

What Has Information Got to Do with Safe-Motherhood Practice? Analysis of Influence of Safe-Motherhood Programme on Women.

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Abstract: This paper examined women's exposure to "safe-motherhood" which is a programme of RadioRivers 99.1FM station, Port Harcourt. It sought to find out whether exposure to this programme will spur women into adopting safe-motherhood practices like family planning and use of insecticide treated mosquito nets. The study adopted survey research design and used questionnaire in collecting data from the respondents. Using simple percentages in analysis, the study found that 93% of respondents are exposed to the programme while 82% have positive attitude towards the programme. Out of these 82% of the respondents who developed positive attitude towards the programme, only 20% were influenced by the programme. This shows that exposure to any radio programme does not guarantee adoption of the innovation being campaigned for. Based on this finding, the study recommends among other things that radio campaigns, especially on health issues, be accompanied by face- to- face contacts in order to strengthen attitude and spur audiences into positive actions.

Keywords: Safe-Motherhood, Safe-Motherhood-Practice, Exposure, Information, Radio Rivers, Women.

Introduction

For a society to exist, certain communication needs must be met. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the role that communication plays in our society is to imagine what it would be like if all of a sudden, the whole system never existed. However, mass media no doubt have played vital role in communication for health and sustainable development. By virtue of their information dissemination function, mass media interact with all other social institution in the society to inform, educate and entertain. Affirming to this, Agbanu & Nwammuo (2007, p.10), maintain that "the mass media function within each of the social systems to foster interaction, and sustenance of the society". The health sector of the society, shares a relationship with the mass media genres like, the radio, television, newspapers and magazines, communicate health policies, report activities in the health sector, embark on health campaigns and publicize health programmer among others. Health communication therefore involves the study and the use of communication strategies to inform and influence individuals and community decisions that enhance healthy living. (www.healthpeople.gov).

Safe motherhood initiatives was launched by World Health Organization (WHO) and other International Agencies in 1987 and immediately supported by International Confederation of Midwives (ICM)

In 2009-2010, the community based approach to safe motherhood was implemented. This was done because the number of women suffering maternal death worldwide was estimated to be at least 600,000 each year with 99% of women coming from developing countries like Nigeria, (International Confederation of Midwives ICM 2010).

The reasons for this occurrence is due to lack of good maternal education knowledge on issues that affect their lives like malnutrition, poverty, lack of clean water and adequate water systems, sanitation, which always give rise to undesired conditions like diseases, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, premature babies, bleeding from unknown origin, Vesico Vaginal Fistula "VVF", deformed babies, hypertension, anemia in pregnancies, still birth, pre-eclamptic anemia, sexual transmitted diseases etc. Safe motherhood was launched for the knowledge and safety of mothers and child maternal awareness and health education is a head way to success from untimely death of mother and child. World Health Organization (WHO) statistics suggests 25% of maternal deaths are due to the above mentioned, conditions, it accounts for more maternal death per annum (Benjamin 2008, p.24).

Safe motherhood programs are designed to reduce the high numbers of deaths and illnesses resulting from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. In many countries, maternal mortality is a leading cause of death for women of reproductive age. Most maternal deaths result from hemorrhage, complications of unsafe abortion; pregnancy- induced hypertension, sepsis and obstructed labor.

Safe motherhood programs seek to address these direct medical causes and undertake related activities to ensure women have access to comprehensive reproductive health services. (Obasi 2009, p.10). This is where this study comes in. Although there are safe motherhood programmes on radio all over the country, no one knows whether pregnant and nursing women are exposed to the information. Even if they are exposed to the information, does the information influence their health habits in any way? These questions necessitated this study. The study therefore was carried out to ascertain the following:

- Whether pregnant women in Port Harcourt city LGA are exposed to "safe motherhood" programmes in radio 99.1FM station.
- Whether exposure to the programme affect attitude of pregnant and nursing women towards the adoption of "safe- motherhood" practice.
- Whether pregnant women are influenced in any way by the Radio Rivers "safe-motherhood" programme.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as theoretical framework. This model according to Yates (2003) emphasizes that attitude change results from a person's

diligent consideration of information that is seen as central to the true merit of a particular attitudinal position. Kenamer and Honnold (1995: 324) agree with Yates when they explained thus:

....If the people see information as relevant, salient or useful to their own lives, they may pay attention and even if it clashes with their belief system... personal involvement with issues seems to play a key role in information processing through activating a heightened state of arousal and/or greater cognitive activity in an interaction between an individual and a stimulus.

