



## EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY MEDIA MANAGEMENT IN LAGOS, NIGERIA.

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined Nigerian women's level of involvement in community media as regard to programme or message content, management and control. Community media should be that powerful tool in enabling women's participation in decision-making on matters that impact to their communities, on matters that impact to their families and to them personally. And not forgetting that women's participation in community media can possibly lead to their broader civil and political participation. In conducting this study, the survey method was adopted using a questionnaire and conducting an in-depth interview to gather data from the three selected communities in Lagos state, Nigeria. Thus, this study found out that the level of involvement of women in the management, programme content and control of community media in the three selected communities was low and implication for development communication is that key developmental issues may be unresolved if women are not integrated into managerial positions in community media.

**Keywords:** Community Media; Media Participation; Programme Content; Women in Media Management.

### Introduction

Community media makes communication easy for people of a community that has been marginalized to integrate common ideas and philosophy. It serves as a voice to the powerless, poor and marginalized by promoting dialogue and cooperation by helping them to identify their true-life situations and challenges which in the process facilitate favourable dialogue, exchange of ideas, information and knowledge. They are true reflection of communities and they are integrated with practices of community life.

Masilela (1995) defines community media as alternative media, distinguished by their ownership and management structure, their financing, their regulation, their programming and their policy stance on issues of access and participation. More so, they are community owned and managed through duly elected representatives or direct and voluntary community participation.

In addition, Opubor (2000), stated that the bottom line in discussing community media is an understanding of the nature of the community in which underlies media practice, access and ownership. This means that the socio-economic and geographic environment of a community determines the type of community media that operates in that community. Thus, community media is regarded as the integral part of the communication system that serves the community.

Community media such as radio evokes a grassroots attitude toward the free flow of opinions and ideas that seeks to educate, entertain and engage community members in the larger political sphere in every society (UNESCO, 2014). Community media operate within a community with the intention to serve and build the community by active commitment of local actors. The council of Europe recognizes the value of community media as an important source of local content, media pluralism, social inclusion that further promotes intercultural dialogue (Chapman et al., 2020).

Community media are designed and set as a collective initiative within the community but there are gaps in the management, control and ownership of these media organizations in the community just as they are perceived as producers and contributors of media content (Pavarala, et al., 2006; Bau, 2009). Women have continuously presented themselves as supportive and active members of the community. The study conducted in Fiji showed the influence of social agency in the participation of women in community film production and found out that the women made significant contributions to both their families and the immediate community (Harris 2009).

Therefore, this study aims to explore community the level of awareness about the various community media types among the residents of three local government areas in Lagos state. Secondly, to find out women representation in the management structure of the community media in Lagos state. Lastly, to explore the level of women's participation in the activities and programmes organized by community media in the selected local government areas in Lagos state.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent are women in Alausa, Ikorodu and Lagos Island communities aware of the contents of their community media?
2. What is the representation of women in the management structure of the community media located in the three selected local government areas of Lagos state?
3. What is the level of contribution of women in Alausa, Ikorodu and Lagos Island communities towards planning and dissemination of the messages of their community media?

### **Literature Review**

The term 'community', as it is used in this context denotes two things; first, as a geographical territory or a group of people belonging to a particular cultural or political entity (Alumuku, 2006) and secondly, shared interests, tastes and values (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). A village, a district or neighbourhood qualifies to be 'community' because it constitutes 'geographical collection of people'. As with regard to 'community as shared interests', people may be living far apart but connected by similar interests, for example, the love of music, football or religious belief.

### **Community Media**

Community media are representations of the media for use by the community, for whatever purpose the community resolves to do with them. They are media in which the community members participate as planners and performers. Explaining further, Oso (2003) says community media serves as the voice of the community,

articulating their interests, in their own language and promoting a community in a dialogue with itself and the outside world.

Berrigan (1981) describes community media as adaptations of media for use by the community, for whatever purposes the community decides. He further explained that the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and European Commission recognize community media as a crucial element in a vibrant and democratic media system. Karikari (2000) describes community media as the language, symbolism and representations that must be that of the least privileged or oppressed people so as to engage them in permanent dialogue for change.

### **Democratic Participant Media Theory**

This theory points out the fundamental principle that the audience is an important factor in the communication and development process and as such the media should serve the needs, interest and aspirations of the audience. McQuail (1987), formulated this theory with the basic postulation that individual citizens and minority groups have right of access to media and right to be served by the media, according to their own determination of needs. Also, that groups, organizations and local communities should have their own media.

This theory finds relevance to this study as it advocates that individual citizens and minorities have right to communicate and access media channels, it is therefore pertinent to note that gender biases should be erased from the policies and ideologies of the community media. More so, community media should allow women get more involved in the programme content, messages, management and control as a reflection of the postulations of this theory.

