

EVALUATION OF ABS PROGRAMME “LIFE AND LIVING” AND ITS INFLUENCE ON REDUCTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG COUPLES IN ISSEKE COMMUNITY



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Abstract

This study investigated how radio programmes could be used to create awareness against domestic violence among listeners of a programme in Isseke rural community of Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. The researchers reviewed both conceptual and empirical literatures that were related and relevant to the study with the agenda-setting theory used as the theoretical framework. The study adopted the survey research design in studying the 372 samples drawn from the 5,321 population of Isseke community using the Taro Yamani's sample size determination formula. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the actual respondents. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Findings from the study reveal among others that the programme has created the necessary awareness on domestic violence against women but has not curbed domestic violence against women. The study recommended among others that more time should be devoted to such programmes that deal with domestic violence against women. Other broadcast stations should see it as call to duty to air programmes that will create the necessary awareness about the ills of domestic violence.

Introduction

Historically, the Garden of Eden till date remains the only habitation (where human beings (Adam and Eve) lived without the usual commotion, fear, pains, oppression, and multiplicity of woes that face human beings today (Genesi 3, p. 16-22). However, it was said that the couple began to suffer pains, deprivations, sickness and death soon after they sinned. According to Ekeli and Tsebee (2012), the world began to expand along with multiplicity of problems leading to a state of inequality, unequal rights, discriminations based on race, religion, gender among others.

The state of inequality among human race led to discrimination and transverses mankind's ways of life and retains it vicious circle from generation to generation. The preference of male children over their female counterpart as an age long practice in greater part of the world draws attention to the male child and through such

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practice, placed him above her female counterpart. And then, when the boys become men and fathers and the girls become women, wives and mothers, the situation remains the same Ekeli and Tsebee (2012). This is the genesis of the inequality and unequal rights observed in the homes today, leading to domestic violence.

One of the most pervasive but the least recognized human abuse in the world is domestic violence. To every good conscience, domestic violence remains the most abusive treatment meted out mostly against women, which as a direct consequence, violates their fundamental human rights (Abama and Kwaja, 2009; Afro News, 2007; Amnesty International, 2007; Nwabugwu, 2012; Nworah 2011; Obi and Ozumba, 2007). Okeibunor and Egbulefu (2012) held that domestic violence is an age long and deep-seated cultural practices exhibited in violent behaviours that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm, injury and distress or pain on women, which subjugate them to second class status. It is a culture of silence which instead of prosecuting the perpetrator inflicts a condemnable stigma on the victim and as well reinforces it (Afro News, 2007; (Aihie, 2009 and Nworah, 2011).

In a more expressive manner, Nworah (2011) made the following exposition about domestic violence when she said that "domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner... or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviour that intimidates, manipulates, humiliates, isolates, frightens, terrorizes, coerces, threatens, blames, hurts, injures or wounds someone" (p.4).

The foregoing makes it imperative to assert that domestic violence can manifest in various forms and magnitude, which includes spousal rape, spousal abuse, battering, name-calling, disrespect, private and public criticism. In a more concise categorisation, Aihie (2009) and Nworah (2011) placed the foregoing into economic abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, etc.

Incidences of domestic violence abound in Nigeria (Okeibunor and Egbulefu, 2012). A highlight by Nwabugwu (2012) narrated how one Mr Godwin Udonta, who resided in Kwali Street, Phase 1, Site 2, Kubwa, Abuja, on Saturday March 31, 2012, attempted to murder his wife, Mrs. Nsini Udonta after years of continuous battering, name-calling, disrespect and economic deprivation. The case of Brume, a lawyer, who made his marriage with his wife Irelioluwade a living nightmare, was also reported. The marriage was seriously bedeviled and marred by incessant physical violence, dehumanising treatments, marital rape, verbal abuse and horrifying raging incidents (Okeibunor & Egbulefu, 2012).

Narrating the incidence, Irelioluwade stated that it all started with a foul, gut wrenching and debilitating verbal abuse, which then graduated to pelting with items like shoes, remote control, hangers, bags and bottles, then followed by dragging, pushing and pulling of her clothes and hair on the ground, with utter dehumanizing beatings that followed.

There were also other reported cases of the death of a 29 year old banker, Titilayo Arowolo by her husband Akolade, a scandalous wife battering of Tess Wigwe by her husband, Dr Wilcox Wigwe, a Nigerian High Commissioner to Kenya and Deji of Akure, Adesina Adepeju who engaged his wife, Olori Bolanle in a public brawl before her death (Wigwe, 2011). Most nations of the world and Nigeria in particular traditionally enthrone and justify domestic violence as a form of discipline and not a taboo. Beating of wives by husbands and children by parents are accepted as a measure of instilling discipline in both parties as women are regarded as children who are equally prone to misconducts (Okeibunor & Egbulefu, 2012). The incidence of domestic violence is therefore regarded as normal or as means of enforcing and ensuring total submission of women to their subordinate status and as private matter that must be protected from public scrutiny (UNICEF, 2001).

