

An Evaluation of the Role of Radio in Curbing Crime Among Youths in Warri: A Case Study of Mega 89.1 Fm

Oronukpo Joseph Wisdom ¹, Edoh Onome Doreen ²

¹ Department of Mass Communication, Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo, Nigeria
ORCID ID: 0009-0009-0770-6819

*Corresponding author email: wisdomoronukpo@edwinclarkuniversity.edu.ng

² Department of Mass Communication, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
ORCID ID: 0009-0003-3361-1991
Email: onomeedoh@delsu.edu.ng

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

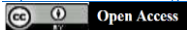
Radio,
youth crime,
crime prevention,
Mega 89.1 FM,
Warri,
mass communication,
agenda-setting,
cultivation theory.

Vol.01, No.04, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22722265>

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ABSTRACT

Youth crime remains a major social concern in many Nigerian urban communities, while radio continues to provide an accessible platform for public education, security information, and community dialogue. This study evaluated the role of Mega 89.1 FM in curbing crime among youths in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and focused on youths aged 15–35 years. A sample size of 384 was initially determined from an estimated youth population of approximately 180,000 using the Krejcie and Morgan approach; however, 322 questionnaires were administered and 300 valid copies were retrieved and analyzed, representing a 93.2% retrieval rate among administered questionnaires. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The results show that 57.7% of respondents listened to Mega 89.1 FM, 63% were aware of its crime-related programmes, and 79% reported exposure to at least one form of crime-related content. Radio was the most preferred channel for crime information (44%), ahead of television (29%) and social media (27%). Most respondents considered the station's crime-related programmes informative and educative (75%); 66% believed that regular crime-related broadcasting could reduce youth involvement in crime, 58% reported personal anti-crime influence from the programmes, and 71% supported more frequent crime-prevention broadcasting. Assault (20.0%), stealing (16.7%), and burglary (13.3%) were the most frequently identified youth-related offences. The findings indicate that Mega 89.1 FM has an important perceived and self-reported role in crime awareness and pro-social communication among youths in Warri. Because the study is cross-sectional and perception-based, the findings should not be interpreted as proof of a causal reduction in recorded crime rates.

1. Introduction

Crime affects personal security, community cohesion, economic activity, and confidence in public institutions. Youth involvement in criminal and deviant behaviour is particularly significant because young people are simultaneously a population at risk of victimization and a group whose social, economic, and cultural environment can shape long-term behavioural trajectories. In urban settings, unemployment, peer pressure, social dislocation, substance misuse, exposure to violence, and weak opportunities for constructive participation may interact in ways that increase vulnerability to criminal involvement. These conditions make crime prevention not only a law-enforcement issue but also a communication, education, and social-development challenge.

Mass media are central to this challenge because they do more than transmit information. They select issues for public attention, frame social problems, create spaces for discussion, and provide repeated representations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Crime reporting can therefore have competing effects. Sensational or glamorized portrayals may intensify fear, normalize aggression, or inadvertently give visibility to deviant lifestyles, whereas responsible communication can improve legal awareness, promote vigilance, publicize preventive measures, strengthen community–police relations,

and present positive alternatives to crime (Anderson et al., 2003; Dowler, 2004; Surette, 2011). Media effects research also indicates that repeated exposure to violent content can be associated with aggressive cognitions and behaviour, especially among younger audiences, although such effects operate alongside family, peers, socioeconomic conditions, and other contextual influences (Anderson et al., 2003; Bushman et al., 2013).

Radio remains especially relevant in Nigeria because of its affordability, portability, immediacy, and ability to reach audiences regardless of literacy level or continuous internet access. Unlike many digital platforms, radio can combine scheduled information, news, public service announcements, music, interviews, phone-in discussions, local language communication, and community participation within the same medium. This flexibility gives radio potential value for crime prevention. Stations can broadcast security alerts, explain legal consequences, invite law-enforcement officers and community leaders to discuss local concerns, provide platforms for youth voices, and repeatedly expose audiences to messages that favour lawful and constructive behaviour. Nigerian scholarship has long emphasized the relevance of mass media to public security and social stability, particularly where communication can support public awareness and collective action (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013).

