

# Examining perceptions of Kwande residents on traditional songs aired on Ashiwaves radio station for curbing the COVID-19 pandemic in Benue State

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**ABSTRACT:** Traditional songs are useful in mobilising natives for genuine causes that promote the wellbeing of society, especially when the issue is life-threatening. This research was carried out to ascertain how traditional songs were used on Ashiwaves FM to curb the COVID-19 pandemic among Kwande residents in Benue State. The research adopted a survey method that relied on a questionnaire that was administered to 400 respondents using the Taro Yamane statistical formula. The theories used to anchor the research were Uses and Gratification and Agenda Setting, which explained how Kwande residents satisfied their need for deriving information and education on how to avoid contracting COVID-19 and how Ashiwaves Radio station repeatedly played traditional songs specifically meant for sensitising the public on the coronavirus prompting people to think about it. Findings of the study revealed that Ashiwaves Radio station played traditional songs on their station (100%), which was useful in sensitizing Kwande residents to curb the spread of the pandemic. It was also discovered from the findings that the song by Rapizo (98%) was the most instrumental in educating Kwande residents to stay at home and avoid crowded areas (40%), wash their hands (24%), and maintain social distance (14%). The research concluded that traditional songs are essential to every ethnic group in carrying out sensitisation on health issues. Therefore, it is recommended that other ethnic groups in Nigeria also encourage their indigenous artists to compose songs that can be used for educating their locals in the wake of future health challenges to avert casualties.

**KEYWORDS:** traditional songs; COVID-19; information; education; Kwande

## 1. Introduction

Communication is fundamental during health crises all over the world, which results in sharing meaningful information that will help people take preventive measures. Within this context, traditional songs have a unique way of communicating with members of society using cultural ties that are cherished and respected. In this contestation, Asemah<sup>[1]</sup> observed that even though sometimes we do not understand the language in which a singer uses to communicate a message, the innate pleasure of sound and melody gives excitement or sober reflection. Santas<sup>[2]</sup> affirmed that music is believed to have its roots in impersonal and unintentional activities. Music may come in the form of songs, choral music, or

entertainment rhythms. Songs convey meaning to the listeners who pay attention to them in order to be informed, educated, or entertained. The use of songs also includes a general critique of wrongdoing in society and warning against unforeseen dangers. As a form of communication, songs as musical tones are important in society because they use the language of the people to send messages to them via channels of mass communication. Therefore, songs play a unique role in indigenous settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic took the world by surprise by the end of 2019 (the last quarter) in Wuhan, China. The deadly outbreak travelled across several countries in the entire world, and Nigeria was not an exception, as were its counterparts in the USA, Italy, England, Ghana, and Brazil, among many others. On 11 March 2020, as pointed out by Aondover et al.<sup>[3]</sup>, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic and urged all countries in the world to take decisive actions to contain the outbreak, its spread, and the damage to human lives. Thus, the importance of communication in the era of a pandemic such as the dreaded COVID-19 cannot be overstressed, which is why this research attempted to examine the perceptions of Kwande residents of Benue State on the instrumentality of traditional songs in helping to curb the contraction of the coronavirus diseases.

### **1.1. Problem statement**

Music is important in informing society about the birth, initiation, deadly diseases, and death of persons in severe instances. Music involves the language, customs, and values of the society in which it is applicable. Songs are veritable, which is why Adam<sup>[4]</sup> postulated the characteristics of songs that “music is integrated in every facet of Nigerian traditional life from birth to death. Hence, in almost every Nigerian society, musicians are held in very high esteem”.

COVID-19 ravaged the world, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people across the globe. In the quest to make the outbreak known to the people of Kwande Local Government Area, indigenous songs were also utilised by Ashiwaves FM station. As a result of the pandemic, several authors all over the world carried out research on the issue of COVID-19, such as Adam and David<sup>[4-6]</sup> and Ogbonna and Obada et al.<sup>[7-9]</sup>. The researchers mentioned herein focused mainly on the aspects of knowledge, perception, and response to media messages on COVID-19; others focused on trends and issues, while some based their arguments on the meaning and historical perspective of the pandemic and how it could be avoided. However, the use of indigenous language songs and how they could be utilised by residents of Kwande Local Government Area in Benue State has created an important knowledge gap in the literature, which this study intends to fill.

