

Stop the Dehumanisation: A Perceptual Study of Ozisa FM Akuko Siri Programme on the Fight against Police Brutality

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ABSTRACT

In our contemporary society, the issue of police brutality has become a major source of concern. To this end, this study examined the public perception of the Ozisa FM Akuko Siri programme on the fight against police brutality in Owerri. The agenda-setting theory was adopted in this study. The survey research design was used in the study with a population of 983,352 Owerri residents. The Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator was used to derive a sample size of 384. Multistage sampling was used. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, and descriptive statistics were employed in analysing the data. Results revealed that an average of 81.8% of respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM radio regarding police brutality issues. Further findings showed that, at a grand mean of 3.0 (N = 380), respondents have a positive perception of the Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues. It was recommended that Ozisa FM sustain their effort in projecting the popularity of the Akuko Siri programme to enhance listenership. The programme should be more persuasive, informative, and objective to maintain the positive perception of respondents towards it with the aim of ending police brutality.

Keywords: Police brutality, Akuko Siri, programme, Ozisa FM, Owerri, human rights

Introduction

The value and applicability of the police institution have been recognised on a global scale. The recognition is based on the requirement to protect society's interests in terms of rights, duties, and obligations, which are the various aspects of the contractual nature of human society (Smah, 2012; Zems, 2016). Any nation's security is a source of pride and hope at any moment. They have a responsibility to uphold the nation's territorial integrity, foster peaceful coexistence, and safeguard the people in every way. Different interests are sparked in the process of accomplishing political, economic, social, and cultural goals, as well as the problems that arise in the process of reaching these goals as society develops. The existence of law and order is often highly valued in African

culture. The stability of society is generally threatened by their absence. The police perform the most prominent and strategically important role in defending the system in a culture where individuals perceive crime as an urgent danger to their wellbeing. Their main goal is to maintain peace and control crime while ensuring that each person's constitutional rights are upheld (Adesina, 2013).

The police now take satisfaction in brutalising citizens at the least provocation, so that is not the case any longer. Since the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was established in 1992, there have been a number of reports of human rights breaches by this Police Unit, whose responsibility it is to look into, apprehend, and prosecute robbery-related offences (Malumfashi, 2020). Amnesty International (2021) reports that on October 20, 2020, in Lagos State's Alausa and Lekki, the Nigerian Army and Police killed at least 12 nonviolent demonstrators and injured a large number. SARS has been accused of violating human rights, including unlawful detention, routine torture of its detainees, coercing detainees (their victims) into providing them with lodging, property, or both before releasing them, and occasionally killing those who refused to comply with their demands (Odigwe, 2018).

The Nigeria Police has also been accused of not bringing the majority of these individuals to justice, instead subjecting them to a variety of cruel punishments, such as illegal torture or forced confessions. Kadioglu (2021) claims that despite their crimes against humanity, there have been zero SARS officers charged since 2017, which is astonishing given the volume of torture-related evidence.

Prior to 2020, there were numerous requests for the Nigerian government to reform the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), particularly its Anti-Robbery Unit known as SARS. In response to these calls, the government made a number of reform commitments in the years 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 (Olugbuo, 2021).

Segun Awonsany began the social media campaign against SARS in December 2017. These calls prompted Nigeria's acting president at the time, Prof. Yemi Osinbanjo, to ask the Inspector General of Police to reform SARS and look into claims made against SARS Officers. This decision had little to no effect. The primary alteration brought about by the directive was the switch from SARS to F-SARS in nomenclature (Onwunoyirima, 2022).

In the wake of this brutality by the police, the media has a great role to play in fighting it. Particularly radio has an enormous task in joining forces with the aim of ending police brutality that has become the norm in Nigeria. The people depend on the media for a whole lot of things, and this is no exception (Iheanacho et al., 2021). A radio programme like "Akuko Siri" is used to fight against police brutality. The programme "Akuko Siri" is aired on Ozisa 96.1 FM Owerri on a daily basis from Monday to Saturday from 7:45 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., anchored by Nonso-Nkwa. On this programme, several issues are discussed, one of which is police brutality. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the public perception of Ozisa FM's "Akuko Siri" programme on the fight against police brutality against citizens in Owerri.

