

The Roles of Mass Media in Enlightening Female Teenagers on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among Akure Residents



**Ikuesewo-Akinbami, Adebowale[♦]
&
Acheme, Ramson Oloche[♦]**

Abstract

Female Genital Mutilation is an old practice of circumcising girls, a practice believed to be a measure of suppressing wanton sexual urges in women. Modern analysis and findings reveal that this practice poses health risks to young girls and inflicts pain on them. From every indication, as proven through empirical studies, FGM serves no helpful purpose other than inflicting physical and emotional pain on young girls. The pain, disease infections, and humiliation this practice inflict on girls have been widely criticised in modern times, and many established groups and governments have long abolished Female Gender Mutilation. However, some far-right conservatives in Africa and Nigeria, still hold on to this way of life despite the ban and ongoing campaign against it. Therefore, this study takes a close look at the role mass media plays in enlightening young girls and affected people about the negative implications of this old practice. The innovation of diffusion theory and cognitive theory provides theoretical ground for this study's literature. At the same time, a survey was employed to gather data from young girls in Akure, a city where such practice is prevalent. Of the 350 copies of questionnaires served, 316 copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned, findings reveal that the mass media campaign has a major impact on the target population. However, Female Genital Mutilation remains common despite the media campaign and awareness. The study proposed that television campaigns be intensified in the campaign since the audio-visual medium is popular among young girls. And that intense media campaign with a new strategy is employed.

Keywords: *Enlightenment, Gender, Girl child, Mass Media, Media Campaign.*

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation of remarkable diversity, home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its rich cultural heritage that shapes societal norms and behaviours (Uturu, 2009). As the country progresses, there is an increasing need to reassess and, where necessary, modify or abandon certain traditional practices that conflict with modern values and development goals. Among these practices, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) stands out

[♦] **Ikuesewo-Akinbami, Adebowale**, Department of Mass Communication, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State Tel: +234 8038688126. Email: adebowale.akinbami@aaua.edu.ng deboiakinbami@gmail.com

[♦] **Acheme, Ramson Oloche**, Department of Mass Communication, College of Arts, Social and Management Sciences, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos. +234 8077860086. ramson.acheme@calebuniversity.edu.ng, chmramson@yahoo.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8103-2559>

as particularly concerning, not least because it transcends ethnic boundaries and is prevalent across all Nigerian nationalities (Kolawole & Anke, 2012; Okpanchi, 2005). Nigeria has more than two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities with diverse cultures that dictate people's patterns of behaviours (Uturu, 2009). The dynamic nature of society demands that these patterns of behaviour should be modified or eradicated for the sake of modernization and development. The traditional practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is one of these behaviours, but unlike other distinctive behaviours, it is a prevalent practice in all Nigerian ethnic nationalities (Kolawole & Anke, 2012; Okpanchi, 2005). Ibekwe et al. (2012), Mandara (2005), the US Department of State (2001), and Shah, Susan, and Furcroy (2009) observed that the practices of female genital mutilation (FGM) as well as the campaign to eradicate the practice are universal phenomena. Female genital mutilation, which is also known as female circumcision, is a set of procedures used to remove part or all of the external female genitals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines FGM as encompassing "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons" (WHO, 2020). This practice, deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and social factors, is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based violence. In Nigeria, the prevalence of FGM remains alarmingly high despite efforts to eradicate it. A study by Aribike et al. (2019) found that approximately 20% of women aged 15-49 in Nigeria had undergone some form of FGM, with rates varying significantly across regions and ethnic groups. The practice is particularly prevalent in the southwestern part of the country, where Akure, the capital of Ondo State, is located. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the multifaceted roles that mass media play in enlightening female teenagers about FGM in Akure. By examining the knowledge levels of these young women, their media consumption habits, and the influence of media messages on their perceptions of FGM, this research aims to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for utilizing mass media in the fight against this harmful practice.

