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Journalists' Assessment of Naptip's Media Campaign Against Human Trafficking and Child Abuse In Akwa Ibom State

Nsikan Senam¹ and Uwem Akpan²

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related Matters (NAPTIP) has since its inception carried out a series of campaigns to curb human trafficking and child abuse. This study was journalists' assessment of NAPTIP's media campaign against human trafficking and child abuse in Akwa Ibom State. The major objective was to ascertain the impact of media campaign on human trafficking and child abuse in Akwa Ibom State. The survey method was used in a population of 351 people – all the registered journalists in Akwa Ibom State. The census method was adopted, thus the population remained the same as the sample. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The findings revealed that NAPTIP's media campaigns have helped in curbing human trafficking and child abuse in Akwa Ibom State, thus the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP were fundamental to attitude change. It was consequently recommended that NAPTIP's media campaign should be made to be continuous so as to eradicate human trafficking and child abuse completely.

Key words: Media Campaign, Human Trafficking, Child Abuse, Public Enlightenment, Human Rights

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Background to the Problem

Nigeria, like most other countries of the world, is faced with myriad social problems and crimes. The rate of violent crimes against the human person is alarming in Nigeria, especially in this digital age. Human trafficking and child abuse are among the most heinous crimes against the human person. The menace of human trafficking and child abuse has crept deep into the fabrics of most riverine areas, especially in the South-South Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. This heinous act is, however, not insurmountable. One of the means of fighting human trafficking and child abuse is the use of the mass media as well as the statutory agency established specifically for this purpose. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) is the public organisation vested with the responsibility of addressing issues of human trafficking and child abuse in Nigeria.

Trafficking in person is one of the fastest growing organised crimes in the world. Thousands of women and children all over the world are being abducted, sold, lured into forced labour and prostitution and involuntary marriage. These acts range from blatant or subtle methods such as organised brothels, sex tour packages, trafficking syndication and forced marriage to bonded labour, etc.

Trafficking in persons is a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. It is multidimensional and multi-faceted to the extent that so many people have become (defenceless) victims. Apart from engaging the victims in prostitution, marriage and forced labour, some victims are used for rituals, as agents or accomplices in other crimes, beggars, or even for organ transplant. For instance, in April 2014, more than two hundred teenage girls of Government School, Chibok in Borno State of Nigeria were abducted by gunmen from the Boko Haram, an extremist Islamic religious sect. The message from this act is that Nigeria has now become a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. Currently, trafficking of women and children still takes place between Nigeria and countries such as Gabon, Cameroon, Niger Republic, Italy, Spain, Benin Republic, Saudi Arabia, etc.

Osakue (2002, p. 3), in a research report on human trafficking in the south-south, says "up to 20 children per day are believed to be trafficked across the Nigerian border. Delta, Cross River, Imo and Abia have been identified as major trafficking zones, with Edo and Akwa Ibom States leading 62% and 45% respectively". This is a serious problem that needs urgent solutions if the rights of women and children are to be safeguarded.

The success of curbing any societal problem depends largely on effective communication of the facts, circumstances and issues on such problem as well as the solutions. Udoakah (2006, p. 82) posits that: "Generally the performance of the communication enterprise

should be beneficial to individuals and society as a whole....It should reflect environmental problems and community welfare, the economy, labour as well as human right issues." Human trafficking and child abuse are obviously fundamental issues in human rights which, if neglected by the communication enterprises, would spell doom for the entire society.

Both the rural and the urban dwellers need to be highly informed on the trends as well as the negative effects of human trafficking and child abuse, and how the menace can be tackled to a standstill. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the agency of the Federal Government established pursuant to the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003, has the responsibilities of investigating and prosecuting offenders and carrying out public enlightenment. NAPTIP operates through four main units: the Investigation Unit, Legal Unit, Public Enlightenment Unit and the Rehabilitation Unit. Outside the four units, the enabling Act empowers the Agency to create such other Units as the Agency may find necessary, subject, however, to the approval of the Agency's Board.

The objectives of the Public Enlightenment Unit of the NAPTIP are establishing, maintaining and securing communication to facilitate the rapid exchange of information concerning related offences as well as conducting research and improving international co-operation in the suppression of trafficking in persons by road, sea or air. The presence and activities of NAPTIP in Akwa Ibom State notwithstanding, trafficking in persons and child abuse still takes place in the State; and this is in spite of the enlightenment programmes being carried out by NAPTIP.

