



A perceptual study of Ozisa FM We the people program on the Unknown Gunmen issue in Owerri municipal

¹Chieme Azubuike*, ²Isaac Uche Dorathy

¹Department of Mass Communication, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Rumuola Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 500102, Nigeria

²Research Fellow, Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 410001, Nigeria

¹chiemeazubuike7@gmail.com*; ²dorathy.uche.pg989540@unn.edu.ng

*Correspondent email author: chiemeazubuike7@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received 2024-10-08

Revised 2024-12-09

Accepted 2024-12-17

Keywords

Insecurity

Unknown

Municipal

Media

The risk associated with insecurity is alarming as such people need to be security conscious in order to stay safe. The aim of the study was to investigate the public perception of Ozisa FM We the people programme on the Unknown gunmen issue in Owerri municipal council. The study was framed around the agenda setting theory. The study adopted a survey research approach with the use of questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The population is 171,102, of which 384 were derived using Survey Monkey's online sample size calculator. The non-proportionate quota sampling and purposive sampling approaches were used. The data was analysed using simple percentages. Results revealed that 47.4% of the respondents confirmed that they are exposed to Ozisa FM's We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen to a moderate extent. Findings also showed that 55.0% of the respondents had the perception that the We the people programme has been effective in joining hands with the authority to curtail the Unknown Gunmen's activities. It was concluded that audience are moderately exposed to the Ozisa FM We the people programme. Despite their level of exposure to the programme they still perceive it in a positive light, due to its role in helping curtail the menace of the Unknown gunmen in Owerri, Imo State. It was recommended that they need to sustain their efforts in joining hands with the appropriate stakeholders with the goal of ending the issue of the Unknown gunmen, especially in Imo State.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



1. Introduction

There is definitely reason to be concerned about the increasing security risks coming from the southeast of Nigeria. However, things weren't always this way. Though it was once considered the most calm area of the nation, the South-east has recently been a source of violence as armed persons dubbed as unknown gunmen target state security facilities (Ezeobi et al., 2021).

Amidst the aforementioned, Nwoga & Taiwo (2021) observed that gunmen have been attacking police and other security forces in Southeast Nigeria more frequently in recent months, in an area

where separatist tensions are rising. The country's Southeast continues to have a dangerous security environment. The area reports incidents of arson of security buildings, the murder of security personnel, and the taking of innocent people's lives almost every day. Therefore, the level of security to keep people safe is low. In agreement with the aforementioned claim, Austin-Egole et al., (2022) noted that the level of insecurity in Nigeria at the moment is unparalleled, resulting in numerous deaths of foreign nationals, security personnel, elected officials, and government employees in addition to innocent civilians. Since many businesses are closed for the majority of the day or only provide skeleton services, they are all negatively impacted by the increased insecurity.

Ewetan & Urhie (2014) asserts that the concerning degree of insecurity in Nigeria has led to a rise in various forms of insecurity in various regions of the country, resulting in unfavourable outcomes for the economy and its development (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014; Okolisah, 2022). The danger and dread of the nefarious actions of government security personnel and unidentified shooters have grown despite the numerous security measures put in place to address the severe problems of insecurity in Nigeria (Macaulay et al., 2021). According to Ezeobi et al. (2021), the violent actors commonly referred to as "unknown gunmen" are carrying out horrific killings and frequent attacks in the now unstable southeast region. If this violence continues, it will be catastrophic for both the region and the nation as a whole.

The broadcast media is crucial in all of these, as noted by Mosharafa (2015), who also notes that in addition to being people's primary source of information about almost every facet of society, the media ranks first among other media genres that draw viewers during times of crisis. Through their shows and articles, the media shapes the opinions and perceptions of their viewers on a certain subject (Adeline et al., 2024; Christenson, 2010; Sylvan et al., 2010). The media's presentation of the Unknown Gunmen topic in its shows and reporting greatly influences public opinion. Ozisa FM station has been working to educate the public about the problem through one of its programmes, "We the People Programme," ever since the plague of unidentified gunmen began. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out how the public felt about Ozisa FM's "we the people programme" in relation to the subject of the mysterious gunmen.

