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Broadcast Media Exposure, Knowledge, Awareness, Attitude And Practice Of Lassa Fever Among Residents Of Oyo Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Lassa fever remains a public health concern in Nigeria, making effective health communication essential for promoting awareness and preventive practices. However, access to broadcast media does not necessarily guarantee adequate knowledge of the disease or significant changes in attitudes towards its prevention. This study examined broadcast media exposure, knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practices of Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was guided by the Health Belief Model and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, with 392 properly completed questionnaires analysed out of 399 targeted. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages and mean scores, as well as inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and independent-samples t-test, were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that awareness of Lassa fever was relatively high, although knowledge of specific symptoms and related information remained limited. Despite the general accessibility of radio, exposure to specific Lassa fever messages was moderate. Respondents demonstrated generally favourable attitudes towards Lassa fever prevention, and broadcast media exposure had a statistically significant positive relationship with their attitudes. Poor environmental sanitation, inadequate hand hygiene, improper food storage and conditions that encourage rodent infestation were identified as important predisposing factors. However, the perceived influence of broadcast media messages on individual attitudes ranged from low to moderate. The study concluded that broadcast media, particularly radio, contribute to promoting favourable attitudes towards Lassa fever prevention, but existing communication efforts require improvement to strengthen specific knowledge and encourage preventive behaviour. It therefore recommends that broadcasters and public health authorities increase the frequency of Lassa fever programmes and provide clearer, consistent and locally relevant information on symptoms, transmission, prevention and appropriate health-seeking behaviour.

Keywords:

Broadcast media exposure, Lassa fever, awareness, attitudes, health communication, Oyo Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Health communication is a key in sensitising and motivating individuals in society to adopt healthy behaviours (Igben & Enebeli, 2023). As Majaye, Adelakun, Odiegwu_Enwerem and Ogbonna. Nwaogu (2023) put it, for communication to be effective, it has to be well-planned and properly disseminated, using appropriate tools to reach the target audience with maximum impact. Health communication is known to help in sensitising and motivating individuals in society to adopt health behaviours as it is through it that awareness is created about preventive health risks in society Okeya (2019) further opines that health communication is also the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (2000) further posits that health communication is the study and practice of communicating recommended health information such as in public health campaigns, health education and between doctor and patient. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) also emphasizes that effective health communication is indispensable in responding to disease outbreaks, reducing misinformation, promoting public trust, and encouraging compliance with recommended health interventions. To effectively deliver these health messages to large and diverse populations, various communication channels are employed, among which is broadcast media which remains one of the most influential and widely accessible.

Broadcast media refer to electronic communication channels that simultaneously transmit audio and visual information to large and heterogeneous audiences through radio and television Asemah & Edegoh (2025). These media play significant roles in informing, educating, entertaining, and mobilizing the public on issues affecting society, including health, politics, education, and national development. Soola (2009) explains that broadcast media are widely used to disseminate health information aimed at informing, educating, influencing, and changing public health behaviour because of the value society places on good health. Likewise, Onabajo (2000) notes that broadcast media report and interpret societal events, communicate social values and norms, and provide educational content that guides people's attitudes and behaviours. Despite the rapid expansion of digital and social media, radio and television remain among the most accessible and trusted sources of information in many developing countries, particularly Nigeria, due to their extensive coverage, affordability, and ability to reach both urban and rural populations (Asemah, Ekhareafo, & Olaniran, 2023).

Broadcast media exposure refers to the extent to which individuals come into contact with health information disseminated through radio and television. It encompasses the frequency of listening or viewing, duration of exposure, level of attention given to media content, and the extent to which individuals depend on broadcast media as sources of information. Nwabueze and Ebeze (2021) observe that media exposure is central to communication research because it determines the degree to which audiences encounter, process, and respond to media messages. Individuals who are regularly exposed to health messages are more likely to acquire relevant knowledge, develop accurate perceptions, and adopt recommended health practices. Similarly, Udeze and Chukwuma (2023) and Nwabueze (2024) maintain that radio and television continue to serve as trusted sources of health information in Nigeria, particularly among populations with limited access to internet-based communication technologies. Frequent exposure to well-designed health messages contributes to increased awareness, improved understanding of disease prevention, and the promotion of positive health behaviours. One of the major health issues for which broadcast media have been extensively utilized in Nigeria is Lassa fever, a recurring infectious disease that continues to pose serious public health challenges across the country.

