change. Campaigns such as *Wait for Me* in the 1980s and more recent initiatives by DKT International Nigeria and the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN) demonstrate the enduring reliance on radio for family planning promotion (Opaleke, Okoji & Olayioye, 2023).

2.5 Radio and Family Planning Campaigns

Numerous radio campaigns have targeted family planning adoption in Nigeria. For instance, *Walwalar Kowa* on Cool FM Abuja, *Your Contraceptive Options* on Gotel FM, and *E Wa Ko Gbon* on Bond FM Lagos have been designed to raise awareness about contraception. The Urban Reproductive Health Initiative (URHI) and the Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative (NURHI) further illustrate how

targeted radio messages can shift norms and attitudes toward contraceptive use (Anyanwu, Nzotta & Orji, 2020). While these campaigns have recorded successes in raising awareness, gaps remain in translating knowledge into consistent contraceptive practice, particularly among rural women.

2.6 Theoretical Review

2.6.1 Agenda Setting Theory

This study is anchored on the Agenda Setting Theory, which posits that the media may not always tell audiences what to think but can significantly influence what they think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Radio programs on family planning, by repeatedly highlighting issues of contraception, child spacing, and reproductive health, can set the agenda for public discussion and bring these issues into the consciousness of rural audiences. The theory is particularly relevant for this study as it explains how consistent exposure to radio messages can shape awareness, influence perceptions, and potentially modify reproductive health behaviors among rural women.

2.7 Empirical Review

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated radio's effectiveness in health communication. Good health communication in the media promotes healthy lifestyle choices and enhances public awareness by dispelling myths surrounding health issues (Chioma, Ngozi, Maduka, Bolaji & Kelechukwu (2025). In Nigeria, Anyanwu et al. (2020) found that reproductive health campaigns broadcast on local radio stations improved awareness but highlighted persistent cultural and religious barriers to adoption. Similarly, Olubodun et al. (2020) reported that while awareness of contraceptives is widespread, actual usage remains low due to misinformation and fear of side effects.

These findings suggest a paradox, although radio is effective in raising awareness, translating knowledge into behavioral

change remains a challenge. This gap underscores the importance of investigating how rural women in Ogun State engage with radio messages on family planning and whether such messages translate into practical adoption of contraceptives.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, employing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) as the primary data collection methods. Qualitative research focuses on collecting participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan 2022) which is crucial for understanding the role of radio messages in shaping attitudes toward family planning.

Interviews are a qualitative research method used for data collection through questioning, involving an interviewer and one or more participants (George 2023). Focus group discussions, on the other hand, encourage interactive dialogue among strategically selected participants, enabling the researcher to gain deeper insights into shared beliefs, values, and community-level perspectives (Bryman, 2003). These two methods were chosen because they aligned with the objectives of the study and provided complementary data sources for answering the research questions.

The population for this study comprised women residing in rural areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. This group was selected because women, particularly those of reproductive age (15–49 years), are the primary users of contraceptive methods and the most directly affected by family planning interventions (Borg & Gall, 1989; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

The study employed non-probability sampling techniques, specifically purposive and stratified sampling. Purposive sampling enabled the deliberate selection of women with relevant

characteristics and experiences, while stratified sampling allowed division into homogenous groups (strata) based on age (Ifidon, 2007; Lauren, 2020).

Participants were recruited from Kila Market in Odeda Local Government and Obafé Market in Obafemi Owode Local Government, Ogun State. Women were stratified into three groups:

16–25 years (predominantly single),

26–35 years (married with children), and

36–49 years (pre-menopausal).

From each stratum, 2 women participated in focus group discussions, while 2 women were selected for interviews. This yielded a total of 12 women per market and 24 participants overall. Data collection took place across four market days, with separate sessions for interviews and FGDs in each location.

