

**EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT  
(TFD) AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING HAND WASHING  
PRACTICE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN ANAMBRA  
STATE, NIGERIA**

**By**

**Nkiru Camila EMECHEBE, Ph.D**

Department of Mass Communication

Tansian University,

Umunya, Anambra State, Nigeria

Email: [nkirumilla@gmail.com](mailto:nkirumilla@gmail.com)

Tel: +2348033166060

**Christian Uzoma, Igwe, Ph.D**

Department of Journalism and Media Studies

Delta State University of Science and Technology,

Ozoro, Delta State, Nigeria

Email: [iguzo2007@gmail.com](mailto:iguzo2007@gmail.com) & [igwec@dsust.edu.ng](mailto:igwec@dsust.edu.ng)

Tel: +2348033570206

**Chinelo Ebere UCHENDA, Ph.D**

Department of Mass Communication

Nnamdi Azikwe University,

Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Email: [cu.uchendu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:cu.uchendu@unizik.edu.ng)

Tel: +2348063264857

and

**Blessing Ifeoma OKEKE**

Department of Mass Communication

Tansian University,

Umunya, Anambra State, Nigeria

Email: [okekeblessingifeoma1@gmail.com](mailto:okekeblessingifeoma1@gmail.com)

Tel: +2347087150139

**Abstract**

In the present day campaign for improved health services, particularly as it relates to respiratory ailments, frequent hand washing practice, with soap, under running water, has been identified as an acceptable therapeutic health behaviour. This seemingly novel health practice has not been fully adopted by the people, hence

the need for this study. Aimed at finding out if TfD can sufficiently create awareness about the health intervention of hand washing practice, and the correlation between TfD and influencing positive attitudes towards hand washing. The study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action while the research design adopted for the study was survey approach. The population of the study was 112,087 pupils in Anambra State. A sample size of 384 pupils was drawn for the study. The pupils were exposed to theatrical display on hand washing with soap in their school arenas. Thereafter, questionnaire was used as a research instrument to gather the views of the respondents on hand washing and TfD. Data obtained from the study were presented in simple frequency distribution tables, and subsequently analysed. Results revealed that TfD was effective in making the pupils to adopt hand washing practice. The study recommended that government and NGOs should scale up the use of TfD as a health campaign strategy.

**Key Words:** Communicating, Development, Hand washing, Practice, Theatre

## **Introduction**

Until the year, 2020, during the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, not much was heard in Nigeria about Hand washing With Soap (HWWS), under running water, as a therapeutic health behaviour. Ezeaka, Ezeoke, and Nwodu (2021) corroborate the novelty of HWWS as a health behaviour in Nigeria, and state that awareness campaign for it was heightened by COVID-19. According to Ezeaka, et al (2021), in the absence of not any known drugs for treatment of COVID-19, mitigating the spread of the disease was ensured through HWWS and social distancing. The public health campaigns that followed, afterwards, created a general wide knowledge about the practice.

The Centre for Disease Control- CDC (2020) informs that hand washing is one of the easiest and simplest practices to personal hygiene, yet it is a neglected practice in Nigeria, adding that it is a shared knowledge that most people do not consider hand washing as an important aspect of their healthy living, and for that, do not pay much attention to it. Washing one's hands, a form of hygiene, is one of the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Hands washing helps to physically remove germs by friction, and to "rinse them down the drain." Adults and children are supposed to wash their hands for the following reasons:

- When hands are visibly dirty
- Before you eat
- Before you prepare food items
- After touching raw meat like chicken or beef.
- After contact with another person's fluid, like blood, urine or vomit
- After changing infant or adult nappies
- After blowing your nose or sneezing.
- After touching animals or pets
- After going to the toilet
- For routine cleaning of hands, anytime they are visibly dirty
- If you have contact with contaminated objects in the environment e.g. dirty tissues/nappies, trash bins.
- Before and after you care for, or have contact with someone who is very sick, very old or very young.

John Oxford (2020) posits that hand washing is the best way to avoid flu and other viruses postulating that, up to half of all men and a quarter of women fail to wash their hands after they have been to the toilet; we have between two (2) and Ten (10) million bacteria between fingertip and elbow; the number of germs on your fingertips doubles after you use the toilet, and germs can stay alive on hands for up to three hours.

Studies have showed that hand washing with soap (HWWS) is one of the most effective means of preventing diarrhea disease, along with stool disposal and safe and adequate household water treatment. Evidence indicates that improved hand washing can have major impact on public health in any country, and can significantly reduce two leading causes of childhood mortality, diarrhea disease and acute respiratory infection. World Health Organization WHO (2020) reports that there are three interventions that attempt to address the transmission of diarrheal pathogens, they are: water, sanitation, and hand washing; WHO points out that, while each has its merits, no one approach is as effective as when paired with the other two.

