



Radio's Contributions to Knowledge of Gender Equality Among Women in Rural Badagry, Nigeria

¹Ademolu I. Soyinka ¹Jonathan Olajide,
²Lanre Biobaku & ²Mabel Affar

¹McPherson University, Ajebo, Nigeria
²Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria

Correspondence: soyinkaai@mcu.edu.ng

Abstract

The study set out to analyze the contributions of radio to the knowledge of gender equality among women in Badagry, Lagos State, Nigeria. It adopted the focus group discussion method to gather data from 40 women aged 20 years and above, and purposely selected, from four groups in four rural communities in the Badagry local government area. The discussion transcripts were thematically analyzed. Findings show that radio stations, especially the public ones did promote gender equality issues through talk shows, discussion, news, and drama. The programming enabled discussants to know more about gender issues, including skill acquisition, girl-child education, domestic violence, reproductive health, and women's political participation. However, it is unimpressive that these respondents perceived these programs as not comprehensive enough for an in-depth understanding of gender issues. They regarded the content as mere informatory. It will take specialized radio broadcasting to make the knowledge of gender equality issues more impressive.

Keywords: *Gender equality, Gender Issues, Knowledge, programs, Radio, Rural communities, Women*

Introduction

Gender issues are quite topical in many parts of the world, especially in Africa (World Health Organization, 2019). Over 80 million women and girls in Nigeria have significantly worse life chances than men in other comparable societies. Violence, exclusion and marginalization are often some of the issues that confront women (British Council, Nigeria, 2012). Gender stereotyping makes the matter controversial in many societies. Previous studies have brought to the fore gender discrimination and inequality as it relates but is not limited to politics, reproductive health, education, entrepreneurship, and even the mass media (Edinyang & Angiating, 2018), and manifest as misrepresentation or underrepresentation of women.

Goal Five of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) widely supports gender equality. Nigeria, like several other countries, subscribes to the goal. However, it is surprising that the goal is just a policy on paper and not in implementation as there is still a wide gap between men and women regarding self-expression and self-realization. Women are hugely limited by traditional and cultural practices and are often relegated (Igbuzor, 2008). Although gender equality is not about women and men being the same. It is about women and

men possessing equal rights and opportunities in the scheme of things economically, societally and politically.

Undoubtedly, the mass media as a socially-responsible arm of society, ought to set agenda for public discourse on gender equality, as well as frame and prime the news to promote gender equality at all levels of society, particularly in rural communities (Okon *et al.*, 2018; Odiboh *et al.*, 2017; Al-Hassan, Andani & Abdul-Malik, 2011; Omojola, 2008) where it appears the problem is more visible. Myers (2009) alludes to research conducted on eight sub-Saharan countries by Balancing Acts in 2008 regarding the most-listened-to-content on the radio. The study found that people use radio *primarily* as a source of news and music, recommending, therefore, that media managers design programs that put men and women on the same pedestal so as boost the social, economic, and sustained development of both genders.

This finding has been corroborated by other studies (Dinye, 2003; Godwin, 2013; Akinfeleye, 2008). The struggle for self-expression and self-realization is still rife in many rural communities in Nigeria and it is expected that mass media, including the radio, can promote the advocacy that fosters a

better society (Heywood & Ivey, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Scholars in Nigeria have conducted studies on the role of media in sensitizing people to gender-related issues (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Oyinade, Daramola & Lamidi, 2013; Ryerson, 2014; Messina, 2014). However, most have paid little or no attention to the role of radio in promoting knowledge of gender equality in rural areas of the South-West – which is low profile regarding this issue despite the region’s claim as the most educated in Nigeria.

Summarily, the extant literature acknowledges that women are exposed to media especially radio in terms of information, but the information garnered from this medium is insufficient to push for gender equality as it relates to empowerment, poverty alleviation, and political participation among others. The results show that the radio programs are insufficient in causing a significant positive change and the needed awareness of gender equality. Further, these studies treat gender equality from an elitist perspective, forgetting that most women in the urban areas, unlike in the rural communities, listen far less to the radio. This study investigated how the radio contributes to knowledge about gender equality. This is important

because women, especially those in rural areas are critical stakeholders and development agents in society. (Somolu, 2013). This challenge is problematized into three objectives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the knowledge of rural women in Badagry Local Government Area about gender equality-based radio programs.
2. To examine the formats in which rural women in Badagry Local Government Area receive gender equality issues on the radio.
3. To examine the gender equality issues frequently discussed on the radio.