Statement of the Problem

In both rich and developing countries, particularly Nigeria, there have been incidents of police brutality in one way or another. However, it is concerning how frequently reports show how the

Nigerian Police violate residents' rights. According to Ojo (2023), between January and September 2021, Nigeria recorded about 164 cases of extrajudicial killing and many other issues of police brutality. For instance, recently, there was a viral video of a motorcyclist allegedly beaten by three policemen in Lagos. This is one of many cases of police brutality in Nigeria, and many appear to be going unreported, even in Owerri.

A report by Amnesty International (2020) claims that during the EndSARS saga, the Nigerian Security Forces suppressed peaceful #EndSARS protests by shooting at the protesters with live ammunition; some were beaten and taken into custody. Protesters were spotted being gassed by Nigerian police. On other occasions, the Nigerian Police have been found wanting for violating human rights.

The media, which is the watchdog of society, has a great role to play in helping to curb the menace of police brutality that has become the norm in recent times. In this context, radio, through its programmes, needs to hold the Nigerian Police responsible for the act that violates human rights. Be that as it may, what is the broadcast media (radio) in Owerri doing to fight police brutality in society? How do the people of Owerri perceive their role in the crusade against police brutality in Owerri? To this end, this study sought to examine the public perception of Ozisa FM's "Akuko Siri" programme on the fight against police brutality against citizens in Owerri.

Research Questions

The questions below served as guide to this study

1. To what extent are Owerri residents exposed to Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues?
2. What is the perception of Owerri residents on Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues?
3. What measures Ozisa FM can take through their Akuko Siri Programme towards fighting police brutality issues?

Literature Review

Human Right Abuse/Police Brutality by Nigerian Police Force

Nigeria has a lengthy history of violating human rights. The police, who are tasked with protecting the populace, have engaged in numerous violations of human rights (Talabi et al., 2021). In Nigeria, instances of police brutality have been proven. One of these is the police raid-related killing of Mr. Kolade Johnson in Lagos, according to CNN (2019). A Special Anti-Robbery Squad police unit in Nigeria allegedly battered Mr. Okoye Agu in 2014, paraded him in public as a criminal, pulled out his teeth, and forcibly confiscated his car and cellphone before selling them without his permission, according to a BBC investigation (October 27, 2020). According to Ulo (2021), human rights abuses by the police and other law enforcement officials continue to occur frequently in Nigeria despite the protections for fundamental rights—particularly the right to life—provided by national, regional, and international institutions. These police-initiated human rights abuses by security personnel were thought to be the result of the police's excessive focus on the law enforcement aspect of their jobs (Adeakin, 2016). This is because antagonism and violence

between the police and citizens tend to be higher in a society where the police tend to concentrate on the law enforcement aspect of their work than in a society where the police blend the law enforcement and social services dimensions of their work (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In Nigeria, there is a virtual absence of a social services dimension in the police's work. This has blocked the opportunities for non-coercive contacts between the police and members of the public (Sule & Madaki, 2017).

According to Onwunyirimadu (2022), police brutality is a result of poor hiring practises. Another element that encourages police violence is the failure of the Nigerian government and police commission to prosecute members of the Nigeria Police Force who violate people's rights. It will serve as a deterrent to other officers not to commit such acts if negligent police are successfully prosecuted or sanctioned. Since some of these dishonest cops operate with impunity, victims of police abuse have stated that these officers will brashly warn them, "I will waste you, and nothing will happen."

Promoting Human Right through Broadcasting

The ability of the broadcast medium to communicate vigorously across or through any type of barrier, even in remote locations, is what gives broadcasting its relevance in advancing human rights problems in Nigeria (Nwabueze et al., 2012). In order to achieve specific predetermined goals in economic growth, health care, political and social awareness, political stability, self-reliance, and national identity, the world has recognised broadcasting as a powerful and effective tool for widespread education for both children and adults (Nkwam-Uwaoma et al., 2021). Shaibu (2022), who supports this viewpoint, claims that radio broadcasting has been one of the most effective media for disseminating information on numerous social reform programmes. The majority of people in developing countries live in rural areas, where the majority of people are impoverished and cannot afford to purchase newspapers every day. This postulation recognised this reality. However, these people can afford a small transistor radio or television set (Azubuike, 2019).

An important medium for educating the public about human rights issues is the broadcast media. As correctly pointed out by Onwuazombe (2017), citizens cannot make informed decisions about the challenges and difficulties they face unless they have access to enough and reliable information about them. Making sure that the public is aware of their rights and benefits as citizens of a state would be the main responsibility of the broadcast media in this regard. The presentation of a wide range of programmes, including chat shows, interviews, drama, and documentaries, by the broadcast media can help with these (Tseguy & Usman, 2013). According to Asemah et al. (2013), the media plays a crucial role in raising societal awareness of and retaliation against violations of human rights. They claimed that human rights violations, studies, and tactics might be covered in news and features. Such media coverage of human rights violations can have a positive impact on political opinion, professional judgement, and political reactions to the situations that members of society encounter.

