

Newspaper and Awareness Creation on Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria: A Development Communication Approach.

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Introduction

In recent times, many media organizations have risen to the challenge by promoting awareness on HIV/AIDS and educating listeners and viewers about the facts of the epidemic and how to stop it. According to a national survey conducted in some selected developed countries, an average of over 70% identify television, radio and newspapers as their primary source of information about HIV/AIDS, more than doctors, friends and family (Davies, 2006).

Meril cited in Ibrahim (2011) notes that the mass media can contribute to people's awareness of potential, dissatisfaction and desire to change (positively or negatively). The lack of behavioural change in the HIV/AIDS campaign in Africa may be reflective of the apparent lack of insight into the semantics of most HIV/AIDS prevention messages and

slogans, such as abstinence, be faithful and condom use (ABC) which form the core of HIV/AIDS campaign messages.

The implication of this is that the recipients of HIV/AIDS messages often exhibit the selectivity process in their choice of what to listen to and what to retain. Thus, they selectively give attention to, selectively perceive and selectively retain HIV/AIDS preventive messages that appeal to them. This is because, the receiver is not a passive decoder of information but one whose psychological, sociological, sociopolitical and economic makeup determines the extent to which he is able to participate fully in the communication process (Imoh 2014).

Classic views of the media audience positioned its members as passively receiving media messages without any thought, critical evaluation, or resistance. The current and more accurate conceptualization of media audiences opposes this view of a largely unengaged audience and positions audience members as actively selecting media, interpreting and assigning meaning to media messages in ways unintended and unimagined by the producer of media and using media for specific and often very relational reasons (Duck, S. & Mc Maham, 2009).

HIV/AIDS has its roots in a range of problems that undermine people's health and human rights, such as inequity and discrimination, poverty, social unrest and migration, exploitation and abuse. Changing these structural and contextual determinants will be fundamental to making the prevention of HIV sustainable. However, there have been growing experiences with a range of shorter-term interventions that have been directed towards encouraging people to avoid the behaviours that underlie the transmission of HIV or to reduce the risk associated with these behaviours. To achieve widespread implementation of these preventive interventions many things will need to be done through many sectors and by many actors (Dick, Ferguson, & Ross, 2009).

One of such interventions to curb the spread of HIV is the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission which is aimed at eradicating HIV transmission from mothers to their unborn children. Strategies to

achieve PMTCT goals lie mainly in early antenatal care as the pregnant woman would be monitored from the first stage of pregnancy until delivery. After delivery, follow continues to ensure that the HIV positive mother does not discontinue her ARV drugs including that of the baby. Given the social environment, the woman needs to be encouraged to initiate early antenatal registration as well to continue in the line of care if she is found positive. The media thus becomes relevant in this wise.

The mass media therefore remain the key component of the global strategy for sustainable health development through adequate information and education on issues of awareness, vaccines such as anti-retroviral drugs and prevention strategies for HIV/AIDS. The power of the mass media to influence audience participation has been seen in so many programmes. For example, Newspapers and magazines carry cartoons on the scourge of HIV (Abone, 2008).

Newspapers disseminate information on stigma and discrimination which is one of the major factors that contribute to depression and death of HIV/AIDS patients. Most media campaigns have discouraged discrimination against HIV/AIDS. Stigmatization has to do with the lack of association with HIV/AIDS patients. Mass media try to address the issue of stigmatization discouraging audience members who stigmatize HIV patients and help to re-integrate HIV/AIDS patients through awareness that they still have their normal life to live.

On 28th August, 2007, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported on *Network Africa* how a number of AIDS victims were burned alive in the Republic of Guinea.

