# Communication: a Medium to Checkmate National Challenges.

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#### Abstract

This study focused on the medium through which communication can checkmate national challenges. The work was set to identify the key media and they are as follow: Direct Human Communication which comprises the family, school and religion, and Indirect Human Communication through which gadgets like phones, laptops, and tablets, among others are used to communicate with people through social media like Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Everything in existence has its advantage(s) and disadvantage(s); but when we weigh communication, the advantages weigh far much more than the disadvantages because communication is the key that unlocks everything that surrounds human beings; even the deaf and the dumb communicate. Therefore without communication, human life will be useless.

#### Introduction

The English term 'Communication' evolved from two Latin words 'communis and communicare'. Communis is a noun which means common, communality or sharing and

communicare is categorised under verb, which means make something common. Some scholars relate the communication with an English word community because community members have something in common with each other and they are formed with the tie of communication. Hence, there can be no community without communication. The roles of communication according to Ndimele (2001:3-4) may be informational, expressive, phatic, directive, ideational, performative, or ludic. To him, language plays the informational role in its use to pass information from one person to another. It plays expressive role when people use it to make their feelings and emotions known to others. Its phatic role is ostensible when it is use to establish contacts and relationships. Directive role is use to influence the behaviour and attitudes of people. Its ideational role is use to control and seek compliance with forces of nature. Effecting a sudden change in the state affairs in the real world, the role of performative communication is use. Lastly, the role of ludic is use to create amusement for entertainment. Furthermore, communication can be seen as sharing of information between different individuals. It includes the sharing of ideas, concepts, imagination, behaviours and written content. Communication can be simply defined as the transfer of information from one place to another. This transfer of information can be conducted in different ways. According to Stewart and D'Angeo (1998:38), "Communication involves not just action but action and reaction, not just stimulus, but stimulus and response". In addition, Cherry (1957:6) has seen communication as a system of sharing elements of behaviour, or modes of life, by the existence of sets of rules. Communication is the only way information can be disseminated to the people living in a particular geographical area. It is the key that can unlock all doors of a nation as well as educate the masses on the rules that guide the nation. Communication is an act that started from the creation, down to our fore-fathers.

In the olden days, there were various ways by which our forefathers communicated. One is: communication with fire as a means of attracting attention or notifying a neighbouring community. This means of communication does not seem to have a place today in any of our societies except perhaps among the societies living in the mountain areas and also among hunters and adventurers in some places. Apart from the original purport of buying and selling, the market square serves well as a communication arena. Women who have picked information from various places spread it around with the words of mouth, and carrier pigeons were also used to get information from one place to another quite quickly. The person who wants to send a message to a set place takes trained homing pigeons from that set place. When some important information need to be sent, a message is written on a very small piece of paper and attached to the pigeon's leg.

According to Wilson (1987) there are numerous forms of communication systems in Nigeria and the world at large. Some of them are: idiophones, membranophones, aerophones, symbolography, signals, and sign, among others. Idiophones are self-sounding instruments or technical wares which produce sound without the addition or use of an intermediary medium. The sound or message emanates from the materials from which the instruments are made and they could be shaken. scratched, struck, pricked (pulled) or pressed with the feet. They include the gong, woodblock, wooden drum, bell and rattle. Membranophones are the media on which sounds are produced through the vibration of membranes. They include all varieties of skin or leather drum. These drums are beaten or struck with well-carved sticks. The Igbo people use these drums, though they are borrowed communication instrument because it is produced in Yoruba land. These skin drums of various sizes and shapes abound in all Nigerian traditional societies especially in Igbo land, if not the most popular means of communication in our society today traditionally. This is because it is the most exposed and intricate in its craftsmanship. This drum is called the "talking drum" in Yoruba land and locally called "dundun" in Igbo land. Aerophones are the media which produce sound as a result of the vibration of a column of air. They comprise media of the flute family, whistle reed pipes, hones and trumpets etc. Symbolography simply means symbolic writing or representation. Communication takes place when encoders use graphic representations to convey a message which is understood within the context of a known social event and an accompanying verbal message. This is a descriptive representational device for conveying meaning. There a lot of them but the well-known one usually in Igbo land is "uri" which is used on wall paintings and even on human bodies.