### **Gender theory in Community Media**

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women. It also refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men (Chen, 2003). These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context (Itzin & Newman, 1995).

Einsiedel, (2000) explained that the contributions of the female half of the world population in every field of development must be stressed. Moffat, et al (1991) also explains that every development funding agency seeks to address gender issues and to ensure women's participation in an often male-dominated developing world. Earlier research focused on how to help women get into more central positions "in a man's world." Increasingly now the emphasis is on the structural, institutional changing of the world so that all essentialist conceptions of gender, race, ethnicity, age, and other identities are questioned, leading to a more human world of equal citizens (Chakravarty, 2007).

Gender is the identification of the sexes whether male or female and usually influenced by cultural factors like religion, politics social factors and education. In developmental communication, gender, more specially, refers to women or the female sex. Gender differentiation will therefore, involved a set of expectations

of people's abilities and potentials days on their sex. More so, Fafunwa (1974) explains that, the traditional roles of women in Africa are mainly that of childbearing, housekeeping and the sustenance of agricultural activities. Gender is the classification that society makes based on genetic and biological factors.

In addition, gender theory is the ideology that the oppression of women comes from the gender biased society we live in. Costa (1994) defines Gender as a social construct, a dichotomy that exists in all societies. It is used to describe the socially constructed differences between men and women, referring not only to individual identity and personality, but also at the symbolic level, to cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and, at the structural level, to the sexual division of labour in institutions and organizations.

The issue of gender in media organization will always propose that personal characteristics will influence content of new information in the media organization. In the study conducted by Omenugha et al., (2013), revealed that women's access to the media is also impeded by cultural and family demands. They further explained that Nigerian men could go into the pubs or friends' houses to watch television while such freedom of movement may not be accepted for women especially in northern Nigeria where some of the women are put in *purdah*. For other women who may not contend with *purdah*, time constraints resulting from heavy burden of work inside and outside the home affect their access to the media.

More so, in another study conducted by AMARC Asia-Pacific and International-Manila (Miglioretto, 2006), a survey of twenty-three (23) community radio stations and production groups in Asia-Pacific examined women's programming and women's participation in community radio. The survey revealed that almost all of the community radio stations (21) have between one to five hours of weekly programs by and for women. These programme cover issues such as women's rights, health care, violence against women, literacy, and success stories of women in society. However, women make up only 28% of leadership positions but this is still comparatively better than in mainstream media where women occupy only 3 to 5% of leadership positions, as reported by the International Federation of Journalists in 2001. In technical positions, women make up only 28% as well. Not surprisingly, there were considerably more women administrative staff and producers at 44% each.

Thus, theories of gender and media such as gender theory, democratic participant theory and development media theory are relevant to this study as they explain the operations, involvement in media programmes as well as cultural issues connected to women's participation in community media.

## **Methodology**

The method of research employed in this study includes both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach involved the use of the survey method in which the questionnaire was the instrument of data collection. The sample size for this study was one hundred and twenty (120) in which forty set of questionnaire were equally administered to the three areas of study i.e Alausa, Ikorodu and Lagos Island using a simple random technique to distribute the questionnaire to the respondents. These three areas were purposively selected for this study because they had vibrant community media presence in Lagos state.

The researcher personally administered and collected the questionnaire from the respondents in Alausa, Ikorodu and Lagos Island communities of Lagos State within a period of four weeks during the field work of this research study. More so, data was collected for the interview session with the use of a mini tape recorder.

For the qualitative aspect of this study, an in-depth interview was conducted with the editors of three community media in Lagos using an open-ended interview guide. The three interviewees were purposively selected from Alausa Community Radio, Alausa, Island News, Lagos Island and Factor Community Newspaper, Ikorodu.

In the quantitative analysis of the data obtained, the researcher adopted the presentation of response of respondents in tabular form and percentage analysis. In this section, the data collected through the questionnaire are classified, processed and interpreted. The forty (40) copies of questionnaire were distributed in the three local government areas. In Lagos Island local government area, thirty –two (32) were returned while eight (8) were not returned, given an effective return rate of 80%. Forty (40) questionnaires were also administered in Alausa Ikeja and all were returned duly filled. Similarly, forty (40) questionnaire were administered in Ikorodu, out of which twenty-eight (28) were completed and returned, representing an effective return rate of 70%.

The findings of this research are presented and discussed. The gender categories of respondents. The number of respondents based on gender were 70 male and 30 female. While the age structure composition of the respondents varied from 18 years to 50 years. Most of the respondents (50%) fall between the ages of 18 – 25 years. Ages 42 – 49 years have the least number (7%) of respondents. The religion practised by the respondents. Most of the respondents representing 77% practice Christianity, 22% practice Islam while only 1% of the total respondents practice African traditional religion. The data on the marital status of the respondents reveals that 25% are married, 73% are single while 2% are divorced. None of the respondents was separated.

