

MEDIA ADVOCACY TO ADDRESS PROSTATE AND DIABETIC MORBIDITIES IN EBONYI STATE: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Prof. BATTA Effiong Herbert

Department of Information and media Studies,
University of Uyo, Nigeria
herbertbatta@uniuyo.edu.ng
08023444791

Dr. AKPABIO Joseph

Department of Film and Multimedia Studies,
University of Uyo, Nigeria
07037615556

EZIKE Onyekachi Michael

Department of Communication Arts,
University of Uyo, Nigeria
kachiezike44@gmail.com
08108815794

Abstract

The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as prostate disorders and diabetes has become a significant public health concern in Nigeria, particularly in sub-national contexts like Ebonyi State. These conditions are often associated with late diagnosis, poor awareness, and inadequate health-seeking behaviours among the population. This situation underscores the critical role of media messages and health advocacy in shaping public understanding and responses to such diseases. The media, through information dissemination, surveillance, and agenda-setting functions, serve as a vital platform for promoting health awareness and influencing behavioural change. This paper is a conceptual review that examines the role of media messages and health advocacy in addressing prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State. Anchored on the Health Belief Model and Agenda-Setting Theory, the study explores how media exposure contributes to awareness, perception, and health-seeking behaviour among residents. It suggested that while media messages have contributed to increased awareness, challenges such as message inconsistency, limited reach in rural areas, and cultural barriers still persist. It therefore recommended that effective, consistent, and culturally sensitive health advocacy using the media should be executed for early detection, prevention, and management of prostate and diabetic conditions in Ebonyi State.

Keywords: Health Communication, Chronic Diseases, Behavioural Change, Media Agenda, Nigeria

Introduction

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have emerged as a major global health challenge, with prostate-related conditions and diabetes contributing significantly to morbidity and mortality rates (Freihat, Sipos, Aamir, & Kovacs, 2025). In Nigeria, these diseases are increasingly becoming prevalent due to lifestyle transitions, urbanisation, poor dietary habits, and inadequate health awareness (Idris, Oguntade, Mensah and Kitamura, 2020). Prostate disorders, including benign prostatic hyperplasia and prostate cancer, primarily affect ageing men, while diabetes affects individuals across various age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds (Esomonu, Obun, Ude, Igwe, Esomchi, and Ogolechukwu, 2024, Liu, He, Li, Yang, Zhang, & Luo 2023) .

In Ebonyi State, the burden of prostate and diabetic morbidities is compounded by limited access to healthcare services, low levels of health literacy, and delayed health-seeking behaviour. Many individuals only seek medical attention when symptoms become severe, thereby reducing the chances of effective treatment and management. This highlights the urgent need for proactive health communication strategies aimed at raising awareness and encouraging preventive practices (Egere & Ogbonna, 2024).

The mass media play an important function in health communication by providing a platform for dissemination of information that can influence public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Through various platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, and digital media, health messages can reach a wide audience and promote awareness of disease symptoms, risk factors, preventive measures, and treatment options (Saei, Valadi, Karimi, & Khammarnia, 2021). In particular, health advocacy through the media can bridge the gap between medical knowledge and public understanding, thereby facilitating informed decision-making (Ezeilo, Leon, Jajodia, & Han, 2023).

Media messages, when strategically designed and consistently delivered, have the potential to shape public discourse and prioritise health issues. By highlighting prostate and diabetes-related concerns, the media can draw attention to their severity and encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles and seek early medical intervention. However, the effectiveness of such messages depends on factors such as accessibility, cultural relevance, clarity, and frequency (Saei, Valadi, Karimi, & Khammarnia, 2021).

This article therefore examines the role of media messages and health advocacy in addressing prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State, with a focus on awareness creation, perception shaping, and behavioural outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Chronic diseases such as prostate-related illnesses and diabetes are among the major health challenges affecting the global healthcare sector. In an effort to address these diseases, various organisations, including governments and health institutions, have adopted media advocacy platforms aimed at creating awareness and curbing the spread of these diseases (William, 2023).

