

Online Media's Role in Public Health Information and Communication Sharing in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

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Abstract: *The effects of health communication interventions are to reach a large number of individuals and communities, as Rogers and Storey, (1987) stated that these are possible within a specified period of time and through an organized set of communication activities. Hence, to promote vaccination and its well-being through health communication campaigns, as in the United States it requires efforts to inform the public about infectious diseases and the benefits of immunization (Paisley, 2001). Nowadays, health communication campaigns and interventions have used a variety of ways to send healthcare messages. However, the role and effectiveness of health communication has been discussed recently without information and communication technologies (ICTs) in improving health systems and healthcare services, particular in the developing countries, including Cote d'Ivoire. The hospitals in Cote d'Ivoire were lacking proper medical infrastructures, or they had outdated equipment. This has revealed the vulnerability of a few healthcare issues, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. as they are quite widespread among the population.*

Index Terms: *Keywords: Public Healthcare, e-health, Health Information, Online Media Coverage, Health Campaigns.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The conventional medical approaches alone cannot address the concerns of everyone; without the implementation of health communication intervention in the health systems, which is the interconnection between health care providers and the patients. Therefore, this project examines the role of online newspapers, which report on public healthcare promotion and health information sharing among the people of Cote d'Ivoire, where the patients will access health information and faster delivery services in the healthcare system. Moreover, the exchanges will positively result in enhancing the interconnection and sharing of information between health providers and the people (Windover et al., 2014). The health communication can also help people adopt positive healthcare attitude, and it creates demand for preventive and curative services. Much of the growth in this field was stimulated by the AIDS epidemic starting in 1985 when there was no antiretroviral treatment, and the only tool for prevention was social change (Goldstein, MacDonald, & Guirguis, 2015). The media

coverage in the healthcare promotion could determine the health information message as a tool for prevention and awareness. As (Cooper, Gelb, & Chu, 2015) argued that public TVs were widely used to disseminate health promotion messages in the United States, such as HIV/AIDS, drugs abuse, dengue and many more.

As reported by (Kéi, 2016) that the National Program for Mother and Child Health (see Figure 1), under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Health and the fight against Aids, launched the awareness campaign on maternal health-child. The "basket of life or survival". Therefore, that will be a matter for health workers to make people aware of essential family-friendly and health-promoting practices. They will also take care of children aged 0 to 5 years, adolescents, pregnant women and mothers. These, through a vaccination operation, free distribution of drug and impregnated mosquito nets. A total of 26 health districts in the country will be affected by this outreach operation supported by UNICEF and several other national and international programs. The first stage will focus only on 12 districts in Cote d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire, out of 10,000 women who give birth, 614 lose their lives. And out of 1000 births, at least, 38 children do not reach the age of 5 years. And out of 1000 children over 5 years, at least 108 of them do not reach adolescence. These losses can be avoided if there is an awareness campaign.

Fig. 1: Mother –Child Health: Awareness Week

A. Media Intervention

The media intervention plays important roles, including influencing public healthcare awareness and health message sharing and delivering care. (Suggs, McIntyre, Warburton, Henderson, & Howitt, 2015) pointed that the media play a critical role in how people



receive messages about health. However, practices are characterized by norms that sometimes hinder the delivery of comprehensive, accurate and relevant messages to news consumers. The media often also reduce complex issues to 'sound bites'. Health messengers throughout the world also are contended with a politicized and commercialized media that select and/or adapt messages in line with the political views of their owners. In some cases, the coverage peaked around certain dates or events, such as the World Health Day, and launch of a programme by the government, and few items covered had people perspective towards better issues (Abdoulaye, 2017) We argue that, the contributions of online or offline media and its roles are significant to health information sharing and public healthcare awareness.