Statement of the Problem

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to be a significant public health and human rights concern in Nigeria, particularly in regions like Akure where traditional practices remain deeply entrenched. Despite national and international efforts to eradicate FGM, its prevalence remains alarmingly high, indicating a persistent gap between policy intentions and grassroots realities (Akinola, Oluwasola, and Adeniyi, 2020). This discrepancy points to a critical need for effective awareness and education strategies, especially targeted at younger generations who may be at risk of undergoing the procedure or perpetuating the practice in the future. This study, therefore, aims to address these critical gaps by investigating the roles of mass media in enlightening female teenagers on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among Akure residents. By examining the knowledge levels, media exposure, and the influence of media messages on attitudes toward FGM, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform more effective media strategies in the fight against this harmful practice.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives outlined above, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of knowledge about Female Genital Mutilation among female teenagers in Akure?
2. To what extent are female teenagers in Akure exposed to mass media content enlightening them about Female Genital Mutilation?
3. Which mass media channels are most effective in disseminating information about FGM to female teenagers in Akure?
4. To what extent does exposure to mass media influence the attitudes and knowledge of female teenagers in Akure regarding FGM?

Literature Review

Concept of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision, is a centuries-old traditional practice that involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organization, 2020). This harmful practice is deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and social beliefs and has been carried out in various forms across Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia for generations. The World Health Organization (WHO) provides a comprehensive definition of FGM, categorizing it into four major types: Type I (clitoridectomy), Type II (excision), Type III (infibulation), and Type IV (all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes) (WHO, 2020). These procedures, often performed on young girls and women without their consent, can have severe and long-lasting physical, psychological, and sexual consequences. Historically, the practice of FGM has been justified through a variety of cultural narratives, including the belief that it preserves virginity, enhances fertility, or ensures cleanliness and purity (UNFPA, 2018). In some communities, FGM is seen as a rite of passage into womanhood, while in others, it is believed to improve marriage prospects or maintain social status. However, these cultural justifications fail to acknowledge the inherent violation of human rights and the devastating impact of FGM on the lives of those who undergo the procedure (UNICEF, 2020).

The origins of FGM can be traced back thousands of years, with evidence of the practice documented in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations (UNICEF, 2013). Over time, the practice has spread and evolved, with various communities developing their unique rituals and customs surrounding FGM. Despite global efforts to eradicate the practice, it remains a deeply entrenched tradition in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, where it is estimated that over 200 million girls and women have undergone some form of FGM (WHO, 2020). In recent decades, the international community has made significant strides in condemning FGM as a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based violence. The United Nations General Assembly has passed several resolutions calling for the elimination of FGM, and many countries have enacted laws prohibiting the practice (UNFPA, 2018). However, the persistence of FGM in various cultural contexts highlights the complex social, economic, and political factors that sustain the practice, often in the face of legal and policy interventions (Alege, Matovu, Ssensalire, and Nabiwember, 2020).

Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa and Nigeria

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains a deeply entrenched practice across many regions of Africa, with an estimated 200 million girls and women worldwide having

undergone the procedure (World Health Organization WHO, 2020). The practice is most prevalent in certain parts of the continent, particularly in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and parts of West Africa. In Nigeria, FGM continues to be a significant public health and human rights concern, with an estimated prevalence rate of 20% among women and girls aged 15-49 (National Population Commission (NPC & ICF, 2019). However, the practice varies greatly across the country's diverse ethnic and religious groups, with higher rates reported in the southern and western regions compared to the northern parts of the nation. A study by the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) found that the prevalence of FGM was highest in the Southwest region, where Akure, the capital of Ondo State, is located. In this region, over 50% of women and girls have undergone some form of genital mutilation (NPC & ICF, 2019). This highlights the persistence of FGM in parts of Nigeria, despite its criminalization at the federal level in 2015.

