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## **Influence of Darling FM Health Programme on Instilling Positive Fitness And Diet Behavioural Change on Owerri North Youth**

**Cajetan O. Iheanacho, PhD; Miracle Chukwuemeka Anele &  
Emeka Williams Etumnu**

Department of Mass Communication  
Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria  
etumnuemeka@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This study was carried out to determine the influence of Darling FM's health programme on the youth in Owerri, Imo state. The researchers in this study used the theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour. The researchers used a survey research design. The population used for this study was 261,300. The Australian sample size calculator was used to arrive at a sample size of 384. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The findings showed that Owerri North youth are highly aware of Darling FM's Darling Clinic. It was also discovered that Owerri youth are moderately exposed to Darling Clinic. Darling Clinic has had a positive behavioural change and influence on the diet and lifestyle of Owerri North youth who tune in to the programme. It was concluded that Darling FM's Darling Clinic so far is doing great work regarding educating their audience and instilling in them the right healthy changes in their diets and fitness plans. It was recommended that Darling FM broaden their Darling Clinic topical scope to include other topics beyond diet tips and fitness. This will help their audience understand better what things to avoid that can worsen their organ malfunction.

**Keywords:** Influence, Darling FM, Health Programme, Positive Fitness, Diet Behaviour

### **Introduction**

The mass media are very powerful tools of setting good agenda for their listeners per time and day. The various mass media are used to improve the world and the lives of those inhabiting it (Baran, 2003; Ahmad & Isyaku, 2023). There are several media that can be put to better use to improve the lives of Nigerians, especially the lives of those in rural areas. Among the media used for societal education and sensitisation is radio (Asemah, Anum & Edegoh, 2013). Numerous studies have demonstrated the value of radio as a medium for the public's entertainment, education and information as well as for influencing listeners' and viewers' social, cultural, political and technological perspectives. Radio has far reaching advantage and is very accessible to the rural settlers in every society (Ahmad & Isyaku, 2023). Community radio is very useful than the conventional radio because it aims at helping those staying in rural communities to feel at home and participate actively in radio programmes aimed at improving their lives (Al-Hassan, Andani & Abdul-Malik, 2011). For marginalised groups, community radio serves as a counter-hegemonic medium or alternative (Onyenakeya & Salawu, 2022)

and is a vital source of information for rural residents (Fombad & Jiyane, 2019). Radio has better edge over other media because it is identified by all to be affordable, easily understood, accepted and can be listened to anytime, from anywhere with no much network interference (Ahmad & Isyaku, 2023).

Global health promotion initiatives now heavily rely on the mass media, especially community radio (Thomas, Peterson & Walker, 2018; Wilkinson, 2016). Public service announcements continue to be a vital tool for raising awareness of health issues and encouraging a shift in public perception and behaviour (Olaoye & Onyenankeya, 2023a). According to Ahmad & Murad (2020), Mheidly & Fares (2020), Wakefield, Loken & Hornik (2010), the mass media play a critical role in promoting health outcomes that change attitudes, influence health behaviour and pave the way for social sustainability (Heras-Pedrosa, Rando-Cueto & Jambrino-Maldonado, 2020). The media, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, can play a crucial role in mobilising public response during a public health crisis like a pandemic, in addition to acting as channels of communication for raising awareness about potential risks to public health (Adebisi, Rabe & Lucero-Priso, 2021; Ajilore, Atakiti & Onyenankeya, 2017; Olaoye & Onyenankeya, 2023b).

In the promulgation of health programmes to educate and sensitise the people, radio is the first and ever effective media used. Health practices and topics can reach a wide range of persons including in rural areas, especially if these radio health programmes were communicated in simple and understandable language (Igbe-Arse, 2023). Communication being a huge contributing factor to radio programme understanding and possible practice of health lifestyles communicated by its listeners, radio programmes are to be tailored in simple English language or Igbo language or preferably in vernacular, which everybody can relate with.

