Ethical Broadcast Programmes: A Communicative Strategy for Alleviating Recidivism Among Inmates in Port Harcourt Correctional Centre.

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate reasons behind recidivism among inmate, Recidivism is a reversion of or repeating of one's criminal behavior after one has been found wanting of a prior offences, sentenced and presumably corrected resulting to re-arrest, re-conviction and re-incarceration. The study highlighted the use of broadcast programmes on moral for alleviating recidivism among youths. The peculiarity of the study necessitated survey. A sample size of 330 was drawn using Taro Yamane's mathematical formula; with the questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Respondents were selected using the systematic sampling technique guided by table of random digits. Findings reveals a fairly low level of awareness (46%) concerning recidivism in Port Harcourt and a complete lack of knowledge (8%) on the type of broadcast programme the inmates are exposed to. It was therefore recommended that the government and other organizations interested in positive attitude of inmates on the release back to communities should promote peace programmes on radio and television for inmates in correctional centres for adequate assimilation and practice of the culture of peace among the inmates.

Keywords: Broadcast, Correctional centre, Ethics, Inmates, Recidivism

Introduction

A Broadcast station is an organization engaged in disseminating information to the general public through sounds, images or both electronically using electromagnetic spectrum or other medium of mass communication. Radio broadcasting requires sound while television is a combination of sound and vision. Sound and vision have much effect on the people which in its proper sense, tend to shape their attitude or behaviour. The efficaciousness of the broadcast programmes to step directly into the home; from their continues and almost universal availability form their easy accessibility and form their realism and capacity to entertain. Broadcasting is unique in the sense that it is ubiquitous, it has the ability to break any barrier and get to the target audience. Broadcast programmes play a vital role in attitudinal change especially the ones which teaches on good morals and nation building, *therefore, the media industry should put mechanisms in place to filter what*

is projected to the entire society Asak and Obiageli (2013, p.238), define ethics as "a system of moral principles governing the appropriate conducts of a person, a group or organization, it includes many components such as: behaviour, moral, honesty, truth, good'', this instills in the audience a continuing sensitivity to their every day actions and decisions; it integrates or blends with his total search for truth and it gives him greater awareness of himself, others and the consequences of his interpersonal relations, the purpose of ethics is to guide the individual to be morally upright in their behaviour.

The rate at which ex-convicts in Rivers state are returning to correctional centre is alarming; hence, this has increased the rate of recidivism in the state. Recidivism is repeating of one's deviant behaviour after one is being punished for that behaviour. Conceptually, is a situation where criminals return to criminal activities after being punished, treated and released to integrate with members of the larger society. Recidivism result to re-arrest, reconvict and re-incarceration of the individual.

Out of the 4,328 inmates in Rivers state correctional centre as at 2020, as many as 74 are recidivists. Records of Nigerian Correctional Service in Rivers state shows that, there were 10 new recidivists in 2018; then it increased to 21 in 2019 and 43 in 2020.

This growing trend is indicative of the increasing rate of crime in the state. Ekeyong (1999) in Elechi and Ogbondah (2006, p.162) describe crime as deviant behaviour, and defined deviant as behaviour that varies sufficiently from the norms of a group that if known, it would become a defensive of legitimate basis for negative sanctions in formal interactions or by official agencies. In the same perspective, Okujiagu (1998) in Elechi and Ogbondah (2006,p.163) defines deviant behaviour as any behaviour, activity or action that negates the expected behaviour by society as set in the constitution of the society or the rules and regulations that guide the behaviour in that society. Elechi and Ogbondah (2006) list the following as some offences which constitute deviant behaviour:

- Stealing
- Dishonesty
-Sex offences
-Disobedience
- Assault and insult
- Wickedness
- Drug offences
- cultism and possession of dangerous weapons
- Mass demonstration

The level of crimes in Rivers state could be attributed to the high rate of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, cultism among others. Oyebamiji and Otamiri (2016), affirmed that crimes leading to violence occurs as a result of community leadership tussles, rivalry between cult groups, struggle for control of political power among political elites, unemployment among others. These unlawful and inhuman restive activities are mainly championed by the youths that are supposed to be agent of development. The most worrisome is that most of the youths involved in these criminal activities have been imprisoned before and are expected by virtue of Correctional centre programmes to have changed and become better citizens, but the reverse has been the case.

