

Indigenous African Communication Strategies and the Campaign against Domestic Violence in Rural Communities of Nigeria's South-South Region

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Abstract

With growing rates of domestic violence and its traumatic effects on victims as well as its implications on human development in Africa, concerns have been expressed by relevant bodies and agencies. Efforts have also been made to call for action to end or reduce domestic violence. Results from intensive interviews and three Focus Group Discussions from three rural communities in three states of Nigeria's South-South region indicate that indigenous African forms of entertainment and communication are effective in curtailing social vices such as domestic violence in African communities. The study therefore recommends a shift in emphasis from mass media to indigenous communication strategies in partnering with NGOs and relevant agencies in the campaign against domestic violence.

Keywords: *Conflict, Campaign, Violence, Indigenous, Strategies, communication.*

Introduction

Domestic violence, ranging from wife or women battery, sexual abuse including rape as well as child abuse and other types of violence with grim consequences like injuries, psychological trauma and loss of lives are daily reported in the media, especially in recent times. The enormity of this problem has resulted in global attention, to the extent that legislations in some countries have been put in place to curtail domestic violence. International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and relevant government agencies in nations with endemic cases have been carrying out campaigns against domestic violence. But despite these, not much has been achieved in terms of reduction of the menace.

Domestic violence results from one sort of conflict or the other. It is often associated with problems of communication. Sometimes conflicts result when expectations are cut short as man and woman move in as husband and wife. According to Enighe (2008), the

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woman and the man have to adjust for peace to exist at home but if the husband, for instance, does not like certain behaviour about the wife, change would be required. Similarly, adults sometimes expect children to think the way they think and act in ways that align with their expectations irrespective of intervening factors, and if such expectations are not met, conflict occurs and often results in violence.

Conflict is a necessary part of human societies. As Enahoro (2008) has observed, "Human history is replete with cases of conflict. Conflict and strife appear to be as basic to society as harmony, integration and smooth functioning" (p.62). Humans always have one thing or the other to disagree over. This occurs both within and outside the home. In the view of Zartman (1991), conflict is an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions as well as an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence. Interdependence is very obvious at home thus whatever frustration is in that home will lead to conflict.

When conflict at home is not properly managed, using effective communication, it often leads to violence. This is because, in every relationship, there is always a tendency for disagreement or misunderstanding. Stronger parties, or persons with one advantage or the other over the other party are likely to exploit the disadvantaged which results in violence. Communication remains the veritable means of resolving conflicts and thereby minimizing domestic violence. Since effective communication involves good speaking, good listening and appreciation of both the situation and the views of all the parties involved in a relationship, it remains the tool for bringing about understanding and appreciation of the various shades of opinion. Whether the conflict is between nations, communities or within homes, communication is the best-known way of resolving it. To that extent, violence at home can only be better managed or minimized through effective communication.

While the mass media are seen to be useful and hence have been deployed for campaigns against domestic violence, especially by international agencies, the menace has continued to plague humanity. In traditional societies, communication has always been a multipurpose exercise where it serves entertainment, integration, balancing purposes and problem-solving. It is used to get people to seek solutions to their nagging problems. Cohesion in homes in rural communities, therefore, which reduces violence could be better achieved with a traditional African communication approach. Violence, whether against women or children, may occur through the denial of rights. The victims are exposed to physical, biological and emotional torture which may result in loss of self-confidence. Injuries are not ruled out just as they can lead to serious dislocation in the family and by extension, the entire society. The increase in cases of domestic violence in many parts of the world including Nigeria despite mass media involvement in the campaign against it calls for the exploration of alternatives even if to complement the media. This study was therefore carried out to test the usefulness of traditional African communication strategies in dealing with the problem in rural communities of Nigeria's South-South region.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to find out if traditional communication strategies are effective in curbing domestic violence in rural communities of the South-South region of Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

- i) find out the indigenous communication strategies adaptable for the campaign against violence at home in the South-South region of Nigeria;
- ii) ascertain the usefulness of indigenous communication strategies in curbing domestic violence in rural communities of Nigeria's South-South region;
- iii) ascertain the relationship between the use of indigenous communication strategies and the reduction of domestic violence in the rural areas of Nigeria's South-South region;

Research Questions

- i) What traditional communication strategies are adoptable in the effort to curb domestic violence in the rural communities of South-South Nigeria?
- ii) How effective are traditional communication strategies in curbing domestic violence in the rural communities in Nigeria's South-South region?
- iii) What is the relationship between the use of traditional communication strategies and the reduction of domestic violence in rural communities in Nigeria's South-South region?