Data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were systematically coded. Emerging themes were identified, categorized, and discussed in relation to the research questions. This process allowed for a nuanced understanding of how radio messages influence knowledge, perceptions, and practices of family planning among rural women in Ogun State

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the findings from interviews and focus group discussions with rural market women in Ogun State are organized according to the objectives of the study below;

4.1 Awareness of Family Planning and Contraception through Radio

Only one out of all the market women that participated in the interview (Mrs A) have not heard about family planning and contraception on radio before but she said, she used to hear about family planning among women in the market but she doesn't have adequate information on it,

three respondent (Mrs. S, Mrs. O and Mrs. F) out of all those who said they have heard information about family planning on radio said the information released was not clear enough to them and they did not deemed it fit to ask further on it:

I have heard information about contraception and family planning on radio more than five times, prior to this information from radio, I have had the believe that nothing could be done to stop woman of reproduction age from getting pregnant but those radio messages on usage of contraceptives for family planning changed my orientation as I am currently using it and it is really working for me.

In the focus group discussion, all the participant said they used to listen to programs that provides information on how, when and why to adopt family planning through the use of various contraceptive devices and most of them are currently using it.

The above findings revealed that radio serves as a major source of information on family planning. Except for one respondent, all participants reported hearing about family planning and contraceptives on radio. While some considered the messages inadequate or unclear, others acknowledged that repeated exposure to such programs reshaped their perceptions and influenced their adoption of contraceptive methods. Focus group participants similarly confirmed that they frequently encountered family planning information on radio and that most of them were currently practicing child spacing.

4.2 Frequency of Listening to Family Planning Programs

In response to the above question, majority of the respondents testified that they used to listen to radio programs on family planning at least once in a week while two respondents (Mrs. O and Mrs. P) said they rarely listen to radio due to the schedule of their work and their testimonies opposed

that of Mrs. A and Mrs. S that said, their radio is like their companion as they listen to radio in the market store in order to ease boredom and entertained themselves in the market;

My Radio is like my companion at my market store because

I always switched on my radio from morning till the closing time in the evening, I used to listen to series of radio program and I always learn a lot from them, programs on family planning and contraceptive usage is part of the series of programs that I listened to, some comes inform of drama, some inform of advice while some comes in between other programs

In the focus group discussion, all the participant said they used to listen to family planning programs at least once in a week.

In relation to the above responses, majority of the respondents reported listening to family planning programs at least once a week. For some, radio provided continuous companionship at their market stalls, while others admitted to less frequent listening due to busy work schedules. Focus group participants corroborated this pattern, with most indicating that they listened to such programs weekly.

4.3 Family Planning Methods Learned through Radio

All the interviewees have similar views about family planning method learned through radio programs, Mrs. P, said she listened to an health program on radio in which the presenter invited a consultant gynecologist from a well know specialist hospital in the state and the Doctor discussed the importance of family planning and contemplated on the use of an inserted device (Copper T) which will prevent pregnancy for long time and she explained what she learned from the program for her husband at home and her husband likes the method and she is currently using the family planning

method. Mrs. O also explained that she first heard about the use of contraceptive device for child spacing through a radio drama and she was in need of such device in that time as she was nursing a child which was about ten months old at that time;

I became pregnant when my first child was nine months old and I gave birth to my second child when the first child was eighteen months old, the stress of nursing two children was much, therefore, I wish to wait for some time before having another child and the radio drama on family planning came at the right time, what really helped me was that at the end of the drama, information was provided on where to go for the family planning which I did and it assisted me in spacing my child, I used a family planning method which was shot into my arm and I used it for good three years before I later removed it when it was time for me to have another child and that made me have space of about four years between my second and third child.

Mrs. F also testified that she has been listening to series of programs on family planning on radio but she used to have phobia for it until when she gave birth to her last child;

I have been hearing about family planning on radio for years but I am a shy type and I have also been having phobia for going to hospital for the purpose of family planning until when I gave birth to my last child and I took him to hospital for immunization, luckily for me at the immunization centre that day, a nurse was invited to come and educate us about the family planning and this gives me avenue to speak to the nurse one on one, the nurse then explained different method of family planning and I later go for the injectable method which I used to repeat every three months.