Lassa fever, also known as Lassa haemorrhagic fever, is an acute viral haemorrhagic disease caused by the Lassa virus, a single-stranded RNA virus belonging to the Arenaviridae family (Tewogbola & Aung, 2020; WHO, 2024). The disease was first identified in 1969 in the town of Lassa in present-day Borno State, Nigeria, and has since become endemic in several West African countries, including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea (Olayemi et al., 2024; WHO, 2024). The primary reservoir of

the virus is the multimammate rat (*Mastomys natalensis*), which transmits the infection through contamination of food items, household materials, or surfaces with its urine and faeces (Fichet-Calvet & Rogers, 2023). Human-to-human transmission also occurs through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of infected persons, particularly in healthcare settings where infection prevention measures are inadequate (CDC, 2024; NCDC, 2024). Symptoms include fever, weakness, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhoea, chest pain, and abdominal pain, while severe infections may result in haemorrhage, organ failure, neurological complications, and death (WHO, 2024). Despite ongoing interventions by health authorities, Nigeria continues to record recurrent outbreaks annually, making Lassa fever one of the country's major public health concerns (NCDC, 2025). Because there is no single preventive measure capable of eliminating the disease, sustained public education is necessary to improve awareness and encourage positive attitudes toward preventive practices.

Rimal and Lapinski (2021) argue that adequate health information enhances individuals' perception of disease risk and increases their likelihood of adopting preventive behaviours. This position is further supported by the Health Belief Model, which explains that individuals are more likely to engage in protective health actions when they perceive themselves as susceptible to a serious disease and believe that preventive measures will be effective (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2022). In Nigeria, organizations such as the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), the Federal Ministry of Health, and development partners frequently utilize radio and television to disseminate messages on environmental sanitation, rodent control, food hygiene, and early treatment seeking (NCDC, 2025). Regular exposure to these messages contributes to increased awareness and more favourable attitudes toward disease prevention (Asemah et al., 2023; Nwabueze, 2024). Nevertheless, factors such as misinformation, language barriers, cultural beliefs, inadequate electricity supply, and unequal access to communication channels continue to influence how audiences receive and interpret health messages (Olapegba et al., 2021; Afolabi et al., 2023). These realities underscore the need to examine the effectiveness of broadcast media campaigns within specific local communities.

Statement of the Problem

Lassa fever remains a major public health challenge in Nigeria despite continuous efforts by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), the Federal Ministry of Health, state ministries of health, and other stakeholders to control its spread through public health education and awareness campaigns. The disease continues to be reported annually, causing illness and deaths across several states, including Oyo State. According to the NCDC (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026), Oyo State has consistently recorded confirmed cases of Lassa fever during successive outbreak periods, indicating that the disease remains endemic despite ongoing preventive interventions.

Broadcast media, particularly radio, have been widely used to disseminate information on the causes, symptoms, transmission, prevention, and early treatment of Lassa fever because of their ability to reach a large and diverse audience. For example, Wogu (2019) found that mass media campaigns enhanced public awareness of Lassa fever in Ebonyi State, while Erubami (2020) reported that media exposure positively influenced knowledge, attitudes, and preventive practices among rural residents. Similarly, Ugochukwu (2021) and Erubami and Ojoboh (2022) observed that media campaigns increased awareness and risk perception of Lassa fever. Bonzena and Lucas (2022) further revealed that radio was an effective channel for disseminating Lassa fever information, while Nnamani et al. (2025) concluded that although media sensitisation improved awareness, it did not always translate into positive attitudes and sustained preventive practices. Okeya (2019) also emphasised that effective health communication is essential for influencing public knowledge, attitudes, and health behaviours.

