

COMMUNITY RADIO AND ITS PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS THROUGH PROGRAMMING

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Abstract

There is hardly any society, community or state that can function properly today without the mass media because they keep people informed with what is going on around the world. There is no gainsaying that the mass media have played critical and important roles in the developmental process of the society through programmes on health, politics, agriculture, gender, environmental issues among others. However, community radio is a radio licensed solely for the purpose of bringing people at the grassroots to limelight, so that their voices can be heard, their plights addressed, their interests preserved and other issues affecting them from time to time. This research paper thus, seeks to examine the overview of community radio in Nigeria, its history and role, nature of programming and how it has contributed to development in the society vis-à-vis two selected community radio in Kwara State. The research was anchored on the development media and democratic-participant theories of the media. It further employed a survey research method to sample 320 respondents that are residents of the two communities that housed the selected community radio. However, findings showed that some of the programmes are not adequately contributing to societal development, and they do not give access to community members to contribute to programme contents. Thus, the study concluded that community radio station is central to the developmental process of the society, as such, the need for the operators of these stations to stick to its mandate of establishment in terms of programme contents (programming), while recommending the need for NBC and other regulators to adequately monitor community radio stations so that they can strictly comply with developmental mandate.

Keywords: Community, Community Radio, Development, Programme, Programming.

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Introduction

Community radio as opposed to the public-owned radio is oriented towards grassroots development and basically meant to be non-profit oriented in nature. This form of radio ownership is independent from government and political control, and is targeted towards issues of immediate and special relevance to a particular community (Ojomo, Tejuoso, Awofadeju & Ilesanmi, 2015). Moreover, according to UNESCO (2012), community radio is meant to serve the community of its base, and in most cases; its

programme contents must be produced in language or languages commonly used, spoken or understood by the community. However, community in this context extends beyond geographical descriptions, to people (individual or groups) with common interests, goals or ambitions that have all come to identify themselves as one.

In the views of Babatunde, Folorunsho and Olayinka (2019), the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) in its 2003 revised Code clearly states the role and purpose of community broadcast

stations as the third tier of broadcasting in Nigeria, as only the public and private owned were initially recognised. The Code further made provisions for the establishment of community broadcasting which can be rural-based, campus-based and association-based. This according to Babatunde, et al. (2019) assigned community broadcast stations (radio and television) with dual roles; firstly as a medium of giving voice to the voiceless, and as a decentralised platform where everyone in the community can contribute to programme contents.

However, several issues have been raised as touching the exact role of community broadcasting in the developmental efforts of the society, as well as what its programme contents should reflect. As averred by Ajibade and Alabi (2017), stakeholders and experts in broadcasting have pinpointed various developmental roles that community radio is meant to serve, especially with the proliferation of community radio stations in Nigeria nowadays.

On the other hand, programme is the basics of broadcasting, as broadcast stations without good programmes will lose their audience base, potential and existing advertisers, as well as patronage from sponsors and critical stakeholders. According to Mboho (2015), programme is critical to the continuous existence/operations of a broadcast station, and as such, broadcasters should guide their programming jealously to avoid loss in revenue and decline credibility. This assertion laid credence to the importance of programming in broadcast stations (radio and television), irrespective of the category of ownership.

Moreover, research has been conducted so far on community broadcasting vis-à-vis radio or television and their influence on development. For instance, Babatunde et al. (2019) did a study on appraising the contributions of campus broadcasting to community development in Nigeria, but failed to examine how programme contents of community broadcasting have impacted development. Also, Ajibade and Alabi (2017) looked at issues and challenges of community radio in Nigeria, but did not take into cognisance the nature of programming of a typical community radio and how it has aided development. In the same vein, Ojomo, et al. (2015) in their study examined the need for community radio operations in Nigeria, by making a case for its proliferation, they did not however focused on the nature of programming a community radio should make. Therefore, this study seeks to expand the frontiers through the various gaps in the above studies, by examining the programme contents of Igbomina F.M Pamo-Isin and Radio TNT; both in Kwara State, and how they can impact societal development amidst its proliferation in the Nigerian nation.

