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The Mass Media and National Development: The Case of ‘Baby Factory’ Activities in Nigeria

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Abstract

The mass media play vital role in the national development of any nation, they provide information, education, entertainment, integration and social interaction in a country by giving insight into the happenings in the society and helping with the development of a nation. The media are also seen as an agent of change instilling new values and behaviours in the society. This paper examined the mass media, national development and ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria. It examined the role of the mass media in national development and the need for the mass media to raise campaign program to combat proliferation of ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria. It explored the agenda-setting and development media theory and explained that the media should be used for nation building. This paper argued that though the mass media have the power to easily propagate ideas on social change, they do not perform their functions and objectives fully in Nigeria due to political, economic and social conditions in the country and in the mass media organizations and concluded that they should be allowed to promote the national identity of Nigeria through the in-depth coverage of societal issues that may be detrimental to the country’s growth.

Key words: ‘Baby factory’ activities, ‘Baby factory’, Mass media, National development

Introduction

‘Baby factory’ activity, a phenomenon that involves the keeping of teens that can still be termed as children to be pregnant and made to bear children for a token and the children sold to individuals is becoming rampant in Nigeria. There is no legal definition for the phenomenon ‘Baby factory’ or ‘Baby Harvesting’. These terms are used by Nigerian journalists to describe the criminal activities in the country involving the harbouring of girls with unwanted pregnancies against their will, the forced impregnation of helpless young girls

and the sale of their babies for illegal adoption to individuals. 'Baby factory' according to Okosun (2013) a reporter of the *Nigerian Village Square*, "is an institution where young girls are deliberately impregnated for the purpose of producing children that will be taken away from the young mothers soon after delivery for onward sale to buyers with deep pockets". The issue of 'baby factory' is becoming everyday news affecting the right of the Nigerian Child who is supposed to be protected from any form of exploitation and who has the freedom of expression. These teenagers are abused, maltreated as they suffer the denial of basic education, healthcare, and rights of a child. Some of them suffer malnutrition and do not enjoy the comfort that a home can offer especially in their pregnancy condition and they also suffer from the loss of their babies, not knowing what happens and becomes of their babies.

According to a reporter of the *National Mirror Newspaper*, Adelaja (2014), "the first cases of 'baby harvesting' in Nigeria were officially reported in 2006 by UNESCO. The United Nations specifically referred to three Nigerian states: Abia, Ebonyi, and Lagos", as the states where this heinous crime is being practiced. 'Baby Factories' are usually disguised as maternity homes, social welfare centres, clinics, and even water bottling factories where doctors, nurses and midwives pose as those rendering humanitarian help to the beneficiaries (Adelaja, 2014). 'Baby factory' is seen as another form of trafficking where babies are sold within and outside Nigeria to interested persons and the luring of teenagers to an unknown destination for sex exploitation.

Exploring the issues of 'baby factory' in Nigeria Huntley (2013, p. 7) stated that,

... according to recent mass media reports, teenage girls and young women are brought by traffickers to the so-called "baby factories" with false promises of jobs or safe abortions. As a result, they are confined and forced to give birth. Some of the victims are trafficked while being pregnant; others are later impregnated by men specially hired for such purposes. Allegedly, their babies are sold for international or domestic adoption, rituals, slave labour or sexual exploitation.

Since 1959, issues (human rights, health matters, immorality/ethics/legality, culture (social stigma) and others) related to children's rights have been in focus with the declaration of the Rights of the Child by the United Nation. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child which was passed in November 20th 1989 advocates for the right of the child and that the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth (United Nation, 1996). Some of the articles talked about the right of the child to freedom of expression; protection of children's privacy and against attacks on the children's honour and reputation; the need for the mass media to disseminate information and material for the benefit of the child and the need for the government to protect children from all forms of exploitation (UNICEF, 2011). In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act to domesticate the convention on the rights of child and established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to enforce the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Child Rights Act. According to Akinlami (2013), the 2003 Child's Rights Act main objective is to "provide and protect the rights of the Nigerian child; and other related matters". Although, the Child's Right Act was adopted in Nigeria, the issues related to children's right (child abuse, child labor, child trafficking) still occur in Nigeria and some of these issues are becoming rampant. According to Kanu (2014), the increasing incidences of young pregnant girls being lured into giving away their babies to be sold have presented Nigeria as a country with another level of human trafficking". UNICEF (2009) defines child trafficking as the

“recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation”. For Jordan and Dottridge (2012), “child trafficking involves the recruitment, transport, harbouring or receipt of children or adolescents (under 18) into a situation involving severe exploitation, such as forced labour, slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography or the unlawful removal of organs”. Kalu (2011) in his report on the issue of ‘baby factory’ in the South East of Nigeria, described ‘baby factory’ as a form of child trafficking since the girls are harboured against their will, their babies sold and they do not know what their babies are going to be used for.

Statement of the Problem

The ‘Baby Factory’ phenomenon has taken a more dangerous and complex form involving child trafficking alongside other illegal activities such as same –sex marriage, the supply of counterfeit goods, smuggling of contraband goods, trade in illegal drugs and weapons. Awosola and Omoera (2008) in their study of the child rights and the media in Nigeria found out that though the mass media have helped to raise public awareness on issues pertaining to the Nigerian child’s survival and development, incidences of abandoned babies, sexually abused or raped as well as maltreated children are still common practices in the communities. In addition, incidences of ‘baby factory’ and trafficking of children still persist. It is against this background that this study looked at the role of the mass media in combating ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria in order to promote national development in the country.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of the mass media in Nigeria on the issue of ‘Baby factory’ as it relates to national development.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Agenda setting theory explains how the media succeeds in telling the public what to think about, describing how the media inform the public on issues that are important (and thinking them important). Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 came up with the term agenda setting in the study they conducted on the role of the media in the 1968 presidential campaign in Chapel Hill North Carolina (Miller, 2002 p. 259). Their study showed that the media may set the “agenda” of political campaigns and other issues making the masses to learn not only about those issues but how important those issues are. Since 1972, McCombs and Shaw have expanded on this theory, producing many research articles. Agenda setting theory explains the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the mass media. Agenda-setting theory helps the audience of the mass media to understand the functions of mass communication in the society. It helps in the understanding of complex relationship among news media treatment of issues, public beliefs about those issues and the policy concerns of leaders in the society regarding those same issues (DeFleur, 2010 p.160). Agenda setting theory explains the pervasive role of the media in creating awareness for societal issues and educating the public for a change in knowledge, attitude and practice. This goes to explain that the media can give perceptual prominence to issues that shape public opinion and bring positive changes to the society.

According to McQuial (2010), development media theory explains that the mass media in developing countries can be mobilized by the government to serve national goals especially in times of economic and social development needs. The mass media are expected to help the nation achieve political integration, literacy, economic self-sufficiency and the eradication of

diseases. The mass media can achieve this through information, educational campaigns, coverage of news stories, for social transformation and development.

The Functions of the Mass Media

The mass media perform some functions in the society. According to Daramola (2007, p. 179), the libertarian theories put forward six major functions of the media which are, “public enlightenment, servicing the economic system, servicing the political system, safeguarding good liberties, profit-making and providing entertainment”. These functions of the media are geared towards promoting national development. Other functions of the media as put together by Dominick (2002) are, surveillance (the news and information role of the media), interpretation (making out meanings of facts and data), linkage (joining together different elements of the society), transmission of values (socialization –transmitting values), and entertainment.

These functions of the media highlight the duties of the mass media and what is expected of them. Nnaemeka (1989) opined that,

the specific roles which can be delineated for the news media in our particular circumstance are those of decolonization of the mental and behavioural dispositions of our people, as well as the orientations of their institutions and attitude to social processes, the strengthening of the bases of the culture of the people towards world civilization, and above all the construction, both in symbolic and in concrete operational terms, of a just, humanitarian and purposeful social reality (p. 6).