B. Research Objectives

1. To examine online newspapers' coverage of public health issues and the impact on the people of Cote d'Ivoire
2. To explain the theory's constructs.
3. To develop health communication and information sharing framework and media intervention strategy
4. To evaluate the role and contributions of online newspapers to public healthcare and information sharing to the people of Cote d'Ivoire.

C. Research Questions

The online newspapers play a role in the coverage of health communication and information sharing. Therefore, the paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the implementation of health communication assist the people of Cote d'Ivoire in the healthcare services concern?
2. What is the impact of media intervention on the healthcare information sharing to the people of Cote d'Ivoire?
3. How does online newspaper coverage assist for health information message as a tool for dissemination of

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Media Role and Public Issues

In defining media framing as a process that influences a target audience to act, think and feel a particular way by raising the certain ideas and promoting conformity in public thought (Watimin, 2017). The previous study about mass media of social and public issues, such as social movements, media provide social movements an opportunity to shape public "collective minds" about specific political or social problems (M. G. a. H. Zanuddin, 2017). The media plays an important role because public depends on media especially during emergency to get an immediate and updated information. During crisis, portrayal of news reporting can provide crisis managers with useful information about the appropriate information and relevant crisis response strategies to be sent to the public in order to minimize the damage to an organization's image (M. A. a. H. Zanuddin, 2017), therefore, (Ambikapathy, 2017) reviewed that "media are powerful because media have the potential to shape and influence the public's opinion and behavior".

B. Landscape of media and information sharing

The studies of mass media coverage, that the media plays a crucial role in communicating the information to the public, especially to get immediate and updated information. For instance, during crisis (M. A. a. H. Zanuddin, 2017), the majority of news that are covered by newspaper are either conflict or crisis news (Conley and Lamb, 2006). Every day, crisis news appears in all types of newspapers. In addition the climate change and print newspaper coverage (C. J. R. a. H. Zanuddin, 2017). In terms of technology and mass media as (Watimin, 2017) reviewed that "New media technology promotes individuals to become sources of information by sharing their opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with other". In addition, the development of today's communication technology raises the information society or the interactive communication era (Mudjirin, 2017, May 1-2). However, the existence of communication technology does not mean also it does not cause other problems. However, the gap that as an inequality of access to the Internet because access to the Internet is a requirement to eliminate inequality in society (A. C. M. a. H. Zanuddin, 2017). On the other hand, the development of social media usage as an effective channel for information dissemination, on the other hand, it can also be misused to spread inaccurate information (Watimin, 2017). The social medial platforms has revealed the gap in the strategic management of the government of the countries as well as the most crucial venue used by the young people in the contemporary environment (Alyousef, 2017). Therefore, media in all its forms, could be paramount in any communication as a system of shared idea, values and social information and awareness (Ganjian, 2017). Media plays a crucial role in communicating the information to the public while this paper about online Newspaper coverage. In this study, the roles of the media are to enable health communication to shape the way people act and react towards health message and information. This is in line with (Asaolu, Ifijeh, Iwu-James, & Odaro, 2016) that the media helped to create awareness and to mobilize members of the public to cooperate with health authorities in the fight against an epidemic.

C. Media overview in Cote d'Ivoire

In the Cote d'Ivoire context; the government operates the outlets with the widest outreach: radio and TV stations as well as the leading daily newspaper (NEWS, 2016), while the radio is the most widespread and prominent system of media in Cote d'Ivoire, for selected news bulletins, public service announcements and advertisement. They reach the maximum number of people in the interior of the country. According to (Infoasaid, 2011) that the state broadcasting corporation Radio Television Ivoirienne (RTI) still relied on satellite broadcasts to reach the audiences. When it comes to print media, it is pointed out that Côte d'Ivoire has the potential to be a major regional media market. On the other hand, the high production costs and low household discretionary spending have limited growth. However, the migration to digital TV and planned liberalization should stimulate competition and spur investment in that side of the market (Group,

2015).

