



An Overview of the Roles of Mass Media toward Reducing Exploitation of Elderly People in Gombe State

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Abstract

Worldwide most elderly persons are maltreated in various communities, despite the pivotal roles they are playing in national and local development. In Nigeria population, 65 years and above are almost 4.3% while 2.8% of people are 65 years above respectively. Besides, 2006 National Population Census (NPC), stress that number of cases of elderly abuse have been reported in the mass media as these people are effortless in present and past violence, as they reported involving in several criminal activities. Countless cases of disrespect and neglect are not given any concern. The circumstances become even worse when perpetrators are very close relatives and in some cases blood relatives also. The present paper attempts to study the role of mass media in minimizing the misuse of elderly people in Gombe state. Further, the aims are focusing more on abuse and victimization character from the perpetrators. In conclusion, majorities of elders especially those with little or no source of income reside with their families' faces abuse and victimization. Based on the views of scholars on this topic the following recommendations were drawn: The government should establish a ministry, agency or any board and also initiate a policy which will take care of the elderly person in the state, more especially those that are not in position to take care of their needs and their health issues. There is need for all Mass Media house be public, private or community to improve their programs and activities which will also concentrate on the issue and shows the importance of Elderly person in the society. Religious and Community leaders should keep on preaching and enlightening the people against exploitation of Elderly persons in the communities.

Keywords: Mass Media, Exploitation, Elderly People



Introduction

The Mass Media play a significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behavior against elderly people abuse and maltreating (Goddard and Saunders 2001), drew attention to the essential role of the media in increasing society's awareness of, and response to, elderly abuse and neglect. Of particular note was the part played by news and features that reported on specific elderly people abuse cases, research and intervention strategies. Such media attention to abuse has, at times, positively influenced public, professional and political responses to the circumstances in which children and young people find themselves. Understanding media influences, and how to use the media constructively, may thus be an essential tool for those who advocate for elderly people, children, young people, and their families (Brawley 1995).

In addition to news stories, feature articles, and investigative journalism, sporadic mass media education and prevention campaigns are launched. These campaigns usually endeavor to broaden community knowledge of child abuse and neglect, to influence people's attitudes towards children and young people, and to change behaviors that contribute to, or precipitate, the problem of child abuse and neglect in our communities. For several reasons, however, the effectiveness of these campaigns remains contentious. Primarily, the effectiveness of mass media in the prevention of child abuse and neglect is debatable. Rayner (1996) argues that "media campaigns are bloody expensive" and their impact is difficult to determine. Expensive media campaigns may be hard to justify in a political climate where limited funds and resources are provided to address children's needs. Further, McDevitt (1996) cites O'Keefe and Reed (1990) to note that: "At best, the media are 'effective at building citizen awareness of an issue' but more complex attitudinal or behavioural change requires 'more direct forms of citizen contact and intervention'." Others argue, however, that mass media campaigns and media coverage of the abuse and neglect of children perform an important and significant role in placing issues such as child abuse on the public and political agenda. Lindsey (1994) maintains that: "Media has a central role in mediating information and forming public opinion. The media casts an eye on events that few of us directly experience and renders remote happenings observable and meaningful." As Wurtele and Miller-Perrin (1993) have observed, media coverage of child sexual assault has contributed to demystifying and reducing the secrecy that has characteristically surrounded its occurrence. Similarly, a review of the literature on mass media campaigns reveals many examples of campaigns impacting on public knowledge about issues such as work safety, drug and alcohol use, drink-driving, speeding, cigarette smoking, obesity, AIDS, and domestic violence. Attitudinal and/or behavioural change may also occur during campaigns, although this result may be short-lived, lapsing when campaigns end (Reger, Wootan and Booth-Butterfield 2000; Freimuth, Cole and Kirby 2001).