Imprisonment is the act of legally restricting, limiting or confining a person. Dambzau (2007) asserts that the rationale for imprisonment is evident in section 2(4) of the Nigerian Correctional Centre Act (1972) which assigned persons with the responsibility among others to ensure the safe custody, rehabilitation and reformation of inmates to become useful and law abiding citizens on discharge.

In tandem with this view, Mango (2006) state that inmates were used for public works and other jobs for the colonial administrators as a form of punishment. This form of imprisonment produced harden criminals into the society, this is because inmates were not expose to information that will bring about change in skills, characters, attitudes and peaceful co-existence. To this end Igbo (2007), state that at the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), there was a remarkable shift in imprisonment philosophy, the emphasis was no linger primarily on the punishment of criminals but there was also concern for their rehabilitation and reformation in order to make them functional and law abiding members of the society.

The Rivers state Correctional centre were established in 1918, first at Aggrey road, Port Harcourt and its capacity was built for 804 inmates. However, the current population of the inmates stands at 4328 (Records of Nigerian Correctional Service in Rivers state). Constitutionally, it is the responsible of the government to reform and reintegrate inmates through well-articulated rehabilitative services among which peace education programme on moral from broadcast programmes among others designed to enlighten inmates on the consequences of violent related crimes and the benefit of non-violent means to resolve issues. This will enable them live in harmony with others in order to bring about peaceful co-existence as well as avoid crimes that will make them recidivate. Igbo (2007) submitted that the rehabilitation of inmates using ethical broadcast programmes should begin from the very day they are admitted into the correctional centre to the day they are discharged.

Rehabilitation and reformation services are designed to change the behaviour of inmates in correctional centres. It is therefore expected that recidivism will decrease if the objective of imprisonment is achieved by planning and providing proper rehabilitation of inmates through ethical broadcast programmes. Broadcast programmes highlighted in this paper includes the use of experiential learning, seminars and religious activities on television and radio. In line with this, Hawley (2013) poses that access to media broadcast is a fundamental human right and inmate should not be denied the chance to exercise this right. It can therefore be argued that imprisonment even if it is viewed as justified punishment should not bring with it the additional deprivation of civil rights, which include information sharing.

Consequently, the correctional centre programmes are supposed to be a life changing activities where those imprisoned are supposed to be informed, skilled and knowledgeable about the effects of their negative actions to the society, and to reintegrate them into moral upright behaviours that enables them to cultivate the culture of peace and to be law abiding. The end result is to ensure that they do not go back to crime, but recent happening in Rivers state has shown that most restive activities are championed by youths who have been in correctional centre before. This calls for ethical programmes on morals that will appeal to conscience of inmates in the correctional centre in Port Harcourt.

The Problem

Recidivist are drawn mainly from the social category referred to as youths, the supposed leaders of tomorrow. Youths are known for their exceptional vigour, vitality and leadership qualities, indeed, they are the pride of any nation since the caliber of youths a nation has tells a lot about the feature of that country, the concern is that most recidivist are youth, the rate at which ex-convict are reconvicted and send back to correctional centre, after destroying lives and properties of innocent citizens within the short time they are released from correctional centre is alarming, no one is spared by their worrisome act.

According to Robinson (2005), recidivists are unrepentant sociopaths, stubbornly resistant to the crime-preventing and control mechanisms of criminal justice system. Robinson therefore maintains that recidivism is a social condition triggering fear in the society since repeat offenders increase the rate of crime. This notion is a fundamental idea in criminal justice system. It becomes an act of repeating criminal offences even after undergoing rehabilitation interventions or sanctions of imprisonment. It is conceptualized as the criminal act of an individual in being reconvicted or return to correctional centre.

The level of awareness with regard to these underpinnings becomes the primary concern of this study. Indisputably, the purveyor of information whose responsibility is to inform, and educate the public ought to know these details. Their level of awareness and knowledge on the vital role ethical programmes play in appealing to the conscience of its consumers for attitudinal change cannot be over emphasis. The problem of this study is therefore preconceived in the foregoing. The justification is also hinged on the fact that if positive ethical programmes are not exposed to the inmate right from the time they are imprisoned to the time they are rehabilitated and released, the streets will be flooded with ex-convicts and correctional centres crowded with recidivist.