Research Questions

1. What do rural women know about gender equality-based radio programs?
2. What formats do women in rural communities in Badagry Local Government Area receive radio programs?
3. What gender equality issues are frequently discussed on the radio?

Significance of the study

The study is significant to both industry professionals and the government. It will help bridge some gaps in media content as professionals will leverage the

findings to build a framework for the policy that will translate into improving the content of gender equality programs on radio. Moreover, the government gets the opportunity with the findings to make policies or decisions that will further drive women's inclusion in key strata of the country's economy. What is more, the United Nations (UN) now has the opportunity to update on SDG 5 concerning rural women in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Gender Equality and Radio

Gender equality as enshrined in the 17 SDGs of the UN entails equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women, men, girls, and boys. It does not require that girls and boys or women and men, be the same or that they be treated exactly alike. According to WHO (2002), gender equality is the absence of discrimination based on a person's sex in opportunities, the allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services. In Nigeria today, one of the pertinent issues of gender equality revolves around women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, political participation, and inclusion. Gender equality and women empowerment are universally acknowledged as human rights that lie at the heart of development towards overcoming the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices

economically, socially, culturally, and politically. It is about providing a level playing ground where all have equal opportunities to grow and develop potential.

Radio offers a level playground opportunity by which crucial information on the affairs of any society, including the well-being and development of people, are discussed (Leandro, 2014). It is an essential source of information for women experiencing structural inequalities (Heywood et al., 2021) and enables them to navigate issues regarding their rights and break negative stereotypes (Siscawati, Adelina, Eveline & Anggriani, 2020). Since radio's emergence in the 1920s, it has provided the space for women to be heard in a male-dominated environment, bridging gaps and connecting boundaries, and attempting to change the status quo.

Before gender equality became an issue of debate, women played key roles – both as broadcasters and listeners – thus affirming radio as a tool of development because, in those days, radio was saturated with feminine-based programming which addressed issues confronting women in politics, health, marriage, or intimate relationships. Through community radio, women empowerment in Africa has also been promoted as women are gradually

getting the required awareness, information, and education required to improve their skills and as a whole propel their social, cultural, political, and economic development (Ike, Omojola & Aririguzoh, 2018; Nirmala, 2015; Myers, 2009).

Gender Equality and Related Issues in Nigeria

Gender equality (and women's empowerment) has become one of the central themes in global treaties and discussions. It has been a catalyst to clear-cut development strategies targeted at poverty reduction, improved standard of living, good governance, and profitable productive investments that are critical to the creation of an enlarged capacity that provides men and women equal opportunity and unrestrained access to decision-making and policy implementation and processes" (Ejumudo, 2013; p.59). In a 2012 report by the British Council Nigeria, Nigeria ranks 118 of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index and women make up only 21 percent of the non-agricultural paid labor force due to their level of education. Nigeria also records one of the lowest rates of women entrepreneurs in sub-Saharan Africa, with the majority of women in casual, low-paid informal sector jobs with limited access to credits (British Council, Nigeria, 2012).

Despite the adoption of the National Gender Policy by the federal government, very little attention has been paid to the empowerment of women in the nation's annual budget. Many women still live below \$1 per day amidst claims of the paucity of funds by the government. He adds that the relatively insufficient budgetary allocation for women's development has been used for the production of maternal advocacy programs and jingles on the radio!

A startling report by the World Poverty Clock reveals that the number of Nigerians who are extremely poor and living under \$1.90 a day is about 94 million, with women making up about 70 percent of the figure (Obiukwu, 2019). It is noteworthy that women contribute so much to food production in the country, but most times are less likely than men to enjoy the benefits of these endeavors. For instance, female farmers contribute almost half of all agricultural labor in sub-Saharan Africa, yet their challenges in production are not adequately addressed. They benefit less from their production than men due to underlying causes such as inequitable access to land, information, productive resources, decision-making process, and unequal access to profits – a situation that could have been different if women had more

information and better support for their agricultural endeavors.

Often, women are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to media both as receivers and producers of information and the cause has been blamed on poor access to education, stereotypical roles which confine women to domestic roles, and restriction in mobility which limits the establishment of interpersonal communication.