The mass media educate the masses, letting the masses know what is expected of them, which help the masses to have the right behavioural dispositions. The mass media also strengthen the cultural heritage of a nation, transmitting those values to one generation to the next. The mass media play the role of the agenda-setter, gatekeeper and watchdog, contributing to democratic governance and accountability of a nation thereby aiming at developing a nation. McQuail (2010, p. 54) stated that “the media could be a potent force for public enlightenment”, enlightening the public on issues, and educating them on what they should know.

Nigerian Mass Media

Mass media in Nigeria started in 1859 when Reverend Henry Townsend published *Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba* (The Newspaper for the Egba’s and Yoruba). In 1926, the *Nigerian Daily Times* was started by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company. *The West African Pilot* of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and *The Nigerian Tribune* of Chief Obafemi Awolowo started in 1936 and 1940 respectively (Igbeka & Ola, 2010). Today, there are so many newspapers in circulation, some of them are, *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *Vanguard*, *Leadership* etc. The Newspaper was initially an agent of political propaganda and war, some of the newspapers had issues with the government which led to sanctioning and restriction from free press. Only a few newspapers are written in indigenous language.

Television in Nigeria emerged in 1959 with the *Western Nigerian Television* (WNTV) taking off in Ibadan the then capital of Western Region, and its radio station also commenced (Akinfeleye, 2011, p. 10). This was followed by stations in the Eastern region, Northern region and that of the Federal Government. State television stations emerged too after the creation of the states and later in 1992 private organizations and individuals set up their own television stations.

Mass media in Nigeria have witnessed tremendous progress in terms of expansion, coverage, technology, personnel and managerial capability since its inception. The media houses have grown across the six geo-political zones of the country because of improved literacy level, political awareness and perceived economic advantage (Owolabi, & O'neill, p. 89).

An Overview of the 'Baby Factory' Phenomenon

UNESCO in 2006 reported the first cases of 'Baby Harvesting' in a policy paper entitled, 'Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations'. According to UNESCO (2006),

In States like Abia, Ebonyi and Lagos, many cases have been reported to clinics, doctors, nurses and orphanages who help pregnant teenagers and other women who do not want to keep their babies after birth. They care for these women during pregnancy and provide money and shelter. Upon delivery the babies are sold to couples who pay a premium for the babies of their choice. The young mothers are paid off after having signed papers repudiating their claims on the babies or swearing oaths of secrecy (p. 31).

This report by UNESCO occasioned investigations by the police, police raids of some of the 'baby factories' and the discovery of pregnant teenage girls in such illegal homes in Nigeria. The pregnant girls and women who were waiting for the day they would give birth sell their babies and perhaps return to normal living were taken and rehabilitated. This indicates that this menace has been on-going even before the report was published by UNESCO. Since this report was published by UNESCO, so many cases of baby factories have been unearthed and reported by the media. In 2008/2009 alone, networks of 'baby factories' claiming to be orphanages were revealed in Enugu State, Anambra State, and Imo State. Kanu (2014) in an online media report highlights that, three years after the report by UNESCO was published, the officers of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, in Enugu State, arrested one Dr. Ben Agbo, for operating an illegal maternity home – 'The Moonlight Maternity Home', and for alleged sale of babies. "The suspect confessed to have been engaged in the crime for 10 years and charged as much as N500, 000 from some prospective clients".

This issue cuts across many states in the country. For example, in Abia State an illegal facility called the *Cross Foundation* was found and pregnant girls were rescued. Some of these girls wanted abortion and in their desperate and vulnerable state were either tricked or persuaded to have the babies at the 'homes'. The same was also reported in Anambra State, pregnant teenagers in October 2011 were also rescued from a sachet water production factory which was used for an illegal 'baby factory'.