Scholars have attributed the continued prevalence of FGM in Nigeria to a complex interplay of factors, including traditional beliefs about femininity, sexuality, and marriageability, as well as the lack of effective enforcement of anti-FGM laws and the limited reach of public awareness campaigns (Kandala et al., 2018; Okeke et al., 2012). One of the key factors contributing to the high prevalence of FGM in Nigeria is the deeply rooted cultural and social norms that sustain the practice. In many communities, FGM is perceived as a rite of passage, a prerequisite for marriage, or a means of preserving cultural identity and traditions (Kolawole & Anke, 2012; Okpanchi, 2005). These beliefs are often reinforced through intergenerational transmission, with the practice being passed down from older to younger generations within families and communities. Additionally, the decentralized nature of Nigeria's governance structure, with states and local communities retaining significant autonomy, has made it challenging to implement a unified, nationwide strategy to eradicate FGM. While the federal government has enacted legislation prohibiting the practice, the enforcement of these laws has been uneven, and the availability of resources and political will to support anti-FGM initiatives can vary across different regions of the country (Kandala et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the limited reach and effectiveness of public awareness campaigns, particularly in marginalized or hard-to-reach communities, have contributed to the persistent prevalence of FGM in Nigeria. Many campaigns have struggled to address the complex cultural and social factors that perpetuate the practice, often relying on top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches that fail to resonate with local communities (Okeke et al., 2012; Aribike et al., 2019). The high prevalence of FGM in Nigeria, particularly in regions like Akure, underscores the urgent need for multifaceted interventions that address the practice's deep-rooted social and cultural underpinnings. Effective strategies must involve not only legislative action but also sustained efforts to educate and empower communities, especially younger generations of women and girls, to challenge this harmful tradition. This is particularly crucial in the context of Akure, where the practice remains widespread and deeply entrenched within the local culture. Addressing the persistence of FGM in this region requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape the practice, as well as the specific needs and lived experiences of female teenagers who may be at risk of undergoing or perpetuating the procedure (Akinola, Oluwasola and Adeniyi, 2022). By understanding the complex landscape of FGM prevalence in Nigeria, and more

specifically in Akure, the current study can better inform the development of targeted and effective strategies to enlighten female teenagers about the harms of this practice and empower them to become agents of change within their communities.

Role of Mass Media in Enlightenment on the Effects of FGM

The mass media, with its ability to reach large and diverse audiences, has the potential to play a pivotal role in enlightening individuals and communities about the harmful effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Through various communication channels, mass media can disseminate critical information, challenge cultural myths and misconceptions, and promote behavior change to eradicate this harmful practice. Scholars have highlighted the importance of leveraging mass media in the fight against FGM, particularly in regions where the practice remains deeply entrenched, such as parts of Africa, including Nigeria (Ruiz *et al.*, 2017; Muthumbi *et al.*, 2015). Media campaigns can raise awareness about the physical, psychological, and social consequences of FGM, as well as educate the public about legal and policy frameworks prohibiting the practice (Johansen *et al.*, 2013; Shell-Duncan *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, mass media can serve as a platform for amplifying the voices of FGM survivors, advocates, and experts, providing a powerful counter-narrative to the cultural justifications that have historically sustained the practice (Ashimi & Amole, 2015; Ogunsiyi, 2016). By sharing personal testimonies, dispelling myths, and highlighting the human rights violations inherent in FGM, the media can play a crucial role in shifting societal attitudes and norms (Kaplan *et al.*, 2013; Vogt *et al.*, 2016).

The rise of digital and social media, in particular, has expanded the avenues through which mass media can engage with and educate younger generations about FGM. Online platforms enable the dissemination of multimedia content, interactive campaigns, and peer-to-peer dialogues that can resonate more effectively with youth, including female teenagers who may be at risk of undergoing the procedure or perpetuating the practice (Nwabueze & Okonkwo, 2018; Chikhungu & Madise, 2015). However, the effectiveness of mass media in enlightening individuals about the effects of FGM is not without its challenges. Scholars have cautioned that media campaigns must be carefully designed and implemented to account for cultural sensitivities, address deeply rooted beliefs, and provide alternative, positive narratives that empower communities to abandon the practice (Johansen *et al.*, 2013; Ruiz *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, the reach and accessibility of mass media can be uneven, particularly in marginalized or underserved communities, limiting the potential impact of awareness-raising efforts (Waigwa *et al.*, 2018; Muteshi & Sass, 2005). Nonetheless, the strategic and thoughtful use of mass media remains a crucial component of comprehensive strategies to eradicate FGM. By leveraging the power of media to educate, empower, and mobilize individuals and communities, stakeholders can work toward the elimination of this harmful practice and the promotion of the health, rights, and well-being of