There is a focus on the online media and newspaper, as the government of Cote d'Ivoire is keen to develop regulations to govern the online press; however, several newspapers have their own news websites. The state broadcaster Radio Television Ivoirienne (RTI) also normally carries news on its website (Infoasaid, 2011). However, the Ivoirian media has limited logistical capacity, as Oxford Business (NEWS, 2016) stressed that the market for online media remains limited due to the low rate of the Internet penetration. Nonetheless, many newspapers and radio stations maintain an online presence. The largest outlet in terms of visitors for web media is Abidjan.net, which receives on average about 1m visits per week. The portal also serves as a point of sale for 30 newspapers and periodicals, processing online payments. The statistics of usage and access to online news and information in the urban area, according to the (Freedom, 2015) is nearly 15 percent of the population that accessed the Internet in 2014, and literate Ivoirians are increasingly turning to the media. While in terms of news coverage, online newspapers such as the Abidjan.net are challenging the newspapers. In addition, there were just over 5 million Internet users by 2016 (via Internetlivestats.com). According to the (NEWS, 2016) that Facebook was the most popular social network used in the country.

In terms of human recourse in the public healthcare, the Abidjan.net, news coverage (Voie, 2016) pointed out that there was a lack of health workers to provide quality care to the population in Cote D'Ivoire. Hence, the national institute of training for the health workers is in the process to employ 662 of health workers. It is therefore in need of this number of health workers to be recruited by the health authorities urgently for a quality training that meets international standards. This complementary session will improve the population-to-health ratio. Figure 2 illustrates the workforces in the public healthcare.



Fig. 2: Public Health – Reinforcement Agent

The study argues that the media intervention and the online news coverage related to health promotion campaigns play and/or contribute to the health communication and information sharing. Photo.3 shows the health message for fighting against informal pharmacy, as it mentioned that “Medicine on the streets is death on the street” and “do not buy medicine on the street go to the pharmacy”.



Fig. 3: Health Promotion and Awareness

D. Hypothesis

H1. The media intervention and online newspaper related to health promotion played and/or contribute to health communication and information sharing.

H2. Accessibility to the online health information has provided a new source of health knowledge for people.

H3. The media coverage positively supports the public health promotion to the people and the development of information sharing.

H4. The communication media positively influence people of Cote d'Ivoire, for the Public service announcements and advertisements.

E. E-healthcare development

To examine healthcare service delivery through a variety of health information, it is reported that the e-health, at present, stands at 80% of the African countries, and it is believed to be using telemedicine or m-health, although the majority of these projects are still in their infancy (AfDB, 2013). Since 2009, the government in Cote d'Ivoire has initiated a plan for the development of the e-health with a view to guarantee people's access to quality, effective, safe and economical health care (Abidjan.net, 2011). Moreover, the national health development plan has created a quality health system to guarantee the best possible level of health for the citizens in Cote d'Ivoire. Some studies by IDAL (2015) that according to (de Morais & Stückelberger, 2014) that in Cote d'Ivoire, the number of mobile phones surpasses that of fixed lines, e-Health and m-Health seem to be a favorable network for medical communication and healthcare. However, only a few applications are available at the moment. One of the most successful is the Duty Chemist application, launched by Orange Healthcare, which identifies the closest pharmacies to patients via mobile. We argue that, the availability of online health information has provided a new source of health awareness for people; therefore, the use of e-health will contribute to the goals of prevention, promotion and protection in healthcare-enhancing strategies (De Rosis & Barsanti, 2016).

However, implementation of health information, such as e-health has not been seen yet in the field of health communication. This means that the health information system level in Cote d'Ivoire is still in its infancy. According to (Cisse, 2011) that despite the increase in recent years in the expenditure to invest in healthcare, the evolution of the indicators of health coverage



in the country is not satisfactory, with reference to the PNDS targets.