#### **1.1.1. Research objectives**

The research objectives are to:

- 1) Ascertain how traditional songs about COVID-19 aired on Ashiwaves FM were perceived by Kwande residents.
- 2) Find out the indigenous songs that were dominant on Ashiwaves FM to sensitise Kwande residents to COVID-19 preventive measures.
- 3) Determine how useful the traditional songs aired on Ashiwaves FM were utilised by Kwande residents to curb the COVID-19 pandemic from escalating in the local government.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. The COVID-19 pandemic**

The World Health Organization describes coronaviruses as a group of viruses belonging to the

family Coronaviridae that infect both animals and humans. For humans, coronaviruses can cause mild diseases similar to the common cold, while others cause more severe diseases such as MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).

Udofia<sup>[9]</sup> described COVID-19 as pneumonia that was determinedly caused by a novel coronavirus 2 (SARS CoV-2) and was officially confirmed as a pandemic by the World Health Organization in December 2019. The first recorded case of the virus was in Wuhan, China. While in Nigeria, the first case was recorded on 27 February 2020, following the arrival of an Italian man in the country, Ahmed and Msughter<sup>[10]</sup>. Benue State also had its first case recorded on 28 March 2020, by Msughter and Phillips<sup>[11]</sup>, as the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) shared the update on its X (formerly Twitter) handle.

It is primarily transmitted from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth and is expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets or by touching objects or surfaces where the droplets have landed. The time between infection and first symptoms (incubation period) ranges from 1 to 14 days, with an average of 5 to 6 days. More than 97% of people experience symptoms within 14 days<sup>[12,13]</sup>.

Older people were the most vulnerable to the virus, alongside those with underlying medical conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, cancer, and so on. Places where people mostly spread the virus included, but were not limited to, mass gatherings, aging populations, displaced populations, international exposure for those traveling from one country to another, the density of urban areas, weak public health systems, a lack of government transparency, and a lack of press freedom<sup>[14]</sup>.

According to Kurfi<sup>[15]</sup>, the rapid spread of the virus across the world in less than a month was rated as one of the biggest-ever pandemics for humans. During the peak of the pandemic, most activities were halted worldwide, especially the movement of people within and outside their countries. The economies of the world were also affected by the devastating effects of the pandemic. In Nigeria, there was a COVID-19 break for workers in government from February to November 2020, also known as the lockdown period.

### **2.1.1. Understanding the importance of songs in the fight against COVID-19**

Songs are musical expressions that are tailored to inform and entertain, also known as infotainment. According to Asemah<sup>[1]</sup>, Music is defined as the art and science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. It is the art of making pleasing combinations of sounds in rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint. This means that music does not only consist of songs but also other accompaniments (sounds, lyrics, etc.) that go along with the human voice.

The foregoing assertion is apt when looking at the harmonization of lyrics and human voice in a rhythmic form to send a message to the listening audience using radio. The authors also stated that “African music can convey different messages (such as funerals, disease outbreaks, ceremonies, and festivals, among many others) even when a combination of instruments is used”.

Stating the classification of music in the Annang tribe, Kurfi et al.<sup>[15]</sup> posit that:

In Annang, the use of music in various activities, including social rituals, ceremonial functions, and festivals, is common. In social groups such as Abang, Asian Ubaikpa, Nka Iban Isong, Afiong, and Asian Akanawan, social music types are used. Ritual musical groups like Ekpo, Ekpo Ekoong, and Ako

demand ritual musical performances. Ceremonial musical types are used for ceremonial activities, for example, naming ceremonies and coronations of chiefs. There are musical types that are used for festivals, such as the New York Festival. The various musical types bear information that guides members of the community on acceptable community norms.