Warri, Delta State, is an important context for examining these functions. As an urban centre in the Niger Delta, Warri contains a large youth population and a complex social environment in which concerns about assault, stealing, burglary, kidnapping, cybercrime, cult-related violence, substance abuse, and other forms of deviance coexist with strong radio listenership and community-based communication. Mega 89.1 FM is one of the local broadcast platforms through which audiences receive news, talk programmes, entertainment, police information, and community safety content. Yet the existence of crime-related broadcasting alone does not demonstrate that it is effective. It is necessary to assess whether youths are actually exposed to such content, whether they perceive it as useful, and whether they report any influence on their attitudes or choices.

The original research from which this article was developed identified a gap in locally focused empirical evidence concerning the role of radio in responding to youth crime in Warri. Much of the broader literature addresses media violence, public fear of crime, or mass-media influence in general, while fewer studies focus on how a specific local radio station is perceived by young listeners as a crime-prevention communication channel. This study therefore evaluates Mega 89.1 FM not as a substitute for policing, employment policy, education, family socialization, or youth development, but as one component of a broader social response to crime.

The study is primarily interpreted through Agenda-Setting Theory and Cultivation Theory. Agenda-Setting Theory proposes that the prominence and repetition given to issues in the media influence the importance audiences attach to those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Applied to crime prevention, frequent and salient coverage of crime consequences, public safety, community vigilance, and lawful alternatives may keep crime prevention high on the public agenda. Cultivation Theory, originally developed in relation to long-term television exposure, argues that repeated media representations can gradually shape audience perceptions of social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Although radio differs from television and the present study does not test cultivation effects longitudinally, the theory offers a useful interpretive lens for considering whether sustained pro-social radio messages may reinforce norms that discourage crime. Together, the theories suggest that repeated exposure can influence both issue salience and the social meanings attached to behaviour.

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to evaluate the role of Mega 89.1 FM in curbing crime among youths in Warri, Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to: (1) determine the extent to which youths in Warri are exposed to crime-related media messages; (2) identify the types of criminal activities commonly associated with youths in the study area; and (3) assess the perceived role of Mega 89.1 FM

in crime awareness, prevention, and behavioural influence. The corresponding research questions were: To what extent are youths in Warri exposed to media messages related to crime? What types of criminal activities are commonly associated with youths in Warri? How does Mega 89.1 FM contribute to efforts to curb youth crime in Warri?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey design was adopted because the study sought to obtain standardized information from a relatively large youth population regarding radio listenership, exposure to crime-related programming, perceptions of youth crime, and self-reported influence of media messages. The design is appropriate for describing patterns of awareness and opinion at a specific point in time. It does not, by itself, establish a causal relationship between exposure to radio programmes and changes in official crime rates.

2.2 Study Area and Population

The quantitative component reported in this article focused on youths aged 15–35 years residing in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria, including the Warri metropolitan environment covered by the original study. The study document reported an estimated youth population of approximately 180,000. The age range reflects the youth population targeted by the research and the audience considered particularly relevant to media exposure and crime-prevention communication.

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling

The original study determined a target sample of 384 respondents using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size approach for a large finite population at conventional confidence and precision assumptions. Simple random sampling was reported as the selection technique. In practice, 322 questionnaires were administered and 300 usable questionnaires were retrieved and included in the analysis. The analytical sample was therefore $N = 300$. This corresponds to a 93.2% retrieval rate among administered questionnaires and 78.1% of the initially planned sample.

2.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire developed for the study. The instrument contained a demographic section covering age, gender, educational qualification, and occupation, followed by items assessing Mega 89.1 FM listenership, preferred programme types, awareness of crime-related programmes, exposure to crime news and police/community-safety content, preferred crime-information channels, perceptions of the educational value of crime-related programmes, perceived crime-prevention effects, personal anti-crime influence, and support for expanded crime-prevention broadcasting.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was reviewed for face validity by the research supervisor and other communication specialists, who examined the clarity and relevance of the items before field administration. The study also reported a test–retest reliability exercise involving a pilot administration and a Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient of $r = 0.73$. This coefficient was treated by the original study as evidence of acceptable consistency for the survey instrument.

