



Challenges of Health Promotion in the Contemporary Nigerian Society

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to expose the challenges of health promotion in the contemporary Nigeria society. In doing this, the paper explained the concept of health, explored anatomy of health promotion, justified the relevance of health in a society, explored the impact of health promotion in Nigeria by using some current statistics of some health indicators, and then identified some major challenges of health promotion in Nigeria. Based on the revelations in the paper recommendation was made that corruption should be tackled in the Nigerian polity for health promotion programme to have satisfactory impact in Nigerian society. This position was informed by the fact that corruption has a way of affecting every other sub-systems in any society.

Key words: Health, Health promotion, Health in Society, Challenges

Introduction

Health, to these authors, is the greatest asset of an individual and, of course, a nation. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce. The health status of an individual, to a great extent, defines the soundness and quality of his life. A totally healthy person is sound in mind as well as in body and hence the saying that a sound mind should reside in a sound body. It is when this state is achieved that an individual is optimally disposed for optimal productivity.

Every society needs people who are sound both in mind and body to drive development. There is no doubt then that every country puts various machineries in place to ensure optimal health of the citizenry. One of the actions adopted by many countries (Nigeria inclusive) is engagement in health promotion activities. In the light of the critical role of health promotion programmes and activities in the total health and development of the individuals, and society generally, these authors decided to explore challenges of health promotion in the contemporary Nigerian society. The paper explores the concept of health, anatomy of health promotion, relevance of health in a society, impact of health promotion on Nigerian society, and challenges of health promotion in Nigeria. Conclusions were drawn and recommendation made on the way forward.

Concept of Health

Health had been variously defined and described by both individuals and organizations. Without proliferating definitions here, the authors adopt the definition in the Medical dictionary (2016) as appropriate and comprehensive enough for the purpose of this paper. Here, health is described as a relative state in which one is able to function well physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually in order to express the full range of one's unique potentials within the environment in which one is living. A deep look into the above definition will reveal the following:

- Health is a state
- State of health is relative to both the individual and the society
- Health, as a state or condition, is in constant flux
- Health of a person reflects the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual conditions of the person

- Health status of an individual is related to the extent an individual could actualize his unique potentials
- Health is essential for optimal functioning of a person
- The environment where one finds oneself impacts on one's health just as the state of health of an individual impacts on the environment (society)
- A nation where the state of health of the citizenry is poor could hardly achieve satisfactory development indices.

eBay (2009) characterized a healthy person as exhibiting positive dispositions to himself, others, and the society where he lives. It is only when the individuals that make up a collectivity or society are positively disposed that success, progress and development are better guaranteed. Lannock and Ehrenpris (2018) described good health as corner stone of development. Since health promotion is a sure way to achieve good health individuals, nations, and international groups and organizations invest so much in it.

Anatomy of Health Promotion

Health promotion is one of the evidence-based approaches to improve the health of individuals (and the society) Umeakuka (2017). It enhances the quality of life of the people. Severally definitions of health promotion abound in literature. Few relevant ones are presented in this paper.

Health promotion is the development of individual, group, institutional, community and systemic strategies to improve health knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours (University of Georgia College of Public Health, (undated). According to Green (1997) health promotion is any combination of health education and related organizational, economic, and political interventions designed to facilitate behavioural and environmental changes conducive to health. By implication, therefore, health education is a tool of health promotion. In another development Umeakuka (2018) tried to capture the meaning, scope and essence of health promotion in the following descriptive statements:

- Health promotion is a process – it involves series of actions to achieve health targets.
- Health promotion is aimed at helping people to have control over their health.
- Health promotion involves combination of interventions.
- Health promotion is also concerned about the environment.
- Health promotion is interested in getting people to make rational choices about their health.
- Health promotion involves provision of information and education to the people.
- Health promotion is concerned with promotion of healthy ideas and concepts to improve health.
- Health promotion is affected by political, social, economic and other sub-systems in a society and vice versa.

Presentation of components of health promotion programme by Semmelweis (2014), perhaps, will go a long way in facilitating conceptualization of health promotion and appreciation of its framework.

Components of Health Promotion Programme



Sources: semmelweis.hu/fills/2014/12/1415...

From the above presentation health promotion experiences and actions can simply be dichotomized into health education and environmental actions. Health promotion programmes need to adequately cover these in order to ensure achievement of the programme goals.