Media Opportunities in Reaching the Populace

Mass media present the opportunity to communicate to large numbers of people and to target particular groups of people. As observed by Gamble and Gamble (2013), mass communication is significantly different from other forms of communication. They note that mass communication has the capacity to reach "simultaneously" many thousands of people who are not related to the sender. It depends on "technical devices" or "machines" to quickly distribute messages to diverse audiences often unknown to each other. It is accessible to many people, but may be avoided. It is orchestrated by specialists whose intent is to persuade potential audiences of the benefits of their attention. It is "controlled by gatekeepers" who censor the content of messages. And finally, unlike one-to-one co] communication, it produces



only minimal, delayed feedback to its senders. However, mass communication simultaneously presents opportunities *and* limitations, both of which require consideration when planning mass media assisted eradication of social problems such as child abuse and neglect. According to Wellings and Macdowall (2000), “The strength of the mass media, lies in helping to put issues on the public agenda, in reinforcing local efforts, in raising consciousness about issues and in conveying simple information. The limitations of the mass media are that they are less effective in conveying complex information, in teaching skills, in shifting attitudes and beliefs, and in changing behaviour in the absence of other enabling factors.” Campaigns, and other forms of media education and entertainment (such as television programs, film and live productions), may be targeted at all families with a view to encouraging positive attitudes toward children and stopping abuse before it starts or is even considered (primary prevention). Groups of people identified as particularly susceptible to abusive behavior may be targeted (secondary prevention). Further, a campaign or program may target families in which abuse has already occurred with the intentions of preventing recurrence of the abuse (tertiary prevention). Thus, abuse of older persons is a major societal problem that mostly goes undetected. Although not a new phenomenon, the speed of population ageing worldwide has given rise to fears that abuse of older persons, too, may increase in its incidence, prevalence and complexity. However, majority of elders are not in order meanwhile those who have a regular source of income face less abuse. To maintain confidentiality of family matters, elderly persons frequently do not report such crimes and undergo trauma.

Historically, elderly person has been accorded little, if any, status in society. Deprived of rights and perceived as the property of their parents or guardians, elderly persons could be treated any way by their “caretakers” (Archard 2015). In this context, community awareness and acceptance of the reality of elderly abuse, particularly elderly person and child abuse perpetrated by family members, has been slow. “Stranger dangers”, beliefs those children’s stories are untrustworthy, and beliefs that parents always act in the best interests of their children, appear to be easier for communities to accept them. Such beliefs may present people with a means of turning a blind eye to the reality that elderly and child abuse is often perpetrated by adults well known to elderly person and children, in elderly persons own homes, and in other trusted environments.

Media Influences on Elder’s Rights

The impact of media advertising on Elders and adolescents is well documented, as is concern about some aspects of the media’s powerful influence on elders’ attitudes and behaviors, for example, Macklin and Carlson 1999; Inquiry into the Effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families, Victoria (2000). Television may be “a more powerful socialization agent than peers and teachers”. Hutson, (2013), as acknowledged in a major New Zealand newspaper, it is notable that: “The media promote violence as an effective way of dealing with conflict through television films, videos, and interactive video games” (The New Zealand Herald, 2001).

One of the influences of Mass media in Gombe state for elder’s right are seriously recognized as a way of improving their right and telling the populace of the state to keep on recognizing the existence of the elderly person in life and also ensured all their right. The media houses of the state are carried out their programmes differently with different names and different times of broadcasting it with different styles. For instance, Gombe Media Cooperation (GMC) named their programs as (Jiyabayauba) and it reached every angle of the state, whereby at times they used to opened a phone to give a phone number for receiving a call as a way of



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answering questions, receiving information of maltreating an elderly persons and in Gombe state both youth and elders are really appreciating the programmes. Vision Fm Gombe their own programme is known as (Madubi), the programme is from both Muslim and Christian preachers who fully participate in it by saying the right of an elderly persons through the teaching of Islam and Christianity and the programmes are carried out and broadcasted weekly that's Friday and Sunday. And that of Progress Fm Radio Gombe elderly persons programme is straight forward dealing with the elders by stating their importance towards the development of the State, they usually invite an elderly peoples from various angle of the state, they are doing it the Gombe Media Television (GMTV) did their own, most of their guest are elderly people from various class and various angle, they usually tell the audience the importance and functions of an elderly person in the state. While Amana Fm Radio Gombe their elderly person programme is directly dealing with women (elders) name as (Daga Matasanmu) whose remain widows and childless, the programme is mostly calling the attention of the youth i.e. children and wealthy one to pay their attention by assisting and helping the elders to ensure that the live freely and enjoy all their rights as human being the way others are enjoyed.

