ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Public Administration and The Enforcement of COVID-19 Safety Protocols - The Role of The Mass Media

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Abstract

The study investigated the place of mass media in public administration in enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols in Anambra State. The study was necessitated by the fact that many citizens are found flouting the COVID-19 safety rules that will help protect them from the deadly disease. Cross-sectional Survey design was adopted for the study. Three basic research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population was all adult residents in Awka town which is the capital of Anambra state. A sample of 185 adults was used for the study who were drawn using the convenience sampling technique. Data were elicited from the respondents via a researcher-made four point scale questionnaire tagged Mass Media and COVID-19 Safety Protocol Enforcement Questionnaire (MMACOVSAPEQ). The questionnaire was validated by two senior lecturers from Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State. The Cronbach-Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was 0.74 indicative of high reliability. Personal contact method was used in data collection. The percentage and Chi-Square test were used in data analysis for the research questions and hypotheses respectively. Results revealed that the mass media is very viable in creating awareness of the COVID-19 Safety rules to citizens especially those at the rural area. Also the most effective mass media for educating the masses about COVID-19 safety rules are town crying (for those in the rural areas) and television for urban dwellers. Most importantly the study found that the greatest challenge to effective public administration in terms of enforcing COVID-19 safety rules are citizens doubts about the existence of COVID-19 and poor living conditions especially for rural dwellers. It was recommended that the government should intensify awareness creation and sensitization about COVID -19 realities especially at the rural areas. Also efforts must be made by the government to improve the living conditions of citizens to enable them bear the cost of COVID-19 safety protocols. The study concluded therefore that the mass media is very helpful in enforcing the COVID-19 safety rules through awareness creation.

Keywords: Corona virus, governance, mass media, pandemic, public administration, safety protocols

Introduction

Public administration is the act of ensuring the goodness, comfort and safety of the citizens. It entails the government seeing to it that the public (masses) are kept in good condition and that they are free from any form of harm or danger. In times of crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social repercussion, public governance matters more than ever before. Government arrangements have played a critical role in countries immediate responses and will continue to be crucial both to the recovery and to building the new normal.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has created a global health crisis that has affected our normal way of life and everyday activities (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020). The mode of transmission of COVID-19 (which is by contact on surface and patients) has implication to our daily life's routine. To before free from Corona virus infection, there are safety measures that have been mapped out by health experts to help the populace contain the spread of the deadly pandemic. Worthy of note in the characteristic of COVID-19 is that it abhors gathering and physical contacts. This aspect of COVID-19 makes it somehow anti-African. Africans are group of people known for communal life (Lantana, 2019). As hospitable people, most of the African people's life styles are communal where people sit together, eat together and do almost all things together as one family. That is why Obiora (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic tend to disrupt African life style.

A lot of information (including myths) are circulating round the world regarding COVID-19. Many citizens were misled and deceived into believing some unfounded evidences about COVID. However, the confusion and doubts of many

persons where cleared via the mass media.

The mass media is a means of communication that reaches large number of people in a short time at the same time (Elvis, 2019). One of the major roles of mass media is enlightenment through information dissemination. The media provides the citizens with relevant information about any matter in the society. In the present COVID-19 era, the mass media is still very active in keeping the general public posted about the development and safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the disease.

It is important to note that in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, social and economic activities go on daily. People still go to markets, transact businesses, travel from place to place, meet people, children still go to school, market women and business men and home all attend to their work despite the pandemic even in the rural areas. The worry here is that, how well is the general public complying to the safely measures of COVID-19. The media is doing its best to enlighten the population. However, Gideon (2021) contended that the level of compliance to COVID-19 safety protocols may be affected negatively by location. In essence, Gideon is of the view that people in the rural areas might not be well disposed to comply to the COVID-19 safety rules. One reason might be due to poor awareness of the COVID-19 safety protocols. This means that it is possible that some people in the rural areas (grass root dwellers) are not aware of the Covid-19 safety rules and as such may be affected negatively. Even among the urban dwellers, there is still skepticisms regarding their level of compliance to the safety protocols because most residents are still seen violating the rules. People still gather without maintaining social distance in weddings, and other social and religious functions.

