

# ROLE OF COMMUNITY RADIO PROGRAMME ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF *EJI OWURO* ON GERIN F.M, ILORIN

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## Abstract

Community Radio is a unique and effective tool for enlisting citizens' participation in issues that concern them. It is a major vehicle for engaging the populace at the community level to ensure even spread of development through sharing of ideas and experiences that will add value to the lives of the citizens. This study examines the roles of "*Eji-owuro*", an early morning programme of Gerin FM radio station on community participation in governance and desired development among the residents of Ilorin Metropolis. It adopted a mixed method with questionnaires and a structured interview guide serving as the instruments of data collection. A total of 200 respondents were selected through multistage sampling. The findings revealed that about 94.0% of the respondents listen to *Eji-owuro* often while 90.0% of them admitted that the programme was of great benefit to them. Analysis of Relative Importance Index revealed that the respondents enjoy a high level of satisfaction listening to *Eji-owuro* on Gerin FM, 95.5. It also indicated that *Eji-owuro* availed members of the community the opportunity to comment on government activities and ventilate their needs, which are best expressed by them. The study recommended that governments, across Nigeria, should appoint desk officers to monitor Community Radio Stations for the purpose of needs assessment and policy formation.

**Keywords:** Community radio; Gerin FM; *Eji-owuro*; participation; development

**Declaration of conflicting interests:** The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Radio broadcasting has been acknowledged as the most potent communication tool for development (Moemeka, 2000, Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto, 2010). Scholars have made distinctions between radio broadcasting to national and local audiences (Alumuku, 2006, Jalov, 2012). Ajibade and Alabi, (2017) lament the concentration of establishment and content of radio broadcasting on urban interest since its inception in Nigeria. To cater for the variance in information needs of the residents of urban and rural settlements, various groups such as The Panos Institute of West Africa (PIWA) and the World

Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), in conjunction with the Institute for Media and Society (IMS-Nigeria) campaigned intensively for approval to establish Community Radio Stations (CRS) (Ajibade & Alabi, 2017, Akingbulu & Mekiti, 2008). Despite the intensity of the campaigns that began in 2003, the Federal Government exhibited a semblance of approval in 2010 at the opening ceremony of Africast 2010. Not much was heard about the licensing again until 2015, when "17 provisional community broadcast licenses were issued to community development organizations across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria" (Olufemi, 2015). That marked the birth of the

licensing of three-tiers radio broadcasting by the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) namely Public, Commercial and Community Radio Stations. The NBC code (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2017), is unequivocal in stating the goal of broadcasting. The document indicates that: 'by means of Broadcasting, every Nigerian is expected to partake in the sharing of ideas and experiences that will enrich the life of the citizenry and help them live in a complex, dynamic and humane society ...'. (p. 11). This expectation levies the Community Radio Station (CRS) with the great task of ensuring equal access to broadcast content by all and sundry; broadcasting 70% of programmes that are produced by the community, giving prominence to the language spoken within the target community. Community Radio, such as Gerin FM, 95.5, is an important part of the media landscape in many countries (Johnson & Rajadurai, 2020, Ajibade & Alabi, 2017).

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Appraise the extent to which residents of Ilorin Metropolis listen to "*Eji-owuro*" on Gerin F.M., 95.5;
- ii. Evaluate the level of satisfaction experienced by residents of Ilorin Metropolis from listening to *Eji-owuro* on Gerin FM, 95.5;
- iii. Assess the contributions of Gerin FM, 95.5 to community development.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community Radio and Development:

Community radio is generally the best tool for getting information to divergent audiences such as the illiterate and poor communities which will, in turn, guide them to making informed decisions. It bridges the gap of information need and exchange that are created by the centralised media environment of public and private radio stations (Abdulbaqi, 2022) as community radio provides the opportunity of "reaching powerless communities and giving them a voice" (Stefania, 2009, pg 12). It often represents the only space where poorer communities can discuss the issues that affect them (Dan'azumi, 2015) and seek to attract the attention of the government, thereby, participating in governance. Nigeria, a pluralistic society where every region, tradition and class of society is endowed with unique cultural and

indigenous identity (Pate, 2015), is incapacitated by its inability to care for the complex needs of its divergent components without a broadcast system that can mirror the developmental needs of the communities as expressed by them in a true democracy. Chapman et al. (2003) reported that the growth of community radio stations reflects both improvements in information technologies and the shifting of the development paradigm towards a more participatory style of information and knowledge exchange for both economic and social development (Amadu & Alhassan, 2018).