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by the renowned psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1980s, provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the potential roles of mass media in enlightening female teenagers about Female Genital Mutilation

(FGM) in Akure. At the core of the Social Cognitive Theory is the idea that human behavior is the product of a dynamic interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's seminal work challenged the prevailing behaviorist and cognitivist perspectives, which tended to view behavior as either a direct response to environmental stimuli or the result of individual thought processes alone. Instead, the Social Cognitive Theory posits that individuals learn and adopt new behaviors not only through their own experiences but also by observing and modeling the actions of others, particularly those perceived as similar or influential. This concept of observational learning, or "vicarious learning," is a key tenet of the Social Cognitive Theory and has significant implications for the potential impact of mass media on addressing harmful practices like FGM (Berge, Underland, Odgaard-Jensen, Fretheim and Vist, 2014). Bandura (1986) argued that individuals can acquire new knowledge, skills, and behaviors by observing the behaviors of others, the consequences of those behaviors, and the reactions of others to those behaviors. In the context of FGM, the media can serve as a powerful source of observational learning, providing female teenagers in Akure with exposure to narratives, testimonies, and role models that challenge the cultural norms and beliefs supporting the practice.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, developed by Everett Rogers in the 1960s, provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the potential roles of mass media in enlightening female teenagers about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Akure. This theory offers insights into how new ideas, practices, or technologies (referred to as "innovations") are communicated and adopted within a social system over time (Baran and Davis, 2012). At the core of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory is the premise that the adoption of an innovation is influenced by a variety of factors, including the perceived characteristics of the innovation itself, the communication channels used to disseminate information, the social network structures, and the attributes of the potential adopters (Rogers, 2003; Behrendt and Moritz, 2005). Understanding these factors can shed light on the mechanisms through which mass media can contribute to the abandonment of FGM among female teenagers in Akure.

Research Method

This study employed a survey research method to investigate the role of mass media in enlightening female teenagers about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Akure, Nigeria. This method was selected for the current study because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a representative sample of the target population, which in this case are female teenagers in Akure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). The study population for this research consists of female teenagers aged 13-19 years who reside in Akure, the capital city of Ondo State, Nigeria. As of the most recent estimates, Akure has a population of approximately 774,000 people (National Population Commission, 2021). According to the 2010 census data for Ondo State, the population distribution indicates that about 10% of the total population falls within the age range of 13-19 years. Thus, the estimated total population of teenagers in Akure is approximately 44,892. The purposive sampling technique is appropriate for this study (Babbie, 2020; Etikan et al., 2016). The data for this study was gathered using a structured questionnaire grouped into five sections, with section A covering the respondents' demographics,

while sections B, C, D, and E were drawn from the four research questions. The face-to-face data collection approach was chosen to ensure a high response rate and to provide the researcher with an opportunity to clarify any questions or concerns the respondents might have. Of the over three hundred and fifty questionnaires served, three hundred and sixteen were correctly filled and found useful.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Data

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Score	Percentage
13-15 years	56	17.7%
16-17 years	130	41.1%
18-19 years	130	41.1%
Total	316	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The age distribution of respondents shown in Table 1 indicates that the majority of participants were in the 16-19 age range, with equal proportions (41.1% each) in the 16-17 and 18-19 categories. Only 17.7% of respondents were in the 13-15 age group. This distribution suggests that the study captured a good representation of older teenagers, who may have more exposure to media and awareness of FGM issues.

Table 2: Educational Level of Respondents

Educational Level	Score	Percentage
Junior Secondary School	86	27.2%
Senior Secondary School	230	72.8%
Out of School	0	0%
Total	316	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that the vast majority of respondents (72.8%) were in senior secondary school, while 27.2% were in junior secondary school. Notably, there were no out-of-school participants in the sample. This distribution reflects a high level of school enrollment among female teenagers in Akure and suggests that the findings may be particularly relevant to in-school youth.

