A Study of Lagos Residents' Awareness on the State Emergency Management Helplines

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Abstract

The study investigated the Lagos residents' level of awareness on the State Emergency Management Agency helplines (112 & 767). To achieve the research objectives, four research questions were raised to guide the study. A standard questionnaire was used as the major instrument for data collection from 300 residents of Lagos State. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with three selected local government chairmen in the state, four LASEMA officials and thirteen victims of emergency situations using 10 guiding questions. In all, 280 copies were returned leaving the researcher with deficit of 7% and a response rate of 93%.The study showed that awareness of Lagos residents on Lagos State Emergency helplines (LASEMA) is positive with the result that the agency has been recognized as efficient and has justified the purpose for which it was established. The high-performance rating is due to availability of competent officials, modern equipment and regular training of staff. The agency has been encouraged to double its efforts in order to drastically minimise emergency situations across the state. The findings also observed that the media play critical roles in influencing the lives of Lagos residents. The study therefore suggested that persuasive media messages can be made to further sensitize Lagos residents concerning the use of the helplines. The study also recommended more training for LASEMA staff on how to interact with the media with the purpose of sensitising the residents of Lagos State concerning the use of the helplines.

Keywords:

Introduction

All over the world, environmental problems have always been a defining factor in most mega cities and Lagos is not an exception. It is therefore not unexpected that Lagos would have its own share of the problem. According to Merem, Twumasi, Hines, Ochai, Leggett, and Nwagboso **(**2018),Lagos is presently confronted with a number of environmental problems chiefly among them are: industrial waste, recurring yearly flood, solid waste, environmental

pollution, and air and water pollution. It was this development that has made Lagos to be labelled as the filthiest capital in the world.

Lagos, a port city and the commercial capital of Nigeria, is believed to have a population estimate of 11.04 million in 2016 and is also adjudged the most populous city in Africa (National Population Commission, 2016). The city of Lagos covers an immense area, coming in with a total of 1,171.28 square kilometers (452.23 square miles). According to a statement credited to the immediate past Governor, Ambode, "It is estimated that 86 immigrants enter Lagos every hour- the highest in any city in the world with no plan to leave" (Kumolu&Okafor, 2017). The overall effects of this growth on the living standards, resources use and the environmentsuffocation can best be imagined. It is simply chaotic.

It is therefore not unexpected that wherever and whenever such large numbers of people are domiciledand engaged in all manner of commercial activities, there is bound to be regular or occasional disaster that will require emergency response. It was in response to this need that the then Governor, Babatunde Fasola, established the Lagos State Emergency and Management Agency (LASEMA) in 2007. The LASEMA Law 16 of 2008 among others saddled the agency with the responsibilities:

> to prevent and manage disasters in the State, develop loss prevention programmes, design and construct emergency management facilities, procure necessary technology for mitigating all emergency situations, formulate policies in relation to emergency management research and technology planning and engage in emergency call time functions. The agency is also empowered to coordinate the activities of all its stakeholders and NGO's who are categorized into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary responders in the management of all emergency and disaster situations in the State as well as to build their capacity toward increasing response capability(LASEMA, 2009).

To achieve the above statutory goals, two emergency lines (767 and 112) are dedicated to provide adequate and prompt response as

well as sustaining intervention in all forms of emergency/disaster situations in the state within the territorial boundary called "Lagos". It performs this onerous task through Emergency/Disaster prevention preparedness, mitigation, recovery and relief.

Universally, no one prays for disaster to happen. But then, the reality is that occurrence of natural and man-made disasters is an integral part of our daily living. Nevertheless, in as much as no one can really predict where, when and how tragedy might occur, its containment whenever it does come up could be strategically planned for ahead of time.

According to Tiamiyu (2018), it is in line with this reality that the Lagos State government established "The Safety Arena" at Cappa, Oshodi. The creation of the Arena was borne out of the need to synchronize the activities of the various Departments and Agencies that are saddled with the task of managing safety and emergency in the State. These include Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA); Fire Service Department; Environmental Health Department; Lagos State Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS); State Environmental Health Monitoring Unit (SEHMU); Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA); Safety Commission; Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC); Nigerian Legion; and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in different placesthough they are inter-dependent.