Secondly, the broadcast media has a duty to observe and report on violations of human rights (Tseguy & Usman, 2013). The media would make a major portion of the population aware of their fundamental human rights and encourage them to seek justice when necessary by continuously monitoring instances of human rights violations and by publicising police brutality and repression (Asemah et al., 2012). For instance, on March 1, 2023, *Punch* published an editorial with the headline "Justice for victims of Anambra police horror den" that purportedly detailed how the Nigerian Police allegedly carried out gruesome extrajudicial killings of criminal suspects after

seizing their property, including their cars and bank accounts. In Awkuzu, Anambra State, some victims were allegedly kidnapped by the wicked syndicate, and their families were pressured to pay astronomical amounts as ransom (*Punch*, 2023). Media coverage of these kinds of human rights violations will inform the public about their rights and privileges and raise awareness of the problem.

Empirical Review

According to a study by Tsegyu and Usman (2013), the role of broadcast media in advancing human rights cannot be understated. Further investigation indicated that despite the presence of numerous human rights organisations in the nation, abuses of human rights continue to occur without repercussion. In their closing statement, the authors urge Nigeria's broadcast media to step up efforts to combat violations of human rights. In a study by Asemah et al. (2013), the mass media in general can be used to influence people's attitudes for the better. Additionally, it was shown that the Nigerian people do not have access to these rights because they are still frequently violated. Additionally, the outcome demonstrated that human rights advocacy in Nigeria has not been particularly successful thanks to the mass media. Thus, it suggests using both print and electronic media to publicise the issue of human rights in Nigeria so that people are aware of their rights.

In a study, Zems (2016) noted that the Nigerian police had made efforts to build a strong relationship with the people through good public relations, but despite this initiative, they have remained scandalously bad, contentious, and undeserving. The research also identified the factors that contributed to the growing disconnect between Nigerian police and the general public. Some of these causes include systemic corruption, the nature of law enforcement in a former colony like Nigeria, the inappropriate use of lethal force, extrajudicial killings, and intimidation. Extortion, illegal detention and arrest, a lack of funding, and a lack of appropriate instruction or training are among other issues. In a similar study, Onwunyirimadu (2022) examined police brutality and human rights abuses in Nigeria. Employing descriptive statistics, it was revealed that police brutality in Nigeria has resulted in fatalities, detainee torture, and suspect extortion. It was recommended that the Nigerian police undergo a thorough mental evaluation before being assigned duty. The Nigerian Police Commission ought to look into matters like this and carefully discipline corrupt employees.

Sule and Madaki (2017) reported in their study that Nigerian Police personnel are widely criticised for their inability to observe and display virtues that promote the protection of fundamental human rights in the conduct of their duties. Allegations of human rights abuses such as extortion, rape, forced disappearances, brutality, and, in some cases, extrajudicial killings by the personnel of the Nigeria Police are rampant. Thus, knowledge of public feelings, opinions, and general perceptions on police human rights protection will provide insight on how the personnel of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) observe the code of conduct designed for them. This study examined the public's perceptions of human rights protection among the cadres of the NPF. The study discovered that rather than being perceived as the protectors of human rights, the police are generally perceived by the public as violators of these rights; that personnel in the senior cadre are perceived to be more prominent than their junior counterparts in protecting these rights; and that the perception was mainly influenced by the people's experience in the hands of the police.

According to Talabi et al. (2021), journalists confront a number of safety-related difficulties when covering internal conflicts. The study's focus was on the 2020 END SARS protests in Nigeria, and it was discovered that the legal restrictions, a lack of safety training, and a lack of safety motivating measures made it difficult for journalists to cover the protests safely.

In a study on George Floyd's passing in 2020, Mozie (2022) looks at the prevailing sentiments of musicians who use their songs to speak out against racism and other types of oppression. It was shown that there is a strong, unfavourable, and statistically significant association between the urge for retribution and negative feelings towards the police. Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2021) stated that 52% of respondents in another study on child abuse confirmed that they had moderate exposure to radio broadcasts on the subject of child abuse.

