

Routing for alternative paradigms in campaigning for the adoption of modern contraceptive methods of family planning in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria's government is dedicated to the 2030 goal for family planning. Therefore, the promotion of family planning is more than a matter of viewpoint; determining what needs to be done to advance the policy is critical. This article examined Nigerian media campaigns promoting the use of modern contraceptives. Through literature review, it was discovered that many people continue to refuse to use any contraception due to religious, cultural, and fear of adverse effects, which the media has failed to address. Although it cannot be denied that family planning media campaigns have had a significant impact on the adoption of MCMs, the adoption rate is still embarrassingly low. Thus, the approach of an alternative paradigm is the panacea for accelerating the adoption of MCMs, particularly in rural regions. This strategy would aid in the development of self-efficacy, involvement, and the elimination of cultural and language barriers in family planning communication interventions.

Keywords: Alternative paradigms, Family planning, Media campaigns, Modern contraceptive methods

1. Introduction

Unplanned pregnancies tend to increase the family size of society's weakest individuals, who are compelled to share the little resources they have. Specific rural communities exposed to modern contraception and other information about a healthy sexual life do not consider it essential. The community has been thrown into turmoil due to their apathy and reluctance to adopt modern family planning methods. According to Monjok, Smesny, Ekabua and Essien (2010), up to 80 million (38 percent) of the 210 million pregnancies that occur each year are unplanned, and 46 million (22 percent) of those pregnancies end in abortion, resulting in a high maternal mortality rate. As addressed in-depth in the research by Monjok et al. (2010), most women in this category prefer a reasonable age difference between their children. At the same time, some wish to quit altogether having children. Despite this, many people still refuse to utilise modern contraceptive methods. Contrary to common opinion, contemporary family planning contraceptive techniques have been clinically researched and found to be the safest and most effective means of spacing out childbirths and avoiding undesired pregnancies.

As a result, people must grasp what family planning comprises, including the idea that family planning extends beyond helping individuals regulate the timing of their children's births and supporting women in having a meaningful sexual life after giving birth. It will help a woman prepare both psychologically and physically for another pregnancy, enabling her to welcome another child into the world. As Omoera (2010) discovered, radio and television have been beneficial in increasing public awareness of the advantages of family planning and promoting its broad adoption. Even more importantly, the media has played a critical role in disseminating knowledge about family planning. Most family planning initiatives in Nigeria utilise radios since radios are owned by a more significant proportion of the population than TVs, which are only found in the homes of a small percentage of the rural population.

Although many people have heard of contemporary family planning methods, it has been concluded that more has to be done to encourage their use. According to Obinna (cited in Aliyu, Charles, Silent, Zaniab & Ja'far, 2018), the root of the issue is a lack of information about contemporary contraceptive methods for family planning and, essentially, the misconception or misinformation about its effectiveness for child spacing and prevention of unwanted pregnancies. During a meeting with the Association of General and Private

Medical Practitioners of Nigeria and the Guild of Medical Directors, it was disclosed that Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (Folorunsho-Francis, 2020). According to the World Health Organization (2018), Nigeria has the highest maternal death rate globally, with over 800,000 women dying between 2005 and 2015. One in every 22 Nigerian women dies due to pregnancy-related complications.

Information dissemination through central broadcast media has been seen as the remedy for overcoming conceiving and pregnancy resistance to end the mayhem of undesired pregnancies and maternal mortality. There are still issues with how existing contraceptive methods are seen, which explains why they are not extensively utilised. There has been much emphasis placed on the role of information and media in affecting people's behaviour. Nevertheless, the focus has shifted to how local media can play an essential role in supporting growth and development in rural regions. The cosmopolitan media have been unable to give the development information that people need, thus criticised as unduly aristocratic, Western-minded, and economically motivated. This paper argues that communication through community media to change the narrative of the adoption rate of modern contraceptives in Nigerian rural communities is crucial.

2. Statement of the problem

Nigeria's population is rapidly growing at an unfathomable pace. According to the United Nations, more than a million individuals were added to Nigeria's population in 2019. Figures show an increase of almost 5,000 new members in the ranks. In Worldometer (2021), Nigeria's population increased to 208 988 700 individuals, with additional births expected before that year. Many researchers have been inspired to conduct numerous studies on factors contributing to the country's overpopulation problem and spotted family planning issues. To avoid a catastrophe caused by insufficient birth control, the federal government has incorporated family planning media campaigns into its yearly development plan. For more than a decade, television programs on modern contraceptive methods for family planning have been aggressively promoted in rural and urban areas (Aliyu et al., 2018; Omoera, 2010; Monjok et al., 2010; Duru et al., 2018; Lamina, 2015). Religious views and worries about side effects, cultural norms, and misinformation may have hampered contraceptive usage. Hence, the need for routing for an alternative paradigm for behavioural change.

3. Literature review

Media, since its emergence, has been keeping man's company as many people turn to it to get entertained and get helpful information that is practically impossible or difficult to get within their reach. This information, therefore, helps shape people's minds and influence the way society is being run. So far, the mass media has helped promote national developmental courses such as the modern family planning methods. The promotion of family planning is often done through radio or television advertisements, drama, and other broadcast programs. Omoera, Grethchen and Deja (as cited in Omoera, 2010) noted that constant awareness through media about the availability of contraception and encouragement of abstinence had helped the high rate of adolescent pregnancy in the U.S.

