ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Broadcast Media and the Promotion of Family Planning: Access and Perception of Women in Etsako-West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examinedbroadcast media promotion of family planning in Etsako-West Local Government Area of Edo State. The study is set among other things to examine the rural women's access to family planning messages on broadcast media in Etsako-West Local Government Area of Edo State and their perceptions on the subject matter. Social cognitive theory was adopted for the study. The paper employs the survey method; questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection.The study found that radio and television have helped in the dissemination of relevant information on family planning in rural areas and agrees with the fact that family planning practices help in reducing complications in child birth among other benefits. The study recommends that the broadcast media should be encouraged to do more in public enlightenmentcampaigns on the benefits of family planning practice among other things.

Keywords: Broadcast media, promotion, family planning, campaigns, Etsako West LGA

Introduction

It is an established fact that the alarming rate of population growth and decline in food production most especially in developing countries like Nigeria has compelled governments of these countries to device a means of managing the ever rising rate of population explosion. An example is the creation of awareness on the desirability and inevitability of family planning. In Nigeria, population increase has become a great concern to demographers, economic planners and even government agents as a result of lack of interest in family planning(Nnorom & Kunnuji, 2006). It is an established fact that Nigeria and other African countries are experiencing population growth without corresponding economic policies to contend with the growth (Ate, 2014). This makes the issue of family planning desirable and inevitable.

A deep look into the rural areas of Nigeria will reveal a large number of people who lack basic information on how to get the best out of life most especially when it concerns reproductive and health care issues (Duyile, 2016).According to the Nigerian Population Commission (2007) cited in Olugbenga-Bello, Abodurin and Adeomi (2011), Nigeria, which has a population of over 140 million and an annual growth rate of 3.2%, is the most populous country in Africa. This is so alarming that Khurfeid (2006) also cited in Olugbenga-Belloet al.(2011) affirm the fact that Nigeria is already facing a population explosion with the resultant effect that food production cannot match the growing population.

Like many other developing nations, a majority of Nigeria's population (about 70%) live in the rural communities (Ekong, 2003). Although these rural dwellers have a reasonable high fertility rate, the use of contraceptives among them seems to be in a very low level (NIJ-NUJ Manual, n. d.).

In the quest to stem the tide of unbridled population growth, the Nigerian government in 2002 came up with a population policy paper on family planning and fertility regulation. According to the paper, the value of family planning and child spacing on the stability and wellbeing of family shall be promoted and family services shall be incorporated in maternal and child health care. This is to help reduce maternal and infant morbidity and

mortality as well as reduce rapid population growth in the shortest possible time in order to ensure sustainable development which can be achieved only by reducing population growth to bring it at par with the available national resources (Omoera, 2010).

In this 21st century, families in Africa especially Nigeria are faced with the challenges of malnutrition, infant mortality, maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases, unemployment, civil strife among others (Ijwo, 2006). One of the subtle but most frightening of all is the issue of maternal mortality which is one of the biggest problems facing Africa.

Raphael (2008) in Omoera (2010) asserts that Nigeria's maternal mortality rate is the second highest in the world after India. The country (Nigeria) is home to 2 percent of the global population, but 10 percent of all maternal death take place there. Only about 60% of pregnant women have access to prenatal care in Nigeria and even fewer have access to family planning. This statistics according to the Centre for Reproductive Rights and the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (2008) hasbeen blamed on the Nigerian government's inability to provide access to information on family planning and contraception, two issues very related to maternal death.

The use of the mass media most especially the broadcast medium to achieve these objectives has continuously increased and both government and Non-Governmental Organisations are seriously developing and implementing programmes through the use of media facilities. This, no doubt, stems from the realization that the mass media can be effectively used as a tool to influence people's behaviour, most especially in developing countries. Kiragu, Krenn, Kusemiju, Ajiboye, Chidi and Kalu (1996) affirm that because the mass media are fairly widespread in Nigeria they are an important vehicle for disseminating information about family planning to this large population.

Despite the numerous measures put in place by governments at all tiers to sensitize citizens on the need for family planning, most Nigerian population are struggling to adopt the practice (Ate, 2016). This may be due to lack of knowledge about the advantages that are attached to it or due to other factors (Ate, 2016). The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the influence of the broadcast media in the promotion of family planning campaigns in Etsako-West Local Government Area of Edo State.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which women in Etsako West LGA in Edo State have access to broadcast media.
2. ascertain the broadcast medium that promotes family planning more in Etsako West LGA in Edo State.
3. determine the extent to which women in Etsako West LGA in Edo State are aware of family planning.
4. find out how women in Etsako West LGA in Edo State perceive the effectiveness of the promotion of planning family.

