Chapter 12
Health Education and Indigenous Language Media: Issues, Trends, and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous language health programmes have potentials to create knowledge, accelerate, and transform Nigeria’s health burden narratives as well as create awareness on national health policies, goals, and objectives. This chapter takes the stand that not only is government disinterested in policy implementation, as suggested by the lack of practical synergy between government, policy implementation committee, and media organizations. Exploring the values of indigenous language in development media theory, this chapter sets out to demonstrate merits of media support in health policy execution via dynamics of indigenous language programmes towards achieving sustainable development goals. The chapter therefore recommends that constitutional gap in health provision should be bridged to eliminate the question of accountability at all levels and on the long run decentralize health education; and it will make it much easier for state government to embark on holistic health communication strategies that suits their geopolitical terrain.

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INTRODUCTION

The centrality of health to proper functioning of a nation has long been established. The health burden of Nigeria, coupled with her bulging population since the 1990s has made her a flash point of reference of a failed healthcare system. With entry of new diseases around the World, Nigeria appears to be one major disease away from health collapse or outright disaster. The World Health Organization (WHO) since inception has been monitoring global health as well as providing financial and technical support to Nigeria to alleviate her health burden.

Yet, in spite international support from government and private agencies, as at 2019, challenges such as accessibility, affordability, poor quality healthcare, lack of trust and unfriendly medical personnel and many more deprive Nigerians in urban areas from obtaining medical care let alone the millions of people in rural areas. The problem posed by lack of quality healthcare was surmised aptly by Dr. Ngozi Azodoh, Head of Special Projects, Federal Ministry of Health when she attributed ten to 15 percent of all death in low and middle-income countries to poor quality of healthcare and that approximately, 8.6 million people in low- middle income countries die each year from inadequate access to quality care; out of the 8.6 million, about 3.6 million never get any health service at all, and 5 million die because of poor quality healthcare.

It is in this context this paper examined the importance of the mass media in alleviating health burden through consciously packaged health information in indigenous language to transforming the narrative of Nigeria health system from that of apathy to a cherished one via reduction in preventable deaths. Taking advantage of media reach, massive heath education at all levels in indigenous language is believed to connect people to their roots. This study examined the implication of near non-existent health literacy at all levels of formal and informal education institutions; the implication of not actively involving the mass media at the planning and execution of health policies, the consequences of the predominant use of English language as a medium of communication in a country with high level of illiteracy in a few existing health programmes; the lackadaisical attitude of Nigerian government to unbundle the health system and ultimately, the implication of these in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (3). The study suggested a way forward.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The centrality of heath and health education to sustainable development of man and his environment cannot be overemphasized. Global concern for health development and cooperation began with the 1851 first International Sanitary Conference in
Designing Sustainable Social Media Health Communication Campaigns for Promoting Rare Diseases
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