The import of the above is that HIV/AIDS victims are given inhuman treatment in some communities. This attitude of some members of the public is attributed to initial campaigns against the disease. This explanation finds its strength in one of the addresses on the effect of mass media report on HIV/AIDS by Collin Powell, the American Secretary of State on Sub-Saharan Africa in May 2001 in an HIV/AIDS conference that “there is no war that is causing more death and destruction, there is no

war on the face of the earth right now that is more serious, that is more grave, than the war we see... in the sub-Saharan Africa against HIV/AIDS" (Mogu, 2008, p. 35). He notes further that mass media reports on war against HIV/AIDS appear more devastating that no one is spared a moment to think about or tell freedom. The effect according to him was people's reactions to media messages as "people choose not to disclose their status. He notes further that the burning question becomes, why the people remained distressed in presenting themselves for verification of AIDS status? Why have the same mass media that over bloated AIDS messages that became devastating now turned around to persuade the public to identify with AIDS victims, give them care and protection, give them assistance and jobs? Why are the same mass media imploring the citizenry to go for HIV screening? Then why are people hesitant about obeying the media? The answer according to Mogu is that the mass media through their contents are trying to build what they have already destroyed perhaps, resulting in stigmatization.

This agrees with Ezinwa and Onyike's (2014) explanation that inadequate knowledge about the disease is also reflected in the inappropriate language used in the media and the attendant stigmatization. While some feel invulnerable, many are unwilling to go for voluntary test as a result of the fear of stigmatization.

Umar (2008) gives credence to the above views as he explains that in a survey of HIV/AIDS messages in the mass media and the credibility of the channels for communicating the message, the result showed that mass media messages about HIV/AIDS in Nigeria were generally non-informative and fear laden. On media report on HIV/AIDS **Adegboye (2009)** posits that:

When I open newspapers, switch on the television or radio, and read, or hear stories on HIV/AIDS, I marvel at the barrage of inappropriate, fear-indicating and stigmatizing languages used by reporters, editors,

presenters, producers and those who should have equipped themselves with new and better knowledge. And these, the reading and viewing public are daily inundated with making them to become perniciously fearful and disgustingly discriminatory of people living with HIV (p. 39).

When words like “AIDS victims”, “killer disease”, “AIDS scourge”, “patient or carrier” are used to describe those living with the virus rather than persons living with HIV or infected person, then such words are subjective and judgmental (Kayode 2008). As part of their education function, the newspapers are supposed to explain the true situation of HIV and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV.

Although the explanations above may sound enticing but I do not totally agree. The mass media are mainly channels through which HIV/AIDS messages are transmitted and if there was any destruction, those who destroyed are those who propagated HIV/AIDS messages by presenting it in fearful ways either through discussions or reports via the media thus, making many persons to perceive the health situation as a death sentence. The shift from fearful reports stem from the fact that those who manage the messages have decided to change their approach to the message.

Having understood the power of the mass media, the Nigerian government and other concerned agencies within the country have been employing the mass media in awareness creation. The mass media are believed to be the most appropriate channels through which the far flung heterogeneous peoples within the country could be reached as quickly as possible, informed and educated about the disease and what is needed to do to prevent, curb, and hopefully totally overcome it. When a disease affects a society in a multi-faceted way, remedies must also be multi-

pronged. Thus, the mass media are one of the instrumentalities, which facilitate and provide a directional thrust to the efforts to curb the disease.

The mass media help in spreading educative information about HIV/AIDS and try to change people's beliefs, behaviours, perception and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS issues. Media have created room for increased knowledge on HIV/AIDS issues, raising the consciousness of the ordinary citizens and policy formulators and implementers at the higher levels. **Abdulsalam and Audu, (2008)** agree that an effective media can raise awareness level and also bring about sustainable behaviour change thereby reducing vulnerability to the virus. According to him, mass media are capable of performing the following roles in preventing HIV/AIDS:

1. **Communication and discussion.** One of the roles of the media is to open the channels for communication and foster discussion about HIV and interpersonal relations.
2. **Medium for creating supportive and enabling environment.** Mass media can be a potent tool in encouraging behaviour change and trying to change people's preconceived notions and norms making positive changes in the society.
3. **Combating stigma and discrimination.** One of the major weapons of death for HIV/AIDS victim is stigma and discrimination. A number of media campaigns have focused on the need to overcome prejudice and encourage solidarity with people infected/affected by the virus.
4. **An instrument for creating a knowledge base for HIV/AIDS related services.** The combined efforts of all modes of media in association with NGOs, state organizations, service providers have brought to limelight the availability and source of beneficial services like counselling, testing, condom provision, treatment and social care. The broadcasters and print media have a specific role to play as their efforts have tremendous recall value.
5. **Education through entertainment.** For creating an efficacious awareness about HIV/AIDS, the message need to be informative, educative as well as entertaining (Abdulsalam and Audu, 2008).

