ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Evaluation of Facemask use Law Message Compliance among Awka Residents.

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Abstract

Evaluation of facemask use compliance among Awka residents is an enquiry into how persons living in the Anambra state capital adhere to an essential aspect of covid-19 prevention. Facemask use is one of the recommended prevention protocols against corona virus hence its legalization in the state with outlined consequences to defaulters. The study investigated if Awka residents were exposed to the facemask use law message, their extent of its understanding and how they responded to its compliance. The survey research method was used to obtain data from 358 respondents from the population of Awka, using the top man's formular. Simple percentage was used for result determination. The weighted mean method was adopted for determining whether the law was responsible for face mask or not. the attribution theory was used to explain how both internal and external factors affected response to the law of face mask use". It was found that the extent of understanding of the law was high at 58% but compliance was low at 41%. It means that majority of the residents did not wear face-mask. It is recommended, therefore, than an aggressive message is provided to persuade face mask use base on examples. Also, less emphasis should be placed on penalties to defaulters, while threat to life and spread of corona virus should be articulated.

Key words: evaluation, face-mask, compliance, Awka residents.

Introduction

Feedback is an essential factor in communication. Okunna and Omenugha (2000) agree that feedback assures that a message has been received, considered and interpreted by the receiver. Roberts and Schramm (1989) see feedback as the juggler's certification that whatever message is given out returns to the same as a response. Owuamalam (2016) asserts that feedback determines whether communication has succeeded or not since a message without feedback is no communication. The above views give an insight into why communication evaluation has become an essential aspect of research. It is through evaluation that audience response to an issue, like the law on face masks use in Anambra state can be determined, hence this study.

Law is designed to guide actions and activities in society. It prescribes expectations from society members and provides sanctions where necessary so as to encourage compliance to the requirements and dissuade non-compliance. Obedience to law is a personal and voluntary act but guided by consequences in the event of any default. It is probably the consequences that may drive compliance in some cases but may re-enforce compliance attitude in beings that are conscious of self-worth. This view explains the relationship between law and ethics as guiding principles to behaviour in the society. It became necessary, therefore, to know how the law on face-mask use in Anambra is responded to by residents in Awka, as a microcosm of the state.

Face-mask use is one of the corona virus prevention approaches certified and advised by the world health organization (WHO, 2019). It is believed that the use of face-mask will curtail community transmission of the disease carrying virus (Owuamalam, Eze and Elijah,2020) and keep persons safe even in a social environment (NCDC, 2020). The prevention of droplets from saliva of an infected person is expected to be restricted from spreading by the face-mask when used to cover facial cavities. It means that the use of face-mask serve as prevention from contracting COVID-19 or corona virus. The law on face-mask use, therefore, is expected to inform state residents what could happen where they fail to use face-mask while

outside their homes. This view supports the reason behind inscriptions like "NO FACEMASK, NO ENTRY" on entrance doors to many shops and public facilities.

It is important to note that promulgating a law is different from its obedience. The law addresses the individual as a member of society. Schramm (1981) believes that information is the message content of communication. What is conveyed in the law and how it s understood and interpreted show how individual differences as opposed to the bullet theory concept affect communication. Fiske (2000) agrees that the nature of interaction between content and receiver determines how the individual responds to an issue. How Awka residents understood the law on face mask use and its compliance became an issue of investigation, hence this study.

Statement of Problem

How to make persons conform to the dictates of a prescribed law is a problem to society. It means that any adopted approach must be clearly communicated through a preferred medium or channel of communication. It is when a majority of the public are aware of legal provisions and frequently communicated that redundancy may generate compliance does the message on facemask use command audience attention and arouse compliance interest among message recipients? What content should be emphasized as to encourage compliance? these and other questions are expected to be answered in a study like the current one on facemask use law compliance in Anambra state as a prevention strategy against COVID-19 using Awka residents as basis for evaluation.

