Chapter 5

Impact of Indigenous Language Media on Safe Motherhood Practices

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the role of indigenous language media and how it has impacted safe motherhood practices in Lagos State. The objectives are to know how the media using indigenous languages have been able to reach more women and inform them on best practices on safe motherhood practices and whether professional health providers communicate in indigenous language to women during ante natal sessions. A questionnaire was administered on pregnant women and nursing mothers at a public general hospital in the state while nurses were interviewed on the use of indigenous language. The research was also carried out in three indigenous radio stations in Lagos. The study found that for Nigeria in general, and Lagos State in particular, to reduce maternal mortality rate and advance in safe motherhood practices, involvement of indigenous language media is imperative in giving women necessary information. The majority of the respondents answered that they would prefer health workers to speak in the local language.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a serious concern on safe motherhood practices and the need to address women’s reproductive health challenges. Many women are still losing their lives during childbirth in spite of advances in the field of health. As part of efforts

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Impact of Indigenous Language Media on Safe Motherhood Practices

in addressing the issue, the World Health Organisation (WHO) came up with the Safe Motherhood Initiatives (SMI) at how communication could be a veritable tool in bridging the gap especially in the rural areas.

There is no doubt that safe motherhood decreases maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. Although, most maternal and infant deaths can be prevented through safe motherhood practices, millions of women worldwide are affected by maternal mortality and morbidity from preventable causes. Every day, 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth around the world. Globally, that amounted to about 303,000 women in 2015 (Stanton, Kwast, Shaver, McCallon, Koblinsky, 2018).

After the 30th anniversary of the launch of the global Safe Motherhood Initiative, it became imperative for the world to renew its visionary goal of ending preventable maternal mortality. Progress toward that aspiration is often equated with the 44% reduction in global maternal mortality between 1990 and 2015. Yet this reduction was still far from achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 of reducing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015, and it is even farther from achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which aims to attain a global MMR of less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.

Study indicates that when women have greater knowledge through education, there is greater likelihood that they will have better pregnancy and delivery outcomes. However, communication plays a very crucial role in educational and information dissemination. It is of essence that for any policy education programme or information dissemination activity to be a success, there must be in place effective communication. One of the pillars of an effective communication process is audience-based communication that is carried out to reach target audience in their indigenous language.

This paper looked at the role of indigenous language media and how it has impacted safe motherhood practices in Nigeria, using Lagos State as a study. It reviewed how the media, using the indigenous language has been able to reach women and inform them on best practices on safe motherhood practices, service delivery, and training and how to access information using indigenous language. It also looked at the role of professional health providers, traditional birth attendants, policy-makers, and community members in improving reproductive health and reducing maternal deaths, from a communication perspective. This paper equally discussed how indigenous language media has been able to reduce maternal mortality rate among women and how women have been able to access information, thereby leading to quality service delivery on the part of service providers.

The researcher argued that while indigenous language has been able to impact safe motherhood practices, there is need for policymakers to encourage health personnel to address women in indigenous language. Also, the media in using
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