The unknown gunmen's vicious attacks have been on the increase in the Southeast zone of the country, particularly intense in Owerri, Imo State which, since it began have not been peace and as a result has become one of the most dangerous states to live in southeast Nigeria. People now become scared to travel down to Imo state because of fear of the unknown. In the wake of this situation a whole lot of people seem to be in the dark concern the issue of the Unknown Gunmen. It appears that there has not been enough empirical evidence showing how radio through its programmes especially in Imo state covers the "Unknown" Gun men's operations in the broadcast

media. As a result, the people are now insufficiently informed about the activities of the gunmen in such situation people will not be armed with information regarding Unknown Gunmen and when people are not informed they may not know how to tackle the issue. Additionally, it is believed that the media, particularly broadcast, has not delved sufficiently in doing investigative journalism to educate the people who rely on them for information to shape their opinions and perceptions on issues of serious concern such as the Unknown Gunmen. Through effective reportage, those perpetuating the crisis can have their perception changed, and peace Nigerians can equally avoid taking part in such a crisis. Based on this, there is an urgent need for broadcast media particularly through radio programmes especially Imo state where the issue of Unknown Gunmen is prevalent to rise to the occasion in order to cover the existing gaps and in the long run carry out their fundamental function of surveilling the environment.

The specific objectives of this study are to: Determine the extent residents of Owerri Municipal are exposed to Ozisa FM We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen. Examine the perception of Owerri Municipal residents on the Ozisa FM We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen. Find out the extent Ozisa FM We the People Programme have helped in bringing peoples' consciousness on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen. Through these objectives the research has been able to contribute to knowledge in the area of exposure, perception and in raising the consciousness of audience on issue as serious as insecurity.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research was based on the Agenda Setting Theory. Agenda setting delineates the significant impact of the media's capacity to determine which subjects are deemed relevant. In 1922, newspaper writer Walter Lippmann expressed concern regarding the media's capacity to shape public perceptions through imagery. McCombs and Shaw examined the presidential campaigns of 1968, 1972, and 1976. The theory was popularised by studies conducted in 1968. Their responsibility encompasses the development of the theory (Asemah et al., 2012, 2017). McCombs and Shaw concentrated on two components: awareness and information. Examining the agenda-setting role of mass media, they sought to evaluate the correlation between the issues deemed significant by voters in a particular community and the actual content of the media messages employed throughout the campaign. McCombs and Shaw determined that mass media significantly influenced voters' perceptions of the primary concerns in the campaign.

The theory posits that individuals' awareness of public concerns is largely influenced by the importance given to these issues by mass media in its reporting. Communication experts have consistently asserted that audiences prioritise issues within the realm of public discourse due to the mass media's emphasis on these topics. Thus, it suggests that the media establishes the agenda

regarding the Unknown Gunmen for public discourse. Cohen, as cited by (Asemah et al., 2017), observed that the media may not dictate what the public should think, but rather what issues to consider. In this context, the radio, through its programming, tends to influence the audience's perspective of the Unknown Gunmen situation in Owerri by dictating their thoughts on the issue.

This theory is relevance because it provides us the basis to understand the reason behind the opinions people have about the issue of the Unknown Gunmen as a result of the media emphasis on the issue.

Unknown Gunmen Activities and Security Issues

The concept of unknown gunmen refers to an ostensibly anonymous group of people who are occasionally called unknown gun men (Reporters, 2021). It seems that security officers are unwilling to identify these criminals or to apprehend them, even if the media sometimes refers to them as terrorists or bandits (Ugochukwu et al., 2021). Consequently, there has been no cessation of attacks, and the marauders often escape capture (Nwoga & Taiwo, 2021). It appears that many of these criminals are well-known, but for unknown reasons, political correctness, or incompetence on the part of our security staff, their crimes are frequently written off and referred to as "Unknown Gun Men, depriving their victims and families of the justice they so richly deserve. Undoubtedly, the rise in crime and criminality nationwide has resulted from the incapacity to capture these Unknown Gun men (Television, 2021).

On April 6, 2021, unknown gunmen stormed the Imo State Police Command headquarters and the Owerri Correctional Service Centre, freeing 1,844 inmates (Ayitogo, 2021). And if that wasn't enough, they also broke into the police headquarters in Owerri and set fire to the Ehime Mbanu Police Station. Even after Southeast Governors established the Ebube Agu security outfit in Owerri on April 11, 2021, the mystery gunmen have not slowed down (Nwoga & Taiwo, 2021).

Omede (2011) asserts that security is a critical situation pertaining to a state's relative ability to repel assaults to its fundamental interests and ideals. To put it simply, security is the state in which people may go about their daily lives without worrying about their safety or their belongings (Akin, 2008). Therefore, insecurity is the exact opposite of security (Ayitogo, 2021; Vambe, 2016). Insecurity is characterised by characteristics such as instability, problem-solving abilities, risk, hazard, uncertainty, loss of confidence, and uncertainty (Achumba et al., 2013). Achumba et al. further argue that these unique qualities create an environment in which there is a danger of injury, loss of life, property, or means of subsistence. Since they are unable to protect themselves or their group from forces that could harm them, they see insecurity as a condition of ignorance and helplessness that leaves them vulnerable to attack.