Talk radio are used, among others, to accomplish participatory health communication. Participatory health communication involves community members as participants in the process of meaning construction and development efforts. It constitutes a communicative effort that enables community members to weave together individual and collective discourses on health and living (Adal, 2023; Onyebuchi, Alaekwe, Idih, Obuibike & Etumnu, 2023).

Haven known the importance of health sensitisation and education, most radio stations now include health beat into the range of programmes they plan, produce and air on Radio. Health programmes have come to stay in almost every operational radio station. There are several radio stations in Imo state that are licensed to stay on air. These several radio stations have health programmes aired at a certain day and time of the day on a weekly basis. One of these radio stations is Darling FM 107.3. Darling FM has their health programme called the *Darling Clinic*. In *Darling Clinic* health related matters and topics are being brought up and discussed to educate and enlighten its listeners on fitness and diet (Darling FM Owerri, 2024). This programme aims at improving the behaviour of its listeners towards the need for exercise and good diet. Therefore, based on the background, this study sought to investigate the influence of Darling FM health programme on instilling positive fitness and diet behavioural change on Owerri North Youth.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Radio programmes are really entertaining and captivating. This helps the radio station to retain their audience without boring them for the duration they are exposed to their station. Most radio programmes are tailored in a way that it will be humorous, engaging, entertaining and educating, this is the same way most radio health programmes are produced and aired. Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* is no exception, since it brings up health talks to be discussed among the host and her listeners. The problem there is that, it is believed that to some listeners to the *Darling Clinic* programme, they think the health topics raised in this programme is for cruise sake not really so that can really practise them. It seems that some listeners have even drawn a line on what they can or cannot accept even though it is discussed on air in any radio stations health programme, this poses as a problem. Another problem is that those calling in seem to be asking questions for asking sake, in most cases they know the answers to these health questions they ask, yet, they cannot really accept the answer to apply it to their lives to improve their physical health outcome. This study sought to ascertain the influence of Darling FM health programmes on instilling positive behavioural change on Imo youths fitness and diet.

### **Research Objectives**

The researchers raised the following objectives for this study:

1. Assess Owerri youth awareness of Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* programmes.
2. Ascertain the extent of exposure of Owerri North youth to Darling FM's *Darling clinic* programme
3. Identify the influence Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* has had on instilling positive fitness and diet behaviours in Owerri North youth who listen to the programme

### **Literature Review**

Radio is a valuable medium for educating, entertaining and enlightening the public. Information is typically disseminated to the public through electronic media. In the long run, radio's usage as an electronic medium can help improve and transform social, cultural, political, and technological thinking, which will benefit rural development (Iheanacho, Okoli, Jumbo, Akwari, Etumnu & Ikpo, 2022). Rural radio becomes a medium that can aid in the development of rural communities since radio can be used to educate, inform, and socialise society (Ahmad & Isyaku, 2023). This is based on the observation that, due to the high rate of illiteracy in rural areas, residents seem to be excluded from discussions about developmental issues. Radio is widely available, reasonably priced, and well understood. It does not require any listening or broadcasting sophistication. It can be listened to or utilised anywhere, at any time. Because of radio's distinctive qualities, it seems that rural residents can readily relate to it as a mass communication medium (Ahmad & Isyaku, 2023).

This makes it necessary for multiple radio stations to be established in Nigeria's rural communities. However, given the startlingly high prevalence of illiteracy in rural

regions, the difficulty here is how to make rural radio acceptable and comprehensive (Asemah *et al* 2013). Darling FM *Darling Clinic* programme is a radio health programme owned, produced, sponsored and aired by Darling FM 107.3, Owerri, Imo state. Darling FM is one of the lively radio stations in Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria. Darling FM has several interesting programmes that educate and enlighten their listeners. Amongst these several interesting programmes, we have the *Darling clinic*. This programme is a radio magazine that involves interviews, vox-pops and listener's participations on issues concerning fitness and diet (Darling FM Owerri, 2023). This programme is packaged to be humorous, engaging, conversational, educating and enlightening (Darling FM Owerri, 2024).