Furthermore, Usman<sup>[16]</sup> established that music is used to transmit the cultural values of society in different parts of African countries. As a result of this, the African people understand the value of songs and place priority on them. No wonder Pate et al.<sup>[17]</sup> remarked that the communication value of songs on the African continent cannot be underestimated because they form a very important part of their rich cultural heritage; the music entertains and informs at the same time. The author explains further that in some parts of Igbo land in Nigeria, when somebody dies, women send across the message of the dead through the singing of a dirge. The moment the song is heard, people know that someone has passed away<sup>[18]</sup>.

The importance of indigenous music to a typical African enlivens his consciousness over certain societal happenings that are of concern. This is because songs, when well structured and composed, appeal not only to the thoughts as words do; songs speak through the hearts and spirits of listeners, even to the core roots of their soul. In the event of a disease outbreak, indigenous songwriters are saddled with the responsibility of educating people on what to do, how to do it, and when to do it appropriately in order to avoid casualties. During the Buhari/Idiagbon regime's War Against Indiscipline (WAI), music was instrumental in disseminating the objectives of WAI to Nigerians. One of the groups that gave its voice through songs was the Ikenga Superstars of Africa<sup>[17]</sup>. This also reveals how important songs have been, not only in addressing health issues but societal issues generally.

Recall also that during the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1983–1984, the government brought the issue of legalising abortion for public debate. A musician, Prince Morroco Maduka, called on the people using music to reject the move to legalise abortion in Nigeria<sup>[17]</sup>. Therefore, songs are capable of entertaining while informing and educating—infotainment and education.

Thus, an excerpt from one of the Tiv indigenous songs about Corona Virus Disease, composed and sung by Nyam Luke Lubem (popularly known as Rapizo), which was played by Ashiwaves 99.9FM during the outbreak, is interpreted in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1.** Tiv song on COVID-19.

Tiv Song during COVID-19	English language translation
Korona Virus angevmbunwuaiaor, Mbuhii ken China ta gbaryemen Italy, mbunyôr America, Ityô yam o Korona virus nyor tar waseNigeria. Koronanyor Abuja...Lagos...Enugu, Koro nyor tar Benue...	COVID-19 is a killer disease, it started in China to Italy, America and it is in Nigeria. It headed to Abuja to Lagos, Enugu and Benue.
Korona fa ican or ga, Korona fa zege or ga, Ka or nan zenden a mi ye o, kaijôghga, de benden a or ga, shi, de nan or uweghga,peiurvezoughkpishiyô de zanhareghga. Iôô avehanmaminitipuekarutaan... Waakaacirinave, ahenga man zwa cii; cighzwaweeasoo u yesemyô, shi de yemenzendega, tema lu hen yawou wer.	Corona is killing both rich/poor people. Human beings are the carrier not inanimate, do not touch or hug someone, do not shake hands, avoid social gatherings. Wash hands every 15 minutes, wear hand gloves and nose mask, and cover your mouth before sneezing. Do not travel, stay at home.
Ityô yam o koro fa APC ga, koro fa PDP ga, jende yam o, koro a fa APGA ga cii, Nguningir tar tserenshiwuan se ior o.	My kinsmen, COVID-19 can kill anyone irrespective of party affiliation (APC, PDP, APGA), it is ravaging the world and killing human beings.

Source: Authors' computation, 2023.

The representation above takes cues from the postulation of Hile et al.<sup>[19]</sup>, who translated a song

titled in Annang language ‘Anie Ulong Idot Ekpo’ to English (Who asked you for Bile?) and Msughter et al.<sup>[20]</sup>, who translated the word ‘egwu’ in Igbo to mean different things in the context of usage (one of which is: ‘O na-aguegwu’—he/she is singing a song) in order to enhance understanding. The reason for this is for the reader to know exactly what the researcher is saying.