Despite these findings and the sustained broadcast media campaigns, Lassa fever outbreaks continue to occur. This suggests that exposure to broadcast media messages may not necessarily lead to adequate awareness or positive attitudes towards the prevention of the disease. According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), Oyo State has recorded confirmed cases of Lassa fever during the 2022, 2023, and 2024 Lassa fever transmission seasons, prompting the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the Oyo State Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders to

intensify public awareness campaigns through broadcast media and other communication channels (NCDC, 2025). However, despite these interventions, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which exposure to broadcast media has influenced residents' awareness and attitudes toward Lassa fever in Oyo Metropolis. It is against this background that this study examines broadcast media exposure, knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practices of Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the level of broadcast media exposure of respondents in Oyo Metropolis on Lassa fever
2. To assess the level of awareness of Lassa fever among respondents in Oyo Metropolis.
3. To examine whether broadcast media exposure on Lassa fever has led to attitude change among respondents in Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State.
4. To ascertain the factors that predispose respondents in Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State to Lassa fever
5. To explain the extent of broadcast media exposure to Lassa fever messages has influenced the attitudes of respondents in Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on the Agenda setting theory and the Health belief model. The Agenda-Setting Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how broadcast media can influence public awareness of Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis. Through regular radio and television campaigns, discussions, and health programmes, broadcast media can make Lassa fever a major public concern? Consequently, residents may become more knowledgeable about the disease and more willing to adopt recommended preventive measures aimed at reducing infection and transmission while the Health Belief Model is highly relevant to this study because broadcast media messages on Lassa fever serve as cues to action that can influence residents' perceptions and behaviours. Through radio and television campaigns, residents can become aware of their susceptibility to Lassa fever, understand the severity of the disease, appreciate the benefits of preventive measures, and overcome barriers to adopting healthy behaviours. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for explaining how awareness generated through broadcast media exposure may lead to positive attitudes and preventive practices among residents of Oyo Metropolis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Lassa fever: A Concept

Lassa fever occurs in both sexes and all age groups. It is a zoonotic disease whose reservoir is the multimammate rat of the genus *Mastomys* (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). Lassa fever is a viral haemorrhagic fever caused by a single stranded RNA virus belonging to the *Arenaviridae* family (March, Ajayi, Nwigwe, Azuogu, Onyire&Nwonwu, 2013 cited in Ojabo, O., &Dunu, I. 2024). The virus is a member of the virus family *Arenaviridae*, is a single-stranded RNA virus and is zoonotic, or animal-borne, transmitted by rats. It has the potential to cause tens of thousands of deaths. Even after recovery, the virus remains in body fluids, including semen (World Health Organization, 2000 cited in Ojabo, O., &Dunu, I. 2024). It has been known since the 1950s, but the virus was not identified until 1969, when two missionary nurses died from it in the town of Lassa in Nigeria (WHO, 2017). Lassa fever, a viral haemorrhagic fever transmitted by rats, is endemic in West Africa (Nigeria inclusive) and may kill tens of thousands of people each year (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). Lassa fever, according to them, is endemic in West Africa, with 300,000 to 500,000 cases and 5000 deaths occurring yearly across Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. However, between 70-80% of Lassa virus infections, remain asymptomatic, mild or self-limiting and in most cases may pass unnoticed (Nasir, Sani, Augusto & Pereira, 2015).

