Radio Campaigns against Harmful Cultural Practices in Ebonyi State, Nigeria: Analysis of Empirical Evidence from Ezza Community

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Abstract

Radio has developed to be one medium of communication that plays pivotal role in rural development. Besides breaking the hitherto seemingly insurmountable barriers of illiteracy and media inaccessibility on the side of the rural population, radio, perhaps because of its content decentralisation and democratisation, has successfully veered into "experimental broadcasting" as a sharp contrast to embedded broadcast-journalism, with its phenomenal exploration of special areas such as harmful cultural practices. Culture is unequivocally overarching in society, but its harmful aspects have affected negatively on the people; thus constituting an enduring wedge between them and their emancipation. This paper presents an empirical evidence of such a quantum leap for a society that is devoid of harmful cultural practices by radio through a study carried out on Ezza natives of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Adopting uses and gratification media theory as its theoretical base, the paper used survey as its method, and as well used interview schedule to gather its data. Findings revealed that radio has greatly contributed to the reduction of harmful cultural practices in Ebonyi rural communities. The paper, therefore, recommends the sustenance of the radio campaign against harmful cultural practices on Nigerian radio in the overall interest of humanity.

Keywords: Radio, Rural development, Development, Culture, Harmful Cultural Practices

Introduction

The emerging Nigeria's broadcast identity, despite the persistent background of competitive, independent and pluralistic broadcasts, has continued to grow in leaps and bounds, thereby expanding its horizon, and extending its coast to embrace special areas of human needs, which were formally neglected. Thus, it is plausible that today broadcast stations, especially radio, have not only become credible channels of social and political integration but also a watchdog against some harmful cultural practices that survived the intervention of the early missionaries. As a result, there is, at present, some empirical evidence to attest to the fact that although total eradication proves to be a herculean task, there is drastic reduction of harmful cultural practices in Nigerian rural communities.

Many communication scholars have stressed the centrality of culture in national broadcasting reforms, particularly in African communities. They include Venatus Agbai, Victor Muzvidziwa and Irene Muzvidziwa (2011), Philip Isakpa (2011), Angela Nwamuo (2002), Chinenye Nwabueze (2011), etc. On the contrary, very little has been done about radio's efforts at keeping cultural practices under surveillance. Under such programming strategies as the campaign against harmful cultural practices, radio has maintained a benign social and cultural Nigerian society. The paper dares to argue that this new dimension in radio programming (often called experimental broadcasting), has further strengthened the radio's power of social responsibility and public accountability.

The point that should be recalled is that by origin, principles and practice, the national broadcasting systems are fashioned as national institutions, which must respond to cultural, domestic, political and social pressures, and to the expectations of the audience (Blankson, 2005). Ugboajah (1986) adds that the structure and content of broadcasting systems should reflect the cultural peculiarities of the societies within which they operate. Udoakah (1998) while toeing the path of Blankson (2005) and Ugboajah (1986) note that a truly African media system must see Africa's condition and values as newsworthy phenomenon. In his argument that those who are exposed to the media of mass information (radio inclusive) are more disposed to adopt new ways of doing things, and look more modern than those not exposed to the mass media, Wright (1980) asserts that the intrusion and expansion of the mass media lead to changes in the members of society. He added that

such changes are evident in social institutions, which make both the population and society more receptive to social change, more modern, more developed.

One of those changes is the discouragement of rural communities from practising harmful cultures. In the context of the paper, this feat is referred to as experimental programming because of the peculiarity of the repertoire. For instance, rather than merely ensuring holistic cultural integration by identifying and expressing all cultural values and symbols, radio also gives desirable interpretations to the cultures and traditions so as to establish an order for applications of the essential ones, and the rejection of the undesirable ones that impact negatively on society. In the threshold of broadcasting in Nigeria, perhaps because of the enduring influence of western media philosophy, this particular felt need of the people had been neglected alongside other numerous communal interests such as death and robbery incidents in rural communities, as unworthy to be the thematic focus of radio broadcast programmes.

The paper presents an evidence of effective rural radio broadcasting, which, arguably, is a quantum leap for the reduction of harmful cultural practices in rural communities, through a study carried out in 2015 to find out the impact of Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation (EBBC), Abakaliki's Programmes against Harmful Cultural Practices on the People of Ezzaland. It is pertinent to point out that EBBC Radio has through its news, jingles, commentaries and other programmes like "family" (Nnoko Ezina ulo) and culture (Omenala) campaigned against some cultural practices with observed vicious implications on the people of Ebonyi rural communities and their environs. The non- rating of the programmes' effects on the audience are presented later in the paper as the findings of the study.