According to media reports, the price of a baby depends on several factors including the sex of the baby; male babies are sold for higher amounts. The amount paid varies and depends on the owner of the factories (Onafuye, 2014; Cristiansson, 2013). According to UNESCO report, babies from the 'Baby factories' were sold to local and international agents and the price varied, they state that,

Officials recently handled a case of two sisters who approached a doctor in Lagos with an offer to sell the unborn child of one of the sisters. They demanded ₦500,000 (about US \$3875) and ₦ 300,000 (about US \$ 2325) for a baby boy and baby girl respectively. Later they raised the price of a baby girl to ₦ 400,000 (about US \$3100) because of "the rising cost of living.

In 2011, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) said that their investigations on ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria showed that babies were sold for up to \$6,400 (£4,200) (*BBC NEWS AFRICA*, 2013). *BBC NEWS AFRICA* (2013) further stated in their report that “the babies can be sold for illegal adoption, used for child labour, or prostitution or sometimes killed with their body parts used for ritual purposes”. Uduma Kalu in his report of *Vanguard* July 30, 2011, also states that “in some ‘baby factories’ twins go for about ₦1 million, male babies ₦500,000, females between ₦350,000 and ₦450,000”. The ‘Baby factories’ were mostly run by medical practitioners and they employed more hands who assisted them in the factories. Huntley (2013 p. 12) highlights that, “Baby factories” were usually disguised as maternity homes, orphanages, social welfare homes, clinics, and even water bottling factories. The traffickers were the owners of these facilities, with some of them being medical doctors. They run their “business” with the help of employees”.

The Root Causes of Baby Factory Practices

Since ‘baby factory’ can be seen as another form of child trafficking, what then is the cause? Can it be caused by poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, orphaned children, and lack of educational opportunities? Also can it be caused by crisis at home, in the community, armed conflict, and demand for cheap labour? Child trafficking according to UNICEF (2007), is caused by “poverty, large family size, rapid urbanization with deteriorating public services, low literacy levels and high school drop-out rates....In most instances, desperately poor and uninformed parents willingly co-operate with the traffickers, giving away their children in exchange for a small fee”. Some of the factors responsible for the proliferation of illegal maternity and charity homes popularly referred to as ‘baby factories’ might be infertility, low awareness of legal adoption procedures, failure to cushion the effect of teenage pregnancy and ineffectiveness of the civil service to combat the scourge (Bankong-Obi, 2014). There are so many root causes of ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria which could be cultural, economical, and social. The root causes of ‘baby factory’ according to Adelaja (2014) “may be those that facilitate any other forms of human trafficking such as poverty and high unemployment rates particularly in rural areas, low levels of education and literacy, corruption, and lack of information on human trafficking”. Huntley (2013) stated that “lack of education and low levels of literacy also contribute to the poverty problem, since they limit women’s and children’s opportunities to get better rewarded jobs in the future” (p.18). He further stated,

Corruption of law enforcement and judges makes the arrest and prosecution of traffickers inefficient and contributes to high profit and low risk of the human trafficking “business,” including “baby factories” in Nigeria. Lack of information and awareness about human trafficking and, in particular, “baby factories” also make women and children more susceptible to this phenomenon (p. 19).

Adelaja (2014) opined that, “the social stigmas that contribute to the existence of ‘baby factories’ in Nigeria are those against teenage pregnancies, pregnancies out of wedlock, couple’s infertility and legal adoption’s”. Kalu (2011) in the media report of *Vanguard* of July 30, 2011, quoting Mr. Sola Alabi the Public Relations Officer of the Abia State Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) said that “they arrest owners of such illegal maternity homes in Abia regularly and it is something that has been on-going over the years”, this shows that the issue has been going on in Nigeria for a long time even before the first case of ‘baby factory’ was reported and the research of ‘baby factory’ activities by UNESCO in 2006.