Research Objectives

As a guide, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the nature of programmes available in the selected community radio?
2. To what extent has the programme contents of selected community radio influenced societal development?
3. What is the level of compliance of the selected community radio with NBC's policy on access and equity?

Review Of Literature Radio and Development

Radio is considered to be one of the most powerful information dissemination medium available to the mass communicator. It is considered to be one of the most effective for development communication purpose especially in the rural areas (Apuke, 2017). This is because radio waves are easily accessible and radio is believed to be the cheapest medium in terms of price and maintenance costs. As posited by Lerner (cited in Sani & Hadiza, 2020) the mass media, especially radio can serve as the means by which people of the third world could be influenced. An important consideration here is how the audiences perceived and are influenced by radio messages. Mass communication and development scholars such as Akinfeleye (2008), Asemah (2013) and Apuke (2017) were of the opinions that the mass media (in this case radio) constitutes both “cause” and “effect” of development where “cause” is the mass media programmes in terms of broadcast media messages, and “effects” is the response to the stimuli of messages. In addition to this, radio has some unique features which include portability, cheapness, universality and selectivity (Alao & Olayinka, 2016).

It is therefore not surprising that radio since invention has been used extensively by those in power and authority to influence and mobilize the masses. Furthermore, radio as a medium offers the audience the opportunity of voicing their opinions on political and social events, these coupled with the positions of Anyadike, Olemadi and Odoemelam (2015) on radio programmes, that consensus is easily reached and conflicts in the society is reduced at the barest minimum through radio and its programmes. In the views of Asemah et al., (2013), radio is effective not only for the sake of informing people, but also in creating awareness regarding many social issues and the need for social reformations, developing interest and initiating actions.

Also, Moemeka (2012) posits that creating awareness regarding new policies, developmental projects and programmes with new ideas helps in creating a positive climate for growth and development and widening the horizons of the people and enlighten them, thereby gradually changing their outlook towards life. However,

in Nigeria, radio penetrates the nooks and crannies of the country, and it is seen as a powerful medium for development; breaking the language barrier. It is the adaptability of this medium that qualifies it as ubiquitous or mostly available and accessible (Apuke, 2017).

Community Radio

In several countries across the globe, community radio stations were established as a kind of response to various agitations and struggles on socio-economic and cultural issues. In Nigeria, the establishment of community radio as the third tier of broadcasting is connected to the yearnings of the masses that the federal government should facilitate its emergence base on the need to create a more pluralistic media system that will engage rural development (Dunu & Ugbo 2007). Thus, the central mandate of community radio is to see to the promotion of grassroots development through the people, and bring positive changes in their living conditions and environments.

Community radio according to the African Charter on Broadcasting (cited in Ajibade & Alabi, 2017) is the radio which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, and which pursues a social development agenda that is non-profit in nature. Also, Canfield and Moore quoted in Babatunde, et al. (2019) opined that community radio are those radio stations which operates within a rural settings (community) and targets the entire members of the community by giving them a voice through which they can be heard, thereby bringing development to such community. They stressed that community radio stations are developmental-oriented in nature, hence the need for them to ensure development-driven programmes are aired at all times. This according to Ojomo, et al. (2015) will give members of the host community a sense of belonging and serves as a platform for their information needs.

Community Radio Stations in Nigeria

After several years of agitation by community broadcasting advocates, development scholars and notable stakeholders, the NBC which is the official regulator of broadcasting in Nigeria finally recognised the establishment of a community radio with it set-up quite different from that of campus radio. As averred by Alabi and Ajibade (2017), President Goodluck Jonathan in the year 2015; approved community radio licenses for over 17 communities as the host of grassroots radio stations. Thus; Lavun Community Radio in Niger State became the first to hit the airwaves, while other licensed community radio followed suit. Presently in Nigeria, there are over 100 functional community radio stations spread across the six (6) geo-

political zones of the country, below are some of the licensed community radio stations:

1. Lavun, 95.5 F.M, Kutigi, Niger State
2. Ekimogun Community Radio 100.1 F.M, Ondo State
3. Igbomina Community Radio Initiative, Igbomina 90.9 F.M, Pamo Isin, Kwara State
4. Agba Community Radio Initiative, Choice 93.3 F.M, Benue State
5. Radio TNT, Ijagno, Kwara State
6. Ekimogun Community Radio, Eki 100.9 F.M, Ondo State
7. Ondo Development Committee, Kakaaki 100.1 F.M, Ondo State

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the development media and democratic-participant theories. The development media theory is based on the core assumption that media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with national established policy. According to Asemah, Nwamuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017), the theory o development media can be fine-tuned to fit perfectly into the situation of developing countries such that the media is obliged to accept and assist in carrying out special development tasks of national integration, socio-economic modernisation, promotion of literacy, and cultural creativity. They stressed that this theory has already provided for the concepts of development communication and developmental-oriented journalism. Thus, asserting the views of McQuail (1987) that freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society, especially the area of its operational base. In line with the notion of the development media theory, community radio stations by their establishment are mandated to give priority in their contents to national, regional and local languages, cultures, norms and beliefs.

On the other hand, the democratic-participant theory emphasised on the basis of society and on the value of horizontal rather than vertical (top-down) communication flow (Asemah et al., 2017). The basic assumption of this theory is that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers. Moreover, Asemah et al. (2017) emphasised that the theory of democratic-participant challenged the dominance of centralised, commercialised, state-controlled and even professionalised media, thereby making a case for broadcast stations (radio) that would be small in scale, non-commercial and often committed to a cause.

Thus, the above two theories present community radio as a platform for development by

giving voice to the voiceless and ensure the under-reported are heard. Also, these theories laid credence to the role of the media institution in a developing country like Nigeria, by ensuring that the media is central to the developmental efforts of the society.

Funding and Nature of Programmes in Selected Radio Stations

Igbomina F.M, Pamo-Isin

Community radio exists to serve the needs of the community, as the community is the entity that forms its audience. The community members participate in the planning, designing and implementation of programmes and activities of the station. Igbomina F.M Pamo-Isin and Radio TNT were the two community radio stations selected for this study. The management operation of the station is done by volunteer members in the various communities in Igbomina land; programmes are produced and broadcasted by these volunteers who are called 'volunteer broadcasters'. In its programming and other activities, Igbomina F.M focuses on events, people, issues, trends and other things affecting the Igbomina people and other neighbouring ones. Starting with about 6 hours of transmission daily, the station now does 12 hours non-stop transmission. It carries community-oriented issues which is capable of bringing development to communities around. Part of these community developmental projects include facilitating farming initiatives through luring people back to farm, this is aimed towards solving the problem of food insufficiency and bringing relevant agricultural aids to the grassroots. Organising health talks, free health services and education to the poorest of the poor; this is done in partnership with health service NGOs. On the area of funding, Igbomina F.M is an enterprise which generates income through savings. Such savings are not profits and are not shared among volunteer staff members, rather; they are ploughed back into its operations to grow and sustain the station.

Radio TNT, Ijagbo

Radio TNT, Ijagbo Kwara State got its license as a community broadcast station in the year 2018. The station, though community-oriented uses volunteer staff for its operations and as well aired programmes that are developmental-based. Some of these programmes include: Health, Agriculture, Gender and Environmental issues. Also, political talks and discussions are always prioritised as and when due. The station however, is deviating in the aspect of commercialisation and management, as a professional person is put in charge of its management, while airing of programmes from third parties are commercialised.

Methodology

The research design that was used for this study

is survey method, since it is believed to be the most suitable method that can be used to seek opinion of selected group of people on a particular issue. Survey as emphasised by Tejumaiye (2017) involves drawing up some set of questions on various aspect of a subject to which selected members in a given population will react to. Thus, in accordance with the research design, the population of this study are audience of the two selected community radio stations who are selected through available sampling technique. However, the NBS (2017) population projection puts the two communities that housed the selected stations (Pamo-Isin and Ijagbo) at 28,642.