Finally, at times all the above mentioned mass media houses of the state used to carried out special programmes of an elderly person by mentioning the functions of the government in terms of assisting the elderly persons in the state like the #5000 given to the elderly person from the previous administration of state government and that of federal government programme of social investment known as Cash Conditional Transfer (CCT). So the Mass Media programmes really adjust the life style of the people both the youth and the elders.

In evidence given to the Victoria, Inquiry into the Effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families in Victoria, (2000) further endorses this view: "Contrary to some claims, many people in the medical, public health, and scientific communities are in agreement that the relationship between television violence and aggression and violence in young people does exist. Exhaustive reviews of the evidence accumulated over 40 years and we are talking about 3000 different studies have led researchers to conclude unequivocally that mass media significantly contributes to the aggressive behavior and attitudes of many children, adolescents, and, of course, adults. "However, this power of the media negatively influence children's attitudes and behaviors may be used to impact positively on the lives of children and adolescents. According to the Inquiry of the Effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families in Victorian Government, "Qualitative evidence suggests that quality children's television can enhance child development by providing positive role models of cooperation and collaboration as a responsible way of acting in the world." Indeed, the constructive use of mass media can assist in teaching children and young people socially desirable ways of dealing with conflict, knowledge of their rights to integrity and protection from harm, healthy eating habits and lifestyles, and ways to assert themselves, also on how to take care of their parents when come to an older age and their rights in a positive, acceptable manner. As noted in the Inquiry into the Effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families in, evaluations of educational television programs, designed either for pre-scholars or for older children, have suggested their effectiveness in "heightening a range of social behaviors" (Victoria, 2000).

According to Victoria, (2000): the Inquiry into the effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families "is one thing on which the critics and the defenders of television agree is that it is a central and pervasive part of modern life. Children can spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep it is a major socializing force in children's lives." Mass media education and prevention campaigns may be designed to target children and young people, providing them with useful information and alerting them to



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avenues for further information, help and support. Campaigns can also use regular television programs for children.

Further, campaigns may be designed to give children and young people an opportunity to express their views on issues that affect them when taking care of their parents of an older age, specifically targeting adult audiences that habitually ignore the views and experiences of elderly people. Research on the physical punishment of elderly persons (Saunders, in progress) suggests, for example, that adults may be interested to hear children's views on the issue of physical discipline, and children interviewed in the research were keen for adults to hear their views. To date, however, the media rarely, if ever, consults elderly persons and takes their views into account before reporting on the physical punishment of elderly persons. Indeed, the media often make light of the issue of physical punishment (Saunders and Goddard 2004).

Tomison (1996) has noted that The United Kingdom Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of elderly Abuse made a recommendation that the media "take a more balanced and sympathetic view of elderly persons". He also highlighted that: "In line with a belief in the importance of 'listening to elderly person', the Commission felt that the media should take the views of elderly persons into account when presenting on an issue in which elderly person have some interest. The Commission recommended that the media should have an obligation to consider elders and child's best interest in stories in which children feature and elderly person lives, and that the failure to do so would constitute grounds for a complaint to a relevant authority."

Global Synopsis on Elderly Abuse

As reported in issues paper 14 in this series, elderly person abuses and the media (Goddard & Saunders 2004), an elderly person can be encourage to express their views through the media. The UK Elder's Express is one of the examples, as it is Youth Forum in Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper. Elderly abuse is now increasingly the subject of television dramas, documentaries, films, and live theatre productions. Some of them, characteristically controversial, have attracted comment in the literature and have been reviewed in the print media. Television programs are often followed by information about where victims and offenders/potential offenders can seek help, and phone numbers to ring (help lines) are often displayed. (Edwards et al (1999).

Elderly abuse is a community problem and as such it ought to be everybody's business. However, as noted above, as part of the ongoing campaign by Australians Against Elderly Abuse, Every old age is important, Quantum Market Research found that: "elderly abuse, as a serious social problem, is poorly understood by the public on a number of levels including its true extent and nature only 4 per cent of respondents accurately estimated the size of the problem, 29 per cent of respondents underestimated the problem by at least 90,000 reports" (Goddard and Mitchell 2007).

