

Potential Impact of the Mass Media on Family Planning in an Urban Community in South Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Context: The role of radio and television message is an important factor in creating and changing the values, ideas and attitudes of people in Public Health. Fertility regulation in Nigeria is still yet to meet the optimum level.

Objectives: The research therefore is designed to assess the role of mass media, radio and television in family planning messages.

Study Design, Setting and Subjects: The study involved 503 females and males of child bearing age at Ife Central District, South Western of Nigeria. Information on respondents socio-economic characteristics family planning practices, their knowledge and attitude, source of information and use of family planning methods including habits and media preference of the respondent were also collected.

Results: Radio was found to be the most common source of information. Fifty-three percent reported that they got family planning messages through the radio as against 10.1% through the television in spite of the fact that 68.5% of the respondents had television and 89.1% had radio. Seventy-two percent of the respondents had never visited family planning clinic. The most favourite programme on T.V. was drama while that of the radio was the news.

Conclusion: The need to intensify and integrate family planning message into television drama and radio news was identified as this could play a significant role in family planning.

Key Words: Family Planning Messages, Radio, Television, Mass Media. [Trop J Obstet Gynaecol, 2004;21:88-90]

Introduction

The role of Radio and Television in creating awareness and changing the values, ideas and attitudes of people to serious life threatening infections such as AIDS can not be over emphasized. Television and radio have been found useful in sending messages across the nation. Few studies have observed bias among health workers in providing family planning methods to especially the adolescents who constitute almost 45% of the Nigeria population^{1,2}. Recent studies also revealed that perception of family planning and attitudes to contraceptive use is generally low among various reproductive groups in Nigeria³⁻⁶.

A review of the Nigerian population's demographic patterns in the last decade against the period between 1995 and 2000 revealed that fertility fell significantly to 6.2% but this is still a far cry from the 4.0% target. Infant mortality rate has risen in the past few years but crude death rate has remained stagnant at 21.4% in 1995^{7,8}. The current contraceptive prevalence rate of 11% is a far cry from a targeted rate of 80% in the National population policy.

The National population policy was promulgated in 1988 to improve the living standards and quality of life of Nigerians by reducing the persistent high level of fertility and population growth and achieving rural urban development. In spite of all efforts, it has been observed that the National Population Policy (NPP) has

not been improved much because of the declining fertility not appreciable neither is the welfare significant. This had been attributed to limited availability and poor quality services which lead to high maternal and infant mortality rate, inadequate adolescent outreach and limited contraceptive use¹⁰. In 1991, Nigerian population census was put at 88.99 million, an increase of 2.7 to 3.3 percent per annum between 1953 and 1991, consequently, the growth rate of the population was found higher than the growth of the economy which is put at 0.5%¹¹. Above all, average Nigerians still cherish large number of children and childlessness is a strong ground for divorce under the customary law¹²⁻¹⁴. Consequently, this research is designed to assess the role of the mass media: radio and television in disseminating family planning messages at Ife Local Government Area of Osun State, South West of Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at Ile-Ife, a predominantly Yoruba community and the cradle of Yoruba Urban civilization. The Local Government was created in

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1989 as one of the 22 Local Governments of Osun State. It has an estimated population of 197, 302 (CC CD 1993).

The people live in extended family compounds. Traditionally, a family compound consists of clusters of houses whose residents share close paternal ties. Polygamy and monogamy are the two types of marriages that flourish in the area. The males are predominantly farmers while most females are petty traders. The inhabitants are Christians, Moslems and adherent of traditional religious practices.

Health Facilities

There are two hospitals in the area that provide secondary and tertiary care, in addition to five dispensaries, several private clinics, pharmacies and a myriad of patent medicine stores and traditional healing homes.

Sampling Technique

A stratified multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 503 males and females of childbearing age (15-49 years). Information obtained from the respondents includes family planning practices, assessment of the respondents' knowledge, attitude, source of family planning information, media habits and preferences with regards family planning messages.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analysed using Epi-Info 6 and SPSS statistical packages. All questionnaires were coded into the computer. Data was cleared using a double entry system. Analysis of data was done using simple percentages and ranking order to summarise source of family planning information.

