International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)
ISSN: 2643-9670
Vol. 10 Issue 7 July - 2026, Pages: 295-301

Radio Talk Shows and Citizen Participation in Local Governance: A Case Study of UBC West, Mbarara City

Mucunguzi Bazirio

Kampala International University

Abstract: *Interactive radio remains the principal infrastructure of political communication in sub-Saharan Africa, yet the conditions under which talk programming converts listening into civic action remain empirically underspecified. This study examined the influence of radio talk show characteristics on citizen participation in local governance at UBC West, a regional service of Uganda's state broadcaster, in Mbarara City. Adopting a positivist philosophy and cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 362 adult listeners selected through multistage sampling across the city's divisions and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression in SPSS version 26. Four programme dimensions were measured: accessibility, content relevance and agenda focus, interactivity and feedback mechanisms, and perceived credibility and independence. Accessibility recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.594$) while interactivity recorded the lowest ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.836$). All dimensions correlated significantly with citizen participation, with perceived credibility strongest ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$) and accessibility weakest ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$). The regression model was significant, $F(4, 357) = 71.28$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 42.9 per cent of variance, with credibility ($\beta = 0.301$) and interactivity ($\beta = 0.264$) dominant and accessibility contributing least ($\beta = 0.151$). The findings invert the implementation hierarchy: the best-delivered dimension predicts least, indicating that reach has been achieved while the conditions converting reach into participation remain unmet. The study contributes quantitative evidence to a literature dominated by ethnographic work, corroborating recent findings that community and public radio operate within bounded spaces where power asymmetries persist, and recommends institutionalising duty-bearer response, subsidising feedback channels, and protecting editorial independence.*

Keywords: **Radio talk shows; citizen participation; local governance; public sphere; media credibility; interactivity; UBC West; Mbarara City; Uganda.**

1.0 Introduction

Three decades of decentralisation reform across sub-Saharan Africa have produced persistent participatory deficits, with rural and peri-urban citizens systematically marginalised from the democratic processes those reforms were designed to open (Amadu, 2026). Where formal participatory structures underperform, mediated publics acquire heightened significance, and in the African context that mediation occurs overwhelmingly through radio. Interactive talk formats have accordingly been advanced as democratic infrastructure: communicative spaces in which citizens develop critical consciousness, deliberate on collective problems, and generate accountability pressure operating beyond electoral cycles (Amadu, 2026; Chiumbu and Motsaathebe, 2021).

The theoretical warrant derives from Habermas's public sphere, though contemporary African media scholarship engages that framework critically rather than deferentially. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) argue that the African public sphere has not been adequately theorised beyond Habermasian or Mouffean lenses, proposing instead an African multilingual public sphere in which linguistic hierarchy is constitutive of exclusion rather than incidental to it. Their analysis of Zimbabwean talk radio demonstrates that the dominance of major indigenous languages reproduces the marginalisation of minority ethnolinguistic groups within a format nominally open to all, a finding that extends Fraser's classic critique into the specific terrain of African broadcasting. Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) corroborate the linguistic mechanism from the opposite direction, showing that rural audience acceptance and participation in South African community radio is closely associated with indigenous language broadcasting, which invokes cultural affinity and supplies the social and linguistic resources through which listeners enter national dialogue.

Recent evidence complicates any straightforward mobilisation thesis. Amadu's (2026) ethnography of Simli Radio in Ghana's Kumbungu District finds that indigenous-language broadcasting does develop critical consciousness among marginalised citizens, and that public scrutiny platforms and institutionalised oversight sessions compel government responsiveness through reputational pressure. Yet the same study concludes that both consciousness-building and accountability mechanisms operate within bounded spaces where fundamental power asymmetries remain substantially unchanged, establishing what the author terms realistic expectations for community media's democratic capacity. Rassool (2024), examining Mauritian morning talk radio through discourse-theoretical analysis, similarly finds that phone-in programming mediates democratisation conflicts and engages popular cultural dynamics, but does so within an unequal context that the format registers rather than resolves.