Women also suffer untold marginalization in politics unlike what was obtainable in the pre-colonial days where women had the opportunity to play prominent and active roles in the traditional and political affairs of the society (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017). Despite the women's clamor for 35 percent affirmative action in government, they ended up with only seven in the current Buhari cabinet (Obiukwu, 2019). Restrictions placed on leadership roles including religious ones are common with women. In some cases, the restriction is statutory. For instance, in the 12 northern states practicing the sharia law, equity between men and women is forbidden (British Council Nigeria, 2012). Women fight hard to be heard and whenever such an opportunity to be heard arises, they are often at the center of sensationalist and stereotyped news (Moyo & Dhliwau, 2019).

Several instances speak to the fact that women struggle to have a voice in Nigeria. One such instance is that of a female activist, Aisha Yesufu who was tongue-lashed for coming out to speak against the alleged tyrant and repressive activities of Buhari's administration during the #EndSARS protest. Buhari was reported as saying his wife and First Lady Aisha should not dabble in the affairs of his administration but instead focus on the kitchen and the 'other room'. The now popular term – 'other room' - translates as a bed for copulation.

Theoretical Review

Theories exist to underpin the fundamental role of radio in ensuring gender equality through its contents. Access to media and communication channels is crucial for nurturing participatory democracy, gender equality, and reducing poverty under theoretical guidance. In this study, the Development Media Theory (DMT), propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1989, helps explain how useful the media can be.

The theory canvasses media support for an existing government and its efforts to bring about socio-economic development. It argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development underway, the mass media must be supportive rather than critical of the government, as well as assist in implementing

policies. Critics of the theory believe that the media is no doubt given power but there is no check, implying that the limitless disposition can be oriented towards unguarded commercialism instead of development. This theory's bottom line is that there can be no development without communication. Concerning this study, radio stations should prioritize gender equality issues in their programming towards solidifying the confidence of rural women who are regarded as agents of development.

Also, because gender equality issues have in recent times gained international attention, the onus lies on radio stations and content producers to come up with laudable ideas that help rural women have their say. Of course, doing this will contribute significantly to the development of the community.

The import of this development media theory assumption in this study is that producers of gender equality programs must give priority to local content not only in programming but in choice of words and language. In this part of the world, language could be a barrier to growth and development, therefore to drive the development and growth of rural communities, the locality must be considered for easy and smooth dissemination of information. The

media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with the national established policy which in many cases accommodates rural development. Without prejudice to the mass media's traditional functions of information, education, and entertainment of the public, media should help in the special development tasks of national integration, socio-economic modernization, promotion of literacy, and cultural creativity. Media should carefully identify and give due attention in their foreign news to link with other countries having similar socio-cultural orientations and/or political and economic aspirations.

Extant Research on Radio and Gender Equality

There has been a handful of research efforts on issues of gender equality in Nigeria and a review of a few of them on the subject matter helps establish the significance of radio in development. Jah, Connolly, Barker and Ryerson (2014) investigate the effect of radio serial drama on gender and reproductive outcomes in northern Nigeria. A total of 793 respondents, in the reproductive age of 15–49 for women and 15–59 for men, were interviewed across four states. The study sought to fill the existing gap in simultaneous assessments of program effects on

changes in both reproductive and gender outcomes, especially in both males and females. The researchers found that exposure to radio drama had a positive association with knowledge about reproductive health, while in terms of behavior, it was discovered that exposure to the drama led to a significant positive change in spousal communication about family planning.

Sow (2014) examines the role of women's radio in Africa, particularly in Senegal. Specifically, the study sought to access the role of Gindiku community radio in the pursuit of development and progressive social change among women in Senegal. Using a mixed method, the researcher purposively sampled 466 respondents comprising 414 members of listening groups and 52 women reporters through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including representatives from the government, women associations, and community radio associations. The researcher found out that the marginalization of women in Senegal in both mainstream media and alternative community media, as well as women's needs, led to the emergence of community radio. It further found that community radio has been able to secure the loyalty of most women because it has implemented gender-based programming targeting

inequality, social injustices, and women's subordination.