In line with the above, Hile et al.<sup>[19]</sup> mentioned the importance of music in the development of a people. They argue that communication is an interactive process between people who are the audience and information providers, who, by extension, serve as advisors (musicians). It is the interaction that occurs between the musician and listener through radio that reflects in the action displayed by the audience when they behave in certain ways, as suggested by the indigenous singer. Within this contextual context, this study sees music as songs accompanied by instrumentals and lyrics that are geared towards the prevention of the COVID-19 outbreak and mobilisation of the rural audience to combat any future pandemic.

Different traditional music or songs, according to Pate et al.<sup>[17]</sup>, are used to convey salient messages to a particular tribe. Drawing from the pool of so many examples of such songs, the author stated that “songs were used to inform people on the dangers of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) advising them to be careful and avoid keeping multiple sex partners or using condoms when having sex”.

### **2.1.2. Empirical review**

A study was carried out by Mbazie<sup>[21]</sup> to find out the level of awareness of residents of Rivers State on COVID-19 pandemic enlightenment. The researchers utilised survey method, which relied on a properly structured questionnaire instrument for data collection. The study found that the level of awareness of residents of Rivers State about COVID-19 enlightenment was high, as the residents also had good knowledge of the coronavirus disease.

In another study on journalists and the challenges of covering the COVID-19 pandemic using Prestige FM Minna, Adam<sup>[4]</sup> sought to identify the challenges faced by journalists at Prestige FM Radio Minna in covering the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study used a qualitative research method to interview nine out of ten journalists at the radio station. Findings from the study indicated that in Prestige FM Radio, journalists were faced with the fear of contracting the virus, the cost of transportation, security challenges, and the fear of a salary slash.

Similarly, Ogbonna<sup>[7]</sup> in his research on conspiracy theory and misinformation in the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic ascertains the areas where conspiracy theories were given coverage by online newspapers on the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was carried out through the quantitative content analysis method. The findings of the study revealed that online newspapers (Guardian and Vanguard) covered conspiracy theories such as 5G being responsible for COVID-19, which topped the conspiracy theories covered.

Also, Sule<sup>[6]</sup> examined the effect of COVID-19 on the print media industry in Nigeria. The study was based on qualitative data that was gathered from newspaper and news magazine pagination, print and circulation figures, as well as staff retrenchments. The author also interviewed some staff in the Circulation Department and Marketing. The study discovered that print media had an adverse effect during the pandemic as advertisers also went into lockdown and circulation diminished because there were no readers to purchase the dailies.

David<sup>[5]</sup> observed that the benefits of virtual communication amidst the coronavirus pandemic are significant. The researchers used the literature review method to highlight the applications that were



aided by technological advancements. Findings of their study showed that media organisations used Skype, Zoom, and other video-enhanced applications on smartphones and other smart devices to keep their audiences glued to their media houses.

Nwaolikpe<sup>[22]</sup> looked at communicating COVID-19 campaign messages among market women in rural communities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study focused on finding out rural women's access to information and level of knowledge on COVID-19. The method of data collection was a cross-sectional survey that spanned between April and May 2020. The study also used a questionnaire, which was administered to 40 market women selected across Magboro and Ibafo rural markets in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study found that the women had good knowledge of COVID-19 but not a good attitude or practice of preventive measures.

Therefore, from the review of empirical studies on COVID-19 in this study, the use of traditional songs to prevent the spread of the disease was missing, and that informed the gap this study seeks to fill, as traditional songs can be useful in the wake of an epidemic, pandemic, or any other global issue yet to be known in the future.

### **2.1.3. Theoretical underpinning**

This research was anchored on two theories: Uses and Gratification and Agenda Setting.