Public administration is about the safety and well being of the people, hence it is equally the duty of the public administrators to ensure that great awareness about the COVID-19 safety protocols as created up to the rural dwellers (grassroots).It is against this backdrop that the researcher wishes to examine public administration and enforcement of COVID -19 safety protocols -the role of mass media.

Statement of the Problem

The advent of COVID-19 brought into existence a new way of life. This new way of life is characteristically anti-African. The government has a responsibility to safe guard the safety of its citizens. This they do through public administration. Public administration is all about governance. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in December 2019, government has been up and doing to put in place some safety measures to contain the virus. However, people have shown worry about how well citizens are complying to the COVID-19 safety rules. How can the public be made to comply? It is through enlightenment, education and awareness creation. The awareness creation is to be done through mass media especially in the rural areas where communal life is still prevalent. The researcher is of the view that many citizens may not be aware of the safety protocols and as such may fall victim of the COVID-19 virus due to ignorance. Also, to those who may be aware of the safety rules, their level of compliance to the safety rules is another issue of worry. How well are citizens complying to the safety rules? Now the problem of this study is to examine how mass media could help in public administration to enforce the COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The study is designed to

1. Examine the level of awareness of the public about COVID-19 safety protocols citizens life style in Anambra state.
2. Find out the extent of public compliance to COVID -19 safety rules in Anambra Sttae.
3. Ascertain how the mass media could help in public administration to enforce COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of the residents in Anambra State about COVID-19 safety protocols?
2. To what extent do residents in Anambra state comply or practice the COVID -19 safety rules?
3. How can the mass media help public

administrators to enforce COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

1) There is no significant influence of public administration on residents? compliance to COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State.
2) There is no significant influence of mass media on the enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols in Anambra state

Significance of the Study

The study is significant for the following reasons. It will provide vital information and create great awareness about COVID-19 virus containment and safety rules to stakeholder like

1. Parents
2. Civil servants
3. Public servants
4. Rural dwellers
5. General public

This awareness will help them to paretic the safety rules to be safe from Covid -19

Literature Review

Concept and Importance of Public Administration

Public administration has been variously defined by different authors. For example, Gucelin (2019) defined public administration as the implementation of government policies in the same manner, Davidson (2018) saw public administration as "public leadership of public affairs directly responsible for executive action. From the view of McDonald (2020) public administration includes legislative activities, taxation, national defense, public order and safety, immigration services, foreign affairs and international assistance, and the administration of government programs are activities that are purely governmental in nature. From the foregoing, public administration can be defined as public governance. It is all about making sure that the people are catered for and made safe and secure. Public administration is often regarded as including also some responsibility for determining the policies and programs of governments which is geared towards improving the welfare of the populace. In essence, public administration is all about making sure that the general public is well taken care of in all ramifications.

According to Explicit Success Scholars (E.S.S) (2019), public administration is the field of service that maintains a civil society and provides for the needs of the public. It is the activities undertaken by the government to look after its people and manage its affairs. Public administration adopts different problem solving skills to help in cases of emergency as in crisis situation or in the event of an outbreak of a disease or a pandemic. As an activity, public administration includes planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. It is synonymous to personnel management in the sense that the target group in public administration is human beings. Public administration deals with containing evil situation and helping to keep people safe, from arranging evacuations to distributing necessary supplies in cases of threats to life or other compelling situations and safe guarding lives and properties. With the rise in natural disasters, pandemic (like the case of COVID-19) and states of emergency, due to factors such as climate change, there's plenty of need for effective public administration. Public administration is the performance of a variety of activities by the government in the interest of the public. It ensures that public goods and services are provided for all citizens. Some of which include water, good roads, the supply of power, etc. It ensures that public goods and services are provided for the citizens (McDonald, 2020). Some of which include water, good roads, the supply of power, etc. Government formulates policies from time to time. These policies play roles in the growth and development of the nation. Hence, public administration ensures the impact these policies have on citizens is positive.

On the importance of public administration, Wilson (2017) noted that public administration is very important to individuals, societies and the nation at large. Continuing Wilson submitted some importance of public administration as presented in

the succeeding paragraphs.

a. Public administration serves as an instrument for providing public services
b. It is government instrument for ensuring safety and security of citizens.
c. Public administration helps to see to it that peace and order are maintained in society, hence, our lives and properties are protected from any unforeseen danger.
d. It establishes a stabilizing force in our society- it ensures that there is no disorderliness or sense of confusion whenever a new government exists.
e. Public administration is an instrument for implementing policies- Implementation of laws, policies, and programs, as well as their execution, is solely rested on Public administration.