Okoro, Nwachukwu and Ajaero (2015) note that personal and community habits, lifestyles, social norms and culture can influence the spread of disease and affect people's vulnerability to them. This is why human behaviour is a major consideration in the fight against disease.

Since behaviour plays an important role in people's health, it then implies that the print media in particular can explore the Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approach which uses communication to positively influence knowledge, attitudes, norms and cultural practices (Obeten, 2015, p. 186). Obeten notes further that SBCC approach can be used to improve the knowledge of the benefits of utilizing PMTCT service among pregnant women; spouses and family members as well as address HIV related stigma and gender inequality in decision making. It can also produce insights into the broader socio-economic impacts of the epidemic. According to Obeten (2015) effective SBCC in HIV/AIDS programming is made manifest in the following ways:

Increase knowledge by ensuring that people have the basic facts in a language, visual medium or other media that they can understand and relate to in order to motivate them to change their behaviours in positive ways. Stimulate community dialogue and national discussions on the underlying factors that contribute to fueling the epidemic such as risky behaviour, risky settings and environments that create these conditions. SBCC should create a demand for information and services, and should spur to action for reducing risk, vulnerability and stigma. Promote advocacy through advocacy, SBCC can galvanize support for policy makers and opinion leaders in formulating policies and laws, as well as creating an enabling environment for HIV/AIDS response intervention to thrive. Advocacy should take place from the national down to the local community levels. Reduce stigma and discrimination. Communication on HIV/AIDS should address stigma and

discrimination and attempt to influence social response to them. Promote services for prevention, care and support. SBCC can promote services that address STIs, encourage and motivate people to access counselling and testing for HIV, prevent MTCT, increase enrollment and participation in support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS clinical care for opportunistic infections and social and economic support. SBCC can also improve the quality of service delivery by supporting providers counselling skills and clinical abilities (p.186).

To achieve maximum level of awareness on PMTCT issues, a behaviour driven approach is needed to reduce HIV/AIDS scourge among Nigerians (Udoakah and Iwokwagh, 2008). The implication of the above is that the media can make substantial contributions to the process of creating public awareness whether the aim of such effort is to bring about increased knowledge on a specific issue, generate a change in their opinions or attitudes or motivate them to action, that is, to change their behaviour and habits (Wilson and Samson, 2011). In other words, the mass media can through planned communication strategies organize programmes geared towards raising awareness on issues of PMTCT. This will not only increase the level of awareness on the issue but will also help people in that condition to make informed decisions at every point in time.

Although mass media messages do have effect, the extent of such effect is subject to individual differences. McQuail (2005) asserts that "that media have effect is no doubt but it is difficult to establish when and to what degree an effect has occurred or likely to occur. Effects when they do occur, involve interaction of the audience" (p.477). Wilson and Samson (2011) state that the mass media have made remarkable contributions towards mobilizing and educating people on HIV/AIDS. Although, 100% success cannot be attributed to the mass media, they play a significant role

in informing and educating Nigerians on HIV/AIDS. In other words, Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS is not an exception. The mass media can encourage and ginger people up to achieve the aims and goals of the society (Okunna, 1999). These goals are promoted by the mass media when they foster the aspiration and activities of individuals and communities to achieve such goals (Umechukwu, 2001). These goals, in this context, can be to help the government to create awareness, enlightenment and education to enable them attain the 80% coverage of counselling and testing for pregnant women, as well as reduce by a reasonable extent MTCT in the country.

Given the level of awareness creation on HIV issues, it is expected that many people should be aware of the disease and take precautionary measures. But the truth is that awareness of the disease condition does not translate to a good understanding of the phenomenon, neither does it contribute to behaviour change nor change in taste and preferences. Knowledge requires a deeper understanding of the disease conditions. McQuail (2005) states that "information acquisition could occur without related attitude change, and attitude change without behaviour change" (p.419).