Interestingly, much of NAPTIP's media campaign is facilitated by journalists in the media through whom the campaign is carried out. In the light of this, it becomes necessary to ascertain how journalists assess NAPTIP's media campaign against human trafficking and child abuse in Akwa Ibom State. This is the focus of the research.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- (i) Identify the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse.
- (ii) Ascertain journalists' perception of the effectiveness of the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- (i) What are the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse?
- (ii) What is the perception of journalists on the effectiveness of the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse?

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History of Human trafficking in Nigeria

Human trafficking is not a new phenomenon. It metamorphosed from prior anti-human and anti-social acts. Historical facts reveal that human trafficking is a reincarnation of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade which took place between the 15th and the 19th centuries. The act of human trafficking and child abuse dates back to the era of the old empires and kingdoms when captives of conquered empires and kingdoms were taken into slavery and made to serve the emperors or kings and their households. As time went on, excess slaves were sold out to the emperor or king as palace wards, especially for the kings who wanted to show-case status or aura of dignity, power and influence. In some cases, excess slaves were sold out as objects of sacrifice to appease the ancestral spirits.

In recent times, trafficking in persons and child abuse have changed drastically from the radical, gruesome and brutal approach to a subtle, yet dangerous method of organised recruitment that is less visible but very effective. The implication is that many instances of trafficking in persons and child abuse in recent times are not necessarily by conquest, but by mild and surreptitious deceit, coercion, threat, fraud, blackmail or misrepresentation.

In 1986, Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented rate of emigration following the introduction of the World Bank tele-guided Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which came with harsh and stringent conditionality. The negative effects of SAP led to a high rate of economic emigrants and brain drain from Nigeria in a bid to look for greener pastures. Among those economic emigrants were a bunch of trafficked women and abused children who, in search of a better standard of living and or because of ignorance or greed, fell victim to the ploy of organised human trafficking syndicates.

It is safe and correct to assert that human trafficking started in Nigeria from the second half of the 1980s when people engaged in it as a means of escape from the excruciating hardship occasioned by the Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP (UNICEF, 2002). Human trafficking and child abuse are therefore issues of longstanding historical traces. In spite of the fact that almost all the member states of the United Nations had signed the UN convention on the oppression of trafficking in persons and child abuse, the “business” still flourishes.

Nigeria is one of the endemic countries of human trafficking and child abuse. There are many transit camps and trafficking outlets in the country. The indiscriminate use of children as house helps or for labour, street hawking, organised crimes, social nuisance, etc, is rampant in the country. The practice does not only make the victims vulnerable to various life hazards, but also denies them and hinder their educational advancement and happy childhood. It is really a social menace in the Nigerian society.

It is a common practice to see children callously abandoned or used for the purpose of servitude. Sometimes young people who are taken to urban settlements usually end up being trafficked outside the country or being enslaved or abused in one way or the other. The practice of child-fostering has also made it easy for children and young people to be used as commodities of trade. Generally, human trafficking and child abuse are socially constructed crimes against humanity which must be deconstructed and eradicated. That is the reason NAPTIP was established; to help in the eradication of these dastardly acts. This is where media campaign is indispensable.

Communication and Public Enlightenment

Communication is the encoding and transmission of message from the source to the receiver who decodes, assimilates the message and responds with appropriate feedback. The message itself is a generic component which could imply an idea, knowledge, attitude, belief, etc. At all times, members of the public need to be aware of the realities of their environment and what happens within the environment. Attaining this desire is the whole gamut of public enlightenment. Communication is the means by which the public are linked to the updates in the society, lest they wallow in ignorance and become victims of lack of information or misinformation. In view of this, the citizenry should be kept abreast of the goings-on in the society. One of the ways of achieving this is public enlightenment. Public enlightenment enables the public to know their right, duties and obligations among other things.

Public enlightenment necessarily demands effective communication in order to engender positive attitude to norms and laws, articulate social interaction, peaceful co-existence and harmony in the society. Effective communication fosters social rest and development. (Okeke, 2003). For communication to be effective in the milieu of public enlightenment, a combination of all or most of the following variables must be present:

- (i) . . . Appropriate and effective medium of communication
- (ii) . . . Sufficient exposure or access of members of the public to the message.
- (iii) . . . Appropriate message and effective delivery of the contents.
- (iv) . . . Open minds of members of the public.
- (v) . . . High level of commitment of both the source and the receiver.
- (vi) . . . The views and attitude of peers, relations and opinion leaders.