Rohr (2020) noted that the critical role of public administration is governing the society. Public administration provides numerous services to the public and serves their interests in many ways. For example, Negero (2013) argued that the real core of administration is the basic service which is performed for the public. It is the administration which ensures the security and protection of life and property of the members of the society by maintaining proper law and order. In addition, the economical, cultural and even spiritual advancement of any nation is a function of its public administration (Ahmed, 2014). In the same vein, the day to day functioning of the Government machinery, external affairs and the national defense are the other important functions performed by the public administration of the country.

Covid -19 and Its Safety Protocols

Corona virus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-COV-2) virus. People infected with the virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some become seriously ill and require medical attention (Lalee, 2020). The disease was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan province, China late 2019. On March, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic (Charles, 2020). The disease shook the entire universe that so many persons including medical experts died (Mbah, 2021). The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic left experts in the health care system to strategize with world health body on how to contain and curtail the spread of COVID-19. This led to many months of total lockdown where citizens were restricted from moving around and going about their normal business in a bid to curtail the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, Evans (2020) noted that a lot of deliberations were made to come up with guidelines or safety protocols that will help contain the spread of the virus or eradicate its existence. This view birthed the COVID-19 safety protocols. The essence of the safety protocol is to help the general public identify the proven lifestyle and conduct especially in public places that will help citizens stay free of the virus.

According to Elema (2021), the under listed are some of the COVID-19 safety protocols

i. Maintain social distance at least one metre apart
ii. Keep clean-by washing hand regularly with soap over running water
iii. Use hand sanitizers
iv. Wear face mask when in a crowd.
v. Avoid crowded places reduce gathering together
vi. Avoid touching surfaces and faces
vii. Conduct regular temperature check

A cursory look at these safety protocols reveals that the COVID-19 abhors togetherness. However, in the real world, it is impossible not to have contact with friends, family members, colleagues and relations. This is more glaring when one considers that we are Africans who are known for their hospitality. The outbreak of COVID-19 a kind of disorganize our normal way of life. Communal life is mostly practice in Africa, hence to maintain some of the safety protocols may be difficult (Mbah, 2021).

Awareness and Compliance to Covid-19 Safety Rules

Safety is the state of being free from any form of

terror. It is the condition of being protected from harm or other dangers. Safety can also refer to the control of recognized hazards in order to achieve an acceptable level of risk (McDonald, 2018). In essence safety is the totality of the efforts made to see that people are secured, confident and relaxed in their mind to be able to attend to their challenges. In simple terms, safety refers to the condition of being free from any situation or condition that has the tendency to threaten one? s life and peace of mind.

In the light of COVID-19 pandemic, safety protocols refer to all activities, lifestyles, indulgences and abstinence that are necessary to help one be free from COVIDD-19 infection or attack. Some of the safety protocols have been highlighted in the preceding session. However, there is great doubt about the level of awareness and compliance of the COVID-19 safety rules by citizens. An issue of importance regarding COVID-19 safety protocol is the level of awareness and compliance of the citizen especially rural dwellers. Elema (2021) noted that many residents in the urban area may be aware of the COVID-19 rules due to the influence of social media and better access to information; however, Elema expressed doubts whether people in the rural areas are aware of the rules. In the same vein, the level of compliance to the safety rules is another source of worry. How many citizens are actually obeying the safety rules religiously. Are there no more crowds seen on the streets? How well are the rules obeyed in public places like the market, worship venues and cinema halls? That is why it is equally necessary to examine the extent of awareness and level of compliance to COVID-19 safety rules in the study area.

Mass Media and Covid-19 Safety Rules Awareness

Mass media refers to a diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication (Investopia. 2018). In the same vein, Wikipedia (2019) saw mass media as a platform that transmits information to a large audience at the same time. They (mass media) refer to channels of communication which aid the transfer of messages, contents, files or information from a sender to heterogeneous audience simultaneously.

