

Curbing the Menace of Fake Drug Circulation in Nigeria: The Media Option

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the broadcast media in curbing the circulation of fake or substandard drugs in the society. The research investigates the role the broadcast media has played, how it played the role and to what extent it has been successful in increasing the awareness on fake drugs in the society. The survey research method was employed using the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection from a sample of 400 respondents. Findings show the broadcast media has done enough to combat the menace of fake drugs in

Anambra State using broadcast media programmes such as "You and Your Health". The study concludes that the awareness of counterfeit and fake drugs in multi sector economy calls for synergy among stakeholders and a sustained approach in order to achieve success. It therefore suggests that the media can produce more programmes that discuss the dangers of fake drugs in the society to control the circulation and also partner with relevant agencies to fight the circulation of fake drugs in the society.

Keywords: Evaluation, Awareness, Broadcast media, Circulation, Fake drugs.

INTRODUCTION

[1] defines evaluation as a systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards. An evaluation can appraise an intervention or initiative to ascertain the degree of success with regard to the aims and objectives. Evaluation is therefore synonymous with assessment, appraisal, judgement, estimation, and ranking. Evaluation can be applied to various human endeavours to determine the degree of success achieved within a given period of time. Thus, it can be applied to the broadcast media fight against fake drugs.

The surveillance function of the media gives them the responsibility to cover, analyze and report impending dangers that are threats to lives and properties of a given society. [2] while writing on media surveillance, asserts that "this is a process of collecting and distributing information about local, national and international events and conditions. [3], citing [4], observes that "they (mass

media) watch over, guard and alert society of impending problems and often proffer the way forward" while [5] avers that the media further exercise surveillance over the environment and alert members of the society to the realities of their environment. Contributing to the debate, [6] asserts that media houses all over the world have continued to play the surveillance role with utmost responsibility, noting that "the mass media in U.S.A, Russia, China and many other countries have effectively played the surveillance role by constantly serving the people with security/safety reports which have helped to avert many calamities that would have occurred".

The trafficking of fake or counterfeit drugs is on the increase in both developed and developing nations. Unfortunately, there appears to be sufficient efforts at tackling the menace in developed country, while the same cannot be said of developing countries. Ordinarily, drug is administered to

prevent illnesses, treat diseases and reduce pain, but drug counterfeiting negates this function and so cannot be glossed over. Perhaps of all crimes, none is as potentially dangerous yet neglected as sub-standard drugs. [7] notes that fake drugs cause so much suffering and deaths that some experts describe it as an attempted murder.

The World Health Organization (WHO 2005) defines a fake or a sub-standard drug as a medicine, deliberately and fraudulent mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source. Available records indicate that the spread of counterfeit drugs is generally more pronounced in those countries where they are manufactured. Importation, distribution, supply and sale of drugs are less regulated and enforcement of safety laws is weak. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products and counterfeit medicines may include products with the correct ingredients but fake packaging, with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients or with insufficient active ingredients; products which have hazardous, adulterated, substituted substances which are misrepresented sold with a false brand name; legitimate drugs that have passed their date of expiry and remarked with false date; and low quality drugs [8]. Suffice it to say that a counterfeit medication or pharmaceutical product is produced or sold with the intent to deceptively represent its origin, authenticity or effectiveness. Fake drugs otherwise called counterfeit drugs are unfit for usage and human consumption and therefore constitute a hazard to good health.

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is a Nigerian government agency under the Federal Ministry of Health that is responsible for regulating, manufacturing, importation, exportation, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of food, drugs, cosmetic, medical devices, chemicals and prepackaged water. The problem of fake drugs was so severe that neighbouring countries such as Ghana and

