

Influence of Radio Coverage of Conditions in Nigerian Correctional Centers on Port Harcourt Residents' Perception of the Treatment of Inmates by Authorities

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Radio Coverage, Correctional Centres, Public Awareness, Inmates, Welfare, Rehabilitation

Received : 05, January

Revised : 10, February

Accepted: 15, March

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ABSTRACT

This study was predicated on the need to analyse the influence of radio coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres on how Port Harcourt residents perceive how the authorities treat the inmates in these centres. With Agenda Setting and Selective Influence theories as base, the study formulated four research questions. The sample size for the study was 384 (survey) and 24 (content analysis) drawn from a population size of 756,000 and 24 respectively. Among other findings, the study showed that in terms of pattern, radio stations covered conditions in Nigerian Corrective Centres frequently and prominently in detailed fashion. The results also showed that the residents recorded a high level of listenership to the selected programmes and also had a high rate of encounter of issues relating to the corrective centres. Finally, findings showed that the radio coverage of the correctional centres influences how the residents perceive the treatment of the inmates by the authorities. The study recommended that radio stations in Rivers State should maintain the pattern of coverage of the correctional centres so as to lead to advocacy and generate public discourse leading to reforms in the sector.

INTRODUCTION

The mass media are sources of information and news which reach a variegated and large audiences separated by distance. Sub-divided into print, electronic (broadcast) and new media, the mass media entertain, inform, educate, survey the horizons of the environment, correlate and integrate different sectors of human life as well as transmit culture.

A popular arm of the mass media is radio which is estimated to have a significantly higher influence than other mass media channels because of its peculiar nature which makes it more accessible to a higher number of the societal populace, particularly in the poor, illiterate rural suburbs (Innocent, 2016). The mass media are generally seen as special mobilizers or change agents. In Nigeria, notable social, health, economic and attitudinal changes and mobilization have been carried out through the mass media. Radio and television, with their visual and auditory appeals and ability to reach far-flung areas to enlighten both the literate and illiterate citizens (Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020). Built on this, is the ability of radio to educate citizens on their rights, privileges, duties and obligations as responsible citizens. As a matter of fact, radio information and enlightenment generates public confidence, legitimacy and political stability in the political system. This makes radio one of the most credible sources of news leading to attitudinal change (Bello, 2015).

Using its surveillance function, the mass media can be used as a tool to expose existing conditions in different sectors of society, especially among societal segments that that could be considered less-privileged, in this case inmates. Consequent upon such exposure, people's perception of such segments or sectors could change, leading to advocacy and subsequently, governmental policies. This notwithstanding, audience members would usually have differing perceptions about issues which ultimately, may not be viewed as a mutual generalisation but a set of new media experiences or a new way of viewing pre-existing experiences; the changeability of perception explains why audience members may exhibit a range of discriminatory responses to media content. This means that a single media product may elicit a range of responses from a particular audience whose perceptions have been modified by new experiences (Innocent & Okezie, 2022).

Given that there has been a plethora of policies regarding the management and welfare of inmates in Nigeria by successive governments (Aborisade and Obileye, 2018), it would appear that these policies have not translated to concrete improvements on the general conditions in Nigerian correctional centres. A recurring concern and discourse within contemporary academic circles, criminologists, social workers and prison experts, is the modalities to put together an appropriate template for proper prison administration that will reflect positive objectives. It is held that though crime and other vices need to be deterred, it should be to the extent that its application is reasonable to the inmates during and after imprisonment; it is therefore needful to be logical and rational in punishing.

Aborisade & Obileye (2018) state thus: Nigerian prisons are „living hell“; twenty to thirty inmates arrive at the prison every day, thus overcrowding the

reformatory structure which does not even exist in the true sense. This often times, often times triples the original capacity of the facility. Its conditions have remained poor and dilapidated, which has denied it of the very needful roles of building and rebuilding Nigerian citizens and reintegrating remoulded law offenders back into the society (Rahaman, 2010; Eze, 2010; Chukwudi, 2012). For instance, Ikoyi Prison in Lagos State has a capacity for 800 but now the inmates are in excess of 1,200 (Aborisade & Obileye, 2018). This scene is reflected in all prisons structures across the country.