*Darling clinic* tone and language is simple and understandable, to allow for better articulation and to relate whatever health topic to be easily understood by anybody including a layman. This programme in few occasions brings up health topics for discussion. This programme is been anchored by a doctor, who the listeners are at liberty to call in, to ask any question related to the human health, these questions are been given better and reliable responses by the Clinic Doctor anchoring the programme. These programme on special health celebration days, bring up such topic on air to enlighten their listeners better about it (Darling FM Owerri, 2023).

This programme is an hour programme that takes place every Wednesday by 11am to 12pm. It is anchored by Certified Camille and Cassey the radio Diva, who are certified broadcast health journalists telling solutions based stories and exploring innovative health journalism. Topics raised at the *Darling Clinic* include topics on acceptable health practices, attitudes and lifestyles on fitness and diet to be embraced by youths who would eventually grow old someday. The goal of this programme is to change the perception of its listeners positively towards having a better health outcome haven put up good and healthy lifestyle (Darling FM Owerri, 2024).

Igbe-Arse (2023) conducted a study on the impact of a radio broadcast focused on promoting healthy living and family planning. The findings showed that the level of exposure to the ITV radio healthy living family programme among residents of Benin City was substantial. Additionally, the effectiveness of the programme in meeting the information requirements of married couples regarding family planning was high. Ahmad & Isyaku (2023) focused on the implementation of community health interventions using radio broadcasting. Their analysis revealed that ABU Samaru 101.1 FM prioritises health-related matters by raising awareness about any outbreaks of specific societal epidemics within the Samaru community. Additionally, it was discovered that the community health programming on ABU 101.1 FM radio promotes development by showcasing health programmes focused on adult health, children's health, personal cleanliness, maternity health and health education.

The study conducted by Olaoye & Onyenankeya (2023) examined the efficacy of community radio in promoting health information in South Africa. The findings indicated that Mdantsane Community FM has the potential to serve as a valuable source of health information. Nevertheless, the station still required to enhance its role in promoting health information. In order to effectively carry out this task, community radio stations

must actively and deliberately produce and broadcast health programmes that are culturally sensitive, on a regular and long-term basis.

Hayford (2023) carried out a study on the relationship between radio health broadcasts and public awareness. His research revealed a substantial audience of women in the perimenopausal age group who listen to Medic 923 and Health Matters. However, these radio programmes do not place significant emphasis on menopause-related topics. As a result, women in the perimenopausal age group have low awareness of menopause. In fact, radio is not a significant source of menopause information for them. Ikpeama, Anaba & Kalu (2024) examined the impact of a health programme on the communication of mental health among residents in the southeast region. Their research findings indicated that the individuals are highly cognizant of the programme and it was also noted that the project has effectively educated them about the underlying factors contributing to mental health issues, as well as the available solutions for those who are already affected.

According to Julian, Okereke, Azubike & Nwaesi (2021), 31.5% of participants acknowledged that radio health programmes had a significant impact on their attitude towards the COVID-19 virus and their health. This influence was attributed to the programmes encouraging them to adopt healthy behaviours, such as regular hand washing, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a study conducted by Ikems (2021), it was demonstrated that radio stations predominantly serve as the primary source for broadcasting health programmes. Nevertheless, we also encountered the predicament of insufficient financial resources to undertake other endeavours. The findings of Nwankwo & Arimitan (2021) indicated that Melody FM broadcasts emphasise the need of maintaining a low blood glucose level for those with diabetes. As a result, inhabitants of Warri actively listen to Melody FM messaging on diabetes. The findings showed that inhabitants of Warri comprehend the messages about diabetes broadcasted by Melody FM, since these messages have significantly influenced their perspectives and attitudes towards the disease.