Review of available literature on HWWS initiatives in schools globally indicates that for HWWS programmes to succeed, several factors have to be considered, these include a policy environment that supports services and activities being put

in place; infrastructure to ensure both hardware and software; an approach that ensures participation of stakeholders; coordination and management of resources that are available at school, community and national levels etc.

This study, therefore, built on existing programmes, and proposed to use theatre as one of the approaches for promoting sustainable hand washing behaviour. The theatre approach emphasised importance of children, their involvement and engagement in their affairs and an opportunity to make critical decisions on matter concerning them. Theatre was chosen for the experimental intervention in this project because it has been used to inform and conscientise people through human history in other countries such as India (Ghosh & Benerjee 2016), conservation, gender violence/abuse, children's rights, etc. Guanah (2018) sees drama as "a useful tool in national discourse and social commentary because it is a very formidable force and a transformer of society" (p. 385), and because it is the textual representation of theatre.

Frequent hand washing is one of the single most important things we can do to help to reduce the spread of infections and prevent ill health. For example, good hand hygiene in children will help prevent the spread of common communicable infections such as colds, and tummy bugs; getting this message out to children will also help to influence their hand washing practices at home as well as at school, and everywhere they find themselves, and even at play grounds and at sports.

Nkrumah (2023), opines that, as a result, theatre has developed through time to become a vehicle for development communication. According to Guanah and Ibibi (2024), drama, which is an arm of the theatre is one of the ways through which communication takes place. They emphasise that drama and mass media use strategies to grab and maintain audience attention; they both make use of dramatic elements such as conflict, tension, and resolution. These similarities impact on audience perception and interpretation. Theatre is used in what is known as Theatre for Development (TfD) to aid in the process of altering outdated behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and practices. It enables everyone to participate (participate) in an activity (solve an issue) that affects them (development) (Illah, 2019).

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Every public health intervention programme requires that the target beneficiaries, to not only have full knowledge about the intervention, but to buy into it for successful implementation. This is because health promotion programmes are successful to the extent that the expected therapeutic behaviours are elicited from the target beneficiaries. Guanah (2022) accentuates that the use of communication medium such as print media in carrying out health-awareness campaigns, particularly as it pertains to conveying health hazards and solutions to individuals and groups of people, is one of the roles played by health communication.

It, therefore, becomes imperative that effective health literacy, health promotion and campaign must involve sufficient and adequate communication. The efficacy of communication strategy (or mixed strategies) to be adopted depends of its/their ability to elicit favourable attitudes and behaviours. This explains the reason why, in contemporary global society, engagement communication platforms are preferably used for public health campaigns. Thus, for the hand washing practice, even though traditional media have tried to address the issue of hand washing, it has failed to reach the hearts of majority of children and the grassroots, as they are cut-off from media like the televisions, billboards, Internet and radio advertisements due to underdevelopment.

Most importantly, majority of individuals, especially children of all classes in the society, have not imbibed the habit of hand washing; therefore this important knowledge is at an unfortunate low among the populace. Using theatre as a medium to communicate this practice (hand washing) will cut-across all parts of the society, and can reach the grassroots children because it is participatory, and is going to reach out to the primary school pupils so that they can participate. According to Aristotle, “tell me, I will know, show me, I will not forget, show me, I will remember, involve me I will understand.”

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this research was to use theatre as a tool and medium to communicate hand washing to primary school pupils, and to see how effective the theatre which encompasses drama, storytelling, songs and the role drama can

be used to achieve this habit among the children. Specifically, other objectives of this study were:

1. To find out if TfD helps children to understand hand washing as a public health campaign,
2. To ascertain if TfD was capable of inculcating the habit of hand washing with Soap in the pupils, and
3. To find out if the pupils perceive TfD as an effective communication strategy for hand washing with soap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) is the theoretical underpinning for the study. Everet M. Rogers is the principal chronicler of the Diffusion of Innovation theory (McQuail & Deuze, 2020), and the theory relates to the many attempts to harness mass media to campaigns for technical advance or for health and educational purposes (World Bank Group, 2018). DOI originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea, a concept, a product, and a thought gains force and spreads (diffuses) through a target population/audience, or social system. The outcome of this process is that the target audience/population, as part of a social system, adopts a new idea, behaviour, or product.