For public enlightenment to be effective, the source must address the issues through appropriate content, message structure and effective delivery. Every public enlightenment campaign aims at positive attitude formation, and in the ultimate, a rational discernment on issues of significance. The public usually adopt, modify or relinquish certain attitudes after public enlightenment to fit their constantly changing needs, interests and aspirations. Anim

(2007, p.16) asserts that "one major element of the social environment that influences attitude is the availability of information". The adoption of a new attitude depends on who presents the message or information, how the information is presented, how the source is perceived and the state of mind of the receiver as well as how the receiver perceives the message. It is instructive to underscore the fact that in assessing attitude change process, the 'who says what, how, through who and of what effect' approach to communication must be taken into account. Other factors of attitude change include personality traits such as susceptibility or resistance to persuasion, intelligence quotient (IQ), readiness or otherwise to accept change, etc. Persuasion techniques, rhetoric and communication strategies are fundamental determinants of attitude change. In other words, attitude change is most likely to take place when:

- (i) The message calling for the change is harmonious and congruous with valued norms of the receiver.
- (ii) The source of the message is perceived as trustworthy or credible.
- (iii) The message follows the basic rules of rhetoric: order, organisation of contents, presentation, nature of appeals, etc.

Theoretical Framework

Public enlightenment is usually aimed at attitude change. The literal implication here is that in every public enlightenment campaign, there is a certain behavioural trend that the public communicator aims at promoting among the receivers or audience. Such a motive then forms the underlying goal of the public enlightenment. This study was anchored on the Attitude Change theory. The theory was propounded by Daniel Katz, Irving Sarnoff and Charles McClintock in 1960. For them human beings are both rational and irrational, depending on the prevailing facts and circumstances such as environment, association, motives and motivation, time and trend etc. Peoples' diverse thinking, actions and utterances combine to provide the basis for attitude change.

There are four major functional approaches to people's attitude.

- (i) The instrumental, adjustive or utilitarian function: Here people hold certain attitudes in order to minimise liabilities or penalties.
- (ii) The ego-defensive function: Under this functional approach, people hold on to some attitude in order to protect their ego against unacceptable impulses and stimuli.
- (iii) The value-expressive function: People uphold certain attitudes in order to protect or safeguard their long-standing beliefs and core values.
- (iv) The knowledge function: Some people hold certain attitudes because such attitudes satisfy their desire for knowledge and eliminate chaos.

The import of the Attitude Change theory to this study is that the main aim of public enlightenment is to bring about attitude change through persuasion. Persuasive message, being the main tool for attitude change, is usually targeted at the audience of public enlightenment. While public enlightenment constitutes the goods aimed at attitude change, attitude change itself is the by-product of public enlightenment. Thus, both the study and the theory revolve around persuasion and its ultimate impact on the personality vis-a-vis a targeted behavioural construct.

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Research Methodology

The research design was the survey. The population of this study was the 351 registered journalists in Akwa Ibom State. The census method was adopted, thus the population of the study remained the same as the sample. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Out of the 351 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 341 were properly completed and returned. Data analysis and discussion of findings were based on the responses of the 341 subjects.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected were presented in tables and computed based on percentages with the formular: $\frac{R}{N} \times 100$ where R – the number response and N= total number of respondents.

N = 1

Table one: Respondents' identification of NAPTIP's Communication Strategies in Akwa Ibom State

Communication Strategies	Respondents (No)	Percentage (%)
Jingles on electronic media	74	21.70
Seminars and Workshops	50	14.66
Advertorials on the print media	38	11.14
News, commentaries and news programmes	26	7.62
Awareness campaign rallies	25	7.33
Billboards	24	7.04
Sensitisation materials (e.g. T-shirt, Fez cap etc)	23	6.74
Opinion leaders	16	4.69
Traditional modes of communication	15	4.40
Messages through Civil Society Organisations	14	4.11
NAPTIPs Newsletter/Factsheets	13	3.81
Online publications	7	2.05
Community theatre	6	1.77
Home videos	6	1.77
Music	4	1.17
Total	341	100