According to Bagdikian (1997) mass media in the broadcast sense of the word refers to the mediums used for communicating to a very large audience, not only through mechanical devices but also the institutions that use the machines/ technology to transmit manages. Bencsch (2014) holds that mass media particularly the broadcast media, refers to an organized means of openly and clearly communicating and interacting with a large audience or public usually through a mechanical device in a short space of time at a distance. McQuail (2010) explains; we need to recognize that mass communication as described is no longer the only means of society wide and or global communication.

From the foregoing, one can say that the main import of mass media is to disseminate information to a large audience at the same time. Basically, the main role of the mass media is informative role. Mass media is indispensable because the public depends on it for updates of the state of the nation. At the outbreak of COVID-19, the general public was thrown aboard about the pandemic. There was tension everywhere due basically to lack of information about COVID-19. However, a great relief came through the media. Austin (2020) noted that the media played a worldwide role in corona virus disease tracking and updates through live updates dashboard. The media allowed for timely interventions by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), enabling a rapid and widespread reach of public health communications. As good as the media provided information, there is still doubt how well the information did the needed job which is to create awareness about the deadly COVID-19 and to help citizens comply to the safety rules. This is the crux of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda setting theory by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1968 was chosen to under pin the study. The theory states that the media has

the ability to tell the audience what issues are important and relevant thus setting the agenda for public discussion.

In the context of the theory, the media decides what issue is important and relates same to the public as such gives the public the green light to focus on such for discussion. This means that any matter that the media did not take as important will not mean much to the public. According to Folarin (1998) the media sets agenda by choosing what stories to consider news worthy and how much prominence and space to allow. This is the concept of salience which the media confers on issues. This shows that the media plays a vital role in setting the agenda that influences and promotes discussions that encourage healthy lifestyle and behaviours of its audience.

This theory is suitable for the study in that the media played great roles in providing information to the populace about COVID-19 and thereby made the public to see the importance of the COVID-19 agenda. The spotlight of the media placed on COVID-19 helped to convince the public that the COVID-19 agenda is worthy of serious discussion.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey design. The study location was Awka town in Anambra state. Data were collected from some selected civil servants, media practitioners (journalists)and some business men and women residing in Awka town, the capital of Anambra state . The use of these categories of respondents was to get a balanced view of the topic of discourse. The study sampled 150 respondents altogether. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the 150 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed in Awka town which is the capital of Anambra state. Data were elicited from the respondents by means of a researcher made questionnaire titled Mass Media and COVID-19 Safety Protocol Enforcement Questionnaire (MMACOVSAPEQ). Data collection lasted for one week via personal contact method. The reliability of the questionnaire was established via the Cronbach-Alpha method and the procedure yielded a reliability value of 0.74 indicative of high reliability. The percentage was used in analyzing the data for the research questions while the Chi square was used for the hypotheses. The cut off mark for the percentage was 50%. In this regard any item whose percentage response was below 50% was not regarded as influential though was recognized. The use of percentage is due to its simplicity and ease of interpretation by the readers.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness about COVID-19 safety protocols among residents in Anambra state?

Table 1: Level of Awareness about COVID-19 Safety Rules among Residents in Anambra State

S/No	Statement	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1.	Many residents have heard about Corona -virus disease.	120	80.0	30	20.0
2.	Some residents are not aware of the existence of Covid-19	10	6.7	140	93.3
3.	A lot of people talk about Covid-19 pandemic	135	90.0	15	10.0
4.	School children discuss Covid-19 among themselves.	110	73.3	40	26.7
5.	There are great doubts about the existence of Covid-19	20	13.3	130	86.7

Result in table 1 show that 90% of the respondent opined that a lot of people talk about Covid-19 while 80% agreed that many residents have heard about COVID-19 and 73.3% attested that school children discuss covid-19. It could then be deduced that the level of awareness of residents about COVID -19 in Anambra State is very high

Research Question 2: To what extent do residents in Anambra state comply or practice the COVID -19 safety rules?