F. Theoretical Framework

The paper presents the theoretical framework information sharing, to explain health related information issue, which could enable health workers, patients and people in Cote d'Ivoire to interact through health communication system. The information sharing is defined as "the personal, cognitive and social skills which determine the ability of individuals to gain access to, understand, and use information to promote and maintain good health" (Fairbrother, Curtis, and Goyder, 2016). And (Dooley, Jones, and Iverson, 2013) cited that to support the healthcare through the flow of communication and horizontal sharing of information, social marketers and health promoters have to use established communication channels, such as television, radio, and newspapers, to reach target audiences and to promote health-related issue. Therefore, information obtained from these sources can be for the public good, and it can be widely shared. The media, can indeed construct images, ideas and identity in the minds of the audiences (Ganjian and Zanuddin, 2017). Over a period of times a collective view of images postulates images of brands and identity (Zanuddin and Mukhtar, 2017).

The focus is placed on the health information sharing through online health communication, and the community as consumers of health information use ICTs to disseminate, obtain and share health information to promote self-care practices (Nor, Chapun, and Wah, 2013). This enables the organization and health providers to communicate healthcare services to the patients and people of Cote d'Ivoire, at multiple locations such as clinics, hospitals, with value added service providers and medical devices. For example, research and clinical data is maintained by separate entities and there is limited sharing of this data (Vargheese and Prabhudesai, 2014). However, the key challenges that needed to be addressed in this article include the limited access to online newspaper information about health information and enabling policy. We suggest that, improving access to and having equity within the health systems will require multispectral interventions to play in assisting to build the capacity of the national health systems.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

Content media research methodology has been used widely by researchers (AlYousef, Almahallawi, Watimin, Ambikapaty, Cheong, and Zanuddin, 2017). In the context of development of social media usage, content analysis approach was appropriate (Watimin, 2017) and the author views that the content analysis corresponds to the objectives pursued by any social research as it provides an opportunity to conduct objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content, in line with (Almahallawi, 2017) using quantitative content analysis for the data collection, which contained online news articles related to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This paper uses quantitative technique content analysis from the online newspapers, namely the Abidjan.net, in relation to the coverage of healthcare

awareness and health information, which took place from 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016 about (HIV/AIDS, Yellow Fever, Dengue and Malaria and many others). An initial set of the total of 81 news articles was examined and content analyzed. The online newspaper was then translated from French into English. Descriptive and non-parametric statistical analysis test were employed for this research.



Fig.4: Logo of online newspaper: Abidjan.net

B. Reliability and Validity

Inter-coder reliability was deployed to test the validity and reliability of the content analysis instrument, a method of summarizing the substance of a set of mediated messages (Freedom, 2015). The Holsti reliability test revealed .86 (86%), which showed strong reliable of the coding instrument. Therefore, the testing of inter-coder reliability was calculated using Holsti Test Format as follow:

$$\frac{2M}{N1 + N2} = \frac{2 \times 195}{450} = \mathbf{0.86 = 86\%}$$

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results show that the largest outlet web media is the Abidjan.net for Ivorian and the region. Therefore, the health information covered various issues including public health campaign and awareness, which could result in reducing many of the sicknesses. They gave considerable health information to the people of Cote d'Ivoire. In terms of frequency and percentage of news article publication, the total of 81 online news articles was collected.

The frequency of the online news articles coverage was on a monthly basis. The result shows that from 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016, the month of December achieved the highest distribution of news article coverage related to health information, which was 13.6% of the news articles, followed by January and August of 11.1% of news articles respectively. Therefore, more health information related to public health issues was covered by the media.



Table I: Online news articles coverage according to month

Year 2016		
Months	Frequency	Percentage (%)
January	9	11.
February	8	9.9
March	7	8.6
April	6	7.4
May	4	4.9
June	5	6.2
July	8	9.9
August	9	11.1
September	5	6.2
October	4	4.9
November	6	7.4
December	11	13.6
Total	81	100

As Tables II, III and IV are related to health conditions coverage. The news coverage revealed the vulnerability of a few contagious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. Tuberculosis and malaria were reported to be quite widespread among the local population. There is a strong indicator in the Budd score in Table II, where four main variables are featured in the front page, and it sent the message to the public that health issues are important issues.