2.6 Data Collection

Two trained research assistants supported questionnaire administration and retrieval. The field process lasted approximately two weeks. Of 322 questionnaires administered, 300 were retrieved in usable form and analyzed. The results presented in this article are based on these 300 respondents.

2.7 Data Analysis

The data were summarized using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages. Because the source dataset reported descriptive results rather than inferential tests, the analysis in this

article does not claim statistical causation or population-level effect sizes. Percentages are interpreted as patterns within the analyzed sample.

3. Results

The findings are presented in five consolidated tables to reduce repetition while preserving the numerical results reported in the original study. The analysis covers respondent characteristics, radio exposure and programme engagement, reported channels of influence, perceptions of Mega 89.1 FM's crime-related programming, and the distribution of youth-related offences identified by respondents.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15–20	45	15.0%
Age	21–25	90	30.0%
Age	26–30	85	28.3%
Age	31–35	80	26.7%
Gender	Male	165	55.0%
Gender	Female	135	45.0%
Education	Primary education	50	16.7%
Education	Secondary education	90	30.0%
Education	Tertiary education	130	43.3%
Education	Postgraduate/Master's	30	10.0%
Occupation	Unemployed	140	46.7%
Occupation	Student	70	23.3%
Occupation	Self-employed	50	16.7%
Occupation	Civil servant	25	8.3%
Occupation	Private sector	15	5.0%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Respondents were distributed across all age categories between 15 and 35 years, with the largest group aged 21–25 years (30.0%), followed by those aged 26–30 years (28.3%). Males constituted 55.0% and females 45.0% of the sample. Tertiary education was the most common qualification (43.3%). The occupational profile indicates substantial socioeconomic vulnerability: 46.7% were unemployed and 23.3% were students, together accounting for 70.0% of the sample.

Table 2. Radio listenership, crime-message exposure, and information preferences (N = 300)

Measure	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Listens to Mega 89.1 FM	Yes	173	57.7%
Listens to Mega 89.1 FM	No	127	42.3%
General listening frequency	Daily	102	34%
General listening frequency	2–3 times a week	81	27%
General listening frequency	Once a week	42	14%
General listening frequency	Occasionally	54	18%
General listening frequency	Never	21	7%
Preferred Mega FM programme	News	75	25%
Preferred Mega FM programme	Crime reports	48	16%
Preferred Mega FM programme	Youth empowerment programmes	39	13%
Preferred Mega FM programme	Talk shows	54	18%
Preferred Mega FM programme	Music/entertainment	66	22%

Preferred Mega FM programme	Others	18	6%
Aware of crime-related programmes	Yes	189	63%
Aware of crime-related programmes	No	111	37%
Crime-related content exposure	Crime news	96	32%
Crime-related content exposure	Police reports	75	25%
Crime-related content exposure	Community safety programmes	66	22%
Crime-related content exposure	None	63	21%
Crime-programme listening frequency	Very often	84	28%
Crime-programme listening frequency	Often	123	41%
Crime-programme listening frequency	Seldom	93	31%
Preferred crime-information channel	Radio	132	44%
Preferred crime-information channel	Television	87	29%
Preferred crime-information channel	Social media	81	27%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Mega 89.1 FM had substantial reach within the sample. A total of 57.7% explicitly reported listening to the station, while the frequency item showed that 34% listened daily and a further 27% listened two to three times weekly. Awareness of crime-related programmes was reported by 63% of respondents. In terms of content categories, 79% reported exposure to at least one crime-related programme type: 32% to crime news, 25% to police reports, and 22% to community safety programmes. Crime-related programming also attracted repeated engagement, with 69% listening either “very often” or “often.” Radio was the leading preferred channel for crime-related information (44%), ahead of television (29%) and social media (27%).