According to Greehaugh, Robert, Macfariance, Bate, and Kyriakidax (2018), adoption in this context, means that the target population does something differently from what it has previously (that is, acquires and performs a new behaviour or attitude). The World Bank Group (2018) however remarks that the key to adoption is that the adopter must perceive the idea, concept, behaviour attitudes, or a product as new or innovative.

In their model of information diffusion, Rogers (1962), and Rogers and Shoemaker (1973) (as cited in West & Turner, 2022), envisaged four stages: information, persuasion, decision or adoption, and confirmation (Greenhaudgh *et al*, 2018). This implies that the stages by which a person adopts an innovation, and whereby diffusion is accomplished, include awareness of the need for innovation (information and persuasion), decision to adopt (or reject) the innovation, initial use of the innovation to test it, and continued use of the innovation.

Rogers (as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2018), further explains that the adoption of a new idea, behaviour or product does not happen simultaneously, but rather passes through certain categories of the target audience (Li, 2020). Rogers (1962) identified five adopter categories as: innovators, early adopter, early majority, late majority and the laggards.

In public health, diffusion of innovation theory is used to accelerate the adoption of important public health programmes that typically aim to change the behaviour of a social system. For example the roll back malaria programme was an intervention which is promoted to the people with the goal of adoption of the attitude of regularly sleeping under the mosquito insecticide treated nets (ITNs). This is also the case with the Zip-up programme, which aimed at discouraging youths from sexual promiscuity and promoting protected sex through the use of condoms.

The theory is suitable for this study because social changes involve adoption of positive developments. The relevance of the theory to the study refers to how hand washing messages seek to communicate information that will promote hand washing, especially at critical times among primary school pupils in the study areas. The change may be immediate or long term behaviour change. Nwosu (2016) asserts that intensive, well-organised, and implemented advocacy campaigns are needed for the expected results to be achieved. The flow of advocacy impacts can range from information or awareness creation, knowledge change, opinion change, attitudinal change, to behaviour, actions or practice adoption or amendment.

## **Conceptual Discussion**

### **Hand Washing and Hand Hygiene**

**Hand Hygiene:** Many strategies have been designed and evaluated to address the problem of low hand hygiene (HH) compliance with most of these strategies conflicting as most effective but how they really work are still unclear. Healthcare associated infections account for approximately 80,000 deaths per year in the United States. A worldwide systematic review found that the incidence of health care- associated infection ranged from 1.7 to 23.6 per 100 patients, hospital costs directly related to health care associated infections ranged from \$28.4 to \$33.8

billion in 2007 U.S dollars. Yet these infections are frequently preventable through hand hygiene.

Substantial epidemiologic evidence supports that hand hygiene reduces the transmission of healthcare-associated pathogens and the incidence of healthcare-associated infections. The link between hand hygiene and improvements in healthcare-associated infections is hard to prove definitively in modern day health care. However, the importance of hand hygiene is universally acknowledged by organizations such as the Joint Commission, World Health Organization (WHO) and Center for Diseases Control (CDC), which recommend or require hand hygiene practices and interventions to improve hand hygiene compliance in order to reduce health care- acquired infections. This review focused on interventions to improve compliance with hand hygiene rather than on the efficacy of hand hygiene for reducing health care- associated infections. Compliance with hand hygiene practices among health care workers has historically been very low, averaging 39 percent.

The review on hand hygiene compliance and intervention aimed improving it that was conducted for the original CDC (2001) “making health care safer” report found that poor compliance has been documented in studies across hospital unit types and in various other settings workers tends to underestimate the importance of compliance and often over estimate their compliance with hand hygiene procedure, the report concluded that future research studies needed to identify reasons for poor compliance and design sustainable intervention that target these factors. Hand hygiene is a general term for removing microorganisms with a disinfecting agent such as alcohol or soap and water. Hand hygiene should be conducted by health care workers before seeing patients majorly after contact with bodily fluids, before invasive procedures and after removing glove.

Hand washing with soap at key events was rare at baseline in both the intervention and control groups (1% to 2% at 6 weeks follow-up, hand washing with soap at key events was more common in the intervention group than in the control group. This study shows that substantial increases in hand washing with soap can be achieved using a scalable intervention based on emotional drivers. Improved hand hygiene has the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality from infections spread by oral routes and person to person contact. Infections preventable by



improved hand hygiene include gastrointestinal infections and respiratory infections and trachoma, fatal neonatal infections, and possibly norovirus infections. Diarrhea and respiratory infections remain the two most important causes of child death globally. Improved hand hygiene can also improve the child development and school attendance.