Table II: Online newspaper prominence (Budd's attention score)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Headline reflects healthcare	20	24.7
Headline reflects public awareness	19	23.5
Article reflects health promotion	18	22.2
Article reflects public awareness	24	29.6
Total	81	100

Table III reflected the various ways for the public to take action after reading the news and/or the articles that are helpful in how-to-get information on health issues, featured public services announcement and coverage on the communication campaign which is important to the people of Ivory Coast. Most news featured mentioned on how-to-get information so that the public is aware of their health related issues, and to know what to do next, and whom to consult.

Table III: Cue to Action

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How-to information	27	33.3
Public services announcement	28	34.6
A communication campaign	26	32.1
Total	81	100

The public health programs were also given coverage such as awareness messages, health policy of the Ivory Coast and health promotion for the people (Table IV). Awareness messages in the news consisted of 34.6 per cent within the public health programs that were given coverage by the

online newspaper, the Abidjan.net. Health policy contributed to 32.1 per cent and health promotion constituted 33.3 per cent of the total coverage within the public health programs factor.

Table IV: Public health programmes

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Awareness message	28	34.6
Health policy	26	32.1
Health promotion	27	33.3
Total	81	100

There is a significant association between Cue to Action and the main actors as the source for the news, chi-square $\chi^2 = 14.463$, $df = 1$, $sig. = 0.05$. The source of information played a significant role in cue to action for the Ivory Coast public. This hypothesis showed a significant association between the two variables. Most participants were local government health officers, NGOs and political leaders of the Ivory Coast (Table V).

Table V: Chi-Square test for Cue to Action and Main actors

Variables	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Chi-Square	14.463 ^a	1	34.6

Table VI: People view and public healthcare programme

Variables	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.785 ^a	1	.029

The opinions of local people towards the public healthcare programs and services were also featured in the Abidjan.net news. Ivorian people were interviewed in the news and the opinions, thoughts, and attitudes were recorded. Hence, there is a significant association between the healthcare service and perceptions of the people, where they wanted improvement in many areas of services (Table VI). Chi square value, $\chi^2 = 4.785$, $df = 1$, $sig. = 0.05$ is significant between Ivory Coast public view and the public healthcare programs.

Overall, the public health care issues were major concerns by the news coverage of the Abidjan.net. Even though health care is available for free for Ivoirians, poor quality prevailed in many aspects. The hospitals in Cote d'Ivoire were lack of infrastructures and modern equipment. In addition, the ambulance services were quite limited. Finally, medication stocks were reported to be insufficient, or even unavailable. On the other hand, the issue of accessing health information in the wake of e-healthcare services initiatives; as in the Cote d'Ivoire, which could enhance health services and provide people the access to healthcare in their daily lives.

V. CONCLUSION

Access to information technology, is agreeably a solution for most social issues such as health information. It reduces time and space barriers to remote health care; as in the context of the Cote d'Ivoire. It enhances health services, facilitates efforts and creates access to healthcare. It can, for instance, help health workers use the Internet to deliver faster services to the people, and interconnect between the public and health practitioners.

Various health policies and national health development have set the goal of creating a quality health system that guarantees healthcare for all citizens, however, the healthcare situation in Côte d'Ivoire described above; required efforts to scale up the impacts of such interventions. We suggest that, improving access to and having equity within the health systems. This will demand multispectral interventions that engage the national government to play a role in assisting to build the capacity of the national health systems. The media intervention and coverage could direct health policymakers' attention to the health issue and to share the information with the people for their health awareness. Thus, this study contributes to health communication implementation and media intervention gap in the public health service in Cote d'Ivoire. In addition, it also creates easy access to the global medical research databases.

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