Nzotta & Orji (2021) conducted a study that revealed a strong impact of radio health programmes "kaanyinyandu" and "ahu ikeamaka" on the understanding of residents in chosen areas in Imo state regarding health-related issues. The findings also indicated that the residents of the selected communities were persuaded to engage in health care practices as a result of their exposure to the radio health programmes. Anyanwu, Nzotta & Orji (2020) conducted a study that revealed a poor level of awareness, at 51.2%, among young mothers in Ohaji/Egbema, on sustainable maternity and child care practices through the "Health Watch" broadcast on Radio Nigeria. Furthermore, it has been discovered that the "Health Watch" programming on Radio Nigeria had a limited impact of just 44.7% on the involvement of young mothers in maternal and child care practices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This investigation finds expression in the theory of reasoned action and its extension. The theory was developed by Psychologists, Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1975. Ajzen later extended the model to include perceived behavioural control, resulting in the TPB

(Simply Psychology, 2020). The theory of reasoned action and its extension; the theory aims to explain human behaviour (Rural Health Info, 2020). They are particularly relevant in the context of public relations and health strategies as they provide a framework for understanding and predicting how people will behave in certain situations, especially regarding health-related decision-making (Simply Psychology, 2020).

The theory posits that a person's behaviour is determined by their intention to perform the behaviour, which is itself influenced by their attitude towards the behaviour and the subjective norms surrounding it. The theory of planned behaviour extends this model by adding perceived behavioural control, which accounts for factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the behaviour (TheoryHub, 2023; SPH Web, 2023).

By applying, radio health communicators can identify the key beliefs that need to be targeted to change behaviour, such as correcting misconceptions (attitude), highlighting social approval (subjective norms) and ensuring accessibility (perceived behavioural control), especially on the health, fitness and diet lifestyles and practices of people (How Communication Works, 2023). This approach can lead to more effective public health campaigns and interventions and result in instilling and retaining good and healthy behavioural change in lifestyle and practices among radio listeners who keep getting themselves exposed to radio health programmes (TheoryHub, 2023b).

### **Methodology**

The researchers employed the descriptive survey research design for this study. The population used for this study was the population of Owerri North youth. The population was estimated at 261,300. This became the population of this study. The Australian sample size calculator was used to arrive at a sample size of 384 at a 95% confidence level and 5% error limit. To select the respondents for this study, the researchers made use of a multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, the researchers used a simple random technique to select the following areas: Orji, Aladinma, Workslayout, Okigwe Road and around the IMSU environs. At the second stage of the sampling, the researchers used a purposive sampling technique to sample respondents who were within the age range of 15–29, who are considered to be youth and are exposed to Darling FM. At the third stage of the sampling, the researchers utilised snowball sampling, which requires that a researcher identify initial respondents who then assist in the recruitment of subsequent participants. The process continued until all the participants were sampled. The instrument for data collection was a self developed questionnaire that has 12 items designed in line with the research objectives. Simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analysed the data.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The researchers printed and distributed 384 copies of questionnaire to the respondents in Owerri North. The respondents took their respective time to fill in their opinions on the respondents. The researcher retrieved back the copies of questionnaire from the respondents. The retrieved copies of the questionnaire were 381 copies altogether. These 381 copies of the questionnaire were analysed and presented below by the researchers.

**Table 1: Responses on Awareness of Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* programmes**

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Do you agree to be aware of health programmes aired on radio	268	113	0	0	3.7	Accepted
Are you aware of Darling FM's health programme titled, <i>Darling clinic</i> ?	211	162	4	4	3.5	Accepted
Are you aware while listening to this programme that it is aired every Wednesday by 11am	189	184	1	7	3.4	Accepted
Haven listened to <i>Darling clinic</i> health programme, are you now aware that it discusses basically health fitness and diet tips	213	154	5	9	3.5	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.4</b>					

The table data above revealed that at a grand mean of 3.4 that Owerri North youth are highly aware of health programmes aired on radio, including that of Darling FM's *Darling Clinic*. The youth havened listened to this programme are aware that this programme is aired every Wednesdays by 11am. They strongly agreed to be aware that this programme discusses mainly health fitness and diet tips.

**Table 2: Response on Listening to Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* Programmes**

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Do you listen to Darling FM's health programme titled, <i>Darling clinic</i> ?	198	178	1	4	3.5	Accepted
Do you listen to <i>Darling Clinic</i> every Wednesday by 11 am?	173	206	0	2	3.4	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.4</b>					

Data from the table above disclosed that, at a grand mean of 3.4, Owerri North youth listen to Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* programmes. This means that they all agreed that they listen to the programme, which is usually aired on Wednesday at 11 a.m.