Despite these efforts, several studies have shown that the prevalence of prostate and diabetic morbidities continues to increase. This increase has been linked to factors such as poor awareness, inadequate access to healthcare facilities, unhealthy lifestyles, late diagnosis, and insufficient health education among the population. In many cases, individuals affected by these diseases do not seek medical attention early due to ignorance, fear, cultural beliefs, or lack of adequate information. This situation has continued to contribute to rising morbidity and mortality associated with prostate and diabetic diseases, especially in developing societies (Schwarz, Schmidt, Bobek, & Ladurner, 2022).

Based on this premise, one wonders how media advocacy could be employed to address prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State. This

forms the thrust of the study.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this article are to:

- i. examine the role of media messages in creating awareness of prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State;
- ii. assess the influence of health advocacy messages on public perception of prostate and diabetes-related conditions;
- iii. determine the extent to which media messages influence health-seeking behaviour among residents of Ebonyi State;

Media Messages

Media messages constitute the core channels through which information is transmitted from communicators to audiences using platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, and digital media. In the context of health communication, media messages are strategically crafted to inform, educate, and influence public attitudes and behaviours regarding health-related issues. These messages often aim to simplify complex medical information into understandable formats for diverse audiences (Oba & Berger, 2022).

One of the key characteristics of effective media messages is clarity. Health information must be presented in simple, non-technical language that can be easily understood by both literate and semi-literate populations. In Ebonyi State, where a significant proportion of the population resides in rural areas, clarity becomes essential in ensuring that health messages about prostate and diabetic morbidities are not misunderstood or ignored (Maamaa, 2023).

Consistency is another important feature of media messages. Repeated exposures to health messages reinforce awareness and help in shaping long-term behavioural change. When messages about prostate screening or diabetes management are consistently aired on radio or television programmes, they become embedded in public consciousness,

increasing the likelihood of action (Azizah, Sulaiman, Jumiran & Malek, 2024).

Cultural relevance also plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of media messages. Messages that align with local beliefs, values, and language are more likely to resonate with the target audience. In Ebonyi State, the use of local dialects and culturally familiar examples can enhance the acceptance of health messages related to prostate disease and diabetes (Onuoha Okereke, Ngwoke, & Ekpechu, 2024).

Furthermore, media messages serve an agenda-setting function by highlighting certain issues over others. When the media frequently report on prostate and diabetic morbidities, these issues gain prominence in public discourse. This increased visibility can influence how individuals prioritise their health and encourage proactive health-seeking behaviour (Oba & Berger, 2022).

Furthermore, media messages are instrumental in combating misinformation. In many communities, myths and misconceptions about diseases often hinder proper health practices. Through accurate and evidence-based messaging, the media can correct false beliefs and provide reliable information about diabetes and prostate problems that empowers individuals to make informed health decisions (Maamaa, 2023).

Health Advocacy

Health advocacy refers to deliberate efforts aimed at influencing public attitudes, behaviours, and policies to improve health outcomes. It involves the use of communication strategies to raise awareness, mobilise communities, and promote actions that support better health practices. Health advocacy is particularly important in addressing chronic diseases such as prostate disorders and diabetes (Goes, 2025).

One of the primary functions of health advocacy is awareness creation. By highlighting the causes, symptoms, and preventive measures of diseases, advocacy efforts help individuals recognise health risks and take

appropriate actions. In Ebonyi State, health advocacy campaigns can play a vital role in educating residents about the importance of early detection of prostate conditions and regular monitoring of blood sugar levels (Bugshan, Alqahtani, Alwagdan, Alkarthi, Alqarni, Alsuat, Alqahtani, Alqahtani, Alshammari, Albagami & Almotairi, 2022).

Health advocacy also serves as a bridge between medical knowledge and public understanding. Medical information is often complex and inaccessible to the general population. Advocacy efforts translate this information into relatable and actionable messages, thereby improving comprehension and application (Goes, 2025).

