

INFLUENCE OF BROADCASTING MEDIA CAMPAIGNS ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: A STUDY OF IKEDURU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study on influence of broadcast media on female genital mutilation remains a topical issue. The broadcast media have tried to influence the local communities but much still needs to be done. This study was anchored on agenda setting and media dependency theories. The study adopted the survey research design. From the population of 108,367 a sample size of 188 was drawn using Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator. The multi-stage sampling technique was used while questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using frequency and simple percentages. The findings of the study showed that 77.8% of the respondents confirmed that they had a moderate level of awareness through the media campaigns on female genital mutilation. Further finding from the data analysed revealed that 41 respondents representing 40% in the study confirmed that by creating information channels to community members and by creating information channels to community members are ways in which broadcast media make efforts in influencing the communities in Imo State on issues associated with FGM. It was recommended that broadcast stations should intensify efforts in their campaign on FGM so that the awareness level will increase and thereby lead to decrease in practices. Also, broadcast media should take into cognizance the content of their campaign with the aim of effectively influencing positive attitude of people towards putting a stop to the practice of FGM.

Keywords: Broadcast Media, Female Genital Mutilation, Imo State.

Introduction

Nigeria has more than two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities with diverse cultures that dictates people's pattern of behaviours (Uturu, 2009). The dynamic nature of the society demands that these patterns of behaviour would be modified or eradicated for the sake of modernization and development. The traditional practice of female genital mutilation of these behaviours, but unlike other distinctive behaviours, it is a prevalent practice in all the Nigerian ethnic nationalities.

Female genital mutilation, which is also known as female circumcision, is a set of procedures used to remove part or all of the external female genitals.

The beginning of this cultural practice is conceivably unknown, but generations have continued this exercise with the notion that it regulates woman's libido, promiscuity and ability to enjoy sex. While also enhancing fertility and child birth. People that do not believe in these perceived benefits of cutting this most essential part of women's organ, still subject their children to female genital mutilation because of cultural orientation, to ensure their acceptability in the society and improve their chances of marriage (Ahmadi, 2013).

Interestingly, the practice has been a source of personal income for the elderly female members of the community who carry out the procedure. Many states in Nigeria, especially Imo State have adopted various strategies to sensitize and mobilize the rural people against female genital mutilation practices. In Imo State laws have enacted to culminate such barbaric act (Nwokolo, 2009). Relevant agencies both government and non-governmental embark on sensitization programmes towards the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the state. The National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) launches a media programme known as Ndukaku (an Igbo expression, meaning, health is better than wealth) while Women Action Research Organization (WARO) engaged in awareness campaign, community dialogue about the practice, cultural and socio-economic issues that reinforced the practice, and community advocacy for people to abandon the practice. The broadcast media, which comprise Radio and TV were extensively used in sensitizing and mobilizing the rural populace against the practice of FGM. Media stations such as Imo Broadcasting Corporation, Nigerian Television Authority, Owerri, and other private Radio Stations have championed the campaigns advocacy against Female Genital Mutilation. In spite of these efforts, Female Genital Mutilation remains widespread in Imo State and Ikeduru Local Government with influence of the Broadcast Media Campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation in the rural areas.

Statement of the Problem

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has long been frowned upon due to the dangers and psychological pain associated with it. Not only that, but it is a complete violation of human rights that should never be tolerated.

According to UNICEF (2017), as cited by Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2019), more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation and cutting in countries where the practice is prevalent. Furthermore, 3 million girls are believed to be at risk of female genital mutilation each year.

FGM is widespread in Nigeria, accounting for one-quarter of all global estimates, and it affects people from all socio-cultural and geo-political backgrounds (UNICEF 2001 as cited in Gbadebo et al. 2021). The current nationwide prevalence of FGM among women of reproductive age is 20%, and 19% among daughters under the age of 14, with the highest frequency (35%) among adult women in the South East, followed by the South West (30%), and the lowest (6%) in the North East (National Population Commission, 2018).

In spite of media campaigns such as End-FGM, Save the girl Child, Say No to Cutting etc. against female genital mutilation; why is the practice still prevalent in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State? This has prompted the researcher to embark on the research, to unravel the continuous widespread in rural communities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research study is as follows:

1. To ascertain community level of awareness of broadcast media campaign on Female Genital Mutilation.
2. To Examine how broadcast media campaign influence Female Genital Mutilation.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study the following research questions were formulated.

1. What is the community members level of awareness on broadcast media Campaign of Female Genital Mutilation?
2. How do broadcast media campaigns influence Female Genital Mutilation?

Review of Related Literature

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a total or partial removal of external female genitalia for non-medical rationale. The practice is mostly common in sub Saharan Africa. An approximated number between 100-140 million women have undergone FGM and 3 million girls yearly are perceived to be at risk globally (Karmaker, et al, 2011). There are growing number of studies which demonstrate a significant association between FGM and various gynaecological and pregnancy complications. World Health Organization (WHO) reports (2000) concluded that FGM has negative implications for women's health, with women who have undergone FGM more likely than others to have adverse obstetric outcomes. FGM has no health benefits and harms girls and women both physically and mentally. These impacts occur at the time of the procedure as well as adulthood, particular motherhood.