Table 3. Reported channels of influence associated with involvement in the assessed activity (N = 300)

Reported influence	Frequency	Percentage
Friends	145	48.3%
Exposure on television	95	31.7%
Cartoons/animated content	60	20.0%

Source: Field survey, 2025. Wording consolidated from the original questionnaire results; the source document described the item as the channel through which respondents became involved in the activity being assessed.

Peer influence was the most frequently reported pathway (48.3%), followed by exposure on television (31.7%) and cartoons or animated content (20.0%). This pattern indicates that radio operates within a broader influence environment. Any radio-based crime-prevention strategy therefore has to compete with, and ideally counterbalance, peer and visual-media influences that may shape youth behaviour.

Table 4. Respondents’ perceptions of the crime-prevention role of Mega 89.1 FM (N = 300)

Measure	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Crime-related programmes are informative/educative	Yes	225	75%
Crime-related programmes are informative/educative	No	75	25%
Constant crime-related programmes help reduce youth involvement in crime	Yes	198	66%

Constant crime-related programmes help reduce youth involvement in crime	No	102	34%
Personally influenced by Mega FM programmes against crime	Yes	174	58%
Personally influenced by Mega FM programmes against crime	No	126	42%
Supports more frequent crime-related broadcasting	Yes	213	71%
Supports more frequent crime-related broadcasting	No	87	29%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The perceived educational value of the station was high: 75% considered its crime-related programmes informative and educative. Two-thirds (66%) believed that constant crime-related broadcasting helps reduce youth involvement in crime, while 58% reported that the programmes had personally influenced them against criminal behaviour. Public support for expanded programming was also strong, with 71% favouring more frequent crime-related broadcasts. These figures suggest a distinction between perceived social usefulness and self-reported personal influence; both are positive, but neither should be interpreted as direct evidence of a measured decline in official crime incidence.

Table 5. Distribution of youth-related offences identified by respondents in Warri (N = 300)

Offence	Frequency	Percentage
Assault	60	20.0%
Stealing	50	16.7%
Burglary	40	13.3%
Kidnapping	30	10.0%
Cybercrime	30	10.0%
Rape	25	8.3%
Attempted murder	20	6.7%
Murder	15	5.0%
Forgery	15	5.0%
Grievous harm and wounding	10	3.3%
Suicide	5	1.7%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Assault was the most frequently identified offence (20.0%), followed by stealing (16.7%) and burglary (13.3%). Kidnapping and cybercrime each accounted for 10.0% of responses, while rape accounted for 8.3%. The distribution demonstrates that respondents associated youth crime in Warri with both violent and property-related offences as well as technology-enabled crime. Suicide was included in the original response categories and represented 1.7%; it is reported here exactly as categorized in the source data, without treating it as equivalent to the other offence categories in criminological or mental-health terms.

4. Discussion

The first research question examined whether youths in Warri are exposed to media messages related to crime. The findings provide a clear descriptive indication of substantial exposure. Sixty-three percent of respondents were aware of crime-related programmes on Mega 89.1 FM, while 79% reported exposure to at least one of the three listed content categories—crime news, police reports, or community safety programmes. In addition, 69% reported listening to crime-related programming often or very often. These results show that the station has achieved meaningful message reach within the surveyed population. In communication terms, this matters because awareness and repeated exposure are prerequisites for any subsequent persuasive or behavioural effect.

The preference data further strengthen this interpretation. Radio was selected by 44% of respondents as their preferred source of crime-related information, exceeding television and social media. This finding is consistent with the continued importance of radio as an accessible mass medium, particularly where affordability, portability, immediacy, and local relevance influence media choice. McQuail (2005) and Baran and Davis (2012) emphasize the capacity of mass media to inform, socialize, and link audiences to public issues; in the present setting, Mega 89.1 FM appears to perform these functions in relation to community safety. The result also complements Nigerian scholarship that sees mass media as relevant to public security by facilitating awareness, dialogue, and social mobilization (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013).