Research Objectives

1. To ascertain if Ezza people listen to EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices.
2. To find out if Ezza people believe EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices.
3. To ascertain if Ezza people attach importance to EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices.
4. To find out if EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices have been able to discourage Ezza people from practising them.
5. To ascertain if EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices promote the overall development of Ezza people.

Research Questions

1. Do Ezza people listen to EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?
2. Do Ezza people believe EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?
3. Do Ezza people attach importance to EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?
4. Have EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices been able to discourage Ezza people from practising them?
5. Have EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices promoted the overall development of Ezza people?

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

Culture

To understand harmful cultural practices, there is the need to explain the concept of culture. Tylor (1974) defines culture as that completely complex, which includes knowledge and capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society. Also, Samovar and Poter, cited in Chude (2007,) sees it as the deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, timing, roles, spatial relations, concept of universe and material objects, and possessions acquitted by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving . M'Bow (1987) sees culture from a multi-dimensional perspective, as the product of all that a society has created in the course of time, and as the essential driving force, for all that it continues to create materially, and in the intellectual sphere. This shapes the awareness and the collective imagination of its members, determines the way they are, and the way they see the world. Containing the seeds of all that a community is capable of producing, it is quintessentially, the repository of all its creative genius, the dynamic principles whereby society, drawing upon its past, feeding upon its own latent resources, while selectively assimilating such external inputs as may come its way, pursues the unending process of its own self-creation. From the above definitions, culture can be seen as a broad term that provides people with creative responses for coping with their environment, especially by enabling them to

master nature, withstand assaults and preserve the basic integrity of the national identity (Chude 2007). Thus, defining culture as merely a set of traditional beliefs, practices and folklore simply limits the concepts of culture. However, culture identifies a people from their neighbour.

At What Stage Is a Cultural Practice Harmful?

Harmful cultural practices are those aspects of culture, which cause damage or injury to the people physically. It can also either be socially, or emotionally. Obinayo (1997) informed that harmful cultural practices incorporated with gender discriminatory practices have over the years, been used as weapons to deny the victims, especially women, the right to control their lives, and the right to attain the highest standard of health. In April 1997, The World Health Organisation (WHO), The United Nations' Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and The United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) issued a joint statement that summarises the importance and challenges inherent in addressing harmful cultural practices as follows:

> Therefore, human behaviour and cultural values have meaning, and fulfill a function for those who practice them. So, for people to change their behavior they must understand the hazards and indignity of harmful practices and when they realise it is possible to give up meaning aspects of their culture (1).

Sometimes, a harmful cultural practice is too deeply rooted that it appears to be resistant to changes. Nevertheless, with the aid of the mass media, particularly radio, people have pushed forward positive changes, and consequently, harmful cultural practices are gradually fading away. Health professionals and organisations worldwide have always mounted crusades against harmful cultural practices, but have at the same time met with such challenges as the one posed by the consideration of a cultural practice as either harmful or necessary. This argument is often strengthened by the disparity in cultures, and this in turn complicates the crusade against unwholesome traditional practices, which according to Yahaya (2002), women, children and other vulnerable members of society are the immediate victims.

Some forms of harmful cultural practices that were evident in Ebonyi rural communities include crude burial of childless people, female genital mutilation, use of traditional birth attendants, maltreatment of widows including widowhood rites, son preference, polygamy, economic disempowerment of women and other gender discriminations, high bride price, early marriage and motherhood practices.

Radio Campaign against Harmful Cultural Practice in Ebonyi State

The media, especially radio, which have a strong and controlling power on the minds of people, have been in constant dissemination of information on the negative effects of harmful cultural practices. One of such radio stations in Ebonyi State is Ebonyi State Broadcasting Corporation (EBBC), Abakaliki. The radio station particularly does this through news mentions, commentaries, programmes (including drama and documentary) and jingles.