The mass media have been in a frontal place of carrying out advocacy and campaigns for the rights of women over the years. This is because of their perceived powerful forces to reckon with in the fight against domestic violence. Kamath (2008) affirmed this position when he asserts that the press is the most potent instrument of a society for economic and social transformation. Reinforcing the above position, the Virtual Knowledge Centre (2012) avers that the media play a paramount role in awareness creation and education against violence on women. Journalism techniques can be employed in advocating for women's right as well as help media audiences live a better life in the society (Jensen, 2008; Niles, 2011).

The broadcast media have demonstrated an undeniable prowess in fighting for women's right in the society. Through their well packaged programmes, radio stations have been known for creating a far-reaching awareness about women's welfare in Nigeria and the world over. The Anambra Broadcasting Service, FM Radio station has created and packaged a programme called "Life and Living" with its primary objective to denounce domestic violence and assert the rights of women in the society. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to know whether ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" has been able to create the necessary awareness against domestic violence among couples in Abacha community.

Statement of Problem

All over the world, women are passing through harrowing experiences of domestic violence in one form or the other. The situation is such that transcends all known dehumanising conditions and speaks volume in the overall subordinate status of women. It enthrones discriminations against women, deprivations of their resources and denials of their fundamental human rights in its entirety. The fight to stop violence against women and enhance their status and development in the society cannot be left to the women alone. The battle needs to be fought on several fronts, with the mass media playing a key role hence, the broadcast media, print media, social media etc. need join forces to combat these patriarchal anomalies dominant in our multi-ethnic society.

The fight can be won through sustained awareness campaign strategies capable of calling all concerned parties to order, prosecuting the perpetrators of domestic violence and protecting the victims (women) and stemming the culture of silence to a culture of equity, justice and fair play. There is also the need to create an enabling environment where women are free to participate as equal partners in socio-cultural, economic and political engagements, without undergoing any physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The broadcast media have all it takes achieve these in the society. The problem therefore is whether the ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" has been able to adequately create awareness against domestic violence in Isseke community of Ihiala Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to evaluate ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" influence on domestic violence among couples in Isseke community. The specific objectives include:

1. To assess respondents' frequency of exposure to the ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" on domestic violence.
2. To ascertain whether the programme has created the necessary awareness against domestic violence among couples in Isseke community.
3. To know whether the programme has helped the respondents in curbing domestic violence in their homes.
4. To understand respondents' attitudes toward the ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" in Isseke community

Theoretical Framework: Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting theory according to McCombs and Shaw (1972 and 1976) emphasizes selective highlights of issues or topics by the media to draw the attention of the audience to those issues. AS a part of their gate keeping function, the media select issues of public interest and constantly feature these issues till they become public agenda of the people. Goffman (2002) and McCombs and Shaw (1976) cited in Ndolo (2005) were of the view that the audience learns how important an issue is by the emphasis and prominence given to the issue by the media. The theory is apt to this study because it depicts the ABS Radio programme "Life and Living" which primary objective is to create awareness against domestic violence on women.

The Review

The Concept of Domestic Violence

Definitions of domestic violence are socially constructed. They have developed over time, and reflect prevailing understandings, interests and power distributions ((Okeibunor & Egbulefu, 2012)). Feminist understandings shaped by the lived experiences of abused women and by supporting research evidence, have helped to

expand conceptualisation of domestic violence as physically injurious assault by highlighting the interrelated range of abusive, coercive, controlling behaviours causing psychological, sexual or physical harm, which often accompany or precede the use or threat of physical force. However, researchers have given considerably less attention to sexual, psychological and other forms of abuse (Dekeseredy, 2000; Saunders 2002). Some issues of terminology remain actively contested, such as whether domestic violence should be a gender-specific or neutral referent and/or encompass all forms and incidence of abuse in all types of intimate relationships (Mullender2001).

The relationship between gender and violence is complex. The different roles and behaviours of females and males, children as well as adults, are shaped and reinforced by gender norms within society (Campbell, 2002). These are social expectations that define appropriate behaviour for women and men (e.g. in some societies, being male is associated with taking risks, being tough and aggressive and having multiple sexual partners).

Differences in gender roles and behaviours often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered to the disadvantage of the other (Ilika, 2005). Thus, in many societies, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status, allowing men control over, and greater decision-making power than women. Gender inequalities have a large and wide-ranging impact on society. For example, they can contribute to gender inequities in health and access to healthcare, opportunities for employment and promotion, levels of income, political participation and representation and education (Plichta, 2004).