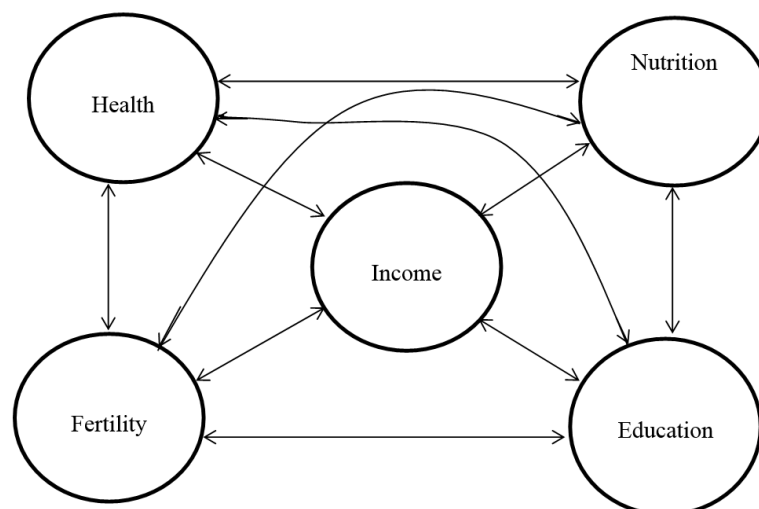
The Ottawa charter for health promotion of 1986 identified five priority areas which WHO described as pillars of health promotion. They are:

- Building a healthy public policy
- Creating a supportive environment
- Strengthening community action
- Developing personal skills
- Re-orienting health services

Health promotion by its nature and structure, draws strength from many disciplines. Hence University of Georgia College of Public Health described it as a behavioral social science that draws from biological, environmental, psychological, physical and mental sciences to promote health and prevent diseases, disability and premature death through education-driven voluntary behavior change activities. In other words health promotion is a multi-disciplinary field of study that requires multi-pronged approach.

Relevance of Health in Society

The question as to the relevance of health in a society, to these authors, need to be answered. Perhaps the answers will justify the huge efforts by people all over the world in improving the health of people. Collins (2005) noted that there is a well understood correlation that as the economy of a country improves, so the health of its citizens and that improving the health of a nation's citizens can directly result in economic growth because there will be more people able to conduct effective activities in the workforce. WHO (2018a) observed the better health is central to human happiness and well-being. Also health makes important contribution to economic progress as a healthy population live longer, are more productive and save more. The labour-productivity hypothesis asserts that individuals who are healthier have higher return on labour output. Grosse and Harkary (undated) adopted Barlow's 1977 model of health and development to show the relationship between health and income. The model is hereby presented.



Barlow's general model of health and development

The model above, no doubt, shows a complex web of relationships. As explained by Grosse and Harkary (undated) the model has five interacting variables: income, education, nutrition, health and fertility. The five variables are linked in 20 ways (count the arrow points). According to them, if for example some external factors cause improvement in health, the effect on income will be the sum of direct effect and the indirect effects arising from the fact that changes in health affects nutrition, education and fertility. The conclusion drawn here and also documented in literature is that there are a variety of such plausible speculations as to the beneficial effects of improved level of health on productivity. It is also concluded that health is an essential component of development both as input and as a goal.

Impact of health promotion on Nigerian Society

Health promotion has been an internal part of interventions to improve the health status of Nigerians and the Nigerian nation. It is expected that health promotion activities in the country should have impacted substantially on the general health of the citizenry be it in such settings as schools, families, hospitals, industries, communities and the organizations. Impacts of effective health promotion activities are expected to reflect in the various health indicators. Perhaps a look at the status of some of the health indicators as represented statistically will reveal the impact of health promotion activities in Nigeria.

Health indicators are the generally accepted parameters for assessing the state of health of a nation. Indicators (also termed indices or variables) help to measure the extent to which the objectives and targets of a programme are being attained (Slideshare platforms) and in this context the health promotion programmes in Nigeria. Wikipedia platform categorized the indicators as mortality indicators, morbidity indicators, health status indicators, nutritional indicators, social and mental health indicators, health system indicators, disability indicators, and health determinants. Five specific indicators are selected from the categories above to show the Status and the impact of health promotion activities in the country. They are life expectancy, infant mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, depression statistics, and corruption status.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy refers to the number of years a person is expected to live based on the statistical average and this varies from geographical area and by era (Ananya, 2018). In this 2018 WHO reported average global life expectancy for males to be 70years and 74 years for females and the average for Nigeria as 55.19 years. In any case the figure for Nigeria will better bring out the picture when the figures for other countries in the Africa are revealed. It will show the relative standing of Nigeria in the committee of some African countries for 2018.

