

Coverage of Diabetes Mellitus Prevention and Management in Nigerian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

This work analysed the coverage of diabetes prevention and management in Nigerian newspapers, taking into cognisance the negative impact and the enormity of diabetes challenges in the country. The objectives were to: find out the frequency of coverage of Diabetes Mellitus in Nigerian newspapers; determine the prominence given to the coverage of prevention and management vis-à-vis other information on the disease; find out the depth given to stories on prevention and management of Diabetes Mellitus and other information about the disease; find out aspects of the contents of Diabetes Mellitus reported by The Nation, This Day, Punch and The Guardian newspapers; ascertain the sources of information relied upon by The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch newspapers on the prevention and management as well as other information on the disease.; examine the level of exposure of Port Harcourt Residents' to diabetes mellitus health messages in the newspapers . The work was anchored on the Health belief model, Development Media and the Social responsibility theories. The content analysis method was used and code sheet was used as instrument for data collection. The population for content analysis was 1488 , the purposive sampling technique was used to select newspapers that published only diabetes stories. Findings revealed that The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch did not report diabetes prevention and management stories frequently and did not give prominence to items of diabetes mellitus. The researchers recommended that newspapers in Nigeria should play their role by exposing the people to dangers of diabetes, also by reporting diabetes prevention and management methods. That the government should develop diabetes prevention and management communication plan as they have done for HIV/AIDs and COVID-19

Keywords: Coverage, Diabetes Mellitus, Prevention, Management

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon described Diabetes as “a public health emergency in slow motion”. This is because Diabetes presents a greater threat than infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and tuberculosis. Data released by the World Health Organization WHO in 2015 revealed that Nigeria has the greatest number of people living with Diabetes in Africa. Diabetes as a chronic disorder of multiple etiologies is assuming epidemic proportion. The World Health Organization estimates that globally, 415 million adults are affected with Diabetes Mellitus, while Nigeria has an estimate of 6 million diabetics. Diabetes Worldwide reports show that diabetes mellitus is a critical health condition and the disease would pose a difficult challenge beyond 2030 (WHO, 2013).

The prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus in Nigeria and the devastating consequences on the socio-economic status of the nation is such that seems to have challenged all logics. The cases of diabetes especially type 2 has become a global problem. Scholars have argued that the cases of diabetes rose from 30 million in 1985 to 230 million in 2006, which was 6 percent of the world population. Eighty per cent of the diabetes cases in the year 2006 were found to be in the developing countries. Scientists estimate that in the next 35 years the global prevalence of diabetes will reach 25 per cent and India was the hardest hit with this problem. Africa was thought to be a continent relatively free of diabetes until the 1990s. In 1994, the continent’s prevalence of diabetes stood at 3 million and was then predicted to double or triple by the year 2010. It is approximated that 7.1 million Africans were suffering from diabetes at the end of 2000, and this is expected to increase to 18.6 million by 2030

In 2017, the Federal Ministry of Health and world Diabetes Foundation representative of NCD Alliance, Diabetes Association of Nigeria (DAN), World Health Organization and other stakeholders kicked off a campaign on “Diabetes and NCDs in Nigeria, this campaign was not sustained overtime, comparing diabetes and the most recent COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS campaign one will agree that little was done in diabetes health communication campaign.

Statistics have it that Nigeria has the highest numbers of diabetics in Africa. As at the moment, there are no efforts geared towards reducing the number of people living with the disease. Despite the enormous impact of diabetes the media have been accused by scholars like Asemah and Jack of neglecting the coverage of diabetes, unlike the response given to HIV/AIDS and the recent COVID-19. The diabetes situation in Nigeria is becoming alarming, diabetics which more than 90% is type 2, is the sixth leading cause of death in the world. Secondly, like most illness, type 2 diabetes is distributed among minorities and those with lower socio-economics status.

Media coverage of health issues is not a reflection of the health problems that are most common in society. Rather, coverage of health patterns are the product of a competitive process among multiple actors seeking for attention and space in which to define a problem, assign blame, and suggest who is responsible for addressing it . Media coverage can influence the public through at least two processes: agenda-setting and framing. It is well recognised that the media play impactful role in public responses to health issues. The mass media television, print, radio and internet have a wide reach as a communication tool, it has the potential power to set

agenda for public discourse. For public health communication to achieve their goals of discouraging unhealthy choices they have to first understand how the media works.

Health related messages are packaged with information to help and encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle or positive practices. The need to communicate health messages is important because a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. There are health issues capable of affecting the society because it can affect the productivity of the workforce as witnessed during outbreaks in Nigeria and the larger world. Okim-Alobi and Okpara (2017) hold the view that media provide a formidable platform through which health information can be made available to the general public. In their view, the media are key players in educating the general public about health issues.