Currently, emergency management is being reinvented in the State to meet global standard. Part of the strategy is the repositioning of the Lagos State Emergency Agency, LASEMA. The Agency now operates via 4 additional centres, namely Command & Control Centre, Alausa, Ikeja, LASEMA Response Unit (LRU) Cappa-Oshodi, LASEMA Response Unit, Lekki (by Lekki-Ikoyi Link Bridge) and LASEMA Response Unit Onipanu**.** Presently, plans are on-going to establish additional 3 Divisional (Upgraded) Dispatch Centres at Ijanikin (to cover Badagry Axis), Temu Junction, Epe (to cover Epe-Itokin and Epe-Ijebu-Ode Axes) LASPOTECH, Ikorodu (to cover Ikorodu-Agbowa Axis),and a

fourth conventional LASEMA Response Unit (LRU) at Costain (to cover Apapa axis and its environs).

Tiamiyu (2018) also notesthat the Lekki Response Unit was strategically located to facilitate quick response to emergencies on the State's waterways and for proximity to riverine areas of Lekki and environs, a new ultra-modern LASEMA Response Unit (LRU) was strategically located along Ikorodu Road, a central place within the Lagos Mainland. Also, Relief/Resettlement Camps have been established in Agbowa and Igando to cater for disaster-related and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across the State while work has commenced on the construction of a third Relief/ Rehabilitation Camp in Lekki

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the government of Lagos State realised that emergency situations are part of human lives generally and Lagos in particular. Domestic accidents, road accidents (personal injury/damage only), fire disasters, building collapse and other natural disasters need urgent attention of government to forestall monumental loss of lives and properties. The media come in as the intermediary between the government agencies and citizens by reporting emergency situations to the agencies concernedor informing the public on the appropriate emergency code numbers to call in time of distress. It is worrisome that the combination of efforts of government agencies and the media seems not enough because there are still records of loss of lives and property as residents cry out severally for help either to save the situation or to prevent future occurrence. It is based on this that the study is set out to investigate the "awareness of Lagos Residents on Lagos State Emergency helplines (112 & 767)" and the level of corresponding response by the agency concerned.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to act as a guide in this research:

1. What is the level of Lagosresidents' awareness on the State's Emergency helplines?

2. What are the attitudes of Lagos residents to LASEMA helplines?
3. How helpful are the dedicated helplines to Lagos residents in times of emergency?
4. How do Lagos residents perceive the response of LASEMA officials to calls on the helplines?

Review of Literature

The role of the media during disaster management process cannot be overemphasised. In their study titled "The role of media in informing people in crisis situation caused by Azerbaijan earthquake",Ghassabi and Fasashbandi (2015) revealed thatthe media forges a direct link between the public and emergency organizations and plays a very important role in disseminating vital information to the public before, during and after disasters. The media assists in the management of disasters by educating the public about disasters; warning of hazards; gathering and transmitting information about affected areas; alerting government officials, relief organizations and the public to specific needs; and facilitating discussions about disaster preparedness and response for continuous improvement.

In another study titled "Evaluating the awareness and perception profile of operation green Lagos campaign in Lagos, Nigeria",Oludare and Odunlami (2017) showed that the campaign recorded a high level of awareness (89.6%) through the instrumentality of the broadcast media while 83% viewed the project as an act of social responsibility to improve the quality of life and this must be sustained. In spite of the impressive outcome of the exercise, respondents noticed an inconsistency in the strategies, which diminished their response to government's environmental activities.

Mikami (1984) also conducted a research focused on "Thestudy of disaster reporting: Nihonkai-Chuubu earthquake and mass-media" in which he examined the role of mass media during disasters, the content of messages in disaster reporting, and the distortion in reporting warnings and disasters, based on empirical studies in

several communities in Japan. The study found that oftentimes the broadcast media are the primary source of emergency information. However, the warnings usually do not reach a complete range of audience, nor could it induce an adaptive response among these recipients.