The Media and Insecurity

The significance of the media in accomplishing societal objectives has been underscored, encompassing social, health, infrastructure, political, educational, and security development. As the primary sector of the cultural economy responsible for spreading ideas throughout Nigerian society, the mass media rank among the most important institutions for socialisation (Elliot et al., 2024; Pate, 2012; Williams et al., 2024). This illustrates how society is impacted by and is shaped by the mainstream media's prevailing views, values, and attitudes. Therefore, what role might the mass media's societal dominance play in organising people against acts of insecurity in Nigeria? The mobilisation against acts of insecurity is centred on the media's correlation and surveillance functions. The media educates society and facilitates the creation of opinions and the adoption of attitudes, according to the monitoring role. The correlation function states that news and various societal events are connected to people's lives and environs by the media. This is achieved through explaining and interpreting how certain events affect people's lives and surroundings, especially when they involve actions that contribute to social unrest (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013). The We the people program on Ozisa FM is one of several media campaigns that attempt to prevent acts of insecurity by increasing public awareness of crime. Despite these programs, insecurity still exists. According to Pate (2012), the media has had a role in the latest wave of discontent in the following ways: selective reporting of biased group and individual stereotypes; reporting of intergroup disputes outside of their core political, social, and economic contexts; brief and sporadic reporting; complete blackout on certain neighbourhoods, individuals, or groups; use of offensive language, among other things, against certain populations.

Nwoga & Taiwo (2021) conducted a study analysing the perceptions of Southeast State citizens on broadcast media coverage of activities involving unidentified gunmen in Southeast Nigeria. The objectives were to: identify the root cause of "unknown" gunmen activities in Southeast Nigeria; evaluate the impact of these activities on residents of Southeast Nigeria; assess the effectiveness of broadcast media coverage of these activities; and determine whether broadcast stations have demonstrated a high level of accuracy, truthfulness, and fairness in reporting on the unknown gunmen activities. The research was based on Perception theory. The survey method was employed. A sample size of 385 was extracted from a population of 1,403,972 utilising the Australian Calculator. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Research indicated that poor governance is the fundamental cause of the activities of unidentified gunmen in Southeast Nigeria; these gunmen have adversely affected the residents; the broadcast media have inadequately reported the attacks by these "unknown" gunmen in Southeast Nigeria, and have failed to demonstrate a high standard of accuracy, truthfulness, and fairness in their reporting of these incidents. It is advised that effective governance is crucial for ensuring national security; given

that economic growth in Nigeria is unattainable amidst security challenges, public cooperation with the government and security agencies is essential to apprehend those responsible for insecurity; the Nigerian broadcast media must acknowledge the surveillance role of the media; broadcast stations in Nigeria should adopt objectivity in their reporting of events.

Austin-Egole et al., (2022) conducted an empirical evaluation of poverty and insecurity. They contended that poverty and insecurity are persistent, interrelated challenges currently faced by numerous nations, particularly those in the developing regions of Africa, including Nigeria. Security is an essential foundation for achieving and maintaining meaningful progress. Nigeria, akin to numerous other Sub-Saharan African nations, is profoundly entangled in and confronting complex security concerns.

The surge of insecurity in Nigeria has reached a perilous level, jeopardising the safety of people and property, as well as disrupting business and economic activity, resulting in significant misery and poverty. The poverty level in Nigeria has resulted in a significant portion of the population living below the poverty line, raising concerns and attracting increasing attention from academics and policymakers. This study aimed to determine whether insecurity causally contributes to the impoverishment of the residents of Owerri and vice versa, with specific reference to current events in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

The study employed a survey research methodology, utilising questionnaires and interviews as key data collection devices, framed by relative deprivation theory. Data were examined using basic percentages, and the chi-square test was employed to evaluate the hypothesis. Library research was employed to get secondary data for analytical discussion. Research findings indicate a reciprocal association between insecurity and poverty, necessitating a recommendation to eschew violence. Nwodu et al., (2021) conducted a study on audience perceptions of social media messaging regarding security challenges in southeastern Nigeria. They contended that, notwithstanding the advantages and disadvantages of social media in national security and its utilisation for disseminating varied security messages in a tumultuous context, there is a deficiency of research assessing or elucidating users' perceptions of social media communications regarding security difficulties.