All forms of FGM have psychological effects, particularly related to female sexuality and sexual relationships. The IJN regards FGM as a violation of female reproductive rights (United Nations Population Fund(UNFPA), 2007), and thus the ending of FGM is relevance to all health professionals who work with FGM affected women and girls who are at risk. This is because there are in a position to communicate directly with affected community members. (Ahmadu, 2007).

FGM is associated with a series of health risks and consequences. According to Tasin et al (2003) immediate consequences are pain and breeding; difficulty in passing urine; infections including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV); death caused by haemorrhage or infections; Unintended Labia Fusion; and psychological consequences. Long term health risks include chronic pain, keloid formation, reproductive tract and sexually transmitted infections, poor quality of sexual life, birth complications and psychological consequences. Type three FGM bears additional complications like need for later surgery, urinary and menstrual problems, painful sexual intercourse and infertility (Tasin et al, 2013).

Several studies have demonstrated a significant association between FGM and various gynaecological and pregnancy complications. Yet women, who bear these consequences, continue with FGM practice.

According to WHO reports, there is evidence that FGM has negative implications for women's health

with women who have undergone FGM more likely than others to have adverse obstetric outcomes (WHO, 2021).

The impacts of FGM occur at the time of the procedure and adulthood, particularly motherhood (Brown et al, 2013). All forms of Female Genital Mutilation have psychological effects, specially related to female sexuality and sexual relationships.

Empirical Review

A study titled Female genital cutting in the new media, carried out Sobe (2015) cited in “Awareness knowledge and perception of Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C) Radio Campaign and practice among women in Imo State” Nkwam-Uwaoma et al, (2019). The study which was quantitative content analysis analysed how 15 years of newspaper coverage surrounding the launch of millennium development goals framed female genital cutting in four countries with varying prevalence levels of female genital cutting; the United States, Ghana, the Gambia and Kenya. The study found female genital cutting is consistently portrayed as a problematic and thematic topic, largely tied to cultural rituals.

Another study Barker et al (2007). The study provides a modelling of positive norms, attitudes and behaviours through Radio and Television Entertainment Programmes which allows audience to be informed on the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation. This has been a useful channel for actualizing this project. A study by World Health Organization (WHO) classifies FGM into four types depending on the extent of tissue removed (Berg & Underland 2013). The mildest of the types, involves partial or total removal of the clitoris and or the prepuce, type 2 involves partial removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora. Type 3 is the most extensive, it involves narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and positioning the labia minora and the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (Yarin et al, 2013) WHO 1996 also suggests a fourth form which includes unclassified procedures such as cauterization of the clitoris, cutting of the vagina and the introduction of corrosive substance or herbs into the vagina for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it (Peredia et al, 2012).

In a study by Okeke et al. (2017) conducted a study on current status of FGM/C in Nigeria through content analysis, the researchers found out there is no federal law banning FGM/C in Nigeria. They confirmed the need for abolition of this unhealthy practice. Sobel (2015) carried out a study on female genital cutting in the news media using content analysis. The study analysed how 15 years of newspaper coverage surrounding the launch of the Millennium Development Goals framed female genital cutting in four countries with varying prevalence levels of female genital cutting: the United States, Ghana, The Gambia, and Kenya. The study found female genital cutting is consistently portrayed as a problematic and thematic topic, largely tied to cultural rituals. However, coverage is minimal and inconsistent over time and does not appear to be impacted by the increase in international initiatives aimed at combating the practice. Gbadebo et al. (2021) carried out a study on cohort analysis of the state of female genital cutting in Nigeria and it was found that that FGC has reduced over the years from 56.3% among the 1959–1963 birth cohort to 25.5% among 1994–1998 cohorts but a rise in FGC between 1994–1998 cohorts and 1999–2003 cohorts (28.4%). The percentage of respondents who circumcised their daughters reduced from 40.1% among the oldest birth cohort to 3.6% among the younger cohort. Birth-cohort, religion, education, residence, region, and ethnicity were associated with FGC. Factors associated with the daughter's circumcision were birth-cohort, religion, residence, region, ethnicity, wealth, marital status, FGC status of the respondent, and FGC required by religion. Similar factors were found for discontinuation intention. Wogu et al. (2019) carried out a study on impact of media campaign against FGM in rural communities and it was revealed that among others that the media campaign against FGM in Enugu state is ineffective. It further reveals that cultural values (51%), poor network reception (23%), epileptic power supply (18%), inaccessible media, and the nature of the content of the campaign are responsible for the ineffectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Agenda setting theory and media dependency theory. This is because these theories are relevant to this research work.