Often inequalities in gender increase the risk of acts of violence by men against women. For instance, traditional beliefs that men have a right to control women make women and girls vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual violence by men (Mitra and Singh, 2007). They also hinder the ability of those affected to remove themselves from abusive situations or seek support (Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

Violence against women is most often perpetrated by an intimate partner, but it takes many other forms: violence by a family member, sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures, trafficking for prostitution, child marriages, dowry-related violence, honour killings, sexual violence committed by soldiers during wars and so on (Heise, Ellsberg and Gottmoeller, 2002). Health consequences of such violence range from physical injuries and unwanted pregnancies to sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), emotional problems such as anxiety and depression and (in extreme cases) homicide or suicide (Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002; WHO, 2008; Sarkar, 2008).

For decades, therefore, promoting gender equality has been a critical part of violence prevention. This has included interventions that confront the entrenched beliefs and cultural norms from which gender inequalities develop, and efforts to engage all sectors of society in redressing these inequalities, both of which are

thought to reduce gender-based violence. Despite the long history and high visibility of such measures, however, few have been subject to any kind of scientific evaluation (Coker, 2007).

Gender Equality in an African Context

In September 2008, the United Nations' Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, addressed the organization on the progress of the Millennium Development Goals regarding women issues. According to him, "The gender gaps remain considerable and the full potential of women is untapped". This was not surprising, considering that various studies in recent times have shown an increase in the rate of domestic and gender-based violence (including honor killings, genital mutilation, trafficking and forced marriages), the victimization of women and girls in conflicts, a lack of women in political and economic decision-making positions, and a refusal to guarantee women's reproductive rights, particularly in the area of abortion (Moon, 2008).

Although African countries have adopted a number of universal declarations and Commitments, but little has been done in translating those declarations into national policies (ERICarts, 2005). Even where commitments have been implemented African women are persistently marginalized in accessing information and information communication technologies (ICTs) due to problem of illiteracy, socio-cultural attitudes and lack of understanding of the resources and situational impediments experienced by women (MDG Monitor, 2008). This is perhaps as a result of low access to productive information resources and wide gap between commitments and implementation (ERICarts, 2005).

In this information society, whatever area of empowerment, access to information is very crucial and the African Union Gender Policy realized this, thus one of the policy frameworks is to "promote equitable access for both women and men to resources, knowledge, information and services including basic needs. Also, facilitate the implementation of corrective measures to address existing inequalities in access to and control over resources, as well as other empowerment opportunities" (International Center for Research on Women, 2008). The promotion of women's empowerment in Africa in areas such as education, politics and economics has been slow and much remains to be done. The African Development Forum (ADF) averred that empowering women to participate in the information economy would bring about benefits such as increased creativity, expertise and competitiveness in technology sector and thus assist the information economy thereby lead to economic growth.

The government in African countries cannot do this enormous task alone, this is the reason Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Africa have stood up to the responsibility of empowering women in different areas. In fact, ERICarts (2005) commended the efforts of the NGOs in the development and adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Saunders (2002) however had earlier purported that empowerment cannot be

conferred by external agents and suggests that such agents can play a role in providing ‘support in ways that encourage the disempowered to free themselves of traditional dependency’. Empowerment therefore becomes an effort to achieve social, political and psychological well-being. Looked at from the perspective of people in households, these various states of power can be achieved and further sustained with education and proper information acquisition.

Using Movies and Soaps for Behaviour Change towards Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

There are three reasons why this study is important from a Nigerian perspective, apart from the fact that women’s empowerment and gender equality are part of the Millennium Development Goals. One is that African women, “particularly at the grassroots level, are avid users of media despite a popular belief that they are too poor or busy with house chores” (Opoku-Mensah, 2001). Therefore, one can argue that the more women are exposed to these movies and their messages, the more likely they are to believe that what they see is what is expected of them. Also, it is said that Nigerian films are “oriented towards female viewers” because the audience is predominantly female. However, very few screenplay writers, producers and directors of these movies are women.

A second reason for this study is that African communication and social change scholars have understudied the media aspects in the areas of empowerment and gender equality. With the spread of these movies across the continent and the rise in similar industries in other African nations, it is time to closely examine their contributions to nation-building. Lastly, it is important to understand the terms of women’s empowerment and gender equality from a Nigerian perspective because for decades, Nigerian women’s rights advocates, like many other countries’, and foreign development agencies have advanced the participation of women as equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace, security, and full respect for human rights.