However, based on the population projection of the two communities, which is put at 28,642, the Taro Yarmane formula was employed to arrive at 392 respondents that were eventually used for the study, and who are members of the community were the two stations are based. Furthermore, available sampling was used as a technique, while questionnaire serves as data instrument. On the validity and reliability, expert check and pilot test was conducted through administering of the data instrument to ten percent of the sample size, so as to ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. However, the instrument was administered through online distribution of questionnaire, while data was analysed through the use of SPSS version 27.0 and results presented in frequency tables and percentage score.

FINDINGS

The study adopted survey research method, while a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 392 respondents selected as sample for the study, of which the total 320 copies were correctly filled and found suitable for further analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data on respondents' Gender, Age, Income Level and Employment Status were obtained. Results are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Respondents Demography

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	124	38.8%
Female	196	61.2%
Total	320	100%
Age		
18-25	30	9.4%
26-35	78	24.4%
36-45	126	39.4%
46-55	74	23.1%
56 & Above	12	3.8%
Total	320	100%
Income Level		
Low income	227	71.0%
Middle income	82	25.6%
High income	11	3.4%
Total	320	100%

Employment status		
Self-employed	222	69.4%
Paid employment	66	20.6
Unemployed	32	10.0%
Total	320	100%

The table above indicates that many of the respondents (61.2%) were female, only 38.8% of them were male. Therefore, majority of the respondents are female. Also, majority of the respondents (39.4%) are of age 36-45, other age categories have lesser percentage. In addition, overwhelming majority of them (71.0%) are low income earners. In the same vein, majority of the respondents (69.4%) are self-employed, while (10.0%) are unemployed. Therefore, substantial numbers of the respondents are female, age 36-45, low income earners and self-employed.

Programmes Available

Data on the nature of programmes available to audience of the selected radio stations were obtained. Results are presented in the table below:

Table 2: Responses on available programmes

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Community-focused		
Yes	195	60.9%
No	36	11.3%
Partially	89	27.8%
Total	320	100%
Frequency		
Very Often	72	22.5%
Often	194	60.6%
Occasionally	36	11.3%
Rarely	18	5.6%
Total	320	100%
Language of Instruction		
Indigenous	186	58.1%
English	108	33.8%
Others	26	8.1%
Total	320	100%

Table 2 above indicates that many of the respondents (60.9%) emphasised that the programmes available were community-focused; 60.6% of the programmes were often aired; while 58.1% of the programmes were produced in indigenous language.

Programme Contents Influence on Societal Development

Data on influence of programme contents of the selected radio stations on societal development of the host communities were obtained. Results are presented in the table below:

Table 3: Responses on Programme Influence

Items	Level of Agreement (%)					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
The various programmes aired by the stations have impacted positively on the	31.0	28.5	21.0	13.0	6.5	100%
The programmes are relevant to the activities of the host communities	15.5	32.5	25.5	15.5	11.0	100%
There is need for improvement in some of the programmes of the stations, so that they can contribute meaningfully to development of the society	27.0	31.0	24.0	13.0	5.0	100%

Table 3: Responses on Programme Influence

Items	Level of Agreement (%)					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
The various programmes aired by the stations have impacted positively on the host communities	31.0	28.5	21.0	13.0	6.5	100%
The programmes are relevant to the activities of the host communities	15.5	32.5	25.5	15.5	11.0	100%
There is need for improvement in some of the programmes of the stations, so that they can contribute meaningfully to development of the society	27.0	31.0	24.0	13.0	5.0	100%

The table above shows 31.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that programmes aired by the selected radio stations have impacted positively on the communities; 32.5% agreed that the programmes are relevant to the various activities of the host communities; while 31.0% agreed that there is need for improvement in some of the programmes, so that they can contribute meaningfully to societal development.

Compliance with NBC Policy of Access and Equity

Data on extent the selected radio stations comply with NBC's policy of access and equity were obtained. Results are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Responses on compliance with NBC policy

Items	Level of Agreement (%)					Total
	SA	A	N	D	SD	
The radio stations do air programmes that affect local communities	28.5	43.5	11.0	16.5	8.5	100%
Members of the community have access to contribute to programme contents	10.5	14.0	17.5	39.0	19.0	100%
Most of the programmes reflect issues of societal concern	12.0	23.0	6.5	42.0	16.5	100%

The table above shows 43.5% of the respondents agreed that the selected radio stations do air programmes that affect the communities; 39.0% disagreed that members of the community have access to contribute to programme contents; while 42.0% also disagreed that most of the programmes reflect issues of societal concern.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the nature of programmes available in the selected community radio?