Information flows help emergency managers to develop situational awareness and decide upon what actions should be taken during disasters (Adenekan, 2008; Joshi, 2011). This applies to each of the four stages of disaster cycle, namely: mitigation (prevention of future emergencies and minimizing their effects), preparedness (preparing to deal with an emergency), response and recovery (Samarajiva, Malathy, Anderson, &Ayesha, 2005).Traditional media have long played a key role in disaster information flows, generating public awareness and understanding of man-made and natural disasters.

The advent and growth ofnew media driven by internettechnology have further boostedinformation flows throughdirect access to the voices of disaster-affected populations who oftentimes were previously marginalized in the traditional news media (Kayode &Jimoh, 2012; Dare, 2011).

In disseminating hazard warnings, broadcast media play a key role in Japan as well as in the United States (Carter, 1980). Studies on citizens' response to disasters indicate that the broadcast media are the primary source of warnings in most cases. For example, of those who received a tsunami warning after the Nihonkai-Chuubu earthquake on May 27, 1983, 57 % heard it from TV while 22 % heard it from radio (Okabe, Hirol,&Mikami, 1984; IJCS, 1985).

In a study conducted by Baran (2012),it was observed that in the age of informationquest, the mass media are considered as one of the most important means of communication. The media can calm the populace and encourage them to act positively during chaotic situations.

In conclusion, all types of media play a critical role in disaster management, prior alarm systems and public education regarding

disaster management; therefore, play an important part in reducing the casualties and financial losses caused by such disasters.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in theSocial Responsibilitytheory, a theory propounded by F.S. Siebert, T.B Peterson and W. Schramm in 1956.The major premise of the social responsibility theory is that the freedom and privileged position which the media enjoy under the government makes them obliged to be responsible to society where they operate. This theory regarded as western theory incorporates part of the libertarian principles and introduces some new elements as well. The underlying principle of the social responsibility theory of the press is that the press should be free to perform the functions derived from the Libertarian theory.In other words, it is expected that the freedom which the media acquired must be used to serve the society where it operates (Okunna, 2002).

If the media fail to meet their responsibilities to society, the Social Responsibility theory holds that the government should compel the media to comply by way of controlling them. Bittner (1989) believes that the media havethe right to criticize government and other institutions so as to ensure good governance that is accountable to the society". In the same vein, but in a slightly different angle, Wimmer andDominick (2009) also writethat the press also has a key role to play in preserving democracy and democratic institutions by properly informing the public and by responding to society's needs and interests. The press does not have the freedom to do as it pleases; it is obligated to respond to society's requirement.

The theory is useful to this study because it details the roles expected of the media especially at critical times of emergency. The fact that emergency report is a lot different from the normal report covered by journalists shows that there is a high level of sensitivity which will determine how socially responsible the media are in reporting emergency situations without causing confusion.

Research Method

Mixed methods combining survey method and in-depth interviews were adopted for this study. The survey method was chosen in preference to other methods because of its capacity to measure human attitudes and opinions. In-depth interview was also conducted withthe Agency's General Manager and the Director of Operation, three (3) Local Government chairmen in Lagos State and seventeen (17) victims of emergency situations. The two LASEMA staffers were purposively chosen because of their position as members of the management. Similarly, the three LG chairmen were the Chief Executives Officers of the three most populated LGs in Lagos State and becausethey have the highest record of emergency since the agency was established.Questionnaire was administered to the 300 respondents randomly selected assample from a population of three Local government areas of Lagos State. The choice of Alimosho, Mushin and Shomolu was based on their higher population than others. Besides, statistics obtained from emergency reports on 112/767 helplines revealed the highestrecord of emergency cases came from those three LG areas.

As a result of the mixed method employed in the research, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to summarise and discuss the findings. Whilethe findings and results were presented using simple tables andfrequencies, numbers and percentage were used to analysethe data and interpret the information collected for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The study here presented some findings and analysis of the data generated through questionnaire and in-depth interview guide.