Since behaviors and attitude change entails abandoning old ways and embracing new precepts and practices, this model seems relevant to this study. This is because as Ochonogor (2005) points out, ELM points that an attitude change campaign on radio/television will be responded to if the dangers or benefits associated with the messages/actions are taken on the same kind of personal reality or usefulness for the individual. This study fits into the above description. It is an effort to analyze whether access to safe motherhood information on radio influences mothers to adopts safe motherhood practice.

Communicating Change in the health sector: What Scholars say.

Many health issues involve a wide range of innovations, and some of these useful innovations have been launched by successive governments in Nigeria, as a contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of babies. Programmes such as the National Programme on Immunization (NPI), Curbing of Maternal and Infant Mortality (CMIM), Roll Back Malaria, Population and Family Planning, Reproductive Health, etc have been launched by the Federal Government in consonance with the goals and objectives of the National Health Policy, which is based on Primary healthcare (Adeniyi, 1972, p.54). Applebaum (2000, p.34), maintains that an evaluation of some of these programmes which were proudly launched revealed that they did not enjoy maximum acceptance, support and utilization. Consequently, they did not achieve the targets set for them.

Agreeing with Applebaum, Adler (1991. p.47) observes that public awareness of the existence and efficacy of these national health programmes are relatively high, some people will not utilize the health service provided, even if they are free charge.

Dominick (cited in Adler 1991) is of the view that campaign is one of the best tools the media can use in order to get their messages across to the target audience. A campaign consists of a large number of issues that should be of concern to target audience Adler maintains that one major constraints to the effectiveness of health campaign at both national and local levels is the lack of effective communication between the policy makers and users of health services. Because of this lack of effective communication, efforts at mobilizing the masses for health action have lagged somewhat behind the technical and operational aspects of the programmes, such that community involvement and participation in health programmes have been taken for granted.

Sambe in Nwosu et al(2008) agree that the mass media can set agenda on health issues and stimulate people towards taking actions against all practice in the health sector. They do not prompt the welfare of man referred to as the anti- corruption campaign in the health sector. One important function that the mass media perform in the society is the surveillance function. They monitor an issue that is of great interest to the society. This makes the mass, media watchdogs of the society. Edeani (1994), contends that the *watchdog* role of the press is in defining wide ranging public interest as well as articulating and catering for them in accordance with the accepted philosophical and ideological orientations which are often spelt out in a country's constitution. The watchdog role of the mass media cuts across all spheres of society, including the health system. The mass media monitor activities in the public and private health sectors as well as general health related issues and duly keep the masses informed. No wonder, Theophilus (2009,) is of the view that Safe Motherhood campaign is to bring the message of safe motherhood to the door posts of women to enable them practice safe motherhood.

Radio Rivers family planning programme "Safe motherhood" came into existence in the year 1998 and it has Mrs Ibim Ogbuada as its producer and Belema Tonye as the programme presenter. It is a talk programme that takes place every Tuesday evening (7:45pm). Safe motherhood means that no woman or baby should die or be harmed during pregnancy which may result in death. The programme "Safe motherhood" aims at reducing maternal and infant mortality and morbidity rate in our society.

It is also a health programme aimed at educating couples and would be couples on the need to cut down their family size. It is a fact that over population and its attendant effect on the society has caused a serious threat to human lives and survival.

Given this, the Government health workers, and non Governmental agencies were seriously involved in finding solution to this menace and the possible control of over population and cases of pre-natal and infant mortality rate which is in the increase in developing countries. In this, the Government of Nigeria at various levels has decided to educate the populace of this threat and the possible ways to curb it.

To do these, information regarding family planning was given to the people through the mass media particularly the radio in order to create awareness and bring about the needed social change in behaviour. Among the broadcast media, radio is assumed to be the most effective medium for sending out information on various social change programmes from Government and other institutions to the majority of the populace in developing countries or areas.

It is against this back drop that the Government of Rivers State, through "Radio Rivers" disseminates information on family planning programme to the people of the state and residents of Port Harcourt City in particular and thus, initial awareness was created. It should be observed that the goal of any communication is to effect a change in attitude, educate, entertain and inform the public, elicit support for individual or corporate entity, as well as to sale a product or an idea.