Agenda –setting theory describes the ability of the broadcast media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. That if a news item is covered frequently, more important. Therefore, this theory is good for this study because broadcast media messages transmitted regularly will impact residence of Ikeduru Local Government positively, to Female Genital Mutilation. In reality, the media only shows the audience what it comprehends as on important issue.

Media dependency theory is a systematic approach to the study of the effects of mass media on audiences and of the interaction between media, audiences and social systems. It is relevant in this research work because it will expose the influence of broadcast media messages in Ikeduru Local Government Area of

Imo State. The theory was introduced by Sandra Ball- Kokeach and Meluin Defleur in 1976.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey approach which was found suitable for this research work. The choice of survey was to facilitate the production of an accurate and identifiable picture of the chosen population.

The population of this study covers all women in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State. According to the 2016 projection of the National Population Commission, the Ikeduru Local Government Area has 108,367. Therefore, the population of this study is 108,367.

The Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size for female members of the Area. The sample size is 188 selected from the autonomous communities and health centres.

The research adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. Ikeduru Local Government was broken into manageable stages. It is this level that make the study easier to manipulate.

- Stage 1:** The researcher selects autonomous communities and health centres.
- Stage 2:** The Researcher purposively selects two villages from the autonomous communities.
- Stage 3:** From the 6 selected villages Umudim, Akabo, Abazu, Amaimo and Atta 188 copies of questionnaire were purposively distributed to respondents i.e $188/5 = 38$.

The structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The analysis is presented using simple percentages and frequency count in tables.

Data Analysis/Discussion of Findings

Data Analysis

Table 1: What is the community member's level of awareness on broadcast media campaigns on female genital mutilation?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High	24	22.2%
Moderate	84	77.8%
Low	-	-
Total	108	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021

From the table above, it can be seen that 84 respondents representing 77.8% said that they had a moderate level of awareness through the media campaigns on female genital mutilation. It means that majority of the respondents indicated that their level of awareness on broadcast media campaigns on female genital mutilation is moderate.

Table 3: How do broadcast media campaigns influence female genital mutilation?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
By creating information channels to community members	28	25.9%
By education community members on the health risks associated with FGM	34	31.5%
All of the above	41	40%
Total	108	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021

From the table above, 41 respondents representing 40% of the respondents believed that by creating information channels to community members and by creating information channels to community members are ways in which broadcast media influences FGM in communities of Ikeduru in Imo State. It then means that by creating information channels to community members and by creating information channels to community members are means through which broadcast media can influence community members on FGM.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of finding revealed that 77.8% of the respondents confirmed that they had a moderate level of awareness through the media campaigns on female genital mutilation. This means that most of the people who are exposed to broadcast media campaigns on FGM are moderately aware of the danger associated with FGM. This finding is line with that of Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2019) that revealed that there are moderate awareness and knowledge level amongst women in Imo State about FGM/C. By implication of this finding it means nothing has change. Similarly, Sobel (2015) in a study revealed that female genital cutting is consistently portrayed as a problematic and thematic topic, largely tied to cultural rituals. However, coverage by media is minimal and inconsistent over time. Going by media dependency theory this study was anchored the media ought to be up and doing so that people will depend on them for proper information as it concern FGM

Further finding from the data analysed 41 respondents representing 40% in the study confirmed that by creating information channels to community members and by creating information channels to community members are ways in which broadcast media make efforts in influencing the communities in Imo State on issues associated with FGM. The respondents from their responses indicated that it is glaring that the broadcast media is making little effort in the fight against FGM. From the theoretical perspective of agenda setting as the media through its campaigns enlighten people about FGM they are invariably telling them to think about the danger of the practice of FGM. This finding is in tandem with that of Okeke et al. (2017) that revealed that in as much as there is no federal law banning FGM/C in Nigeria there is the need for abolition of this unhealthy practice. However, Wogu et al. (2019) in their study did reveal that the media campaign against FGM in Enugu state is ineffective. It further reveals that cultural values (51%), poor network reception (23%), epileptic power supply (18%), inaccessible media, and the nature of the content of the campaign are responsible for the ineffectiveness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is crystal clear that FGM is dangerous, and as such, the broadcast media is unrelenting in trying to raise the consciousness of people towards the practice of FGM. However, their efforts in doing this are still not so encouraging as most of the respondents confirmed that they are moderately exposed to FGM campaign of broadcast media. The truth is that the menace may likely continue if people are not well exposed to the media campaigns discouraging the practice of FGM. The practice will continue as most people, ignorant of the dangers of FGM, will keep practicing it in their communities.

Recommendation

Based on the findings the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Broadcast stations should intensify efforts in their campaign on FGM so that the awareness level will increase and thereby lead to decrease in practices.
2. The broadcast media should take into cognizance the content of their campaign with the aim of effectively influencing positive attitude of people towards putting a stop to the practice of FGM.

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