Table 1: Creation of awareness by the media about the dedicated helplines

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	190	68
No	90	32

Total	**280**	**100**

Table 1 indicates that 68% of the respondents agreed that the media created enough awareness about the dedicated helplines, while 31% of the respondents disagreed. This in essence means that a majority of the respondents held the opinion that the media created enough awareness about the dedicated helplines.

Table 2: Mode of getting awareness of 112/767 emergency helplines by LASEMA in Lagos State

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	77	28
Television	85	30
Newspaper	38	14
Mouth	34	12
Others	46	16
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 2 indicates that 28% of the respondents became aware of the dedicated helplines in Lagos State through the radio medium, while 30% became aware through television medium. 14% got the information through newspaper; only 12% of the respondents became aware through words of mouth while 16% others knew about it through social media and other media of communication.

RQ. 2: Has the dedicated helplines been of help to Lagos residents in times of emergency?

Table 3shows the helpfulness of the helplines to Lagos residents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	240	86
No	40	14
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 3 indicates that 86% of the respondents agreed that the dedicated helplines have been helpful to Lagos residents since introduced while only 14% of the respondents disagreed. This means that a majority of Lagos residents who had access to the dedicated helplines have benefitted immenselyfrom it.

Table 4: Shows the dedicated helplines as a life-saving tool in Lagos State.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	240	86
No	40	14
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 4 indicates that 86% of the respondents agreed that many lives have been saved through LASEMA dedicated helplines while only 14% of the respondents disagreed. This means thata majority of the respondents agreed that mortalityrate hasreduced since the introduction of the dedicated helplines in Lagos State.

RQ. 3: How do emergency helplines influence the lives of Lagos residents?

Table 5shows the level of consciousness of the Lagos residentsabout dedicated helplines.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	170	61
No	110	39
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 5 indicates that 61% of the respondents agreed that Lagos residents are conscious of the usefulness of the dedicated helplines during emergency situations while 39% of the respondents disagreed. This indicates thata majority of the respondents are conscious of the dedicated helplines during emergency situations.

RQ. 4: How do Lagos residents perceive the responses of LASEMA officialsto calls on the helplines?

Table 6: Lagos Residents' perception of responses of LASEMA officials during distress call

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	190	68
No	90	32
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 6 indicates that 68% of the respondents find the responses of LASEMA officials encouraging during emergency calls to the dedicated helplines while 32% of the respondents had a contrary opinion.

Table 7: The grading of LASEMA officials in terms of their response during distress call

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	190	68
No	90	32
Total	**280**	**100**

Table 7 indicates that 68% of the respondents awarded pass mark to LASEMA in terms of responses to emergency calls while 32% of the respondents were of a contrary view.

Findings and Discussions of interview responses
LASEMA General Manager
When asked to assess the performance of LASEMA, he said the agency has performed wonderfully well. He also expatiated on the three stages of operations: information, control and command.Information involves the helplines (112/767) through which all complaints, messages, and calls are taken and transmitted to the appropriate quarters for action. Control is getting equipment ready to carry out operations; that is, equipment must be in proper condition for use at all times while command is the actual operations; that is, action taken.

He stressed that the objectives of the agency are: to manage emergency situations arising from road, fire accident and floodamong others,within Lagos State.He added that the innumerable calls they received daily from Lagosians show that people are influenced and are aware of the humanitarian services rendered effectively and efficiently by the agency.

LASEMA Director of Operations and Logistics and the next in rank to the GM

When asked how prepared and equipped the agency is for the responsibility given to it, he substantiated his boss on the points he made. He commended the efforts of the past two successive governments for evolving and sustaining LASEMA since 2008. According to him, "safety of lives and property are major concerns of Lagos government, and that is why it is doing everything to ensure safe and conducive environment for residents. When you talk about a responsible government, other states take a cue from Lagos State". Speaking further, he stresses that "several awardsthe agency has won nationally are eloquent testimony to our performance rating" and that"In fact, other states are coming to understudy the 'magic' of how Lagos State is achieving a lot despite her large population".

On the issue of creating awareness, he said, "LASEMA is poised to do more in terms of awareness creation among the citizens about the dedicated helplines. Considering the population and cosmopolitan nature of the state, we have consistently relied on the mass media channels to reach different people in different languages". "We also embarked on road show, as well as reaching the people through informal communication channels such as talking to market women and religious bodies until every citizen is aware of the 112/767 emergency helplines".