Researches carried out by Quantum for Australians against elderly person Abuse are integral to a successful campaign. Social marketing principles, which incorporate such research, are increasingly recognized for their relevance to campaign planning and evaluation. The social marketing model has much to contribute to plan mass communication campaigns (Windahl, 1994). Successful commercial marketing involves an "exchange process" that results in the satisfaction of the needs of two or more groups of people. Communication thus plays a significant role: an offer is communicated to the client based on essential information received by the seller about the client's "needs, wants and resources" (Windahl et al. 1994).



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The statement above summarized seven key elements of Andreason's (1995) social marketing model (which was used in the *Breaking the Cycle* campaign) as follows:

1. Consumer behaviour is the bottom line: learning new information is only important if it leads to the desired behavioural outcome (raising awareness and changing attitudes may be steps in this direction).
2. Programs must be cost-effective: limited resources must always be used wisely in the social services arena.
3. All strategies begin with the client: rather than attempting to make an audience accept and carry out the marketer's values and beliefs, practitioners of social marketing recognize clients will only change their behaviour when they believe it is in their interests. It is therefore essential to start with an understanding of the target audience's needs and wants its values and its perceptions.
4. Interventions involve marketing theory's classic "four Ps".
5. Market research is essential to designing, pre-testing and evaluating intervention programs.
6. Markets are segmented: initial research inevitably points out how different the client groups are and highlights the limits of mass marketing. (The use of a budget will impact on the ability to segment markets.)
7. Competition is always recognized: every choice of action by the client involves giving up some other action. What the client sees as major alternative behaviors must always be kept in mind so the deficiencies of these alternatives can be highlighted and the benefits of the new behaviour promoted.

The above stated seven (7) key elements of mass media are found available in all the programmes and activities of television and radio stations that are operated in Gombe state at large right from public one i.e. government owned one and other four radio stations which are Gombe Media Cooperation (GMC) FM and GMTV, Progress Radio FM, Amana Radio FM station and Vision FM radio station. They all carried out their programmes based on their capability but all the programmes are sweetened the needs of the community and societies more regards to the issue of misuse and maltreating of an elderly person in the state. Globally, the number of cases of elder maltreatment is projected to increase as many countries have rapidly ageing populations whose needs may not be met easily due to resource constraints. Elderly abuse is associated with a number of consequences, both for individuals as well as societies. Victims of elderly abuse often experienced significant distress and may never fully emotionally recover from trauma. The individual may suffer from a growing sense of insecurity, from illness, anxiety or depression. Consequences of elderly abuse may be worsened because shame and fear of getting institutionalized may cause reluctance to seek help. Victims of elder abuse are typically torn between the feelings they have for their abusers and their desire to speak up about the abuse. They are also often dependent on their abuser (WHO, 2011).

Elder abuse, including neglect seems to lead to higher dependence in performing activities of daily living, increased emergency room visits, higher rates of mortality, and self-destructive behaviors in abused elders which can even result in suicide. For older people, the consequences of maltreatment can be especially serious because their bones are more brittle and convalescence takes longer. At the societal level, abuse is related to higher direct costs related to health care, case detection and staff training, as well as indirect costs related to loss of social capital and the reduced ability of people to productively contribute to society.

Elder abuse has cultural, ethnic and religious dimensions. For example, in Norway the definitions of elder abuse include "family disharmony" and in France "moral cruelty"



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(Lowenstein 2009: 282; cf. Phelan 2013: 6-7). The World Health Organization's (WHO) definition may provide some common ground to discuss abuse in an international context:

“Elder abuse is a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.” (WHO 2008).

Abuse can range from what might clearly constitute a criminal offence, e.g. sexual or physical abuse, theft, etc., to acts that cause harm to an older person whether by omission or otherwise, e.g. neglect through lack of resources or difficulties with interpersonal relationships. Abuse and neglect have been distinguished depending on whether or not there has been an active violation of rights or an absence of action. The abuser can be a stranger, an acquaintance or a trusted other. The perpetrator can be the person him or herself, in which case one would talk about self-neglect. Abuse can take place at home (domestic abuse) or in a health and care setting (institutional abuse). Depending on the motivation of the perpetrator, it can be intentional or unintentional (De-Donder et al. 2011: 130; Anetzberger 2012: 13-14).