Objectives

Since it has been established that broadcast programmes informs, educates and entertain, again, that radio and television can break geographical barriers, therefore, this study sought to find out media workers' awareness of type of ethical programmes suitable for inmates right from the time they are imprisoned to the time they are rehabilitated and released back to the society

i. find out if the inmates in Port Harcourt correctional centre have access to radio and television broadcast
ii. examine the programmes the inmates are exposed to
iii. fine out if there are specific broadcast programmes designed for the inmates

The Research Questions

i. how do inmates in Port Harcourt correctional centre have access to radio and television broadcast?
ii. what programmes are the inmates exposed to?
iii. which are the specific broadcast programmes designed for the inmates?

Conceptual Review

Recidivism

The conception of recidivism is a Latin word meaning to fall back (Barroski and Hos, 2001). Recidivism is a reversion of or repeating of one's criminal behavior after one has been found wanting of a prior offence, sentenced and presumably corrected. Recidivism is conceptualized as a process where criminals go back to criminal activities resulting to re-arrest, re-convict and re-incarcerate.

Broadcast programmes has often been employed for advocacy efforts geared towards greater public participation in certain social change issues, it is nonetheless described as the use of available media to pass information that are expected to appeal to audiences by

means of positive attitudinal influences and the engendering of change in behaviour within a period. McQuail, (2010) would maintain that a ethical programmes is a thoughtful effort that is expected to reorient the target audience on how they think about public issues; address unexpected attitudes in expectance of a desired behaviour through information disseminated by means of media about an issue and at specified period of time. Ethical broadcast depends on communication channels to pass social change messages, for at the centre of the enlightenment programmes are the mass media.

Media broadcast influence people's behaviour, given that those who ordinarily would not do something may be found practicing it because of media influence. One of such examples is in the regular hand washing and preventive measures as order that is now a thing of necessity, as advocated by broadcast media due to the outbreak of the deadly novel corona-virus, also known as Covid-19 which is now becoming the new normal. These programmes are carried out through several channels of communication such as interpersonal channels and mass mediated channels. the mass media has however gained popularity because of their ability to a vast majority of people within a short time. As such government and other relevant agencies invest huge amount of money on Public Service Announcement (PAS). This is with the view that such broadcast programmes are capable of inducing the required behaviour in the people they are targeted at. Consistent with this view, Dejong (2002) remarks that; television, radio and print advertising can entice people to buy a wide range of products and services, and television entertainment programmes and movies exert enormous influence over our ideas, values and behaviour. Therefore, according to conventional wisdom, it should be possible to use broadcast programmes to get people to do right, and subscribe to social causes. Base on this assumption, since world war 11, federal, state, and local governments, private organizations and nongovernmental organizations have sponsored lots of public service programmes that promotes social behaviour among people in the society and dispirit recidivism among ex-convicts.

Abone (2008) equally describe broadcast programmes as the key component of global strategy for sustainable moral and development through adequate information and education on various deviant issues. The role played by broadcast programmes is a vital one such that without the programmes it would be absolutely impossible for attitude promoters and stakeholders to disseminate information as well as monitor and coordinate the activities of the various correctional centers on alleviating recidivism among inmates.

In Rivers state for instance, ethical broadcast programmes communicated regularly on television and radio include those by various agencies such as the State Government, example Rivethics on radio by the wife of Rivers state governor, Suzette Nysom Wike,

National Agency for Food Drugs Administration and control (NAFDAC), National Agency for the control of AIDS and states Action Committee on AIDS, National Orientation Agency as well as other non-governmental organizations. such broadcast programmes takes the form of Jingles/ advertisements, Public Service Announcements, and education entertainment (edutainment) like dramas or soap operas.