Sierra Leon officially banned the sales of drugs, food and beverages products made in Nigeria [9]. This led to the establishment of NAFDAC with decree 15 of 1993, charged with the responsibility of eliminating substandard pharmaceuticals, foods and beverages that are not made in Nigeria and ensuring that available medications are good and efficient. In December 1992, NAFDAC's first governing council was formed, chaired by Ambassador Tanimu Saulawa. NAFDAC currently runs public enlightenment jingles cast in English Language in the network stations of NTA and FRCN. The vernacular versions of the jingles are also being aired in the regional stations of FRCN. While the weekly discussion programme runs on NTA Network. The pervasiveness of fake drugs is global and ranges from random mixtures of harmful toxic substances to inactive and ineffective preparations. [10] supports this view saying that up to 50% of all drugs sold worldwide are estimated to be fake. The actual prevalence of counterfeit drugs is difficult to ascertain partly due to failure of the majority of member nations in the World Health Organization to report instances of drug counterfeiting occurring in their countries. Also just like other crimes, dealing with substandard drug is an underground business that comes to light only when deaths occur [11]. Furthermore, fake drugs are identical to the real ones in terms of packaging, labels, and even appearance because they are faked not by amateurs in drug business but by scientists and knowledgeable individuals whose aim is profit-oriented [12]. About 50% of the drugs utilized by patients are purchased from the private places (pharmacies patent medicine stores and street vendors) where control is difficult hence they are expected to be more easily invaded by drug counterfeiters compared to public dispensaries. With all the media awareness and campaign against fake and adulterated drugs as well as advocacy by NAFDAC and other international agencies, the success of this "war" needs to be

evaluated through an empirical study such as this. The study therefore seeks to analyze the role of the broadcast media in curbing the circulation of substandard drugs in the health sector of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been posed to guide the study:

1. What is the role of broadcast media in curbing the circulation of fake drugs?
2. To what extent do broadcast media create awareness to curb the circulation of fake drugs?
3. What strategies do broadcast media adopt in creating awareness on curbing circulation of fake drugs?

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

NAFDAC and the Drug War

The high prevalence of fake and counterfeit drugs has been a source of worry to the Nigerian government which gave birth to NAFDAC, saddled with this great responsibility. Bracing up to this challenge, NAFDAC adopted several measures including the sanitization of the distribution channels through strengthened inspectorate activities and sanctions such as prosecution and destruction. These are considered coercive regulatory measures and not an end. [13] notes that "as one moves from traditional or collective markets to the modern retail institutions, such as supermarkets and departmental stores, one passes from the use of brute or coercion to the use of soft persuasive and consumer oriented communication".

Onah highlights the vital role of communication in achieving set objectives and focuses on dialogue persuasion and public enlightenment. Broadcast media is the means of public communication reaching to the large, scattered heterogeneous and anonymous audience at the same time. Mass media have had tremendous influence on modern world. Mass media are the powerful means that do not only influence today's world but also shape the world of tomorrow with its various functions. These include Education, Information, Entertainment, Persuasion, Surveillance, Linkage and Socialization. The media has a huge impact on society in shaping the public opinion of the masses. They can form or modify the public opinion in different ways depending on what the objective is. [14] observes that awareness leads to knowledge which leads to behavior modification. The media help to solve

social problems since they exert influence on people's ideas, values and behavior; thus, it is important to consider use of the mass media to influence people's behaviour or attitude on health matters. This agrees with the views of [15] that the mass media inform, educate, and entertain. But beyond these, they also persuade, and catalyze social mobilization, especially on issues of national interest through campaigns. There are three types of campaigns.

- i. Information campaigns:** These try to raise awareness of the problem, usually with the intent of motivating the citizens to avoid the undesirable behavior.
- ii. Social norms marketing campaigns:** These try to correct misperceptions of citizens towards certain undesirable behavior often misconceived as the norm. For instance, with respect to drinking, if the citizens no longer have an exaggerated view of how much alcohol their peers are consuming fewer of the society will be led to engage in high-drinking.
- iii. Advocacy campaigns:** Such campaigns attempt to stimulate support for institutional, community or public policy change.

It is thus clear that the mass media can be used to create awareness against circulation of fake drugs in the Nigerian society. The mass media can be used by the following agencies: Government representatives, pharmaceutical industries, health professionals and consumers who work together against fake drugs. It also operates a complaint and appeal system. [16] corroborates this view stating that the country, India,

ensures that adequate structures are put in place to create an enabling environment for drug agencies as well as to build capacities on human resources to carry the workload.

