

# Role Of Radio Campaign Messages In Shaping Electoral Participation Among Young Voters

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the role of radio campaign messages in shaping electoral participation among young voters in Oyo State. The population of the study comprises of students from the department of Mass Communication, the Polytechnic, Ibadan. The Yamane (1967) formulae was used to determine the sample size was arrived at One hundred and Twenty (120) while the study made use of survey research design and adopted a research questionnaire as a research instrument. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency tables were used to analyze the data. The result of the study revealed that young voters are aware of various political party messages that are disseminated before to elections and frequently listen to radio stations that broadcast political campaigns. In addition, a significant percentage also reported hearing election-related jingles and radio announcements on a regular basis. Furthermore, the study revealed that radio provides young people with clear and accessible ways to understand national concerns, party policies and programs, and political issues. The study recommends the need for government and NGOs to actively and persistently make use of radio programmes to encourage young people to participate in election.*

**Keywords:** Campaign messages, Electoral participation, Radio, Election, Young voters

## Introduction

Nigeria's media landscape has changed dramatically in recent decades, notably in terms of political communication and public engagement. Radio is one of the most accessible and important types of media, particularly in areas with low literacy levels or limited access to other forms of media, such as the Internet. Radio has long been recognized as a tool for development communication. According to this school of thought, the ideal radio broadcasting service fosters the spread of public information, creates awareness, and encourages participation in the topics being discussed.

The aforementioned perspective was bolstered by researchers such as Chapman, Blench, Kranjac-Berisavljevic & Zakariah (2003), and Nazari & Hasbullah (2010), who noted that radio broadcasting is a useful means of reaching the people and promoting involvement in the development process. Radio broadcasting is rapidly becoming more interactive than it was previously, claim Etineagbedia (2014) and Oji (2011a). In most parts of the world, it is seen to be a means of spreading information and a platform for citizens to express their opinions on issues of public concern. In his 2005 article "In Media in 'Globalizing' Africa: What Prospect for Democratic Communication?" Aginam claims that radio broadcast is the most widely used mass communication medium in Sub-Saharan Africa.

To bolster his arguments, the author used the fact that 80% of Sub-Saharan Africans reside in rural areas. Aginam went on to argue that due to the low literacy rate in Africa, the existence of multilingual states, and the extensive usage of radio broadcast media, radio has a unique status as a communication medium. Radio is quite popular in Africa. Eighty percent of Africans utilize radio due to its cost, portability, and general acceptance, according to Myers (2008). Radio is the main medium that politicians use in many underdeveloped countries. McChesney (2015). Odunola, Babafemi, and Lois (2015) state that radio has unlimited access since it gets around "the restriction posed by electricity availability, as well as restrictions imposed by distance and illiteracy."

## Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's large youth population and numerous voter education campaigns, youth electoral participation remains uneven (INEC, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). In Nigeria, radio remains one of the most dependable and easily accessible sources of political information, particularly for young people living in rural and semi-urban areas with limited access to digital media (Akinfeleye, 2008; Ojebode, 2018). Research has shown that radio campaign messaging, particularly talk shows, jingles, and voter education programs, can influence political knowledge and voter turnout (McQuail, 2010; Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013).

Asemah, Nwammuo, and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017), as well as Okoro and Nwafor (2013), found that there was little influence on actual voting behavior. Nonetheless, there is mixed evidence about the direct impact of radio campaign messages on teenage voter turnout. Instead of investigating how specific message features such as framing, believability, frequency, and language influence

young voters' political ideas and involvement, the bulk of Nigerian studies currently in print focus on media exposure in general (Entman, 1993; Oso, 2014). Furthermore, there has been little emphasis on how radio campaign message interacts with or competes with social media platforms, which are increasingly affecting Nigerian youth political engagement (Adeyanju & Harcourt Whyte, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2022).

As a result, there is little empirical evidence available to policymakers, broadcasters, and electoral stakeholders to develop radio campaign message that effectively motivates young people to continue voting (INEC, 2023; Ojebode, 2018).

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the role of radio campaign messages in shaping electoral participation among young voters in Ibadan North local government, Oyo State. The secondary objectives are to:

- i. Determine the extent to which young voters are exposed to radio campaign messages during election periods
- ii. Examine the influence of radio campaign messages on the political awareness of young voters.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Appraising Radio as a Tool for Raising Public Awareness**

For stakeholders to increase awareness and promote involvement in a variety of facets of life, broadcasting is essential. Roskin, Cord, Medeiros, and Jones (2003) claim that the media simultaneously reaches millions of people and has a major impact on politics worldwide. Furthermore, Ojebode (2003) found that Radio Kaduna successfully encouraged formerly nomadic nomads to participate in nomadic education through its program Don Makiyae Ruga, with roughly 83% of respondents saying that radio influences their enrollment in nomadic education classes. Kaid (2004) asserts that an assessment of the impact of media messages was the first step in political communication.