Theoretical Framework

The Media System Dependency (MSD) Theory

The Media System Dependency theory was used to justify the study, initially proposed in 1976 by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melivin Defleur. It seeks to explain the interconnectivity systems where individuals, the media and their social environment have a relationship that is largely dependent on each another. That is the information resources of the media system (Wikipedia, 2012). Also Baron and Davis (2009) posit that Media Systems Dependency Theory assumes that "the more a person depends on having his other needs met by media use, the more important will be the role that the media play in the person's life, therefore the more influence the media will have on the person. People now rely on media programmes for information on virtually everything happening around them. Little-John (2002) also is of the opinion that 'people will become more dependent on the media that meets a number of needs than the media that touches only a few needs'. In essence, the more the media is applied for the purpose of educational benefits and to tackle challenges of life, the more reliant individuals become the media and as such it influences the individual's action and activities, the more the media is been used, the more it broadens our horizon and changes our attitude, cognitive in emotional state for the right behaviour. Wikipedia (2011)

Time Displacement Theory

The time Displacement Theory explains that, some new forms of activities may replace other ones". Most of these new forms of activities that may replace older ones are technologically based (such as media programmes) and have been attributed to the decline of the more common activities, sober reflections, attitude change and even evil socialization. Broadcasting, since it emergence, has changed its users from bad to good. media broadcast users now use it as substitute to other activities. Time displacement happens when ethical broadcast programmes entertain adolescent with stimulating visuals images as well as auditory effect, is more attractive than violence related activities. Using ethical programmes in some ways will result in the displacement of anti social behaviour. Researchers have also found out that problematic programme consumption among adolescent may bring about negative outcome in school performance as well as social skill.

Broadcast programmes construct our view of the world, therefore, pictures in the heads is of greater impact than direct communication with the environment, that's the reason Lippman position was that average man was incapable of rightful judgments from the information that pervades them in their environment. The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion, it may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The foregoing situates the theories as not only germane to this study but expedient in assessing ethical broadcast programmes as a communicative strategy for alleviating recidivism.

Methodology

The peculiarity of this study necessitated the descriptive survey. The interest in descriptive survey, according to Wimmer and dominnick (2011), is "in discovering the current situation in the area under study" (p.167). Survey no doubt enables a researcher investigate problems in realistic settings. The justification for its use however is hinged on its versatility in eliciting data from a variety of people.

In descriptive terms, all information workers (journalists) in Port Harcourt, the capital of River State, formed the population of this study. That is, information workers in broadcast media were purposively streamlined bearing in mind the fact that broadcast programmes falls within the purview of broadcasting process. Workers in that sector ought to have a comparative advantage, over their print counterpart on the issues of ethical broadcast programmes. To this end, the media skyline in Port Harcourt metropolis shows that there were about sixteen broadcast stations (10 radio and 6 televisions). A summation of figures from the nominal roll of these stations reveals that there are one thousand eight hundred and ninety (1890) information workers in these stations and this invariably formed the population of the study.

Taro Yamane (1967) Mathematical formula for sample size

$$\frac{}{1+N(e)^2}$$

n = sample size

N = Research population size

e = Sample assume errors (level of precision which is constant) =0.052

Therefore:

$$n=\frac{1890}{1+1890(0.05)2}$$

$$=330.131$$

Sampling technique, the systematic sampling technique was used to avoid the researcher bias and convenience. As the efficiency of this technique is dependent on the sampling frame, the respondents were systematically selected using the nominal roll as basis for algorithmic presentation on the table of random digits.

Data gathering technique, this was done by the use of questionnaire. the questionnaire was structure on demographic and psychographic variables. As the focus was on the use of ethical broadcast programmes to alleviate recidivism among inmate. the questions on the questionnaire was structured to elicit answers along that line. The instrument had (17) items, of these (11) were open-ended while (6) were close ended. The reason is that open-ended questions are channeled towards eliciting knowledge based responses.

Validity of the instrument was carried out on a pilot group with the view to ensuring completeness, coherence, comprehensibility, and answerability. And reliability on the other hand was carried out using the Pearson product Moment Correlation, symbolized as r.

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X\sum Y}{\sqrt{\left[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\right]\left[N\sum Y^2 - (\sum X)^2\right]}}$$

Where X and Y stands for the original score.
N= number of pairs of score.

Data presentation was in table and charts while analysis was done using simple percentage.