There is shortage of bed spaces; only half of the inmates sleep on beds. Disease is widespread; cells are unclean and offer little ventilation resulting in unhealthy and dangerous sanitary conditions (Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020). Prison and detention conditions remain harsh and life-threatening. Prison inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise irregularly and many inmates provide their own food. Chukwudi (2012) maintains that the "Nigerian prisons are characterized by so many problems which have been indicated by several studies, and this has been reasons for inadequacies of the system as a corrective institution" (p.38).

Petty corruption among prison officials makes it difficult for money provided for food to reach the prisoners and poor inmates often rely on „handouts“ from others to survive. These unwholesome conditions have contributed to the death in detention of numerous prisoners (Aborisade & Obileye, 2018). A report by Human Rights Practice Commission for Prisoners“ Dignity (1999) cited in Amnesty International (2014) estimated that at least one inmate dies per day in Kirikiri Prison in Lagos alone. Other studies (Abdulrasaq, 2022; Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020; Oyeyipo, Asamu & Arisukwu, 2021) also echo the same findings. Dead inmates are promptly buried in graves on the compound usually without their families being notified. Educational and vocational training programmes do not exist. Though a study by Igbinoia and Omoroghiunwa (2019) identifies the rehabilitation programmes in Benin City prisons as social intervention services with the highest mean value of 2.92 (70%), skills acquisition programmes 2.76 (69%), recreational programmes 2.66 (66.5%), and educational services 2.51 (62.8%); the general story in the Nigerian prison system tells of human resources being wasted due to idleness among inmates because the old-time trade ideas and occupations have been abandoned (Chukwudi, 2012).

This accounts for the high rate of recidivism because inmates are not properly reformed or rehabilitated (Chukwudi, Marumo, & Mothelesi, 2019). There is more to imprisonment than opening and closing of prison gates. Modern penal management techniques emphasise reform of the inmates or convicts. Building upon this, the current attitude in penal circles is to see improvement from the perspective of reform and rehabilitation rather than from the perspective of punishment. It is assumed that those who have committed crimes need help, and should be assisted to lead a good life. This view is predicated upon the understanding that those who have fallen foul of the collective norms and laws of the society expressed in criminal laws should

be reformed; this is why the term „correction“ is applied to reflect this thinking (*Guardian*, 2018, February 19).

As Ayuk (2013) holds, the administration of inmates in Nigerian correctional centres is very outdated. For example, each day, prison directors register inmates' names on a blackboard positioned near the prison gate and report to the zonal office which in turn, reports to the headquarters in Abuja. Successive governments in Nigeria have made recommendations and suggestions to better the operation of prisons, but little or nothing has been done in terms of implementation.

Sometime in 2014, the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave its Committee on Interior a 2-week deadline to submit a report on a bill seeking to improve the appalling conditions of the nation's prisons entitled, *A Bill for an Act to repeal the Prison Act* (Oyeyipo, Asamu & Arisukwu, 2021). This bill sought to provide a legal framework for the comprehensive reform of the Nigerian prison system. Regrettably, this and similar efforts in the past, have been inconclusive. For instance, Obasanjo's government set up a National Working Group on Prison Reform to audit the state of the nation's prisons and make recommendations to the government. Successive Attorneys General in the country have equally made recommendations to the government on prison reform following the extensive audit of the nation's prisons in 2005 (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2014). For instance, one-time Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Bayo Ojo, and the Federal Ministry of Justice recommended to the then Federal Executive Council to declare the issue of Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATI) a matter of urgent national importance. Nothing fruitful resulted from that reform initiative ((Alemika & Chukwuma, 2014).

The mass media play several roles in society but of note is provision of information leading to creation of awareness. In today's life, events that happen within and outside the immediate environment have the potential to shape how the people in such environments live and behave (Eghosa, 2013). Specifically, the nature, in terms of frequency, slant and patterns of reporting by the mass media can therefore shape public opinion. With the foregoing in mind therefore, it becomes pertinent to give a thought to the role of the mass media in driving public opinion on situations in Nigerian Correctional Centres and how this advocacy colours the perception of the citizenry on these existing conditions. It is on this premise that this work is born. Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, was chosen for the study because of the existence of one of the biggest correctional centres in the South-South geopolitical zone - the Port Harcourt Correctional Centre - which services other correctional centres in the zone (Comptroller of Prisons, Port Harcourt Correctional Centre, personal communication). The existence of this centre in the city is bound to generate public discourse among the residents on conditions in the centres. Again, two programmes, *The Prisoner and You* (Family Love 97.7FM) and *Hard Facts* (NigInfo, 92.3FM), Port Harcourt were the programmes analysed.