Another critical aspect of health advocacy is behavioural change. Advocacy campaigns encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles, such as balanced diets, regular exercise, and routine medical check-ups. These behaviours are essential in preventing and managing prostate and diabetic morbidities. In addition, health advocacy plays a role in influencing policy and resource allocation. By drawing attention to the burden of certain diseases, advocacy efforts can prompt government and stakeholders to invest in healthcare infrastructure, screening programmes, and public health interventions (Simpson, Beauchamp, Dimmock, Willis & Jackson, 2025).

Moreover, health advocacy helps to reduce stigma associated with certain diseases. In many communities, individuals may feel ashamed to discuss or seek treatment for prostate-related issues or diabetes. Advocacy efforts can normalise these conversations and encourage openness, thereby improving health outcomes (Bugshan *et. al.*, 2022).

Prostate Morbidity

Prostate morbidity encompasses a range of diseases affecting the prostate gland, including benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), prostatitis, and prostate cancer. These conditions are prevalent among ageing men and can significantly affect quality of life if not properly managed (Seladi-Schulman, 2020).

One of the major challenges associated with prostate morbidity is late diagnosis. Many men do not seek medical attention until symptoms become severe, often due to lack of awareness or cultural beliefs. This delay reduces the effectiveness of treatment and increases the risk of complications. Symptoms of prostate conditions, such as difficulty in urination, frequent urination, and pelvic discomfort, are often overlooked or attributed to ageing. This misconception highlights the need for increased awareness and education on the importance of early detection and screening (Zhang, Wang, Qin, Gao, Xing, Li, Wang, Song, & Zhang, 2020).

Prostate cancer, in particular, is a leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men in Nigeria. Early detection through screening methods such as prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests can significantly improve survival rates. However, access to such screening services remains limited in many parts of Ebonyi State. Lifestyle factors such as diet, physical inactivity, and genetic predisposition also contribute to the development of prostate conditions. Addressing these risk factors requires sustained public health education and advocacy (Adewumi, Oladele, & Jegede, 2022).

Furthermore, the management of prostate morbidity requires not only medical intervention but also psychological support. The emotional impact of diagnosis and treatment can be significant, necessitating a holistic approach to care (Adesina, 2024).

Diabetic Morbidity

Diabetic morbidity refers to the conditions associated with diabetes mellitus, a chronic condition characterised by elevated blood glucose levels. These complications include cardiovascular diseases, kidney damage, nerve damage, and vision impairment. The prevalence of diabetes is increasing in Nigeria due to factors such as urbanisation, unhealthy diets, and sedentary lifestyles. In Ebonyi State, limited awareness and access to healthcare services contribute to poor management of the condition (Adeyeye, 2021).

One of the major challenges in managing diabetes is late diagnosis. Many individuals are unaware of their conditions until complications arise. This underscores the importance of regular screening and awareness campaigns. Effective management of diabetes requires lifestyle modification, including healthy eating, regular physical activity, and adherence to medication. However, these practices are often difficult to maintain without adequate support and information (Ikem, Enikuomehin, Soyoye, & Kolawole, 2022).

Complications arising from diabetes can significantly reduce the quality of life and increase healthcare costs. Preventive measures and early intervention are therefore essential in reducing the burden of the disease. Additionally, cultural beliefs and misconceptions about diabetes may hinder proper management. Some individuals may rely on traditional remedies instead of seeking medical treatment, which may worsen the condition (Ikem *et...al*, 2022).

Media Coverage of Health Issues in Nigeria

When it comes to media coverage of health issue in Nigeria, it has become an important aspect of national development because of the medias's capacity to serve as essential platform both for information dissemination and promotion of vital health issues. In Nigeria, different forms of media such as television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms are widely used to spread information. While traditional media still play important roles, digital media and social media platforms are becoming increasingly popular (Gever, & Ezeah2020).