The findings can be interpreted through Agenda-Setting Theory. By repeatedly broadcasting crime news, police reports, and community safety content, a station can increase the salience of crime prevention in listeners' everyday thinking. McCombs and Shaw (1972) did not argue that media directly determine behaviour; rather, their central insight was that media attention helps shape what audiences perceive as important. The present results fit that logic more strongly than they support a causal behaviour-change claim. High awareness, frequent exposure, and strong demand for more programming suggest that crime prevention has become a meaningful issue within the station's communication agenda and among a substantial portion of the surveyed audience.

The second research question concerned the types of criminal activities associated with youths in Warri. Respondents most frequently identified assault, stealing, and burglary, while kidnapping, cybercrime, rape, attempted murder, murder, forgery, and grievous harm were also represented. The coexistence of violent, property, and technology-enabled offences demonstrates why a single-message crime-prevention strategy is unlikely to be sufficient. Programmes addressing interpersonal violence may require different framing, experts, examples, and referral information from programmes dealing with cybercrime, property offences, or gender-based violence. Crime communication should therefore be segmented by risk type and linked to practical alternatives such as conflict resolution, legal literacy, digital ethics, vocational opportunities, reporting mechanisms, and access to support services.

The relatively high proportion of unemployed respondents is also relevant to interpretation. The study does not test unemployment as a causal predictor of crime, and no inferential association between occupation and offending was calculated. Nevertheless, the demographic profile shows that many participants were situated in conditions of economic uncertainty. This reinforces the need for radio programming to move beyond warnings and punishment-focused messaging. Youth-focused broadcasts can be more constructive when they combine crime-prevention information with employment information, entrepreneurship opportunities, education, rehabilitation, mentorship, and stories of legitimate achievement. Such programming is consistent with a social-development approach in which communication supports alternatives rather than merely condemning deviance.

The third research question addressed the perceived role of Mega 89.1 FM in curbing youth crime. Three findings are particularly important. First, 75% regarded the station's crime-related programming as informative and educative. Second, 66% believed regular crime-related programmes help reduce youth involvement in crime. Third, 58% reported that the programmes had personally influenced them against crime. The difference between these percentages is analytically useful: audiences may regard a programme as socially valuable even when they do not report a direct personal behavioural effect. This distinction should be preserved because media influence can operate through knowledge, norms, discussion, perceived community expectations, and support for institutions—not only through immediate self-reported behaviour change.

The 58% personal-influence result is encouraging but should be interpreted cautiously. Self-reported influence is susceptible to social-desirability bias, recall limitations, and uncertainty about

whether media exposure preceded behavioural change. In addition, the survey did not compare listeners and non-listeners using inferential statistics, did not follow respondents over time, and did not link exposure to police or administrative crime records. The data therefore support the conclusion that respondents perceive Mega 89.1 FM as a useful crime-prevention communication platform; they do not establish that the station caused a measurable reduction in crime incidence. This more cautious interpretation strengthens, rather than weakens, the scientific value of the study because it aligns the conclusion with the evidence actually collected.

Cultivation Theory provides a supplementary explanation for why sustained anti-crime communication may matter over time. Gerbner and Gross (1976) focused on cumulative television exposure and the gradual shaping of social reality. The present study neither measures long-term cultivation nor validates a direct transfer of the theory from television to radio. However, its core idea is relevant: repeated narratives can contribute to perceptions of what is normal, risky, approved, or socially rewarded. If a radio station consistently presents crime as harmful, provides credible legal and social consequences, gives airtime to reformed offenders and positive youth role models, and reinforces community responsibility, repeated exposure may contribute to a communication environment that supports pro-social norms. Longitudinal research would be needed to test this possibility directly.

Table 3 also highlights an important boundary of radio influence. Nearly half of respondents identified friends as the main reported pathway of influence associated with the activity assessed, while television and cartoons accounted for the remainder. This demonstrates that young people are embedded in multiple influence systems. Media-based prevention is therefore most likely to be effective when integrated with family socialization, school programmes, peer-led initiatives, community organizations, and law enforcement. Radio can amplify these efforts, give them visibility, and provide a trusted platform for coordination, but it cannot independently resolve the structural and interpersonal drivers of youth crime.