Statement of the problem

Research in media effect have proved that people in different societies formulate the perception events and issues in society based on the influence of media coverage of such issues and events (Innocent, 2016). It is observable that one of such issues that has often captured media attention is the plight of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres. These Correctional Centres have therefore often come under the radar of media coverage in Nigeria and this coverage has generated public opinions influencing how people perceive the issues, especially the authorities who manage these facilities (Chukwudi, Marumo, & Mothelesi, 2019; Igbinovia and Omoroghiunwa, 2019). Nearly every city in Nigeria has some form of prison facility and media coverage of these facilities generate public discourse in the host city and beyond. Port Harcourt is one of such cities with a number of radio stations that observably touch on the subject. However, it is not clear whether such coverage by these radio stations influences how the residents of Port Harcourt perceive the authorities' treatment of the inmates. Therefore this study examined influence of Radio coverage of conditions in Nigerian Correctional Centres on Port Harcourt residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by authorities.

Aim and Research Questions

This study aimed to evaluate the influence of radio (Family Love 97.7FM and NigInfo 92.3FM) coverage of conditions in Nigerian Correctional Centres on Port Harcourt residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by authorities. The research questions were:

RQ1: What are the patterns of coverage of conditions of inmates in Nigerian Corrective Centres in the selected radio programmes in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State?

RQ2: To what extent do Port Harcourt City LGA residents listen to the selected radio programmes?

RQ3: To what extent are Port Harcourt residents exposed to issues of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres in the selected radio programmes?

RQ4: To what extent does the radio coverage of the welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres influence Port Harcourt residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Coverage of conditions in Nigeria's Correctional Centres

There is documented evidence (Bello, 2015; Owolabi, 2015; Lee, 2014) that over the years, the Nigerian mass media have significantly played advocacy roles in the Nigerian society, especially as it relates to issues of human rights. This advocacy is largely achieved through the frequency and patterns of coverage of these issues (Innocent, 2022). As it relates to conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres, the mass media, specifically radio has continued to beam coverage searchlight on issues of inmates' welfare – health, feeding, living conditions, the judicial process, education and skills acquisition, etc. As Chukwudi, Marumo, and Mothelesi (2019) aver the nature of prison administration in Nigeria stimulates 98% of prisoners' and ex-convicts' to get involved in crime and criminal behaviour. The print media, largely newspapers have also continued to report the same issues with a touch of advocacy for reforms and overall treatment of inmates (Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020). On the part, the social as well as online media appear to be in the forefront of covering and driving public opinion on the conditions in correctional centres the world over (Barbakov, Vinogradova, & Shatsky, 2018).

In terms of nature of media coverage on Nigeria's correctional centres, radio appears to give attention to the conditions of inmates largely through their news bulletins, current affairs as well as other programmes (Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020). The current affairs programmes seem to favour the panel discussion, vox pop as well as audience interaction formats. This also applies to TV. For the print media, the coverage is largely through straight news, editorials, opinion articles and sometimes, print documentaries or supplements (Etannibi, Alemika, 2020). The social media coverage is mostly restricted to times when certain significant events, like deaths of prisoners, occur. Available literature also indicate that media coverage of inmates' conditions seem to gain ascendancy during particular times like the International Day of Prisoners of during Jail Delivery visits by Government officials especially during religious celebrations in the country (Okon, 2018).

On a daily basis, issues relating to or emanating from Nigeria's correctional centres serve as conversational currency among Nigerian citizens (Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo, 2020). Interpersonal discussions most times focus on how inmates are treated in these correctional centres. These discussions most times occur more among citizens whose relatives are in the centres (Innocent & Okezie, 2022). Research (Igbिनovia & Omoroghiunwa, 2019) has also indicated that while some Nigerian citizens believe that the mass media are not doing enough to call attention to and exposure the perceived ills in the Nigerian judicial and corrective system, others maintain that the blame is not on the mass media but on government corruption and policy infidelity (Igbिनovia &

Omoroghiunwa, 2019). In sum, it is evident that Nigerian citizens are exposed to the media coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres.

Finally, just as it has been established that mass media agenda influences public opinion and perception of issues among citizens, in the same vein, there is evidence that correlates media coverage of conditions and welfare in Nigeria's correctional centres with how citizens perceive the way government authorities treat inmates. For instance, since the citizens have very restricted access, in some cases, no access at all, it follows that their window of sight into conditions in these centres are the mass media.