Concerning how media has helped promote family planning in Nigeria, Nyakundi, Kibiwott and Alfred (2018) said mass media has become irreplaceable tools for disseminating vital information about family planning (FP) from medical personnel in the class. Also, Etokidem, Ndifon, Etowah and Asuqo's (2017) report draws attention to how media have created awareness and promotion of family planning. Owoseye (2017) documented that the Federal Government's advocacy for the use of modern family planning among sexually active women in Nigeria has yielded positive results as more women were recorded to have had fundamental knowledge about what family planning is really about. Moreover, many women in this category have had positive behavioural changes about child spacing. Moreover, the final health report for the NBS from the National Nutrition and Health Survey (Owoseye, 2017) showed an increase in the use of modern health contraceptive methods compared to the traditional methods of preventing unwanted pregnancy and abortions.

However, many studies have indicated the reverse. For instance, Chukwuji, Tsafe, Sayudi, Yusuf and Zakarriya (2018), titled "Awareness, Access, and Utilisation of Family Planning Information in Zamfara State, Nigeria," also investigated the level of awareness and utilisation of FP. The finding revealed that married women of Zamfara State are aware of various contraception methods, but factors such as culture, spouse's disagreement, financial constraint, fear of side effects, and non-availability of close health influence the use of family planning and attitudes towards the innovation. Olawande and Fasasi (2017), in a study titled 'Family planning perception and sustainable development in Nigeria'. A Nigerian home survey of 424 married women was used to conduct the research. They also spoke with five married women in-depth about the high

fertility rate and its relation to various forms of family planning. 95.5% of respondents had heard of family planning, but 53.3% declined to use any technique because they were worried about adverse effects, and 51% said that money had been a barrier to its usage. In contrast, 35% of those polled said it was against their religious beliefs. Nigerian researchers studied 'Family planning practices of rural community residents in Cross Rivers State' (Etokidem, Ndifon, Etowah & Asuqo 2017). Their findings revealed that 17.2% are using family planning methods, 56% indicated that it is against their religious beliefs, 43.8% said it is against their culture, 64.9% said they would like to have more children, 35.3% said their partners are against family planning 42.9% said family planning does not work, 76% argues that it reduces sexual pleasure. In comparison, 59% said it promotes infidelity. In addition, in a paper titled "Family planning in Nigeria and prospect for the future." Despite awareness, Mandara (2012) addressed the low adoption of FP in Nigeria. The study used two qualitative methods: focus group interviews and in-depth interviews. The report shows that illiteracy, low level of income, and non-availability of family planning services restrain people from adopting FP.

Olubodun, Balogun and Ogunsilu (2020), in support of these studies, stated in their paper titled 'Awareness and practice of family planning among women residing in two rural communities in Ogun state, Nigeria' that even in communities where knowledge about modern contraceptive methods of family planning is widely preached, media campaigns remain futile. A substantial percentage of people still refuse to adopt any contraceptive methods due to religious, cultural practices, and fear of side effects which the media have, over time, failed to address.

4. Adoption of alternative paradigm

The national media, because of their commercial objectives, cannot always be believed by their audience and the communities they serve. Nigerian government-controlled and privately-owned media have become so close to the government and corporate sources that their reporting resembles a dialogue between powerful 'insiders' rather than an endeavour to keep an eye on government and business on behalf of the nation and its people. There are cases when funders, marketers, or owners may have pressured the media not to report on a disturbing story to have their interests protected. Viewers are becoming less confident in what they hear, read, and see due to the inability of conventional media to keep their assurances of neutrality. When it comes to producing development communication interventions—such as adopting family planning, an alternate paradigm emphasises small media networks and indigenous tactics. According to this perspective, communities with grassroots participation are more inclined to adopt suitable initiatives.

One illustration of this notion is the community media approach. "Where carefully developed programs have failed," according to UNICEF's UNESCO study, "this approach, which consists in helping people... to acquire an awareness... of new options, rather than to force them to implement a plan that was formulated elsewhere, makes it possible to intervene more effectively." The concept of interactivity allows people to learn independently through small media, which serves as an operational tool for developmental ideas. "Community media" refers to grassroots or locally-oriented media access initiatives motivated by a deep dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content and are dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, improving community relations and promoting community solidarity. When creating communication interventions, various issues must be considered. If these are not addressed, modern contraceptive methods for family planning will mostly remain fiction. Language and culture are essential to this endeavour. The English-speaking countries of West Africa demonstrate the employment of a foreign language for mass media communication in rural Africa. People speak with one another in their native tongues daily. The fact that community media communicates in the language of the people it serves is its most important feature. Community media are critical in responding to linguistic and cultural complexities since indigenous wisdom, knowledge, philosophy, and science are intertwined in the language. As a result, community media is better equipped to elicit cooperation from people of all cultural backgrounds to adopt modern family planning methods.

On the other hand, the alternative paradigm adheres to the ideas of reciprocal determinism, which displays the interdependence of behaviour, personal qualities, and the environment. According to Bandura, health behaviour theories stress the relevance of self-efficacy as a critical component of change. Another way to boost self-efficacy is to get individuals together in a safe atmosphere to debate their viewpoints on a common problem and develop innovative ideas as solutions. Goal-setting, behavioural contracting, monitoring, and reward are approaches used to drive change in rural communities.

5. Conclusion

This paper concludes that family planning advertisements are often broadcast on mainstream media and that many Nigerians have been exposed to them. However, the review of previous studies has shown that these media efforts failed to settle issues surrounding the adoption of MCMs or misinformation, such as side effects, cultural beliefs, religious belief, and others. Therefore, this study concludes that although there was a palpable influence of family planning radio advertisements on the adoption of MCMs in some sections of society, to accelerate the adoption of MCMs, especially in rural communities, the methodology of community media is the panacea. This method would help to increase self-efficacy, participation as well as overcome the language barrier.

6. Recommendations

Observably, misinformation and people's cultural beliefs, values, and religious inclinations, for example, may have already moulded people's perception of modern contraceptive methods, which the primary use of mainstream media may not easily modify. Therefore, it is recommended that the alternative paradigm for developing communication interventions be adopted.

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