From table one, it is clear that, out of 341 respondents, 74 representing 21.70% recognised jingles on electronic media as the communication strategy used by NAPTIP in Akwa Ibom State; 50 (14.66%) recognised seminar and workshop; 38 respondents (11.14%) recognised advertorials on the print media; 26 (7.62%) recognised news, news commentaries and news programmes while 25 respondents (7.33%) recognised awareness campaign rallies as NAPTIP's communication strategies in Akwa Ibom State. Twenty four respondents representing 7.04% recognised billboards as NAPTIP's communication strategies in the public campaigns in Akwa Ibom State; 23 (6.74%) recognised sensitisation materials like T-shirt, fez cap etc, while 16 respondents (4.69%) recognised opinion leaders; 15 respondents (4.40%) said the strategies were the traditional modes of communication; 14 (4.11%) recognised messages through civil liberty organisations while 13(3.81%) recognised NAPTIP's Newsletter and factsheets as the communication strategies. The rest were: 7 respondents (2.05%) NAPTIP's online publications; 6 respondents (1.77%) community theatre; 6 respondents (1.77%) home videos and 4(1.17%) music.

Table Two: Respondents' Perception of effectiveness of NAPTIP's communication strategies

Category	Response	Percentage
Effective	259	76
Not effective	82	24
Total	341	100

According to Table two, 259 respondents representing 76% said the communication strategies used by NAPTIP in their media campaigns in Akwa Ibom State were effective while 82 (24%) said they were not effective.

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Discussion of Findings

Research Question One

What are the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse?

It is obvious in Table One that NAPTIP adopts several communication strategies in their campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse. All the 341 respondents agreed that NAPTIP adopted various kinds of communication strategies in their media campaigns in Akwa Ibom State. Fifteen communication strategies have been identified as being adopted by NAPTIP in Akwa Ibom State. The communication strategies are presented in a descending order of

prevalence and frequent use: Jingles on electronic media; seminars and workshops; advertorials on the print media; news commentaries and news programmes; awareness campaign rallies; billboards; sensitisation materials e.g. T-shirt, fez caps etc; opinion leaders; traditional modes of communication; messages through civil society organisations; NAPTIP's newsletter and factsheets; community theatre; home videos and music.

Research Question Two

What is the perception of journalists on the effectiveness of the communication strategies adopted by NAPTIP in their media campaigns against human trafficking and child abuse?

Table two provides the answer to this research question. According to the table, 197 (67%) said that the communication strategies used by NAPTIP in their media campaigns in Akwa Ibom State were effective while 98 respondents (33%) said they were not effective. This indicates that the communication strategies used by NAPTIP in Akwa Ibom State are seen as being effective. The effectiveness of the communication strategies implies that the media have gone a long way to assist NAPTIP to achieve the goals of its public enlightenment campaigns. The role of the media in this respect is indispensable. Generally, the mass media help a lot in creating awareness on NAPTIP's public enlightenment campaigns in Akwa Ibom State and in sensitising the people through the transmission of appropriate information, facts, figures and opinions. This places the media in a strategic position as change agents.

The implication is that the media campaigns have curbed human trafficking and child abuse and have also led to increased awareness on the part of the populace. This awareness, no doubt, has caused parents and the society at large to be more vigilant and sensitive to issues on human trafficking and child abuse. The society is the better for it. As media campaigns have helped in curbing human trafficking and child abuse, it becomes glaring that communication strategies are fundamental to attitude change. Attitude change usually occurs when appropriate information is received and the information conforms to the receivers' desire which serves as a motivation for change.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

Communication strategies play a fundamental role in curbing human trafficking and child abuse. This implies that communication strategies have a way of attacking the heinous acts of human trafficking and child abuse. From the study it can be conveniently concluded that NAPTIP in Akwa Ibom State has adopted various communication strategies to fight against human trafficking and child abuse. These strategies are effective at various degrees in curbing the crime. Through the various communication strategies, NAPTIP usually creates awareness amongst the media audience thereby sensitising them on the negative impact of human trafficking and child abuse. This inversely leads to positive attitude change among the people.

For NAPTIP's media campaign against human trafficking and child abuse to be more effective, it is necessary that:

- (i) Audience members should be properly segmented so that the right message can be targeted at the right audience.
- (ii) Some messages of NAPTIP's media campaign should be tinted with morality-related issues so as to evoke some rapid concern and appropriate attitude. This is predicated on the fact that the people of Akwa Ibom State have a high degree of attachment to religious beliefs, particularly Christianity.
- (iii) NAPTIP's media campaign should be made to be continuous, not only when human trafficking and child abuse are on the high side. This will enable the media campaign to be in tune with emerging strategies and antics of human traffickers and other related offenders.
- (iv) NAPTIP's media campaign should flow from research so that the goals of the campaign can be achieved with ease and precision.

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