The power of radio in fighting harmful cultural practices derives from its ability to sway the people against strongly held beliefs. It connotes radio's mind management capability with the aid of different programmes. Commenting on radio's power of persuasion, Hadamowski (1974) asserts:

> We spell radio with three exclamation marks because we are possessed in it of a miraculous power, the strongest weapon ever given to the spirit-that opens hearts, and does not stop at the boarders of cities, and does not turn back before closed doors; that jumps rivers, mountains and seas, that is able to force people under the spell of one powerful spirit (p.1).

Hale (1975) added that radio is a powerful weapon in the hands of those who know how to make use of it. The persuasive power of radio is further emphasised by Goebbels (1980) who averred that real radio broadcasting is true propaganda, and that propaganda means fighting on all battlefields of the spirit, generating, multiplying, destroying, exterminating, building and undoing. In all, the bottom-line here is the faith placed in the radio medium to cause attitudinal change. This faith, Hale (1975) reports, has a time-honoured confirmation, as early as 1934, by the evidence of a radio campaign to re-incorporate the Saarland into Germany. The implication is that through a judiciously coordinated radio programming, there would frank emotions to the people's feeling that borders on harmful cultural practices. This is the more successful,

if such a campaign is directed through the confines of a target audience, and through the intimate knowledge of the audience that can be achieved with a broadcaster that resides among the audience population.

Over the years, EBBC (radio) has been playing the role of information provider, through news broadcasts, public service messages about the availability of social services, and through the announcement of important events to the rural people in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, just as other radio stations do in other African communities. National objectives, programmes and aspirations have always been made known and explained to the people through radio programmes in indigenous languages in order to have their support, and to forge a sense of belonging among them.

The same format has also been used to campaign against harmful cultural practices, and to teach in non-formal education in subject areas that are specific to the development needs of individual regions of a country. Development related knowledge on agricultural and economic practices, public health, personal hygiene and nutrition, community organisation, and so forth have all been accessible to the Ebonyi rural communities through the instrumentality of radio programming in indigenous languages.Changing behaviour is the most difficult goal to achieve, yet radio programmes in indigenous languages provide the only reliable communication system that reaches large portions of the rural population, and thus constitutes a potent weapon in the behaviour change process.

Drama, folk-tales, oral poetry and music, which were aired through the medium of radio as progammes, signature tunes, jingles, complementary ads, promos and trailers, soundtracks, etc, can purvey some rich development messages and ideas, which have great possibilities to mobilize people for development, and particularly discourage them from practicing harmful cultures. Referring to radio drama, Soola points out that:

> The theatre as an interactive participatory tool in development constitutes an asset in mobilising and galvanising people into action for sustainable environment. Using local language, or even preferably its dialect variant, idioms and symbolism, popular theatre, laden with environmental awareness messages, can be used to enlist the local or community people in theatrical performance (p. 35).

The majority of the programmes were aired under public service broadcasting in addition to a few sponsored ones, and at different times and of varied frequencies. However, from their synopses, it is discernible that the programmes address the basic needs of rural development, including the abolition of harmful cultural practices. This implies that the rural radio programmes in local languages convey rural development messages, especially if one recalls that these basic needs are the thematic preoccupation of rural development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research method used in the study was survey, because it aimed at finding the impact of EBBC (radio) campaign against harmful cultural practices in Ezza land.

Population of the Study

From the records available at the National Population Commission (NPC), the population of Ezza North and Ezza South Local Government Areas, which make up Ezza land, was 279,734, out of which the locality summary listings for the three traditional communities of the land included: Izzikworo-103, 160, Kpakpaji-93,058 and Izzo-83,000.

The justification for the choice of Ezza land was that it was a rural community that hitherto had the major phenomenon (harmful cultural practices) that was investigated. The community was also located within the effective coverage area of EBBC (radio).

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for the study as determined through Burley's statistical formula was 360. The study therefore judgmentally drew the respondents from both literate and illiterate groups because the issue under study concerned both of them. Through Burley's proportional statistical sampling formula, the proportion of the segment of samples for each of the traditional communities under study was also determined as follows: Izzikworo -133, Kpakpaji -120 and Izzo -107. With this in mind, the study drew the data proportionally from

each of the cluster samples represented by the three traditional communities. Accordingly, 133 people were interviewed in Izzikworo, 120 people in Kpakpaji, while 107 were interviewed in Izzo community and altogether 360 respondents were interviewed. However, in collecting the data, the study used trained research assistants, who physically administered the interview schedule, including the immediate filling of the responses. The face-to-face administration and collection approach was not done just because all interviews are done so, but it was meant to guard against the absence of mortality, which often stems from the insincerity among the respondents. Thus, it was meant to prevent the intrusion of extraneous variables, which may result from the misinterpretation of the contents of the instruments, on the side of respondents