Theoretical framework

The study was anchored on psychodynamic and edutainment theories. The basic assumption of the psychodynamic theory according to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) is that all behaviours have a cause which is found in the mind of the individual and much of the behaviour of an individual is governed by a process that is situated outside the awareness of the individual. Every action of the individual is motivated and it ends up shaping the personality and behaviour of the individual. Since intentions are held by someone, motivations are linked to the psychology of the personality. That is why Folarin (2002) has argued that in the case of psychodynamic theory, a persuasive message cannot be effective if it does not, first of all, change the psychological functioning of the individual for whom the persuasion is meant in such a way that he can respond overtly and positively towards the suggested behaviour. Psychodynamic theory thrives on motivation and mental processes. Certain behaviours can be changed through a deliberate effort aimed at breaking the habit that leads to that behavior (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008).

Applied to traditional communication techniques and the resolution of domestic violence, psychodynamic theory directs us to the link between the thought systems of the people who engage in violent behaviour against family members. For instance, if a child grew up in an environment where violence was common, that child may grow up exhibiting violent behaviour towards family members. To discourage such a person from such behaviour, it will be useful, as the tenet of this theory stipulates, to find a way of changing the psychodynamic functioning of the individual for him or her to be able to respond to the persuasive message against domestic violence.

The entertainment-education theory, also known as edutainment theory, by (Fischer and Melnik in Usua, 2014) was propounded in reaction to the dichotomy that was believed to exist in the modern mass media between educational and entertainment values. Many programmes, particularly in the electronic media were categorized either as entertainment or educational, and programme philosophies were built around these as distinct philosophies which content makers vigorously pursued. The entertainment-education theory emerged, in the words of Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) to

"abrogate the needless dichotomy in almost all mass media contents: that mass media programmes must either be entertaining or educational" (p.182).

According to this theory, media messages should be deliberately created to educate and entertain all at once. When this is done, the knowledge of the audience about educational issues as well as their knowledge of social problems will be increased. Favourable attitudes will also be created and change of overt behaviour will be achieved. The larger objective of entertainment-education is to get communication activities to contribute to the process of direct social change which can happen within an individual, a group or the entire society.

As it concerns domestic violence, the benefits that are inherent in music, dance, masquerade, festival and story-telling or folktale, just like television programmes; and with their interesting, exciting, visually and aurally stimulating values, these strategies can be used as explicit educational and sensitization tools against domestic violence. In that case, the indigenous communication strategies using music, dance, proverbs, story-telling and folktale will not only serve entertainment purposes but in accordance with the principle of edutainment, they will also be purposively used to influence audiences in ways that will help reduce the incidents of domestic violence.

Literature

Violence, described as words or actions that are intended to hurt other people, usually arises from conflict. When views on any given subject are divided, what results sometimes is violence. Enighe (2008) notes that "ineffective communication can degenerate into a power struggle and that lack of proper and adequate communication in a family is most likely to result in conflict. Ineffective communication is therefore a major reason or cause of domestic conflict" (p.451). Conflict is vividly captured by Wilson (1997) to be either endogenous or exogenous. Any situation that results in controversy, struggle, strife or contention, and consequently brings about an uncertainty within oneself is endogenous conflict while that which brings about incompatibility between humans and a crisis within the society is taken to be exogenous conflict. According to Enahoro (2008), conflict and strife are as basic to human society as harmony, integration and smooth functioning are. Conflicts always lead to violence if they are not well managed from the initial stages. Nwolise, cited by Enahoro (2008) has observed that what transforms conflict into violence is a lack of timely action to deal with the conflict.

Conflict that has gone full cycle within a home or a family is what domestic violence is all about. In line with Wilson's (1997) observation that conflict can occur between individuals, when that conflict situation is between a man and his wife or children, as it progresses through pre-conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome and post-conflict stages, we can refer to it as domestic violence. In other words, the controversy, struggle, strife or contention between a man and his wife, a man and his children, siblings and other occupants of any home is what domestic violence is all about.

Enighe (2008) is of the opinion that conflicts that end up as violence manifests in Nigeria mostly as rape, incest, abuse of children, verbal abuse, threats and so on. There is also violence against children in terms of child labour and slavery and denial of food, school fees and other opportunities. For example, it is an act of violence for a family to send their biological children to school while domestic servants are denied access to education. Parents who deny their children certain privileges because they refuse to obey them can be described as violent parents. The author again makes the point that children

would naturally react to parents who want to re-live their lives through them (the children) and that many undocumented conflicts have arisen because parents attempted to force careers or professions on their unwilling children. "When parents and children have the same ideas, plans or thoughts, there would usually be no conflicts; where parents hand out choices to their children, in the form of commands or orders, they (the children) would feel short-changed and therefore rebel" (p.451).