Table 2: Level of Compliance of Residents to COVID-19 Safety Protocols

S/No	Statement	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1.	Many residents do wear face masks while outside their homes.	55	36.7	95	63.3
2.	Most public places provide wash hand water and soap.	50	33.3	100	66.7
3.	People regularly sanitize their hands.	30	20.0	120	80.0
4.	Social distance is maintained in all public places.	20	13.3	130	86.7
5.	Schools now have only 20 children per class	20	13.3	130	86.7
6.	Gathering has reduced drastically.	40	26.7	110	73.3

Evidences in Table 2 show that the level of compliance is very low. This is evident in the below 50% affirmative responses on all the six items in Table 2. For example, only 26.7% (40 out of 150) of the respondents agreed that gathering has reduced. Which invariably means that a greater percentage 73.3% (representing 110 respondents are of the view that gathering is still on.

Research Question 3: How can the mass media help public administrators to enforce COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State?

Table 3: Role of Mass Media in Enforcing Compliance to COVID-19 Safety Protocols in Anambra State

S/No	Statement	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1.	Mass media educates people on how to abide by the safety rules	90	60.	60	40
2.	They provide information about the effects of COVID-19 on people and national economy.	120	80.0	30	20.0
3.	They mobilize security agents to move round the town to ensure compliance.	130	86.7	20	13.3
4.	Mass media shows pictures of victims to the public to help them see the need to comply to safety rules.	140	93.3	10	6.7
5.	The media enlightens the masses about COVID-19.	125	83.3	25	16.7

The role of the mass media is presented in Table 3. Data showed that 93.3% agreed that the mass media helps compliance to COVID -19 safety rules by showing pictures of victims to residents, also 86.7% opined that they mobilize security agents to move round the town ensure compliance among others.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of public administration on residents compliance to COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra State.

Table 4 shows that calculated X^2 value of 54.0 is greater than table Chi-square value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance at a degree of freedom of 1; hence the bull hypothesis is rejected. The study holds therefore that there is a significant influence of public administration on residents compliance to COVID -19 safety protocols.

Table 4: Chi-Square Summary of the Influence of Public Administration on Residents Compliance to COVID-19 Safety Rules in Anambra State

Variables	N	fo	Fe	fo-fe	$\frac{(fo - fe)2}{fe2}$	df	α	X^2cal	X^2tab
Public Admin		120	75	45	27.0				
	150					1	0.05	54.0	3.84
Residents' Compliance level		30	75	- 45	27.0				
					$\Sigma\chi 2=540$				

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of mass media on the enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols in Anambra state.

Table 5: Chi-Square Summary of the Influence of the Role of Mass Media on Enforcement of COVID-19 Safety Protocols in Anambra State

Variables	N	fo	Fe	fo-fe	$\frac{(fo - fe)2}{fe2}$	df	∞	X^2cal	Mean
Mass media		135	75	4560	48.0				
	150					1	0.05	96.00	3.84
Enforcement of Covid-19 safety rules		15	75	- 60	48.0				

Data in table 5 shows that calculated X^2 value of 96.00 is greater than table value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant influence of mass media in enforcing the COVID-19 safety protocols in Anambra State.

Conclusion

The study is on public administration and enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocol: The role of the mass media. The essence was to examine how the mass media helps in public administration by through enforcing the COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra state. The study was necessitated by the great non-compliance to COVID-19 safety rules by many residents in the study area, From the analysis, it was gathered that the level of awareness of COVID-19 among residents is very high; however, despite the great awareness, the rate of compliance to the safety rules is rather minimal. In the same vein, the various roles of the mass media towards Covid-19 safety protocols were highlighted and they include mass education of the public, enlightenment about the dangers of COVID-19 among others. In the same vein, the study found significant influence of public administration on the residents compliance to COVID-19 safety rules in the study area. Finally it was equally gathered that mass media has a significant influence on the enforcement of COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra state. Based on these findings, the study concludes therefore that mass media has significant roles to play in public administration in terms of enforcing the COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra state.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings from the study the following are recommended:

1. The study found that the level of compliance to COVID-19 safety rules among residents is very minimal hence there is need to devise means of making residents to comply to the safety protocols in order to contain the disease to foster a healthy nation.
2. There is need for the government to set up monitoring team/task force to move round the

towns and villages to ensure strict compliance to the various COVID-19 safety rules.

3. People in the rural areas need more enlightenment about the COVID-19 diseases especially as it relates to gathering in crowded places and maintenance of social distance.
4. To enforce strict compliance of the COVID-19 safety rules in Anambra state the government needs to impose fine for defaulters to serve as deterrent to others.

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