Signals are the physical embodiments of a message. In some parts of our country, so many ancient signals are still in existence. To portray this point, in all the broadcasting stations in Nigeria, there must be a sign of drum signals to draw the attention of its listeners, indicating that they are about to start or to begin transmission for the day. In this category, some of the signals include fire, gunshots, canon shots, drum (wooden or skin). Signs are marks that are meaningful or objects or symbols used to present something. It is a construct by which organisms affect the behaviour or state of another in a communication context. Sign language (ie system of communication by gestures) has been developed for the deaf in all the Nigerian communities and even across board. While signs are more associated with specific denotative meanings, symbols usually carry along with them connective meaning as well, (Ross 1992). In addition, Ross (1992) maintained that symbols require an interpreter who knows something of the system by virtue of which the symbol has meaning. Natural signs require an interpreter who knows a theory or general law in terms of which the sign is an index of the existence of some other thing. Despite the forms of communication mentioned

above, traditional institutions, clubs or various other societies use communication for the purpose of dissemination of information, passing on gossips, rumours, and at times highly confidential information. These institutions operate in both rural and urban areas, but mostly in the rural areas, especially co-operative the following societies: esusu (Osusu), clan/town/village/family unions, ethnic unions. drinking clubs, old students associations, market women associations, age grade, secret societies, cults, among others help a lot to disseminate information or communicate effectively. Communication processes are in various forms and are geared towards achieving a particular goal. Without communication, development will be impossible in a nation because that is the only way the masses can reach out to their leaders, leaders in return to their subjects and among other individuals. For example, it enables planners when identifying and formulating development programmes to consult with people in order to take into account their needs, attitudes and traditional knowledge. Helping people at all levels to communicate empowers them to recognise important issues and find common grounds for action, and builds a sense of identity and participation in order to implement their decisions.

Every nation undergoes constant change, and this change also introduces new ways of doing things for the development of the nation. Therefore, communicating through media and techniques can be powerful tools to educate people about new ideas and methods, encourage adoption of these ideas and methods, and improve overall training. The phenomenon of communication has travelled far from the concept of paper and pen. Now, with the evolution of the internet, almost every electronic and digital device has become a means of communication. Besides computers and mobile phones, from fuelling devices on the petrol pump to the radars, all devices have been transformed to share information. These devices amazingly carry and deliver information over

considerable distances and time lapses. The delivery time for sharing information has almost diminished. One can send and receive information in a blink of an eye. We live in a contemporary communication age, and the full impact of communication on development is just starting to be seen. Therefore, this research examined various institutions in the society that inculcate positive attitudes in human beings through the means of communication.

# **History of Communication**

Communication has always been the most significant part of human expression and interaction. Simple verbal communication has existed since the evolution of languages. There was an evolution of different kinds of writing styles. Egyptians developed hieroglyphic writing; similarly, Greeks developed the phonetic style of writing i.e. the writing from left to right. The first ever encyclopaedia was written in Syria. However, before the advent of the simple verbal communication, the ancient man was forced to be creative with communication and keep it consistent to maintain a common understanding. When speech originated around 500,000 BCE, communication was changed, but the system was not perfect and needed assistance. While verbal communication was used in ancient times, symbols and images were still used to portray information. The earliest proven form of this is cave paintings. These images usually included scenes of hunting wild animals or stencils of human hands. Communication for ancient man became more complex as variations of cave paintings evolved into pictograms. Pictograms are images that represent a simple place or object. Later, ideograms were created and used to communicate concepts. The communication crafted during this period moved from simple drawings of people and animals to visual communication that could express entire ideas with one symbol. Their brain power fuelled the original use of all types of communication that evolved into the channels we use today. While communication saw a lot of advancements during ancient times, that was only the beginning.