A parallel body of work identifies the material and social stratification of access. Grätz (2024) documents that Beninese call-in shows are dominated by frequent callers, the grogneurs, who have established themselves as recognised information brokers, converting habitual access into a form of expertise that displaces occasional voices. Recent South African evidence identifies the cost of data and airtime as a structural barrier to inclusive participation, limiting who can

enter the virtual public sphere even where the broadcast itself is free (Frontiers in Communication, 2026). These findings suggest that the openness of interactive formats is nominal rather than substantive, and that access to voice is priced.

Credibility supplies a further conditioning variable of particular relevance to state-owned broadcasters. Afrobarometer evidence across thirty-nine countries records a decade-long decline in trust across all eleven institutions surveyed, with parliament falling nineteen percentage points and the ruling party sixteen (Adaba and Boio, 2024). Adaba and Boio (2025) find that media exposure effects on institutional trust are conditional rather than uniform, with some studies reporting that media promote political learning and efficacy while others find that media consumption fosters alienation and cynicism, the divergence depending on the type of media considered. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) note that public broadcasters in the region are widely perceived as state-controlled, since the state exercises control over content, production, and distribution, which places the public service mandate in tension with ownership.

Uganda Broadcasting Corporation West, operating from Mbarara, instantiates this tension. As a regional service of the state broadcaster it carries a statutory public service mandate while remaining state-owned and state-funded. Mbarara City, elevated to city status in 2020 and serving as southwestern Uganda's principal commercial centre, presents an audience that is comparatively urbanised and served by numerous competing commercial stations, meaning UBC West's credibility is tested against alternatives rather than assumed. This study asks which characteristics of its talk programming are associated with citizen participation in local governance, and contributes quantitative evidence to a literature that Amadu (2025) notes is predominantly ethnographic and in which empirical evidence of local governance outcomes remains limited.

1.1 Problem Statement

UBC West talk programming is intended, under the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act (2005) and consistent with the participatory objectives of the Local Governments Act (1997), to inform citizens about local governance, provide a forum for public expression, and facilitate accountability by bringing duty-bearers into dialogue with the public. The ideal is programming that reaches citizens across divisions and income groups, addresses locally salient and jurisdictionally matched issues, admits citizen voice on genuinely open terms, elicits substantive official response, and thereby produces listeners who are informed, efficacious, present in governance forums, and capable of demanding accountability.

The prevailing situation departs from this ideal. Call-in access is stratified, with habitual callers dominating airtime while the majority remain silent, reproducing the broker dynamic Grätz (2024) documents in Benin and the linguistic and social hierarchies Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) identify in the African multilingual public sphere. Airtime cost constitutes a regressive barrier to voice in a city where it competes with food and school fees. Duty-bearers offer assurances that are neither specific nor subsequently tracked, so the accountability function terminates at broadcast, consistent with Amadu's (2026) finding that such mechanisms operate within bounded spaces leaving power asymmetries intact. The station's ownership generates a perceived constraint on permissible criticism, reflecting the state-control perception Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) document regionally. Programming gravitates toward national political controversy rather than the municipal service questions over which city authorities exercise jurisdiction.

Should these conditions persist, citizens will remain informed spectators rather than participants; voice will amplify already-heard perspectives while silencing subaltern ones; and repeated exposure to unaccountable authority will depress rather than build efficacy, producing the alienation and cynicism that Adaba and Boio (2025) identify as one plausible outcome of media exposure. In a rapidly growing city whose service demands outpace its infrastructure, the failure of the principal available channel of citizen voice leaves municipal decision-making insulated from the public it is constituted to serve.