Research Objectives

The goals were set to be achieved by this study. The goals were as follows:

1. To find the level of exposure of Awka residents to the law on face mask use in Anambra state.
2. To know the extent of understanding of the meaning of the law on face mask use in Anambra state.
3. To find how Awka residents responds to the law through their level of compliance to the requirements of the law.

Research Questions

The three questions posed to be answered in this study were;

1. What is the level of exposure of Awka residents to information on face mask use law in Anambra state?
2. What is the extent of message understanding of the law on facemask use among Awka residents?
3. How did Awka residents respond to the law on facemask use in Anambra state?

Research Hypothesis

H_o: compliance to facemask law message is not dependent on Awka residents' exposure to the message.

H_o: compliance to the law does not depend on how they residents understood the message.

Scope of Study

The law on facemask use was enacted by the government of Anambra state to ensure compliance to corona virus prevention, particularly, its transmission in the state. It became necessary to assess how adults who live in Awka responded to the message through compliance or default. The study enquired whether the residents were exposed to the message, understood its meaning and how they reacted to the law on face mask in Anambra state. Only the survey research method was used to obtain data which were analysed using simple percentage and the Likert scale. The attribution theory was used for result interpretation.

Conceptual Discussion

Evaluation deals with a careful assessment of the value of an issue based on a specific template. Wimmer and Dominick (2012) see evaluation as the determination of the significance of a condition through a careful appraised and study of the situation concerned in the investigation. The import is that facemask use is appraised based on how

residents comply to the promulgated law in order to ascertain compliance or otherwise. It means that two approaches complement each other in such a study on behaviour. One aspect is observation based while the other is personal assertion provided by persons concerned in the experience. The current study used the personal approach since it would not be sufficient to observe behaviour towards facemask but also to know why observed attitude persists from those exhibiting it. The study therefore enquired if the message on facemask use law persuaded compliance or not.

Self-preservation is desired by humans in all situations. Maslow (1974) Owuamalam (2019) and NCDC (2020) agree that basic human needs, actions and activities help in the prevention of disasters. This thinking has led the national centre for disease control to advice on COVID-19 prevention protocols among which is the use of face mask in public places. In order to ensure public adherence to face mask use, the Anambra state legislature promulgated a law prohibiting persons from not wearing face mask in public. The law prescribed a fine of #10,000 (ten thousand naira) or a two-week community service or both for offenders. Mobile courts adjudicate on the matter and are empowered with the regular courts to try offenders. It is expected that the measures would facilitate compliance to face mask use in public among persons in Anambra state among where Awka residents' are part thereto.

Awka is the capital of Anambra state. The Anambra state government house and offices are located in Awka north while the governor's lodge is situated in Awka south. The study therefore considered residents in both Awka north and Awka south in the selection of Awka residents, competent to serve as respondents. It avoided the metropolitan constitution of Awka metropolis which included areas within 15 kilometres from aroma as the city centre so that areas within Dunukofia and Aniocha would be eliminated from the study. It means that persons resident in the wards within] Awka north and Awka south were involved in this study. Compliance relates to laws, rules and norms which are established for order in the society. If the essence of government is to provide security to life and property (opulami, 2012) it then becomes obvious as to why such a law on face mask use should be promulgated by government to save lives from corona virus disease. The message conveying the content of the legislation, particularly, the consequences of non-compliance should be addressed. It was hoped that the provisions would dissuade compliance.

The prescription of face mask law in Anambra state suggests that an enforcing authority is also created to deal with defaults. It is such a body that ensures public compliance through the arrest and prosecution of offenders. This effectiveness of compliance is determined by the extent to which people for whom the law exists obey its precepts as confirmed by the enforcing authority. it became necessary therefore to determine if persons comply willingly through message persuasion or coarse by law to adhere to the established law. The study investigated the level of law compliance through facemask use as well as determined if the law on facemask use facilitated its use among Awka residents. Ezeani (2010, p.61) asserts that the essence of law is to encourage orderliness within a society. Community transmission of COVID-19 is dreaded in Anambra state. The law on face mask use therefore was designed to protect residents from contracting the virus through self protection.