The problem

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been a serious concern on the management of Diabetes, since it was identified as one of the major underlining health problem that poses a challenge of surviving the deadly corona virus. (WHO,2017) report shows no fewer than 63,958 Nigerians died of Diabetes and its complications in 2019, out of 2.7 million living with the non-communicable disease (NCD) in the country, IDF predicted in 2017 that there will be 451 million (age 18-99 years) people with Diabetes worldwide .These figures were expected to rise to 693 million by 2045.

World Health Organization has also predicted that there would be 143 percent increase in prevalence of Diabetes between 2019 and 2045 just when the world is faced with the deadly Corona virus. That is, there would be 3.861 million more Nigerians to live with the condition if nothing is done to halt the trend. The number of people affected with Diabetes Mellitus in Nigeria is on the increase just as the mortality rate is high. This is worse in Africa where the prevalence of undiagnosed Diabetes Mellitus is as high as 50%-80%. In Nigeria, even symptomatic Diabetes Mellitus remains undiagnosed for several reasons such as ignorance of symptoms, attribution of symptoms to other myths and lack of awareness. Nyekwere (2019) & Jack (2019) have accused the newspapers of under reporting issues pertaining to health especially Diabetes Mellitus when they are supposed to give it accurate/wide coverage especially in this era of COVID-19.

Therefore, this study bothers around the question of what extent was the coverage of prevention and management of diabetes mellitus in Nigerian newspapers. Do the newspapers under study utilize their editorial and health column pages in educating the citizen about Diabetes Mellitus, and this raised the thrust of this work.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the extent of coverage of Diabetes Mellitus prevention and management in Nigerian newspapers.

The objectives are to:

1. find out the frequency of coverage of Diabetes Mellitus prevention and management in the selected newspapers.

2. determine the prominence given to the coverage of prevention, management vis-à-vis other information on the disease
3. find out the depth given to stories on prevention and management of Diabetes Mellitus and other information about the disease.
4. find out aspects of the contents of Diabetes Mellitus reported by *The Nation*, *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* newspapers
5. ascertain the sources of information relied upon by *The Nation*, *This Day*, *Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers on the prevention and management as well as other information on the disease.

Theoretical framework

Health Belief Model

The Health Belief Model (HBM) was developed in the 1950s by Psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock and others. The HBM proposes that the perception of a personal health behavior threat is influenced by certain factors, general health values; specific health beliefs about susceptibility to a particular health threat; and beliefs about the consequences of the health problem (Hochbaum & Rosenstock, 1952). If a person perceives a threat to their health or life, he or she is consecutively forced to take actions and their perceived benefits outweigh the perceived problems, and then they are likely to follow the recommended preventive health plan.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a conceptual framework for predicting and explaining whether a person will perform an action necessary for preventing a specified health condition or not.

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory is centred on journalistic ethics. It is regarded as a western theory and integrates part of the libertarian theory and introduces some new elements as well. The prime principle of the social responsibility theory of the press is that the press should be free to perform the functions which the libertarian theory granted it freedom to perform, but that this freedom should be exercised with responsibility (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012). In essence, the relevance of this theory to this work is seen in the need for the newspaper as a mass medium to embark on health reporting especially on issues of global concern such as prevention and management of Diabetes, creating awareness to the ordinary man. The media gives information about epidemics and health hazards. Here, acting responsibly is by not spreading wrong news and panic.

Reports of health news in the media can be taken as media acting socially responsible. The media gives information and awareness on health problems. It also provides awareness on some basic health problems like diarrhea, HIV/AIDS, Diabetes, Corona virus and how to prevent, cure and manage them. There have been instances of mass panic among the people because of some misunderstood news on health published by various media. Also, advertisements of harmful substances like cigarettes and alcohol are considered to be wrong according to the social responsibility theory.

Concept of media coverage of health issues

Mass media are required to share relevant health information to the general public. Journalism is the field of study that handles the gathering and dissemination of information to the general public. Omego and Ochonogor (2013) opine that journalism is a social activity that engages people who are involved in the business of writing and preparing messages meant for the public.

Health journalism is also known as medical journalism that deals with writing stories or reports that are health-related for daily or weekly publication in the news media. According to Hodgetts and Chamberlain (2006) posit that the media provide a shared understanding of notions of health, illness and disease. Media can affect people's ideas about a health risk, which could lead them to become unnecessarily concerned about low risk diseases while undermining the risks of serious and preventable diseases (Gardner, 2008). Thus, media coverage of health issues can ultimately drive public policy and healthcare decisions (Bomlitz & Brezis, 2008).

Awareness creation on prevention and management of Diabetes Mellitus

Andrew, Atie, Simon, Signe and Claire (2022) suggest that the best way to influence people to act or behave in a certain way is to emphasize the benefits of the desired behavior and neglect any disadvantage. Scholars have suggested strategies that are beneficial or can help influence people to behave in a certain manner, either deliberately or unintentional, which presenting the risk factors of such problem has been identified as the top on the list. Information to enable them make informed choices. Scholars argue further that there are compelling evidences that the advantage outweighs the disadvantage, the difference between persuading and informing people will be smaller.