Research Methodology

This study adopted survey as the research design. A sample size of 382 (Three Hundred and Eighty Two) women in Port Harcourt city was used for the study. This was arrived at using a table for sample size determination developed by Krejcie and Morgan (cited in Keyton 2001 p.127). The table establishes sample sizes against their corresponding population. In this case, 131,605 was obtained from Port Harcourt city local Government Area Health Unit, as the population of women in the unity. At 95% confidence level and 5% sampling error, 382 emerged as the sample size. Respondents were purposively selected based on exposure and access to the "safe motherhood" programme of Rivers 99.1 FM radio station. The reason for this sampling technique was to get responses only on women who listen to the programme and who attend antenatal and post-natal visits in different hospitals in the city. The questionnaire was employed in data collection and out of 382 copies distributed; the same number of copies were collected. This yielded a 100% response rate because face-face contact was employed in the distribution of the questionnaire. In some cases, where few respondents found it hard to either understand or fill the questionnaire, the researchers were handy in helping out.

Discussion of Findings

Simple Percentages were used in analyzing the data. The choice of using simple percentages in analyzing data was informed by the fact that the data were in nominal scale. Moreover, since nominal scale enables us to categorize individuals and responses more conveniently, (Asika, 2010); it was deemed fit for the analysis of data generated in this study in a bid to ascertain whether respondents who are mostly pregnant women in Port Harcourt city LGA are exposed to "safe motherhood" programme in Rivers 99.1 Fm radio stations. The study showed that 93% of them are actually exposed to the programme. This is in accordance with earlier studies conducted by Ekwere (2009) and Michael (2001) who have established that women are exposed to radio messages on breastfeeding, immunization and other related health campaigns. The reason for high number of women who are exposed to radio programmes is not far-fetched. As conceptualized in the Elaboration Likelihood Model

(ELM) which serves as the theoretical framework for this study, people pay attention to information which they consider useful to their lives (Yates, 2003). So exposure to “safe motherhood” programme is as a result to the usefulness of the messages to the health of women.

Another interesting finding of this study is that a greater proportion of respondents used in this study (82%) had positive attitude towards “safe motherhood” programme. This means that they are pleased with the message content of the programme. This finding points to the importance of effective communication in arousing positive attitude in the minds of media audiences.

In supporting this assertion, MacBride et al (1980 p.3) captures communication in this way:

Communication creates a common pool of ideas, strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages, changes attitudes and opinions and translates thoughts into actions.

This finding seems to provide further empirical support for the view that individuals tend to expose themselves and develop positive attitudes to opinions and messages which they consider useful. (MacQuails 2005). One major factor which might have prompted respondents’ especially pregnant women, to develop positive attitude towards the “safe motherhood” programme is the nature of topics discussed. The topics range from family planning, antenatal care, use of insecticide treated nets, clean labour delivery to essential information on how to prevent high risk pregnancies and complications. These topics developed by the producers of the programme tend to be areas of interest to both nursing and pregnant women.

On whether the programme, “safe motherhood” influences mothers in Port Harcourt city to adopt and practice healthy lifestyle that will improve their health and that of their families positively, the study showed an interesting finding. Although 82% had positive attitude towards the programme, only 20% were influenced by the programme while a larger percentage of 62% were not influenced at all.

Influence here refers to the ability of the programme to make women adopt safe motherhood practices like the use of insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITNS), and use of several family planning methods to regulate the number of children and unwanted pregnancies. This finding is inconsonance with Tinker (2004) research that emphasizes that millions of women do not utilize good quality health services during pregnancy and childbirth especially women who are poor and uneducated. This explains that access to or utilization of health services is not guaranteed by exposure and positive attitude towards the programme or campaigns supporting the service. Inability of “safe motherhood” programme to influence women into adoption of motherhood practices may be based on some factors like superstitions beliefs, fear and negligence of modern innovations. This finding also supports the finding by Omodo (2012) that women experience 50 million maternal health problems annually. This high mortality rate is due to inability of women to adopt safe motherhood practices.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This study which set to find out what information got to do with safe- motherhood practices among women made interesting findings regarding the issues at stake. Based on these findings, the study concludes that though exposure to a health campaign may lead to positive attitude towards the issues discussed. It does not guarantee adoption of the innovation or action towards the issue being campaigned for. With regards to health issues, belief systems, availability of health personnel, cost, face-to-face contacts may be factors that may pose as intervening variables. Although radio programmes may create awareness of an innovation, adoption of the innovation may require face-to face contacts in order to strengthen positive attitude intended by the campaigners or change agents. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. That based on the positive attitude already achieved through “safe motherhood” programme. It is necessary to combine radio health campaigns with face-to-face contacts so as to spur audiences into intended actions;

2. That similar study be carried out to find out why most pregnant women and nursing mothers fail to adopt the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) despite several campaigns that emphasized its benefits.
3. That another study be carried out to ascertain why some women are still cold towards the use of family planning methods in regulating the number of children and unwanted pregnancies.

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