However, there are other sources of information for the citizens on conditions in correctional centres, but it would appear that the citizens rate the mass media more credible than the other sources. For instance, *Daily Trust*, (2016, May 13) reported that conditions in Nigeria's "Prison and detention center remain harsh and life threatening. Prisoners and detainees, the majority of whom had not been tried, are reportedly subjected to extrajudicial execution, torture, gross overcrowding, food and water shortages, inadequate medical treatment, deliberate and incidental exposure to heat and sun, and infrastructure deficiencies that lead to wholly inadequate sanitary conditions that could result in death. Guards and prison officials reportedly extort inmates or levy fees on them to pay for food, prison maintenance, and release from prison. Female inmates in some cases faced the threat of rape." A report in the *Vanguard* news newspaper (2019, May 14) states thus, "Conditions in Nigerian prisons are heart-wrenching. What strikes one immediately is the age of the prisons, the congestion and more importantly the large number of persons who are yet to be tried and convicted," while *Saharareporters* (2022, May 10) reported that "conditions under which prisoners live are not fit for human beings whether they have committed crimes for which they are serving sentences or not. The way our prisons are structured, they neither reform nor remould. Rather, they make prisoners worse than they were before entering the prisons. These reports seem to inform the perception of Nigeria's correctional system as corrupt, mean and inhuman. (Chukwudi, 2012)

Agenda-setting theory

According to Childs and Reston the first scholar to formalize the Agenda-setting theory, was a prominent American journalist, Walter Lippman (Ndimele and Innocent, 2016). This theory simply states that the mass media have the ability to mentally order or organise the world for the people (Daramola, 2003 as cited in Nwagbara, Okon, Nweke & Okugo, 2018). The mass media can make an issue or event in society a topic for public discourse by attaching importance to it through intense coverage or reportage. Explaining how this happens, Ndimele and Innocent (2016) hold that the mass media often present to the audience certain basic socio-political and economic issues that dominate public discourse and debate even at interpersonal levels at some periods in their history.

In the long run, the mass media do not only inform us, but also influence the importance we attach to certain events and happenings in society; by so doing, the mass media can set agenda for society. People generally depend on the media to know what is going in the society and the world at large. Whatever issue the media lays more emphasis on is therefore seen as more important than those with lesser emphasis. Following this dependence therefore, the media set agenda functions which explains media role in shaping and influencing public opinion (Ndimele and Innocent, 2016). According to Baran and Davis (2020), the agenda-setting function of the mass media manifests in the vividness of presentation (addition of descriptive details, use of visuals and sound-bites as well as pictures; position of a story (lead stories as well as stories on cover, back and centrespread pages are considered of higher news value than others) and priming (positioning stories in contexts that give them meaning).

Selective Influence Theory

Also known as the conditional effects model, this theory states that although the mass media can play crucial roles in behaviour change, people interpret media messages differently, which can result in separate conclusions drawn from the consumption of content from the same medium (Hodkinson, 2011). People's opinions, interests and predispositions can have a deep influence on their behaviour vis-à-vis mass media and the effects such messages are likely to have on them. There is enough strong evidence to show that people tend to expose themselves to media messages that they agree with and consciously or unconsciously avoid messages they disagree with (Ndimele and Innocent, 2016). Selective exposure, which has roots in psychology, therefore advances the argument that individual tend to favour information which reinforces their pre-existing views while avoiding contradictory information. Selective exposure has also been known and defined as congeniality bias or "confirmation bias" (Hast, William; Albarraum, Dolores, *et al*, 2009, cited in Hodkinson, 2011). Selective exposure relies on the assumption that one will continually seek out information on an issue even after an individual has taken a stance on it. The position that a person has taken will be coloured by various factors reinforced during the decision-making process. Theoretically, selective exposure occurs when people's beliefs guide their media selections (Baran and Davies, 2020).

The selective influence theory is therefore a form of dissonance-reduction in the sense that individuals can determine the type of media messages to expose themselves to, and those to avoid. This occurs through the three sub-process of the theory namely, selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention or subconscious erasure (Ahmed & Bates, 2013).