The study addresses this vacuum in the literature by employing the Four Index Perception Evaluation Scale (FIPES), which includes the dimensions of hatred-support perception, propaganda disinformation perception, conversationality-tone perception, and believability, to examine the problem. The study is led by four objectives, each corresponding to one of the four dimensions of index perception evaluation. The study employed a survey research design, focussing on two types of social media users among the population. A sample size of 310 respondents was established

using the Cochran method. A web-based questionnaire utilising a five-point Likert scale was employed for data collection, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Decision-making was conducted with the mean score of a five-point Likert scale. Research indicates that the audience interprets social media posts regarding southeastern instability as expressing animosity or favour towards one of the two primary entities (IPOB and the Federal Government of Nigeria) involved in the conflict.

Ugochukwu et al., (2021) conducted a study on the role of social media in disseminating false information and its impact on security issues in Nigeria. They contended that social media has demonstrated substantial advantages in information diffusion and awareness building. In light of the recent increase in attacks by armed organisations, including Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and, more recently, unidentified gunmen in Nigeria's South-East region, social media functions as an effective instrument for fostering security awareness and vigilance. The proliferation of social media in Nigeria has given rise to the prevalence of fake news, undermining its effective use for enhancing security awareness.

This study employed a survey research method to gather primary data from respondents, while existing literature provided secondary data. Theories of Technological Determinism and Disruptive Technology were employed. The study revealed that social media users disseminate false material to increase their follower count. Additionally, individuals do not unfollow social media platforms for posting fabricated stories or news. Dissemination of false information on social media incites worry and tension when rapidly circulated by a large audience. The researchers advise that government and security agencies should leverage social media to enhance public understanding of optimal responses to security concerns.

Nwabueze & Ebeze (2013) conducted a study that investigated the essential function of mass media in addressing the increase in crime that has resulted in a state of insecurity in the nation, particularly in the Northern, South Eastern, and South Southern regions. This analysis employs a qualitative methodology to evaluate the relationship between mass media and insecurity in Nigeria, focussing on applicable metrics in this context. It is recommended that journalists receive frequent training in terrorism and conflict reporting to be informed about contemporary tactics for effectively utilising mass media to combat insecurity in Nigeria.

Aka 2011 and Seimo (2010) conducted a perception-based study on media and security concerns, revealing that broadcast media inadequately fulfilled its surveillance function during the Niger Delta crisis. He observes that the surveillance role of the media offers substantial advantages, including enhancing regional security through crisis coverage, while also highlighting the Nigerian media's insensitivity to the region's security in its reporting on the crisis.

Maxwell (2010), as referenced in Udeze & Chukwuma (2013), in their study "Audience Assessment of Broadcast Media Surveillance and National Security in Nigeria," corroborated Siemo's findings, noting that the media, especially broadcast media, have insufficiently contributed to Nigeria's security. He expressed regret that, despite the media's significant potential to enhance national security, the Nigerian broadcast media have not adequately fulfilled their role (Gonina & Ngantem, 2019; Ottah & Okpoko, 2024).

Nwafor (2010) indicates that the mass media can enhance national security, although it has not fully utilised this potential for the advantage of Nigerians. Nwafor asserts that when the media disseminate security reports regarding potential threats from violent organisations, citizens, security personnel, and other stakeholders will take action to mitigate the risk.

Okoro & Chukwuma (2012) regarding the Boko Haram terror assaults corroborated previous assertions indicating that the Nigerian broadcast media had inadequately fulfilled its surveillance role in reporting on Boko Haram insurgencies in Northern Nigeria. Adeyemi (2011) similarly concludes that rather than merely reporting these attacks, the media should endeavour to enhance national security by employing an investigative approach to expose and prevent their schemes. In instances where aborting the plans proves exceedingly challenging, appropriate alternative measures should be implemented to mitigate the impact on the populace and the nation.