The Director General of NAFDAC avers that the weakest point in drug regulation is probably in the area of implementation and enforcement. The D.G adds that the harsh socio-political interplays of the country over thirty years also caused some constraints and contributed to the weakening of drug regulation in Nigeria, leading to faking and dumping of drug products through chaotic drug distribution channels (NAFDAC Consumer bulletin,2003).

Obviously the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria has claimed many lives, cutting across different class, ethnic and religious divide. Of course, a majority of the victims have been established to have come more from the socially disadvantaged group, particularly those who live in the rural areas, with little or no privileges of having multiple sales outlets for over-the-counter drugs. The rural areas also bear the brunt of the consequences of fake drugs because of the absence of regulators, whose limited resources and personnel are often spread thin in the discharge of their huge mandate [17]. To this, [18] notes that the laws prohibiting the sale of counterfeit drugs cannot succeed without technological interventions, as drug trafficking is a health-related crime with huge economic implications. [19] observes that much of the counterfeit drug trade is probably linked to organized crime, corruption, the narcotics trade, the business interests of unscrupulous politicians and unregulated pharmaceutical companies.

Factors that support the circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria include: bad government (FDA 2013), poor quality drugs, trade mark, prevalence of substandard antimicrobial, high cost of drugs, chaotic distribution network [20], inadequate legislation, poor implementation of existing laws, ignorance [21], [22].

Role of the Broadcast Media in Curbing the Circulation of Fake Drugs

Since inception in 1993, NAFDAC has achieved tremendous success in the fight against fake drugs through campaigns in the broadcast media raising awareness of the general public to the drug counterfeiting menace in the country. To achieve this, NAFDAC has employed medicines detecting technologies, the traditional media of television, newspapers, radio, etc. via commercials, public alert notices on banned products, phone-in programmes, talk shows, etc. This is in addition to the interpersonal media of community mobilization and household sensitization visits. However, it is expected that the agency can do better in terms of targeted mobilization and mass awareness creation because the present strategy is too general and targeted at the entire populace.

It is also advocated that more specific messages and targeted approaches should be directed at different groups of people for different effects/results. Messages, for instance, should be directed at key stakeholders for policy enunciation, development and implementation. On the other hand, artisans-commercial motorcycle riders, plumbers, cobblers, market women, youth, etc. who are more vulnerable to counterfeit medicines should be sufficiently educated and enlightened on the dangers of counterfeit medicines and should be discouraged from patronizing medicine hawkers. It is expected that this will lead to behaviour change, since [23] insists that "the first step towards combating counterfeiting is getting people to know that it exists with all its consequent deleterious effects". NAFDAC could therefore deploy other forms of New Media Technologies (NMTs) to complement, consolidate, and extend the influence of the cutting edge technologies, to traditional and interpersonal media which were previously engaged in the anti-counterfeiting fight.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is hinged on Diffusion of Innovation theory (multi-step flow theory). Katz and Lazarfield's two-step hypothesis (1995) helped to "reduce fears of mass indoctrination by an all-powerful media". Via personal influence [24] diffusion research goes one step further than two-step flow theory. The original diffusion research was done as early as 1903 by the French sociologist Gabriel Trade who plotted the original S shaped curve. Trade's 1903 S-shape curve is of current importance because "most innovation is t an S-shape rate of adoption" [25]. According to him, diffusion is the "process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among the members of a social system". He believes that an innovation is an idea that is perceived to be new by individuals or other units of adoption while communication is the process in which participants create and share information with one another to reach a mutual understanding.

Diffusion research centers on the conditions that increase or decrease the likelihood that members of a given culture will adopt an idea, product or practice. This theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contact provide information and influence opinion and judgment. Studying how innovation occurs, [26] argued that it consists of four stages, invention, diffusion (or communication) through the social system (or market), time and consequences. The information flows through networks. The nature of networks and the roles opinion leaders play in the flow determine the likelihood that the innovation will be adopted. Adoption is

the spread of a new idea from its ultimate users or adopters. Several groups move towards adoption at different rates: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

The idea of media campaign against fake drugs is to protect the health of the nation. This social system must be communicated through a planned approach to achieve set objectives. This theory is considered suitable for this research since the media campaigns against fake drugs have innovations for the public and people along the value chain of drug production and distribution as well as for users to adopt.