In 2006 the United Nations secretary-general is credited to have informed the General Assembly of the world body that violence against children was at an alarming rate. It was observed that an estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 years experienced forced sexual violence adding still, that even that figure was underestimated. Yet, studies from 21 countries suggested that in some places as many as 36 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men had been subjected to some form of sexual victimization in childhood (Usua, 2021).

Widespread violence against children has been reported in all regions of the world both in school and at home. Such violence includes psychological violence, discrimination, neglect and maltreatment. Violence against this category of people ranges from sexual abuse in the home to corporal punishment; it includes physical restraints and brutality and may even include infanticide and honour killing. It is however generally believed that women are the greatest victims of violence at home. In recognition of this fact, the United Nations, in an effort to fight and reduce violence at home against women sets aside November 25, every year as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The General Assembly of the international body in 1999 recognised the day to create awareness about violations and rights of women. Records are available to show that women have been subdued to violence almost throughout the world. An Awake publication quotes statistics indicating high incidents in Holland and other countries in Europe. The British Home Office in England and Wales corroborates the claim (Awake, January 2008).

In Africa, despite poor record-keeping habits, daily media reports point to a high level of domestic violence. In India and other Asian nations, the story of violence at home is not better "For women across India, fear is a constant companion and rape is the stranger they may have to confront at every corner, on any road, in the public place....Amnesty International describes violence against women and girls as today's most pervasive human rights challenge" (Awake January 2008, p.3).

According to Akpojivi (2008), most domestic violence involves male anger directed against their female partners. Quoting a report, the author notes that one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way, most often, by someone she knows, including her husband or another male family member. While conflict which is usually the harbinger of violence is unavoidable, it is largely believed that it can be managed to avoid violence. The media of communication according to Ugochukwu (2002) are expected to play a role in resolving conflicts in the larger society. However, in the domestic setting, personal communication can play the role of the media. In other words, communication is critical to reducing or eliminating violence at home.

Emphasizing the centrality of communication in dealing with domestic violence Enighe (2008) argues that its proper and effective use can greatly improve the situation. "Because communication is the single most important skill needed to stem the tide of domestic conflicts, the better we communicate, the more control we have over people

and the more likely we are to keep domestic conflicts at bay; this means that communication is the string that holds human societies together" (p.90). The critical role of communication in the fight against domestic violence, Joseph and Gapiso (2008) have noted, was the basis for the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which recommended among other things, that women should have access to information and communication so that they can advance and be empowered.

Unfortunately, even though man has been engaging in communication since the beginning of human existence and in spite of the fact that international networks, non-governmental organisations and even the United Nations have all been promoting communication towards awareness creation, domestic violence has not abated. It is not unlikely that the activities of these bodies are limited to urban centres while they rely mostly on urban-based media organizations to pass information to the public.

Elite media, which the modern mass media are, have their limitations. Online communities that may have access to campaigns against domestic and other forms of violence are usually not constituted of rural dwellers in Africa and other developing nations. This in part may explain the failure of efforts so far carried out to stop domestic violence, especially in rural communities. This means that indigenous communication strategies may not have been adequately factored into the campaign bearing in mind, the fact that a good portion African population, almost 70% in the case of Nigeria, are residents of rural communities.

Indigenous or traditional African communication is that type of communication that is carried out within the community, built around practices such as speech, movement, music and dance as well as others like signs, symbols, and so on. Citing Ogumbiyi, Usua (2014) says that in early traditional societies, man sought ways of penetrating the major secrets of nature, and he felt that he could achieve this desire by carrying out rituals and by dancing and acting in the form of rites. Over time, such traditional practices became useful entertainment and communication activities. United Nations (1980) posits that such practices and the events that occasion them as well as related cultural developments are shared through stories, songs and dances among others. Nketia (1985), cited in Usua (2014) observed that music is not only a play activity, it "engenders the conviviality of an occasion, enhances the sharing of individual and group sentiments, and facilitates the communication of both aesthetic and social values" (p.19). Corroborating this, Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto (2010) state that traditional songs or music is powerful and communicative in traditional communities because "songs convey meanings that relate to the cultural norms and values among the rural people. The songs are either meant to warn, entertain or simply inform" (pp140-141).