3. Method

The research employed a survey design, utilising a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. This method allowed the researchers to identify and describe the population they were studying. Also, it allowed the researchers to gather firsthand data from the respondents, which helped in solving the research problem. Furthermore, it was used because it is one of the most reliable methods in social research. Researchers like Jumbo et al., 2023; Loveth et al., (2022) have used this method and it was effective in addressing the research problem. The study's population consisted of residents from Owerri Municipal, which had a population of 127,213 according to the 2006 census. It was anticipated that the population would increase at a rate of 2.28 percent over 15 years, culminating in a projected population of 171,102. See calculation below:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{(2006 population figure given as 127,213)} \\ & Pp = Gp \times Pi \times XT \\ & 127,213 \times 0.023 \times 15 = 43,889 \\ & \text{Population increase from 2006 to 2021 is 43,889} \\ & 127,213 + 43,889 \\ & = 171,102 \end{aligned}$$

Based on the population projection of 2006 population the current population in 2021 is = 171,102. Therefore, the population of the study is 171,102. A sample size of 384 was determined with the Survey Monkey online sample size calculator. This investigation employed non-proportional quota sampling and purposive sampling methods. The sample size of 384 was allocated among five villages in Owerri Municipal Council: Umuororonjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche, Umuodu, and Umuoyima, employing a non-proportionate quota sampling method. 384 divided by 5 equals 77, for instance. Subsequent to the divide, the researchers selected a random sample of 77 individuals from each group.

These sampling techniques enabled the researchers to allocate instrument appropriately to the respondents for equal representation. The study utilised questionnaire as the instrument for data collection and the instrument was face validated by two research experts in the department of Mass Communication Captain Elechi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt. Their suggestions were incorporated in the final draft of the instrument. Also, the research instrument was subjected to Cronbach Alpha coefficient test using SPSS version 21 the result showed .78 indicating that the instrument is consistent. The face to face approach was used to gather data in the study. The data was evaluated utilising basic percentages and displayed in tables.

4. Result and Discussion

This section deals with data presentation and analysis. Out of the 384 copies of questionnaire distributed 369 (96.1%) was retrieved and found valid for analysis. Meanwhile, 15(3.9%) was invalid and was not used for the analysis. Therefore, the analysis for this study was done using 369 copies of the questionnaire.

RQ1: To what extent are residents of Owerri Municipal exposed to Ozisa FM We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen?

Table 1. RESPONDENTS RESPONSES ON THE EXTENT RESIDENTS OF OWERRI MUNICIPAL ARE EXPOSED TO OZISA FM WE THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME ON THE ISSUE OF THE UNKNOWN GUNMEN

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	110	29.8%
Moderate extent	175	47.4%
Low extent	74	20.0%
No extent	10	27.1%
Total	369	100

SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY, 2023

Analysis of data from the above table showed that 47.4% of the respondents are exposed to Ozisa FM We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen to a moderate extent. This means that many of the respondents studied are duly exposed to the programme that is being aired in Ozisa FM moderately.

RQ2: What is the perception of Owerri Municipal residents on the Ozisa FM We the People Programme on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen?

Table 2. RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION ON THE OZISA FM WE THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME ON THE ISSUE OF THE UNKNOWN GUNMEN

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Believe that the programme has been effective in joining hands with the authority to curtail the Unknown Gunmen activities	203	55.0%
Neutral	59	15.9%
Do not Believe that the programme has been effective in joining hands with the authority to curtail the Unknown Gunmen activities	107	28.9%
Total	369	100

SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY, 2023

Analysis as presented in the table above revealed that 55.0% of the respondents are of the perception that the We the People Programme has been effective in joining hands with the authority to curtail the Unknown Gunmen activities. This implies that majority of the respondents are of the view that the programme is equally helping to curtail the activities of the unknown gunmen activities within the state.

RQ3: To what extent Ozisa FM We the People Programme have helped in bringing peoples' consciousness on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen?

Table 3. RESPONDENTS RESPONSE ON THE EXTENT OZISA FM WE THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME HAVE HELPED IN BRINGING PEOPLES' CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE ISSUE OF THE UNKNOWN GUNMEN

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	209	56.6%
Moderate extent	125	33.8%
Low extent	35	9.4%
No extent	-	-
Total	369	100

SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY, 2023

Analysis of data from the above table showed that 56.6% of the respondents confirmed that Ozisa FM We the People Programme have helped in bringing peoples' consciousness on the issue of the Unknown Gunmen to a large extent. By implication of this finding, it means that through the programme a whole lot of people come to know about the Unknown government activities.