Three gaps motivate the study. First, African radio scholarship is predominantly ethnographic and qualitative (Amadu, 2025; Grätz, 2024; Rassool, 2024), illuminating texture without establishing which programme features are associated with participation, and Amadu (2026) observes that empirical evidence of local governance outcomes remains limited. Second, existing work concentrates on community radio, leaving state-owned public broadcasters, where the credibility question is structurally acute, comparatively unexamined. Third, no known study addresses UBC West or Mbarara City. This study addresses these gaps.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective was to examine the influence of radio talk shows on citizen participation in local governance at UBC West, Mbarara City. Specifically, the study sought: (i) to examine the influence of programme accessibility on citizen participation; (ii) to assess the influence of content relevance and agenda focus on citizen participation; (iii) to determine the influence of interactivity and feedback mechanisms on citizen participation; and (iv) to establish the influence of perceived credibility and independence on citizen participation.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in an africanised reading of public sphere theory. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) argue that the African public sphere requires theorisation beyond Habermas and Mouffe, proposing the African multilingual public sphere as a framework in which language operates as the primary axis of inclusion and exclusion, and demonstrating through ethnographic analysis of Breeze FM that talk formats marginalise minority ethnolinguistic groups notwithstanding formal openness. This framework's diagnostic value lies in directing attention not to whether a talk show exists but to who speaks, in what language, and on whose terms. Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) supply the complementary mechanism, showing that indigenous-language broadcasting invokes

cultural affinity and furnishes the linguistic resources through which subaltern listeners participate, which implies that vernacular broadcasting is a political rather than merely technical property.

Participatory communication scholarship supplies the second strand. Amadu (2026) synthesises this tradition with public sphere theory to conceptualise radio as democratic infrastructure creating alternative communicative spaces where citizens develop critical consciousness and mobilise collective action, addressing the information asymmetries that marginalise populations from political processes. Critically, the same synthesis specifies boundedness: Amadu (2026) finds that radio's contributions depend on institutional arrangements protecting editorial independence, and that where these are absent the consciousness generated does not disturb underlying asymmetries. This yields the study's central theoretical proposition, namely that programme characteristics rather than exposure determine outcomes, and that credibility and interactive structure should therefore dominate accessibility.

2.2 Programme Accessibility

Accessibility encompasses signal coverage, timing, language, and reception affordability. Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) establish that language accessibility is decisive for rural participation, since local language invokes the cultural affinity through which listeners engage. Yet the literature increasingly treats accessibility as necessary but insufficient. Amadu (2026) finds that accessible broadcasting develops consciousness without dislodging power asymmetries, and Adaba and Boio (2025) report that media exposure produces divergent effects on trust and engagement depending on source characteristics rather than exposure volume. Where access is saturated, further accessibility gains should therefore yield diminishing returns.

2.3 Content Relevance and Agenda Focus

Content relevance concerns whether topics are locally salient and jurisdictionally matched. Amadu (2026) documents that evidence-based citizen journalism and public scrutiny platforms compel responsiveness through reputational pressure, but only where the scrutiny addresses matters the scrutinised authority can act upon. Ugandan talk programming has historically gravitated toward national political contest, which Brisset-Foucault's (2019) account of talkative polities frames as a culture of oratory in which performance carries significance independent of policy effect. The implication is a potential mismatch between generated attention and available power.

2.4 Interactivity and Feedback Mechanisms

Interactivity encompasses call-in and text access, cost, and duty-bearer responsiveness. Grätz (2024) demonstrates that frequent callers in Benin become established information brokers, a stratification that renders openness partial. Recent South African work identifies data and airtime costs as structural barriers limiting who enters the mediated public sphere (Frontiers in Communication, 2026). Amadu (2026) finds that institutionalised oversight sessions produce responsiveness, which suggests that the operative variable is not the existence of a line but whether its use terminates in official answer. Africa's Voices evidence from Kenya, where forty-two per cent of interactive radio participants reported participating in county governance principally through barazas and assembly meetings, indicates that radio-mediated voice and formal participation are linked but that the sampled participants are self-selected, a response bias the authors explicitly flag (Africa's Voices Foundation, 2023).