Table 2 of the analysis answered this question, as 60.9% emphasised that programmes available were community-focused; 60.6% of the programmes were

often aired; while 58.1% of the programmes were produced in indigenous language. Therefore, the various programmes available on the selected community radio stations are community-focused, aired at often times and are in indigenous language.

Research Question 2: To what extent has the programme contents of selected community radio influenced societal development?

Table 3 of the analysis above answered this question, 31.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that programmes aired by the selected radio stations have impacted positively on the communities; 32.5% agreed that the programmes are relevant to the various activities of the host communities; while 31.0% agreed that there is need for improvement in some of the programmes, so that they can contribute meaningfully to societal development. Therefore, it can be deduced that the programmes aired by the two radio stations have positively impacted on the host communities and are quite relevant to their activities. However, the respondents are of the opinion that there should be improvement in some of the programmes, so that they can contribute to societal development.

Research Question 3: What is the level of compliance of the selected community radio with NBC's policy on access and equity?

As shown in Table 4, as 43.5% of the respondents agreed that the selected radio stations do air programmes that affect the communities; 39.0% disagreed that members of the community have access to contribute to programme contents; while 42.0% also disagreed that most of the programmes reflect issues of societal concern. Therefore, it is evident that the selected community radio air programmes that affect the local communities, but do not give access to community members to contribute to programme contents. Also, some of the programmes do not reflect issues that concern the local communities.

Discussion of Findings

Having analysed the various responses to the research questions, the following are the key findings:

1. Various programmes available on the selected community radio stations are community-focused, aired at often times and are in indigenous language. Therefore, this finding is in tandem with the UNESCO (2012) recommendations that community radio should serve the community of its base, and in most cases; its programme contents must be produced in language or languages commonly used, spoken or understood by the community.
2. The programmes aired by these radio stations have positively impacted on the host communities and are quite relevant to their

activities. Thus, this finding is supported by the work of Ojomo (2015) which stresses that community radio stations are developmental-oriented in nature, hence the need for them to ensure development-driven programmes are aired at all times.

3. Some of the programmes on the selected community radio are not adequately contributing to societal development. This finding does not agree with the position of Mboho (2015) which avers that programme is critical to the continuous existence/operations of a broadcast station, and as such, community radio operators should guide their programming jealously to avoid loss in revenue and loss of audience.
4. The selected community radio aired programmes that affect the local communities, but do not give access to community members to contribute to programme contents. Therefore, this finding negates the views of Babatunde, Folorunsho and Olayinka (2019) that community broadcast stations (radio and television) have the dual role of serving as a medium for giving voice to the voiceless, and as a decentralised platform where everyone in the community can contribute to programme contents.

Conclusion

Community broadcasting no doubt has come to stay in Nigeria, owing to the purpose and functions it is mandated to serve. This research has carefully examined community radio and its pivotal role in societal development. Moreover, the programme contents of these radio stations are meant to be central to development by ensuring that those aspects that have been downplayed and not properly reported are brought to the limelight. Also, there is absence of professionalism and centralization in community radio, hence the hegemonic tendency should be jettisoned. It is however expedient for operators of community radio to stick to the mandate of establishment of this tier of broadcasting, by ensuring that their programme contents are critical to developmental needs of the people. Likewise, these radio stations should strictly comply with the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) policies, especially in the aspect of giving access and equity to members of the community that housed the radio station.

Recommendations

1. Managers and operators of community radio stations should look for alternative sources of income, in order to solve the challenges of funding which is critical towards having effective programme contents.

2. There is need for constant reviews of some of the programmes of these stations, so that they can positively contribute to grassroots development.
3. The NBC and other regulators of broadcasting should adequately monitor community radio stations, so that they can totally comply with their developmental mandate, especially in giving access to members of the community to contribute to programme contents.

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