On the level of the competence of the personnel to respond to emergency situations, he said, "LASEMA receives not less than 100,000 calls per day from Lagosians". "In terms of manpower, we have competent officers, well trained on how to attend to several emergency situations. That is why we have several units specialising in differentroles. We have the fire service that attends to fire disasters; LASTMA takes control of traffic situations while LASAMBUS takes charge of road accidents."

Mr. Bisiriyu Kabiru, who is an emergency responder receiving emergency calls on recovery, rescue, safeguarding, traffic control and other emergencies, also bares his mind on several questions

raised by the researcher. When asked why the choice of three digit numbers, he said, “the objectives of the 112/767 emergency helplines are to make it easy for Lagosians to quickly rememberthe number in times of emergency.” According to him, “it is easier to remember three digits than trying to recalleleven numbers under emergency situation. Besides, the call is free of charge to callers. Another major uniqueness of these helplines is that when you don’t have airtime on your phone device, you can still push a call through and deliver your message.”
When asked to compare the pre-helplines timewith now, Mr. Kabiru said,“Before the helplines came into existence, people had to self-manage their emergencies”. They just continue to pray and hope until the emergency phases out on its own. He cited an example of when there is armed robbery in a particular household; victims just hide somewhere praying or in some cases shouting till day break when the assailant will go. He also cited the example of a road accident where victims and the affected vehicles will remain on the road for days without anyone clearing it. But now when there is any threat to life or property, people quickly reach out via these emergency helplines and in no distant time, they get responses and their problems are solved. These helplines have helped to salvage, protect and sustain emergency situations among Lagos residents. Another example he gave was in a situation of a fallentruck on the road, like container blocking the road; in those days before the helplines, people would start looking for alternative routes to get to their various destinations. But, nowadays, they put calls through these helplines and in no time,the container is cleared off the roads. In a nutshell, this era of emergency helplines is much better than before it.

Talking about awareness creation of these emergency helplines among Lagos residents, he said on a scale of 100, the awareness rate is about 60-65%; he stressed that there is need for more awareness especially when we classify Lagos residents based on standard of living, the low level group in particular, need more enlightenment and awareness on the helplines. He said the elites know how to put calls through in times of emergency situation; but

the same cannot be said about the low-level group in the rural communities. LASEMA needs to achieve between 85-90%.

When asked if Lagos residents are influenced by these emergency helplines; he said from his experience, the statistics speaks for itself; “when we have over 100,000 calls from Lagos residents per day and multiply by seven (7) days, then the result is enough to say Lagos residents are highly influenced”.

Considering the rate of calls per day, how does LASEMA handle these emergency calls from different locations simultaneously?Mr Kabiru said the management anticipated this hence, the decentralisation of operations. He said there are dispatch points where equipment and manpower are located across the state. Unlike in those days when there was just one dispatch point at the headquarters, in Alausa.Nowadays, there are dispatch points in Cappa/Oshodi, Onipanu/Fadeyi, Lekki and also in Alausa secretariat and there are plans to have more at Epe, Ojo that will cover Badagry axis. In a nutshell, decentralization of operations has made the service easier and accessible to the peoplethan before. As such, “we have been able to handle emergency situation amongst Lagos residents simultaneously.”

When asked if there are enough human and material resources, Mr. Kabiru was cynical about it. He said the present administration of Lagos State and the leadership of LASEMA are both tryingto ensure that sufficient human and material resources are in place. He emphasized that Governor Akinwunmi Ambode and Mr. Adeshina Tiamiyu, the LASEMA boss have designed a structure that allows incoming employees to go through thorough training before they are certified good to work for LASEMA. He said a layman could see the level at which machines are brought into the state for the use of LASEMA to carry out emergency situations. “Unless we want to procure more, we have adequate human and material resources”.

Mr. Lawal Gideon Olabisi, Research and Rescue officer whose responsibilities are to attend to fire accident and collapsed

buildings among othersalso responded to the interview questions directed to him.