Later on, other civilisations including Rome, Persia, Syria and Egypt too contributed towards the progress of the postal system. Horses were used as the main carriers in this very early postal system. There were relay stations established where the horses were required to deliver the information. Previously, there was no concept of paper. People used to communicate by writing messages on stones, leaves, bones or horsebacks. Moreover, there were no proper means for writing. The messages were penned down with coal or other useful tools. This kind of information exchange was most common in China and Egypt. Later, there were some developments done to improve the writing surfaces. People made use of the Papyrus rolls and light weight parchments derived from dried reeds. These surfaces were much better as they were easily portable and could retain the colour of writing for a longer period. Otherwise, writing on stones, bones and horsebacks was prone to fading in a very short time. This created difficulty for the people to understand what was exactly written by the sender.

As time went by, a new idea was introduced to utilise homing pigeons as carriers of messages, and the technique really worked out well. A written message was usually tied to the wings of a pigeon, and the pigeon will deliver it to the intended recipient. It was good as it saved time and pigeons' travelling time was relatively less. But it was not a reliable way of communication. The message transfer was solely dependent on the well-being of the bird, and if a pigeon was caught up in danger, which was a common occurrence, then the message was wasted

# **Invention of Printing**

The advancement towards better communication was heralded by the advent of printing technology. Printing was first invented by the Chinese in 1300 B.C. Also the first ever writing device, the pencil, was invented in 1565. Printing was first developed to be done by blocks in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The first known book published at that time using block printing was the Diamond Sutra of 686. Later in the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century, a person named Johannes Gutenberg in Europe invented the press. This revolutionised the communication process, as the printing of books became easier and cheaper. It also laid down the foundation for newspaper printing. Later the idea for the printing press started gaining popularity in the other nations as well. The introduction of newspapers increased the interest of people towards printing and served to advance communication mechanisms.

The printing press established by Gutenberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> century introduced the idea of newspapers, thus newspaper printing was invented. The first ever newspaper was published in England in the year 1641. However, the name 'newspaper' coined until 1670. The developments communication gradually continued to expose people to new and effective ideas and concepts. The beginning of the 19th century saw the introduction of several new concepts in the world of communication. It accounts for remarkable inventions including carbon paper and the telegraph. Instead of relay stations, there were developments for laying down the foundation for proper channels that made it possible to communicate across the Atlantic. By the middle of the 19th century, the fax machine was invented. The year 1876 saw the incredible invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell. This device was different from the previous inventions as it significantly reduced the time required for conveying information over long distances.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was an evolution which led to the discovery of radio and television broadcasting.

Communication was transformed to be conducted through electronic means. In 1960, communication satellites were introduced. Scientists introduced different techniques to create wonders in communication. Echoes and laser technology were invented to revolutionise communication. Bulky telephones were transformed into precisely structured mobile phones. Also, the internet and web services became eminent in the late 19th century.

# **Important Elements of Communication**

There are three elements necessary for communication to take place. They are the sender, a medium (the platform over which information is conducted) and a recipient. The sender is the most involved person with a full understanding of that matter which he wants to deliver. On the other hand, the receiver does not necessarily know about the sender and the subject of information which the sender aims to deliver.

# **Steps of Communication**

Technically, the communication process is split into three major steps. These include the thought, encoding and decoding. The thought is the subject of information that exists in the sender's mind. When the sender transforms his thoughts, ideas or concepts into verbal speech or a written message, this is known as encoding. Encoding refers to the encryption of ideas from the perspective of the sender. When the message is received by the receiver, the recipient reads and understands it. He may translate the information to understand it better. So decoding refers to the interpretation of information from the perspective of the receiver. When the receiver clearly understands the information sent to him, the communication process ends.

Communication can be a one-way or two-way process. When the information conveyed by the sender is received by the recipient, this marks the completion of a one-way process.