One of the interventions to curb Diabetes is to raise awareness amongst major stakeholders of the need to improve NCDs and Diabetes care in Nigeria. Strategies to achieve prevention of Diabetes lie mainly in the early diagnosis and adherence to drugs and the use of insulin

Sustainable Development Goals Campaign in Nigeria

The idea of development in Nigeria is about Nigeria is implementing the SDGs across different states of the nation by helping to reduce poverty, improve healthcare system and implement achievable climate change plans. Todaro & Smith (2015) see development as raising standard of living, establishing good environment for citizens' self-esteem and freedom. International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) explains development as: Focusing on economics and physical wealth in the pursuit of development has proven to be unsustainable not only from the environmental perspective but also from the economic, social and employment perspectives because it is resource-intensive, hence the need to pursue SD. Despite all efforts to ensure sustainable development, "there is a growing concern that Nigeria could fail in achieving Sustainable Development if enough awareness is not created because, there is a continuous growth in diabetes health and other health issues, poverty and the diminishing strength.

Methodology

According to Kerlinger in Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.156) "content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of

measuring variables”. It is also a scientific method used in the analysis of the media contents to ascertain the status of a given phenomenon (Okoro, 2011). The choice of content analysis as the design for the study is anchored on the fact that the study will examine the contents of select newspapers—*The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch*.

The population of the study are the issues of *The Nation, This Day, Guardian and The Punch* newspapers published between April 1 2020 and April 30 2021. The population of study is, therefore, 1,488 issues for the four select newspapers. Each national newspaper published 365 issues per year which gives cumulative of 1,488 issues. The purposive sampling technique was used to select issues for the national newspapers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research and analysis of data

Table 4.1: Stories on diabetes mellitus prevention and management in *The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch* between 1st April 2020-30th April 2021

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Nation	11	21
This Day	10	19
Guardian	19	36
Punch	13	25
Total	52	100%

Table 4.1 The presentation above shows the number of newspaper stories analysed for *The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch* newspapers. It is obvious that diabetes prevention and management stories were not given adequate coverage by the newspapers.

Research question 1: frequency of coverage given to the prevention and management of diabetes mellitus among other information on the disease by The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch?

Newspaper	Straight news	Editorial	Feature	Letter to the editor	Photograph	Total/Percentage
Nation	2	0	0	0	0	22.2%
This Day	3	0	0	0	0	33.3%
Guardian	2	0	0	0	3	22.6%
Punch	2	0	0	0	0	22.2%
Total	9	0	0	0	3	100%

From table 4.2, The data in the above table shows that The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch had a total of 9 straight news stories and 3 photographs, no editorial, no features, no letter to the -editor on diabetes mellitus prevention and management. The Guardian had the highest score on stories on diabetes mellitus; stories on prevention were not given adequate coverage.

It can be deduced that stories on diabetes mellitus prevention and management were not given adequate coverage by the newspapers under study.

Research question two; Prominence given to the coverage of the prevention and management vis-à-vis other disease

Table 4.3 : Placement of diabetes stories in the Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch between April 1st 2020 to April 31st 2021

Newspaper	Front page	Back page	Centre spread	Inside page	Total/Percentage
Nation	0	0	0	2	22.2%
This Day	0	0	0	3	33.3%
Guardian	3	0	0	2	22.6%
Punch	0	0	0	2	22.2%
Total	3	0	0	9	100%

The table above shows that diabetes stories in the four newspapers were placed mainly in the inside page, inside pages, only the Guardian newspaper placed on the front page. Stories on diabetes prevention and management were not given prominence in terms of where they were placed in the newspaper within the study. It is safe to say Diabetes mellitus prevention issues were not given prominence in terms of placements in the newspaper studied.

Table 4.4: Depth of coverage of Stories on Prevention and management of diabetes by The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch.

Newspaper	1-15inches	16-30inches	31-45inches	46inches to 1 page	More than 1 page	Total/Percentage
Nation	2	0	0	0	0	22.2%
This Day	3	0	0	0	0	33.3%
Guardian	2	0	0	0	3	22.6%
Punch	2	0	0	0	0	22.2%
Total	9	0	0	0	3	100%

From the above table above, it can be deduced that diabetes prevention and management stories published in The Guardian were allotted 1 page (space). The space given to a story is a major determinant of the importance the media organization perceives that issue and how much detail the newspaper has to make public. The very important areas of diabetes were not given in depth coverage by the selected newspaper

Research question 3: direction of coverage of Diabetes prevention and management issues in The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch between April 1st 2020 to April 31st 2021

Table 4.5: Direction of Coverage of Prevention and management of diabetes Stories in the select newspapers.