On the objectives of the 112/767 emergency helplines, he said one of the objectives of these helplines is to show Lagos residents that professionals are employed to give them rest of mind and assurance in time of emergency situations. He said people outside Lagos State usually call in through these same emergency helplines to seek for help and they often get response from the cream of professionals working with the agencies.

In comparing the situation before the advent of 112/767 helplines with what we have todayhe said,"Before then, the Police were used to respond to several emergency situations in Lagos State."In a case of fire outbreak, the police receive calls and relay it to the fire service men. That period, time was wasted before information gets to the section that will actually respond to it because of communication gap between residents and officials of these agencies. "The advent of 112/767 helplines have changed the architecture and changed Lagos State from rural to urban centre. By this, information travels faster than before".

On the level of awareness creation amongst Lagos residents about these helplines,Mr. Olabisi said there is insufficient awareness creation yet. He added thatthe population and illiteracy level among Lagos State residents won't allow easy circulation of information. He said people need sensitization, and that is why LASEMA embarks on sensitization exercise twice in a month just to ensure everyone is informed about these helplines. He stressed that LASEMA has carried out sensitization programmes in form of road show across the state in order to sensitise Lagos residents; yet, a lot of Lagos residents are still not conversant with these helplines. "We have over 18 million residents in Lagos State and we expect substantial percentage of this population to become conversant with these helplines.

When asked if Lagos residents are influenced by these emergency helplines, he said emphatically that they are.Anytime when

LASEMA officials arrive at the scene of an emergency a bit late, people easily accuse them of coming late because they expect more from them. He said Lagos residents believe more in them especially during emergency situations in the state. “They believe we have solutions to their various emergency situations”.

On how they handle manifold emergency situations simultaneously; he said they cannot handle all emergency cases simultaneously without the support of other primary agencies. He said LASEMA is a coordinating body for all other agencies that attend to emergency situations. For instance, he said if there is a fire incident at Ikorodu and also at Epe at the same time, LASEMA would contact the fire service office at both ends to attend to these cases simultaneously. Some of the support agencies are LRU (LASEMA Response Unit), Fire fighters, the Police, LASTMA, LASWA (Lagos State Waterways Authority), and LASEPA (Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency). He said these agencies are primary responders to various emergency situations in Lagos State, but LASEMA is the umbrella body that transmits information from Lagos residents to the respective units. He emphasized that Lagos State government did well to have decentralized their operations by siting dispatch points across the state. In a nutshell, he said decentralization of operations with provision of dispatch points hasmade it possible to attend to several emergency situations simultaneously in the state.

On if there are enough human and material resources to attend to these emergency cases in the state, he said they could manage with what they have now but as demand keeps mounting more hands would be required. “For now, I can say for human resources, we have about 80% and for material resources, we have about 90%. The current administration has promised even more equipment.”

The excerpts of the in-depth interview conducted withsome Local Government Chairmen

(1) Alimosho LGA Chairman (Hon. Jelili Adewale Sulaimon)

LASEMA is like a state unit of NEMA; that is why Lagos State government has thought of a better way to help Lagos residents out of emergency situations that have become regular occurrences. The helplines (112/767) provided by LASEMAserveother smaller emergency-handling units under it.

When asked if he was aware of LASEMA and its roles, Hon. Sulaimon said,"As a third tier of government, we work with the state government. We are aware of the agency and we are in full support of it."

On how to widen the level of awareness in the state,he states that the media is the mirror of the society, and whatever the government is doing is best relayed to the people through the media. Media arebelieved to be the intermediary between government and the people. LASEMA as an agency of state government should partner with the media to inform, educate and encourage residents about what it represents and how Lagosians can benefit from it.

Speaking further, he claims "the helplines have been a huge benefit to the people of my area, I have heard people discussing it. Apart from that, there have been emergency situations in Alimosho here where people have called those lines for help, and succour instantly came through those dedicated lines."

Without prejudice, those helplines are good initiatives of Lagos State government. It simplifies the difficulties people usually encountered when trying to reach out to agencies like fire servicemen, LASTMA, LASAMBUS, and others. It is a laudable project that has brought reliefto many Lagosians.