It is not necessary that the recipient must respond to the sender, but if the recipient formulates a message in reply to the sender's message, then communication becomes a two-way process. Media content is an example of one-way communication, in which the receiver is not required to respond, but only receives the information.

# **Types of Communication**

There are different kinds of communication. However, the two major types are verbal communication and non-verbal communication

#### Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the sharing of information through speech. It includes the information that people hear on radios, televisions, telephones, speeches and interviews.

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Effective verbal communication incorporates the use of <u>interpersonal skills</u>. Factors that contribute to the effectiveness of verbal communication are the clarity of voice, perception and listening skills of the recipient. Verbal communication, if it is conducted in a two-way loop, is usually based on immediate responses. Verbal communication is also influenced by eye contact, gestures and facial expressions. The hearing and understanding skills of the recipient help him understand the context of the information and develop his responses accordingly. Linguistics and the way of presenting information build the impact of communication on the recipient.

#### Non-verbal Communication

Written or spoken words are not the only means for sharing a message. When there is no use of words, and the recipient understands what the sender is asking, then it is known as non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is conducted through eye contact, postures,

gestures, facial expressions, <u>chronemics</u> and <u>haptics</u>. Visuals are also an excellent way to represent any information. Use of pictures, symbols and graphs can help a person communicate effectively. Even hairstyles and the clothing of a person convey information regarding his nature, mood and intentions. People use architectures, and different colours and textures for home and office surfaces to represent their interests and preferences.

In the case of written communication, it is the kind of information transferred where the encoding of a message is done in written form. The message may only be written in words, or it may include different symbols, or sometimes even machine codes. Written communication is influenced by writing and representation skills of an individual. A written message is developed while taking the audience into consideration. Different audiences have different levels of perceptive abilities. Different kinds of messages require different techniques of writing. For instance, an analytical report is written in a way greatly different to a CV or an essay.

# **Challenges and Criticisms of Communication**

The challenges for sharing information over time have majorly been resolved, but still, there are some <u>barriers that</u> hinder the communication process.

#### **Personal Barriers**

During communication each individual is greatly influenced by his or her capability of speaking and writing. If the message is not written or spoken well, there is every tendency that the message and its meaning may be ambiguous for the receiver. The translation of a written message can be misconceived as different recipients will interpret a certain message on the basis of their individual perceptions and knowledge. If the receiver finds it difficult to understand the information, there will be high possibilities that he may

conceive wrong information. Therefore, a message must be written with the right words in such a way that the intended recipient can easily understand.

### **Systemic Barriers**

When communication involves electronic and digital means, the machine and network errors can affect the effectiveness of communication. Usually, if a problem is encountered along the line, there will be an unwanted delay in information. This is often experienced in our daily use of phones and computer whereby due to poor network, the information we feed on the gadget may take a longer time than what we bargained on before it comes up with the information we need.

### **Essential Components of Communication.**

As has been echoed, communication is a continuous two-way or one-way process through which a message can be conveyed through a medium to a recipient. The recipient must understand the message and respond within a specific time frame, though only if it is a two-way process of communication. This is an instance of a face to face communication that can be experienced at homes and schools. Therefore, the following is the breakdown of the essential communication components:

*Source:* The source is the person who imagines, creates, and sends the message.

**Message:** The message is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience.

*Channel:* The channel is the way in which a message travels between the source and the receiver.

*Feedback:* Feedback is the verbal and/or nonverbal response to a message.

*Environment:* The environment is the physical and psychological aspects of the communication's context.

*Context:* Context involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved.

*Receiver:* The receiver receives the message from the source and analyses and interprets it both intended and unintended, from the source.

*Interference:* Interference is anything that blocks or changes the source's intended meaning of the message.

# Mediums through which Communication Checkmates the Problems in the Society

Communication is a vital instrument in the society and it is used in reaching out to people for various reasons at various times. Communication has contributed a whole lot in the development of every country both individually and collectively, physically and psychologically; and finally, it has aided so much in character formation. Below, we are going to discuss various mediums through which communication solves problems in the society such as drug abuse, unprotected sex, armed robbery, among others; the differences between religious societies; also, the positive impact it also creates. They will be grouped into direct human communication and indirect human or technology communication.