### **2.1.4. Uses and gratification theory**

Propounded in 1974 by Katz et al.<sup>[23]</sup>, the Uses and Gratification Theory is considered one of the most influential theories of communication because recognises the usage and digestion of media messages by people for their own benefit. Kurfi<sup>[15]</sup> maintained that the theory aims to highlight why and how people leverage media for their own personal “needs” or to gratify a consumer in ways they consider personally desirable. Citing Asemah<sup>[24]</sup>, it was revealed that the major thrust of this theory is that people use mass media for different reasons and seek to derive various gratifications, such as the use of radio and television. However, people only listen to programmes that satisfy their needs on the radio. Consequently, Jere<sup>[25]</sup> is of the view that the most frequently found motives for using traditional media (television, radio, and newspapers) are diversion (the need to escape personal problems and the need for emotional release); personal relationship (the need for companionship and help in social interaction); personal identity (the need for self-understanding and reassurance of one's role in society); and surveillance (the need for information about factors that might affect or help one).

Ebeze<sup>[14]</sup> categorized the various needs of people into three categories: content, process, and social gratifications. The content gratifications apply when consumers use a particular medium for the content it provides them (such as infotainment). Process gratifications apply when consumers use a particular medium because they enjoy the process of using the medium (for example, by dedicating their time to listening to local songs on the radio). For social gratifications, it is when consumers use a particular medium to satisfy their need for social interaction (for example, friendship, interpersonal communication, and keeping in touch)<sup>[25]</sup>.

The theory also presupposes that “people choose various media because they get something out of them or because it makes them happy in some way”<sup>[24]</sup>. The authors further asserted that the media people choose is a result of the goals that they fulfill. This simply implies that some people seem to use the new media to derive different goals. While others use it to interact with friends and family members, others use it to share information.

The foregoing is probably why Anaeto<sup>[26]</sup> observed earlier that the uses and gratification theory takes

a more humanistic approach to looking at media use. According to them, “Ijeoma<sup>[27]</sup> believes that there is not merely one way that the populace uses the media”. As a result, Ijeoma<sup>[27]</sup> posited that “research has shown that the goals for media use by the audience can be grouped in five ways”. The audience wants to achieve the following:

- Be informed or educated.
- Identify the characters of the situation in the media environment.
- Simple entertainment.
- Enhance social interaction.
- Escape from the stress of life.

From the above explanations, Kwande residents who listen to the Ashiwaves 99.9 FM programmes “Anzaakaa” (meaning proverbs), “ImôngoTeman” (Discussion Programme) and “Abaver A Vesen” (News Hour) during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and were exposed to the traditional song titled “Korona Vairus” in Tiv language (sang by Rapizo), including other musicians songs that were about the history of the disease and how it could be prevented, invariably gratified their need for health education and information about the Corona Virus Disease<sup>[28]</sup>.

#### **2.1.5. Agenda-setting theory**

The Agenda Setting Theory is a common theory among communication scholars as it highlights the role journalists and media organizations play in creating topical discourse among people in various societies. This theory was first used by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968, and since then, the theory has maintained a dominant position in the study of mass communication theory<sup>[29]</sup>. Furthermore, Maikaba and Msughter<sup>[30]</sup> stated that the Agenda Setting Theory is a theory that discusses how the mass media set agendas on certain issues in the public domain. The public agenda is the main focus or prime issue that members of society or the public are concerned about. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was a topic that generated unprecedented media traffic in the last quarter of 2019 and 2020 because of its health implications worldwide. Campaigns of different types were launched on all media and community platforms to enlighten the people about the danger of the virus, as traditional songs were not left out of the many avenues of talking to the people of Benue State.

Also known as the agenda-setting function of the mass media, the theory advocate presupposes that the media set the public agenda by identifying what they should think about. In describing Agenda Setting Theory<sup>[28]</sup>, it was maintained that two views present themselves: the broad and the narrow. The point of emphasis for the broad citation<sup>[29]</sup> is:

These are the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda. The media agenda is seen as a set of topics addressed by media sources such as newspapers, television, radio, and magazines; the public agenda sets topics that members of the public believe are important to public discourse, while the policy agenda represents issues that policymakers or decision-makers believe are particularly salient and definitive of a society.

In its narrow sense, agenda setting concentrates on the link between the media and public agenda, as visible in the works of Folarin<sup>[31]</sup>. In addition to the foregoing, Anaeto et al. [26] explain further that the media may not be successful much of the time in telling the people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling the people what to think about.