Information on the educational background of respondent reveals that are primary school certificate holder amongst the respondents, 23% hold secondary school certificate, 48% possess university degree, 13% are professional degree holders. The remaining 15% have National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND), technical school certificate and certificate in education (NCE).

The occupation distribution of the respondents shows that majority are students representing 40% of the respondents. Self-employed represents 13%, traders represent 18%, artisans represent 3%, business executives represent 7% and other occupations represent 3% of the total respondents.

**Table 1: Awareness of Community Media in Communities**

No.	Question	Yes %	No %	Total %
1	Are you aware of any community media in your community?	90	10	100
3	Are you aware of any programme, ideology or philosophy or any cause these community media promote?	87	13	100

**Source: field study, 2020**

From table 1, 90% of the respondents are aware of the community media in their community while 10% are not. The table also shows that 87% of the respondents are aware of the programmes, ideologies or philosophies or any cause promoted by their community media. There is a high level of awareness among the respondents.

More so, 57% of the respondents are involved in the management and control of the programme content of their community media while 43% are not involved. More of the respondents are involved in the management and control of the programme content of their community media. 33% of the respondents have issues that require attention of the community media while 67% do not have any issue that requires attention of the community media.

**Table 2: Participation in Community Media Content**

No.	Question	Yes %	No %	Total %
5	Have you ever participated in any of these programmes or activities organized by any community media?	53	47	100
10	Are you involved in the management and control of the programme content of your community media?	57	43	100
15	Do you have any issue that requires the attention of the community media in your community?	33	67	100
17	Have you ever benefited from the programmes and activities carried out by the community media in your community?	83	17	100

**Source: field study, 2020**

The table 2 shows that 83% benefited from the programmes and activities carried out by the community media in their community while 17% have not benefited. Thus, the programme and activities carried out by the community media have benefitted most of the respondents. Hence, the contribution of women in Alausa, Ikorodu and Lagos Island communities towards planning and dissemination of the messages of their community media is low.

From the various findings, revealed that women, regardless of the high level of awareness of their community media, have low interest and contribute little to the content of their community media.

The findings from this study further elaborate the cultural imbalances in the Nigerian society that have made women and children marginalized to so many developmental benefits on a national level. In the traditional media organizations in Nigeria, there is a great level of male dominance in the ownership, management and control. For instance, the editorial board is usually headed and mostly constituted by the male gender as other

less serious beats like fashion, gossips, lifestyles are left in the hands of women. This common practice has spread out widely not leaving out the community media. Women in such media organizations only rise to the rank of entertainment and lifestyle editor.

More so, from the interview discussions with the director of programmes, Alausa community radio, Alausa, the publisher of Island News, Lagos Island and editor of the Factor community newspaper, Ikorodu. It was also revealed that all the three persons were male, the editorial team of these community media comprised more of men than women. For instance, in the Factor community newspaper, there is only one female team member.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this study reveal that there is low women's participation in the management, programme content and control of community media in their immediate environment. The presence of Nigerian women in the media is inhibited by the major key players – journalists, media owners, and governmental bodies – who are still non-gender sensitized. Therefore, lobbying and sensitizing them on gender issues must continue. Nigerian media key players should realize that the exclusion of women implies an exclusion of the majority of Nigerians who are trapped in a cycle of poverty.

There is the urgent need to make the media accessible to more people. More so, there is the need for the reorientation in the organizational patterns of community media especially the broadcast media. Government should evolve and implement programmes and strategies to actually support ownership of media by communities and interested bodies. Community media should also be strengthened through community and people oriented rather than individually oriented programmes. Evidently, women are stereotyped within community media. Women also lack access to decision-making in the community media sector.

## **Recommendations**

Today, women have become one of the potent forces of change, causing upheavals in the staid, in waters of smug male oriented society. Modern communication techniques such as radio, video, telephone and television can be a great force for women's emancipation if it is utilized for promoting a critical consciousness on the women's questions. But it can be source of powerful support to the force of status quo, to conservative and revivalist values and practices and to annihilation of women's personality and identity.

The researcher proposes the following recommendations in support of women's involvement in community media management:

1. Gender specific programmes can be very effective in promoting attitude and behaviour change when done well. Programmes focusing on issues important to women are likely to appeal to women listeners and therefore have high female audience, this will in turn increase the level of awareness among community members
2. Women should voluntarily come out to participate in programmes and activities organized by these community media groups so that issues pertaining to their health and well-being would be catered for.

Since community media serves as a voice to the oppressed and voiceless, women should find the community media in their locality as a voice for them.

3. This study further recommends that community media should be gender sensitive irrespective of their organizational ideologies and cultural value by assigning more managerial functions to women in the community media management structure. Women's involvement opens a space for a more participatory, dialogical, nondirective, and horizontal communication, which enables high level community media content production.

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