But can Nigerian women actively participate in development if they receive messages contrary to this goal, considering that African culture is posited as being “hostile to women?” (Tamale, 2007). Understanding such definitions could also increase the success of programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs on women’s empowerment and gender empowerment in Nigeria.

While the interventions discussed above have tended to resemble either advertisement, musical pieces, short skirts or what might be termed ‘public information’ broadcasts; one particular genre has been explored as a very successful means of ‘edutainment.’ Soap operas, or ‘serial narratives’, or *telenovelas* in Latin and South America can either explicitly, or implicitly, convey a particular theme which can possibly influence viewers’ behaviour. The subject has been heavily theorised in recent years (Adenugba, 2008), with some even arguing that the format has the power to change and entrench cultural homologies.

Other behaviours observed in British soap operas are discussed by Adamu (2008), who conclude that 'popular television serials offer the chance to portray 'healthy' behaviours as normal, and so help change attitudes and shape behavioural norms among the viewing public'. As such, 'engaging the makers of these programmes in a health promotion agenda may be a fruitful method of promoting healthy behaviours' (Adamu, 2008). Based on the foregoing, it is the believe of this researcher that these media will no doubt impact massively on the Nigerian couples if utilized in sensitising them against domestic violence. Movies and soap operas can be used to create the necessary awareness towards behavioural change and adoption of desired norms in the society.

Method of Study

This study adopted the survey research method. The method utilizes representative samples in studying a large population. It is therefore apt in this study since couples in Isseke community are so large to be examined in one single study. According to the Transition Committee Chairman of Ihiala Local Government Area, Engr Jeff Obi, Isseke has an estimated population of about 5,321 people.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study is 372. This was determined using the Taro Yamani's, (1973) sample size formula. The purposive sampling technique was used in carrying out the study.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument used in collecting data for this study was the questionnaire. It was administered on face to face basis to ensure that the respondents have clear understanding of the questions from the researcher. Also, the researcher's presence will ensure that the respondents fill the questionnaire without mistakes and return same to him on the spot

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study show that majority of the respondents have had good exposure to the ABS Radio programme "Live and Living". This finding supports an earlier observation by Adenugba (2008) who held that mass media have played a vital role supporting women empowerment campaign in Nigeria. This it achieves using its channels which include: the radio, the television, newspaper and magazines, books journals and so on.

Findings from the study also show that the ABS programme "Life and Living" has created the necessary awareness on domestic violence against women. This finding is in tandem with an earlier submission by the Virtual Knowledge Centre (2012) which states that the media play a paramount role in awareness creation and education against violence on women.

Further findings show that majority of the respondents did not agree that the programme has helped in curbing domestic violence. Despite agreeing that the ABS programme has created the necessary awareness on domestic violence against women, the respondents said domestic violence has persisted. Reinforcing this finding, Moon (2008) observed that media have defining power, whether we like it or not” the media are thus hypothesized to fulfill the structural needs of a patriarchal and capitalist society by reinforcing gender differences and inequalities”.

Finally, findings from the study show that the respondents have positive attitude towards the ABS Radio programme “Life and Living”. This finding also supports an earlier observation by Jensen (2008) stated that journalism techniques can be employed in advocating for women’s right as well as help media audiences live a better life in the society.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that study has done justice to the research problem, which was to fill the gap-in-knowledge by establishing that the ABS Radio programme Life and Living can influence respondents’ awareness of domestic violence. The mass media have played a vital role supporting women empowerment campaign in Nigeria. This it achieves using its channels which include: the radio, the television, newspaper and magazines, books journals and so on. In addition to supporting women empowerment campaign, they also perform the functions of socialization, information, education, communication by carrying out enlightenment programmes. They create forum for information and motivation.

The fundamental function of the mass media is mainly to expose, provide and enhance incidental learning. They have the capacity to reflect and shape opinion thus playing active role in public attitude formation. It is a very effective body of communication with good and wide availability which makes it more convincing that a large number of people are more likely to be influenced. Therefore, the mass media aims at converting, re-enforcing, charging or persuading the activities of people in a given society. In assessing the role of the mass media in supporting women empowerment campaign in Nigeria therefore, one takes into cognizance those roles both the radio, television, newspaper, magazines, books and journals etc. have played by improving and ensuring the welfare of the women in our society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. More time should be devoted to such programmes that deal with domestic violence against women.
2. Other broadcast stations should see it as call to duty to air programmes that will create the necessary awareness about the ills of domestic violence.

3. The broadcast stations should endeavour to frame the incidences of domestic violence comprehensively and elaborately so as to expose the forms, and extents for a result-oriented knowledge of families, the public and government to recognize and embrace different positive roles for peaceful and harmonious existence.
4. Women groups such as National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) etc. should engage in a massive campaign to stop the onslaught.

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