Theoretical Foundation

The agenda-setting theory served as the theoretical support for this study. The theory can be found in Walter Lippmann's book *Public Opinion*, which he published in 1922 (Alphonsus et al., 2022). According to Lippmann, the public's perceptions of happenings around the globe are mostly shaped by the mass media. Walter Lippmann was referring to what we now refer to as "agenda setting," even though he did not use the phrase. In 1963, Bernard Cohen made a similar observation to Lippmann, stating that while the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, it is stunningly successful in telling its audience what to think about" (Nwamara & Etumnu, 2022). According to Cohen, on the map that is created for each person by the authors, editors, and publishers of the newspaper they read, the world will appear differently to each individual. The concept that later inspired McCombs and Shaw to develop agenda-setting theory was first put forth by Cohen in the 1960s. Thus, Walter Lippmann's book on *Public Opinion*, published in 1922, laid the foundation for the notion of agenda setting by asserting that "the news media construct our view of the world" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). This idea was furthered by Lang and Lang (1966), as cited in Asemah et al. (2017), who noted that the mass media pay attention to particular concerns and are continuously displaying items that imply what people should believe and feel.

Agenda setting theory, as noted by Folarin (1998) and cited in Asemah et al. (2017), suggests that the mass media predetermine what issues are considered essential at any given time in a given society; agenda setting theory does not give the media the capacity to decide what we actually think, but it does ascribe to them the power to determine what we are thinking about.

The theory has relevance because emphasis by radio programmes such as "Akuko Siri" on the issue of police brutality in Owerri and, by extension, Nigeria, will draw serious attention to it with the intention of ending it.

Methodology

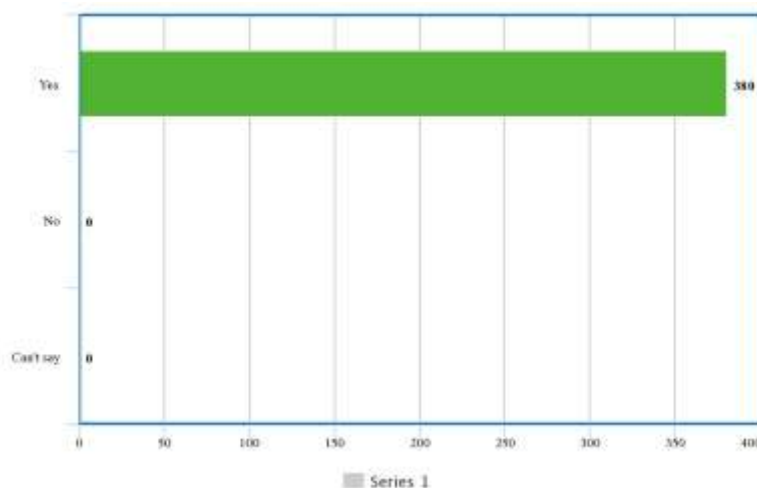
The descriptive survey research design was used in this investigation. This method is appropriate because it allows for the sampling of respondent opinion on the issue of police brutality (Okalla et al., 2022). The residents of Owerri metropolis constitute the population of this study, and according to the World Population Review (2023) data bank, the population of Owerri is projected to be 983,352. Wimmer and Dominick's online sample size calculator was used to determine a sample size of 384 from the aforementioned population with a 95% confidence level and a 5% error limit.

Adopting the multistage sample technique, copies of the questionnaire were given out to residents of Owerri Metropolis in Imo State. Owerri, which is a cluster, has already been separated into three areas in the first stage: Owerri North, Owerri West, and Owerri Municipal. Two communities from each local government area were purposefully chosen. At the second stage, the researchers purposefully selected two communities each from local government areas that made up the Owerri metropolis. They are Owerri North (Egbu and Orji), Owerri West (Orogwe and Umuguma), and Owerri Municipal (Umuoyima and Umuororonjo). The rationale behind their selection is based on the fact that they are exposed to the Ozisa 96.1 FM radio signal, and one time or another, the issue of police brutality has happened in these locations. In stage three, having identified these communities, the researchers at random distributed the questionnaire proportionately to each community ($384/6 = 64$). At stage four, the researcher purposefully distributed 64 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in these communities. In this investigation, a questionnaire was used to collect data. The face-to-face approach was used to administer the instrument to respondents. The instrument was face-validated by an expert in the department of Mass communication at Imo State University, Owerri. The test-retest approach was employed for the reliability of the instrument. The researchers carried out the test with 15 respondents and seven items on the questionnaire. The responses were subjected to the Cronbach alpha statistical procedure with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, and the result showed .98, which implies that the instrument is reliable. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of charts, tables, and mean analysis.