When asked if he is aware of the prominence of the agency among the citizens, he declared, "The influence is obvious when you look at the number of Lagosians testifying to how it has saved them at critical times. I might not be familiar with the exact percentage of Lagosians who are familiar with these helplines, but it is certain

that a substantial number of the residents are aware and discussing it."

(2) Mushin LGA Chairman (Hon. Emmanuel Bamgboye)
In a similar vein, the house member spoke about the emergency helplines; LASEMA is saddled with the responsibility of disasters and other emergency situations in the state.

(3) Shomolu Local Government Chairman
He reiteratedwhat his colleagues earlier said. According to him the establishment of LASEMA is one of the best things that has happened in Lagos. Its performances are excellent and similar to what obtains abroad.

In-depth interview with selected victims of emergencies
Seventeen victims of different emergency situations were interviewed, and they bared their minds on their experiences.
Twelve (12) of the selected seventeen (17) victims were aware of LASEMA and had personal experience of LASEMA agencies. Five others mentioned two Federal agencies (NEMA and FRSC) outside Lagos State.

On what they know about LASEMA, one of them claimedthat the agency came to his rescue when his vehicle was involved in an accident with a trailer on the way to Apapa from Ojuelegba. When asked of his personal experience with LASEMA another victim said,"I didn't even know how they (LASEMA) got to know our plightbut I perceived someone had calledthem because I wasalready perplexed when it happened. I couldn't think of any immediate solutionuntil they just emerged from nowhere to save the situation".

Another victim who was a victim of water mishap said they were rescued through the efforts of LASEMA and LASWA.Although two ofhisco-passengers lost their lives instantly, fifteen others including him were rescued, thanks to the timely response of those agencies, he declared.

All the respondents (victims) narrated their experiences individually, but most of them commended LASEMA and Lagos State government for the good initiative that has saved many lives and property of Lagosians. They,however, advised LASEMA to create more awareness for other residents of Lagos State to promptly make use of the helplinesin time of emergency situations. They also asked LASEMA to sensitize and educate Lagosians on what to do and how to react in emergency situation. When there is an emergency,some passengers resort topanicking, while some will even attempt to die before death comes.

Some of the victims said they became aware of these emergency lines through radio, television and newspaper, while some said they heard through friends on the street. The victims who are familiar with the helplines affirmed that the dedicated lines have been of immense help to Lagosians since created; but they urge the agency (LASEMA) to try and use the media more for awareness creation as the awareness is not enough in their opinion.

Some of the respondents also said the helplines could be used to survey traffic situations across the state; someone said he once called to find out about the traffic situation along Ikorodu road when he had an urgent message to deliver there. “I was marvelled when I got a feedback about the traffic situation in Ikorodu Road after calling the 112 line.That single episode saved me a lot of time I could have wasted in traffic hold up”.

Discussion of Findings

RQ.1 What is the degree of Lagos residents’ awareness about the emergency lines?

The findings of the study revealed that 68% of the respondents were of the opinion that the media are creating enough awareness about the use of the dedicated helplines during emergency situations in Lagos State while only 32% of the respondents held a contrary view. Apart from awareness creation, 79% of the respondents also acknowledged the importance of the media in general.The “media are the mirror of the society, and whatever the government is doing is best relayed to the people through the

media. The media are the intermediaries between government and the people; without the media that perform the watchdog roles on the government, there cannot be good governance."

RQ.2How do the media influence the lives of Lagos residents with information about the emergency helplines?
Seventy nine percent (79%) of the respondents held the opinion that persuasiveness of the media message about the dedicated helplines could influence the lives of Lagos residents; only 21% held a contrary view. That 79% respondents believe so much on persuasiveness of the media message indicates that most people like to be persuaded before doing something that will benefit them rather than personally initiating the thought. People do not mind losing their lives in ignorance but the persuasive power of the media has delivered some from crass ignorance. Also, 86% of the respondents were of the opinion that media messages about the dedicated helplines in a way sensitised them on how to use the helplines during emergency situations while only 14% held a contrary view.