Table 1: Life Expectancy of some African Countries and their world ranking

Country	Life expectancy	World ranking
1. Mauritius.	75.82.	82
2. Rwanda.	68.04.	129
3. Senegal.	66.77.	131
4. Kenya.	66.68.	132
5. Ethiopia.	65.51.	144
6. Congo.	64.30.	145
7. South Africa.	63.66.	153
8. Ghana.	63.45.	155
9. Togo.	60.61.	164
10. Cameroon	58.06.	174
11. Nigeria	55.19.	178*

Source: WHO (2018).world life expectancy.com Retrieved 7 Oct 2018

From the table above one can conclude that health promotion interventions in Nigeria are not impacting enough on the life expectancy indices of the citizenry. Also, most African countries are fairing better than Nigeria on the life expectancy index.

Infant mortality rate in Nigeria

Infant mortality rate refers to the number of infants who die before reaching age of one per 1000 life births in a given year. In relation to Nigeria UNICEF (2018) ranked Nigeria 11th position on newborn deaths globally for 2017 and Nigeria also posted 69.8 deaths/1000 life births in the same year. According to UNICEF the average global mortality rate was 29 deaths per 1000 life births for the same 2017. UNICEF also noted that eight of the 10 most dangerous places to be born are in sub-saharan Africa (Nigeria is there) where pregnant women are much less likely to receive assistance during delivery due to poverty, conflicts, and weak institutions. Again let us take a look at the relative standing of Nigeria in the committee of other African countries.



Table 2: infant mortality rates- Africa- 2017

Country	Deaths/1000 life births 2017
1. Somali.	95
2. Chad	85
3. Bokinafaso	72
4. Nigeria	68.8 (approx 70) *
5. Zambia.	65
6. Uganda.	56
7. Liberia	52
8. Ethiopia	50
9. Senegal.	45
10. Kenya.	37
11. South Africa	31
12. Morocco.	22
13. Liberia.	11

Source: CIA Fact-book 2017

Figures in table 2 above show that most countries in Africa have lower infant mortality rates than Nigeria. This revelation is below expectation.

Maternal Mortality rate

Maternal mortality rate refer to the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 life births.

Table 3: maternal mortality rates for some African countries 2017

Country	Death per 100,000 life births
1. Sierra Leon.	1360
2. Central Africa republic	882
3. Chad.	856
4. Nigeria	814*
5. South Sudan	789
6. Somalia.	732
7. Liberia.	725
6. Burundi.	712
7. Gambia.	706
8. DR. Congo	690

Source: Worldatlas published 25 April 2017

Table 3 above shows that Nigeria "the giant of Africa" has not achieved an impressive index even among the Africa countries as the maternal mortality rate is higher than the index posted by-mist of the smaller and poorer countries in the continent.

Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that cause a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest and it affects how one feels, thinks, and behaves and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems (Mayo Clinic, 2018). According to WHO (2018b), depression is a common mental disorder and that 300 million people globally are depressed. In addition, WHO noted that women are more depressed than men and that depression could lead to suicide. Muanya and Onyedika-Ugoeze (2017) quoted WHO to have declared that Nigerians are the most depressed people in Africa - that from among the happiest on earth, Nigerians slumped to the rank of the most depressed people in Africa. This finding by WHO is not surprising because there is hopelessness everywhere in Nigeria today especially for the youths, the extreme poor, the aged, the internally displaced and the masses in general.

Table 4: Depression statistics in Africa 2017

Country	Number suffering Depression	% of population
1. Nigeria.	7,069,815.	3.9
2. Ethiopia.	4,480,113.	4.7
3. DR. Congo.	2,871,309.	3.8
4. South Africa	2,402,230.	4.6
5. Tanzania.	2,138,939.	4.1
6. Seychelles	3,722.	4.0

Source: The guardian online 7th April 2017

Seven million+ depressed people in any country is quite a significant number and holds grave consequences for the citizenry and the entire country.

Corruption in Health facilities in Nigeria

Transparency International, as reported by Onwujekwe, Odii, Mbachu, Hutchinson, Ichoku, Ogbosor, Agwu, and Obi (2018) noted as follows:

- Countries plagued by corruption can attest to the fact that once it becomes entrenched (as in Nigeria), it can be found in all the sectors of the economy (Health sector inclusive).
- In low and middle income countries (like Nigeria) the health sector is particularly vulnerable because:
 - * Competence and integrity are undermined by poor working condition and weak systems.
 - * Health corruption is increasing in all countries with high rate of corruption (like Nigeria) (Buowari 2017).

