The Role of Mass Media in Mobilising Women for Political Participation: A Case Study of 2023 General Election in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study assessed the effect of the media in mobilising women for political participation, the extent to which broadcast media has mobilised women for political participation, women's level of perception of political programmes, and it also determined the effect of media mobilisation on the women of Abeokuta North Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. A total of one hundred and fifty women were purposively sampled through questionnaires but only one hundred and forty-one (141) were returned and duly validated. The responses were analysed using frequency tables, mean and standard deviation, which provided answers to the research questions. The respondents' response in the table shows that broadcast media play a very important role towards mobilising women for political participation in Abeokuta North Local Government. But the response from the subjects (women of Abeokuta North Local Government) was at best negative because 50% of the respondents were negatively disposed towards the political information provided by the media, while the remaining 22% respondents were undecided. Although the media play its role of information dissemination, the level of women perception of political programs is negative, and so renders media role ineffective in mobilising women towards political participation in Abeokuta North Local Government.

Keyword*:* Gender, Politics, Media, Effects, Role, Participation,Women

Introduction

The existence of society depends to a large extent on the meeting of certain associated communication needs. These needs existed long before Johann Gutenberg's printing press and Samuel Morse's electric telegraph. There have been cases, where mass communication's functions are undesirable to the citizenry, especially, from the general or individual's point of view, called dysfunctions. The role of the media in the society touches different aspects of the communal life. It roles traverses socialization, entertainment, societal watch dog, and also as a medium for projecting the beliefs, of the society (Paul & Rai, 2021).

The surveillance function is popularly regarded as the information and news role of the media. In Nigeria, several millions expose themselves to mass-mediated news daily on local radio and television and also on the networks. Surveillance can be a 'warning' surveillance or a 'mental' surveillance. In warning surveillance, the media informs us about threats, while in mental surveillance they transmit useful and helpful information about everyday life. It is noteworthy that in the world, people rely on others for news on different matters. For this to happen, trust, otherwise called credibility, must exist for the media to be chosen as the source of believable news. Closely linked with surveillance is the interpretation function of the media (Al-Rfouh, F.O. (2005).

The mass media provide information on the meaning and significance of events. It is not possible to report everything that happens in the news or in the newspapers. So, whatever news that makes it into the paper or onto radio and television newscasts must have been adjudged by gatekeepers as important. Many elements of society that are not directly connected are linked by the mass media. Advertising, for instance, links buyers to sellers; legislators keep in touch with their constituents by reading local papers; and so on. Sadly, some linkage sites have been known to have harmful consequences. 'Hate' sites are now on the Internet. They can be used by terrorists to spread pernicious propaganda and to recruit new members. Subtle but nonetheless important, transmission of values is another function of the mass media. Mass media enhances cultural socialization. It also refers to the way an individual comes to adopt the behaviour and values of a group (Ezeaka & Nwafor, 2023).

The mass media portrays our society and what values are important therein. In the area of socialization, there are countless examples of values and behaviour socialized through the media. The media sometimes consciously tries to instill values and behaviour in the audience (Nwaolikpe, 2013, 2018). Smoking cigarettes is an example. Fastening of seat belts is another. But it must be noted that not every attempt by the media to enforce social norms succeeds.

The entertainment roles of the media covers motion pictures and sound recordings, books, magazines, and newspapers that are devoted to entertainment (Paul & Rai, 2021). In the past, troubadours, storytellers, court jesters, and magicians performed the entertainment function which has now been taken over by mass communication. Critics of the use of mass media for entertainment are disturbed that soon people will become 'watchers' and 'listeners' instead of 'doers'. This is because, instead of playing football, they will entertain themselves by watching others play; instead of learning to play the guitar, they will simply listen to a tape of someone else playing. Individuals make use of mass media to meet certain social needs, Pate et'al (2013) writes that the functions of mass communication will focus on how the individual uses. The uses and gratification theory posits that audience members have certain needs or drives that are satisfied by using both non-media and media sources. Uses and gratifications are classified into cognition (getting to know something); diversion (e.g. stimulation, seeking relief from boredom, relaxation, or emotional release); social utility (need to affiliate with others); and withdrawal (using mass media to create a barrier with others). It is noteworthy that audience usage is not determined by media content only. The social context also contributes to the use of the mass media by the audience. For example, those who go to movies may value socialization much more than any aspect of the film. Also, soap operas provide more opportunities for escape than anything else for many.