Research Method

Survey has been adopted for this study as it provides more data for analysis within the shortest possible time. Also, it ensures better representation of the population through sample. The public service announcements against drugs on NTA and FRCN were used as bases for this assessment. The target population for this research is made up of people between ages 15 and above in Awka Metropolis Anambra State who are the audience of NTA Television and FRCN. A sample size of 400 was drawn from this population using simple random sampling.

A quantitative method of data collection was applied in the study, using the questionnaire. Awka was delineated into clusters: Ifitte, Amawbia, Iyiagu/Ngozika and Ring Road as suggested by [27]. Quota sampling techniques advocated by [23] was adopted to allocate a sample of 100 to each cluster to give a sample size of 400. Of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 384 were retrieved and used for analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

270 and 114 males and females respectively who are the audience of NTA and FRCN participated in the study. Those aged between 15 and 37 are in the

majority. Each person has one form of educational qualification or the other, with OND/NCE holders forming the majority.

Table 1: Have you watched or listened to any broadcast programme that deals with fake drugs in the society?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	344	89.6
No	40	10.4
Total	384	100

The table above shows that 344 (89.6%) respondents agreed they have watched broadcast programme that deals with fake drugs in the society while 40 (10.4%)

respondents said No, This shows that majority of the respondents have watched or listened to broadcast programmes that deal with fake drugs in the society before.

Table 2: The broadcast media done enough to increase awareness on the circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	107	27.9
Agree	190	49.5
Undecided	20	5.2
Strongly disagree	44	11.5
Disagree	23	5.9
Total	384	100

The table shows that 107 (27.9%) respondents strongly agreed that the broadcast media has done enough to increase awareness on the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria; 190 (49.5%) respondents agreed; 20 (5.2%) respondents were undecided; 44 (11.5%) respondents

strongly disagreed; and 23 (5.9%) respondents disagreed. This shows that a majority of the respondents agreed that the broadcast media has done enough to increase people's awareness on the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria.

Table 3: The creation of awareness on circulation of fake drugs by the broadcast media is recognized by the general public

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	179	46.6
Agree	122	31.8
Undecided	30	7.8
Strongly disagree	33	8.6
Disagree	20	5.2
Total	384	100

The above table shows that: 179 (46.6%) strongly agreed that the awareness on fake drugs by the broadcast media is recognized by the general public; 122 (31.8%) agreed; 30 (7.7%) were undecided while 33 (8.6%) strongly disagreed; and 20 (5.2%) disagreed. This show that the

general public must have been watching or listening to jingles, programmes or adverts on television and radio talking about fake drugs thus making the increased awareness recognized by the general public.

Table 4: There are factors influencing circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	182	47.4
Agree	179	46.7
Undecided	23	5.9
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Total	384	100

The table above shows that: 182 (47.4%) respondents strongly agreed that there are factors influencing circulation of fake

drugs in Nigeria; 179 (46.7%) respondents agreed as 23 (5.9%) respondents were undecided.

Table 5: There are programmes and news strategies used by the broadcast media in creating awareness on curbing circulation of fake drugs in the country

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	182	47.4
Agree	179	46.7
Undecided	23	5.9
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Total	384	100

The table above shows that 182 (47.4%) respondents strongly agreed that there are strategies used by the broadcast media in creating awareness on curtailing circulation of fake drugs in the country;

179 (46.7%) agreed while 23 (5.9%) respondents were undecided that more strategies should be created to control circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria.

Table 6: Television and radio have helped to increase awareness on the circulation of fake drugs.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	102	26.5
Agree	261	68
Undecided	21	5.5
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Total	384	100

The table above shows that: 102 (26.5%) respondents strongly agreed that television has helped to increase awareness on fake drugs; 261 (68%) respondents agreed; 21 (5.5%)

respondents were undecided. This shows that television has succeeded in increasing awareness of fake drug in Nigeria.

Table 7: One of the measures put in place by the broadcast media is producing programmes like “You and Your Health” on Television

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	331	86
No	20	5
Not sure	33	9
Total	384	100

The table above shows that: 331 (86%) respondents strongly agreed that programmes like “You and Your Health” on television in one of the measures put

in place by the broadcast media to increase awareness of fake drugs in Nigeria; 20 (5% of respondents said No while 33 (9%) respondents are not sure.