Related Empirical Studies

Ayuk (2019) undertook a study on: Congestion of Nigerian prison and its impact on rehabilitating the inmates: A case study of Ikom Prison, Cross River State and the findings indicated that the reforms have not in any way improved the welfare and treatment of inmates. Relatedly, Ezebuilo, Okon and Okugo (2020) undertook a research on media coverage and audience awareness of prison reform campaigns in South-East Nigeria. Data were collected using the questionnaire and interviews. The findings showed that there was inadequate coverage of prison-related issues in the Nigerian mass media and this inadequacy resulted in a significantly low level awareness among the residents of the South-Eastern geopolitical zone on issues of prison conditions and the need for reforms. On their part, Abu and Anele (2020) studied the conditions and congestions levels in correctional services in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria. The results of their findings show that the congestion levels are high and are predicated on the steady rise of awaiting trial inmates in these facilities. Finally, Opafunso and Adepoju (2016) investigated Prison Reforms and Inmates' Welfare in Nigeria. The findings revealed that despite different reforms in Nigerian prisons by various administrations over the years, the welfare of inmates is not significantly impacted positively.

METHODOLOGY

To analyse the influence of radio coverage of conditions in Corrective centres in Nigeria on Port Harcourt residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities, a triangulation (content analysis and survey) was employed to extract data from respondents. For the survey, the population was 756,000 (2006 National Population Census figures for Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, Rivers State). For the media, the 24 editions of the two selected programmes between January and March, 2022, constituted the population. Note the timeframe was chosen because February 11 of every year is World Prisons Awareness Day and the media were expected to make this the peak reportorial period for stories on prisons. The survey sample was 384 respondents, using purposive sampling to target only residents who are exposed to issues of conditions and welfare in Nigeria's correctional centres on radio. For the content analysis, the sample size was 24, using census sampling technique. The units of analysis were the frequency of the issues in the programme editions, the position of the stories and the format for presentation. The questionnaire was a 13-item instrument constructed using a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The mean criterion was used in analysing the results in a tabular form and to arrive at the mean criterion, responses option were weighed as follows: (SA)- 4 points, (A)-3 points, (SD)- 2points, and (D)- 1 point and any mean below the average mean of 2.5 was rejected while any mean above 2.5 was accepted.

RESULT

The retrieval rate of the administered instrument was 90.1% (346 copies retrieved out of 384 administered). The coefficient index is was 0.80 while data employed mean score and criterion mean with any mean below the criterion mean was rejected and those above 2.5, were accepted.

Demographic data

Table 1: Sex or Gender of Respondents

	Sex/Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Male	217	62.7
2.	Female	129	37.3
3.	Total	346	100

Table 2: Age Category Respondents

	Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	20-30	78	22.5
2.	31-45	132	38.2
3.	45 and above	136	39.3
	Total	346	100

Table 3: Educational Levels of Respondents

	Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
1.	O"Level	61	17.6
2.	1 st Degree	147	42.5
3.	Post-graduate Degree	138	39.9
	Total	346	100

RQ1: What are the patterns of coverage of conditions of inmates in Nigerian Corrective Centres in the selected radio programmes in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State?

Patterns of coverage was measured in terms of frequency of the issues in the programme editions, the position of the story in the programme and the format for presentation. In terms of frequency, issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria"s correctional centres had a significantly high frequency of 79.1% (19 times) on both programmes for the months reviewed. In terms of position of the story, issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria"s correctional centres appeared 11 times (57.9%) as lead stories, 6 times (31.6%) as second lead and 2 times (10.5%) as last story. As it relates to format for presentation, 2 major panel studio discussion and interview of experts were the

formats with which issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria's correctional centres, were presented.

RQ2: To what extent do Port Harcourt City LGA residents listen to the selected radio programmes?

Table 4 Mean (x) Analysis of Port Harcourt City LGA residents' rate of listenership to the selected programmes

S/N	Item Description	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
1.	I listen to every edition of <i>The Prisoner and You</i> and <i>Hard Facts</i>	73 292	131 393	142 284	0 0	346 969	2.8	Agree
2.	I listen to <i>The Prisoner and You</i> and <i>Hard Facts</i> at least twice in a month	46 184	96 288	204 408	0 0	346 880	2.5	Agree
3.	I listen to <i>The Prisoner and You</i> and <i>Hard Facts</i> whenever I remember	21 84	32 96	142 248	151 169	346 597	1.7	Disagree

Data in Table 4 above show the rate of listenership to the selected programmes by the respondents. The results of the analysis indicate that 54.4% (202) of the respondents listen to the selected programmes weekly while 15.3% (53) of the respondents listen only whenever they remember to tune in. This implies that there is a high rate of listenership to the programmes.