Transmission of Lassa virus to humans occurs most commonly through ingestion or inhalation (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). They stated that *mastomys* rodents shed the virus in urine and droppings and direct contact with these materials, through touching soiled objects, eating contaminated food, or exposure to open cuts or sores, can lead to infection. Many persons infected by the virus do not develop symptoms, but when symptoms occur they typically include fever, weakness, headaches, vomiting, and muscle pains (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). Less commonly, there may be bleeding from the mouth or gastrointestinal tract. Direct contact with infected rodents is not the only way in which people are infected; person-to-person transmission may occur after exposure to virus in blood, tissue, secretions, or excretions of a Lassa virus-infected individual (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). Casual contact such as skin-to-skin contact without exchange of body fluids does not spread Lassa virus.

Lassa fever presents with symptoms and signs indistinguishable from those of febrile illnesses such as malaria and other viral haemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola (Enemuo&Obayi, 2021 cited in Ojabo&Dunu 2024). According to them, it is difficult to diagnose clinically but should be suspected in patients with fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) not responding adequately to antimalarial and antibiotic drugs. They further stated that the most useful clinical predictors of Lassa fever are fever, pharyngitis, retrosternal pain, and proteinuria for diagnosis; and fever, sore throat, and vomiting. Even after recovery, according to them, there may be residual problems such as sensorineural hearing loss. The initial presentation of Lassa fever may be with non-specific symptoms similar to what is seen in the more common febrile

illnesses such as malaria or typhoid fever. In such a setting therefore, timely diagnosis of Lassa fever may be difficult (Chime, Chime, Ndibuagu, Ekochin, Arinze-Onyia&Oti, 2020).

Broadcast Media Exposure and Lassa fever Awareness

Broadcast media exposure is particularly important because radio and television have the capacity to reach large, geographically dispersed audiences within a short period, including populations with limited access to the internet and other digital platforms. Broadcast media play a central role in creating Lassa fever awareness. Radio and television serve as major channels for disseminating public health information during both routine periods and disease outbreaks (WHO, 2024). Through news bulletins, health programmes, jingles, drama, interviews with health experts, and public service announcements, broadcast media can repeatedly present information about Lassa fever to the public which causes awareness Fatiregun et al. (2019). The repetitive nature of broadcast messages increases the likelihood that audiences will remember and recall health information (Ilesanmi et al. (2015). When broadcast media provide regular and credible information on Lassa fever, audience exposure to such content is expected to increase their level of awareness about the disease Ilesanmi et al. (2015). Awareness is an individual's knowledge, recognition, and consciousness of a particular issue, object, or phenomenon (Ilesanmi et al. (2015)). In the context of health, awareness involves having basic information about a disease including its causes, symptoms, modes of transmission, preventive measures, and appropriate treatment-seeking behaviour. Lassa fever awareness therefore the extent to which individuals is expose to Lassa fever content on television or radio or know and understand key facts about Lassa fever such as: that it is caused by the Lassa virus, transmitted through contact with food or materials contaminated by infected multimammate rats, and preventable through environmental sanitation, proper food storage, and early medical care (WHO, 2024; NCDC, 2023)Enemuo&Obayi, 2021). Increased exposure to radio and television health campaigns is associated with higher knowledge awareness of disease symptoms and prevention (Fatiregun et al. 2019; Tobin et al., 2013). For example, Fatiregun et al. (2019) found that respondents who were frequently exposed to health communication messages on Lassa fever demonstrated better knowledge of preventive practices. Likewise, Tobin et al. (2013) reported that media campaigns contributed significantly to public awareness of Lassa fever during outbreaks in Nigeria.

