

Electronic Media Reportage of the Physically Challenged Groups in Rural Communities (The Case of Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Television Service, Nigeria Jan. 2015 to June 2015)

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Abstract

The World's population is a combination of the physically strong, the weak and the disables otherwise referred to as the physically challenged. No matter the status, these individuals require effective communication within themselves and others to carry out daily actions, targets and expectations, since every minute of living depend on the availability of appropriate information, education and entertainment usually provided by media institutions. One of the most significant medium of communication that has created impact in the creation of awareness on activities and status conferment is the Television. But not all class of individuals find ample projection in the eyes of the media, especially the television as a medium of communication. One of such class of persons that tends to be usually kept away from the screen of televisions is the physically challenged despite the large population constituted by the group in the society. The focus of this paper is to examine the level of reportage given to the physically challenged group of persons using the Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC) television service as a case study between January and June 2015. The paper strives to answer research questions bordering on the frequency, prominence, and the category of stories from television news programmes given about the physically challenged found in the communities of Akwa Ibom State. Arising from it would be established if there is any significant prominence in the reportage of the physically challenged in Akwa Ibom State by the medium of television.

Introduction

Since the mid 1970's there has been much call from the disabled community for society to recognize the disabled people as equals to non-disabled people, and to take into account their contributions in creating enabling environments for development. The call for the society to integrate the disability groups in development have not been rested neither has the clarion demand for vast improvements to establishing the human rights of disabled people diminished. In furtherance of developing the people, and the disabled side by side, at the 2014 International White Cane and Safety Day, participated by the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare, the Akwa Ibom state government announced plans to increase educational grants for the visually-impaired persons and other physically-challenged individuals living in the State. It was part of promises and plans formed at ensuring that the rights of the disabled are adequately brought to limelight in the State. The visually impaired and the physically-challenged persons were described in colorful terms as special people, who deserve special attention and support from everyone, including the media institutions. It was not the first of such plans by the government and other public spirited groups, either to increase scholarships for them or undertake other welfare schemes usually in line with the agenda to improving the living standard of the physically challenged persons in Akwa Ibom State.

For the success of that such policies and programmes favorable to the disabled, in addition to providing mobility aids for them from either the government or from public spirited persons and charitable institutions and organizations, it is the media that has the responsibilities of bringing and showcasing the physically challenged to the knowledge of willing groups. The expected love and passion for the welfare of the physically-challenged persons, especially by improving their conditions, celebrate their achievements, cause the materialization of their desires, to have a sense of belonging is the work of the media such as television.

The media therefore comes in to provide an opportunity for visually-impaired persons by highlighting challenges facing them, and the need for their safety from members of the public while also seeking assistance to the blind and other disabled persons especially in rural communities. The thinking is that the conditions of deformity need not stop actualization of dreams and aspirations.

Etukudo (2010, p. 3), said “the plights of physically-challenged persons could be alleviated, with the support of government, individuals, groups and organizations, where media institutions play their role of highlighting the plight of the down trodden (the physically challenged) in as much as the affluence of the well placed are promoted”. The position of the author is anchored in the truism that in every disability, there is ability to manifest and in the age long notion that all human beings are equal. There is no doubt that the strengthening of these notions, lie in the promoting of the fundamental rights of individuals, which conventionally, stretches to the right of dignity. Nature grants ability to individuals equally especially to relate within self and with others in the capacity to communicate, no effort, idea or action can be realizable by any person without involving elements of communicating at the inter and intra stages.

Communication is seen as the fuel that drives the engine of living by individuals and institutions. The inter and intra level of communication by individuals are deeply supported by the emerging technologies of mass media especially television broadcasting. This assertion is not restricted to any continent, religion, clan, tribe or financial status of individuals or organizations. This is to say that those by providence had the opportunity of finding themselves born in the Western bloc or the Eastern bloc of the World require communication to function effectively just as those seen in the developing nations of Africa and the Middle East. Aside from desiring effective communication within oneself, individuals seek for communication with the immediate and distant environment. This is to enable the individual be in constant awareness of events about others, reactions and effects while also using such assessments to take decisions, acquire skills, seek for latest knowledge, control the environment and willingly participate in civic responsibilities. In sum, effective communication without restrictions, discrimination or segregation leads to change, growth, actualization and development. Previously, individuals appear to have been satisfied with the existence of traditional means of communication in relating with people, but the advent of electronic technology brought about the existence of television. With this technology, the audience does not merely use the ear alone to listen to the news but equally apply the eyes to see the images of those referred to in the news. In that regards, it is ideal to mention that television helps in promoting the actualities of those in the news and assist the viewer to either appreciate or reject those in the news. According to Brown (2012, p.15) “these days Television sets are everywhere in the western world and are increasingly popular in less developed nations and it is estimated that by the middle of the 21st century every home will have at least one television”. They are privately owned, publicly, owned and commercially owned television stations. While the privately owned television and commercially owned television stations exist to make immediate profit, the publicly owned television stations are opened primarily to act as agents of disseminating developmental information to the public. Considering, television mass audience, in the presentation of issues, it is expected to grant equal opportunity in reportage of issues rather than promoting some groups beyond others.

This is the simple way through which television can be rated as an agent of developing the society. There has never been a moment where information from television is circulated to a certain class of human beings and restricted from reaching others. Once the station is on air, the information given is to the audience hooked to the station at that moment at equal rate and coverage. This means that no matter the physical deformity of an individual or the absence of deformities, information released on air from the television reaches the different class of audience at the same moment and ceases as soon as the information is over. During the past 50 years, television service has spread so quickly that it became available to virtually all Nigerians regardless of their income. It has become the primary source from which Nigerians receive their news and also the primary means by which Nigerians entertain themselves. It has become integral that the average Nigerian adult watches, on average, three hours of Television viewing per day. People find television more interesting than these other forms of communication; this is because of the visual simulation they get from the programs they watch. The people of Akwa Ibom state encompassing the physically challenged or disabled are not exception. The ready television service to these people is provided by the Akwa Ibom state Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC) Television service built before the creation of the state in 1987.

Statement of the Problem

Television services serve the interest of several people known or known to the owners and operators of stations. The motives of establishing television stations include using it to bring development closer to all persons in the society irrespective of status, class or deformities. This is because if the society seeks to be developed, the approach must integrate the interest, aspirations and desires of all class of persons.