#### **Direct Human Communication**

This is a situation whereby there is a direct communication between human beings which instant reaction perhaps is experienced; as the case may be sometimes, the effect is fully blown in the later years or may be a thing of daily progress. This can be found in the following key places like the family, school and church.

**Family**: It is the bedrock of the society; that is, the family is the first form of any society and government. Aristotle wrote that

the family is nature's established association for the supply of mankind's everyday wants. Therefore, for any society to succeed, the family must succeed. The only tool that can bring about a proper successful functional society is communication and it starts from home; that is the communication between parents and their children. In recent times, parents rarely have time for their children because everyone is in for the quest of wealth. For instance, there are situations where both the mother and the father are working in the banking industry, leaving the children at the mercy of a housemaid. The question is, "when do they now have time to communicate with their kids and get to know them and the people they hang out with?" This issue also extends to most traders who leave their homes very early in the morning and return home very late in the night, when the children must have retired for the day.

Communication does not centre only on parents and their children but also to a large extent extends to husband and wife because one cannot give what one does not have. Effective communication between a husband and wife enables them to fashion their home in a way they wish it to be. Furthermore, through communication, both parents can give an account of each other at every point in time, thereby, have their marriages devoid of negative intermediaries that are bound to bring about broken homes. Broken homes result to an unstable society. Children learn more from what they see than what they hear. Therefore, if both parents communicate well, the children will eventually form the habit of carrying their parents along in their daily endeavours or will let their siblings know in a situation where they choose to keep their parents out of the picture of an event.

Spending time with the members of one's family facilitates communication. This will enable parents understand their children, as well as parents knowing each other more too. It will definitely reveal some challenges in a family. When these challenges are known, they will be discussed, and there

is a high possibility of arresting them through guidance and counselling to prevent them from becoming a full blown problem to the society. These negative behaviours can be in the form of stealing, drug abuse, consumption of alcoholic beverages, gambling, sloth, infidelity, injustice, among others. All these vices turn out to become a menace to the society. Therefore, communication plays a vital role in the family because it checkmates a whole lot of negative behaviours.

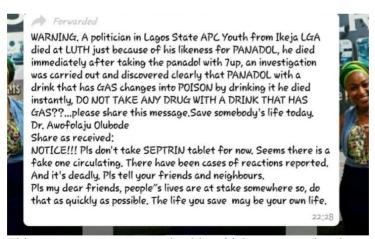
**School**: it is the immediate and effective institution next to the family which every child comes in contact with and it has a whole lot of influence on children. Here, children from various homes and various characters emerge as well as teachers with their distinctive characters. In the school, children are exposed to so many things they may not learn if they are to be at home. In recent times, children spend more time in school, and so get integrated in the things they are exposed to the school more. Inasmuch as there are different people with different characteristics in the school environment, the academic curriculum is fused with so many lessons of life, teachings that will aid in the formation of children and all about the society we leave in. For instance, religious studies is based on the teachings in the bible which help to seek the face of God, and we cannot truly seek the face of God without having our behaviour form positively. Another one is Social Studies, Cultural Art and Civic Education; the three subjects are interwoven. They bring to the fore different cultures in our society, and remember that culture is the people's way of life. Knowing the dos and don'ts of a particular society will not instigate violence which will definitely bring instability in a nation. The last and not the least is History which aids us to have an idea of the past, and this past will enable us to know how to deal with the future. The teachings of the above mentioned subjects can only take place through communication between the teacher and the students. Exposing the students to the cultures that exist in the nation, the dos and don'ts of the society and the histories of the society help to form them from the cradle which will aid in their later development.