Development, on the other hand, entails the ability to explore opportunities, access and adapt such opportunities to solving personal and collective problems. According to Torado and Smith, cited in Abdulbaqi, (2022), the core values of development are to elevate citizens to be self-sustaining, increase their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth, and free them from servitude. These values cannot be enthroned without adequate communication through an efficient medium. Hence, communicating for development is characterised by interactions that are geared towards meeting people's basic needs, environmental development, healthy living as well as behaviour and life-styles changes. Since there is no uniformity in the needs and aspirations of individuals, communication should be customised in such a way that, all citizens, regardless of the differences in their social and economic background, can seek information that is good for them and process the same to suit their personal identified needs.

Early days of radio broadcasting in Nigeria adopted the one-way flow of information model which involved talking to the people and not talking with them. This model endangered development rather than engendering it. However, the participation of all stakeholders is key to the success of any development. For instance, Walters et al. (2011) assessed the impact of community radio in Indonesia and concluded that effective radio activities can make a significant change in a community's life. The authors used the Most Significant Change (MSC) process with origin in community health development debates but applied it to community radio impact evaluation. Through the MSC process, community members provide feedback in the form of stories describing the desirable change in their life as a result of the activities of the radio. The same evaluation is conducted through phone-in programmes such as *Eji-owuro*.

Community radio is a localised medium where national

and international issues can be discussed with focus on their implications on the lives of the common people at the grass-root level. It avails the opportunity of enlisting resources from within the community as well as helping the community to organise itself, promote its culture, mobilise people to solve common problems and share information about health and disease control via interactions between community members and health workers. Above all, it helps a community to realise the abundant resources it has for solving its own problems. Community radio stations often serve their listeners by offering a variety of content that may not necessarily be provided by larger commercial radio stations (Falade, 2014). However, the not-for-profit designation of community radio (NBC code, 6th edition, 2017, p. 123) often makes some of their proprietors pursue commercial interest rather than community or rural development which they were set up to engender (Ese, 2012).

#### **Community Radio and Democratic Governance**

Democratic governance is citizen-driven. It is such that gives every citizen a sense of belonging, having input into the process of governance as well as the opportunity to assess the government's activities. Concurrently, community radio aid the process of democratic governance as it grants a voice to the voiceless, empowers the citizens to hold the government accountable and 'constructs the public sphere' (Dori-Hacohen, 2012). Moemeka (2012) remarks that a local broadcast media like radio, if well managed, and fully operated, will provide a continuous flow of educational information on all aspects that affect the lives of rural communities and also arouse their awareness with a view to changing what is detrimental to their lives. It is accessible to the community in terms of ownership, decision making and programme output. In the majority of cases, programming is produced by the community, with a focus on local concerns and issues. In their own submission, Asemah et al. (2013) affirmed the status of community radio as a community representation with great commitment to meeting local community needs and aspirations.

The urban-based media lack the flexibility to accommodate the views of the rural dwellers as they are saturated with elitist views in content and language. In instances where the centralised mass media (Moemeka 2000, Abdulbaqi, 2022) feature rural dwellers, scholars observed that the attention is often focused on government functionaries who may have gone to rural areas to monitor government projects

instituted there or to galvanise the rural people to support government programmes.

#### **Establishment of the Gerin FM 95.5 Radio Station**

The Gerin FM 95.5 radio station was established on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 and commenced operation on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2021 after meeting all the conditions for licensing by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) (Informant 1). Since the establishment of the station, it has been commanding a fair share of the audience in the city ((Informant 2). The station derived its name from the history of Ilorin which was founded by Alimi in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The station, therefore, has a historical connection with the ancestral town of Ilorin and this has enabled listeners to be fully associated with the station. It has participated in the process of community development by disseminating useful information to the general populace of the metropolis (Informant 3).