Method of Data Collection

Interview was used as the research instrument for this study. This decision was made in cognisance of the nature of the study population that comprised both literate and illiterate people. Researchers have shown that the illiterate rural dwellers obviously cannot fill copies of questionnaire. An interview schedule was designed, because it was all embracing. The interview schedule was structured to strictly maintain an order in the questions. As a result, the respondents were expected to answer the same questions in the same order. This means that the interviewees only responded to the series of questions generally administered in a predetermined order, with a few words that conformed to any of the options that went with each of the questions. It consisted of open and close-ended questions related to the objectives of the study. The questions were on their exposure to radio, awareness of radio's information against harmful cultural practices, attitude towards the received messages, discussion after listening and others to strengthen the messages.

Measurement of Variables

There open-ended questions concerned the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the close-ended questions were rooted in the phenomenon that was examined, particularly as captured by the research objectives stated above. Responses were based on the Five-Point "Likert" scale, which ranged as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, and which formed the options to each question. The options were believed to give latitude to the freedom of choice at the disposal of the respondents. On the whole, 360 copies of the interview schedule were made and purposively administered among the respondents that made up the sample size of the study's population. Their responses were also recorded.

In addition, Simple percentage and tables were used in the analysis of the data collected. This was done in order to break down the statistical data, and relate them to the research problem. The approach facilitated the presentation of the findings in a more understandable way.

Results and Discussions

Copies of the interview schedule used and returned

No of copies of interview schedule used	No of copies of interview schedule returned
360	360
100%	100%

Source: Field Study 2014

The table above shows the number of copies of the interview schedule used for the respondents. The total of 360 copies of the interview schedule used to interview the respondents were all returned, and this represents 100%. As a result, 360 copies of the interview schedule were used for the analysis.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	No of respondents	Percentage
Male	140	45%
Female	220	55%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Study 2014

The gender distribution of the respondents on the above table indicates that out of 360 respondents, 220 or 55% of the respondents were females, while 140 or 45% were males. This shows that the female respondents were higher than the male ones.

Marital Status of the Respondents

Status	Number	Percentage
Single	150	42%
Married	210	58%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Study 2014

From the above table, 150 or 42% were single, while 210 or 58% were married. This shows that the majority of the respondents were married.

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Qualification	Number	Percentage
FSLC	205	56%
WASC	75	21%
OND	24	13%
HND/ B.Sc	10	3%
M.Sc. MBA/PhD	24	7%
Total	360	100%

Source: Field Study 2014

As shown on the table above, out of 360 respondents, 205 0r 56% have FSLC, 75 or 21% have WASC, 24 or 13% have OND, and 10 or 3% are either HND or B.Sc degree holders while 24 or 7% were M.Sc/MBA/PhD holders. This shows that the majority of the respondents were merely first school leaving holders..

Presentation of the core Research Questions

Question 1: Do Ezza people listen to EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	197	54.7%
Agree	131	36.4%
Undecided	10	2.8%
Strongly Disagree	15	4.2%
Disagree	7	1.9%
Total	**360**	**100%**

Source: Field Study 2014

The responses to this question, as indicated on the table above, show that 197 representing 54.7% strongly agreed, 131 or 36.4% agreed, 10 or 2.8% were undecided, 15 or 4.2% strongly disagreed, while 7 representing 1.9% disagreed. The implication of their responses was that Ezza people listened to EBBC (radio) against harmful cultural practices in Ezza land and other rural communities.

Question 2: Do Ezza people believe the EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	120	33.3%
Agree	175	48.6%
Undecided	10	2.8%
Disagree	30	8.3%
Strongly Disagree	25	6.9%
Total	**360**	**100%**

Source: Field Study 2014

The question sought to know whether Ezza people believed the messages by EBBC against their harmful cultural practices. The table above shows that 120 representing 33.3% strongly agreed, 175 or 48.6% agreed, 10 or 2.8% were undecided, 25 or 6.9% disagreed while 30 which represent 1.9% disagreed. Their responses therefore indicate that Ezza people believed the messages by EBBC against the harmful cultural practices in Ezza land and other rural communities.