Development approach particularly through the use of the television has to be weighed holistically rather than partially, where a segment of the society is heard at the detriment of others based on account of deformities. That a reporter knows the sources of information constitute no excuse for the frequent promotion of activities of certain groups beyond a given dimension. Such a situation would definitely, amount to discriminating a segment of the society. Hence, a non discriminatory posture of news and programmes presentation is expected of public television stations, particularly, the Akwa Ibom State Broadcasting Corporation, AKBC, Television service, where the majority of the audience is seeking for developmental information irrespective of whether they are with deformities or are not with deformities. Moemeka (1999, p.4) notes, "The role of the government in television is to make available to the people a constant flow of information on the various aspects of life that affect the public in which they live is not, and has never been in question. That, in the process of performing this role of mass information, the mass media should carry out the functions of interpretation, correlation, education and entertainment, is also not in question". He argues, "What is usually in question is the mode of operation followed and the amount of freedom allowed?". The core burden of this paper then arises to assess the reportage of the AKBC television, whether the disabled persons or the physically challenged class of persons are adequately reported with a view to helping to draw an all round and sustainable sense of development in Akwa Ibom State as part of the Niger Delta states of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are;

- To find out the outstanding category of stories by the AKBC about the physically challenged groups in news presentation to enhance rural development from Jan 2015 to June 2015.
- To find out the level of prominence granted the physically challenged group of people in news presentations of the AKBC, television service.
- To find out the frequency which the physically challenged persons are featured in news presentations of the AKBC, television service between Jan. 2015 to June 2015.

Research Questions of the Study

The research questions of the study are:

- Which category of news appear outstanding by the AKBC about the physically challenged to enhance rural development?
- Is the physically challenged granted prominence, in news presentation of the AKBC, television service to enhance rural development?
- What is the frequency of reportage given to the physically challenged groups in the news presentation of the AKBC, television service to enhance rural development?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several respects. Firstly, it will help to establish the efficacy of the television as a veritable instrument for achieving change and development. It will also help to confirm the effectiveness of the television as an instrument for social mobilization. Secondly, it is expected to sensitize the society about the role the television can play in integration and resolving discrimination. It can also help to sensitize the press on their role in giving equality in coverage to all human groups. Thirdly, it will serve as a reference point for students and other researchers who may wish to carry out similar studies. Finally, it should be of great importance for policy formulation by government and development agencies on issues concerning the physically challenged.

Assumptions

There is a significant reportage of the physically challenged group by the Akwa Ibom state television service

Scope of Research

The research work is limited to the news programmes of the Akwa Ibom state Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC) Television service, Nigeria, between January 1, 2015 to June 30th, 2015. The choice of the station is that it has been on air since 1987 at the creation of the state without any other private television station rivaling her position in television services in the state having a population over 3.9 million people. The state maintains about 10 public rehabilitation centers and not less than 20 private rehabilitation centers for the physically challenged. The period of the research was when the wife of the governor was using the pet project of housing, empowerment and grants to reach out to the physically challenged.

Definition of Terms

Development: Increased level of changes in the social and economic living.

Assessment: An evaluation of work done by an institution or person.

Electronic: A device use in communication which is not printed.

Media: The combination of the instruments to dissemination information.

Reportage: The act of giving information about people and institution.

Physically Challenged: The class of persons with deformities

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: The Social Responsibility Theory

Among the dominant theoretical perspectives or models that have been useful in analyzing the role of mass communication, the researcher made use of Social Responsibility Theory as Propounded by Peterson, Siebert and Schramm. Employing the social responsibility media theory in this work becomes relevant due to its stand that the press in any society should be responsible in the performance of its functions which are as follows;

- To serve the rural system by making information discussion and consideration of the rural dwellers accessible.
- To inform the rural areas to enable it to take self determined action.
- To promote the rights of the rural dwellers by acting as watch dog over the area.

By implication the mass media though free to express themselves and publish news information, must be social responsible to the society especially the rural dwellers.

Conceptual Review

The Disabled Persons and the Society

Today, Radio and Television media outlets play an increasing role in forging a cultural identity and a sense of community among people with disabilities around the world, regardless of the nature and the extent of their disability. In the United States of America and other nation's laws, efforts of many disability organizations and the government have made strides in improving accessibility in buildings, increasing access to education, opening employment opportunities and developing realistic portrayals of persons with disabilities in television programming and motion pictures. But progress is still needed in communication and interaction with people with disabilities. Individuals and institutions of communication are sometimes concerned that they will say the wrong thing about the disabled person and end up, saying nothing at all about them - thus further segregating people with disabilities from issues expected to create opportunities of developing their minds and skills to the advantage of the society.

The International Year of the Disabled Persons in 1981, served as a catalyst in rehabilitation issues in Nigeria. During the UN Decade of the Disabled celebration (1983-1992), awareness was created, and organizations of persons with disabilities were given encouragement. The Nigerian government accepted the principles of participation, integration and equalization of opportunities for the disabled as defined by the United Nations in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and by the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Federal Government of Nigeria further accepted the principles incorporated in the declarations proclaiming the necessity of protecting the rights and assuring the welfare and rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disadvantaged and the quest to attain social progress and development.

A national policy frame work on the disabled persons was rolled out for sound and comprehensive rehabilitation of persons to ensure that disability issues are on the agenda in all spheres of social, economic and political life. It was also to ensure maximum access of people with disabilities to all mainstream services and facilities; develop appropriate disability prevention and rehabilitation programmes throughout the nation; prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities in all spheres; provide persons with disabilities with the tools to change their lives and to give them a greater degree of independence. To take into account the specific needs of different disability groupings; increase awareness on disability issues and support national/international advocacy for persons with disabilities.

The means to securing these objectives require the application of the mass media (the television) with reach to scattered and heterogeneous audiences, which incorporate the disabled persons. In the television, news caster or programme presenter do not know the receiver of the messages. But one issue known is that the message is disseminated from different sources through which the information was gathered.

Concepts of Development and Disabilities

Development is the product of human endeavors designed to improve facilities and infrastructures in order to provide a better life to world communities. It involves in depth understanding of one's environment and the application of creative approaches, toward the achievements of satisfaction, within a society. It entails the acquisition and utilization of skills, for the provision of the requirements for the advancement of human society (Owuamalam, 2003, p. 4). This means that development is needed for man's happiness in the society. Development equips man with the vital tools needed for achieving human potentialities, which are necessary for socio-economic advancement for local communities. However, development has been described as a complex concept, which could mean different things to different individuals. But there are basic features for measuring healthy or positive development. These features, according to Okunna (2004) emphasize that:

- Development should bring change
- This change should be for the better
- The change should be for the benefit of the majority of the people.
- The process should be participatory, that is, involve the people as closely as possible.
- Development should be compactable with the environment in which they live.
- It should be sustained.