In the focus group discussion, all the participant also learned different methods of family planning on radio, Mrs. C said

I first heard about family planning on radio through a discussion program on different birth control method and I subscribed to it with immediate effect because that time I was seriously in need of it, I have already given birth to six children and I need to stop child bearing, although I have been hearing about pregnancy prevention through condom (barrier method) but I always feel that it is for single ladies that wants to prevent pregnancy for a certain period of time I didn't know that married woman like me can use it until I continue listening to different programs on family planning that I got to know that family planning is for all fertile woman.

In relation to the above date, respondents identified several methods learned from radio programs, including Copper T (IUD), injectable contraceptives, and condoms. Women narrated instances where expert-led discussions or dramatized programs introduced them to options they later adopted, often with the consent of their spouses. Focus group participants further emphasized that the credibility of medical professionals invited to radio programs enhanced their confidence in the information received.

4.4 Influence of Radio on Decisions to Adopt Family Planning

All the market women that participated in the interview revealed that series of programs on family planning and child spacing on radio play a significant role in their decision to use family planning, Mrs. P revealed that she used to consider child spacing as a sinful act but her exposure to radio programs on family planning broaden her knowledge on family planning and also contributes to the reason why she sees family planning as a normal thing for all married women.

All the participants in the focus group discussion also revealed that their exposure to radio programs influenced their decision

to use family planning, Mrs. B testifies that;

fear of having another child after having five children made me to always denied my husband sexual intercourse but when I listened to a program on radio on family planning, I seek advice from medical experts who enlighten me on the benefits of using contraceptives for prevention of unwanted pregnant, and I gave it a trial by taken contraceptive injection which will be effective for three month and after seeing the benefit I later go for the insertion method that will last longer.

Both interview and focus group participants acknowledged that radio programs significantly influenced their decision-making. For example, some women who had previously regarded child spacing as unacceptable reported a change in perception after consistent exposure to expert discussions on radio.

4.5 Attitudes towards Family Planning after Listening to Radio

In the interview segment, one of the participants showed interest in answering this question by saying that,

her small transistor radio is her best friend and she always tried to put whatever she heard on the radio into practice and has been hearing about family planning and child spacing through contraceptive devices, but she always believed that using contracept devices is meant for only men to prevent them from ejaculating in their female partners but when she listened to a particular program in which a Midwife was invited to talk about child spacing she was motivated to phone-in the program and asked questions on its benefits, the Midwife took her time to explain various benefits derived from spacing children with the use of contraceptive devices, which made her gained a new insight into child spacing, which changed her attitude towards it.

In the focus group discussion, all respondents had negative attitude towards

family planning but due to the credibility of radio their attitude towards family changed when they started listening to programs on the usage of contraceptive device for child spacing which also assists them to plan their family.

The above data revealed that participants' attitudes shifted positively following their exposure to radio messages. While initial views were often negative, respondents testified that credible information from radio programs motivated them to embrace family planning as beneficial to maternal and child health.

4.6 Preferred Program Formats for Family Planning Information

In the focus group segment, almost all the participant prefer radio programs in form of interview in which medical practitioner will be invited and interviewed on the likely questions that married women will want to ask on family planning and talk show in which a well learned nurse or doctor will enlighten them on the usage of contraceptives. While in the interview segment, almost all the interviewee mentioned radio drama as the most suitable programs format for enlighten the women about the benefits of family planning, Mrs. P. considered interview as the best radio program format for disseminating knowledge to people on family planning while Mrs. B. countered Mrs. P by saying that interview might look boring but radio drama, apart from educating them on family planning radio drama will also serve as a means of entertaining people apart from providing information on the benefits of family planning.

The above data shows that participants expressed diverse preferences for program formats. Focus group respondents favored interviews and talk shows featuring health professionals, while interviewees preferred dramatized formats, which they described as both educative and entertaining.