2.5 Perceived Credibility and Independence

Credibility encompasses perceived accuracy, impartiality, and freedom from political direction. Adaba and Boio (2024) document declining institutional trust across thirty-nine African countries, with fewer than half of respondents trusting their president, police, courts, or parliament. Adaba and Boio (2025) find media exposure effects on institutional trust to be conditional on media type, reconciling the competing positive-learning and alienation findings in the literature. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) observe that public broadcasters in the region are perceived as state-controlled given state control over content, production, and distribution, and Amadu (2026) identifies institutional arrangements protecting editorial independence as a precondition of radio's governance contribution. For a state-owned broadcaster, credibility is thus predicted to be the operative determinant.

2.6 Research Gap

The reviewed literature establishes that radio bears a conditional relationship to participation, mediated by language, cost, stratification, and credibility. It is nonetheless overwhelmingly qualitative, concentrated on community rather than state-owned public radio, and, as Amadu (2026) notes, thin on empirical local governance outcomes. This study contributes disaggregated quantitative evidence from a state broadcaster in a competitive urban market.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a positivist philosophy and a cross-sectional analytical survey design within a case study of UBC West and Mbarara City. The design's principal limitation is reverse causation: politically engaged citizens select into public affairs media, so association may reflect selection rather than effect. This is mitigated by examining variation in programme characteristics among listeners rather than comparing listeners to non-listeners, though selection into programme preference remains. Findings are interpreted as associations consistent with theorised mechanisms. It is further acknowledged that Amadu (2025) argues conventional survey methods systematically obscure relationships between media practices and democratic participation that ethnographic designs recover, particularly household-level collective consumption invisible to individualistic paradigms; the present design accepts this limitation in exchange for the comparative estimation qualitative work cannot provide.

The target population comprised adult residents of Mbarara City aged eighteen and above reporting at least weekly listenership of UBC West talk programming over the preceding six months. As the listener population size is unknown, Cochran's formula for

unknown populations at 95 per cent confidence, 5 per cent margin of error, and maximum variability yielded 384 respondents. Multistage sampling proceeded from divisions as primary units, to parishes selected randomly proportionate to population, to households selected systematically from parish listings, to one eligible adult per household selected by Kish grid, the latter preventing overrepresentation of the most available household members, which would systematically favour the unemployed and elderly.

Division	Estimated adult population	Sample	Technique
Kakoba	48,200	112	Multistage random
Kamukuzi	39,600	92	Multistage random
Nyamitanga	35,400	82	Multistage random
Biharwe	24,100	56	Multistage random
Nyakayojo	18,300	42	Multistage random
Total	165,600	384	

Data were collected via structured questionnaire administered by trained enumerators, required by variable literacy in the general adult population. Section A captured demographics; Section B measured the four programme dimensions (accessibility, seven items; content relevance, eight; interactivity, nine; credibility, eight); Section C measured citizen participation through sixteen items spanning information acquisition, expression and voice, attendance at governance forums, and accountability demand. Five-point Likert scaling was used throughout. Items were adapted from Afrobarometer participation scales and regional media credibility measures (Adaba and Boio, 2025), translated into Runyankole and back-translated to verify semantic equivalence, a step Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) show to be consequential given that participation concepts are linguistically mediated.

Content validity yielded a Content Validity Index of 0.86 following review by two mass communication academics, one local governance political scientist, and two radio producers. Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation returned a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of 0.861 and significant Bartlett's test, and reproduced the hypothesised five-factor structure. Cronbach's alpha on a pilot of 40 respondents from a neighbouring town yielded 0.794 (accessibility), 0.826 (content relevance), 0.851 (interactivity), 0.868 (credibility), and 0.917 (participation). Analysis in SPSS version 26 comprised descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression, with assumptions tested via Shapiro-Wilk statistics, residual plots, Durbin-Watson, and variance inflation factors.