Rasheed and Maraimalai (2018) investigate the role of public and private sector radio in women's development in India. Being a qualitative research, the researchers employed the in-depth interview to elicit views from 25 staff members of All India Radio (AIR), including directors and announcers. Specifically, the study sought to know the contribution of private and public radio stations in Chennai toward the development of women in society. They found that radio was identified as a powerful medium to grab the attention of women listeners through various program genres and radio content. Women-focused programs are aired on All India Radio or focus on harassment and violence aiming to give solutions to overcome such situations.

Godwin (2013) examines what factors drove women's participation in governance. Using a mainly secondary source of data collection, the researcher found that there was high women participation in governance in other parts of the world than in Nigeria, adding that the poor attitude of women towards local governance was borne out of a lack of funds to achieve the 30 percent affirmative action declaration' for women at the grassroots. Ifeanyi,

Martins, and Alexander (2012) assess the role of media in gender balance and politics in Nigeria. The study among others, ascertained if the media had succeeded in creating a smooth and equal playing field for both male and female folks in Nigerian politics. They found that media messages that are political in nature contain marginalized campaigns which favor the male folk as against the female folk, while coverage given to gender inequality coverage was very little and in most cases insignificant.

Fombad and Jiyane (2016) investigate the role of community radio in information dissemination to rural women in South Africa. The study investigated the extent to which community radio stations contribute to the dissemination of information and the development of rural women in South Africa. Two community radio stations were investigated in the qualitative research. The researchers found that there are not many information awareness programs tailored towards women and that women are more at the receiving end in these radio stations rather than active participants in the ownership and management of the programs.

Methodology

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was adopted to gather data from residents

of four rural communities namely *Agbojedo, Ibereko, Itoga, and Topo* in the Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State. There were 327,400 persons living in the LGA with 119,267 females according to the 2006 National Population Commission census. Using the purposive sampling system, forty (40) women were selected to participate in the group discussion. Robson (2002) suggests between eight and 12 participants for FGD, while Krueger and Casey (2014) argue that as many as five focus group sessions are appropriate for an in-depth conversation. Lazar, Feng and Hochheiser (2017) aver that relying on one or two group sessions should be discouraged because such might not give room for validity, reliability, and generalization of data. The authors add that the participation of many persons in FGD allows a broad range of viewpoints and insights. All these opinions on FGD research guided this research.

The criteria for selecting the discussants included literacy, age (from 20 years and above), occupation, marriage, and radio listenership. The minimum educational qualification set for the respondents was the First School Leaving Certificate as well as the ability to read and write; occupation as a criterion was set to select those who were employed, self-employed

and unemployed. Married and single women were invited to participate in the group discussions.

Research Ethics

The discussants were given a synopsis of the research. They were informed that the study was meant for academic purposes only and that their anonymity would be guaranteed. As such, the respondents were not asked for their names but were given tags or labels. The researcher received informed oral consent from every discussant before data collection. The discussion session was recorded. The researchers transcribed the discussions manually and verbatim to ensure that every word was captured. After transcription, the researchers categorized the discussants' responses under key themes which were then discussed using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The respondents' general standpoint is that communication is essential for gender equality to be well established in Nigeria. They also reported that gender equality is an issue that must be pursued holistically through effective advocacy and engagement. The results of the research were presented under the following themes and sub-themes:

Radio Programmes on Gender Equality

The first set of questions sought to identify the programs on gender equality that women listened to and how they informed the understanding of gender equality and women empowerment as well as promoting it. The composite views of the respondents' standpoints are reported. The discussants mentioned different types of radio programs on gender equality - talk shows, phone-in programs, commercials, and dramas they listened to such as "*Tiwan Tiwa*" "*Toko Taya*", "*Aare*", "*Olori*" all on Faaji 106.5 FM. They noted that radio programs such as "*Abala Egbeyewo*", and "*Tojubole*" talked about different gender equality issues. This finding proves that radio is a thriving medium for the promotion of gender equality among rural women and corroborates the submission of Rasheed and Maraimalai (2018) that radio as a medium has not only grabbed the attention of women listeners but also appears to have broken the barriers of distance and literacy.

Knowledge of Gender Equality Among Rural Women

Most participants agreed to have heard about the term "gender equality" be it in the marketplace, in schools, in books, in social media, at

political gatherings, in NGOs, and on radio programs. According to them, oftentimes when it is discussed, it bothers on skill acquisition, women empowerment, girl-child education, the fight against rape and domestic violence, and political inclusion in their community. One of the participants said the following:

It was in the past, in the days of our fathers that they held the belief that the girl-child should not be given a chance to be educated but all thanks to the programs we listen to on the radio. For example, there is a program on the radio that encourages women to assume positions, especially government jobs. If we look at the economy, we now have female lecturers, as we have male lecturers and also female principals in schools.