Hand washing is one of the most important practices to personal hygiene that helps reduce germs and keep us healthy, especially children because of their playful and exploring life-style because they are easily exposed to dirt. Even though traditional mediums have tried to address the issue of hand washing, it has failed to reach the grassroots as they are cut-off from mediums like the Television, Radio, Bill-boards, Magazines, Newspapers and cinemas, due to science and technological growth that brought social, economic and geographical change. In the society, this also leads to change in mode and medium of communication, this also comes with its own limitations such as network barriers that make it difficult and inaccessible to the grassroots people as a result of these barriers and limitations, this research has focused on how theatre can be used as a tool for communication and to bridge a gap or poor hygiene practice. This gap between human beings in their various social environment (the urban, cities and villages) such as the urban people and grassroots people on important issues of health, economic, social behaviours, politics and environment.

Theatre is a folk art which, like any such art, must originate in the community. It can best be developed and communicated to the audience by people who 'speak the same language' with the audience, people who, as Stuart Hall points out, must share sets of concepts, images and ideas which enable them to think and feel, and thus interpret phenomena, in roughly similar ways. This paper serves to highlight the importance of community theatre with a view to encouraging its development and establishment of such community-based programmes in Africa as a sustainable machinery for addressing the myriad and ever increasing environmental, socio-economic and political problems confronting the continent. It also illuminates some potential implementation constraints and offers ways of overcoming them.

### **Theatre for Development (TfD)**

Scholars like Guanah and Okowa-Nwaebi (2023) affirm that drama belongs to the traditional genre of the mass media, and that it can be used to address various issues because it is capable of arresting the attention of varied audiences, no matter their religious or ethnic differences. They opine that “theatre (drama), like other forms of the traditional media, has its foundation in the culture of the primeval society, for it is the origin of all arts that arose from the life of the community” (p. 206).

The exceptionally eclectic and complex nature of Theatre for Development makes it challenging, if not problematic to define. A glut of nomenclatures, pointers, tags, even brands have been allotted to the endeavour by diverse reviewers, researchers, intellectuals, critics and even theatre practitioners. These nomenclatures include Theatre for Integrated Development, Community Theatre, Popular Theatre, Participatory Educational Theatre, Theatre in Education, Alternative Theatre, Campaign Theatre, Resistance Theatre, Revolutionary Theatre, Protest Theatre, Liberation Theatre, Oppositional Theatre, etc. Many efforts have grappled and tussled seriously with this subject. The phenomenon is generally a popular theatre form, aimed at conscientising and sensitising the society through research, performance and dialogue for positive action.

Despite the fact that the classification seems to fluctuate, the fundamental nature of all these variations remain the same, which is looking ahead to the idea of theatre whose focus and ideological position is strictly tied to the services it provides, which is social transformation, change, restructuring and above all, overhauling of the society. Theatre-for-Development is conceived as transcendence over the less interactive styles of popular theatre. Byam (2023) is of the view that the area of the increased participation of the target audience in the theatrical process is key and fundamental. As a result, she proposes that “theatre for development must aspire to give confidence to the spectators in an examination of the social environment using dialogue.” Mda (2021), argues that Theatre-for-Development can be described as “modes of theatre whose objective is to disseminate messages, or to conscientise communities about their objective and social-political situation.” Mluma (2022) sees the concept as Popular Theatre, and expresses its purposes swiftly thus:

It aims to make the people not only aware of but also active participants in the development process by expressing their viewpoints and acting to better their conditions. Popular theatre is intended to empower the common man with a critical consciousness crucial to the struggle against the forces responsible for his poverty (p. 67)

It has become quite realistic that even the most untailored commitment with these definitions provided here divulges their frequent denominators as intensification and interactive audience participation and the expected resultant empowerment of those involved in the programme, which is the target audience. In this particular study, the researcher shall adopt the expression: Theatre-for-Development (TfD) as the operational concept. This is so because the term replicates its description as theatre in the service of community. Aesthetic performances, expressions and forms which include pantomimic dramatisation of poetry, dances, narratives and plays are all slackly considered as theatre in this research effort; agreed that in nearly all Theatre for Development endeavours, the boundaries between the different performance genres are not only liquid but also tremendously shallow.

Yet, different cultures and traditions react differently to artistic forms of transmitting messages. Very truly, Theatre for Development frequently aspires to be the form that will communicate the aesthetics and worldview of the community in the most efficient and effective manner. No wonder TfD provokes people to be constantly aware of the forces which determine their living conditions and those active participants in the development process, in this manner, increasingly expanding their point of views, thereby developing their critical thinking, their perceptions and actions to improve their living conditions.