Question 3: Do Ezza people attach importance to EBBC (radio) messages against their harmful cultural practices?

Options	Number	Percentage

Strongly Agree	240	66.7%
Agree	90	25.0%
Undecided	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.8%
Disagree	20	5.6%
Total	**360**	**100%**

Source: Field Study 2014

This question verified if Ezza people attached importance to the messages packaged by EBBC to eradicate their harmful cultural practices. The table above shows that 240 representing 66.7% strongly agreed, 90 or 25% agreed, 0 or 0% was undecided, 10 or 2.8% strongly disagreed while 20 0r 5.6% disagreed. Their responses therefore buttress the fact that Ezza people attached much importance to EBBC messages against the harmful cultural practices in Ezza land and other rural communities.

Question 4: Have EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices been able to discourage Ezza people from practising them?

Options	**Number**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	1600	44.4%
Agree	153	42.5%
Undecided	7	1.9%
Disagree	15	4.2%
Strongly Disagree	25	6.9%
Total	**360**	**100%**

Source: Field Study 2014

The question ascertained if the programmes of EBBC (radio) discouraged Ezza people from practising harmful cultures. The table above clearly indicates that 160 representing 44.4% strongly agreed, 153 or 42.5% agreed, 7 or 1.9% were undecided, 25 or 5.9% strongly disagreed, while 15 or 5.6% disagreed. Their responses therefore support the fact that EBBC programmes discouraged Ezza people from practising their harmful cultures.

Question 5: Have EBBC (radio) messages against harmful cultural practices promoted the overall development of Ezza people?

Options	**Number**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	80	22.2%
Agree	190	52.8%
Undecided	20	5.6%
Strongly Disagree	60	16.7%
Disagree	10	2.8%
Total	**360**	**100%**

Source: Field Study 2014

The question was designed to confirm that EBBC radio programmes promoted the overall well being of Ezza people. The table above, in a nutshell, indicates that 80 representing 22.2% strongly agreed, 190 or 52.8% agreed, 20 or 5.6% were undecided, 10 or 2.8% strongly disagreed while 60 or 16.7% disagreed. Their

responses are clear pointer to the fact that EBBS campaign programmes promoted the overall well being of Ezza people.

Presentation of Detailed Findings

S/N	Questions	Strong Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Undecided (U)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Dis-agree (D)
1.	EBBC transmissions are received in Ezza land	200 (55.6%)	60 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	80 (22.2%)	20 (5.6%)
2.	You voluntarily listen to EBBC programmes against harmful cultural practices because you have radio set that is in order and you are interested in them	220 (61.1%)	80 (22.2%)	5 (1.4%)	40 (11.1%)	15 (4.2%)
3.	You believe the EBBC campaign against harmful cultural practices.	120 (33.3%)	175 (48.6%)	10 (2.8%)	25 (6.9%)	30 (8.3%)
4.	You attach importance to EBBC programmes against harmful cultural practices	240 (66.3%)	90(35%)	0 (0%)	10)2.8%)	20 (5.6%)
5.	Your listening to EBBC programmes against harmful cultural practices have made you hate these harmful cultural practice	210 (58.3%)	90 (2.5%)	5 (1.4%)	40 (11.1%)	15 (4.2%)
6.	Ezza people no longer practice these harmful cultural practices	80 (22.2%)	190 (52.8%)	20 (5.6%)	10 (2.8%)	60(16.7 %)
7.	Ezza people peddle rumour about the negative consequences of EBBC campaign against harmful cultural practices	195 (54.2%)	85 (23.6%)	15 (4.2%)	25 (6.9%)	40 (11.1%)
8.	Many people are supportive of such rumour peddlers despite the clarifications from EBBC and even other media.	40 (11.1%)	28 (7.8%)	40 (11.1%)	120 (33.3)	132 (37.7%)
9.	Listening to EBBC programmes has enhanced the health and social well-being of Ezza people	160 (44.4%)	153 (42.5%)	7 (1.9%)	26 (6.9%)	15 (4.2%)
10.	Female genital mutilation son-preference and widowhood practices were hitherto practiced in Ezza land	265 (73.6%)	80 (22.2%)	15 (4.2%)	0.(0%)	0 (0%)
11.	Had early marriage, bride price and polygamy existed in Ezza land?	220 (61.1%)	120 (33.3%0	20 (5.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
12.	Before the radio intervention, had crude burial of people who had no children, the use of untrained traditional birth attendants and women economic disempowerment been an indispensable part of the people's culture?	200 (55.6%)	150 (41.7%)	10 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%0
13.	EBBC through its programmes and news mentions has regularly condemned the harmful cultural practices mentioned in 10, 11 and 12 above	186 (51.7%)	93 (25.8%)	17 (4.7%)	35 (9.7%)	29 (8.1%)
14.	The radio is a very important medium for the eradication of HCP	197 (54.7%0	131 (35.4%)	10 (2.8%)	15 (4.2%)	7 (1.9%)
15.	EBBC programmes are truly targeted at the people and not mere government propaganda as often misconduct	90 (25%)	95 (24.4%)	86 (23.9%)	44 (12.2%)	45 (12.5%)
16.	EBBC require more encouragement from the government and the private sector to carry out health enhancing programmes	234 (65%)	126 (35%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)