Literature Review

Family planning has attracted attentions all over the world due it its relevance in decision making, population growth and development (Ndubisi, 2014). According to Akinwalere, Owolabi, and Adesida (2015), family planning is the planning of when to have children and the use of birth control and other techniques to implement such plans. Stressing further, they said family planning services encompasses educational, comprehensive, medical or social activities which enable individuals, including minors, to determine freely the number and spacing of their children and to select the means by which this may be achieved.

The Free Encyclopedia (2015) sees family planning as the birth control and other techniques to implement such plans which include sexuality education, prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections, pre-conception counselling and management of infertility. In the view of Samuel (2010), family planning is the practice that helps individuals or couples to attain certain

objectives such as avoiding unwanted pregnancies, bringing about wanted babies at the right time, regulating the interval between pregnancies, controlling the time at which birth occurs in relation to the ages of parents and determining the number of children in the family.

As observed by Iffih and Ezeah (2004), family planning is a means of reproductive health. In-spite of the hue and cry in and outside Nigeria about family planning or birth control, many people are still confused about its meaning, methods involved, the advantages and disadvantages and the factors hindering its wide application in Nigeria. Miro (1985) cited in Ate (2014, p.28) predicted that "the coming decades will see rapid changes in population structures with marked regional varieties". He added that the absolute number of children in developing countries will continue to rise so rapidly that special programmes will be necessary to respond to the needs and aspirations, including productive employment.

Factors affecting the utilization of family planning practice

The adoption and the success of family planning practices in Nigeria is affected by a lot of factors which most often do not lead to the realization of the practice. Brown(1987) cited in Ndubusi (2014) argues that a majority of the traditional societies welcome family planning practices because they are linked to the world communication and transportation networks which carry ideas and messages on contraceptive use. On the other hand, some societies do not accept family planning due to their cultural practices. For instance, the Nigerian culture takes delight in male child preference. A good example of son preference in Igbo societies is shown when married couples with female children shun family planning so that they will be able to raise male children who are accorded more importance than females because males propagate family name, property and inheritance laws which limit the rights of females and can reinforce son preference. This clearly shows that one of the determinants for the acceptance and non-acceptance of family planning practice is culture.

Culturally, the northern part of Nigeria strongly believes that children are gifts from God and as such man should not put a limit to when they should come and when not to. Having this belief in their subconscious will lead to the non-acceptance and practice of family planning.

Women's educational level can also be seen as a factor that affects the acceptance of family planning practice in Nigeria. The level of educational attainment of women directly or indirectly enhances their capability and also their reproductive rights to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have other necessary information regarding reproductive rights. This has clearly shown that education is a determinant of awareness of family planning practices in Nigeria.

The above statement is clearly affirmed by the findings of Olaitan (2010) on factors influencing the choice of family planning among couples in South West Nigeria which reveal that educational background of couples significantly influences the choice of family planning practice among couples.
Aside education, the socio-economic status of women can also be a determinant of their likelihood to engage in family planning practice. It has been observed that women of high socio-economic status are linked to the knowledge/awareness and acceptance of family planning practice because they can foot the bills associated with it.

Religion is another determinant of family planning practice in Nigeria. The two major religion beliefs in the country (Christianity and Islam) are factors that have placed the women folk at a disadvantaged position in reproductive health issues. For instance, the Catholic Church is very rigid in their perception of family planning. They hold a strong view that the application of any other artificial method apart from the use of Billing's ovulation method which is rather natural is wrong. With the Billing's method not guarantying a 100% accuracy, this will then mean that the likelihood of unexpected pregnancy occurring at any period in time is sure. The resultant effect may lead to serious health complications for women.

According to Islamic belief, the use of birth

control practices is seriously frowned at. As stated earlier, the women are always at the receiving end of the situation. The strong desire to have more children have prevented women from using family planning. This was affirmed by the study of Igbudu, Okoedions, Peremene and Eghafona (2011) which reveals that attitudinal factors such as strong religious desires for more children haveled to women paying lip service to the practice of family planning.

Another general challenge associated with the issue of family planning is rumour. The NIJ-NUJ Manualon Integrated Health and Population Communication Curriculum (n. d., p.77) statesthat, like many other issues, the concept of family planning has been subjected to many rumours, misinformation and misgivings peddled by people who themselves do not understand or are not supportive of family planning.

The Media and Family Planning Campaign

Family planning studies indicate that sources and nature of information about family planning in all ramifications are very important as far as its utilization is concerned in any community whether urban or rural. For these to be the gateway, for family planning utilization, the messages about it need to be adequate and well understood. On the sources of family planning information, Duze and Mohammed (2006) opine that using friends, relatives and neigbours as sources of family planning may be harmful. These sources, according to them, are characterized by unfavourable rumours about the practice. They emphasize side effects of family planning as means of discouraging people from adopting and using contraceptive methods.