Theatre generally is that genre that gives room for participation and not just watching and hearing audience in a building or an open space, using this theatre as a tool to communicate and educate and not just to entertain is another exciting phase of the theatre among its numerous facets and aspects. It is very interesting to know that theatre can serve as a tool for communicating important life issues in our society. We should also understand that theatre is a mirror unto the society,

because plays, performances, dances, storytelling, folklores are part of the human activities in the society.

### **The Significance of Community Theatre**

Community theatre an effective way of communicating sensitive issues without the attending antagonism that would have normally occurred in direct realistic situations, a point earlier observed (Eyoh, 2010). Despite the fact that some of the messages conveyed by my plays were a direct criticism of local activities and customs that were incompatible with development and conservation goals, the audiences participated actively and positively during the question-and-answer session that followed each theatre performance, as opposed to several cases of hostility that had often greeted community meetings.

Theatre presents community members with situations that engage them not only intellectually and aesthetically but also emotionally (Bentley, 2010). This type of emotion is best described as "empathy" which Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* defines as the emotional relationship established between the character and the spectator, which makes the latter feel the impact of what has happened, is happening, or may happen, to the former. He opines that on a number of occasions during his theatre programme at Korup and Banyang-Mbo, some members of the audience were so emotionally involved that they climbed on stage or shouted/cried out passionately in reaction to the renditions or actions on stage.

Theatre is also a powerful way of putting across messages with the aim of stimulating community action to address identified problems and issues. The theatre activities helped to generate positive conservation actions in the targeted communities, with two traditional councils mobilising the male youth to evict foreign hunters from their forest territories. Similarly, five traditional councils passed injunctions against the use of pesticides and dynamite to kill fish, and two voluntarily assisted law enforcement officers in the arrest of culprits. It was also noted that most farmers who watched the theatre performances voluntarily abandoned their traditional method of burning trees on farms indiscriminately and took precautions not to clear farms too close to rivers. Voluntary community actions of this nature were hardly observed when only community meetings were conducted in the villages.

### **Empirical Review**

Azuogu, Ilo, Nwimo, Azubogu and Owunaka (2016) did a study on “the extent of hand washing practice among Secondary School Students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.” The study noted the high incidence of infectious diseases like diarrheal among secondary schools in Nigeria; the, study explained how contaminated hands promote the transmission of infections, especially with people living in close like school. The study indicated that washing the hands with running water and soap prevents the spread of diseases. The study used a cross-sectional survey to determine the extent the secondary school students in the study area (Ebonyi State) practice hand washing exercise with a sample of 420 students from both junior and senior classes from government schools in the rural and urban area of the state; the study used a 3- point scaled while the instrument of data collection was 18 items self-structured questionnaire.

Also a Cronbach Alpha that obtained the reliability of 0.862 while T-test statistic was used for the hypotheses with 0.05 alpha level. The study found the extent of hand washing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. The study revealed that findings of the study have implications towards hand washing campaign in the country and recommended the use of mass media to promote the campaign and improvement of hygiene education and its curriculum, that all the concerned agencies from the government take appropriate policies that will enhance good hygiene; in terms of education in schools, mainly the primary as well as the secondary schools in the area of creating a conducive environment for hand washing practice to improve through the provision of hand washing facilities in all the schools.

Vivas, Gelaye, Aboset, Kumie, Berhane and William (2015) conducted a study on the “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices KAP; of Hygiene among school children in Angola, Ethiopia,” The study noted that poor hygiene practices and insufficient sanitary conditions play significant parts in the increased problem of infectious diseases, the study examined the knowledge, attitude and practice of hygiene; among rural school children in Ethiopia with a sample size of 669 students carried out in a government-owned institution from the study population made up of all Angolan primary school children from grades 1-6. The research design used was survey while the questionnaire provided both demographic

questions and frequencies to which pupils maintained the personal hygiene; and issues relating to hand washing during the day, especially at critical moments. Knowledge about sanitation, proper hygiene; and presence of parasite were highlighted. The findings show that 52 per center of the pupils knew about basic hygiene; the frequency of hand washing with soap was at 36.2 percent.

### **Methodology**

The researchers worked with pupils of Staff School, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (for Anambra Central Senatorial Zone), All Saints Primary School, Onitsha (for North Senatorial Zone), and Core Maria Primary School, Nnewi (for South Senatorial Zone) where they were involved in games and exercises, role play, storytelling, songs and drama with emphasis on hand washing and its importance to them and their health.

Having identified the schools to work with, the researchers met the various relevant authorities of the schools with an introductory letter to seek for permission to work with primary five (5) and six (6) pupils of the school. After series of meetings with the school authority, the request was granted. As a result of the busy schedules of the schools, such as the teaching hours, and time table of the concerned classes, the two days and time selected for the researchers, fell during the break periods.