Discussion

The results showed that 47.4% of the respondents said they have moderate exposure to Ozisa FM's We the People Programme regarding the Unknown Gunmen problem. It is evident that a large number of respondents still make out time to listen to Ozisa's We the People programme. This is possible because of the agenda setting role the radio station is playing because if they fail to talk about the Unknown Gunmen issue people will not know anything about it. It is implied that this exposure will enable them to become aware of the condition of affairs about the actions of Unknown Gunmen in the state. This result is in line with that of Nwoga & Taiwo (2021), who discovered that proper awareness of the issue can arise when the media covers the operations of unknown gunmen

effectively. However, they found in their analysis that the attacks by "unknown" gunmen in Southeast Nigeria had not been sufficiently covered by the broadcast media. The distinction lies in the fact that, whereas the broadcast media effort was examined broadly, this study specifically focuses on Ozisa FM's "We the people Programme." This finding is also consistent with Mosharafa, (2015) and Adeline et al., (2024) who noted in their studies that the broadcast media is crucial because in addition to being people's primary source of information about almost every facet of society, the media ranks first among other media genres that draw viewers during times of crisis (Fissi et al., 2022). Through their shows and articles, the media shapes the opinions and perceptions of their viewers on a certain subject. Regarding the agenda-setting theory, listening to Ozisa FM programs will undoubtedly affect how the audience perceives them.

Further data analysis showed that 55.0% of respondents believed the "We the people programme" had been successful in working with the authorities to reduce the activities of the Unknown Gunmen. By implication the radio station is carrying out their surveillance function adequately in society. This result is consistent with a study conducted in 2013 by Nwabueze and Ebeze, which found that the mass media is essential in halting the rise in crime that has caused unrest throughout the nation, particularly in the North, South Eastern, and South Southern regions. Additionally, Taiwo et al.'s study (2021) revealed that respondents believed that poor governance was the main reason behind the activities of unknown gunmen in Southeast Nigeria and that the media had not done enough good job of covering these attacks.

Nwodu et al., (2021) did show that viewers interpreted social media posts on insecurity in the Southeast as either supporting or demonising the two main players—IPOB and the Federal Government of Nigeria. On the other hand, the Niger Delta crisis's broadcast media did not adequately carry out its surveillance function, according to Seimo's (2010) study. He pointed out that the Nigerian media showed insensitivity to the security of the region in their media coverage of the crisis and noted that there are significant benefits to the media's surveillance function, including bolstering regional security. It is crystal clear that the agenda setting role of the media very essential if at all the media wants to contribute in ending the Unknown gunmen activities. As the theoretical foundation of this study the agenda setting theory helps us to understand in clear terms why Ozisa FM do what they do through their programme.

Subsequent result showed that 56.6% of respondents agreed that Ozisa FM's "We the People Programme" had played a significant role in raising public awareness of the Unknown Gunmen issue. This statistic implies that a large number of people learn about the Unknown Gunmen's operations in Imo State thanks to the programme. If the radio station is not responsible in carrying out its role of informing the people this would have been difficult to attain such success. The radio station is aware of their obligation hence the agenda setting role in making people think about the

Unknown Gunmen issue. This result is consistent with that of Ugochukwu et al., (2021), who found that social media is a true tool for raising security awareness and consciousness. However, as social media has grown in Nigeria, fake news has emerged, which has made social media's usefulness for raising security awareness ineffective.

This result is also in consonance with Macaulay et al., (2021) who revealed that the media is key in propagating the awareness on security issue. In a similar vein, Nwafor (2010)'s study also showed that while the mass media can support national security by reporting on events, they have not done so to the fullest extent possible for Nigerian citizens. According to Nwafor, when the media, including citizens, security personnel, and other relevant parties receive security reports through the media, including threats of potential attacks by violent groups, their awareness of the threat is heightened and they take action to prevent it. This result also aligns with the agenda-setting theory that served as the foundation for the investigation.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is, therefore, concluded that audience are moderately exposed to the Ozisa FM "We the people programme." Despite their level of exposure to the programme they still perceive it in a positive light, due to its role in helping curtail the menace of the Unknown gunmen in Owerri, Imo State. Also, the rate at which people are conscious about the Unknown gunmen's activities can be equally attributed to the efforts of Ozisa FM's "We the People programme." This study has theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical implication is that, through the agenda-setting theory, issues such as Unknown Gunmen activities can be addressed when the media make it a point of duty to report the danger of the group thereby raising the consciousness of people towards the issue.

This information could be handy for future researchers who would want to apply the agenda-setting theory to tackle issues in society. For the practical implication, this study has demonstrated that the radio through its programmes has the capacity to end social ill in society by just raising peoples' consciousness towards the issue with the intention of addressing it. The study is not without limitations. The limitations of the study was that, it paid attention to only one programme without considering other programmes and even news reports. Again, the study focused only on Owerri municipal whereas the issue of unknown gunmen is spread across all the L.G.As in the state. Therefore, future should consider carrying out research in these areas the study could not cover.