RQ3: To what extent are Port Harcourt City LGA residents exposed to issues of the welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres in the selected programmes?

Table 5 Mean (x) Analysis of Port Harcourt City LGA residents' extent of exposure to issues of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres on in the selected programmes

S/N	Item Description	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
4.	I am exposed to issues of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres on <i>Prisoner and You</i> (Family Love 97.7FM and <i>Hard Facts</i> (NigInfo 92.3FM) at least 3 times in a month	124 496	102 306	120 240	0 0	346 1042	3.0	Agree
5.	I am exposed to issues of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres on <i>Prisoner and You</i> (Family Love 97.7FM and <i>Hard Facts</i> (NigInfo 92.3FM) at least once in a month	68 272	198 594	80 160	0 0	346 1026	2.9	Agree
6.	I am exposed to issues of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian	22	58	206	60	346	2.1	Disagree

Correctional Centres on <i>Prisoner and You</i> (Family Love 97.7FM and <i>Hard Facts</i> (NigInfo 92.3FM) only once in a while.	88	174	412	60	594		
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The data in the table above indicate the frequency of exposure of the respondents to issues relating to inmates in the selected programmes on radio. The data reveals that 65.3% (226) of the respondents encounter issues relating to conditions in correctional centres at least twice in a month in the selected programmes. This figure shows that the rate of exposure is high.

RQ4: To what extent does the coverage of the welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres influence Port Harcourt City LGA residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities?

Table 6 Mean (\bar{x}) Analysis of extent of influence of radio coverage of welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres on Port Harcourt City LGA residents' perception of treatment of inmates by authorities

S/N	Item Description	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
7.	I perceive that inmates in Nigeria's Correctional Centres live in unhealthy conditions	322 1288	24 72	0 0	0 0	346 1634	4.7	Agree
8.	I believe that inmates in Nigeria's Correctional Centres are maltreated by the authorities	277 1108	48 144	21 42	0 0	346 1294	3.7	Agree
9.	I believe that inmates in Nigeria's Correctional Centres are not well fed	329 1316	17 51	0 0	0 0	346 1367	3.9	Agree
10.	I believe that Nigeria's correctional system is corrupt and the authorities exploit the inmates	331 1324	15 45	0 0	0 0	346 1369	3.9	Agree
10.	My perceptions above derive from my listenership to <i>Prisoner and You</i> (Family Love 97.7FM and <i>Hard Facts</i> (NigInfo 92.3FM)	123 492	187 561	26 52	0 0	346 1105	3.2	Agree
12	The detailed discussions and expert interviews on the <i>Prisoner and You</i> (Family Love 97.7FM and <i>Hard Facts</i> (NigInfo 92.3FM) influence my perceptions most on the treatment of inmates.	117 468	132 396	97 194	0 0	346 1058	3.1	Agree
13	My perception of the treatment of inmates by authorities is also influenced by interpersonal sources as well as occasional personal visits to the correctional centres.	134 536	136 408	76 152	0 0	346 1096	3.2	Agree

The data in Table 6 above show that the 6 items (7-13) used to measure the influence of the radio coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres on Port Harcourt City LGA residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities, had mean scores above the mean average. This therefore indicates a correlation between the 2 variables. However, the data also reveal that this influence is predicated on the programme formats used to present the issues on radio.

DISCUSSION

1. *Research Question 1: What are the patterns of coverage of conditions of inmates in Nigerian Corrective Centres in the selected programmes Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State?*

Patterns of coverage was measured in terms of frequency of the issues in the programme editions, the position of the story in the programme and the format for presentation. In terms of frequency, issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria's correctional centres had a significantly high frequency of 79.1% (19 times) on both programmes for the months reviewed. In terms of position of the story, issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria's correctional centres appeared 11 times (57.9%) as lead stories, 6 times (31.6%) as second lead and 2 times (10.5%) as last story. As it relates to format for presentation, 2 major panel studio discussion and interview of experts were the formats with which issues of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria's correctional centres, were presented. These findings resound with those of Rahaman (2010) that when issues human rights break, especially those connected with the police and judicial system, they become topical in all spheres of societal life.