In a survey in the *Report of Communication for Development Round Table* (2001), the study found out that well over 90 percent of people in the worst affected countries are aware of the disease. However, more often than not, that awareness is limited and does not include accurate knowledge or development of the skills needed to protect oneself and has not resulted in reduced HIV transmission. The implication of the above is that some persons are still ignorant of HIV.

Hence, judging from the fact that mass media have always played significant roles in the society by keeping the public abreast of developmental issues that have improved the lives of the citizenry, the newspapers can be potent tools in disseminating information of interest to the populace, especially issues pertaining to health.

Newspaper as Information Agents on Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS

Historically, the Nigerian media enjoy the prestige of being the most developed in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Nigeria press have over the years enjoyed a good measure of press independence even though there were obvious and clear interference and censorship especially during the dark moments of the Babangida and Abacha regimes (Orhewere and Umolu, 2008). Nwosu (2008) submits that Nigeria mass media are one of the most vibrant, effective, free and powerful in Africa despite the many challenges they are facing. He notes further that the media environment has grown tremendously and continued to grow. Nigeria is blessed with a rich array of modern and traditional communication forms. For instance, there are about 25 strong leading and widely read privately owned newspapers and magazines that give indepth analysis of the day-to-day happenings in the country, including health promotion and other development oriented messages. Thus, the Nigerian press has remained the most vigorous sector of the Nigerian media. With a history of unfettered comments, they have maintained a tradition of an open critic of government actions and policies (Orhewere and Umolu, 2008).

In contemporary times, the Nigerian press is strong enough to hold the government accountable to the people and bring to public glare issues that would have been hidden. Since the advent of democratic rule in 1999, the print media have continued to play a watchdog role for the people (Udoudo, 2010). The newspapers have become more reader-friendly; they have redesigned their formats, increased the use of colour and added special sections and themed supplements.

The main function of a newspaper is to let its readers know what is happening in the society. In other words, the primary function of a newspaper is to gather, process and disseminate news. The newspaper actually derives its name from the nature of its functions and the basic element of its content (news). A newspaper is literally a news carrying

paper because the happenings or findings contained in a newspaper are new and timely, and therefore qualify as news (Okunna and Omenugha 2012).

The importance of the newspaper as a mass medium derives from its role as a carrier of current information or views. "The newspaper is the oldest and traditionally the most important source of current information. Even today, the average daily newspaper contains far more news than is available on television or elsewhere (Okunna and Omemugha 2012). Ukonu (2013) explains that the newspaper is an industry as well as a profession. Apart from providing information on wide variety of issues, pressmen as experts in information management think it wise to present reasoned argument on given social issues to guide the reader. It is this function that separates the newspaper from being merely speechless information pipes.

Often, readers of newspapers are those who seek to know what has happened each day in the society. They feel that the newspaper are capable of providing them with the information they need (Udoudo, 2013). Newspapers and magazines function as journals of record and opinion. As journals of record, the events of society are recorded daily, weekly or monthly, depending on their frequency, albeit in summaries. They came into existence as a result of the need by political groups to propagate their views, but they have developed to a point that all classes in society and all points of views are represented in them. Diverse opinions are expressed in newspapers and magazines as letters to the editor, features or interviews.

In Nigeria, newspapers are published as national dailies with their Sunday editions, regional dailies with their Sunday editions and some as weeklies or bi-weeklies (Udoakah, 2001). Johnson (2012) states that:

Readers of newspapers rely on it to provide them with information. In other words, the mass media (newspapers) perform a more fundamental function of informing, educating and illuminating

the audience about happenings within and outside their environment. This information is vital to the development, existence and progress of an individual and the society at large. Newspapers offer functional and utilitarian values for both the individual and society. It helps people to keep informed about things happening in the society, and also correlate every facet and aspect of the society together (p. 267).

As information disseminators, the onus lies on the journalist to determine who makes the audience of the news he is reporting since news audiences are scattered all over the human environment just as resource in the human environment is a potential article of news (Udoudo, 2013). Sommers (2009) explains that for centuries, the printed word has ruled supreme. While electronic media have significantly eroded this supremacy over the last century, the print remains a powerful force in the word of mass communication.