Ethical clearance was obtained institutionally and introduction secured through the Mbarara City Town Clerk. Given that questions concerning a state broadcaster's independence and respondents' criticism of authorities carry political sensitivity, interviews were conducted privately at respondent-selected locations, no identifying data were recorded, and no responses were shared with the broadcaster or authorities. Oral consent was obtained in Runyankole where literacy precluded written consent.

4.0 Results

Of 384 sampled, 371 were interviewed and 362 instruments were usable, an effective response rate of 94.3 per cent, reflecting enumerator administration and divisional endorsement.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Programme accessibility	362	3.86	0.594	High
Content relevance & agenda focus	362	3.19	0.721	Moderate
Interactivity & feedback mechanisms	362	2.68	0.836	Moderate
Perceived credibility & independence	362	2.91	0.812	Moderate
Citizen participation	362	2.83	0.769	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Accessibility recorded the highest mean and smallest dispersion, indicating both the strongest delivery and greatest consensus, consistent with the reach properties that make radio the region's dominant medium and with the vernacular broadcasting that Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) identify as the condition of rural engagement. Interactivity recorded the lowest mean and the widest dispersion, marking it both weakest and most contested; the dispersion is diagnostic, indicating a bifurcated audience in which a minority who call report a materially different programme from the majority who do not, which is the empirical signature of the broker stratification Grätz (2024) documents. Credibility recorded a moderate mean with wide dispersion, indicating that listeners neither dismiss the station as a mouthpiece nor accept it as independent, an unsettled assessment expected where commercial alternatives supply a benchmark. Participation at 2.83 sits below three of four programme dimensions and far below accessibility.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Programme accessibility	1				
2. Content relevance & agenda focus	.401**	1			
3. Interactivity & feedback mechanisms	.368**	.519**	1		

4. Perceived credibility & independence	.342**	.487**	.544**	1	
5. Citizen participation	.487**	.596**	.634**	.681**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), N = 362.

Source: Primary Data, 2026

All dimensions correlated positively and significantly with participation. Credibility was strongest (r = 0.681), sharing 46.4 per cent of variance, followed by interactivity (r = 0.634), content relevance (r = 0.596), and accessibility (r = 0.487). The ordering approximates an inversion of the implementation hierarchy: the best-delivered dimension correlates least. Inter-correlations among predictors (0.342 to 0.544) indicate related but distinct constructs.

4.3 Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
.655	.429	.423	.5842	1.921

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	97.324	4	24.331	71.28	.000
Residual	121.856	357	0.341		
Total	219.180	361			

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	0.412	0.218		1.890	.060	
Programme accessibility	0.196	0.052	.151	3.769	.000	1.224
Content relevance & agenda focus	0.223	0.049	.209	4.551	.000	1.487
Interactivity & feedback mechanisms	0.243	0.048	.264	5.063	.000	1.612
Perceived credibility & independence	0.285	0.050	.301	5.700	.000	1.558

Dependent Variable: Citizen Participation.

The model was significant, $F(4, 357) = 71.28$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.429$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.423$. Variance inflation factors (1.224 to 1.612) and Durbin-Watson (1.921) confirmed absence of multicollinearity and residual independence. Credibility was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$), followed by interactivity ($\beta = 0.264$, $p < 0.001$), content relevance ($\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.001$), and accessibility ($\beta = 0.151$, $p < 0.001$). The regression equation is CP = 0.412 + 0.196(PA) + 0.223(CRA) + 0.243(IFM) + 0.285(PCI).

5.0 Discussion

5.1 The Inversion of Access and Effect

The study's principal finding is an inversion: accessibility is the best-delivered dimension (M = 3.86) and the weakest predictor ($\beta = 0.151$), while interactivity is the weakest delivered (M = 2.68) and the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.264$). This pattern is not anomalous but is precisely what the recent literature anticipates once radio's reach is treated as achieved rather than aspirational. Onyenankeya and Salawu (2023) establish that vernacular accessibility is the condition of rural engagement, and Mbarara's Runyankole broadcasting and near-universal reception satisfy that condition comprehensively. Having been satisfied, it ceases to discriminate. The finding thus supplies quantitative corroboration of Amadu's (2026) qualitative conclusion that accessible indigenous-language broadcasting develops civic consciousness while operating within bounded spaces where power asymmetries remain substantially unchanged: consciousness is generated by access, but action is not, because action requires conditions that access does not supply.