Newspapers	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable	percentage
Nation	2	0	0	22.2%
This Day	3	0	0	33.3%
Guardian	2	3	0	22.2%
Punch	2	0	0	22.2%
Total	9	3	0	100%

Table 4.5, it can be deduced that stories published on diabetes prevention and management were favourable in their manner of reporting. Stories in this study are described as favourable when they create awareness, provide education and inform people about positive health practices. Unfavourable stories on the other hand refer to stories that are about negative practices that affected diabetes management. The aspect with the highest number of favourable was hypert

Table 4.6: Sources of Information on Prevention and management of diabetes by the Select Newspapers

Newspapers	NGO officials		Agencies	Corporate organization	Individuals	Health workers	Communities	Total and Percentage
		govt.						
TN	2(22.2%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	22.%
This Day	3(33.2%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	33.2%
Guardian	2(18.2%)	3	0	0	0	0	0	22.2%
Punch	2(18.2%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	22.2%
Total	9(61.9%)	3(36.4)	0	0	0	0	0	100%

Table 4.7 shows that most of the stories came from Non-Governmental Organisations while few reported in the Guardian came from the government. The above table shows that relevant stories did not come from health professionals and individuals.

Table 4.7: Headlines Depicting Prevention and management

Newspapers	Prevention and management Headline	Diabetes Headline	Percentage
The Nation	2	0	36.3%
This Day	3	0	18.2%
Guardian	2	3	9.1%
Punch	2	0	18.2%
Total	9	3	100%

Table 4.7 shows that all the stories on diabetes prevention and management appeared as headline and also as part of stories with Diabetes headline. The implication of this is that issues on diabetes mellitus prevention and management did not receive adequate attention because of the number of times the stories appeared on the newspapers under study.

Sources of Information relied upon by the Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch in their coverage of diabetes mellitus prevention and management

CONTENT CATEGORIES ON DIABETES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT by the select newspapers

Newspapers	Neuropathy	Insulin	Erectile dysfunction	Hypertension	Weight loss	Blurring vision	Amputation	Covid
The Nation	1(9.1)	1(9.1)	0	0	0	0	0	0
This Day	0	3(20.1)	0	1(9.1)	0	0	2(18.1)	0
Guardian	0	2(18.1)	1(9.1)	0	0	0	0	0
Punch	1(9.1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.8 shows that most of the stories were on insulin, an insignificant numbers was on amputation and neuropathy. The implication of the finding is that the various newspapers considered insulin more important than other aspects of the disease.

Major findings

1. The study found out The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch newspapers actually published stories on diabetes stories and prevention and management but such stories did not appear regularly in publication but only 12 times.
2. The work showed that The Nation, This Day, Guardian and Punch did not give prominence to the issues of Diabetes mellitus prevention and management.
3. It was found that stories of prevention and management of diabetes were reported along diabetes stories, 3 published stories were independent with headlines cast on diabetes prevention and management.
4. Findings from the study revealed that stories on diabetes prevention and management received favourable slant.
- 5 It was found that stories on diabetes prevention and management came from Non-Governmental organization.

Conclusion

Drawing from the data, it is concluded that the media failed to provide adequate information on diabetes prevention and management in Nigeria within the study period. The study concludes that diabetes is on the increase. The general media's responsibility in providing health information is lacking in the reports of diabetes management, this is because of media negligence of setting agenda on diabetes, the need to follow up their stories. This means that change of attitude and lifestyle can hardly be achieved so as to reduce the death rate and the high rise of people battling with the disease in the country. This can be best done through frequent publishing of stories on diabetes prevention and management.

While newspapers are generally exalted for their numerous feature stories, editorial content as well as space advantage in relation to other medium, the four select newspapers only utilized other newspaper contents such as few pictures etc to address diabetes management. There was no letter written to the editor on the issues of diabetes it is further concluded that the newspapers would do well if they pay more attention to issues of health especially, diabetes prevention and management. This is because few stories reported on the prevention of diabetes received favourable slant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The government should draw diabetes mellitus prevention and management communication plan as they have done for HIV/AIDs and COVID-19
- 2 Newspapers should play their role by exposing the people to the dangers of diabetes, also by reporting diabetes prevention methods and management. This can be done by publishing stories/ reports of diabetes frequently.

3 The newspapers as a matter of necessity should begin to follow up stories on diabetes prevention and management; newspapers should give prominence to the coverage of diabetes prevention and management by placing such stories at strategic positions such as front page, centre page and the back page.

4 A feature story or editorial written once or twice aimed at stopping the rise in diabetes cannot bring a meaningful result towards creating awareness, newspapers should ensure that they report the issues twice a week in other to set agenda for public discussion and awareness creation. Newspapers should give more space to items of diabetes prevention and management

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APPENDIX I