However, exposure alone does not guarantee awareness. Several factors can moderate the relationship between broadcast media exposure and Lassa fever awareness. These include: language of broadcast, clarity of message, credibility of the source, educational level of the audience, and competing media content (WHO, 2020). A person may have access to radio or television but may not pay attention to health programmes, or may not understand technical medical terms used in the broadcast. Therefore, for broadcast media to effectively increase Lassa fever awareness, messages must be simple, frequent, culturally relevant, and presented in local languages where necessary.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Ojabo&Dunu (2024) note that Lassa fever remains a public health problem in Nigeria with frequent outbreaks and high fatalities, and that One Health and Development Initiative embarked on a Facebook campaign to sensitize the public on prevention. The objective of the study was to ascertain Awka South residents' level of exposure to the campaign, their attitude towards the campaign, and the extent to which they put the preventive measures into practice. The study was anchored on the Source Credibility Theory by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953), which states that audience attitude toward a message depends on perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the source. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, A sample of 399 respondents was drawn from a projected population of 298,895 using the Taro Yamane formula and selected from three communities in Awka South LGA. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with frequency tables and simple percentages. The study found that Awka South residents are highly exposed to OHDI's Facebook campaign on Lassa fever prevention. The study concluded that social media campaigns can be effective in creating awareness about Lassa fever. It recommended that residents should continue to

expose themselves to OHDI's Facebook campaign on Lassa fever prevention so as to remember preventive measures and avoid contracting and spreading the disease.

Okeya (2019) examined the role of health communication in preventing Lassa fever infection among residents of Ekiti and Ondo States, Nigeria. The study was undertaken due to the persistent outbreaks of Lassa fever in Nigeria and the realization that despite increasing awareness of the disease, many people still lacked adequate knowledge and adherence to recommended preventive measures, thereby contributing to the continued spread of the disease. The specific objective of the study was to determine how respondents in Ekiti and Ondo States prevented Lassa fever infection through exposure to health communication messages. The study was anchored on the Behaviour Theory, propounded by Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner, which explains that behavioural change occurs as individuals respond to stimuli and influences from their environment, including health communication messages. The study adopted the survey research design, while a structured questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. A sample of 854 respondents was selected from Ekiti and Ondo States using a multistage probability sampling technique, and the data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression. The study found that respondents adopted several preventive practices against Lassa fever, with regular handwashing being the most common preventive behaviour, followed by eating well-cooked food, maintaining personal cleanliness, washing clothes regularly, avoiding rats, and reducing the consumption of bush meat. The findings further revealed that health communication messages had a statistically significant positive influence on the prevention of Lassa fever infection, indicating that increased exposure to health communication messages improved respondents' preventive behaviours and attitudes towards the disease. The study concluded that effective and sustained health communication plays a vital role in promoting positive behavioural change and preventing the spread of Lassa fever among the public. Consequently, the study recommended that government agencies, health institutions, and relevant stakeholders should intensify health communication campaigns and place greater emphasis on all recommended preventive measures rather than focusing predominantly on handwashing.

Elom, Nnebuife, Okere, Ogbu, Ugochi, Peace, Asuzu, Ngozika&Ngwakwe (2024) note that Lassa fever outbreaks continue to reoccur in Nigeria with high morbidity and mortality, and that Ebonyi State is one of the high-burden states with frequent outbreaks. The objective of the study was to determine health risks practices associated with the reoccurrence of Lassa fever outbreaks among households in Ebonyi State. The study was guided by Health Belief Model as it examined how household practices increase vulnerability to Lassa fever infection, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population comprised 5,041 heads of households and a sample of 468 was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, ANOVA and t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that households in Ebonyi State practice to a high extent health risks behaviors associated with reoccurrence of Lassa fever. There were also significant differences in health risks practices based on age ($F=4.557, p=0.004$) and location ($t=7.244, p=0.000$). The study concluded that households in Ebonyi State engage in health risks practices that contribute to the reoccurrence of Lassa fever. It recommended that there is need for proper education of households through seminars, workshops and conferences by health educators and community health workers on Lassa fever. This study is similar to my research because both studies focus on Lassa fever prevention and behavioral factors among Nigerian households. However, while Elom et al. (2024) focused specifically on health risks practices among households in Ebonyi State, my study focuses on broadcast media exposure, Lassa fever awareness and attitudes among residents of Oyo Metropolis.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the descriptive survey research design. The choice of the descriptive survey research design for this study is informed by the nature and objectives of the research, which seeks to examine broadcast media exposure, Lassa fever awareness, and the attitudes of respondents in Oyo Metropolis.