Discussion of Findings

After the analysis of the relevant data, the study discovered that females constituted the majority of the respondents, while those within the age bracket of 36-45, and who were either B.Sc or HND holders topped the list of respondents. Five research questions were formulated for the study. Findings revealed that Ezza people were exposed to EBBC programmes against harmful cultural practices. The results also indicated that Ezza people were satisfied with the EBBC (radio) campaign against harmful cultural practices in Ezza Land.

Again, the study buttressed the fact that Ezza people attached much importance to EBBC programmes against harmful cultural practices. Furthermore, the study unraveled that while EBBC promoted the rich cultural heritage of the people, it has discouraged the practice of the obnoxious ones. Findings further revealed that radio plays significant roles in the overall development of rural communities, particularly by reducing harmful cultural practices, and promoting peaceful coexistence.

The findings of the study, particularly on the enhancement of development of rural communities were consistent with the findings of a radio experiment executed under the sponsorship of the University of Massachusetts' non-formal education project with funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The findings of that study titled "Radio Mensaje" showed that there was significant attitudinal change among the respondents, especially in the areas of self-worth, community development and literacy and numeracy skills. Again, the findings of this study were similar to those of a study carried out by Radio Education Rural: Senegal at the instance of UNESCO, during which fifty-seven radio listening groups were established in the pilot provinces. The programming focused on topics of local and pressing concern including the production and marketing of groundnut, the responsiveness of government agencies to peasant farmers' needs, social aids and health problems. The results of the study showed that the programming had a high level of impact on national policy as a standardised price was given to groundnut producers.

Conclusion

It is the decision of this paper to conclude, particularly on the premise of the data generated from the reviewed literature and the empirical study that the electronic medium of radio, in the exercise of its pivotal traditional functions of informing, educating and entertaining, has helped to reduce the incidence of harmful cultural practices in rural communities. The rural area is remarkably noted for the absence of electricity and other basic infrastructure coupled with high illiteracy rate. This, therefore, plays-up the radio as the most effective broadcasting medium in such areas. Its affordability, especially the battery-powered radio sets in the face of epileptic and erratic electricity supply, enhances its accessibility, while its dialectal programmes and vernacular translations of the news broadcasts fracture the barrier created by illiteracy.

Ezza people have particularly benefitted immensely from these distinctive features of the radio through Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation, Abakaliki, which sensitisation and mobilisation of the rural communities of Ebonyi State have yielded great results in the reduction of harmful cultural practices. The eradication of harmful cultural practices is an important development issue, and the radio, like other electronic media, has through its agenda setting function, always been in the vanguard of directing its inclusion in public agenda.

Recommendations

Because of the findings and discussions so far made, the paper hereby recommends as follows:

1. That government and other concerned policy makers and development agencies should institute specific health education programmes on the disadvantages of harmful cultural practices for the masses, while using the mass media, especially radio, as the channel to mobilise community leaders and rural dwellers.
2. The Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), women, men and the media should join hands in disseminating information and education to the public, particularly those in the rural areas, on the dangerous effects of harmful cultural practices.
3. That the school curricula for primary and secondary schools should include education on Nigerian cultural practices with emphasis on the harmful ones, which should be abolished.
4. The radio medium should be reinforced for more effective communication of government policies, programmes and general development initiatives.
5. The government as a member state of the United Nations should uphold the various conventions and declarations of all related United Nations conferences.

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