Oladeji (2008) contends that communication and decision-making play a vital role in ensuring informed choice of family planning and reproductive health behaviour. Rimal, Ratzan, Arntson and Freitmuth (2002) also agree that effective communication/decision making allows people to seek what is best for their own health and to exercise their rights to good quality health care.

It has been argued that the mass media, especially radio and television, have been quite effective in creating family planning awareness in urban areas in Nigeria. This is perhaps because a larger number of urban dwellers have greater access to the mass media. According to Information, Education and Communication (IEC, 1996) in Omoera (2010), about 90% of all urban households have radios and about 60% own televisions in Nigeria and the likelihood that people living in urban areas would readily have access to family planning information as purveyed through radio and television media is high. But how well can this be said of the rural areas?

The spread of television and radio, the rise in independent press, and increasing literacy rates in many countries offer new opportunities for family planners and other health care organisations to inform the public and reach opinion leaders. While examining the knowledge and practice of family planning methods among the Currently Married Adolescent Women (CMAW) in India, Narsary (2009) observes that exposure to the mass media and husband-wife communication play a significant role in family planning matters.

In the same vein, Obaid (2006) and Abd El-Aziz (2006) have also identified radio and television media as effective instruments in family planning education in Jordan and Egypt respectively. Also, in a study carried out to assess the knowledge, understanding and attitude of couples towards family planning in India, Dhingra, Manhas, Kohli and Mushtaq (2010) reveal that television and magazines were the major accessible sources of information on family planning to couples.

Ate (2016, p.42) takes a look at the media of population communication from above-the-line and below-the-line perspectives:

> The media of population communication can also be appreciated from the stand point of the below-the-line and above-the-line axis. Folk media, oral media or trado media can be used by stakeholders of the population crusade to communicate certain population and integrated health ideas, policies and campaigns to rural communities across Nigerians in their

dialects and cultures for easy understanding of the message. Traditional rulers, through town hall meetings, horn men and gong men could pass potent population messages to their subjects. This same thing can be done through the minstrel, the town crier and other types of trado communication like village meetings and special festivals where experts could be allowed to educate the people on population-oriented issues. In the above-the-line perspective, the conventional media is potent false for communication of population policies, components of population change among other population dynamics can be analyzed and dissected through the mass media. The broadcast media with its audio-visual attributes can preach population messages through news, features, documentary, drama, interview with experts among other things. Equally, the print media with its in-depth exposition of issues coupled with its permanence nature and editorial elegance can penetrate the minds of readers through news, features, editorials, opinions, and other journalistic genres on population matters.

This study probes the concept of broadcast media and the promotion of family planning, beaming a searchlight on rural women in Etsako –West Local Government Area of Edo State.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in the social cognitive theory. This theory centers on the prominent role of social modeling in human motivation, learning, thought and action. According to Pajares (2004) cited in Ndubusi (2014), the social cognitive theory is rooted in the perspective that people are self-organising, pro-active and self-regulating. Human behaviour is the product of an active interplay of personal, behavioural and environmental influences.

Social cognitive theory assumes that if one is motivated to learn a particular behaviour, then that particular behaviour would be learned through clear observations. By imitating these observed actions, the individual observer would solidify that learned action. Social cognitive theory is a learning theory based on the ideas that people learn by watching what others do and that human thought process are central to understanding personality.

Bell (2007) argues that social cognitive theory is concerned with how humans operate cognitively on their experiences and how these cognitive operations then come to influence their behaviour.

This theory is relevant to the study because the broadcast media could be seen as an avenue or a learning centre for rural women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State, to learn the art and science of family planning.

Methodology

This paper adopted the survey research design method. Daramola and Daramola (2011, p.24) affirm that this research design focuses on people and it issuitable for studying a large population. This is used to find out people's opinion, describe their behaviour and predict such behaviour. Specifically, descriptive survey was used for the study. We used directly administered questionnaires given to a group of specific people at a certain place for a purpose. The major advantage of this instrument according to Ary, Jacob and Sorensen (2010, p.387) is to get "the high response rate, which is typically close to 100 percent.

The study's population is the rural women of reproductive age in Etsako West LGA of Edo State. According to www.citypopulation.de, the National Population Commission of Nigeria 2016 projected population of Etsako West LGA is 260,700. In determining the sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was used.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Extent to which the Respondents have access to the broadcast media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Great Extent	262	65.5	65.5	65.5
	Great Extent	99	24.8	24.8	90.3
	Undecided	9	2.3	2.3	92.5
	Low Extent	24	6.0	6.0	98.5
	Very Low Extent	6	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that a greater number of the respondents are exposed to broadcast media in terms of access. It therefore means that the respondents can receive messages or campaigns on family planning through this medium of communication.