Nwodu (2005, p. 137) reinforces this view where he argues, "Development involves positive transformation of both man and his physical environment". Development is therefore a change for the better in human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individuals and consequently, of the society. This shows that there must be a change for the better in all aspects of the lives of individuals that they make up a society before development could be said to have occurred. Dissanayaka (cited in Okunna, 2004) agrees with this when he described development as a "process of social change which has as its goals the improvement of quality of life for all or the majority of the people without doing violence to the national and cultural environment in which they exist and which seeks to involve the generality of peoples as closely as passion in this enterprise." According to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) development is "a widely participatory process of change in our society intended to bring about both social and material advancement including greater equality, freedom and other values or qualities for the majority of people through their greater controls of their environment." It is many sided process, which at the level of individuals implies increase skills, and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline irresponsibility and material will being. The import of these is that development is all about "change" for the better.

Without any meaningful transition from "what has been" to what is" then, there is no positive development. Development plans or programmes must therefore be designed to have their greater positive impact on the rural areas. It must involve labour intensive projects and also must provide a capacity for the neglected majority or rural Africans to continue to better their lives largely through their own efforts. This implies that development efforts should not just focus on the urban areas alone but also on rural areas especially in nation like Nigeria where a good number of people still dwell in the rural areas. Edeani (1993) adduces "national development must focus on rural areas due to the enormous size of the rural population compared with the small percentage living in the cities, the country abundant natural resources located in the rural areas and the disproportionate role which the rural population plays in economic, social and political life of the entire nation".

Today, development eludes most communities especially as more people live with a disability than ever before and are far away from improved treatments in the media. Some people are born with a disability, others become disabled as a result of an illness or injury, and some people develop them as they age. One of the key challenges for a person with a disability is to be seen by the public, to be portrayed in media outlets, and treated by the society as individuals with their own abilities, not just stereotyped as a "disabled person". About 1 in 5 people in America currently has a disability while over a billion people, around 15% of the world's population, have some form of disability. Between 110 million and 190 million adults worldwide have significant difficulties in functioning.

The U.S. Social Security Administration 2011 report indicated that the rates of disability are increasing due to population ageing and increases in chronic health conditions - among other causes. In Africa, an estimated 60-80 million people are living with disabilities today. USAID missions throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere, provide financial and technical assistance to people living with disabilities, including those disabled as a result of war and conflict. Disabled people are estimated at 10 percent of the general African population, but possibly as high as 20 percent in the poorer regions. The vast majority of Africans with disabilities are excluded from schools and opportunities to work, virtually guaranteeing that they will live out their lives as the poorest of the poor. School enrollment for the disabled is estimated at no more than 5-10 percent. For many begging becomes a sole means of survival. Every day in Africa, many people are disabled by malnutrition and disease, environmental hazards, natural disasters, traffic and industrial accidents, civil conflict and war.

According to Rehabilitation International, it is estimated that 350-500 people worldwide become amputees each day due to landmines that they encounter while walking, farming, or playing. The number of people living with disability in Africa is increasing. Factors that contribute to the growing number in Africa include: violence, HIV/AIDS, birth defects, malnutrition, population growth, ageing population, environmental degradation injuries at home, work and on the roads. For South Africa, it has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol in 2007. Furthermore, the South African Constitution specifically enshrines equality for persons with disabilities under Article 9(3). Yet, it is not clear how the current bill gets closer to full implementation of the Constitution and the Convention. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abel (2008) commented, "South Africa has committed itself to removing all barriers faced by persons with disabilities, this bill is easily assailable to foster the establishment of a South African disability council and to promote the views of disabled people, maintain a body of consensus, and the voice of the disability sector in South Africa".

Any vision towards development for the future of Africa must include people with disabilities, who constitute "a significant percentage of the community anywhere in Africa. People with disabilities have a lot of potential to take part in the development processes of their countries, yet they are in most cases excluded from most of the development programs. However, some people with disabilities in Africa are taking control of their future, according to the UN body African Decade of Person with Disability. It says, "Africa will be leading the world in numbers of disabled entrepreneurs." In some instances, individuals see, know and understand matters of others interest from the perspectives which the media tends to portray. In Nigeria through the national policy on rehabilitation, the issue of defining disability is more than a matter of semantics, since the definition influence how the society perceive persons with disabilities and how persons with disabilities perceive themselves. This also influences the type of services provided from public institutions including the media institutions to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. It is true to say that the media is an extremely important part of our everyday life and as an industry has been critical in the dissemination of information to the mass population. According to Wood (2012, p. 2), the media of communication notably the print and the electronic, traditionally perform the function of educating, entertaining, enlightening and persuading their audience with the increasing complexity of the modern world coupled with the invention of more sophisticated communication technologies, the functions of the media have become widened.

Media and Disabilities

The functions of the media, Television inclusive, range from education, surveillance, interpretation of events, socialization, dissemination of information, entertainment, stimulating change, cultural promotions among several others as:

Educational Function

The mass media is concerned with formal and informal education programmes for all segments of its audience, children, youths and adults. These programmes which are either in English or vernacular are not only meant for the intellectual development of the audience, they are also relevant for the socio-political development of the individuals including the disabled. Stressing further the multi-dimensional impact of education, Moemeka (1981, p.9) similarly stressed the persuasive impact all of activities, social, economic, educational, political and cultural which touch on the lives of rural community, knowledge of which is essential to development.

Surveillance

The Mass Media monitor and report events as they happen with a view to draw attention to the significant and relevance of such events as they affect people, nations and organizations. This surveillance or information sharing of the media became relevant in view of the fact that an event or issue in one part of the world is most likely to generate a ripple to people all over the world. Therefore, require a continuous basic dose of information and other data in order to fit into an even changing and complex society. Akpan (1987, p.30) equally wrote on the surveillance function of the media thus "the surveillance function of the media is that of the watchdog. This involves gathering and reporting news of happening in the community.