Religion: can be grouped into Christian, Islamic and traditional. It is another institution that has a great positive effect in the formation of human beings through its communication. It can be tagged as the first moral nurture specific base institution for every human being because the moral knowledge parents and the elders transfer to the younger generation is definitely what they learnt from the same institution under discourse. This communication can be through catechism classes, Bible/Koran study classes, sermons during services and through the stories of our forefathers as the case may be which serve as a guide to a good life.

Furthermore, the impact of intra and inter religious associations cannot be over-emphasized because they mediate and engage in various dialogues between Muslims and Christians for the progress and protection of the masses. The following are some of the religious associations in Nigeria: Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), Muslims of South-West of Nigeria (MUSWEN), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), among others. For instance, NIREC was instituted on September 29, 1999 by the representatives of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria to foster inter-religious peace and dialogue. These associations aid to manage the religious differences that exist in Nigeria. This can be fused in the recent challenges facing Nigeria based on the Christian-Moslem crisis in Kano. Different religious organisations have often and on various occasions engaged in communications with the federal government in relation to this, gunning for various ways through which they will put a stop to it. Further, these various organisations have used various communication mediums like, radio and television programmes, or through Netspeak media/mediums like whatsapp, twitter, facebook, among others to reach out to their communicants, pleading with them to keep away from instigating any form of violence.

# **Indirect Human or Technology Communication**

This is a situation where communication takes place without having a face to face contact. That is, communication in this context is carried out through the use of technological equipment like phones, tablets, laptops, Tv, radio, etc. As a result, there may not be a visible reaction from the recipient as the case may be; or this can most often be classified as a one-way type of communication. This is the type of communication that often takes place through social media like Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and so many others. Here, we are going to look at some messages disseminated through various social media that are for the wellbeing of the nation.



This message centres on health which stresses the danger concerning the type of liquid we use in taking drugs. One major responsibilitity of Nigerian government is to protect the lives and properties of the masses; therefore, the circulation of this meassage is to protect the lives of the masses. This is also a caution on self medication which has become the order of the day in Nigeria because so many lives have been lost through it. Mass death is one of the things that disorganises the society. So, the dissemination of the above message will checkmate this and will also bring about peace and harmony in the society.



Whenever fire guts any building, it puts the whole country into mourning. The havoc may not be direct; however, the masses always felt for the people that lost their loved ones in the fire outbreak. This reason must have motivated the circulator of this message to post it. Life is so valued that any reasonable human being will do anything to protect it and communication is one of the tools through which we can protect life.

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In the quest to meet up in the society, both the old and young engage in various negative behaviours. The above information is to educate people on how to avoid being a victim of these fraudsters. This is another importance of communication to the society and the use of social media is one of the most efficient means of doing so.



Cancer is one of the diseases that is common, and till now, its causes and cures are yet to be defined. However, so many routines or people's lifestyles have been tagged the cause of this disease and that is the reason for the above message; to inform people on the things to do and the ones not to do in order not to experience this ugly disease.



Currently, Nigeria has been facing a lot of challenges concerning some imposters claiming to be policemen. In order to checkmate this challenge, the Nigerian Police Force has put down ways the masses can identify fake policemen at a glance, and through this information, they will be able to get hold of these culprits and prosecute them according to the law.

#### Conclusion

Communication serves as a means of connecting people and places. Communication has expanded to relate to diverse perspectives. It can be used to share different kinds of information in different ways. It is not necessary to hold a solid reason to communicate with others. With the evolution of the internet, communication has been adopted as a mean to expand one's social circle. Social communication is purely conducted

for one's entertainment or to develop relationships with others, either in a verbal, written or non-verbal way. Social communication includes web surfing, internet chatting and mobile texting. Furthermore, communication also extends to non-electronics; this implies the direct contact that exists between the speaker and the hearer.

Having looked at various medium through which communication can checkmate national challenges, it will be of utmost importance for every individual and various institutions to collectively work on using any available means to communicate positively to people around them, educating them on the dos and don'ts of the society in order to bring about peaceful coexistence of all, as well as progress in the society.

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