The researchers, in collaboration with the Health Educators/Social Mobilization Officers (SMOs) from Primary Health Care Development Agency, and National Orientation Agency, used some of the pupils to expose though the other pupils' theatrical displays on hand washing with soap. After exposing the pupils to theatrical display on hand washing with soap, their observations were sought on the experiences gained. The researchers made a total of 384 copies of the questionnaire and shared them according to the population strength of each schools under study

The area of the study is Anambra State, Nigeria. The area is located in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria; and is bounded in the East by Enugu in the south west by Delta and Edo State; in the North by Enugu and Kogi states; and in the South by Imo and Abia States. The area has a total Landmass of 4,844km<sup>2</sup>

(Okunna 2013) and popularly known with two commercial and industrial cities (Onitsha and Nnewi) and one administrative capital city (Awka).

The population of the study was one hundred and twenty-one thousand, and eighty-seven (121,087) primary 5-6 pupils in primary schools from the three senatorial districts of Anambra State. In determining the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan table was used to determine the sample size. The population of the study which was 121,087 was known. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) (as cited in Nwodu, 2017), table for sample size determination was applied to obtain the sample size of 384.

The cluster sampling strategy was used for the purpose of this study. The cluster sampling strategy is suitable for this study because the population of the study is distributed in cluster and pockets of settlements. The population is geographically distributed, as well. The researchers made use of random sampling to select the sample subjects from each cluster/area.

The research instrument for this study was the Likert Scale questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections – section A and section B. while section A bore the biographic data of the respondents, section B bore the thematic questions. The thematic questions had five (5) rating scales – Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UN), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). Out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 335 (87.24%) copies were returned and found usable.

### Data Presentation and analysis

**Table 1: Sex**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	107	32
Female	228	68
Total	335	100

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

Table 1 shows that there were more females than male in the sample size.

**Table 2: Respondents' Age Distribution**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
8-9	14	4
10-11	282	84
12 and above	39	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

The data in Table 2 indicated that the dominant age range was between 10-11, representing 84% of the respondents, the age range of 12 and above represented 12% while between 8-9 age range represented 4%.



**Table 3: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Knowledge/Awareness Response**

SN	Do you know about hand washing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I know little about hand washing messages	78 (390)	60 (240)	62 (186)	58 (116)	77 (77)	335 (1009)	3.0
2	I only hear of the messages occasionally	122 (610)	74 (296)	59 (177)	50 (100)	30 (30)	335 (1213)	4.0
3	It is a message that encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water	145 (725)	60 (240)	47 (141)	39 (78)	44 (44)	335 (1228)	4.0
4	It is a message for disease prevention	44 (220)	37 (148)	152 (456)	64 (128)	38 (3)	335 (990)	3.0
4	It is a message for disease prevention	44 (220)	37 (148)	152 (456)	64 (128)	38 (3)	335 (990)	3.0
5	I do not know anything about the message	40 (200)	42 (168)	144 (432)	50 (100)	59 (59)	335 (959)	2.86

Figures in brackets are Alternative Response Scale Values

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

The table above shows the mean distribution table of the responses to the five items in the questionnaire on knowledge/awareness of hand washing messages among the respondents. The mean score associated with item one on research question one which has to do with knowledge response produces a mean score of 3 showing that respondents knew of hand washing messages.

The second item from the questionnaire shows a mean score of 4.0, indicating that respondents got to hear about hand washing messages occasionally. The respondents agreed that hand washing message encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water with a mean score of 4.0. Thus the mean score of 3.0 indicated that respondents believed that hand washing messages have to do with sensitization; for disease prevention.

Finally, the last item on knowledge/awareness response shows the mean score of 2.86 below the decision rule of 3.00, indicating that respondents did not know anything about the hand washing messages. From the analysis above, the results from knowledge/awareness of hand washing message revealed that respondents from the study area know of hand washing messages.

**Table 4: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Knowledge Source**

SN	Do you know about hand washing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	It is through radio programmes	170 (850)	45 (180)	52 (156)	49 (98)	19 (19)	335 (1303)	3.88
2	It is through television programmes	175 (875)	52 (208)	45 (135)	42 (84)	21 (21)	335 (1323)	3.94
3	It is through fliers, posters and handbills	165 (825)	47 (188)	51 (153)	45 (90)	27 (27)	335 (1283)	3.83
4	I don't know of any source of hand washing	22 (110)	38 (152)	149 (447)	74 (148)	52 (52)	335 (909)	2.71

Figures in brackets are alternative response scale values

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

The data on Table 4 revealed that the highest mean score recorded 3.94 followed by 3.88 and 3.83 indicating that the respondents' information sources for hand washing messages were through television and radio programmes as well as through flyers, posters and handbills. The result further revealed the mean score of 2.71 indicative of the respondents' reaction of not knowing any source of hand washing messages showing negative mean score that should be rejected.