Wogu, Chukwu, Nwafor, Ugwuoke & Ugwulor (2020) note that mass communication functions for the benefit of the individual as a member of society. She labeled some functions, like education and information, as "serious," while she called the entertainment function the "lighter" function. The functions are:

This is the most fundamental function of mass communication. It means' to give knowledge to'. The information function is regarded as the most important function of mass communication.

Entertainment is a big industry worldwide, especially on television. They believe that the "entertainment function is compelling". People are glued to their television sets or to their radio sets for hours for the sake of entertainment or enjoyment. This is to escape life's harsh realities and get some relief. They believe that the mass media are best appreciated for their entertainment functions.

Education, which comprises intellectual development, acquisition of skills, and the formation of character, is acquired through the mass media. Wogu et'al (2020) continues by saying that: skills and knowledge could be acquired from reading, watching, or listening to entertainment mass media content, even though more such skills and knowledge would be gained from watching or listening to an educational programme in the 'Schools Broadcast' series, for example, or from reading a textbook.

In advertising, the mass media brings together buyers and sellers of goods, services, and ideas. This has become an increasingly important function of the mass media. An advertisement, according to the Advertising Professionals Council of Nigeria (APCON) cited by Wogu et'al (2020), is "a communication in the media paid for by an identifiable sponsor and directed at a target audience with the aim of imparting information about a product, service idea, or cause." The mass media also serves as a forum for public debate and discussion on issues that are considered important in society. In this way, the mass media help in the formation of public opinion. Public opinion is the thinking of the majority of people in society about important issues. According to Wogu et'al (2020), "the mass media make it possible for people to know what others are thinking and saying about the issues that are considered important". The promotion of cultural values is another function of the mass media. The media disseminate information about the cultural and artistic heritage of the people. This led to the production of cultural artifacts. Similarly, the mass media work with other agents of socialization, such as the family, church, school, and peer groups, to produce socialization of the group or

individual. Socialization enables the individual to learn and adopt the values, norms, and behaviour patterns of society. Motivation and mobilization are other functions of the mass media. This involves encouraging and motivating people to achieve society's aims or goals. When the media promotes these goals, individual or community aspirations are stimulated, leading to higher achievement.

Ikenwa (2020) submits that in every society, the disadvantaged, marginalized, and powerless groups require mobilization for action. The integration function of the mass media is considered particularly important in today's modern world where ethnic, religious, and political differences divide people locally, nationally, and internationally. The mass media provide information that people require to understand and appreciate their neighbors. Among the social institutions that the mass media has to deal with are: the educational, cultural, family, kinship and political.

Looking at political institutions, the mass media's link with this institution is most noteworthy. The media provides people with the information they require for political decisions (Ikenwa, 2020). In addition to this, the mass media confers status and legitimacy on political leaders. The status-conferral function of the mass media makes political leaders "appear important and right. Also, the mass media sets the political agenda for society by deciding what political topics people talk about. This function of agenda setting is an important factor in the linkage between mass communication and political institutions. Another institutional linkage is that between mass communication and cultural institutions. Unarguably, the mass media are very useful in the transmission of culture. The MacBride Commission found that mass communication is a major carrier of culture. The mass media themselves are cultural instruments which shape the cultural experience of millions of people all over the world.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting states that the frequency of a news report has a way of engineering people's thought towards the subject matter. It posits that people judge as important what they see, hear or read from the broadcast media. The import is that the nature of broadcast media portrayal of an issue or individual determines