RQ.3 Has the dedicated helplines been of help to Lagos residents in terms of emergency?
A considerable number (86%) of the respondents admitted that the dedicated helplines have been helpful since introduced in Lagos State while only 14% of the respondents disagreed with this notion. According to them, they have never called through the helplines because they have not found themselves in an emergency situation where LASEMA could come to their aid. Their reasons for not recognising the importance of LASEMA helplines show their depth of ignorance and lack of awareness.

RQ.4: How do Lagos residents perceive the responses of LASEMAofficialswhenthey called through the helplines?
Among the respondents,68% of them acknowledged the excellent responses of LASEMAofficialsduring emergencysituationswhile 32% of the respondents held a contrary view.Notwithstanding the avowed excellence, they should not rest on their oars; rather, they

should try hardertoachieve at least 90% because 32% is not too small to overlook.

It is noteworthy from the foregoing that efforts of Lagos State government at ensuring safety of lives and property of Lagosians can only be effectively achieved by recognizing and making the media a working partner in all the activities of the agencies in the state. As a step towards this, Lagos State has on Tuesday, January 8, 2019 launched a TV reality show tagged "Lagos Rescue" operations that airs the activities of emergency agencies in the state.

The state's Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Kehinde Bamigbetan, who said this while addressing a press conference at the Bagauda Kaltho Press Centre in Alausa, said 'Lagos Rescue', was a design of Governor Akinwumi Ambode to enlighten residents of their responsibilities during emergency situations. As the heartbeat of the governor, he has appropriated huge resources to efficiently run the agency and to reinforce their capacity to manage emergency situations.
Bamigbetan therefore urged residents to take advantage of the programme which would be showing on Lagos Television every Sunday by 10:30pm, and also provide valuable feedback through the various social media platforms of the State Government.It is anticipated that this government-media partnership would further enhance the efficiency of the agencies.

Conclusion
Theoretically, the study is anchored in Social Responsibility Media Theory. This theory provided the framework for understanding the media awareness on the emergency helplines.

The research designs adopted for this study were survey method and in-depth interview. The instruments used to gather the required data were questionnaires and interview guide. Three hundred respondents were sampled via questionnaire while twenty other respondents were interviewed using the interview guide.

From the findings, results showed that awareness of Lagos residents about LASEMA is positive such that the agency has been recognized and relied upon to serve more and to put an end to avoidable death across the state. Some of the residents affirmed that the mass media are trying to disseminate information about LASEMA and its dedicated helplines around the state.
The study also showed that the dedicated 112/767 helplines have been helpful in saving lives since they were introduced in Lagos State in 2008. For the responses of LASEMA officials, respondents said the officials have been responsive, but need to put extra efforts.

It is evident from the foregoing that as a responsible government,Lagos State gave primary attention to safety of lives and property of her citizens. It is one thing to have an agency saddled with responsibilities, but it is another thing to ensure the agency is positioned to live up to the billing. LASEMAdoesnot rely on NEMA to carry outits assignedresponsibility; instead itcollaborates with NEMA in various ways. The Lagos State government has recruited more staff, trained and equippedthem to perform their statutory duties. Some Lagos residents through the findings of this study also affirmed that LASEMA is an agency that drives development in Lagos State. It has been observed that LASEMA has complemented the efforts of the Lagos State government in taking Lagos State to the next level. However, there is a call for more awareness creation about the dedicated helplines to enable greaterrespond to emergency situations across the state.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing, this research therefore makes the following recommendations.

- The media must endeavour to organize more training of their personnel on how reports of emergency cases are treated. One thing is to obtain degrees from higher institutions on Mass Communication or Journalism, another thing is to apply the theories learned from the classrooms on the field. Emergency is quite different from usual daily activities of human movement; so, it must be treated as a specialised beat.
- It is important to deliberate and strategize steps to be taken to determine how best the citizens want to be served in emergency situations. It is expected that from time to time the news media should survey the opinions of media audiences so that they can ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of LASEMA as it attempts to serve Lagosians.

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