According to Matsaganis<sup>[32]</sup>, discussions on this theory also cover how the mass media present particular events for their media audiences. For example, traditional songs composed by Tiv musicians, specifically about Corona Virus Disease, were repeatedly played on Ashiwaves radio station during the

pandemic in order to disseminate messages to the natives of Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State on the dangers of the pandemic and how to avoid contracting it. By so doing, Kwande people were given a direction on the issue to think about and discuss during the period the pandemic lasted.

## 2.2. Research design

This study adopts the traditional approach of positivist research design, which informs the choice of survey method using a structured questionnaire to elicit appropriate responses from Kwande residents to achieve the objectives of the study. The population of the study area (Kwande) was derived from the National Bureau of Statistics data projected in 2022 to be 359,000 following the 2006 Census. Thus, the Taro Yamane statistics formula was used to adopt a sample size of 399, which was approximately 400 from the research population. Furthermore, the researchers purposefully picked Adikpo, the headquarters of Kwande Local Government, to administer the questionnaire.

The choice of Adikpo was borne out of the cosmopolitan nature of the area, as natives from the five main clans of the local government (Turan, Ikyurav-Ya, Shangev-Ya, Naney, and Usar) usually converge on every market day to buy and sell. Also, as the headquarter of Kwande Local Government Area, many natives live and work at the Local Government Secretariat, while others engage in businesses, as some teach in primary and secondary schools. Since the respondents are educated and own radio sets or handsets that they use for listening to Ashiwaves 99.9FM, they were in the best position to ascertain how indigenous songs played a crucial role in curbing the spread of COVID-19. Consequently, using cluster sampling, the researchers administered questionnaires to local government staff, teachers, taxi drivers, and business owners at random to gather data, which was further analyzed in a statistical table using frequency and percentage to explain the results generated from the field.

## 2.3. Findings and discussion

The data derived from 387 respondents who returned their questionnaire properly filled and usable based on the objectives of this study is presented in the tables below:

**Table 2.** Kwande residents' listenership of Ashiwaves 99.9FM.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I Listen to Ashiwaves FM	387	100
I don't listen to Ashiwaves	-	-
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

The response given by Kwande residents in **Table 2** showed high level of listenership which Ashiwaves station receives.

**Table 3.** How often Kwande residents listen to Ashiwaves 99.9FM.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Daily	342	88
Thrice a week	38	10
Once a week	7	2
Bi-weekly	-	-
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.



The responses in **Table 3** indicated that Kwande residents listen to radio more often and regularly at long intervals.

In **Table 4**, respondents affirm that indigenous songs about corona virus disease were played on Ashiwaves 99.9FM station.

**Table 4.** Response on whether Kwande residents heard any indigenous song about Covid-19 on Ashiwaves 99.9 FM during the pandemic.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
yes I did	387	100
I am not sure	-	-
I did not	-	-
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

**Table 5.** Responses on the indigenous artistes whose songs were played most on Ashiwaves radio station.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Rapizo	381	98
Obadia	6	2
Orkucha	-	-
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

**Table 5** shows the responses of Kwande residents, which is in favour of Rapizo (98%) whose music was widely heard during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 6.** How the indigenous songs played on Ashiwaves radio helped in curbing COVID-19 among Kwande residents.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Avoided Crowded Areas	154	40
Hand washing with Soap	91	24
Social Distancing	56	14
Avoided handshake and hugging	86	22
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

Measures in **Table 6** suggested in the indigenous songs were not different from the conventional messages on how to avoid contracting the virus. The most important was to stay at home and avoid crowded areas (40%).

**Table 7.** Other reasons raised in the traditional songs to ensure caution and consciousness from Kwande residents on COVID-19 preventive measures.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
COVID-19 could kill someone irrespective of party affiliation	117	30
COVID-19 could kill people across different Ethnic groups	126	33
Covid-19 could kill both the rich and poor	144	37
Total	387	100

Source: Field survey 2023.