Dance, which is the normal accompaniment of music, is used in the same way as music. Praise-singing and oral story-telling, festivals and, masquerades, are all aspects of the African communication system. Masquerade for instance, as a communication channel, helps in solving people's problems and serves a purpose similar to advocacy and mobilization functions of the modern mass media while festival as a component of the traditional communication system in Africa, reveals the ingenuity by which people in the past employed theatrical enactments to control their environments (Razaki, 2002; Kur & Orhewere, 2009; Hagher, in Usua, 2014).

An important aspect of traditional African practice is ostracism (ex-communication) which is a combination of communication and an element of psychological torture. In that case, as Aluta (2017) has noted, friends, peer groups, age grade, family and other

community members may receive instructions from leaders to shun and avoid the exchange of speeches with the erring member in breach of community practice. "An erring member may be vested with the status of '*persona non-grata*'. Which may affect family ego, prestige and pedigree" (p. 52). This has always been an effective communication strategy in Africa.

It is generally believed that Africa is still largely populated by illiterate people with a good number living in traditional, culturally and linguistically homogenous village settings. That makes traditional modes of communication the preferred mode of communication because it is the communication mode that allows the building of strong relationships between leaders and marginalized groups like women (Morrison, 1998).

Indigenous African communication system as a means of oral communication and informal transference system peculiar to each community demonstrates the interplay between a community's customs and conflicts, harmony and strife, cultural convergences and divergences, culture-specific tangibles and intangibles, interpersonal relations, symbols as well as codes, oral literature and traditions, mythology, masquerades, witchcraft, rites, rituals, music, dance drama, costumes and all other elements which encompass a people's factual, symbolic and cosmological existence (Ugboajah, in Usua, 2014; Ogbuoshi, 2010; Wilson, 1990).

By its nature, traditional African communication is multi-purpose on one hand and problem-specific on the other. It is naturally aimed at solving problems before they get out of hand. In other words, this communication is not reactionary. And because traditional communication is something that the people believe in especially the aspect that has to do with the link with the spiritual world, it is something that the people do not take for granted. This explains why Wilson (1997) has opined that since the media and channels have force and credibility, such a significant system of communication can effectively be harnessed towards the resolution of conflict in society and indeed violence at home.

Methodology

The study made use of Focus Group Discussions and intensive interview since the experiences of people in relation to social and cultural existence was the deciding factor in determining the potential of indigenous African communication strategies in dealing with domestic violence as a social problem. Three states of the South-South region were picked through simple random exercise. The states — Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa — have many things in common culturally. Two rural/semi-urban communities were chosen from each of the states for the study. A community was considered rural if it had more indigenes than non-indigenes residing there and had little or no modern infrastructure like electricity, and modern houses but most especially, still relied on indigenous means of sharing information such as town crier, elders' council, market women and other women groups as well as age grades among other traditional African means of communication. Two traditional leaders from each of the communities were purposely selected for interview. Focus Group Discussions from each of the selected communities also provided data for the study. One of the groups was made up of six participants, one female and five males while the other two had eight discussants each made of three females and five males. Discussants were men and women who were forty-five years of age and above and who spent a substantial part of their growing years

in rural communities. They were therefore familiar with traditional communication practices and the culture of their local communities.

With an eleven-item discussion guide and nine-item interview schedule, data were gathered for analysis which was done qualitatively. Submissions of the discussants were compared to data from intensive interviews and conclusions were drawn based on the results.

Data presentation and discussion

Data were gathered for this study through focus group discussions and intensive interviews. Interview results from the three states are presented and followed by results from the three focus group discussions.

Research question 1: What are the indigenous communication strategies adaptable in the campaign against domestic violence in the rural communities of South-South Nigeria?

On this question, all the traditional leaders interviewed submitted that their communities rely on the council of elders, heads of kindred, the town crier, women groups (family women, market women groups, first daughters, and other women associations), age grades, masquerade cults and town hall meetings. All of these channels make use of satires in songs and in proverbs which discourage people from anti-social and other unacceptable behaviours while masquerade cults, in addition, inflict physical pains on offenders through flogging if the need arises. The practice of ostracism or ex-communication was also mentioned to be in use in some communities. In that case, one who engages in an unacceptable practice is not allowed to relate with others whether as a group member or a member of the larger community.