Table 8: Government has partnered with the broadcast media to fight fake drugs in the Society

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	201	52.3
Agree	130	33.9
Undecided	22	5.7
Strongly disagree	11	2.9
Disagree	20	5.2
Total	384	100

The above table shows that 201 (52.3%) respondents strongly agreed that government has partnered with the broadcast media to fight fake drugs in the society; 130 (33.9%) respondents agreed; 22 (5.7%) respondents are undecided;

11(2.9%) respondents strongly disagreed and 20 (5.2%) respondents disagreed that government has partnered with the broadcast media to create awareness of fake drugs in the society.

Table 9: What can be done by the media to control the circulation of counterfeit drugs?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Producing more programmes that discuss dangers of fake drugs in the society	250	65
Partnering with relevant agencies to fight the selling of fake drugs in the society	180	47
All of the above	384	100

The above table shows that: 250 (65%) respondents agreed that producing more programmes that discuss the dangers of fake drugs in the society can control the circulation of fake drugs; 180 (47%) said that partnering with relevant agencies to fight the circulation of fake drugs while

all the respondents agree that both strategies should be adopted. This shows that all respondents agree that both production of more programmes and partnership with relevant agencies will yield a better result.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question 1 seeks to ascertain to what extent the broadcast media has created awareness to curb the circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria. Table 2 answers the question showing that 107 (27.9%) and 190 (49.5%) respondents, who are the majority, strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the broadcast media has done enough to combat the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria. Table 3 also shows that 179 (46.6%) strongly agreed while 122 (31.8%) agreed that the creation of awareness on fake drugs by the broadcast media is recognized by the general public. [7] agrees that prevention advocates would look to the mass media as an important aid in addressing the problem of high risk of fake drugs in the Nigerian society.

Research question two seeks to identify the strategies used by the broadcast media in creating awareness on curbing the circulation of fake drugs in the country. Table 5 shows that 182 (47.4%) strongly agreed that there are strategies used by the broadcast media in creating awareness on curbing the circulation of fake drugs in the country; 179 (46.7%) agreed while 23 (5.9%) respondents were undecided.

This question was answered by tables 6, 7, and 8 which show respectively that television and radio have helped to increase awareness on the circulation of fake drugs (363 respondents; 94.5%); 331 respondents representing 86% agreed that programmes like "You and Your Health" on television is one of the measures put

in place by the broadcast media to create awareness on circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria; and that the government has partnered with the broadcast media to fight fake drugs in the Society (331 respondents; 86.2%) Agreeing with this, [22] avers that the broadcast media in its bid to create awareness on circulation of fake drugs in the society can produce numerous programmes like to make the general public aware of the dangers of fake drugs in the society.

In answering research question three which asks what role the broadcast media can perform in curbing the circulation of fake drugs, Table 9 shows 250 (65%) respondents believe that the media can produce more programmes that discuss the dangers of fake drugs in the society to control the circulation of fake drugs; 180 (47%) said that partnering with relevant agencies to fight the circulation of fake drugs can be helpful while all the respondents agree that both strategies should be adopted.

These findings support [1] view that "the traditional media of television, newspapers, radio, etc. has done enough via commercials, public alert notices on banned products, phone-in programmes, talk shows, etc. This is in addition to the interpersonal media of community mobilization and household sensitization visits. The truth, however, remains that the agency can do better in terms of targeted mobilization and mass awareness creation".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The broadcast media, particularly radio and television, has a role to play in safeguarding the health of the nation through their various programmes and news, as watchdog of society. This task will better be performed in synergy with other stakeholders and regulatory agencies. It is the duty of the public to report cases of irregularities on drugs and circulation of fake drugs to government.

This study hereby recommends that:

1. Media outfits should produce more diversified content on this issue to

accommodate different segments of the society.

2. There is need to sustain the ongoing programmes and devote more time to the health programmes in various media houses.
3. More interactive (live) phone-in programmes should be designed for feedback to the stations, stakeholders, the regulatory agencies, and government.

4. More research should be carried out on other aspects of the fight

against circulation of fake drugs in Nigeria.

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