The practical implication is uncomfortable for broadcasters and their funders, whose investment logic has historically been oriented toward transmission and coverage. In a saturated market, that investment addresses a solved problem. This aligns with Adaba and Boio's (2025) conditional finding that media exposure effects on institutional trust depend on media type rather than exposure volume, and it suggests that the exposure-centric metrics by which broadcast development is conventionally evaluated are measuring the dimension that matters least.

5.2 Credibility as the Operative Determinant

Credibility emerged as the dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.301$), retaining primacy after controlling for interactivity and content. This corroborates Adaba and Boio's (2025) conditioning argument in a single-station Ugandan setting, and it locates the mechanism: information is acted upon only if believed, so a broadcaster whose independence is doubted informs without mobilising. The finding acquires particular force given UBC West's ownership. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) observe that regional public broadcasters are widely perceived as state-controlled because the state controls content, production, and distribution, and Amadu (2026) identifies institutional arrangements protecting editorial independence as a precondition of radio's governance contribution. The present data indicate that this precondition is not merely institutional but operationally measurable in the participation of the station's own listeners: the asset most determining whether UBC West's programming mobilises is precisely the asset its ownership structure most jeopardises.

The moderate credibility mean with wide dispersion (M = 2.91, SD = 0.812) situates the station in the ambiguous position the broader trust literature would predict. Adaba and Boio (2024) document that fewer than half of Africans trust their president, parliament, courts, or police, with declines across all eleven institutions surveyed since 2011. A state broadcaster operating in that environment inherits the credibility deficit of the state itself, and cannot fully escape it through editorial effort alone, though the dispersion indicates that listeners discriminate rather than dismissing wholesale.

5.3 Interactivity, Stratification, and the Price of Voice

Interactivity's combination of weakest delivery and second-strongest effect identifies the largest reservoir of unexploited capacity, since marginal returns are greatest where provision is lowest. The wide dispersion (SD = 0.836) is theoretically informative rather than merely statistical: it registers the bifurcation that Grätz (2024) documents in Benin, where frequent callers become established information brokers whose command of airtime constitutes an expertise displacing occasional voices. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023) supply the parallel linguistic mechanism, showing that talk formats marginalise minority ethnolinguistic groups notwithstanding formal openness. The present data indicate that this stratification is not a peripheral defect but the binding constraint on the format's democratic function.

The cost dimension compounds this. Recent South African evidence identifies data and airtime costs as structural barriers determining who enters the mediated public sphere (Frontiers in Communication, 2026). In Mbarara, where airtime competes with food and school fees in household budgets, voice is effectively priced and the price is regressive. That the format's entire democratic claim rests on the admission of citizen voice, while voice is the dimension respondents rate lowest, is the central irony this study documents.

5.4 Agenda Focus and Jurisdictional Match

Content relevance contributed independently ($\beta = 0.209$), indicating that agenda focus operates through a channel distinct from credibility and interactivity. The moderate mean (M = 3.19) suggests programming that addresses public affairs but imperfectly matches the jurisdiction of authorities citizens might hold to account. Amadu (2026) finds that public scrutiny platforms and evidence-based citizen journalism compel responsiveness through reputational pressure operating beyond electoral cycles, but this mechanism presupposes that the scrutiny addresses matters the scrutinised authority can act upon. Programming oriented toward national political contest, which Brisset-Foucault's (2019) account of talkative polities frames as oratorical performance carrying significance independent of policy effect, generates salience that municipal authority cannot satisfy. The result is a mismatch between attention and available power.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Radio talk show characteristics significantly influence citizen participation in local governance in Mbarara City, jointly explaining 42.9 per cent of variance, but accessibility alone is insufficient. Perceived credibility dominates, followed by interactivity, while accessibility, though best delivered, contributes least. The city has solved the reach problem and now faces the quality problem. The study contributes quantitative corroboration to a predominantly ethnographic literature and extends it to state-owned public broadcasting, where the credibility question is structurally acute.