The Analysis and Discourse

From the sample size, three hundred and thirty (330) copies of the questionnaire were distributed but 288 were retrieved which represents returned rate of 87%

Table 1 Awareness of recidivist in Port Harcourt correctional centre

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	132	46
No	138	28
Not sure	18	6
Total	**288**	**100**

From the data above, there is preponderance of unawareness with regard to recidivist in Port Harcourt correctional centre

Table 2: Knowledge of recidivism among youths in Port Harcourt

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	144	50
No	58	20
Not sure	86	30
Total	**288**	**100**

The implication of not knowledgeable of recidivism among youths in Port Harcourt is that, the city will be dominated with unrepentant criminal without knowing it. the data on table 2 reveals that the awareness and unawareness seen to be at par.

Table 3: Inmates' Access to Ethical broadcast programmes

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	54	19
No	128	44
Not sure	106	37
Total	**288**	**100**

Table 3 shows 19% of awareness on the fact that inmates has access to broadcast programmes. The question on type of programmes the inmate watch is captured on table 4

Table 4: knowledge of type of broadcast programme the inmates are exposed to

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	23	8
No	265	92
Not sure	-	
Total	**288**	**100**

Very few people know the type of broadcast programme the inmates are exposed to

Table 5: Knowledge of the phrased Recidivism

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	76	26
No	86	30
Not sure	126	44
Total	**288**	**100**

The preponderance of unawareness concerning the issue of recidivism in Port Harcourt is incontrovertible.

Table 6: Commencement of re-arresting recidivist

Response	Frequency	%
Aware	48	17
Unaware	200	69
Not sure	40	14
Total	**288**	**100**

Very few people knew that unrepentant inmates can be re-arrested and send back to correction centre

Table 7: The status of Port Harcourt Correctional centre

Response	Frequency	%
Aware	22	8
Unaware	100	35
Not sure	66	57
Total	**288**	**100**

The degree of awareness regarding Port Harcourt correctional centre is very low.

The inference from the foregoing data shows that Port Harcourt information workers in River state seems to have a fair knowledge of the importance of ethical broadcast programmes for inmates in correctional centre. There however seems to be a significant low level of knowledge concerning the programme type that is suitable for inmates undergoing rehabilitation. This irony is further compounded by the fact that information workers who ought to know the importance of broadcast programme to change of behaviour are totally blank on the issue. Of the 288 respondents, more than 50% seems to be in the dark as regard Knowledge of recidivism among youths in Port Harcourt as shown on table 2.

As concerning knowledge of type of broadcast programme the inmates are exposed to, 44% of the respondents upheld a complete lack of Knowledge while 37% did not seem to be sure of broadcast programme the inmates are exposed to. The summation therefore shows a gross lack of knowledge among information workers in Port Harcourt; on the premeditative steps needed to prevent recidivism in Port Harcourt. It becomes innocuous that information workers are unaware of the steps to follow to dispirit recidivist among inmates in Port Harcourt.

However it is not surprising that knowledge on the issue of recidivist among inmates in Port Harcourt correctional centre is abysmally low. As regards the awareness/ knowledge ratio on the ethical broadcast programmes, it can be discernibly inferred that the awareness level concerning the status of Port Harcourt Correctional centre is fair.

Summary and Recommendation

Data so far has shown that ethical broadcast programmes is a vital tool that can be used to alleviate recidivism among inmates in correctional centres because it enable inmates embrace the culture of peace as a way of life by being at peace with oneself as well as living in harmony with others. It build in the inmate the right attitude and skill to avert violence and related crimes. Therefore, failure to accommodate inmates in broadcast programmes of peace and non-violence way of life through peace advocacy programmes would continue to increase recidivism among inmates.

Recommendation

1. There should be concerted effort by the government and broadcast regulators to include ethical broadcast programmes for inmate that would lead to change in behaviour
2. The Nigerian correctional Services should recruit trained facilitators or instructors to teach the inmates on the culture of peace as a way of life.
3. Government and other organizations interested in positive attitude of inmates on the release back to communities should promote peace programmes on radio and television for inmates in correctional centres for adequate assimilation and practice of the culture of peace among the inmates.

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