The responses given by the respondents in **Table 7** shows that the traditional songs gave them more reasons to ensure that the measures to curb the pandemic were duly observed.

## **2.4. Discussion**

Based on the findings in objective one, it was discovered that Kwande residents (100%) who responded to the questionnaire listen to Ashiwaves FM more frequently (98%) and confirmed that traditional songs about Corona Virus Disease were heard on the radio stations broadcast (100%) during the pandemic period to educate them on how to curb the health challenge that ravaged the world. This function performed by Ashiwaves FM is in line with the assertion by Sule<sup>[6]</sup> that “it is a necessity for the mass media to exist and perform its function of informing and educating the public for the development of society.” The foregoing position is apt because, should Ashiwaves FM decline its role of infotainment and education, the tendency to have more casualties in Benue State may be very high.

From objective two, the responses in **Table 5** by Kwande residents showed that Rapizo (98%) was the artist whose traditional song about COVID-19 was heard the most, and Obadia (2%) took the least. This invariably means that the number of times Rapizos’ song in Tiv Language titled “Corona Virus” was played on the station was more frequent, which validates the postulation of the Agenda Setting theory that the media lay emphasis on a particular topic that the public will think about and discuss as the most important topic<sup>[33]</sup>. In addition to the foregone, Sobowale<sup>[9]</sup> found in his study on indigenous African music composition that songs draw on natural ingredients inherent in the people’s culture. As a result, the musicians of Tiv extraction used Tiv language and culture to educate their kinsmen on the dangers of contracting the coronavirus disease.

Based on the responses generated, which are consonant with objective three, the respondents in **Table 6** established the measures for curbing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include avoiding crowded areas (40%), hand washing with soap (24%), social distancing (14%), and avoiding handshakes and hugging (22%). The measures outlined in the traditional song are in tandem with the findings of Musa<sup>[23]</sup> that regular hand washing, wearing of a face mask, use of hand sanitiser, and social distances were measures of curbing the spread of the pandemic in Nigeria. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the artist Rapizo used his musical prowess to inform the public to do the needful; otherwise, COVID-19 could kill anyone, irrespective of party or ethnic affiliation, neither rich nor poor. Based on the postulation of Uses and Gratifications theory, it is important to align with the fact that Kwande residents, having been curious to know more about COVID-19, used the songs played by Ashiwaves FM station to satisfy their curiosity as they were also entertained. Furthermore, Santas<sup>[2]</sup> found in their research that the COVID-19 pandemic did put people in a position where they had to seek health-related information on preventive and curative measures necessary to avoid being hurt or even killed.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

This research on the perceptions of Kwande residents on traditional songs on Ashiwaves Radio in curbing COVID-19 has revealed that traditional songs were important and influential in the sensitisation of Kwande residents on COVID-19 preventive measures in Benue State. The natives of Kwande, who are Tivs, understood the message disseminated by the songs, especially that of Rapizo, which they effectively utilised to avoid crowded areas. Washing their hands with soap and covering their mouth and nose with a mask, among other measures like social distancing to curb the pandemic, was effective in the state because today, Kwande residents are not only free from COVID-19, but the entire Benue State is free from the pandemic.

## 2.6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are set:

- Ashiwaves FM, as an indigenous station, should not relent in the promotion of traditional songs because of the enormous benefits the songs have in society, owing to their ability to help curb the COVID-19 pandemic among Kwande residents in Benue State.
- Ethnic groups in Nigeria that are yet to establish indigenous radio stations should also do so in order to emulate the culture of Ashiwaves in promoting traditional artists whose songs are didactic and serve as infotainment and edutainment to curb disease outbreaks.
- Government-owned broadcast stations can also improve the knowledge of the masses by playing traditional songs for them in order to prevent the spread of a pandemic or disease outbreak.

## Author contributions

Conceptualization, TDA; methodology, TDA; validation, IJO; formal analysis, IJO; writing—original draft preparation, EMA; writing—review and editing, EMA. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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