The newspaper has undergone a lot of changes to appear in the form in which it does today. Modern scholars still agree that to be a true newspaper, a publication should have a set of characteristics. Groth cited in Okunna and Omenuagha (2012) explains the characteristics thus:

A newspaper must be published periodically at regular intervals; these intervals should not be less than once a week. It must be mechanically reproduced. It must be timely. It must offer freedom of access to all readers that is, it must be available to everyone who can afford the cover price. Its content must vary to include everything that could be of interest to every member of the society that is, the content must not be aimed at any select group in the society (p.76).

Newspapers vary in a number of ways. The frequency of newspaper publication can be daily, weekly or monthly and the reach of any given newspaper varies in terms of a national, regional or local/community audience. Today, most newspapers have extensive websites that allow readers to view current stories or search for archived stories relating to a particular subject. This enhances the papers timeline and provides stories with a life beyond the print editions. (Sommers 2009).

Okon (2017) explain that:

Newspaper reports in contradistinction to broadcast news, are enriched with detail that serve to illuminate perspectives on socio-political and socio-economic ideologies. Since newspaper deadlines are not as neck breaking as those of the broadcast media, it is often assumed that the latitude of time enjoyed by the newspaper reporter allows for diligent search and inquiry. The supposition of diligent search and enquiry inexplicably engenders a notion of credibility which invariably makes newspaper reports authoritative and credible. This no doubt accounts for the mainstay of the newspapers in the face of dynamism and stiff competition (p. 282).

The inference from the above is that newspaper reports in an ideal sense do not miss out on details that broadcast media sometimes leaves out, perhaps due to fleeting air time and other operational exigencies. Newspapers no doubt are inseparable parts of nation building. Ohaja (2005) argues that the print media give elaborate interpretation to many stories unlike the electronic media.

These unique characteristics of the newspaper, Moemeka (2000) as stated allow for fuller and better understanding of message contents. Because newspapers can be stored away for future use, making for the preservation of materials that are considered important for future reference, the printed word appear to be the best suited for mass education and mobilization of illiterate and semi-literate populations which are generally slow to learn. The above, translate to the fact that health information as well as mobilization campaigns on PMTCT issues can be disseminated through the newspaper.

Furthermore, newspapers are in regular supply and do contain current and varied information on cultural, social, economic and political as well as rural development activities. They are also capable of carrying literacy and non-formal education materials for new literates, thus ensuring that the rural population does not only learn to read but also reads to learn (Moemeka 2000). Moemeka (2000) notes further that despite newspapers' good qualities, there are very strong arguments against the use of newspaper in rural education for development. The strongest opposition is based on the fact that the newspaper is a literate medium. The argument is that people who are mostly illiterate cannot directly make use of a literate medium. The rural population aptly fits this description. In addition, there are the problems of cost and distribution, as well as the urban-elite orientation of the content of newspapers. In other words, the assumption would be that health messages especially that of prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV or any other information presented in newspapers might not get to the rural people because majority of the rural dwellers are illiterate.

However, HIV/AIDS is not an exclusively rural development issue. It affects both the rural and urban population, just like the urban population can be reached via newspapers, the rural population can also be reached through newspapers because there are always elite in these rural places who buy newspapers, read and pass down both health and other information got from the newspapers to others.

Moemeka (2000) agrees that the arguments adduced against newspaper's use in mainly literate population are not sufficient to disqualify it as a viable medium for use in rural development activities. The proponents of these arguments against the newspaper have failed to take a holistic view of the problems of rural underdevelopment and the possible solutions to them. Because, to him rural underdevelopment is not an exclusively rural problem; it is a national problem that affects directly or indirectly, all segments of the total population. Therefore, the newspaper is an appropriate medium for eliciting the sympathy, understanding, moral and financial support of the urban population and of government functionaries for rural development. The newspaper is a potent medium for mobilization and education in the sub-urban segment of the total population. A few people among these sub-urban population can read intelligibly enough to be able to interpret intelligently. They and few information conscious illiterates do buy newspapers. These newspapers are usually read and interpreted in groups by literate friends and neighbours. This is the two-step flow hypothesis in action (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Those who read the newspapers are usually those who are trusted and respected within the group and the reading is usually followed by discussions and questions and answers all of which generates understanding of issues and commitment to group decisions. What is particularly development orienting about this practice of "You buy, I read for the group" which was in vogue in the late 1930s and early 1940s is that it engenders reassurance and acceptance of new ideas (Moemeka, 2000).