Despite the importance of media in health communication, the coverage of prostate and diabetes-related issues in Nigeria is often inadequate. Health stories are not consistently prioritised, and when they are reported, they may lack depth or clarity. This limits the effectiveness of media messages in influencing public awareness and behaviour (Musa, Haruna, Manirambona, Eshun, Ahmad, Dada, Gololo, Musa, AbdulKadir, &

Lucero-Prisno, 2023).

Furthermore, the use of technical language in health reporting can create barriers to understanding, particularly among individuals with low literacy levels. There is therefore a need for simplified, culturally relevant, and audience-centred messaging to enhance comprehension and impact (Al-Mutairi, n.d).

Theoretical Framework

The Health Belief Model explains how individuals' perceptions of health risks influence their behaviours. It was propounded by social psychologists namely: Hochbaum, Rosenstock and others in the 1950's to provide an explanation into why people fail to participate in programmes to prevent and detect disease. It was later expanded to investigate people's behavioural responses to health issues. It holds that individuals are more likely to take preventive action if they perceive themselves to be susceptible to a disease and believe that the benefits of taking action outweigh the barriers (Khormi, 2025).

This theory is relevant here as it explains how media messages can shape individuals' perceptions of prostate and diabetes risks and motivate them to adopt preventive behaviours such as regular screening and healthy living.

Also, the Agenda-Setting Theory conveys the idea that the media influence public perception by determining which issues are given prominence. It was propounded by **Maxwell McCombs** and **Donald Lewis Shaw** in 1972. When the media consistently highlight a particular issue, the public perceives it as important (Freeland, 2012). In this context, frequent media coverage of prostate and diabetic morbidities can elevate their importance in public discourse and encourage individuals to take proactive health measures.

Media Messages and Health Advocacy in Addressing Prostate and Diabetic Morbidities

Media messages and health advocacy can play a crucial role in addressing prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State by creating awareness and promoting preventive health behaviours. Through radio programmes, television campaigns, and social media platforms, health information can reach a wide audience and influence public understanding of these diseases (Ouchene, Boussalah, & Ziane, 2024).

One of the major contributions of media messages is in educating the public about the symptoms and risk factors associated with prostate disorders and diabetes. By providing timely and accurate information, the media help individuals recognise early warning signs and seek medical attention promptly. Health advocacy complements media messages by encouraging behavioural change. Advocacy campaigns promote healthy lifestyles, such as proper nutrition and regular exercise, which are essential in preventing and managing these conditions (Musa, Haruna, Manirambona, Eshun, Ahmad, Dada, Gololo, Musa, AbdulKadir & Lucero-Prisno, 2023).

Furthermore, media messages help to normalise discussions around prostate diseases and diabetes, thereby reducing stigma and encouraging openness. This is particularly important in communities where cultural beliefs may discourage individuals from seeking medical help. The integration of local languages and culturally relevant content enhances the effectiveness of media messages and advocacy efforts. When health information is presented in a familiar context, it is more likely to be understood and accepted by the audience (Oba & Berger, 2022).

Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited access to media, misinformation, and low literacy levels can hinder the effectiveness of health communication efforts. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated approach involving multiple stakeholders (Maamaa, 2023).

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that media messages and health advocacy are essential tools in addressing prostate and diabetic morbidities in Ebonyi State. Through awareness creation, perception shaping, and behavioural influence, the media play a significant role in improving public health outcomes.

However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on the consistency, clarity, and cultural relevance of the messages. By strengthening health communication strategies and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, it is possible to reduce the burden of prostate and diabetic morbidities and improve the overall well-being of residents in Ebonyi State.

Recommendations

There is a need for increased and consistent media coverage of prostate and diabetic morbidities to enhance public awareness and understanding. Health messages should be tailored to local contexts using indigenous languages and culturally relevant examples to improve comprehension and acceptance.

Government and health organisations should collaborate with media houses to design and implement effective health advocacy campaigns. Regular community-based outreach programmes should be conducted to complement media efforts and reach underserved populations.

Efforts should be made to combat misinformation through fact-based reporting and public education. Healthcare services, including screening and treatment, should be made more accessible and affordable to residents.

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