Results

From the 384 copies of questionnaire distributed 380 (99%) was returned and they were usable. Meanwhile, 4 (1%) copies were invalid. This means that the analysis was done using the retrieved 380 (99%) copies of questionnaire.

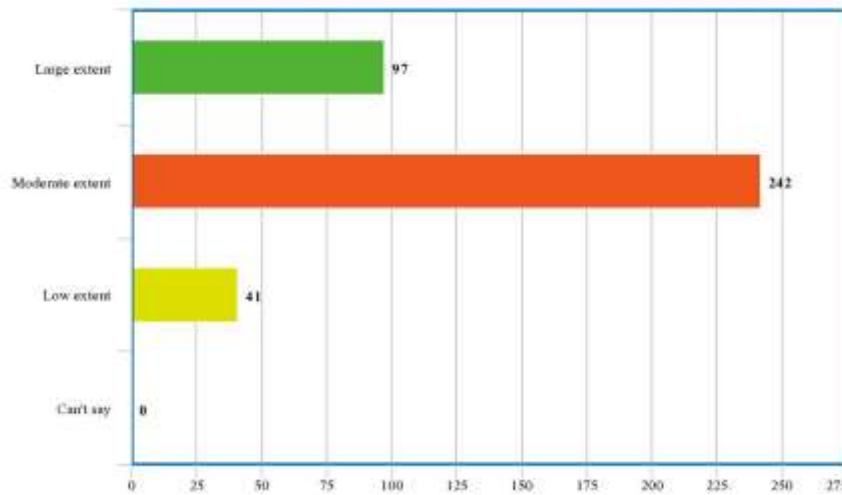
Figure 1: Respondents response on whether they listen to Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM



Source: created by the authors (field survey, 2023)

Figure 1 above showed that all the respondents studied confirmed that they listen to Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM. By implication of the data presentation it is indicative that respondents listen to Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM.

Figure 2: Respondents response on the extent they are exposed to Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues



Source: created by the authors (field survey, 2023)

According to the data in the figure 2 above, 63.6 percent of respondents are moderately exposed to Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues. This simply means that respondents who were studied confirmed that they are moderately exposed to Akuko Siri programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues.

Table 1: Respondents response on whether residents have positive perception on Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues

Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	STD	Mean	Decision
I see Akuko Siri programme as a good avenue in the fight against police brutality	171	110	55	44	380	1.02	(3.0)	Accept
The anchor of the programme is doing a great job towards curbing police brutality in the state	145	182	37	16	380	.78	(3.2)	Accept
The programme is objective in dealing with the issue of police brutality	120	137	81	42	380	.97	(2.8)	Accept

Average Mean

3.0

Source: created by the authors (field survey, 2023)

The results in Table 1 above show that respondents agreed to items 1, 2, and 3 with a mean range of 2.8 to 3.0. The grand mean rating of Table 1 is 3.0, which is agreeable and implies that generally all the items presented are about the positive perception on Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues. The standard deviation ranged from .78 to 1.02, which showed that the respondents were not far from each other in their responses with respect to their perception on Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues.

Table 2: Respondents response on measures Ozisa FM can take through their Akuko Siri Programme towards fighting police brutality issues

Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	STD	Mean	Decision
Calling for sanction for erring police officer	140	171	37	32	380	.89	(3.1)	Accept
Advising authority to carry out retraining/reorientation of NPF officers	190	125	48	17	380	.85	(3.2)	Accept
Encourage recruiting of NPF officers based on merit	174	137	22	47	380	.99	(3.1)	Accept
Constant deliberation on the issue of police brutality	115	160	40	65	380	1.03	(2.8)	Accept

Grand Mean

3.1

Source: created by the authors (field survey, 2023)

The results in Table 2 above show that respondents agreed to items 1, 2, 3 and 4 with a mean range of 2.8 to 3.2 to. The grand mean rating of Table 2 is 3.1, which is agreeable and implies that respondents generally agreed that all the items presented are measures Ozisa FM can take through their Akuko Siri Programme towards fighting police brutality issues. The standard deviation ranged from .85 to 1.03, which showed that the respondents were not far from each other in their responses with respect to the measures Ozisa FM can take through their Akuko Siri programme towards fighting police brutality issues.