4.7 Radio as the Most Useful Medium for Health Communication

In the focus group segment, almost all the participant considered radio as the most useful medium of spreading information about family planning. While responding to questions on whether radio is useful in promoting family planning in the rural areas, Mrs. O said;

radio being the most useful medium accessible to the rural dwellers is the most useful in sending message to the people on the usefulness of family planning and child spacing as radio is portable and comes in sizes, it is like a partner in progress to us in the rural areas and we relied on it for information which information on child spacing and family planning is also inclusive.

In the focus group segment, Mrs. D. said *the first time I heard about family planning was through my radio set and I did not believe it due to the fact that, traditionally we believe in my locality that there is nothing one can do to prevent unwanted pregnancy but when radio continue to educate us on the importance of family planning I deemed it fit to consult the local hospital doctor who enlightened me more on the usefulness of family planning and child spacing, therefore, radio is most suitable medium for reaching out to the people in the rural areas and health related information is better spread in the rural areas when it comes from radio and with this, I will consider radio as the most reliable medium in promoting child space and family planning in the rural areas.*

All participants highlighted radio as the most accessible and effective medium for promoting family planning in rural areas. Its portability, affordability, and wide reach were cited as major advantages. Respondents emphasized that, in areas with limited electricity and mobile network coverage, radio remained the most reliable means of receiving health information.

Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm that radio plays a central role in creating awareness and influencing the adoption of family planning practices among rural women in Ogun State. Most participants were first introduced to family planning through radio programs, and repeated exposure reinforced knowledge and practice. This observation validates the work of Ahn, Briers, Baker, Price, Strong, Piña, Zickafoose & Lu (2022), which argues that knowledge and awareness are crucial to the practice of contraception.

The data also demonstrate the importance of content quality and source credibility. Respondents noted that programs featuring medical specialists, particularly gynecologists and Midwives, were highly persuasive. This finding aligns with the Health Belief Model, which emphasizes that individuals' health actions are shaped by perceived benefits, cues to action, and the credibility of the information received (Ojetola & Onaopepo, 2022).

Nevertheless, barriers persist. Some women expressed shyness or fear about visiting hospitals despite being aware of available methods. This aligns with work of Foluke & Oluyinka (2021) who found that radio can increase listener's participation in the community through their development initiatives.

Overall, the study affirms that radio remains the most accessible and impactful health communication medium in rural Nigeria, capable of reshaping perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding family planning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that radio remains the most effective medium for disseminating family planning information to rural women in Ogun State. Consistent exposure to family planning programs not only

enhances awareness but also improves knowledge and encourages the adoption of contraceptive methods. The findings further reveal that program format plays a significant role in audience engagement, as some women prefer expert interviews and talk shows for their credibility, while others find dramatizations more appealing because of their entertaining and educative nature. However, despite the increased awareness and positive shifts in perception, cultural beliefs and personal inhibitions continue to hinder the full utilization of family planning services among rural women.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that radio stations should prioritize health-related content by increasing the frequency and prominence of family planning messages in their daily programming. To enhance audience engagement, program diversity is essential; a mix of interviews, talk shows, and dramatized formats should be adopted to reflect the varying preferences of listeners. Stronger collaboration between radio stations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations is also necessary to secure funding and sustain family planning campaigns in rural communities. In addition, continuous capacity building for journalists and broadcasters is crucial, particularly in the area of health communication, to ensure that messages on contraceptives and reproductive health are delivered accurately and effectively. The study further emphasizes the importance of featuring medical specialists in radio programs, as their expertise enhances credibility and builds trust among listeners. Finally, radio campaigns should not operate in isolation but be complemented with on-the-ground health outreach initiatives. Such integrated approaches would help to address cultural barriers, dispel misconceptions, and encourage rural

women to seek professional guidance on family planning

5.3 Suggestion for Further Studies

Further studies on the Effect of Radio Message on Family Planning Usage Among rural women can use mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research method with the use of questionnaire to complement the Focus Group Discussion and Interview for more generalization.

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