The message on face mask law is disseminated through various communication channels. It became necessary to know how Awka residents got information concerning the law on face mask use, whether they understood the message content and how they reacted to the received information using compliance as the basis for adherence. It means that message understanding is crucial to compliance. This view explains why it is necessary to know whether the information delivered in respect of the law on face mask use conveyed the expected meaning that would justify any consequence on defaulters. It is when the extent of compliance is ascertained that compliance effectiveness can be determined like in this study.

Empirical Review

Owuamalam, Owuamalam, and Elijah (2020) present hand hygiene habit among visitor to households in Owerri as a strategy for the prevention of COVID-19 among Imo state capital residents. They believe that freeing the hand from contamination provides the safety value as necessary prevention from COVID-19. This study shows that inspite of the CDC (2020) health advice as prevention against corona virus; only 25%of visitors to households complied to hand washing as a preventive measure against COVID-19. The study however, did not deal with what happens to human cavities if harassed by droplets of saliva from infected persons. The low turnout may have given impetus as to how to persuade a greater number of persons to conform to in another prevention protocol like the law on face mask use among residents in Anambra state like those in Awka. The survey research method was used in the study.

Omowale and Oyedeji (2020) used the survey research method to show that radio was most effective in disseminating messages related to corona virus prevention. Their study shows that one-quarter of the respondents favoured the radio as the most preferred medium through which they obtained the most reliable information on COVID-19., in Abeokuta, the capital of Osun sate. It linked source credibility to message recipients' attitudinal change. The current study therefore investigated how Awka residents got exposed to the face mask low law messages to ensure compliance.

Also, Owuamalam, Ezeh and Eze (2020) investigated hand washing realities in select Nigerian communities during the COVID-19 pandemic period. They believed that hand washing prevents contact with infected surfaces. Their study conducted through the cross-sectional method showed that inspite of the awareness created about proper hand washing as prevention against COVID-19, only 20% of the recipient adhered to the directions of the prevention protocol. The current study therefore has any effect in influencing compliance.

How frames were used in messages related to COVID-19stories were studied by Ezebuenyi,Obi and Agbo (2020). They investigated the use of specific frames used by three Nigerian newspapers: the guardian, daily sun and vanguard through content analysis and found that most of the stories dwelt on treatment and prevention of the virus as strategy for sensitizing the public on safety precautions. It was the social responsibility of the culminated in the dissemination of the prevention protocols. The current study enquired on whether message understanding as obtained from media channels in relation to face mask use law enhanced compliance by Awka residents in Anambra state,.

Theoretical Framework

The attribution theory which presents justification for action on an issue. According to Jaspers, Hewstone and Fincham (1983, p.4). "Attribution theory, in the widest sense of the term… Deals with the …. Common sense way of answering 'why' questions". Manusov (1990p.105) believe that "people are active interpreters of the events occurring in their social sphere" and that "attributions use consistent and logical basis upon which to make their casual claims" the import on this study therefore lies on why the law on facemask use is either complied to or not as well as to how they respond to its consequences.

Miller (2002) believes that internal attribution which refers to how the individual message receiver feels about its content and how environmental or external factor affect compliance to a required situation like the law on facemask use in Anambra state. It means therefore that compliance as basis for law adherence would therefore be determined either through how the individual resident in Awka understands the message about the law or how some other factors outside the individual influence his or her decision to comply or not. The theory was therefore found relevant in explaining result in this study.

Methodology

The survey research method was used in the study because it gave the researcher an opportunity to go into the field(Awka) to study the subjects (residents) in order to ascertain how they responded to the phenomenon (message on face mask law in

Anambra state) exist (Wimmer & Dominick,2012). The research design provided an opportunity to study to study a faithful representation of the population which Owuamalam (2012) calls sample. Nwodu (2017) agrees that result emanating from studying the sample can be generalized across the population it represents. The method therefore became apt since the feasibility of studying the entire residents in Awka would not be possible within the few weeks allowed for the investigation.