In line with the findings, here are the recommendations: Effort needs to be made by Ozisa FM to keep boosting the popularity of the programme so as to motivate people towards exposing themselves to the programme. They need to sustain their effort in joining hands with the appropriate stakeholders with the goal of ending the issue of the Unknown gunmen especially in

Imo State. Ozisa FM should continue making programme more interactive to give room for eye-witness reports so as to properly raise the consciousness of audience towards the issue of the Unknown gunmen.

Acknowledgment

We wish to thank our research assistant Etumnu Emeka Williaams for his assistance in the course of this study. Also, we express our deepet gratitude to the editorial team of Commicast Journal for their good job in ensuring quality journal articles.

References

- Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S., & ... (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development. In *Journal of economics ... academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/download/30633214/Security_Challenges_in_Nigeria_and_the_Implications_for_Business_Activities_and_Sustainable_Development.pdf
- Adeline, N.-U., Ugboma, E. J., Chike, N. M., A., E. I., & Williams, E. E. (2024). Public Perception of Radio Programmes on Parental Sexual Abuse on Children: A Study of Residents of Owerri Metropolis. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 18(8), 191–202. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajarr/2024/v18i8721>
- Adeyemi, O. G. (2011). Appraising the place of the media in combating the Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. In *Journal of Terrorism studies*.
- Aka, S. M. (2011). Media coverage of the Niger Delta crisis. In *Journal of Media and Conflict Studies*.
- Asemah, E. S., Gujbawu, M., Ekhareafo, D. O., & Okpanachi, R. A. (2012). *Research methods and procedures in mass communication*. Jos: Great Future Press, Nigeria.
- Asemah, E. S., Nwammuo, A. N., & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O. A. (2017). *Theories and models of communication*. Jos: University Press.
- Austin-Egole, I. S., Iheriohanma, E. B. J., Iheanacho, J. I., Ezeji, N. R., Okafor, H. I., & Wokoma, C. U. (2022). Insecurity And The Pauperization Of Residents Of Owerri In Imo State, Nigeria: An Empirical Assessment. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v7i3.1232>
- Ayitogo, N. (2021). How gunmen attacked Owerri prison, freed 1,844 inmates–Official. In *Premium Times*.
- Christenson, B. L. (2010). The effect of grade-level retention on student success as defined by the Student Success Initiative of Texas. [search.proquest.com. https://search.proquest.com/openview/a64cd1b36bdf161fcc8fb6a9748edae2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750](https://search.proquest.com/openview/a64cd1b36bdf161fcc8fb6a9748edae2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750)

- Elliot, I. J., Ifeoma, O. U., & Etumnu, E. W. (2024). The role of the media in security strategies (on the example of Bayelsa State, Nigeria). *Skhid*. <https://skhid.kubg.edu.ua/article/view/303052>
- Ewetan, O. O., & Urhie, E. (2014). Insecurity and socio-economic development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*. <https://www.scienta.asia/index.php/jsds/article/view/531>
- Ezeobi, C., Isiguzo, C., Arinze, G., Eleke, D.C., Ugwu-Nwogo, E., Nworie, B & Uneze, A. (2021). As Insecurity Tears across the South-east. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/07/26/as-insecurity-tears-across-the-south-east/>
- Fissi, S., Gori, E., Marchi, V., & Romolini, A. (2022). Social media, brand communication and customer engagement in Michelin-starred restaurants during a time of crisis. *British Food Journal*, 125(13). <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-04-2022-0363>
- Gonina, S. S., & Ngantem, L. M. (2019). Mass media, terrorism and national security: Defining the threats. In *Cross-Cultural Communication*. [academia.edu. https://www.academia.edu/download/106428888/11336.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/106428888/11336.pdf)
- Jumbo, C. N., Asemah, E. S., Anyanwu, B. J. C., Onyebuhi, A. C., Etumnu, E. W., & Anyi, O. S. A. (2023). Utilisation of new media in communicating insecurity in Southeast Nigeria. *COMMICAST*, 4(1), 25–36.
- Loveth, O., C., A. K., M., O. K., W., E. E., Okodogbe, P., & Odionyenma, C. U. (2022). Effectiveness of Mass Media in the Fight against Drug Abuse among Undergraduates of Tertiary Institutions in Imo State. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2022/v14i330380>
- Macaulay, S. U., Etumnu, E. W., & Akwari, C. (2021). Perception on the Use of Social Media in Propagating Security Issues in the Post COVID- 19 Era: A Study of Owerri Residents, Imo State. 8, 113–126.
- Maxwell, O. J. (2010). Mass media and national security. In *Journal of Communications Studies*.
- Mosharafa, E. (2015). All you need to know about: The cultivation theory. [academia.edu. https://www.academia.edu/download/39949289/3-All-you-Need-to-Know.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/39949289/3-All-you-Need-to-Know.pdf)
- Nwabueze, C., & Ebeze, E. (2013). Mass media relevance in combating insecurity in Nigeria. In *International journal of development and ... isdsnet.com*. <https://isdsnet.com/ijds-v2n2-31.pdf>
- Nwafor, N. K. (2010). Mass media and Nigeria's quest for national security. In *Journal of Communication and Defence Studies*.
- Nwodu, G. B., Ezeoke, C. B., & Ezeaka, N. B. (2021). Audience Perception of Social Media Messages on Security Challenges in the South East, Nigeria: Implication for Audience Gate Keeping. In *World Journal of Innovative ... researchgate.net*. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gloria->