Abject poverty (most of the girls came from poor homes) is seen as the primary motivation that is propelling the producers of the babies in the baby factories to give out their babies for

money, also infertility is one of the causes because most of the buyers of the babies are mostly women who are yet to have their own babies (Charles, Akwara, & Andeshi, 2014). According to Fide (2014), poverty level is one of the root causes of baby factory, Charles, Akwara, & Andeshi (2014) found out in their study that most of the producers of the babies are educationally challenged and some of them did not complete their secondary school education. Also, greed is the main motivating factors that made the owners of the baby factories to start their heinous trade. Some of the root causes of ‘baby factory’ according to Kanu (2014) are poverty, corruption and failure of the government to affect the people through job opportunities. As stated earlier, Onyemelukwe –Onuobia (2013) in analyzing the ‘baby factory’ activities in *This Day Newspaper* (online) states that some of the root causes of ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria are, “the premium placed on biological children, inability to police orphanages, failure to use our criminal laws effectively and the absence of adequate policies and legislation”. She further revealed that,

... infertility is one of the most difficult challenges a couple will have to face, especially in Nigeria. In a country where many cultures place a heavy value on biological children, the burden of infertility is not merely a personal cross which a couple may have to carry; instead, it becomes an almost overwhelming encumbrance placed by the society on a marriage

This shows that ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria could be caused by so many factors that concern the public and the entire society. According to Oyeleke (2012) six factors are responsible for trafficking and prostitution, they are poverty and lack of economic opportunities; low levels of education and lack of information about the process of recruitment; history of sexual abuse; family pressure; aspiration of the women, often accompanied by the growing sense of personal and economic autonomy; alleged success stories of those who migrated for income abroad. Thus, it can therefore be said that since ‘baby factory’ can be seen as a form of human trafficking, some of these factors might be responsible for its growth in Nigeria.

The Media and National Development

Development of a nation is seen as the increase in the economic, human, political, and socio-cultural security of that nation. Asemah, Anum, & Edegoh, (2013) citing in Asemah & Asogwa (2014, p. 25) defined development as “a process of change in attitude, social structure and general acceleration of economic growth, through reduction of poverty and inequality” National development can be seen as the progressive increase in the economic, educational and health status of the citizens, encompassing all aspect of their welfare and offering them political freedom. Adekoya & Ajilore (2012) opined that “national development is a term that refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one” (p.66).

National Development is people oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had in improving the lot of the masses. Elugbe (2010) in Adekoya & Ajilore (2012) further stated that “national development refers among other things, to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government” (p. 66). The media is seen as an agent of change and development, hence, the development of a nation is assured when the media are utilized for societal and human enlightenment, through sourcing and dissemination of information and educating the masses.

The Nigerian media as an agent of national development has constitutional rights to freedom of expression and therefore should be expected to educate the public, create public awareness and mobilize public support on societal issues. Asekome (2008) stated that,

Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution, under the Obligation of the Mass Media, states that “the press, radio and television and mass media agencies shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives of the constitution, and the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. Under section 39(1) of the same 1999 Constitution, it is stated that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference”. Thus, the press in Nigeria has constitutional rights to freedom of expression, and to provide information to the masses, to shapen public opinion and also to impart the right information that could mobilize the people to concentrate their efforts in the direction of national growth and development (p. 23).

The constitution of Nigeria gives the media the freedom to report news and thereby promote national development, providing information for the masses and creating an enabling environment for human development. Okere (1996, p. 173) observed that, “statements made by the [Nigerian] leaders since independence, and even before, clearly indicate that the media were expected to endorse and support official interpretation of the national unity and economic development”. In line with the constitution of the country, the leaders of the country are also of the view that the media should be an agent of national development.

Dominick (2002) explained that in developing countries where there is strong centralized control over the media, the mass media should help develop and build the nation and also help promote modernization or other national goals. The mass media in developing countries in addition to their conventional functions of information, education and entertainment are also expected to be active agents of national development (Folarin, 1998). According to Okoro,

Nigerian news sources must henceforth focus on collaborative, integrative, and strategic communication designed to provide constructive news and information that can shape citizens’ attitudes and behaviours, cultivating a culture of oneness in an environment where all citizens are able to contribute their initiative, creativity, and intellectual know-how equally (p.549).