to a large extent, how the public will perceive such an issue or individual (McComb, 1976). The broadcast media tend to possess special charm that influences people's construction of reality, what is echoed by the press becomes important to the public (Blanton & Kegley, 2017). This is why women's participation in the news should be an issue of grave concern to both experts in broadcast media gender, and development studies; and the general public. Plausibly, broadcast media portrayal of women or women representation in the broadcast media has always been a very crucial broadcast media issue. Agenda-setting theories implies that the broadcast media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a society. Agenda setting does not describe to the broadcast media the power to determine what we actually think, it is right to say that agenda setting theory which the broadcast uses, is used for political campaigns and may also influence policy agenda building (West & Lynn, 2014).

This theory uses some elements which are involved in agenda setting and they are:

- The quantity or frequency of reporting.
- Prominence given to the reports through headlines display, picture and layout in films graphics or timing on radio and television.
- The degree of conflict generated in the reports, and the opportunity for agenda setting by the broadcast media becomes enhanced when the values structure of a society is in a state of instability.

Statement of the Problem

There has been and still instances of women holding high political positions of leadership in countries like, Britain, Philippines, Brazil, Liberia, Germany etc., but in Nigeria the reverse is the case. Political leadership is not reserved for the men alone, women are also called to be leaders and not mere followers because they have equal rights as provided for in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria.

The mass media especially the radio has an important role to play in mobilizing women for political participation, as this is one of the primary functions of the mass media. But, this seem not to be the case as the media have often been accused of gender stereotyping of the women's role in politics to just singing and dancing.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the broadcast media role in mobilizing women for political participation. Therefore, the specific objectives are to:

a. examine the extent at which broadcast media has mobilized women for political participation in Abeokuta North Local Government area, Ogun State,
b. determine the women's level of perception of political programmes,
c. identify the effect of media mobilization on the women of Abeokuta North Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Research Question

a. What is the role of the broadcast media towards mobilizing women for political participation?
b. What is the perception of women on these political programs?
c. What has been the effect of media in mobilizing women towards political participation?

Research design

This study adopted the descriptive survey of the *ex-post facto* type. The design was chosen because it easily allows for fact-finding where the independent variables have already occurred and the researcher does not have the power to manipulate such variables.

Population of the Study

Specifically the target population for this study comprised of all the 338,700 women in the selected local government area in Ogun State (Abeokuta North Local Government). There is no age, educational, religious limitations, than that the respondents must be women whether married or not.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study was 150 respondents. The study adopted purposive sampling technique to select the women used for this study. This study was carried out to examine the broadcast media role in mobilizing women for political participation using Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State as a case study. Hence, the population of this study comprises of women of Abeokuta

North Local Government Area of Ogun State. In essence, it is that part of a whole that represents the whole and its members share characteristics in like similitude (Udoyen, 2019).

In this study, the researcher adopted a convenient sampling method to determine the sample size. Out of the entire women of Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State, the researcher conveniently selected 150 participants as the sample size for this study. According to Torty (2021), a sample of convenience is the terminology used to describe a sample in which elements have been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the researcher.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is a set of self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first section enquired about demographic or personal data while the second section is in line with the study objectives, aimed at providing answers to the research questions. Participants were required to respond by placing a tick at the appropriate column on the instrument. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher.

Reliability of the Study

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A co-efficient value of 0.68 indicated that the research instrument was relatively reliable.

Method of Data Collection

Two methods of data collection which are primary source and secondary source were used to collect data. The questionnaire were distributed personally by the researcher with help of one trained research assistants. Out of the 150 questionnaire distributed, 141 were duly validated due to irregularities in the fillings and mutilations of some.