#### **Description of "Eji-owuro" on Gerin 95.5 FM, Ilorin**

"Eji-owuro" is a life programme that is aired between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. (1½ hours) Monday to Friday. The programme is designed to provide daily information ranging from news, sports, newspaper review, weather forecast and phone-in segment that allows the audience to express their views on topical issues, register their impressions about government activities and voice their expectations from the government. A part of the phone-in segment allows the listeners to respond to questions and win fabulous prizes, a practice that has sustained listeners' interest in the programme and the station. A phone-in programme is a one-on-one interaction between the host and callers about public affairs or an issue of interest. The callers express their opinions on issues thus, transforming radio broadcasting into a two-way medium that elicits instant feedback from the listeners on issues of discussion as typical of communication for development. The callers are central to phone-in programmes, they do the talking while the host manages their talks as encapsulated in the Democratic Participant Media theory.

#### **The Democratic Participant theory.**

This study is premised on the Democratic Participant Media theory which postulates that the media constitutes an enabling environment for every citizen to contribute meaningfully to the development of their society. Democratic Participant theory is an extension of the normative theories propounded by Siebert et al (1956). It was extended by McQuail (2005) In the context of this study, community radio is owned and controlled by the community, run by volunteers from the

community and is designed to reflect the philosophy of its hosting community in its programming and operations. Hence, community radio avails all citizens the platform to hear and be heard. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the contributions of the community radio programme; *Eji-owuro* on Gerin F.M 95.5 on community participation in governance.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional design to obtain data from the audiences of *Eji-Owuro* on Gerin FM 95.5, Ilorin. It used a mixed method approach; survey and content analysis method. A combination of questionnaires, tagged: Community Radio for Community Development Questionnaire (CRCQD Questionnaire), and structured interviews were used as instruments of data collection at the survey level while the second method involved an analysis of programme content. A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the listeners of the programmes on Gerin F.M. 95.5 through a Snowball sampling technique. The researchers identified the listeners through 10 members of the Association of Regular Callers on Radio, Kwara State. 20 copies of the questionnaire were given to each of the selected 10 members for onward distribution to other listeners on their contact. The reliability test on the instrument revealed a Cronbach alpha higher than the criterion 0.7 value (Taber, 2018, Abdulbaqi & Mustaffa, 2017).

#### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 23) and presented in frequency count, percentage and Relative Importance Index (RII) calculations and ranking. The RII was calculated using the following formula:

$$RII(\%) = \frac{RIA}{N}$$

$$\text{Where: } RIA = \frac{5 * X_1 + 4 * X_2 + 3 * X_3 + 2 * X_4 + 1 * X_5}{N}$$

Where:

**RIA** = Relative Index Analysis; **RII**= Relative Importance Index; **X<sub>1</sub>**\_Number of respondents answering Strongly Agreed; **X<sub>2</sub>**\_Number of respondents answering Agreed; **X<sub>3</sub>**\_Number of respondents answering Neutral; **X<sub>4</sub>** \_Number of respondents answering Disagreed and **X<sub>5</sub>** \_Number of respondents answering Strongly Disagreed  
**N**=Total number of respondents

This was analysed using the total number of Strongly Agreed multiplied by 5 points and divided by the total

number of respondents (200) to obtain the Relative Importance Index (RII). The process was repeated all through to the last value of Strongly Disagreed was obtained by multiplying the total number of respondents by one (1) point and dividing by the total number of respondents (200) to obtain the index. The total of all these five indexes was then added together to obtain the RII for each of the research items. This was then compared with the index set out thus:

i.	Highly Satisfactory	4.50 - 5.00
ii.	Satisfactory	3.50 - 4.49
iii.	Moderately Satisfactory	2.50 - 3.49
iv.	Unsatisfactory	1.50 - 2.49
v.	Highly Unsatisfactory	0.00-1.49

#### Appraisal of the Extent to which respondents Listen to "Eji-owuro"

The analysis of the extent to which the residents listen to the *Eji-owuro* was analysed based on the following factors: listening to the *"Eji-owuro"* programme; the time the programme is aired and the impact of the programme on the people.

#### Examination of Extent of Listenership to "Eji Owuro" Programme

The extent to which the respondents listen to *"Eji Owuro"* on Gerin FM is presented in Table 1.