The mass media play the role of raising public awareness and determining issues for public debates and discussions. They are effective channels of informing the public and sensitizing them on issues of national and societal importance and are expected to provide the public with credible and realistic information that will educate the citizens. The issue of ‘baby factory’ came into limelight in the country in 2006 and since then the mass media have been reporting cases of police raid on ‘baby factories’ across the country. Media reports of police raids of ‘baby factory’ houses indicate that it flourishes in Nigeria.

Factors that Affect Adequate Raising of Awareness of ‘Baby Factory’ Activities by the Mass Media in Nigeria

The Nigerian mass media have been reporting the cases of ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria, but the issue continues because enough awareness has not been created and the masses have not been educated and informed about this issue. Some factors which are not expected to be might be responsible for the inadequate information and education of ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria by the mass media.

Economic Factor - The journalism that is practiced today is market-driven journalism. In the media, the circulation, sales, and editorial efforts are integrated because they all have one goal – that of marketing news information which has affected what is being featured by the media outfits. The interest of the public is not considered because the media houses are more profit-oriented than watchdog-oriented. Most mass media houses compete with others to get audience and advertisers. The content and programming of a mass media house can be influenced by a market-driven medium. Some media corporations are interlocked with financial institutions such that their boards of directors serve as journalists and prove a threat to the autonomy of mass media (Eijaz, 2012 p.9). These journalists might tend to suppress messages which might term ‘unwanted messages’. The mass media get most of their income from advertisements and sponsoring, and because of this, the media might tend to satisfy their advertisers instead of their audience.

Political Factor - The media function for the society but the influence of the government on the media affect government owned media houses, for the government somehow controls the media. The news stories and information from the media tend to support the government even when the government is not acting for the interest of the citizens. It therefore becomes the case of he who plays the music dictate the tune. According to Asekome (2008), “our observation revealed that most of the government controlled press promotes basically the interest of government in their news coverage on the other hand the privately owned newspapers and magazines have been more vocal on issues of public importance”. Mass media content and programming might be affected because of these controls, Eijaz (2012, p.8) opines that “Government owned media are controlled through media framing. Politicians, government officials and civil servants make all editorial and programming decisions. Censorship policies are executed to control the content”. The owners of the media houses have control over the media and influence the programs. Asemah & Asogwa (2012) stated that, “The owners of a media house have influence not just by direct intervention or by establishing lines that cannot be crossed; they set the tone, they decide which markets to target, they control editorial budgets and they hire and fire their editors, who are their representatives in the media world”. Eijaz (2012, p.8) also stated that, “government controls privately owned media through laws, regulations, licenses and taxes”. Hence, they propagate government activities in the media organizations. Members of a media house/firm are answerable to their owners and top management, hence, the content of a mass media organization can be affected by its economic goals, structure, internal policies, internal control and organizational roles which are all determined by the owners of that organization.

Social Factor - Poverty, shortage of well trained Journalists and low level of technological development affect the quality of media content and programming in Nigerian mass media. Poverty and the harsh economic situation in Nigeria have made some journalists to be vulnerable and as such could easily fall prey to the brown envelope syndrome. The brown envelope syndrome affects what is covered in the news and what is made prominent as well. This in turn affect the role of the mass media as agenda-setter and gatekeepers, and would make the Journalists to be more dependent on the government, the elite, and the perpetrators of the ‘baby factory’ activities in Nigeria, hindering them from reporting the news the way it is. In Nigeria today, most graduates of mass communication find themselves in banks, and multinational companies to make ends meet. This affect the quality of media content and programming as well, this is because anybody who can report news and who can write are in the mass media organizations, information may not be properly researched and news gathered may not be adequate, hence, disturbing issues in Nigeria like ‘baby factory’ activities will not be covered and featured. According to Imoh (2013)

Low level of technological development and shortage of well-trained mass communicators have affected the quality of programming, production and transmission. The result is that most programs lacked serious informational, educational and developmental content and their message signals did not travel far and wide enough for clear reception by the diverse audience (p. 48).