Based on the 2026 projected population estimate used for this study, Oyo Metropolis has an estimated population of approximately 262,971 residents. The sample size (399) for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. This study adopt a multi-stage sampling technique to choose participants. The instrument of data collection is a structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

DATA PRESENTATION**RQ1: Research Question One:**

What is the level of broadcast media exposure to Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis, Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State?

Table 1: Level of Broadcast Media Exposure to Lassa fever (N = 392)

Item / Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
B1. Do you have access to radio?		
Yes	333	84.9%
No	59	15.1%
Total	392	100.0%
B2. How often do you listen to radio programmes?		
Daily	54	13.8%
Several times a week	85	21.7%
Once a week	106	27.0%
Occasionally	73	18.6%
Never	74	18.9%
Total	392	100.0%
B3. Have you ever heard a radio programme/announcement on Lassa fever?		
Yes	200	51.0%
No	192	49.0%
Total	392	100.0%
B4. How often do you hear information about Lassa fever on radio?		
Very often	41	10.5%
Often	54	13.8%
Sometimes	73	18.6%
Rarely	26	6.6%
Never	198	50.5%
Total	392	100.0%
B5. How useful do you consider broadcast media information on Lassa fever?		
Very useful	70	17.9%
Useful	109	27.8%
Undecided	107	27.3%
Not useful	84	21.4%
Not useful at all	22	5.6%
Total	392	100.0%

The findings in table 1 indicate that although broadcast media, particularly radio, is widely accessible to residents of the study area, actual exposure to Lassa fever-specific messages remains moderate, with roughly half of the respondents yet to be reached by such messages on radio. This finding answers

Research Question One, showing that the level of broadcast media exposure to Lassa fever among respondents is moderate.

RQ2: Research Question Two:

What is the level of awareness of Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis, Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State?

Table 2: Level of Awareness of Lassa fever (N = 392)

Item / Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
C1. Have you ever heard of Lassa fever?		
Yes	335	85.5%
No	57	14.5%
Total	392	100.0%
C2. Where did you first hear about Lassa fever? (n = 335 who had heard of it)		
Radio	129	32.9%
Television	70	17.9%
Social media/internet	34	8.7%
Health worker	32	8.2%
Family/friends	36	9.2%
School	18	4.6%
Religious organisation	7	1.8%
Community meeting	4	1.0%
Other	5	1.3%
Total	335	85.5%
C3. Have you heard of any confirmed/reported case of Lassa fever in Oyo State?		
Yes	155	39.5%
No	107	27.3%
Don't know	130	33.2%
Total	392	100.0%

Table 2 shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents, 335 (85.5%), had heard of Lassa fever, while 57 (14.5%) had not, indicating a generally high level of awareness of the disease's existence among residents of the study area. Among the 335 respondents who had heard of the disease, radio was the leading source of first information. This confirms broadcast media, particularly radio, as the primary channel through which residents of the study area first become aware of Lassa fever. This finding answers Research Question Two, indicating that the level of awareness of Lassa fever among respondents is generally high.

RQ3: What is the level of knowledge of Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis, Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State?

Table 3: Level of Knowledge of Lassa Fever Prevention and Transmission (N = 392)

Item / Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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C4. Do you know that Lassa fever can be prevented?		
Yes	274	69.9%
No	61	15.6%
Don't know	57	14.5%
Total	392	100.0%

Table 3b: Respondents' Knowledge of Symptoms of Lassa Fever (N = 392)

Symptom Identified (multiple response)	Frequency (Yes)	Percentage (%)
Fever	202	51.5%
Headache	147	37.5%
Weakness	133	33.9%
Vomiting	85	21.7%
Sore throat	83	21.2%
Abdominal pain	54	13.8%
Bleeding	51	13.0%
Hearing loss	39	9.9%
Don't know any symptom	109	27.8%

This result indicates that while respondents know that Lassa fever can be prevented, their in-depth knowledge of its specific symptoms remains considerably limited, revealing a gap between general and detailed disease knowledge.