Discussion of Findings

Findings in respect to research question 1 revealed that an average of 81.8% of respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio regarding police brutality issues. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2021), who revealed that audiences were exposed to a fair amount of radio programmes dealing with the issue of child violence. By implication, this finding means that respondents who are exposed to this radio programme will have the opportunity to know their rights and join in the crusade against

police brutality that has taken centre stage in our society. No wonder, in the study of Mozie (2022), it was revealed that artists use their songs to address the issue of police brutality and other forms of racism. Those who are exposed to all these messages of police brutality will invariably become aware of the impunity of the police force and, as such, join in the fight to end police brutality. This finding is consistent with the agenda-setting theory that underpinned this study, as media exposure will influence what people think about, particularly when it comes to police brutality.

Findings in respect to research question 2 revealed that at a grand mean of 3.0 (N = 380), respondents have a positive perception of the Akuko Siri Programme on Ozisa FM radio towards police brutality issues, as seen in table 1. They confirmed that the programme is a good avenue for the fight against police brutality. That the anchor of the programme is doing a great job curbing police brutality in the state, and that the programme is objective in dealing with the issue of police brutality. These are the perceptions of the respondents. They believe that through the programme, the issue of police brutality can be tackled. This finding is in tandem with that of Sule and Madaki (2017), who in their study revealed that public knowledge of human rights abuses such as extortion, rape, forced disappearances, brutality, and in some cases extrajudicial killings by the personnel of the Nigeria Police Force shapes their perception of the Nigerian Police Force negatively. Further findings showed that rather than being perceived as protectors of human rights, the police are generally perceived by the public as violators of these rights. Additionally, the study by Onwunyerimadu (2022) showed that police brutality in Nigeria has resulted in fatalities, the torturing of suspects in custody, and the extortion of witnesses, according to sources, all of which have damaged public perceptions of the Nigerian Police. The findings of this study support the postulation of the agenda setting theory on which this investigation was anchored.

Findings from research question 3 showed that at a grand mean of 3.1 (N = 380), respondents agreed that there are certain measures Ozisa FM can take through their Akuko Siri Programme towards fighting police brutality issues. Such measures include: calling for sanction for erring police officers; advising authorities to carry out retraining and reorientation of NPF officers; encouraging the recruiting of NPF officers based on merit; and constant deliberation on the issue of police brutality. According to the findings, these measures by the radio station can trigger effective change in the fight against police brutality. This is why Tsegysu and Usman (2013) and in their study, Asemah et al. (2012) found that the role of broadcast media in the advancement of human rights cannot be understated. And that using the media in general can help people change their attitudes for the better. Though Asemah et al. (2012) further note that broadcast media need to redouble their efforts in the fight against human rights abuses in Nigeria as human rights violations are still being carried out with impunity by Nigerian policemen. The study of Zems (2016) found that systematic corruption, the improper use of lethal force, extrajudicial murders, and intimidation are some of the causes of the deteriorating gap in relations between the police and the general people in Nigeria. Extortion, unlawful imprisonment and arrest, inadequate funding, inadequate training and education, and other problems are also included. By implication, the media has a great role to play as the watchdog of society, keeping an eye on every ill in our society.

Conclusion

In line with the findings, we therefore conclude that respondents are exposed to Ozisa FM's Akuko Siri programmes about fighting police brutality, although at a moderate level. This exposure may have somehow contributed to the positive perception respondents have of the programme, especially as it pertains to the issue of police brutality. Also, the respondents agreed with the highlighted measures that Ozisa FM can use to help tackle the issue of police brutality in Owerri. The study has practical and policy implications. In terms of practicality, the results have highlighted that radio programmes anchored by properly trained journalists or presenters have the capacity to fight police brutality by way of professional handling of the programme. In terms of policy, the information will be beneficial to policymakers who make policies regarding the safety of citizens and policies capable of penalising those who violate them.

Recommendation

In line with the findings, the recommendations are put forward:

1. Ozisa FM should sustain their effort in projecting the popularity of the Akuko Siri programme to enhance listenership and make people know their rights and when they have been violated by police or any armed force.
2. The programme should be more persuasive, informative, and objective to maintain the positive perception of respondents towards the programme with the aim of ending police brutality.
3. Those in authority who are in charge of taking critical decisions towards the police force should be encouraged to take some of the suggestions of the Ozisa FM Akuko Siri programme towards fighting the menace of police brutality in Nigeria.

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Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.984	.986	7