The survey is quantitative in nature and gives an opportunity to obtain data which were statically analyzed and interpreted (Asika, 2005) as related to the study. The population of study was the residents in both Awka north and Awka south as relevant to this study which evaluated their response to the message on face mask use law as promulgated by the Anambra state government. A sample was derived from the population of Awka residents (Nworgu, 2006) estimated at above 100,000 persons. The sample was obtained using the top man's formular as shown below.

$$n = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$$

Where N=sample size; Z= margin of tolerance, P=positive, q=negative response and e=margin of error. Thirty residents were asked whether they have heard about the law while eleven (11) Said they did not. The details while the margin of error was 5% (0.5) and Z= (1.96).

A sample size of 340 was used and distributed equally to 2 wards from Awka and 2 wards from Awka south allocated to Ifitte and Amaenyi as well as Amawbia and Nibo at 85 to each of the 4 wards. The wards were selected using the simple random without replacement method (Gravetter and Frazano 2005).

Also, a 9-item questionnaire was used to obtain data from respondents in the selected wards in Awka. The obtained responses were used to answer the posed research questions and test the two formulated research hypothesis. Simple percentage as well as the weighted mean methods were used to analyze and interpreted determined values. It was found on collection of completed copies of the questionnaire, 17 copies were invalid since 12 copies were not returned while 5 copies were not properly completed. It means that 323 copies were used in this study as valid. Details of analysis were as follows:

Q.1. have you heard about the law on face mask use in Anambra state?

Table 1: Response to Law Awareness

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	188	58.20
Not really	39	12.07
Can't remember	96	29.72
Total	323	99.99

Result above shows that more than half of the respondents claimed to have heard about the law while less than one-fifth have not heard the law and less than one-third could not remember if they had heard about the law. It means that majority of the respondents had heard about the face mask law and its consequences as promulgated by the Anambra state government.

Q.2. how did you hear about the face mask law in the state?

Table 2: Medium for Message Reception

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	193	59.75
Television	44	13.62
Oral media	62	19.20
Newspaper	24	7.43
Total	323	100.00

The table above shows that radio at more than half response source of message reception, while newspaper at less than one-tenth of the respondents attesting to it was the least. Oramedia at nearly one-fifth constituted the second major source of message reception on the face mask use law and its consequences in Anambra state.

Q.3. Did you understand the law on face mask use.

Table 3: extent of message understanding by respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes I did	214	66.25
No I didn't	51	15.79
Can't really say	58	17.96
Total	323	100.00

Results above shows that nearly two-thirds of the respondents understood the message on face masks law and its consequences while the others were not sure they did. It means that majority of the respondents understood the facemask use law and its consequences as prescribed by the government of Anambra state.

Again, item4 in the questionnaire was used to know what was responsible for the large extent of message understanding. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

Q.4. what made you to understand the message.

Table 4: Reason for Message Understanding

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Message presented in igbo and English languages	214	63.16
Message explained clearly	27	11.46
Message deals with COVID-19 prevention	82	25.38
Total	323	100.00

Results above shows that whereas one-quarter of the respondents attended to the message because it concerned corona virus prevention, nearly two-third understood the meaning of the message because it was rendered in igbo and English predominantly spoken and used in awka. While less than are fifth believed it was clearly explained. It means that least number of respondents believed that the law on facemask use is clearly explained.

Q.4. how did you respond to the message?

Table 5: Respondents Feeling About the Message.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Willing to comply	152	47.06
Indifferently	107	33.13
Not moved at all	64	19.81
Total	323	100.00

The above result shows that whereas less than half of the respondents were willing to comply, about one-third felt indifferent while one-fifth of the respondents were not moved at all by the message on face mask law in Anambra state. It means that more than half of the respondents were not willing to comply with the face mask law in the state.