In their study titled: Corruption in Nigeria in Health sector has many faces: How to fix it, Onwujekwe et al (2018) found that corruption in the health sector appears in the form of absenteeism, procurement-related corruption, under the counter payment, health-financing related corruption, and employment-related corruption. Corruption in the health sector in Nigeria could also appear in the form of offering bribe, diverting patients to private clinics, poor governance (administration), and many other illicit practices. They finally noted that all these impacted negatively on the crucial development indices such as life expectancy and standard of care the patients receive.

Challenges of Health Promotion in Nigeria

The various sections of this paper alluded, directly or indirectly, to the major challenges facing health promotion in Nigeria. They include corruption, poverty, conflicts, weak institutions, leadership, and global environmental threats.

Corruption

Corruption has been implicated as one of the problems of health promotion in Nigeria. As identified in their study Onwujekwe et al (2018) stated that corruption in the health sector appears in the form of absenteeism, procurements-related corruption, under the counter payment, employment-related corruption, and financing related corruption among others. Recall that in the ranking of 10 most corrupt countries in the world published in 2016 by Dicker and Boyer (2016) Nigeria came first among the 60 countries evaluated. It had been stated that in any country where there is corruption, health sector is usually one of the most vulnerable.

Poverty

One time secretary of United Nations, Kofi Annan was quoted to have observed that poverty is the biggest enemy of health in developing world. WHO (2002) noted that at the dawn of the new millennium, poverty is likely to remain the number one killer worldwide. According to Brookings Institute (2018) the number of Nigerians in extreme poverty increase by six people every minute. The institute further noted that at the end of May 2018 the institute trajectory suggests that Nigeria had about 87 million people in extreme poverty. The state of extreme poverty in the country, no doubt, impacts on health promotion provisions as well. The state of Nigerian economy is in a mess.



Conflicts

Conflict is yet another big challenge facing health promotion in Nigeria today. The impact conflict could have on health promotion is unimaginable. Nigerian society today is characterized by so many conflicts in the form of clashes between ethnic groups, clashes between civilians and the military and other law enforcement agents, clashes between political groups, clashes between one cult group and another, Boko haram insurgency in the north-east, and conflicts of views and ideologies. Conflicts in different parts of Nigeria have led to many deaths, many losing their means of livelihood, many displaced from their homes, abandonment of health programmes etc. Too much pressure would have been put on existing health facilities and programmes as conflicts in Nigeria have become endemic and pervasive.

Weak institutions

Health promotion had been defined by Green (1997) as any combination of health education and related organizational, economic and political interventions designed to facilitate behavioral and environmental changes conducive to health. This definition captures some of the social institutions. The five major social institutions are the political, family, religions, educational and economic institutions. Health and health promotion programmes and activities can be a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the various institutions. One may now ask how strong are the various social institutions in Nigeria today? The honest answer, to these authors, is that non of the institutions can be said to be strong. The weaknesses of these institutions, especially economic and political institutions result in the weaknesses of health promotion experiences and consequently little or non-significant impact of the programmes.

Leadership

Both experts and non-experts in Nigeria today agree that the country has serious problem with leadership at all levels. Leadership is supposed to define the direction of development of a country. The Nigerian government of today is clueless. The leadership of Nigeria today misplaces every priority. The key sectors of the economy such as education and health etc. have been neglected to the point that the political class, including the president, travel to other countries to receive healthcare. Right now there is no known serious attention paid to health and health promotion that even some of the diseases that had been eradicated are resurfacing. Today there is outbreak of one disease or the other here and there.

Global Environmental threats

Nigeria is part of the global village. Any issue that is global also affects Nigeria. WHO (2002) reported that there are global environmental threats to health and they are climate change, depletion of ozone layer, reduction in biodiversity, degradation of ecosystem, and the spread of persistent organic pollutants. As in other parts of the world, global environmental threats also affect health and health promotion programmes in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Health promotion is a very encompassing health programme. Ideally health promotion is capable of improving all the dimensions of human health and the social, political, economic, educational, and religious health of the country. Unfortunately the combined forces of corruption, poverty, conflicts, weak institutions, leadership, global environmental threats etc. drowned the expected impacts the programmes would have made. Consequently Nigeria failed to post satisfactory results in all the health indicators examined especially when placed side by side with those of most African countries.

Recommendations

Based on all the issues raised and expositions in this paper, the authors would want to recommend that governments at all levels in Nigeria should deal with corruption. Once corruption is eliminated most of the other factors militating against health promotion will be checked. This work revealed that once corruption becomes entrenched in a system it will permeate every fabric and sector in the polity.

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