Interpretation

The modern society with its growing complexity also imposes on the media the role of interpreting events, actions and developments as they concerns the ruralites. Thus, the media not only survey events of the day and make them the focus of public and private attention; they also interpret their meaning, put them into context and make specifications about their outcomes. Similarly, Nwosu (1990, p.190) noted that in addition to performing the traditional functions, the media are more useful in providing better interpreted in depth development stories that place developmental issues and facts in greater perspective.

Socialization

The heterogeneous nature of the world made it imperative for people to understand themselves for mutual respect and peaceful co-existence. The media therefore has the function of providing the necessary platform using the television for the ruralites to provide and ensure better understanding by demonstrations and directions. Emenyeonu (1999, p.35) was emphasizing this vital role of the media when he said "Communication provides knowledge which and enable people from all parts of the world to co-operate with one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation". However, the influence that the media holds over society has not always been used to society's benefit, particularly in relation to disability, where the media has continued to add to the discrimination of disabled people. The media contribution to disabled people's discrimination are in the reinforcement of impairment and the use of the medical model of disability, and underpinning the use of disabled stereotypes, the use of images, the under-representation of disabled people in the media.

The media throughout history has depicted disability through the use of impairment, where as Shakespeare (1999, p.164) points out that the disability "impairment is made the most important thing" and disabled characters are "objectified and distanced from the audience". The media has focused on portraying impairment through the influence of the medical model of disability, where disabled people's inability to interact in normal daily life is a direct result of their physical and/ or mental impairment. Shakespeare further presents a potential reason behind the use of one of these stereotypes thus: "The use of disability as character trait, plot device, or as atmosphere is a lazy short-cut. These representations are not accurate or fair reflections of the actual experience of disabled people. Such stereotypes reinforce negative attitudes towards disabled people, and ignorance about the nature of disability" In other words, the disability itself is often used as a hook by writers and film-makers to draw audiences into the story. These one-dimensional stereotypes are often distanced from the audience - where characters are only viewed through their impairment, and not valued as people. Shakespeare (1999) continues: "Above all, the dominant images [of disabled people] are crude, one-dimensional and simplistic." However since the mid 1970's there has been much call from the disabled community for society to recognise disabled people as equals to non-disabled people, and to take responsibility for societies contribution to creating disabling environments. The call for adopting the social model of disability has seen vast improvements to establishing the human rights of disabled people and much has been set in legislation. The media has been faulted as being slow to take on the changes and to frequently practice what they preach as in the following areas.

Use of Disabled Stereotypes

The media continue to enforce disability stereotypes portraying disabled individuals in a negative un-empowering way. Hunt(1991, p.45)identified 10 stereotypes that the media use to portray disabled people: The disabled person as pitiable or pathetic, an object of curiosity or violence, sinister, or evil, the super cripple, as atmosphere, Laughable, worst enemy, as a burden, as unable to participate in daily life. What we see, hear and read in the media is often decided and influenced by a small group of decision makers. These are the reporters, editors, producers, programmers and controllers who swayed by their own opinions of disability and what they believe will bring in audiences. Historically, media examples containing disabled people have largely conformed to stereotypes.

These decision makers may feel that they are taking a risk by portraying disabled people outside of the stereotypes which have historically "sold well" Adding to this problem is the under-representation of disabled people in news and programmes from the media. Of omba (2005, p.43) say, "The representation and portrayal of people with disabilities on analogue terrestrial television reports rather than progress still remains slow". He cites Skillset (2005, p.4), stating that there has been only very minor change in the rate which disabled people in the broadcast television sector are projected. This under-representation of disabled people within the media products has obvious implications for the power of the disabled community to contribute to the development of rural areas. The manner in which the disabled are portrayed within the media circles influence their psyche and social interaction and subsequently lowers the status of the society. This in turn has an effect on the community at large, where the media holds a high level of influence over the perceptions of the general public. An under-representation or miss-representation of disabled people has large social implications. Saito and Ishiyama, (2005, p. 34) highlights the influence that positive examples have on society's perception of disability, stating that "one or two particularly salient programmes might dramatically affect our perceptions of disability and disabled persons".

The Use of Images

The language used in the media in relation to disabled people offers a good indication of whether social change has occurred. It is interesting to look at the fact that a lot of the language used still revolves around the medical model of disability. For example, *Kate(2004,p.56) noted that* "there is a continuing trend of broadcast stations to use negative language, portraying disabled people as sufferers of their own impairment, including designating them with words as condition, deterioration, plight, and victims"

Terminology

The terminology used in these and similar broadcast televisions reinforces discrimination, negativity, and devalues disabled people while creating a negative self-image. Haller (2006, p.62) confirms this: "Even something as mundane as the words used to refer to a group are important because they have ramifications both for the self-perception of people with disabilities and what the general public believes about disability" There are a number of definitions on rehabilitation and disability. Rehabilitation is defined to include all measures aimed at reducing the impact of disability for an individual, enabling him or her to achieve independence, social integration, a better quality of life and self-actualization. Rehabilitation includes not only the training of persons with disabilities but also interventions in the general systems of society, adaptations of the environment, protection of human rights and empowerment.

Language

The term "disability" embraces a great number of different functional limitations occurring in any population in any country of the World. The World Health Organization (WHO) uses the medical approach to define disability. However, organizations of and for people with disabilities are increasingly, adapting definitions of social model. "Disability" is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the everyday life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers. Disability varies in terms of severity, longevity, causes and consequences. Some disabilities remain static throughout a person's life while others may have periods of remission or regression.

Disabilities and Challenges

The prevalence of disability increases drastically with the onset of old age. It follows that, as the life expectancy of Nigerian population increases, so are the prevalence of disability among the older persons in our society.

The problems of persons with disabilities in Nigeria are increasing for the following reasons: There is increasing number of older persons with disabilities in the population as life expectancy increases. The physically challenged in the urbanization and rural-urban are left to look after subsistence farms with inadequate support from the younger generation. Few physically challenged persons have adequate social security, pension or savings, even after a lifetime in employment. Nigeria is increasingly experiencing intensified hardship which disproportionately affects vulnerable groups as persons with disabilities. The social security is being further eroded by prevailing economic realities. Poor access to home-based health and social services, especially in rural communities, means that persons with disabilities are often confined and neglected. A percentage of Nigerian children with disabilities have over the years suffered neglect owing to the fact that they are perceived to be incapable, ill, misfit and a burden to their families and the society at large.