Table 3: Family Type of Respondents

Family Type	Score	Percentage
Monogamous	245	77.5%
Polygamous	71	22.5%
Total	316	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The family structure of respondents, as presented in Table 3, shows that more than three-quarters (77.5%) came from monogamous families, while 22.5% were from polygamous households. This distribution may have implications for the dissemination of

information about FGM within family units and the potential influence of family structure on attitudes toward the practice.

Table 4: Religious Affiliation of Respondents

Religion	Score	Percentage
Christianity	168	53.2%
Islam	138	43.7%
Traditional Religion	10	3.2%
Other	0	0%
Total	316	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 illustrates the religious composition of the sample, with Christianity (53.2%) and Islam (43.7%) being the dominant religions. A small percentage (3.2%) of respondents practiced traditional religion. This religious distribution reflects the diverse spiritual landscape of Akure and highlights the importance of considering religious factors in FGM awareness campaigns.

Table 5: Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	Score	Percentage
Yoruba	271	85.8%
Igbo	23	7.3%
Hausa	22	7.0%
Other	0	0%
Total	316	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The ethnic composition of the sample, as shown in Table 5, indicates that the vast majority of respondents (85.8%) were Yoruba, which is consistent with Akure's location in a predominantly Yoruba-speaking region. There were small percentages of Igbo (7.3%) and Hausa (7.0%) respondents. This ethnic distribution underscores the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in media campaigns addressing FGM.

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge about Female Genital Mutilation among female teenagers in Akure?

Table 6: Knowledge of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1. I am aware of what Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) entails.	112 (35.4%)	158 (50.0%)	36 (11.4%)	10 (3.2%)
2. FGM is a cultural practice that involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia.	98 (31.0%)	176 (55.7%)	32 (10.1%)	10 (3.2%)
3. FGM is practiced for non-medical reasons.	88 (27.8%)	162 (51.3%)	54 (17.1%)	12 (3.8%)
4. I understand the different types of FGM.	76 (24.1%)	142 (44.9%)	78 (24.7%)	20 (6.3%)
5. FGM can lead to serious health complications.	128 (40.5%)	152 (48.1%)	28 (8.9%)	8 (2.5%)
6. FGM is a form of violence against women and girls.	136 (43.0%)	138 (43.7%)	34 (10.8%)	8 (2.5%)
7. FGM is illegal in Nigeria.	102 (32.3%)	156 (49.4%)	46 (14.6%)	12 (3.8%)
8. I am aware of the reasons why some communities practice FGM.	84 (26.6%)	168 (53.2%)	52 (16.5%)	12 (3.8%)

9. FGM has no health benefits for girls and women.	118 (37.3%)	146 (46.2%)	42 (13.3%)	10 (3.2%)
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Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 6 indicates a generally high level of awareness and knowledge about FGM among female teenagers in Akure. A significant majority of respondents (85.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of what FGM entails. Similarly, 86.7% recognized FGM as a cultural practice involving the removal of female genitalia, and 79.1% understood that it is practiced for non-medical reasons. The understanding of different types of FGM was less comprehensive, with 69% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they understood the various forms, while 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests a need for more detailed education on the specific types of FGM. Notably, 88.6% of respondents acknowledged that FGM can lead to serious health complications, indicating a strong awareness of the health risks associated with the practice. An overwhelming 86.7% of participants recognized FGM as a form of violence against women and girls, demonstrating a strong understanding of its human rights implications.

Knowledge of the legal status of FGM in Nigeria was also high, with 81.7% of respondents aware that the practice is illegal. However, this also indicates that nearly one-fifth of the participants were either unaware or uncertain about the legal status, suggesting room for improvement in legal education. A large majority (79.8%) of respondents were aware of the reasons why some communities practice FGM, indicating a good understanding of the cultural context surrounding the practice. Finally, 83.5% of participants recognized that FGM has no health benefits for girls and women, which is crucial for dispelling myths that might perpetuate the practice. These findings align with research by Ahanonu and Victor (2014), who found increasing awareness of FGM health risks among Nigerian youth, but also noted gaps in comprehensive understanding of the practice. The results suggest that while general awareness is high, there are still areas where knowledge could be improved, particularly regarding the different types of FGM and its legal status.