Listenership	Frequency	Percentage
Very Often	146	73.0
Often	42	21.0
Once in a while	10	5.0
Rarely	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The result showed that the level of the listenership of the programme is very high; a large percentage of 188 respondents (94.0%) often listen to the programme. This is so because of the wisdom that people gain listening to the programme and adequate dissemination of information that is relevant to current happenings in society.

#### Benefits of Listening to the Programme

The analysis of the reason why people listen to the programme is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Benefits derived from Eji-owuro by the Respondents**

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate and curren information	128	64.0
Reallife experiences	52	26.0
Developmental informatio	18	9.0
No benefits	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 shows that 64.0% of respondents who listen to the programme opined that the programme provides adequate and current information while 26% gain from the real-life experiences shared on the programme. The content of Development information accounts for 9% while only 1% of the respondents see no benefit in the programme.

**Audience Participation on Eji-owuro through Phone-in segment**

All the segments of the programme attract the listeners to phone in during the programme to air their views which are usually acknowledged by the anchor of the programme as presented in Table 3:

**Table 3: Extent of Phone-in during the Programme by the Respondents**

Reason for audience's participation in Phonin	Frequency	Percentage
Often to express my grievances about the level of development in my area	96	48.0
Often to contribute to the issues of discussion	72	36.0
Once in a while to acknowledge the government's developmental efforts	22	11.0
I don't phone in at all	10	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 reveals that 96 (48%) of the respondents call to express their grievances about the level of development in their areas while 72 (36%) often contribute to the issues of discussion. Only 10 of the respondents (5%) confess that they don't phone in at all.

**Evaluation of the level of satisfaction with Eji-owuro**

Analysis of the level of satisfaction by the listeners with the Eji-owuro was conducted using Likert's 5-point scale and presented in Table 4. This is then ranked to determine which level of satisfaction ranked best and which one ranked the least by calculating the Relative Importance Index (RII) as presented in Table 4:

**Table 4: Level of Satisfaction with Eji-owuro**

Variables	Level of Satisfaction					Ind ex	Rank
	SA	A	N	D	SD		
Information provided by Eji-owuro have been useful in understanding citizens' rights from the government	22	17	05	00	00	46	1 <sup>st</sup>
The programme addresses my information needs daily	9	0	3	8	2	2	
The 5 segments of the programme are beneficial to a large number of the people	23	10	05	01	00	41	7 <sup>th</sup>
	8	4	3	8	2	5	
	20	18	05	01	00	45	2 <sup>nd</sup>
	2	3	3	8	2	8	

Information derived from the programme has contributed to an increased sense of belonging in the society	2.02	1.61	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.36	4 <sup>th</sup>
Information derived from the programme has contributed to the development of a new ideology for development of the society	2.19	1.30	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Over the years the programme has helped to boost the sense of patriotism in the people	2.34	1.04	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.11	9 <sup>th</sup>
Information derived from the programme has aided proper decision and increased awareness of developmental issues	2.38	1.04	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.15	7 <sup>th</sup>
The benefits I derive from the programme are worth the time invested in listening to it	2.02	1.29	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.42	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Information obtained from the programme prevents the exploitation of people	2.19	1.30	0.53	0.18	0.02	4.22	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>4.27</b>	

The ranking of the level of satisfaction as presented in Table 4 confirmed that Information provided by Eji-Owuro have been useful in understanding citizens' rights from the government and the happenings in the society, and the 5 segments of the programme are beneficial to a large number of the people and the benefits I derive from the programme are worth the time invested in listening to it' are ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. With index values of 4.62, 4.58 and 4.42 respectively. The programme manager of Gerin FM corroborated this assertion by saying that "Eji-owuro enjoy patronage if compared with all other programmes aired from the station on daily basis". (informant 2).

**Assessment of contributions of the Station to Community Development**

Table 5 shows the level of impact as perceived by the people on community development.