The following types are commonly differentiated:

1. Physical abuse: violent action or brutality causing harm, physical pain or malaise, including hitting, slapping or pushing, inappropriate restraint or misuse of medication;
2. Psychological abuse (including emotional, mental, verbal abuse): actions inflicting mental pain, anguish or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts, including abusive language, manipulation, bullying, threats, humiliation or isolation;
3. Sexual abuse: non-consensual physical contact such as unwanted touching or kissing;
4. Financial/material abuse: use of money or goods without consent and to the disadvantage of an older person, including theft of money or goods, pressure in connection with wills and inheritance, as well as an abusive utilization of power of attorney;
5. Neglect: intentional or unintentional refusal or failure to fulfill a care-taking obligation, for example insufficiency of nutrition, personal hygiene, health care or company;
6. Self-neglect: refusal or being unable to care about own health or safety;
7. Discrimination: based on ageism, racism, sexism, a person's disability.

Based on the stated statement and reasons of how a elderly persons are maltreated and abused in every angle of the society, that's why the mass media woke up by initiating and broadcasting a new programs that will enhance the society by adjusting their attitudes of maltreating an elderly persons in their society. The programmes varies from station to another be a television, a radio station, magazines, news paper e.t.c. Globally, mass media play a vital role towards reducing the rates of abusing of elderly persons either from family member's i.e caretakers, medical personnel's, politicians, wealthy peoples.

Days in Respect of Elderly People in Nigeria

World Elderly Abuse Awareness Day (15th June) is one of many excellent opportunities to share information on the links and many facets of abuse and neglect in later life, as a family violence problem, an intergenerational concern, as well as a health, justice, and human rights issue. It is an opportunity to join together and recognize the many local and

regional efforts to address the problem. These efforts are often overlooked. It is also a chance to speak with one voice on this important matter.

According to United Nation (UN 2020), Governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, religious groups and individuals can promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect in later life by organizing observances of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Day also provides an opportunity to increase knowledge of the cultural, social, economic and demographic processes affecting abuse and neglect of older adults living in community and institutional settings. Education and public awareness campaigns have been vital for informing people in a growing number of countries about elder abuse. Raising awareness is a fundamental prevention strategy that involves not only teaching new information but also helping to change attitudes and behavior.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and other elder abuse awareness initiatives can be an intensive period of focus on both a national and local level where organizations become engaged in this issue. It can become an opportunity to engage the support of key legislators to increase funding for public awareness and the needed community resources.

World Awareness Day is also an opportunity to link nation-wide efforts to international initiatives. The joint cooperation can enable people to build new partnerships and engage a wider audience in saying "No" to mistreatment of older adults in all parts of the world. One of the greatest benefits of a specific occasion like World Awareness Day or other awareness campaigns is the opportunity for seniors' groups, other community groups and non-government organizations as well as government bodies to plan and work together. The event can often be a means to build and strengthen partnerships. When organizations only have a few resources, they may not feel they can accomplish as much as they would like. By working together, resources can be pooled to create a larger and better event than any one organization could accomplish alone. Special days can come and go. Communities may want to plan and use the efforts for the Day to build a legacy of new information, products and publications, as well as action plans for the year and longer term. When developing events across a country or in specific communities, it is useful to share information while planning, so that people know what others are doing to celebrate and recognize the event in their community or other jurisdictions. This can aid collaboration where appropriate, and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as follow:

1. The government should establish a ministry, agency or any board and also initiate a policy which will take care of the elderly person in the state, more especially those that are not in position to take care of their needs and their health issues.
2. There is need for all Mass Media house be public, private or community to improve their programmes and activities which will also concentrate on the issue and shows the importance of Elderly person in the society.
3. Religious and Community leaders should keep on preaching and enlightening the people against exploitation of Elderly persons in the communities.
4. Community leaders should keep on emphasizing and punishing all the perpetrators of the issue.
5. Non-Governmental organizations and philanthropic should patronize in supporting ethical awareness and financial aid to the elderly persons especially the vulnerable one.



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