Research Question Two: To what extent are female teenagers in Akure exposed to mass media content enlightening them about Female Genital Mutilation?

Table 7: Exposure to Mass Media Content on FGM

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1. I have seen or heard information about FGM on television or radio.	96 (30.4%)	172 (54.4%)	38 (12.0%)	10 (3.2%)
2. I have read articles about FGM in newspapers or magazines.	82 (25.9%)	158 (50.0%)	62 (19.6%)	14 (4.4%)
3. I have come across information about FGM on social media platforms.	108 (34.2%)	154 (48.7%)	44 (13.9%)	10 (3.2%)
4. I have seen posters or billboards addressing FGM in my community.	76 (24.1%)	146 (46.2%)	76 (24.1%)	18 (5.7%)
5. I have received text messages or WhatsApp broadcasts about FGM.	68 (21.5%)	132 (41.8%)	94 (29.7%)	22 (7.0%)
6. I have attended community events where FGM was discussed.	62 (19.6%)	128 (40.5%)	102 (32.3%)	24 (7.6%)
7. I have seen educational videos about FGM on YouTube or other online platforms.	88 (27.8%)	148 (46.8%)	66 (20.9%)	14 (4.4%)
8. I have heard discussions about FGM on radio talk shows.	92 (29.1%)	162 (51.3%)	52 (16.5%)	10 (3.2%)

9. I have seen drama series or movies that address the issue of FGM.	78 (24.7%)	144 (45.6%)	78 (24.7%)	16 (5.1%)
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Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 reveals substantial exposure to mass media content on FGM among female teenagers in Akure across various platforms. Television and radio emerged as the most common sources of information, with 84.8% of respondents reporting exposure through these channels. This is followed closely by social media platforms, with 82.9% of participants encountering FGM-related content online. Print media also played a significant role, with 75.9% of respondents having read articles about FGM in newspapers or magazines. Community-based media, such as posters and billboards, reached 70.3% of the participants. However, mobile messaging platforms like SMS and WhatsApp showed lower penetration, with 63.3% of respondents receiving FGM-related messages through these channels.

Community events discussing FGM had the lowest attendance, with 60.1% of respondents participating in such events. This suggests that while mass media reaches a broad audience, direct community engagement might need more attention. Educational videos on platforms like YouTube have reached a significant portion of the audience, with 74.6% of respondents reporting exposure to such content. Radio talk shows have been particularly effective, with 80.4% of participants having heard FGM discussions through this medium. Drama series and movies addressing FGM have reached 70.3% of the respondents, indicating the potential of entertainment-education approaches in disseminating information about FGM. These findings are consistent with research by Aderibigbe and Adeyemo (2020), who noted the increasing importance of diverse media channels in disseminating health information to Nigerian youth. The high exposure rates across multiple platforms suggest that mass media is playing a substantial role in enlightening female teenagers about FGM in Akure, with traditional media (TV and radio) and social media platforms being particularly effective in reaching this demographic.

Research Question Three: Which mass media channels are most effective in disseminating information about FGM to female teenagers in Akure?

Table 8: Effectiveness of Mass Media Channels

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1. Television programmes effectively convey information about FGM.	102 (32.3%)	168 (53.2%)	38 (12.0%)	8 (2.5%)
2. Radio broadcasts are a reliable source of information on FGM.	94 (29.7%)	176 (55.7%)	36 (11.4%)	10 (3.2%)
3. Newspapers and magazines provide in-depth coverage of FGM issues.	86 (27.2%)	162 (51.3%)	56 (17.7%)	12 (3.8%)
4. Social media platforms are effective in raising awareness about FGM.	112 (35.4%)	154 (48.7%)	42 (13.3%)	8 (2.5%)
5. Posters and billboards effectively communicate key messages about FGM.	88 (27.8%)	158 (50.0%)	58 (18.4%)	12 (3.8%)
6. Community events are effective in educating people about FGM.	96 (30.4%)	164 (51.9%)	46 (14.6%)	10 (3.2%)
7. Online videos are an engaging way to learn about FGM.	104 (32.9%)	156 (49.4%)	48 (15.2%)	8 (2.5%)
8. Text messages and WhatsApp broadcasts effectively disseminate information about FGM.	82 (25.9%)	148 (46.8%)	72 (22.8%)	14 (4.4%)