Their case represents a problem to be dealt with differently from other children issues. The fact that such children are unable to defend themselves, they are often left alone at home and are undervalued by those around them hence they become vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Such children, when born into families of poor social-economic backgrounds, are often confronted with many problems, which tend to have negative effect on their emotional growth and development. For the women with disabilities, unlike their male counterpart suffer double jeopardy, firstly as women and secondly, as women with disabilities. They have continued to experience a lot of setbacks in all spheres of life not only because they lack educational opportunities, but also because of negative attitudes, stereotypes and lack of understanding which exist among the larger non-disabled group in the society. Many Nigerian Women with disabilities still live in obscurity, silent misery, and socio-economic dependency. One of the most serious obstacles preventing the participation and integration of women with disabilities is the fact that the greater majority of them have not yet been encouraged to take on their duties as citizens which is an essential measure of claims to success. They are entitled to love and family life. In Nigeria, services enjoyed by people with disabilities in urban areas are not readily available in most rural areas. This is owing to the disparity between the level of development in rural and urban areas.

Disability in rural areas is synonymous to deprivation, abandonment, curse, burden and complete societal ostracism in political, social and economic life. Persons with disabilities in rural areas apart from dehumanizing stigma attached to them by their immediate community are completely cut off from rehabilitation services and other opportunities that are prevalent in urban areas. It is a vital problem that parents and relations of children with disabilities in the rural areas are often not mentally prepared to recognize: the disability in a correct sense. This prevents them from stimulating the children to develop in a positive way. Parents often put the children behind the curtains 'or send them out to the street to beg. Many poor families fully depend on their disabled children's income from begging and cannot afford the offer of sending them to school. This attitude affects the children's development and personality in different ways. As infants, children with disabilities are deprived of stimulation that could lessen their difficulties that arise when they go through the normal stages of development. A greatest hurdle, persons with disabilities face when trying to access mainstream programmes is a negative attitude. It is these attitudes that lead to the social exclusion and marginalisation of people with disabilities. The changing of attitudes is not something that happens spontaneously. Attitude changing is a complex process, which involves moving in a series of stages, from one set of attitude to another. Thus, raising awareness is central to the changing of attitudes. To raise awareness of disability as a Human Rights and Development issue targeting every component of government and society at large. To reduce discrimination against persons with disabilities based on archaic beliefs and customs, give adequate publicity on issues affecting persons with disabilities. This is where television becomes significant.

Development, Media and Disabilities

Over the years, the Government of Nigeria has undertaken important initiatives towards the development of a number of policy statements, which address the demands and rights of people with disabilities. Disability issues in Nigeria have been taken care of by the three tiers of Government, Voluntary Organizations for and of persons with disabilities. At the Federal level all the line Ministries collaborates to offer services for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities towards achieving the goals of rehabilitation and development. In Nigeria, there are organizations, associations for and of persons with disabilities such as: - Associations of the Blind, Deaf and physically Handicapped. There are no legal provisions mandating the representatives of persons with disabilities to participate in policy-making and to work with government institutions. The government gives financial and organizational logistic support to existing or new organizations of persons with disabilities.

The organizations have the role to advocate rights and improved services, mobilize persons with disabilities, identify their needs and priorities, participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services and measures concerning the lives of persons with disabilities, contribute to public awareness, provide services, and promote/organize income generating activities. Historically, disabilities have often been cast in a negative light. An individual thus affected was seen as being a "patient" subject either to cure or to go for medical care. His condition is seen as disabling; the social reactions to it are justified, and the barriers unavoidable. This position is known as the medical model of disability. Over the past 20 years, a competing view known as the social model of disability has come to the fore. In this model, disability is seen more as a social construction than a medical reality. An individual may be impaired by a condition that requires daily living adaptations, but the bulk of his problem - his disability - can be found in the attitudinal and physical barriers erected by society.

Both the medical and social models agree, to a point, that facilities and opportunities should be made as accessible as possible to individuals who require adaptations. Dismantling physical barriers, or setting up adaptations such as wheelchair ramps, are known as "fostering accessibility". Within the disability sector generally, the language matters. For a group of people who have been so relentlessly described in disparaging, reductionist and exclusivist terms, language matters profoundly. This is not unique to people with a disability. In civil rights movements around race, gender, nationality and sexuality, language has been a cornerstone of achieving respect and inclusion. In 2000, for example, the United Nations Assembly decided to start working on a comprehensive convention for the rights of disabled people. In the past, disability was viewed as a curse, which evokes pity and public sympathy. This resulted in unjust dependency, segregation, isolation exclusion from the society. Over the past decade, organizations of people with disabilities all over the world have worked to reposition disability as a human rights issue. The results are a social model for disability based on the premise that if society cannot cater for people with disabilities, it is the society that suffers and remain underdeveloped. Developing the society and in turn developing the disabled persons demand for an appropriate model requiring substantial changes beyond the physical environment to incorporate communication as a social engine of growth using the media institutions.

The goal must be the right of people with disabilities to play a full participatory role in society. This changing ethos has taken place within an international context which finally gave rise in 1993, to the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with disabilities. A key principle of movement of persons with disabilities throughout the world, and indeed of the social model itself, is the involvement of persons with disabilities in the process of transformations. The principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance and that planning and policy-making, should be based on those needs. Furthermore, all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to participate. Special attention is expected in the area of access to health and social services; to education; ability training and income generation opportunities; to housing; transportation and to building; to information, to cultural and social life, including sports and recreational facilities; to representation and full political involvement in all matters of concern to them. As persons with disabilities achieve rights, they should also have equal obligations. As those rights are being achieved, societies should raise the expectations of persons with disabilities to assume their full responsibility as members of society.

Thus the present policy of always trying to model media institutions systems after Western systems has to change to make way from a more realistic approach to conform with community problems. Most media institutions especially the government owned television suffer partly from the inability of promoting disabilities in communities government since it is totally owned and run by government.. Added to this is the more fundamental problem arises from the inability of the managers to innovate, create or adapt models of coverage to suit their society but surrendering their responsibility in a manner Carr (1962:p.3) describes as the 'tiresome obligation to think for themselves'. It is the intellectual laziness that has further reduced the effectiveness of Nigeria's television service. Admittedly, the problems of television services in Nigeria generally are multifarious and diffuse given that 'the demand of television in terms of technology, know-how and finance is greater than those of radio' (Katz and Weddel, 1978:p.83). Television service under its present state has largely failed because in spite of these demands, it has not addressed itself to the intrinsically basic problems of rural communication. More than 80% of Nigeria's over 80 million people live in rural areas. The present problem is how to make existing facilities available to those 60 million people, in spite of the fact that it may be considered a waste of resources to spend so much money for the entertainment of just a few as is the case now.