**Table 3: Response on the Extent of Exposure to Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* Programme**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	76	20%
High	82	21%
Moderate	171	45%
Low	52	14%
Very low	-	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100</b>

Data presented as shown in table 3 above 45% revealed that many of the respondents are moderately exposed to *Darling Clinic programme*. By implication of this, it means that the youth are moderately exposed to *Darling Clinic* programme aired on Darling FM.

**Table 4: Responses on how Darling FM’s *Darling Clinic* Programme has influenced and instilled Positive Fitness and Diet Behaviours among Owerri North Youth**

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
We now get to understand some confusing health practices after listening to <i>Darling Clinic</i>	128	135	75	43	2.9	Accepted
We have changed our diet lifestyle for good to stay healthy	213	97	16	55	3.2	Accepted
We are now influenced into trying to occasionally exercise our bodies to stay fit and healthy	148	193	21	19	3.2	Accepted
We can now proffer little advice to people about the right diet to consider in order to stay healthy	169	158	33	21	3.2	Accepted
We now even suggest to the anchors on better health topics to work on in the subsequent days	65	186	48	82	2.6	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.6</b>					

The table data above show that at a mean of 2.6 Darling FM’s *Darling Clinic* programme has influenced and instilled positive fitness and diet behaviours among Owerri North youth. By implication of this result, it means that *Darling Clinic* programme has greatly influenced and instilled positive fitness and diet behaviours on youth of Owerri North, Imo State.

### Discussion of Findings

Finding showed that Owerri North youth are highly aware of health programmes aired on radios, especially that of Darling FMs *Darling clinic*. They are aware that *Darling Clinic* is aired every Wednesdays by 11am and that this programme discusses basically health fitness and diet tips. In consonance with the finding Ahmad & Isyaku (2023) revealed that radio is used for health awareness especially on any breakout of societal epidemics. However, the study of Anyanwu, Macaulay, Etumnu, Okpongpong & Ekanem (2020) found that consistency to listenership “*Nsongidem*” health programme was low even though the programme was considered to be very useful.

Further findings revealed that at a grand mean score of 3.4 Owerri North youth are exposed to Darling FM’s *Darling Clinic* on a weekly basis. However, regarding their extent of getting exposed to *Darling Clinic* programme it was revealed that Owerri North youth at 45% are moderately exposed. Igbe-Arse’s (2023) study concurs that radio health programmes exposure was high. Hayford (2023) adds that radio health programmes have high level of listenership. Nzotta & Orji (2021) finding points that exposure to the radio health programmes influenced the engagement of Owerriresidents' in health care practices.

Findings revealed that at a mean score of 2.6 Owerri North youth are now influenced by *Darling Clinic* programme, especially towards instilling positive fitness

and diet behaviours. Base on the data as seen in table 3, the programme encouraged people to stay healthy and exercise occasionally in order to stay fit. Agreeing to the finding, Igbe-Arse's (2023) study admits that radio health programmes affects its listeners' attitude and lifestyle positively. Olaoye & Onyenankeya (2023); Ikpeama *et al* (2024) add that radio health programmes that are consistent are used to sustain and impact positive change in the listeners' daily living. Julian *et al*'s (2021) finding agrees with this study's finding on health programmes influencing healthy behaviours on it listeners.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers conclude that Darling FM's *Darling Clinic* so far is doing a great work regarding educating their audience and instilling in them the right healthy change in their diets and fitness plans. In line with the findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Occasionally, health workers in Imo state should collaborate with radio stations to take on a health campaign fighting any of the sicknesses rampaging Nigerians in this part of the country. This will increase the people's health sensitivity and help them to practically join in the fight against sickness and diseases.
2. Radio stations in Owerri Metropolis should make sure to have engaging and health behavioural change programmes to keep the people of all ages not just youths to know what they need to know to better their health outcomes.
3. Darling FM should broaden their *Darling Clinic* topical scope to contain other topics beyond diet tips and fitness; this will help their audience to understand better what things to avoid worsening their organs malfunction.

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