RQ4: What are the factors that predispose respondents in Oyo Metropolis, to Lassa fever?

Table 4: Factors that Predispose Respondents to Lassa Fever (N = 392)

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Poor environmental sanitation increases exposure to rats that may transmit Lassa fever	103	197	87	5	0	4.02	Agreed
Living in houses with holes/cracks that allow rats to enter increases the risk of Lassa fever	73	195	115	9	0	3.85	Agreed
Storing food in places accessible to rats increases the likelihood of exposure to Lassa virus	44	187	144	17	0	3.66	Agreed
Failure to wash hands after handling contaminated food/materials increases the risk of Lassa fever	109	217	65	1	0	4.11	Agreed
People who work in environments where rats are common are more likely to be exposed to Lassa fever	19	150	192	29	2	3.4	Agreed
Healthcare workers who contact infected patients without protective measures are at risk of infection	59	189	137	7	0	3.77	Agreed
Lack of adequate knowledge of how Lassa fever is transmitted increases vulnerability to infection	31	170	174	17	0	3.55	Agreed
Delayed access to healthcare and diagnosis can increase the risk of Lassa fever transmission	80	214	92	6	0	3.94	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.78	Agreed

This finding answers Research Question Five, showing that the practice of respondents in the study area with regard to environmental sanitation, food storage, hand hygiene, and prompt access to healthcare falls short of what is required to adequately guard against Lassa fever, thereby predisposing many of them to the disease.

RQ5: What is the extent of broadcast media exposure to Lassa fever messages and its influence on the attitudes of respondents in Oyo Metropolis?

Table 5: Extent of Broadcast Media Influence on Attitude towards Lassa fever (N = 392)

Item / Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
F1. Extent radio information on Lassa fever has influenced your attitude		
Great Extent (GE)	43	11.0%
Moderate Extent (ME)	116	29.6%
Low Extent (LE)	59	15.1%
Zero Extent (ZE)	174	44.4%
Total	392	100.0%
F2. Aspect of attitude most influenced by broadcast media information		
Personal hygiene practices	64	16.3%
Environmental cleanliness	51	13.0%
Food storage practices	26	6.6%
Willingness to seek medical attention	43	11.0%
Concern/seriousness about the disease	34	8.7%
None in particular	174	44.4%
Total	392	100.0%
F3. Overall rating of the influence of broadcast media on attitude towards Lassa fever		
Great Extent (GE)	33	8.4%
Moderate Extent (ME)	157	40.1%
Low Extent (LE)	173	44.1%
Zero Extent (ZE)	29	7.4%
Total	392	100.0%

Table 5 shows the extent to which radio information influenced attitudes of the respondents towards the disease, however, 174 (44.4%) indicated a zero extent, while 116 (29.6%) indicated a moderate extent and only 43 (11.0%) indicated a great extent.. On the overall rating of broadcast media influence, most respondents rated the influence as low, 173 (44.1%), or moderate, 157 (40.1%), while only 33 (8.4%) rated it as a great extent.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of the study revealed that the level of broadcast media exposure to Lassa fever among respondents in Oyo Metropolis is moderate. Although radio is generally accessible to the respondents, exposure to specific Lassa fever messages through radio was not uniform among them. This suggests that access to broadcast media does not necessarily mean that respondents are regularly exposed to particular health messages. This finding is in line with Nwabueze and Ebeze (2021), who asserted that media exposure is an important factor in communication research because the extent to which an audience encounters and responds to a particular health message depends on the type and level of media exposure. It also agrees with Udeze and Chukwuma (2023), who noted that although radio and television are important sources of health information in Nigeria, the availability of these media does not automatically guarantee constant exposure to a particular health message. The findings also revealed that the general level of awareness of Lassa fever among respondents was moderately high, although their knowledge of specific symptoms and other detailed aspects of the disease was comparatively low. This indicates that while many respondents are aware of the existence of Lassa