Finally, the strong support for increased crime-related broadcasting (71%) suggests an audience mandate for continued intervention. Expansion, however, should prioritize quality rather than repetition alone. Effective content should be accurate, non-sensational, youth-centred, culturally intelligible, and participatory. Phone-ins, expert interviews, short dramas, survivor-safe discussions, public-service announcements, myth correction, digital-safety segments, and youth opportunity features can diversify delivery. At the same time, responsible journalism is essential because crime coverage can produce fear or stereotyping when it relies on exaggerated or decontextualized narratives (Dowler et al., 2006; Hall et al., 1978; Jewkes, 2011). The most productive role for Mega 89.1 FM is therefore not simply to broadcast more crime stories, but to provide sustained, evidence-informed public-interest communication that connects awareness with prevention, support, and constructive alternatives.

5. Conclusion

This study evaluated the role of Mega 89.1 FM in curbing crime among youths in Warri, Delta State, using descriptive survey data from 300 respondents. The findings show substantial exposure to the station and its crime-related content, a clear preference for radio as a crime-information channel, and strong positive perceptions of the educational and preventive value of crime-focused programming. Most respondents considered the programmes informative, two-thirds believed that regular broadcasting can help reduce youth involvement in crime, more than half reported personal anti-crime influence, and a large majority supported expanded programming. At the same time, the identified offence profile—led by assault, stealing, and burglary but extending to kidnapping, cybercrime, rape, and other serious offences—demonstrates that youth crime is multidimensional and requires responses beyond communication alone. Mega 89.1 FM can therefore be described as an important local platform for crime awareness, public education, community dialogue, and reinforcement of pro-social norms. The evidence

supports a perceived and self-reported contribution to crime prevention; it does not establish a causal reduction in official crime rates. Future evaluations should combine audience surveys with longitudinal designs, programme-exposure measures, qualitative interviews, and independently verified crime data to determine the magnitude and durability of any behavioural or community-level effects.

6. Recommendations

1. Mega 89.1 FM should sustain and expand youth-focused crime-prevention programming, with dedicated content on assault, theft, burglary, cybercrime, kidnapping, substance misuse, and gender-based violence.

2. Crime-related programmes should use participatory formats such as youth panels, phone-ins, expert interviews, short radio drama, testimonials, and question-and-answer sessions so that young listeners are active participants rather than passive recipients.

3. The station should strengthen collaboration with law-enforcement agencies, schools, youth organizations, community leaders, social workers, and relevant government bodies to ensure that prevention messages are accurate, practical, and connected to real support services.

4. Programming should counter peer and harmful media influences by promoting media literacy, conflict-resolution skills, digital responsibility, employability information, entrepreneurship opportunities, mentorship, and visible examples of lawful pathways to success.

5. Crime reporting should avoid sensationalism and stigmatizing portrayals of youths. Ethical reporting, verification, contextual explanation, and protection of victims should remain central to public-safety programming.

6. Future programme evaluation should include baseline and follow-up surveys, objective exposure measures, focus groups, and official or independently verified crime indicators so that changes over time can be distinguished from audience perception alone.

7. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The study has several limitations that should guide interpretation. First, the analysis is cross-sectional and descriptive; it captures perceptions and self-reported influence at one point in time and cannot establish temporal or causal effects. Second, the final analytical sample of 300 respondents was smaller than the initially planned sample of 384, although 300 of the 322 administered questionnaires were successfully retrieved. Third, the study relied on self-report, which may be affected by recall error and social-desirability bias. Fourth, the research did not use police records or other objective indicators to test whether crime rates changed in relation to programme exposure. Fifth, the study focused on one locality and one radio station, limiting generalization to other parts of Delta State or Nigeria. Future research should compare multiple stations and communities, use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs, distinguish levels of programme exposure, and integrate survey evidence with qualitative interviews and official crime data. Research could also compare radio with television, social media, podcasts, and other digital platforms to determine which combinations of media are most effective for different youth populations and crime-prevention objectives.

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