In determining the information needs of rural people, (Olatunbosun's (1975) appraisal of government policies on rural areas allege neglect and that the media could help in establishing a relatively adequate direction for the country.

This writer further synthesized the problems into fourteen broad categories of information needs, namely, (i) Health (ii) Land and Agriculture (iii) Employment (iv) Family matters (v) Education (vi) Self and Community Services (vii) Financial Matters (viii) Transportation (ix) Religion and Spiritual Matters (x) Recreation and Cultural Matters (xi) Law, Politics and Government (xii) Crime and Security (xiii) Ethnic Relations (xiv) Housing. These categories can further be classified into two broad groups; information for preventing problems and information for solving problems. These are needs which policy-makers in government — government being sole owner of television stations in the country - and executors of government policies would do well to examine for the fruits of television must be reaped in the right season.

As a result, television services in the country should be geared towards the following ideological goals with the fourteen categories suggested above acting as props and guide: television should. (a) Mobilize the people at the grassroots level towards national consciousness. (b) Be a source of education and enlightenment for the masses leading them towards self-actualization and national development. (c) Serve intra-cultural, intercultural and other communication purposes leading to group cohesion and national unity. Television broadcasting in other parts of the world has become the most pervasive, and often the most persuasive means of information diffusion in these societies. (Cassata 1979, p.45) says, 'it can disseminate information with lightning speed and impact, as well as infuse viewers with imagery and values in a subtle, perhaps almost imperceptible manners'. But Nigerian television has not yet attained the standards that these technologically advanced countries have, simply because these societies are culturally different in the Nigerian society. The traditional media in Nigeria are determined by the culture of the different ethnic groups in the country and this realization is important in determining the success of any media policy. In the traditional Nigerian society mass communication is viewed as a collective enterprise. It is like what may be called total communication. The system encourages the total participation of all human beings living within the society. It is a virile, dynamic process where the audience as well as the communicator is engaged in a multi-directional transaction, transmitting, receiving and giving feedback through the same channel using different media. It is a kind of total experience which admits of diverse communication theories. The use of a model borrowed from the West has today created what is often referred to as communication breakdown, a misnomer in television news communication. In order to devise a model that can penetrate the rural communities, television must first free itself from the self-imposed prejudice which often comes with the treat of change. Nigerian television including the AKBC TV is currently organized under a system of almost a single ownership based on a policy of government control without individual participation. Under this pattern of ownership the government holds the powerful apparatus of information dissemination in trust for the people whose interest they claim to represent.

Disability, Media and Effects in the Rural Society

Over the years, the government of Nigeria has undertaken important initiatives towards the development of a number of policy statements, which address the demands and rights of people with disabilities. Disability issues in Nigeria have been taken care of by the three tiers of Government, Voluntary Organizations for and of persons with disabilities. In Nigeria, there are organizations, associations of persons with disabilities such as: - Associations of the blind, deaf and physically handicapped. There are no legal provisions mandating the representatives of persons with disabilities to participate in policy-making and to work with government institutions. The government and donor institutions partially give financial and organizational logistic support to existing or new organizations of persons with disabilities. The organizations have the role to advocate rights and improved services, mobilize persons with disabilities, identify their needs and priorities, participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services and measures concerning the lives of persons with disabilities, contribute to public awareness, provide services, and promote/organize income generating activities. In Nigeria, services enjoyed by people with disabilities in urban areas are not readily available in most rural areas. This is owing to the disparity between the level of development in rural and urban areas. Disability in rural areas is synonymous to deprivation, abandonment, curse, burden and complete societal ostracism in political, social and economic life.

Persons with disabilities in rural areas apart from dehumanizing stigma attached to them by their immediate community are completely cut off from rehabilitation services and other opportunities that are prevalent in urban areas. It is a vital problem that parents and relations of children with disabilities in the rural areas are often not mentally prepared to recognize: the disability in a correct sense.

This prevents them from stimulating the children to develop in a positive way. Parents often put the children behind the curtains 'or send them out to the street to beg. Many poor families fully depend on their disabled children's income from begging and cannot afford the offer of sending them to school. This attitude affects the children's development and personality in different ways. As infants, children with disabilities are deprived of stimulation that could lessen their difficulties that arise when they go through the normal stages of development. One of the greatest hurdle persons with disabilities face when trying to access mainstream programmes is a negative attitude. It is these attitudes that lead to the social exclusion and marginalization of people with disabilities. The changing of attitudes is not something that happens spontaneously. Attitude changing is a complex process, which involves moving in a series of stages, from one set of attitude to another.

Thus, raising awareness is central to the changing of attitudes using the media to raise awareness of disability as a Human Rights and Development issue, targeting every component of government and society at large. Attitude can also be change by reducing discrimination against persons with disabilities based on archaic beliefs and customs through adequate coverage on issues affecting persons with disabilities. The way in which the environment is developed and organized in Nigeria contributes to a large extent to the level of and equality that people with disabilities enjoy. There are a number of barriers in the environment, which prevent persons with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities with non-disabled people. For example, structural barriers in the built environment, in accessible service point, inaccessible entrances due to security system, poor town planning and poor interior design. There should be a national requirement for an accessible built environment because this is an important development in the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Development agencies do not have clear policies on environmental access. In Nigerian rural communities, people with disabilities have limited or no access to information and communication as their rights considering available media services and programmes in rural communities. Media institutions especially the television are expected to present news and programmes pertaining to the disabilities as well as on those services which are generally available to them as part of the general public. Communication and information are important aspects of access to public services. Access to communication and information therefore forms an integral part of the equalization opportunities for people with disabilities, such as the deaf, people with speech disabilities and people with visual disabilities.