These practices and approaches to communicating the concerns of the community were said to cut across the three states involved in the study. The interviewees also agreed that all the mentioned communication channels are used to discourage community members from acts of violence and victimization which includes domestic violence. One of the interviewees stated: "The masquerade cults, for instance, both warn offenders in songs as well as punish them physically if an offender refuses to abstain" Another said that if a man for instance verbally abuses his wife (for instance calling her a dirty woman), and the information gets to *Ibanlsong*, a women group, they sometimes go to the extent of visiting the offender and taking him to a special meeting place in the bush where they strip naked, sing and dance round him and ask him to clean them up. He said this is because as far as the women are concerned, referring to one of them as dirty amounts to referring to all as dirty. The interviewees noted that the elders' council may lampoon offenders and get them to pay fines to deter other community members.

Results from the three focus group discussions corroborated the views expressed by interviewees. One of the groups submitted that in addition to the channels mentioned earlier, necromancy and incantation were also commonly used as a strategy for discouraging violence and abuse of people's rights in general and domestic violence in particular. A female discussant from one of the groups recounted that as a child, her mother showed her a man who was taken by a women group to the bush and made to encounter the nakedness of the women for abusing his stepmother. She said after the encounter with the women in the bush, he was forced to go around the community ringing a bell, retracting his statement and apologising to the stepmother.

Research question 2: How effective is the use of indigenous communication strategies in curbing domestic violence in rural communities of Nigeria's South-South region?

The traditional rulers interviewed all agreed that the use of these strategies was very effective. According to one of the respondents, violent behaviours generally which include those at home are very rampant in modern societies compared to typical traditional communities. This indicates that the use of indigenous African strategies being a combination of approaches contributes to keeping violent behaviours low. Another respondent insisted that the use of strategies such as folk songs nibs the problem in the bud in the sense that the people get used to the messages in the songs which are part of them and work on their sub-consciousness even before they get to the age of involvement in violent acts. In the same vein, an interviewee argued that messages in proverbs, wise sayings and songs are taken seriously by the people because they are believed to be inspired by ancestral spirits. Thus if an indigenous song for instance contains messages such as those that warn against inflicting harm on others, the people see it as a message from their forebears. Because people grow up with the fear of their forebears, the tendency for violent acts against others remains low.

Submissions by the three focus groups supported the views expressed by the interviewees. They insisted that in contemporary society, the modern mass media have indeed carried out vigorous campaigns against violence yet there has been more violence in modern towns and cities than there are in rural communities where people consume less mass media messages. They linked this to the efficacy of traditional approaches which one of the discussants described as a preventive approach.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between the use of traditional communication strategies and the reduction of the rate of domestic violence in the rural communities of Nigeria's South-South region?

All the traditional leaders interviewed except one were of the view that domestic violence was less in their communities compared to what they have been hearing about in the cities. The one who was not sure whether there were more cases in the cities than in the rural areas however said that there was no record to be used as the basis for comparison. He agreed nonetheless with other interviewees that indigenous communication strategies were very effective in discouraging people from exhibiting violent behaviours towards others at home. Taken together, the respondents were therefore of the view that with indigenous communication strategies, domestic violence was low, meaning that without them it would be higher, hence the relationship between the two variables is that the use of the strategies reduces violence at home in rural communities in Nigeria's South-South region.

Results from the three focus groups also indicated that there was a relationship between the use of indigenous communication strategies and the rate of domestic violence in the region under study. The participants argued that since the use of indigenous communication strategies helps keep domestic violence low in their communities, it could be said that without the use of such communication approaches, violence against spouses, children, siblings and other family members would be high. A female discussant in one of the groups said: "Without the approach which uses masquerade and women groups like *IbanIsong*, and the songs the masquerade cults and women groups sing, which keep reminding community members that physical abuse of women attracts punishment, the lot of women would be unimaginable" Other

participants responded in unison that the approach instils some fear in men who would be in the habit of manhandling their wives.

From the results of the interview and submissions of those who took part in the focus group discussion, the general opinion is that indigenous communication channels involving the council of elders, heads of kindred, the town crier, women groups, age grades, masquerade cults and town hall meetings are frequently used to wage war against general violence in rural communities and that domestic violence is an aspect of that general violence that is covered in that regard. There are also indications that those channels have their inherent strategies that make them effective in whatever social reengineering they are meant to pursue, including the use of direct warnings and satires in songs and in proverbs which discourage community members from violence while masquerade cults in addition to psychological torture, inflicts physical pains on offenders if the need arises. This confirms the argument by some scholars that for Africans living in culturally and linguistically homogenous settings, songs, dance, story-telling, and proverbs, used by and through elder's council, women groups, age grades and masquerade groups remain the preferred strategies for communicating their feelings and their issues (Morrison, 1988; Akpabio, 2003; Batta, 2009).