The newspaper as a mass medium has its own disadvantages, such as: incomplete reading given that few people have time to read an entire newspaper and so many stories will be missed. Great potential for inaccuracy given that newspaper reports are usually written in a hurry to beat deadline. The disadvantages of the newspapers notwithstanding, they are still potent information disseminators in this contemporary times as such, they can champion health campaigns on HIV/ AIDS especially PMTCT strategies available to members of the public. Summarily, the

newspaper stands tall as an effective mobilizer of the populace to embrace PMTCT intervention strategies.

The Newspaper and Development Communication

Development is a multidimensional process involving the totality of man in his political, economic, psychological, social relations, among others (Nwanne, 2003). Development in this context goes beyond having plenty of money but embraces all aspects of social behaviour (Ogai, 2003). Development communication can be used to engender development at all levels. Development communication therefore, is an attempt to influence the public to accept new ideas, to win citizens to new ways of doing things. Success depends on the quality of persuasion and the type of change the citizens are persuaded to accept. An effective strategy for ensuring desired response must be concerned with influencing citizens attitude towards change and the types of change that should be introduced and when. Thus, those who want to accomplish change must act at the right time, on the right issues with the right leaders and the right people in the right place (Udoakah 1999). Development communication should be followed with or preceded by a social policy of reducing the sufferings of the ordinary citizen in the areas of food, healthcare and shelter (Udoakah, 2004)

In line with the above, the newspaper should engage in a pragmatic, skillful, dialectal, composite and purposive process product coverage of socially desirable programmes and projects, designed to enhance the living conditions of the people. Thus, the provision of information must flow bi-directionally between the rural and urban communities and be disseminated in the language that the people will understand and bring to the fore issues bordering on the economy, environment, health, agriculture, food, shelter, unemployment, poverty etc (Soola, 2002). This is because media are windows that enable us to see beyond our immediate surroundings, interpreters that help us to make sense of experience, platforms or carriers that convey information, interactive communicators that include audience feedback, signposts that

provide us with instructions and directions, filters that screen out parts of experience and focus on others, mirrors that reflect ourselves back to us and barriers that block truth (McQuail, 2005).

The newspaper thus, fosters social development through communication. Social development is geared towards the development of human beings and the environment. Whatever will enhance such wellbeing of the human being and the environment is seen as development (Chieme, Nyekwere, Nwaubete and Ikiriko, 2017).

Traditionally, two models have been suggested that the media reflect the realities, values and norms of a society. Thus, if we want to study a society, we could turn to its media-its films, novels, television services, magazines etc. which will reflect to us what people feel and think, and how they behave. But the media themselves do not directly affect society; they simply act as a mirror of society or a window on the world that can be used as a resource to understanding the society. The second model suggests that the media do affect what people think, what they believe, and how they behave. The media construct our values for us and have a direct effect on our actions (O'shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008).

Duck and McMahan (2009) explain that discussion on newspaper content may impact people's understanding and evaluation of a material as well as their comprehension of its production and influence. The newspaper can enable people to recognize and promote shared interests, understanding and belief. For instance, discussion in a newspaper editorial can lead to the realization that issues of public interest are shared. Reading newspaper contents on HIV/AIDS related issues can help in information sharing on the health challenges by those who have read the newspaper.

Hence, the newspapers capacity to contribute to development is enhanced by the fact that clippings from the print media can be filed away and referred to again and again and passed from one reader to another. No special equipment is required to gain access to the content of newspaper. They can be carried easily from one place to another and can

be read just about anywhere. Thus, the media can help to concentrate public attention on a subject or goal. The subject in this context is PMTCT. The media can be employed to keep the populace thinking about health development, to make the people recognize and accept the need for development to mobilize them for and make them predisposed towards development; in short, they can help set development agenda (Moemeka 2000). The print media can anchor on their strength to determine special topics on the prevention of mother-to-child –transmission of HIV and begin to project such issue as being important (Nyekwere & Nyekwere, 2012).