Tham, Wenn, Ong, and Lim (2020) and Aririguzoh (2011) found that radio broadcasts have a substantial impact on listeners during election campaigns and the delivery of candidate manifestos. Newton (2009) and Okinda, Nyambuga, and Ojwang (2020) both accept that radio, like other mass media, has an impact on politics and government, but they argue that this impact is modified by a variety of intervening factors. Durante and Gutierrez (2014) argue that characteristics other than radio can influence people's knowledge, consciousness, and participation in political activities. Citizens' political mobilization is thus influenced by their exposure to diverse sources of information about political action, resources, perceived community advantages, and other personal characteristics.

#### **Broadcasting and Political Mobilization**

The 1990 Arusha Declaration on Popular Participation, Development, and Transportation was prompted by the overall lack of interest in third-world countries' development initiatives. This resulted from third-world countries' inability to garner public support and involvement for their political, health, and economic public programs. This lack of support was ascribed to authoritarian liberal democratic media ownership and control systems, which prevent the media from promoting public engagement and promoting development initiatives. Additionally, there was a lack of national ideological trust, which is required to provide grassroots development participation the boost it needs (Oji, 2018).

Several Nigerians firmly believe that their votes are meaningless, that politicians will be politicians no matter what they do, and that the selection of the nation's lawmakers will be determined by the power dynamics of the wealthy and well-known as well as the goodwill of the godfathers, not by the will of the general populace. According to Oji (2009), participatory communication is fundamentally a step toward a new development paradigm that prioritizes human liberation from all types of exploitation and marginalization. He adds that it promotes more thoughtful public discussion and government investigation into the type of data that the country and its people require in order to determine their social, political, and economic development path.

#### **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura (1977) developed Social Learning Theory, which holds that humans learn behaviors through imitation and observation. Listeners of radio programs may adopt political habits and attitudes that they observe during broadcasts. If "People and Politics" promotes active citizenship and involvement, radio broadcasts may inspire listeners to participate in political activities including voting, civic discourse, and community organizing. This theoretical framework uses Social Learning Theory to study the effectiveness of radio programs in promoting political awareness among young people. The study uses these ideas to investigate the

impact of radio as a political communication medium, as well as how it influences public awareness and political engagement. This approach serves as a starting point for researching how young people's media and political consciousness interact.

### Empirical Reviews

Obasi (2024) examines the effectiveness of the Magic FM radio show "People and Politics" in enhancing political consciousness in Abia State. Utilizing a review of relevant literature, including scholarly articles and reports on political advocacy, the research evaluates the program's impact on residents' political engagement. It identifies both benefits and drawbacks of the program in fostering political awareness and assesses factors that influence its effectiveness. The findings reveal that the program significantly contributes to developing informed and engaged citizens by promoting political awareness, civic participation, improving civic education, exposing corruption, and affecting voter behavior.

Orji et al. (2024) examined the perceptions of young people in Imo State regarding the influence of TRadio Nigeria's "Politics Nation-Wide" program on Permanent Voters' Card (PVC) collection. Utilizing the Agenda Setting theory and a descriptive survey method, the study surveyed 385 registered youth in the region. Results indicated that 50.8% of participants were exposed to the program, which positively influenced their attitudes towards PVC collection, reflected in a mean score of 3.11. However, other factors such as social media, opinion leaders, and family had a higher influence on PVC involvement, with a mean score of 3.37. Overall, radio political programs significantly impacted the attitudes of youth toward PVC registration and collection in Imo State.

### Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design method. The survey was utilized since it is suitable for getting information about participants' perspectives. To achieve this purpose, an online survey form was designed, specifically using the Google online survey form. This option was decided due to its user-friendly accessibility and convenience of use, as well as its ability to efficiently collect a large amount of data in a short period of time. The study's population consists of students from the Polytechnic of Ibadan's Mass Communication Department. A total of 120 students were given a study questionnaire, which was utilized to collect data. Data was collected mostly via a standardized questionnaire with closed-ended questions. This specific method was selected because it effectively and economically gathers large amounts of data while preserving the data source's confidentiality and homogeneity. The five-point Likert scale was therefore used in the questionnaire's development to measure participants' agreement with each statement. The scale contained a range of values, with 1 representing a significant degree of agreement and 5 representing a significant degree of disagreement. The Yamane formulae was used to determine the sample size was arrived at One hundred and Twenty (120). The quantitative data was processed, computed and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency tables were used to analyze the data.