**Table 5: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Practice**

SN	How do you practice hand washing message?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I only wash hands with water	48 (240)	39 (156)	155 (465)	47 (94)	46 (46)	335 (1001)	2.9
2	I wash my hands with soap and water when my hands are dirty	55 (275)	40 (160)	139 (417)	46 (92)	55 (55)	335 (999)	2.9
3	I wash my hands often	55 (240)	60 (240)	76 (228)	68 (136)	76 (76)	335 (955)	2.8
4	I don't wash my hands at all	45 (225)	49 (196)	120 (360)	62 (124)	59 (59)	335 (964)	2.9

Figures in brackets are alternative response scale values

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

Table 5 shows the response to the practice of hand washing messages. All the four items from the questionnaire relating to hand washing practice revealed the mean scores that are below the decision rule, indicative of the respondents' poor performance of hand washing practice.

### Discussion of Findings

The study was aimed at evaluating the knowledge and practice of hand washing messages among the respondents from the study area. The results of the demographic data of the respondents enabled the researchers to determine the eligibility of respondents in the study area. A majority of the respondents were within the age range of 13-14 (84%). Therefore, the respondents are true representative of all the students in Anambra State. Results showed adequate knowledge of hand washing messages with positive mean scores of 3 and above (3 as decision rule). This was evident in the number and frequency of the surveyed pupils from the study area that affirmed exposure to hand washing messages. This finding show that the respondents were aware of hand washing messages.

Also, the findings are in agreement with White, Kolble, Carlson and Lipson (2018) on "the impact of a health campaign on hand hygiene and upper respiratory illness among college students living in residence halls" and found that exposure to media campaign and the availability of gel hand sanitizer;

increased students' knowledge of health campaign. Despite the acquired knowledge from the hand washing messages, the practice of hand washing has remained insignificant or low.

The responses from research question three showed that respondents do not practice nor advocate the hand washing messages. These findings are in agreement with the research findings of Azuogu et al. (2016) where the study found the extent of hand washing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. Also, the study is in agreement with the findings of Junxiong, Shao, Lumen and Liyang (2015) that a high knowledge and attitude of the respondents have not translated to good hygiene practices. Similarly, the study also agreed with Ikogho and Igbuldu (2023) who found that few availability of hand washing facilities were utilized, and that this was hindered by the maintenance of a few available ones.

The findings also supported Merenu et al. (2015) where it was discovered that majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge of the use of hand sanitizer; while few practised correct hand washing exercise. The findings also supported Mwachiro (2012) where it was observed that lack of provision of soap in schools, inadequate water and disappearance of soap and hand washing facilities as obstacles towards hand washing practice. Therefore, the study found that despite the knowledge acquired from hand washing messages, the practice still remains low.

In line with the diffusion of innovation theory, which the study was anchored on, it was observed that the rate of diffusion was influenced by individual differences among potential adopters as well as the social system of the respondents. Though the respondents were exposed to hand washing messages through media information by the government and different agencies like UNICEF (1998), the adoption of the practice of proper hand washing still has to do with individual differences. Also, the social system of the respondents has a lot to offer towards the realization; of the practice of hand washing messages. If the respondents were adequately exposed and have a favourable attitude to hand washing messages without a conducive environment, then the practice of the knowledge gained from these messages may not be realistic. Thus, irrespective of the acquired knowledge

from hand washing messages, the practice of hand washing has remained insignificant or very low.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings from this study confirm and show that Theatre can be used as a tool for communication. From the practical field work analysis, the importance of theatre to children and how it can serve as a platform for learning and not just for entertainment. The Theatre that was deployed in this study included: games and exercises as theatrical activities, and dance, storytelling, role-playing and above all the hand washing exercise. In view of the use of Theatre as a tool and medium of communicating hand washing among primary school pupils, the importance and strength of Theatre to educate, and also entertain cannot be overemphasised.

It is therefore recommended that, apart from TfD being used for hand washing as a public health campaign, it should also be used to address other health issues. Also, since TfD is an effective communication strategy, and is capable of inculcating the habit of hand washing with soap in the pupils, its use should be intensified. Likewise, government and NGOs should scale up the use of TfD as a health campaign strategy.