Trained journalists who are practicing journalism exhibit professionalism in their job, their goal is to educate, inform and entertain the audience. They go all out to make sure that issues that hinder national development in a country are reported and portrayed in educational programs and they will find it difficult to accept money from 'baby factory' activity perpetrators in the country who are always ready to give journalist money so that their crimes will not be exposed and reported in the media.

The Role of the Mass Media in Raising Awareness of 'Baby Factory' Activities in Nigeria

The mass media as agenda setter decide what issues are discussed by the society and which ones are not, but the media present the society with a fairly narrow agenda for discussion. Government and private owned media; profit and market-driven media, affect media content and the audiences are given little choices and public interest on disturbing issues are not often raised, because the mass media did not play their role as information giver and, educators.

The role of the mass media as gatekeepers in news selection and objectivity is undermined, news organizations prefer news events that fit a number of criteria related to time, place and potential audience demand, but can these be seen? The mass media are expected to be objective, balance and fair in their news selection and coverage, this will make news stories that pertain to national development to be covered. Eyewitness account of events, corroborating of facts with multiple sources and 'balance' are expected from the journalists which will make them to play their institutional role as a fourth estate - a body that exists apart from government and large interest groups, reporting events without bias.

Journalists are seen as opinion builders, they trace and critically analyse new trends and tendencies in society, and are expected to provide decision makers with invaluable information, thereby ensuring, that issues of societal concerns are looked into. The mass media should disseminate information freely especially on issues like 'baby factory activities in order to combat these illegal activities and boost the development of the nation.

The media have a role to play in mobilizing public support and involvement to help prevent and combat 'baby factory' activities in Nigeria. The mass media by writing an article on 'baby factory' activity in the print media, online media or broadcasting it in the broadcast media, will not only educate the public but also create awareness and inform them about 'baby factory' activities, hence, people especially teenagers would not want to get involved in these illegal, dangerous and destroying activity. Some Journalists and mass media organizations may not be adequately aware of the 'baby factory' phenomenon and may not have sufficient understanding of the activities. Therefore, journalist should get updated with the happenings in the country in order to report and write in depth stories on 'baby factory' activities.

The mass media inform, educate and persuade the masses on societal issues, and studies have shown that mass media campaign programme can be an effective tool in creating awareness and increasing prevention of societal issues, the mass media therefore, can create public awareness through mass media campaign programmes on 'baby factory' activities to change

attitude and behaviour of the citizens, protect the victims and mobilize the public to take action.

Conclusion

The media are seen as agent of change and development, hence, the development of a nation is assured when the media are utilized for societal and human enlightenment, through sourcing and dissemination of information and educating the masses. The issue of 'baby factory' is becoming everyday news affecting the right of the Nigerian Child who is supposed to be protected from any form of exploitation and who has the freedom of expression. These teenagers are abused, maltreated as they suffer the denial of basic education, healthcare, and rights of a child. Some of them suffer malnutrition and do not enjoy the comfort that a home can offer especially in their pregnancy condition and they also suffer from the loss of their babies, not knowing what happens and becomes of their babies. The Nigerian mass media as agent of national development have constitutional rights to freedom of expression and therefore, should be expected to educate the public, create public awareness and mobilize public support on societal issues. They are to play their role of agenda-setter, gatekeeper and watchdog, contributing to democratic governance and accountability of Nigeria thereby, aiming at developing the nation. The mass media as agent of change and promoter of national identity should therefore ensure that issues that pose as threat to the national development of Nigeria are tackled and addressed and raise strategies to promote, advocate and mobilize support on 'baby factory' activities in Nigeria.

The professionalism of journalists and editors are supposed to constrain the power of owners. Journalists are expected to be fierce in their pursuit of the truth and are not supposed to be biased regularly in favour of one particular perspective. The mass media are expected to supply what the audience wants rather than what the owner decides. Investigative journalism has a good reputation in uncovering the happenings in the society, Journalist are expected to dig deep and bring out disturbing issues in the society, and reporting those issues frequently to be able to create awareness and raise public opinions. The mass media are powerful tools for social change. Investigative journalism on 'baby factory' activities in Nigeria needs to be promoted.

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