Also, item 6 in the questionnaire was used to find why there was a high level of non-compliance to the face mask law in the state. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

Table 6: reason for high level of non- compliance

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Message emphasized more on penalty than COVID-19 prevention	115	35.60
Message did not address prevention	96	29.72
COVID-19 is not real	112	34.67
Total	323	100.00

Result above show that whereas less than two-fifths felt that the message emphasized more of penalties, one-quarter believed that covid-19 prevention was not addressed by the law to warrant adoption or compliance. Also, more than one-third did not believe that COVID-19 is real, hence no need for compliance to the facemask use law as promulgated by the Anambra state government.

The two hypotheses formulated were tested as follows using the weighted mean or Likert scale approach. The tested hypotheses were as follows:

H_o: compliance to face mask law does not depend on exposure to message on the law.

H_i: exposure to the message on the law assures compliance.

Item 7 in the questionnaire if respondent complied

with the law because of information contained in the message. Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

Table 6: Influence of Message on Facemask Law Compliance.

Item 7	Response						Total	Mean value $\overline{X}$
Exposure to message on facemask law made me to comply with the requirements of the law.	Code	SA=5	A=4	UD=3	D=2	SD=1	15	$\frac{810}{323}$ = 2.51 $\overline{X}$ = 2.51
	Frequency	26	31	82	126	58	323	
	Code value	130	124	246	252	58	810	
	Result							
	Percentage	7.89	33.62	30.11	23.68	6.90	100.00	

Results above shows that the calculated mean value of 2.51 is less than the decision point value of 3.0. It shows that X=2.51<3.0, hence the null hypothesis, it was accepted, while the H1 was rejected. It means that compliance was not dependent on exposure to the message on face mask use law.

Also, item 8 in the questionnaire was used to best the relationship between the message understanding and law compliance. The tested hypothesis was:

Ho: compliance to the law does not depend on message understanding.

H1: compliance to the law was dependent on message understanding.

Obtained data were analyzed as follows:

Table 8: message understanding responsible for law compliance.

Item 8	Response						Total	Mean value $\overline{X}$
Understanding of the message on facemask law made me consider compliance to the law.	Code	SA=5	A=4	UD=3	D=2	SD=1	15	$\frac{933}{323}$ = 2.89 $\overline{X}$ = 2.89
	Frequency	15	50	78	122	58	323	
	Code value	75	200	214	366	58	933	
	Result							
	Percentage	7.89	33.62	30.11	23.68	6.90	100.00	

Result as above shows that the calculated mean value of 2.89 was less than the decision point value of 3.0. It means that X=2.89<3.0, hence accepting H_o and rejecting H_1. It means that compliance to the law does not depend on message understanding.

Discussion of findings

The study found that majority of the respondents were exposed to the message on the facemask use law as promulgated by Anambra state government as evident with Awka residents. The finding is in line with the requirements of the first objective of this study. It also found that a low rate of compliance was observed among Awka residents as respondents in this study.

Their reaction was based on how they respectively felt about the law as the internal aspect of decision making consideration. This is in line with the

postulation of the attribution theory why dealt with how each respondent dealt with the information on the law as related to facemask use. Also, how people felt about COVID-19 as non-existent or a nullity made their compliance to the law less effective.

Conclusion

Exposure to information like the law on facemask use does not assure compliance as expected by the state government. The provided legal consequences were weighted against internal and external factors as basis for compliance consideration. Also, message understanding does not guarantee compliance since the received information content is considered based on the receiver's attitude to the issue.

Recommendation

1. Promulgated laws should de-emphasize penalties but emphasize benefit to the concerned persons. It is when the benefit is considered more than the cost or consequence that compliance can be contemplated. The facemask use law is not an exception.
2. More emphasis should be placed on how facemask prevents COVID so s to arouse user interest them presenting punishment for non-compliance.
3. A vivid example of how the promulgated law is enforced provides basis for message appreciation, which can enhance compliance. Humans avoid pains and are attracted by comfort.

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