## **References**

- Azuogu, V. C., Ilo, C. I., Nwimo, I. O., Azubogu, B. N., & Onwunaka, C. (2016). Extent of Hand Washing practice among secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK ([www.eajournals.org](http://www.eajournals.org)). *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, 4(7): 11-22.
- Bentley, N. K. (2023). *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byam, S. (2018). The performer-audience relationship in African Theatre: A performance studies perspective. *African Theatre*, 17, 105-119.
- Centre for Disease Control (2020). *"When and How to Wash Your Hands."* Retrieved from [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).
- Everet M. Rogers (1962). *Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory (First Edition)*. New York: MacMillians.

- Eyoh, W. (2019). The Contributions of African Traditional Theatre to Global Theatricality. *African Research Review*, 8(2), 129-146.
- Ezeaka, N. B., Ezeoke, C. B., & Nwodu, G. (2021). Evaluating Knowledge and Practice of Hand Washing Messages among Secondary School Students in Anambra State, *Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 1(1): 12-25.
- Greehaugh, R., Macfariance, B., & Kyriakidax, A. (2018), *Theatre for Development: An Art for Self Determination*. London: Exeter Publishers, U.K.
- Guanah, J. S., & Ibibi, A. A. (2024). Audience Perception of Play Makers as Professional Communicators: An Analysis of the Performance of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* on Stage *Africa Update*, xxxi (3):1-18.
- Guanah, J. S. & Okowa-Nwaebi, L. (2023). Nexus between Traditional Communication, Drama and Conflict: Perspectives on Rowland Amaefula's Defiance. In: S. O. Osakue (Ed) *Media, Culture and Conflict in Africa*. (Pp. 201-220). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing..
- Guanah, J. S. (2022). A Review of the Relationship between Newspapers and Health Reporting in Nigeria: Reportage on Lassa fever in Edo State. *Global Media Journal*, 20 (47):1-8. Available at: <http://www.globalmediajournal.com>.
- Guanah, J. S. (2018). Book as a communication medium: Using Barclays Ayakoroma's *Dance on his Grave* to discuss salient gender issues. *International Review of Humanities Studies*, 3 (2):385-403. Available at: [www.irhs.ui.ac.id](http://www.irhs.ui.ac.id).
- Ikogho, D. E. & Igbudu, U. (2023). Availability and Utilization of Hand washing facilities among primary school pupils in Ughelli North LGA of Delta State, Nigeria. *Academic Research International*, 4 (5): 10-25.
- Illah, C. (2019). Theatre and social change in contemporary Nigeria: A study of some selected plays. *International Journal of African and African American Studies*, 2(1): 1-14.
- John Oxford (2020). Cost-effectiveness of public health interventions against human influenza pandemics in France: a methodological contribution from the FLURESP European Commission project.
- Junxiong, P., Shao, W. J., Lumen, C. & Liyang, H. (2015). Current Knowledge, Attitude and the behaviour of hand and food hygiene in a developed residential community of Singapore: a cross-sectional survey. *BMC; Public Health* PMID: PMC: 4475322.
- Li, C. K. (2020). Toward a normative social media theory for public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 46 (1): Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101857> Get rights and content.

- Nkrumah, J. (2023). The Impact of African Theatre on World Theatre Practice, *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 11(8): 138-143.
- Nwodu, L. C (2017). *Research in Communication and other Behavioural Sciences: Principles, Methods and Issues*. Enugu: RhyceKerex Publishers.
- Nwosu, T. (2016). Street Theatre and the African Theatre Tradition. *African Research Review*, 12 (2): 32-45.
- Penina Mlama, T. (2019), Using Theatre in Development. Tearfund International Learning Zone. Retrieved from <http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps>.
- UNICEF (1998). A manual on school sanitation and hygiene. Water environment and Sanitation, *Technical Guidelines series* No. 5, New York.
- Vivas, A., Gelaye, B., Aboset, N., Kumie, A., Berhane, Y., & William, M. (2020). Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Hygiene among school children in Angolela, Ethiopia *Journal of Preventive medicine and Hygiene*, 51 (2): 73-79.
- West, R & Turner, R. D. (2022). *Introduction to Communication Theory*. London: MacGraw-Hills Inc.
- White, C., Kolble, R., Carlson, R., & Lipson, N. (2018). The impact of a health campaign on hand hygiene and upper respiratory illness among college students living in residence halls. *JAM Coll health*, 54 (1): 64.
- World Bank Group, WBG (2018). Theatre for African Community Outreach Programme. Retrieved from <https://projects.worldbank.org/pt/projects-operations/project-detail/P064888>.
- World Health Organization. WHO (2020). Coronavirus [Internet] Geneva (Switzerland): World Health Organization. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1).
- ZakesMda, F. (2019), *Theatre arts: Fundamental theory and Practice*. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.