The results indicate that traditional communication strategies are effective in discouraging people in the rural areas of Nigeria's South-South region from engaging in violent acts against family members; and that there exists a relationship between the use of traditional indigenous strategies and the rate of domestic violence in the region under study as well as the finding that comparatively, the indigenous strategies are more efficient ways of tackling the violence than modern mass media, fall in line with the argument that these strategies do not only entertain, they indeed have been very useful in disseminating development messages, healthcare awareness and for behavioural change (Kur & Orhewere, 2009; Wilson, 1990; Okoro, 2008).

Drawing from the tenets of psychodynamic theory, the foundation for this study states that for any persuasive message such as that aimed at discouraging domestic violence to be effective, it has to succeed first and foremost, in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient of the message, we can argue that the effectiveness of indigenous strategies is linked to the fact that the people grow up with the songs, proverbs, dance steps and other strategies that persuade, remind and warn the people about the need to steer clear from violence. It becomes difficult for the instinct towards violent acts to overwhelm the consciousness that has grown with the individual through regular exposure to anti-violent messages that are inherent in songs, proverbs, wise sayings, folktales and other aspects of traditional communication systems.

We also observe the tenets of edutainment theory at play in the indigenous communication strategies concerning the campaign against domestic violence. Music dance, folktale, masquerade displays, proverbs etc., are in their nature very entertaining. But the entertainment value is derived alongside information, education, persuasion, cultural dissemination, mobilization and sometimes indoctrination. Thus it is understood why the traditional leaders interviewed and participants in the focus group discussion believed that in their communities, indigenous communication is not only effective in carrying out the campaign against domestic violence but that in comparison with the modern mass media, they are more effective in the campaign. This corroborates the argument that any medium that deliberately pursues edutainment can easily influence audience awareness, attitudes or behaviour towards a socially desirable goal and equally

influence the external environment of audience members thereby helping in creating the necessary conditions for social change at the group or society level. Indigenous communication media, with their peculiar combination of entertainment goal with mobilization, serve as social mobilizers, advocates or agenda setters that easily influence the behaviour of society members in a desirable direction (Usua, 2014; Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2008). This is a possible explanation for the acceptance of traditional or indigenous strategies as the preferred strategy in the fight against domestic violence in rural communities, as seen in this study.

Conclusion and recommendations

Domestic violence has become one of the biggest challenges faced by human society today. Unfortunately, while our society is said to have evolved into a modern one, human behaviour does not appear to have improved, at least not in the way humankind inflicts injuries on one another. One way that human inhumanity to fellow humans manifests is in violence at home. Even though the attention of the world has turned to the problem of domestic violence as a result of its consequences, and even though the relevant agencies of both states and international bodies have carried out campaigns against the problem, it does not appear that much success has been achieved. The use of mass media, believed to be a potent means of carrying out campaigns such as this, has not yielded the expected result as reports of an increase in the rate of domestic violence continue to hit us daily. This study was an attempt to explore the potential of indigenous communication tools and strategies in carrying out the campaign against domestic violence, focusing on the rural communities in the South-South region of Nigeria.

The study evaluated the opinions of respondents in three out of the six states of the region. With the result showing that indigenous African communication has great potential in the fight against domestic violence and with even greater promise than the modern mass media, especially in African communities, the conclusion is that concentrating attention on the use of the modern mass media in the campaign against domestic violence will continue to yield minimal results.

Further, rather than emphasise on workshops and conferences, which often take place in the cities, relevant bodies should move into rural communities, where, like the urban centres, domestic violence also occurs and draw from the strength of the indigenous African communication system to discourage the practice. To that extent, the services of traditional communicators should be deliberately and adequately employed. As rural communities evolve into urban and semi-urban centres, and as African people get carried away by the rush after modern mass media of radio, television, film and of late, the social media, indigenous performances—music and dance, festivals, masquerade displays, folktales and story-telling among other—are imagined to gradually become ineffective. But as seen in this study, and in the case of the fight against domestic violence in rural communities, a return to those practices is critical. Traditional music composers, town criers, age groups, women groups such as *Ibanlsong*, elder's councils and other traditional agencies should be made vital components of communication to create and raise the level of awareness on the menace of domestic violence.

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