Results

The respondents consisted of 48.1% males and 51.9% female and 63.2% were in their active reproductive years. 90% were married and 57.4% were monogamists and 42.6% were polygamists. Based on religion, over half of the respondents were Christians (all Protestants) and only 11% were Catholics and 30.7% were Moslem. On literacy, only 19.1% were illiterate, the rest of the respondents had 1-6 years of schooling (48.5%) whilst 14.3% had gone beyond secondary education (See Table 1). On family planning information, 53% of the respondents reported that they got their family planning messages through the radio, followed by health workers (15.5%) posters (10.5%) television (10.12%) and through music (6.4%) and other print media such as pamphlets/ leaflets (0.6%), newspaper message (0.2%) and town crier (0.4%). On accessibility to media; 89.4% had radio sets while 65.8% had television sets. News is the most favourite radio programme reported while it was drama on the television. On the use of family planning services, 74.2% had never used the

services while 21.2% of the respondents had used the services at one time of the other. Majority of the respondents favoured 1-4 children which is the nationally recommended family size per woman. 10.5% however favoured large family size such as 5-8 children and 0.5% favoured 9-12 children. Nearly half of the couples did not discuss the issue of family planning as husband and wife.

Table 1: Respondents Socio-economic and Demographic characteristics

Variables					
Sex	Male	Female			
No	246	257			
%	48.9	51.1			
Age	15 -24	25 -34	35-44	45-54	55+
No	48	193	125	60	66
%	8.9	38.4	24.8	14.9	13.1
Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced/ separated	Widowed	
No.	30	453	16	3	
%	6.0	90.0	3.2	0.6	
Types of Marriages	Monoga- mous	Polygamous			
No	26.0	193			
%	57.4	42.6			
Religion	Moslem/ Christians	(Catholic)	Protestants	Others	
No	151	55	279	14	
%	30.7	11.0	55.6	2.8	

Table 2: Respondents Social Class based on Education and Occupation

Variables						
Education	Illiterate	Primary /Koranic	Secon- dary	Post Secondary		
No	96	150	151	72		
%	19.1	29.8	30.0	14.3		
Years of Schooling	1-6	7-13	Above13			
No	244	158	67			
%	48.5	31.4	13.3			
Occupation	Civil Servants	Artisans	Tra- ders	Farm- ers	Trans- port	Unem- ployed
No	56	99	169	88	16	42
%	11.2	19.2	33.7	16.6	3.2	8.4
Ethnic Origin	Yoruba	Hausa	Ibos			
No	437	29	35			
%	86.9	5.8	7.0			

Table 3: Reported Most Popular Source of message on Family Planning

Source	No	%	Ranking Order
Radio	263	53.0	1st
Health workers	76	15.3	2nd
Poster	52	10.5	3rd
Television	5	10.1	4th
Mus ic	2	6.4	5th
No idea	26	5.2	6th
None	20	4.0	7th
Pamphlet/leaflet	3	0.6	8th
Town crier	2	0.4	9th
News	1	0.2	10th
Paper/Magazine			
Public Address system	1	0.2	10th
Line cover	-	-	-

Table 4: Respondents used of Family Planning Services

Ever visited family planning clinic	Yes	No	107		
		%	21.2		
No. of children desire	No	No	373		
		%	74.2		
Do you discuss with spouse about family planning	No	Yes	No	N/A	
	%	183	238	12	
	%	40.4	57.0	2.6	

Discussion

The importance of the role of the radio in language communication cannot be over emphasized. The fact that over half of the respondents expressed that radio was the most important source of message on family planning is an indication that the Radio could be used to intensify family planning messages, especially during or shortly after the news. Health workers' influence is also important. So also is the print media and television drama. It is an acknowledged fact that faced with information about a risk to their health, people might be expected to amend their behaviour, habits or change

their environment to reduce exposure to the risk. However, evidence has shown that people do not respond in such a rational manner to messages about risk (15-18). Though 89% of the respondents were found to have favoured limited number of children of at most four, yet only 21.2% had ever visited family planning clinics. This is in spite of the fact that the majority perceived the radio as an important source of family planning messages. Since news and drama were found to be the most favoured programmes, integrating family planning messages through news and drama may increase further awareness on the need to reduce fertility for effective control of population.

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