Method of Data Analysis

The responses were analyzed using frequency tables, and mean and standard deviation, which provided answers to the research questions. In using the mean score, the four points rating scale was given values as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree	4
A = Agree	3
D = Disagree	2
SD = Strongly Disagree	1

Decision Rule:

To ascertain the decision rule; this formula was used

$$\frac{4+3+2+1 = 10}{4 \quad 4} = \mathbf{2.5}$$

Any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. Therefore, 2.5 was the cut-off mean score for decision taken.

The analysis of data derived through the questionnaire and key informant interview administered on the respondents in the study area. The analysis and interpretation were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as interpretation of the information gathered. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were administered to respondents of which only one hundred and forty-one (141) were returned and duly validated. This was due to irregular, incomplete and inappropriate responses to some questionnaire. For this study a total of 141 was validated for the analysis.

4. RESULTS

The focus of this research was to assess the broadcast media role in mobilizing women for political participation using Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State as a case study. The study specifically was aimed to explain the role of the broadcast media towards mobilizing women for political participation, and examination of the effect of the media in mobilizing women towards political participation

The study adopted the survey research design and randomly enrolled participants in the study. A total of 141 respondents were validated from the enrolled participants where all respondents were women of Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

1: Distribution of Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Sample size	150	100
Received	141	94
Validated	141	94

Source: Field Survey, 2023

2. Demographic data of respondents

Demographic information Gender	Frequency	Percent
20-24	17	12.1%
25-30	33	23.4%
31-35	35	24.8%
36+	56	39.7%
Education		
Dropout	30	28.3%
Basic Education	10	7.0%
Secondary Education	39	27.6%
Tertiary Education	62	44.0%
Occupation		
Student	30	21.2
Self-employed	82	58.1
Employed	20	14.2
Unemployed	9	6.3
Marital Status		

Single	30	21%
Married	59	42%
Separated	10	7%
Divorced	19	13%
Widowed	23	16%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Question 1: What is the role of the broadcast media towards mobilizing women for political participation?

Table 3. Respondents on the role of the broadcast media towards mobilizing women for political participation.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S.D	DECISION
1	It created political awareness	99	21	12	09	3.5	4.5	Accepted
2	It enlightened the public about gender equality	78	43	14	06	3.4	4.4	Accepted
3	It created public orientation on the need for women to participate in politics.	86	15	26	14	3.2	4.3	Accepted
4	It helped the public in accessing the political information.	99	21	12	09	3.5	4.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 The respondents' response in the table shows that broadcast media plays a very important role towards mobilizing women for political participation in Abeokuta North Local Government as all the variables 1 to 4 were accepted. This is proven as the respective items have mean scores above 2.50.

Question 2: What is the perception of women on political programs?

Table 3: Perception of women on political programs.

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Positive	40	28
Negative	69	50
Undecided	32	22
Total	**141**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The responses on table 4 points to the fact that although, the media plays it role of mobilization through information, the response from the subjects (women of Abeokuta North Local Government) was at best negative because 50% of the respondents were negatively disposed while the remaining 22% respondents were undecided. Their lack of interest was not for want of information, because they all accepted that the media played its role well. The remaining 28% who embraced politics, were negligible and could not be of much effect. It implies that majority (50%) of the respondents have negative perception about political programmes in the study area and so women were not well disposed to political information.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following conclusion:

- The role of the broadcast media towards mobilizing women for political participation includes: political awareness, enlightening the public about gender equality, public orientation on the need for women to participate in politics and the accessibility of the political information.
- The perception of women on political programs is negative.
- The effect of media in mobilizing women towards political participation is also negative.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered.

- The media are powerful agents of social mobilization should be utilized more to motivate and champion the course of women towards full political

participation. To this end, more media political programmes should be created to motivate women towards political participation.

- The media should be effectively engaged, especially as a tool for grassroots enlightenment. This will go a long way, in changing the negative attitude most people have to women's participation in politics. It can also inspire and stimulate women to vie for elective positions and alleviate some of the fears inhibiting women's full political participation.

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