fever, awareness does not necessarily translate into comprehensive knowledge of the disease. The finding agrees with Ilesanmi et al. (2023), who observed that general awareness of infectious diseases in Nigeria is often greater than people's in-depth understanding of such diseases. The finding also supports the Agenda-Setting Theory, which explains that the broadcast media can draw public attention to an issue and make it prominent, although making an issue salient does not necessarily provide audiences with sufficient detailed knowledge. Furthermore findings revealed that respondents generally had a moderately high and favourable attitude towards the prevention of Lassa fever. The overall attitude score was above the criterion mean, indicating that respondents generally considered preventive measures important and expressed willingness to follow recommended hygiene, sanitation and health-seeking practices. The study also revealed a significant positive relationship between broadcast media exposure and respondents' attitudes towards Lassa fever.

This finding supports Rimal and Lapinski (2021), who noted that adequate health information can increase people's perception of health risks and encourage preventive behaviours. The finding is also consistent with the Health Belief Model, which proposes that individuals are more likely to adopt protective actions when they perceive a disease as serious and believe that preventive measures are beneficial. The finding is similarly related to the studies of Erubami (2020) and Wogu (2019), which reported relationships between knowledge, attitudes and preventive behaviours concerning Lassa fever. Furthermore, for research question four, The findings indicate a moderately high level of agreement among respondents regarding the factors that predispose individuals to Lassa fever. The respondents identified poor environmental sanitation, structural defects in houses that allow rats to enter, improper storage of food, poor hand hygiene, occupational exposure to environments where rats are common, inadequate protection among healthcare workers, inadequate knowledge of transmission routes and delayed access to healthcare as important factors that may increase vulnerability to Lassa fever. Poor hand hygiene and poor environmental sanitation were among the more strongly recognised factors, while occupational exposure received comparatively lower recognition. This finding is consistent with the literature reviewed, particularly Fichet-Calvet and Rogers (2023) and the CDC (2024), which identify rodent exposure, environmental conditions, contamination and human-to-human transmission as important factors associated with Lassa fever transmission. The finding therefore reinforces the need for broadcast media campaigns to continue emphasising environmental sanitation, rodent control, proper food storage, hand hygiene and other preventive practices.

The findings also revealed that the extent of broadcast media influence on the attitudes of respondents towards Lassa fever was generally low to moderate, rather than high. Although some respondents indicated that information obtained through radio had changed their understanding and attitudes towards Lassa fever, the overall influence of broadcast media was not sufficiently strong to produce a substantial attitudinal effect among the majority of respondents. This suggests that although broadcast media remains an important channel for health communication, the frequency, consistency and depth of Lassa fever messages may not yet be sufficient to produce a strong influence at the individual level. This finding is consistent with Nnamani et al. (2025), who observed that media sensitisation may improve awareness without necessarily producing corresponding positive attitudes and preventive practices. The finding also supports the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which recognises that audiences are active users of media and may differ in their attention to, interpretation of and response to health messages according to their needs, interests and circumstances. Therefore, there is a need for more consistent, informative and audience-centred broadcast messages on Lassa fever in Oyo Metropolis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that broadcast media, particularly radio, remains a widely accessible and important source of information on Lassa fever among residents of Oyo Metropolis, Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State, and that exposure to broadcast media messages on the disease is significantly associated with more favourable attitudes and, to a lesser extent, better recognition of predisposing practices among respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study recommends that broadcast stations serving Oyo Metropolis should increase the frequency of programmes and announcements specifically dedicated to Lassa fever, rather than relying on general health programming, given that half of the respondents in this study had never heard information about the disease on radio despite widespread radio access.
2. In addition, Broadcast media content on Lassa fever should place greater emphasis on the specific symptoms of the disease, rather than general statements about its existence and preventability, in order to close the observed gap between general awareness and detailed symptom knowledge.

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