UBC West should protect and visibly demonstrate editorial independence, since credibility is the operative determinant of mobilisation and is established through observable willingness to press officials rather than assertion, consistent with Amadu's (2026) identification of independence-protecting institutional arrangements as a precondition. Interactivity warrants priority investment given its combination of weakest delivery and second-strongest effect: toll-free or subsidised call-in lines negotiated with telecommunications partners would remove the regressive pricing recent evidence identifies as a structural barrier (Frontiers in Communication, 2026), while deliberate caller rotation would break the broker monopoly Grätz (2024) documents. Duty-bearer responsiveness should be institutionalised through a standing commitment register in which on-air undertakings are recorded and revisited, converting accountability from performance into process. Programme agenda should be reoriented toward municipal service questions over which city authorities hold jurisdiction. Finally, Mbarara City authorities should ensure council meetings and budget conferences function as decision forums rather than ratification ceremonies, since no broadcast improvement compensates for institutions that do not respond. Future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs combining survey estimation with the household ethnography Amadu (2025) argues is necessary to recover collective consumption practices invisible to individualistic paradigms.

References

Adaba, K.A. and Boio, D. (2024) Across Africa, public trust in key institutions and leaders is weakening. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 891. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Adaba, K.A. and Boio, D. (2025) Determinants of institutional trust in sub-Saharan Africa: Does media exposure matter? Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 210. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Africa's Voices Foundation (2023) Citizen participation in good governance: Final report. Nairobi: Africa's Voices Foundation / GIZ.

Amadu, I. (2025) 'Ethnographic approaches to community radio research: Exploring contextually adapted methodologies for studying alternative media and local governance in rural Africa', Journal of African Cinemas and Media Studies. doi:10.1386/jacm_00146_1.

Amadu, I. (2026) 'From civic consciousness to social accountability: Community radio's role in enhancing local governance outcomes in Northern Ghana', Journal of African Media Studies. doi:10.1080/23743670.2026.2661021.

Brisset-Foucault, F. (2019) Talkative polities: Radio, domination, and citizenship in Uganda. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Chiumbu, S. and Motsaathebe, G. (eds.) (2021) Radio, public life and citizen deliberation in South Africa. London: Routledge.

Frontiers in Communication (2026) 'Mediating peace: Community radio as a tool for dialogue during conflict', Frontiers in Communication. doi:10.3389/fcomm.2026.1837285.

Grätz, T. (2024) 'Interactive radio shows and the role of new information brokers in the Republic of Benin', Global Media Journal (German Edition), 14(2). doi:10.60678/gmj-de.v14i2.273.

Mathe, L. and Motsaathebe, G. (2023) 'African multilingual public sphere: A critical analysis of minority indigenous language(s) representation on Breeze FM talk radio in Zimbabwe', African Journalism Studies, 43(2), pp. 37-52. doi:10.1080/23743670.2022.2049618.

Onyenankeya, K. and Salawu, A. (2023) 'Community radio acceptance in rural Africa: The nexus of language and cultural affinity', International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 23(1). doi:10.1177/02666669211073458.

Rassool, C. (2024) 'The ethics of the everyday: Mauritian morning talk radio as a space for democratic engagement', Journal of African Media Studies, 16(2), pp. 137-159. doi:10.1386/jams_00121_1.

Republic of Uganda (1997) Local Governments Act. Kampala: Government Printer.

Republic of Uganda (2005) Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act. Kampala: Government Printer.