However, the arguments or disadvantages of newspaper, it remains the workhorse of the health reporter. In other words, newspaper reporters gather most of the daily news, especially the public affairs news about government, social changes, (health issues) and economic development. Newspapers are a primary means of reaching community publics. Although no longer the primary news medium for the majority, newspapers are still a powerful force in shaping the public agenda and influencing the outcome to date. And for individuals seeking political content, survey results show that they tend to turn to newspaper. Daily newspapers offer the greatest opportunities because they have more space to fill and they offer the greatest range of special sections and specialized reporters assigned to such beats as environment, health, business, science and so on (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, 2009).

The newspaper can drive development messages through some of its contents. Newspaper contents can be straight news stories, special news reports, news analysis/interpretative reports, features, editorials, advertisements, columns, letters to the editor, reviews/criticisms, portraits/personality profiles, cartons/comics (Okunna and Omenuagh, 2012). Whatever the topic, newspapers hope their editorials will raise the level of community discourse and participation (Hasan 2013).

For instance, an editorial can be written to entertain, persuade, interpret an issue, inform or commend. It can also be structured to achieve

a combination of objectives (Udofia, 2010). Ukonu (2013) states that the editorial is the newspaper's voice or reasoned expression on a burning issue. It is a critical evaluation, interpretation and analysis of mostly topical issues by a newspaper. This is done as part of a newspaper social watchdog and crusading function (Ukonu, 2013). He notes further that readers often turn to editorial pages to see the opinion of a newspaper on an issue and to get information and guidance on that issue. Research indicates that readership of editorials or search for editorial comments on burning issues is highest during crisis, tension or periods of important developments. One study found out that generally editorials are read 10 – 15% more than other newspaper contents apart from news (Ukonu, 2013). One can then say that the editorial is a veritable avenue of social agenda setting and a means of mobilizing people for a cause. It is also an avenue for public opinion moulding and guidance (Ukonu, 2013).

No wonder, modern communication experts and analysts have respect for quality and efficient editorials. This is because editorials produce exceptional expertise of the newspaper makers in the manufacturing of public opinion and regional/national agenda setting for the interest of all or majority of the members of the society (Iroabuchi, 2012). In other words, newspaper organisations should go beyond profit making but project those issues that will impact the society positively. Newspaper organisation's focus and obligation should be to protect and to benefit other individuals in the society and to avoid actions that might cause harm (Sonnenburg and Allman, 1997).

Newspaper are usually used in national campaigns geared towards social marketing discourses like HIV/AIDS campaigns, drug abuse, and safe health practices. It is in fact this particular function of the newspaper that enables nation building, national integration, cultural promotion, socialization, attitude or behaviour change etc (Odigbo, 2003). According to Udoakah, (2001), mobilization is the wakening or activation of the dormant consciousness of a greater number of people with the use of new ideas for the purpose of gaining their support for an action or in action. It

is a process of creating new loyalties using new ideas and appeals to reason and sentiments at appropriate times. Udoakah, (2001) notes further that for the people to be mobilized, they must be ready to forgo anything for a cause. This implies that such people must have absolute confidence in the gains that such a cause would bring.

Conclusion

Newspapers play pivotal role in awareness creation and matters of development because they perform the role of keeping the citizenry abreast of developmental issues as well assensitizing, mobilizing and educating them to appreciate government policies and programmes and possible behaviour change that could engender development towards a cause.

In line with the above stand, newspapers in particular could position themselves in a pedestal that will endear members of the public to messages that they propagate. For instance if they are championing the cause for improved antenatal care for pregnant women in order to avoid Mother-to-Child Transmission (MTCT) of HIV, the message should be packaged in a way that it will be accepted, considering the gains of such early antennal care. This further explains why the newspaper need to inform members of the public based on their specific needs. For instance, the newspaper can leverage on their numerous contents to project issues pertaining Prevention of mother to-child Transmission of HIV. A newspaper editorial can deliberate on any topical issue of public interest that the newspaper feels strongly about. Thus, issues on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV are topical for newspaper editorial and the newspaper can become potent instruments of mobilization on PMTCT of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.

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