It is the objective of the media to develop strategies to make information and communication service and documentation accessible to all persons with disabilities in formats that can be used and understood by people with hearing, visual and other communication challenges. The media are also to promote the development of rural communities by the implementation of standard programmes with best practices to make information and communication accessible to persons with disabilities. The use of Television by the media to give out information is also essentially aimed at creating mass awareness and participation of the ruralites to advance rural development and education of the people in rural areas in the The extensive structural outlay of the media and its diverse coverage has made it a powerful agent of change in any socio-political setup. As quoted from Shehu (1990, p.17) "Economic and Societal development function of the media cover being agent to change habit, change of domestic living. In economic terms, this means better hygiene and nutrition, improvement in housing and home management. In broad terms, it means education in social, political and economic matters of life. Judging by this list of desirable changes in any society, the media is better placed through its numerous formal and informal instructional programmes.

Broadcasting of news is a form of mass communication that involves the dissemination of information, news and entertainment to a large audience through electronic transmitters. The role television plays in rural development can be seen in the society today, where the ruralites have come to know more about democracy, their right to cast votes to their choice of candidate, their right to speak out and reach out to the government on matters affecting them. Television also provides agenda for political discussion and understanding which ultimately contribute to political development of the ruralites. Similarly Ahyiche (1991, p.73) has indicated that the Nigerian Media and indeed the African entire media have continuously proved relevant in the development of the continent.

According to him, since 1960 the press in Africa in general, has continued to be very relevant in development. The leadership of most African countries has relied on the press as an instrument of information and enlighten to the people using television in promoting rural development. In a study titled: *Mass Media: Custodians of culture*, Opubor (1985, p.145) stated that cultural transmission as a function of the media involves the communication of information about the values, preference and orientation of the society. In other words, the role television plays in rural development has to be adequately utilized in most rural areas particularly in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The programmes of the Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation Television service have helped to promote agriculture and related aspects of economy, politics, social interaction and general education in the State, giving the ruralites a share of the broadcast media programmes and development. Mass media in relation to rural development has created a great impact on the ruralites, the urban dwellers, semi-urban dwellers and rural dwellers. The three social economic groups that make up a society, of all these groups the rural dwellers, the most populated forms the heart beat of a nation, but the same rural communities are sometimes neglected in the course of things through developmental programmes. Edeani (1993,p3) says “although there is high rate of illiteracy in the rural areas but through visual demonstration shown by the television, it has helped to promote development generally”.

He gives the following reasons why this is so: Because of the enormous size of the population as compared to the small percentage living in the cities, because of the disproportionate role which the rural populations play in the economic social and political life of the nation, it was this opinion that he considered that changes was imperative. The media has the capacity of influencing individuals although it experienced a little difficulty but through the use of television programmes to demonstrate, it can easily to get the attention of the ruralites to make changes. Another role of the media in rural development is the influencing and shaping of their behavioral patterns, virtually, no aspect of our habits, desires and relationships, both as individual and as groups escape examinations in our public media, getting along with neighbours, personal problems and our taste in popular music, racial and religious tensions, sports and trends in fashion among others are reported and discussed by the media. Without the media, the development of the ruralites will be very difficult to handle, the television in particular has helped in the processes of development, disseminating information to the ruralites through visual and audio, helping them to understand better, it has given rise to the hope of the ruralites in the developmental aspect of their general life.

Review of Related Studies

Media Portrayal of People with Intellectual Disabilities

A study by Dr. Carol J. Pardun at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The study specifically, examined 38 television programs (1,153 scenes) from 1995-2004 in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles. The study determined that over time media depictions of persons with intellectual disabilities focused more often on pity than on strength and achievements. Specifically, the research found in film and television, Super hero portrayals, showing stories of great achievement despite obstacles, declined significantly, particularly from the 1990s onward. Portrayals designed to elicit pity increased significantly, with the largest increases in recent years. Victim portrayals significantly increased in 2000–2004. Vulnerable depictions increased onward, while the portrayal of unrealistically heroic types has declined, which is consistent with portraying people with intellectual disabilities more realistically, their increasing portrayal as vulnerable, pitiable and as victims demonstrates that progress overall is not being made. Despite greater scientific knowledge, policy and societal changes, and the establishment of high-profile events such as the Special Olympics World Games, media accounts have continued to portray persons with disabilities in stereotypical, one-dimensional ways.

The Methodology

The Research Design

The research design adopted was the content analysis, which is the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest contents of a communication item either in print or electronic medium. Akpan (1990, p. 306) indicates “for anybody to use the content analysis technique, the rules of objectivity, systematic and generality must be obeyed”. This means ensuring that the distinctions in categorization of the contents devoid of influence and the possibility of attributing the results to theoretical relevance are strictly allowed.

Population

The population of the work was the total number of 10 news items at 3 times bulletins per day at 6am, 1pm and 8pm aired by the Akwa Ibom Broadcasting service of the television from January 2015 to June 2015. This resulted to 30 news items aired per day at 181 days of January 2015 to June 2015 at 3 times news bulletin amounting to 5430 news items in 181 days of January 1, 2015 to June 30, 2015. Therefore a total of 5430 news items were seen as the population.

Sample and sampling Technique

The population was reduced to a manageable number in a sample derived from Obasi (2013, p. 99) quoting Boll and Gall (1971), suggesting the use of 10 percent for a population of up to and above 5000. Hence, 10 percent of 5430 news items amounted to 543 news items were picked. For equal representation of days, counting from the 1st of January 2015, the 10th day news bulletin was picked making a total of 18 days with 10 news items to give 181 news items for cross checking to find news about the disabled persons.

Units of Analysis/Categorization

The units of analyzing the news and programmes of AKBC television are, main news, detail news. The categorization was based on the specific, General and unspecific news programmes concerning the physically challenged groups in Akwa Ibom state.

Validity and Reliability

For the purpose of reliability, one controller of news was assigned to cross check the selected items by the researcher. In the selection of the 181 news items, the two coders agreed on 135 items separately multiplied by two to arrive at 270 items to have 0.75 percent minimum reliability co-efficiency as Hamilton (2003, p. 5) postulated in the Accuracy rate test of reliability.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was analyzed by selecting out the high Specific, General and non specific news about the disabled persons. News Bulletins were categorized on the basis of Main news, breaking news, Detail news.

Table 1: News Categorization

News categories	Politics	Business	Social	Sports	Total	Percentage
Headline	4	12	5	3	24	13.26
Breaking	-	-	-	-	-	-
Detail news	20	41	90	6	157	86.74
Total	24	53	95	9	181	100

In table 1 showing the categorization of news, Headline news about the disabled was 24 or 13.26%, Breaking news nil, detail news 157 or 86.74%.