**Table 5: Level of Impact of the Station on Community Development**

Variables	Level of Satisfaction					Inde x	Ran k
	SA	A	UD	D	SD		
The station has been a benefit to our community	250	120	006	020	008	404	7 <sup>th</sup>
The station has been important to the general development of our community	220	160	036	004	000	420	4 <sup>th</sup>
The station provides us with development indices in our community	250	096	078	000	000	424	1 <sup>st</sup>

The station has attracted the government's attention to our community	2.10	1.04	0.48	0.32	0.00	3.94	8th
The station has helped to mobilise people for the development of our communities	2.10	1.04	0.40	0.15	0.03	3.72	9th
<i>Eji-owuro</i> programme on Gerin FM helps to highlight our plights as a community through the effort of <i>Eji-owuro</i> on Gerin FM, basic needs are being made available in our communities by our government	1.80	1.36	0.40	0.10	0.05	3.71	10th
Gerin FM has served as a veritable tool for the mobilisation of citizens for participation in developmental activities	2.20	1.12	0.60	0.12	0.02	4.06	6th
Gerin FM has assisted in the actualisation of the developmental needs of the people by concentrating on grassroots programmes	2.40	1.12	0.48	0.12	0.02	4.14	5th
Gerin FM help in promoting our culture	2.50	1.12	0.54	0.04	0.02	4.22	2nd
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>4.05</b>	

The analysis presented in Table 6 shows the perception of residents of the Ilorin metropolis on the impact of the programme ("*Eji Owuro*") in particular and the radio station in general on the effort to promote development at the grass-root level. The result indicated that the station and the programme provide residents with development indices to measure progress in the community (4.24) index among other Relative Importance. The mean index of development was calculated to be 4.05 which is very good on the scale of measurements.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from this study indicate that:

- a) A higher percentage of the residents (94.0%) listen to the "*Eji Owuro*" on Gerin FM 95.5 because it provides real-life experiences, and correct and adequate information dissemination that the audience can relate with. This is similar to the work of Ese (2012), and Asemah et al. (2013) that community radio has been playing a significant role in the dissemination of information to the citizens at the grass root level that enhances community development.
- b) The analysis also shows that a higher percentage of listeners followed the

programme on a weekday basis (90.0%). It was also observed that the listeners are of the opinion that the programme is highly beneficial and provides adequate information, good news, and real-life experience by young and vibrant anchors of the programme. This corroborated the findings of White and Chiliswa (2012) that examined the level of benefits of community radio in Kenya and concluded that programmes on community radio have been of utmost relevance and benefit to people at the grass-root level.

- c) Also, the analysis of the evaluation of residents of Ilorin Metropolis' level of satisfaction listening to *Eji Owuro* indicated that the respondents perceived the programme to be highly satisfied with a rating index of 4.62 (Very Highly Satisfactory), especially the item that stated that: 'Information provided by *Eji-Owuro* have been useful in understanding citizens' rights from the government' with 4.62 index. This is similar to the findings of Falade (2014) in a rural community in Ghana, and Mhagama (2015) in Malawi that community radio has helped the citizens to understand the governance and become satisfied with their community development and initiatives that promote inclusiveness.

- d) The assessment of the contributions of Gerin FM 95.5 on community development also shows that it contributed immensely to development at the grassroots with a mean index of 4.05. All the variables contributed to the mean, of particular interest is the value of the item that ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in this category: 'The station provides us with development indices in our community'. This is in line with the expectations of the NBC (2017, 9.5.1, p. 123); '...grassroots public service medium through which community members can contribute and foster civic responsibility and integration'. The finding also aligns with Yalala (2015), Wabwize

(2013) and Johnson and Rajadurai (2020) all of who examined the activities of Community Radio in India and West Africa and concluded that community radio played a significant role in community developments.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis above, the following recommendations are advanced:

- i. Efforts should be geared towards sustaining and enhancing the reputations of the programme and the station to retain and further enhance listenership and position it as the best programme of choice in the metropolis.
- ii. Efforts should be put in place to ensure that the level of satisfaction with the programme does not wane but is up-scaled so that it remains relevant to the listeners in the face of rising competition in the broadcast environment.
- iii. The station should not derail from its focus on broadcasting for the grassroots in pursuit of monetary benefits to be relevant in the dissemination of information on developmental strides for the growth of the communities in the metropolis.
- iv. Governments across the country should appoint desk officers to monitor and harvest inputs from the populace on community participatory programmes for policy formation as well as a basis for needs assessment.

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