9. Drama series and movies are powerful tools for addressing FGM.	108 (34.2%)	152 (48.1%)	46 (14.6%)	10 (3.2%)
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Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in Table 8 provides insights into the perceived effectiveness of various mass media channels in disseminating information about FGM. Television emerged as the most effective medium, with 85.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that TV programs effectively convey FGM information. This was closely followed by radio broadcasts, which 85.4% of participants considered a reliable source of FGM information. Social media platforms were also highly regarded, with 84.1% of respondents viewing them as effective in raising awareness about FGM. Online videos were similarly well-received, with 82.3% agreeing that they are an engaging way to learn about FGM. Traditional print media (newspapers and magazines) were perceived as slightly less effective, though still highly valued, with 78.5% of respondents acknowledging their role in providing in-depth coverage of FGM issues.

Posters and billboards were seen as effective by 77.8% of respondents, indicating the continued relevance of traditional outdoor advertising in communicating key messages about FGM. Community events were rated highly, with 82.3% of participants considering them effective in educating people about FGM, suggesting the importance of face-to-face interactions in complementing mass media efforts. Text messages and WhatsApp broadcasts were perceived as the least effective among the channels, though still rated positively by 72.7% of respondents. This suggests that while mobile messaging has potential, it may need refinement to maximize its impact. Notably, drama series and movies were seen as powerful tools for addressing FGM by 82.3% of respondents, highlighting the potential of entertainment-education approaches in tackling sensitive topics like FGM. These findings align with recent research by Omoera et al. (2018), who highlighted the complementary roles of traditional and new media in health communication in Nigeria. The high effectiveness ratings across various channels suggest that a multi-platform approach may be most beneficial in reaching and educating female teenagers about FGM in Akure.

Research Question Four: To what extent does exposure to mass media influence the attitudes and knowledge of female teenagers in Akure regarding FGM?

Table 9: Impact of Mass Media on Attitudes towards FGM

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1. Mass media has increased my understanding of the health risks associated with FGM.	118 (37.3%)	162 (51.3%)	28 (8.9%)	8 (2.5%)
2. Information from mass media has changed my perception of FGM as a cultural practice.	106 (33.5%)	158 (50.0%)	42 (13.3%)	10 (3.2%)
3. Mass media campaigns have motivated me to speak out against FGM.	92 (29.1%)	154 (48.7%)	58 (18.4%)	12 (3.8%)
4. I feel more empowered to make decisions about my body after exposure to media messages on FGM.	102 (32.3%)	148 (46.8%)	54 (17.1%)	12 (3.8%)
5. Media coverage has helped me understand the legal implications of FGM.	96 (30.4%)	166 (52.5%)	44 (13.9%)	10 (3.2%)
6. Mass media has influenced my family's attitude towards FGM.	84 (26.6%)	152 (48.1%)	68 (21.5%)	12 (3.8%)