Table 2: Broadcast medium respondents have more access to

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Television	136	34.0	34.0	34.0
Radio	264	66.0	66.0	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, it is evident that a majority of the respondents have more access to radio than television. Therefore, they may likely be exposed to family planning messages on radio than television.

Table 3: Respondents level of awareness of family planning

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very High	226	56.5	56.5	56.5
High	113	28.3	28.3	84.8
Undecided	7	1.8	1.8	86.5
Low	42	10.5	10.5	97.0
Very Low	12	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

From the above table, it is clear that the rural women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State are to a great extent aware of family planning. This may not be unconnected with family planning campaigns on broadcast media they are exposed to.

Table 4: Effectiveness of broadcast media in promoting family planning

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Effective	237	59.3	59.3	59.3
Effective	106	26.5	26.5	85.8
Undecided	12	3.0	3.0	88.8
Not Effective	29	7.3	7.3	96.0
Very Ineffective	16	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, a majority of the respondents agreed at different rates that broadcast media is effective in the promotion of family planning. Other respondents disagreed while a few others were undecided on the issue.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that to a very great extent, women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State have access to broadcast media. The study also found that radio is the most preferred medium for the dissemination of family planning messages by the respondents. Dagaci (2020, p.225) opines that "radio is a development medium and it has been proven on different situations and in various facet of the society. The need for information keeps increasing daily among media audience and this necessitates the use of radio for communicating development messages aimed at solving societal problems". This development may not be unconnected with the semi-urban nature of Etsako West LGA of Edo State and the literacy level of the respondents. Nwosu (1996, p.60) affirms that "the broadcast media tend also to be "warmer" and more lively as communication channels than the print media. This is because of their ability to use the human voice, music, and sound effects that add life and excitement to their messages". Ojebode (2010, p.12)

believes that "community radio can bring development to the community. Information about health interacting with and disease control can be discussed on radio with community members' health workers on radio." In a similar development, Institute for Media and Society and Pamos Institute West Africa (2010, p.vi) states that radio has been "overwhelmingly demonstrated to be the most effective tool of mass communication in the developing world. Because of its affordability, portability, ubiquity and low power demands, it is the preferred medium of mass communication."

Findings also revealed that to a very high extent, women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State are aware of family planning programmes on broadcast media. The study further revealed that broadcast media is very effective in the promotion of family planning programmes in Etsako West LGA of Edo State. From the findings, radio is more accessed by the respondents than radio.

On a general note, findings revealed that broadcast media is effective in the promotion of family planning campaigns in Etsako West LGA of Edo State. Nwabueze (2011, p.163) argues that "people turn to radio and television for news that is not delivered in textual, "lifeless" form but news that comes with 'life' in it. The background sound that creates the mood in the environment of the story is heard, seen and felt by the audience". This, presumably, may be the reason why a majority of the respondents believe in the ability of broadcast media in promotion of family planning. This therefore means that the broadcast media are used as learning avenues or tools as projected by social cognitive theory.

Conclusion

Based on the views of women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State, the study concludes that broadcast media in Nigeria is a very effective tool in the promotion of family planning. It is also an established fact that a good number of the respondents were aware of family planning programmes and could, to a very great extent, attest to the effectiveness of the broadcast media in the promotion of family planning. We therefore conclude that broadcast media can be a potent tool in the promotion of family planning in semi-urban areas in Nigeria as it is the case in Etsako-West LGA of Edo State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

i. Even though the women in Etsako West LGA of Edo State are aware of the efficacy of broadcast media in the promotion of family planning, broadcast media practitioners should be encouraged to do more in public enlightenment campaigns to step up the benefits of family planning practice in the area.
ii. We recommend that more well trained radio health communicators should be brought in our communities to engage the people in different health issues especially family planning in their predominant local languages. According to Ijwo (2006, p.36) "a health communicator is a troubleshooter who pushes trouble out of the lives of individuals and community. He does so by promoting good health life style which, when heeded to, means setting them free from health problems".
iii. We also recommend an integrated media approach in the promotion of family planning in our rural areas to deal with a tidal wave of population explosion in the country. To this end, interactive media, group communication methods and other approaches can be adopted to enlighten couples especially in rural areas on family planning methods.
iv. The concept of promoting *community-based distribution* of contraceptives such as condoms and oral contraceptive pills through *community volunteers* and *depot holders* should be explored (Sharma, Beni, Robertson, & Maurizio, 2020). We recommend that this process should be closely monitored by broadcast media.

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