2. *Research Question 2: To what extent do Port Harcourt residents listen to The Prisoner and You (Family Love 97.7FM and Hard Facts (NigInfo 92.3FM) in Port Harcourt City LGA?*

Data in Table 4 show the rate of listenership of the selected programmes by the respondents. Items 1 and 2 had accepted means of 2.8 and 2.5 respectively while item 3 had a negative mean of 1.7. The results of the analysis further indicate that 54.4% (202) of the respondents listen to the selected programmes weekly while 15.3% (53) of the respondents listen only whenever they remember to tune in. This implies that the rate of listenership to the selected programmes is high. This finding echoes those of Ayuk (2013) that radio programmes which focus on or relate to human life and conditions of living attract a high level of viewership and leadership from the audience. The author also corroborates the claims by Ahmed and Bates (2013) that among the channels of the mass media, radio attracts the greatest chunk of audience followership, most times by the educated segment of the audience which use the radio in supplemental fashion.

3. *Research Question 3: To what extent are Port Harcourt City LGA residents exposed to issues of the welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres in the selected programmes?*

The data in Table 5 indicated the frequency of exposure of the respondents to issues relating to inmates in the selected programmes on radio. While items 4 and 5 recorded mean scores of 3.0 and 2.9 and were therefore accepted, item 6 had a mean score of 2.1 which was rejected. Furthermore, the results reveal that 65.3% (226) of the respondents claimed they encounter issues relating to conditions in correctional centres at least twice in a month in the selected programmes on the 2 radio stations. These data are indicative of a high level of coverage of conditions and welfare in correctional centres which resulted in a high rate of exposure to these issues by the respondents. This finding is in consonance with those by Igbinovia & Omoroghiunwa (2019) as well as Innocent & Okezie (2022) that the mass media in Nigeria give adequate reportorial and coverage attention to issues relating to conditions and welfare in Nigeria's correctional centres resulting in a high level of exposure to and awareness of these issues by mass media audiences in Nigeria.

4. *Research Question 4: To what extent does the coverage of the welfare and conditions of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centres influence Port Harcourt City LGA residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities?*

The data in Table 6 above show that the 6 items (7-13) used to measure the influence of the radio coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres on Port Harcourt City LGA residents' perception of the treatment of inmates by the authorities, had mean scores above the mean average. The mean scores were 4.7, 3.7, 3.9 and 3.9 respectively and related to how the respondents perceive Nigeria's correctional system. The mean scores that related to the influence of the coverage of the issues relating to Nigeria's correctional system were 3.2, 3.1 and 3.2 respectively. The scores above indicate that the radio coverage of conditions and welfare of inmates in Nigeria's correctional centres influences how residents of Port Harcourt City LGA perceive how the authorities treat the inmates. However, the data also reveal that interpersonal sources also influence this perception. These findings echo those of Sabitu, Iliyasu & Joshua (2009), Opafunso and Adepoju (2020) and Ezebuilo, Okon & Okugo (2020) that the nature of coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres by the mass media in Nigeria drives awareness and perception among the Nigerian populace. However, these findings are at variance with those of Sabitu, Iliyasu & Joshua (2019) that mass media (particularly radio) coverage of conditions in Nigeria's correctional centres is shallow and biased and has influenced significantly, how Nigerians perceive government policies and programmes aimed at managing the prison system in Nigeria. The authors further claim that the gap in awareness creation by the mass media has invariably resulted in misplaced and inaccurate perceptions among the populace of the goal of the prison system in the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was necessitated by a perceived gap in research literature as to the nature and extent of coverage of conditions and welfare of inmates in

Nigeria's correctional centre by radio stations in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State, and if the coverage influences how the residents of the city perceive the treatment of inmates in these correctional centres by the authorities. Consequent upon the findings of the study, we conclude that radio stations in Rivers State provide adequate and detailed coverage of issues relating to conditions and welfare in Nigeria's corrective centres and that this coverage influences the perception of the residents of the local government area, of Nigeria's correctional system as corrupt and the inmates as maltreated. Against the backdrop of the foregoing, the study recommends that radio stations in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State, should continue in the same path and pattern of coverage of issues and events relating to corrective centres inmates' welfare and conditions. In fact, other radio stations should put up similar programmes as the ones surveyed and tailor them to initiate and drive advocacy and public discourse among residents in the city leading ultimately to reforms and improvement in the country's correctional system.

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