7. I am more likely to support anti-FGM initiatives after exposure to media messages.	108 (34.2%)	158 (50.0%)	40 (12.7%)	10 (3.2%)
8. Media messages have helped me recognize FGM as a human rights issue.	114 (36.1%)	156 (49.4%)	38 (12.0%)	8 (2.5%)
9. Mass media has encouraged me to seek more information about FGM.	98 (31.0%)	162 (51.3%)	46 (14.6%)	10 (3.2%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 9 illustrates the significant impact of mass media on the attitudes and knowledge of female teenagers in Akure regarding FGM. An overwhelming majority (88.6%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mass media had increased their understanding of the health risks associated with FGM. This high level of impact suggests that media campaigns have been effective in communicating the medical consequences of the practice. The data also shows that mass media has been influential in changing cultural perceptions of FGM, with 83.5% of participants indicating that media information had altered their view of FGM as a cultural practice. This finding is particularly important given the deep-rooted cultural associations of FGM in many communities. Moreover, 77.8% of respondents reported feeling motivated by mass media campaigns to speak out against FGM, indicating that media exposure not only informs but also empowers young women to take action. Similarly, 79.1% felt more empowered to make decisions about their bodies after exposure to FGM-related media messages, suggesting that media campaigns are contributing to a sense of bodily autonomy among female teenagers. The legal aspects of FGM have also been effectively communicated through mass media, with 82.9% of participants agreeing that media coverage had helped them understand the legal implications of the practice. This awareness of legal consequences could be a crucial factor in deterring the continuation of FGM.

Interestingly, 74.7% of respondents indicated that mass media had influenced their family's attitude towards FGM. This suggests that media messages are not only impacting individual attitudes but are also penetrating family units, potentially catalyzing broader social change. The impact of media exposure on support for anti-FGM initiatives was notably high, with 84.2% of participants stating they were more likely to support such initiatives after exposure to media messages. This indicates that media campaigns are effective in mobilizing support for efforts to eradicate FGM. A significant majority (85.5%) of respondents agreed that media messages had helped them recognize FGM as a human rights issue. This framing of FGM within a human rights context is crucial for shifting perceptions and fostering a rights-based approach to combating the practice. Lastly, 82.3% of participants reported that mass media had encouraged them to seek more information about FGM. This suggests that media exposure not only provides information but also stimulates further curiosity and engagement with the issue, potentially leading to more sustained and in-depth learning. These findings are consistent with research by Ashimi *et al.* (2015), who found that media exposure was associated with increased knowledge and more negative attitudes towards FGM among Nigerian women. The results underscore the powerful role that mass media can play in shaping attitudes, increasing knowledge, and promoting action against FGM among female teenagers in Akure. However, it's important to note that for each item, there remains a minority (ranging from 11.4% to 25.3%) who did not agree with the statements. This indicates that while mass media has been largely effective, there is still room for improvement in reaching and influencing all segments of the target population.

Conclusion

This field study reveals that mass media has been effective not only in increasing knowledge about the health risks associated with FGM but also in changing cultural perceptions and motivating action against the practice. This suggests that media campaigns have succeeded in addressing FGM from multiple angles, framing it as both a health issue and a human rights concern. The study's findings also highlight the potential of mass media to influence attitudes and behaviors beyond the individual level, with indications that media messages are penetrating family units and potentially catalyzing broader social change. This suggests that media campaigns have the power to challenge deeply entrenched cultural norms and practices (Olawale, 2018). In conclusion, while mass media has proven to be a powerful tool in the fight against FGM in Akure, the persistence of the practice indicates that media efforts must be sustained and continually adapted to effectively address this complex issue. The findings of this study provide valuable insights for developing more targeted and effective media strategies to combat FGM and empower young women to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Given the high level of knowledge about FGM among female teenagers in Akure, it is recommended that media campaigns focus on deepening understanding of specific aspects of FGM, such as its different types and long-term health consequences. This could involve more detailed and targeted educational content across various media platforms.
2. Considering the extensive exposure of female teenagers to mass media content on FGM, it is recommended that media organizations and health agencies increase the frequency and diversity of FGM-related content. This should include a mix of informational, educational, and entertainment-based programming to maintain engagement and reinforce key messages.
3. As television and radio were identified as the most effective channels for disseminating information about FGM, it is recommended that these traditional media platforms be prioritized in future awareness campaigns. However, given the significant reach of social media, a balanced approach that leverages both traditional and digital media should be adopted to maximize impact.
4. In light of the significant influence of mass media on attitudes towards FGM, it is recommended that media campaigns focus on empowering messages that not only educate but also motivate action against FGM. This could include featuring stories of FGM survivors, and community champions, and highlighting successful anti-FGM initiatives to inspire change at both individual and community levels.

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