Table 2: Prominence of News Stories about the Disable

Types	Headline	Breaking	Detail news	Total	Percentage
Politics	4	-	20	24	13.26
Business	12	-	41	53	29.28
Social	5	-	90	95	52.49
Sports	3	-	6	9	4.97
Total	24	-	157	181	100

In table 2 showing the prominence of news given to the disabled, it indicated that politics was rated at 24 or 13.26%, Business news 53 or 29.28%, social 95 or 52.49% while sports news was rated 9 or 4.97%

Table 3: Frequency of News about the Disable Persons

Frequency	Politics	Business	Social	Sports	Total	%
Daily	2	25	38	--	65	35.92
Weekly	12	19	12	-	43	23.76
Bi weekly	8	9	45	9	71	39.22
Monthly	2	-	-	-	2	1.10
Bimonthly	-					
Total	24	53	95	9	181	100

Table 3 shows the frequency given to news about the disabled persons as follows, Daily 65 or 35.92%, weekly 43 or 23.76%, biweekly 71 or 39.22 and monthly 2 or 1.10%.

Answers to the Research questions

Question 1: Which news category is outstandingly aired by the AKBC about the physically challenged to enhance development?

1. In response to this question reference is on table 1 with three categories of news, namely, the Headline news, the breaking news and the detail news. In each of the three categories, news about the disabled or the physically challenged was seen in the type of politics news, business news and social news and sports news. The AKBC television gave the disabled persons 24 news on politics, 53 business news, 95 on social news and 9 on sports. In all these, Headline news attracted 24 or 13.6%, detail news had 157 or 86.74%. This shows that the station did not give the disabled total blanket from news presentations, conscious of its role for enlightenment on issues of development. This supports Eastman and Ferguson,(2006, p.45) that “.the broadcast of news is an activity, in which practically every broadcasting organization engages. News operations range from large scale undertakings involving news editors, film crews and special reporters. Because of the great audience for news and the public faith in the reliability of broadcast news, it is essential that news broadcasters have a full sense of responsibility and are intellectually equipped professionals. News is very important to everybody because it keeps people informed as to what is happening in their community and other communities. News satisfies people’s curiosity and concern and it provides basic facts, which enable people to make up their minds and so join the general discussion that leads to community discussion.”

Is the physically challenged granted prominence in news presentation of the AKBC, television service?

The answer to this question is derived from Table 2 showing the prominence given to stories about the physically challenged or the disabled persons. The table indicated that politics had 24 or 13.26%, Business news had 53 or 29.28%, social news had 95 or 52.49%, and 9 or 4.97%. This is an indication that prominence of the disabled persons in news was given to social news at 52.49% beyond economic news at 29.28%. the social news items were merely those news from donations given to the physically challenged rather than on their economic upliftment which has the yardsticks of development beyond social issues. The study agreed with the study of Pardun(2004,p.23) positing the “portrayals of the physically challenged are designed to elicit pity in recent years. Disabled persons portrayals significantly increased in 2000–2004 as vulnerable depictions increased onward, while the portrayal of unrealistically heroic types declined, which is consistent with portraying people with disabilities”. More realistically, their increasing portrayal as vulnerable, pitiable and as victims demonstrate that progress overall is not being made. The non prominence of economic stories about the disabled is an indication that development in the rural areas remains poor in rural communities.

What is the frequency of reportage given to the physically challenged groups in the news presentation of the AKBC, television service?

In the frequency of stories given to the disabled in 181 days, 65 or 53% of stories were done on a daily basis, in 25 weeks of the 181 days 43 or 23.76% news were recorded, while in the six months 73 or 40.32% news were recorded. This shows that the frequency at which stories about the physically challenged was low at 40.32%. This shows that the AKBC did not do more stories about people in the rural communities where the disabled persons are found more. It supports Katz and Weddel (1978, p.83) position that” the government owned television suffer partly from the inability of promoting disabilities in communities government since it is totally owned and run by government.. Added to this,a fundamental problem arises from the inability of the managers to innovate, create or adapt models of coverage to suit their society but surrendering their responsibilities under the cover of government control”. In sum, it means that television service under its present state has largely failed because in spite of these demands, it has not addressed itself to the intrinsically basic problems of rural communities.

Conclusion

For development to be seen in rural communities, including that of Akwa Ibom State, it is expected that all class of persons are integrated in the news programmes of media institutions especially the television, by ensuring that negative attitudes about people with disabilities change. It is the negative attitude of people including the television mangers that lead to the social exclusion and marginalization of people with disabilities.

To raise awareness about the disabled persons, rights, potentials and development issues from that class of persons must be made known to government and society at large. To reduce discrimination against persons with disabilities based on archaic beliefs and customs, adequate coverage on issues affecting persons with disabilities must be intensified. This is where television becomes significant. Like other people without disabilities pride come to limelight in the communities, It is also important for people with disabilities to be proudly made visible in the communities. People with disabilities have to be seen from the angle of the media as full citizens with respect. Using bold images and strong words, disability pride awareness dates, parades, and festivals can lift challenges. Positive thinking and positive attitudes will help people with disabilities achieve real goals. The pride of the disabled through the media can come from celebrating their heritage, culture, the unique experiences, and contributions to society. King(2004, p. 45) states, "as long as people with disabilities remain ashamed of themselves, development will never be realized as they require true equality and freedom The media (television) must first take pride in covering communities no matter the class of people".

This is what Tayo (2002, p. 45) posts, "there is a tremendous need to create a counter-culture that teaches new values and beliefs, and acknowledges the dignity and worth of all human beings. Disability pride through media promotion is a direct response to this need."

Recommendations

Television operators have

- To design and promote news programme raising awareness to change public attitude towards persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of the lopsided portrayal of persons with disabilities as object of pity and public sympathy
- Ensure that persons with disabilities have access to mass media especially those with sensory loss.
- Develop programmes of social mobilization and awareness to abolish practices that encouraged discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- Promote partnerships with government, the independent press and alternative media practitioners at community level on issues concerning persons with disabilities.
- Increasing the percentage of disabled people in employment within the media industry as a step towards removing stereotypes and empowering disabled people in the general community.
- Use positive language and images by focusing on the disabled people, rather than just the impairments to improve both the public image and the self-image of disabled people.

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