### Data Analysis

**Table 1: The extent to which young voters are exposed to radio campaign messages during election periods**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
1	Young voters frequently listen to radio stations that broadcast political campaign messages during election periods	47 (39.2%)	69 (57.5%)	4 (3.3%)	-	-	3.68	1.73
2	Young voters are aware of different political party messages broadcast on the radio before elections	72 (60.0%)	40 (33.4%)	8 (6.7%)	-	-	3.49	1.68
3	Young voters often come across radio announcements or jingles related to election campaigns	31 (25.8%)	81 (67.5%)	8 (6.7%)	-	-	3.57	1.82
4	Young voters discuss political campaign messages they hear on the radio with friends or family	26 (21.7%)	87 (72.5%)	7 (5.8%)	-	-	3.71	1.76

5	Radio campaign messages influence the interest of young people in participating in elections	35 (29.2%)	79 (65.8%)	6 (5.0%)	-	-	3.44	1.48
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Table 1 reveals that a significant number of respondents perceive young voters as actively engaged with political campaign messages broadcast on the radio. Specifically, 57.5% agree that young voters frequently listen to such programs, with 39.2% strongly agreeing. A majority, 60.0%, strongly believe young voters are aware of various political party broadcasts, while 67.5% agree that they often encounter election-related jingles. Additionally, 72.5% agree that young voters discuss these messages, and 65.8% indicate that radio messages influence their interest in participating in elections. Overall, the results indicate that radio plays a considerable role in both exposing and encouraging young voter engagement in elections.

**Table 2: The influence of radio campaign messages on the political awareness of young voters.**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
1	Radio campaign messages help young voters understand the issues being discussed in Nigerian politics	28 (23.4%)	79 (65.8%)	13 (10.8%)	-	-	3.62	1.71
2	Through radio campaign messages, young voters learn about the policies and programmes of political parties	73 (60.8%)	39 (32.5%)	8 (6.7%)	-	-	3.81	1.74
3	Radio political programmes explain national issues in a way young people can easily understand	91 (75.8%)	21 (17.5%)	8(6.7%)	-	-	3.69	1.85
4	Radio campaign messages help young people form opinions on political and electoral issues	36 (30.0%)	74 (61.7%)	10 (8.3%)	-	-	3.19	1.53
5	Young people rely on radio as a source of information about political developments during elections	22 (18.4%)	88 (73.3%)	-	-	10 (8.3%)	3.95	1.66

Table 2 indicates strong support for radio campaign messages among respondents regarding their impact on young voters' understanding of Nigerian politics. Specifically, 65.8% agree that these messages enhance comprehension of political issues, while 60.8% believe they inform young voters about party policies. Additionally, 75.8% assert that radio programs clearly explain national issues, and 61.7% feel these messages assist in forming political opinions. Furthermore, 73.3% rely on radio for information during elections. Overall, the findings suggest that radio plays a vital role in increasing the political awareness of young voters, with minimal disagreement on its influence as a reliable source of electoral information.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study's findings revealed that young voters are aware of various political party messaging distributed prior to elections and routinely listen to radio stations broadcasting political campaigns. In addition, a sizable proportion reported hearing election-related jingles and radio announcements on a frequent basis. The data imply active participation in addition to exposure, as many respondents mentioned that young voters discuss radio campaign rhetoric with their friends and family. Similarly, data revealed a broad opinion that radio campaign message is critical in raising the political consciousness of young voters. The majority of respondents believe that radio provides young people with clear and accessible information on national concerns, party policies and programs, and political issues.

This demonstrates a progressive shift in young people's conduct and attitudes toward radio, as the bulk of this generation is computer aware and obtains information via social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so on. This conclusion complements the findings of Orji et al. (2024), who reported that Radio Nigeria's "Politics Nationwide" program had a beneficial impact on young people's views toward PVC collection.

### **Conclusion**

In Nigeria, radio encourages people to participate in politics by encouraging them to cast ballots, attend manifesto readings, choose candidates impartially, etc. It promotes rally attendance and knowledge of the decision-making process, both of which are crucial aspects of the election process. Young people are gradually participating in talk shows on radio which could be as a result of evolution and advancement in technology which has made it possible for live radio broadcast programs to be viewed on social media platforms like Facebook. This encourage young people to engage more in radio programs online in which various topics such as politics are discussed.

### **Recommendations**

- i. There is need for government and NGOs to actively and persistently make use of radio programmes to encourage young people to participate in election.
- ii. There is need for media houses to air more radio programmes that involve interactive sections such as call-ins, live polls and social media interaction programmes to encourage young people to participate in elections.

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