- Eberechukwu-Nwodu/publication/358089643_Audience_perception_of_social_media_messages_on_security_challenges_in_the_Southeast_Nigeria_Implications_for_Audience_Gatekeeping/links/6599a65c0bb2c7472b3764fd/Audience-perception-of-social-media-messages-on-security-challenges-in-the-Southeast-Nigeria-Implications-for-Audience-Gatekeeping.pdf
- Nwoga, C., & Taiwo, I. (2021). Assessment Of Southeast Residents' Perception Of Broadcast Media Coverage Of "Unknown" Gun Men Attacks In Southeast Nigeria. 5, 32-39.
- Okolisah, C. P. (2022). The Question of Insecurity and Sustained Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. Nigerian Journal of Philosophical Studies. <https://acjol.org/index.php/njps/article/view/3331>
- Okoro, N. M., & Chukwuma, O. (2012). Reporting Violent Insurgencies in Postcolonial Nigeria: An Analysis of Audience Assessment of Nigerian Broadcast Media Reportage of the Boko Haram Insurgence. ... Media Journal: Pakistan Edition. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=20702469&AN=86824474&h=nkEe8SBigq%2FbSeEkm1nAV6MGJwCC4iCPy9AsAnzMP8qRKDuzFjoSSglWw9X9QSox4RN%2Fx%2BKj2kdotgqZgIhGUA%3D%3D&crl=c>
- Omede, A. J. (2011). Nigeria: Analysing the security challenges of the Goodluck Jonathan administration. In Canadian social science. academia.edu. <https://www.academia.edu/download/107539312/2002.pdf>
- Ottah, I., & Okpoko, C. C. (2024). Mass Media, Communication Policy and National Security. Esut Journal Of Social Sciences. <https://www.esutjss.com/index.php/ESUTJSS/article/view/187>
- Pate, U. A. (2012). Practices and challenges of media performance in conflict-prone multicultural Nigeria. In The companion to communication and development
- Reporters, S. (2021). Timeline: 10 INEC offices attacked by unknown gunmen in May. In Sahara Reporters.
- Seimo, S. S. (2010). Media coverage of the Niger Delta crisis. In Journal of Development Studies.
- Sylvan, S., Christenson, B., & Ardung, B. (2010). Three-year surveillance of community-acquired and health care-associated Methicillin-Resistant staphylococcus aureus infections in Uppsala County, Sweden. International Journal of [https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712\(10\)01974-0/abstract](https://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712(10)01974-0/abstract)
- Television, C. (2021). Interview on security issues in the East with Governor David Umahi unknown gunmen are not unknown. Youtube. <https://m.youtube.com>
- Udeze, S. E., & Chukwuma, O. (2013). Audience assessment of broadcast media surveillance and national security in Nigeria. Covenant

<https://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjoc/article/view/22>

Ugochukwu, C. C., Joel, N. O., & Nnabuife, C. O. (2021). Social media use in propagating fake news and its influence on security challenges in Nigeria: Study of unknown gunmen. In *International Journal of Innovative ...*

Vambe, J. T. (2016). Poverty, insecurity and national development in Nigeria: An overview. In *Global Journal of Applied, Management and Social ... academia.edu*.
https://www.academia.edu/download/61822708/POVERTY_INSECURITY_AND_NATIONAL_DEVELOPMENT_IN_NIGERIA-AN_OVERVIEW20200118-24090-1vpwcrp.pdf

Williams, E. E., Grace, O., Inioluwa, O. V., & Nseobong, U. E. (2024). Tackling Hate Speech on Refugees and Migrants in Nigeria: What can the Media do? *Scope*. <https://hal.science/hal-04562196/>