The participants identified some radio stations and gender equality-based programs including *Abala Egbeyewo* on *Faaji 106.5FM* from 9-10 am on Mondays-Fridays and *Tojubole* on *Radio Lagos 107.5FM* that discuss women's issues, especially domestic violence. They also listened to radio dramas such as *Toko Taya*, *Aare*, and *Olori* on *Faaji FM* and *Radio Lagos* respectively. The participants agreed that the contents on gender equality provided

clarity on the concept, especially on the dynamism that characterizes it, a disclosure that is consistent with the findings of Somolu (2013).

Gender Equality Issues Addressed on Radio Programmes

Another common view among the respondents is that several gender equality programs on the radio focus on the economic gratification and independence of women. The claim is that the content zeros in on skills acquisition and political prospects of women. One respondent said that she came across lots of business ideas such as '*Recharge and Get Paid*' with as low as #3,000 (\$7) start-up funds, headgear design, make-up lessons, nail artistry, and the like while listening to the radio. She said:

I heard about this 'Recharge and Get Paid' business idea and how to print recharge cards to earn money and women were told to come to a place called 'Ajangbadi' to learn about this new way of making money, we could start this business with as low as three thousand naira.

Furthermore, content on girl-child education, female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, and family planning were gender also discussed in the programs. A participant added:

We are told that rather than women staying home and being subjected to giving birth only, they should be encouraged to embrace family planning so they can focus on their business to help their flow of income to the family.

Rural Badagry Women's Perception of Gender Equality Programmes

Generally, the participants agreed that although the world is rapidly evolving, gender equality issues do not exist in the real sense of it because not all cultures and countries have embraced it. They suggested that nations of the world should make gender equality a core of their advocacy for change, adding that radio programs on gender equality are worth their time and have contributed meaningfully to their lives and their communities at large. One of the participants said:

I see Faaji 106.5 FM as an evangelist station because most times it feels like they just have a way of knowing what I'm going through. Their programs speak to me directly and help me personally.

Another discussant reported that not all times do they believe in the gender equality programs aired on the radio because it sometimes sends the wrong

information to the listeners and causes some women to misbehave and become uncontrollable for their spouses. She said that gender equality programs by the radio stations do not exhaust the many issues associated with gender equality adding that it is only discussed on the radio during an incident such as rape or murder or when certain government policies touch on it and during such events as International Women's Day. Her words:

The last time I heard about gender equality on the radio was recently when rape was on the rise in the country and one that involved a lady in Benin. The nation went agog with awareness programs on radio.

This view was penalized by a discussant who blamed the scantiness of gender issues on the radio on too many advertisements. Her opinion:

I think in such a situation, gender-related programs should be produced in series for them to be given adequate coverage and for good listenership.

Generally, the participants suggested the establishment of specialized radio stations for the broadcast of programs on gender equality and advised that such programs be prioritized in the programming.

Furthermore, some participants demonstrated a deep understanding of the benefits of gender equality in society while others dismissed it as a concept that is preached by successful single women to confuse women. They described gender equality as a mere dream that could not be realized because men and women are different in terms of their physical and emotional make-up. Some respondents were of the patriarchal belief that the “*husband is naturally the head of the home*”. This is consistent with extant studies (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Anorue, Obayi & Onyebuchi, 2012; Fombad & Jiyane, 2016 and Al-Hassan, Andani & Abdul-malik, 2011) which also reveal that there are not many information awareness programs tailored towards women on the radio. A few of these suggest that this challenge can only be addressed if women become active participants in the ownership and management of radio stations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Radio, no doubt, is valuable in promoting gender equality but this value is limited. This is why it makes sense to with the view of some of the discussants that media professionals should make the mass media gender-friendly if they are to break the existing stereotypic perspectives about the female gender. On top of

this are the following recommendations:

1. In line with the view of some discussants, gender equality programs on the radio should be prioritized and the programming should be women-specific.
2. The government should consider establishing specialized radio stations for an effective broadcast of programs on gender equality while such programs should long-lasting not seasonal.
3. The media should design programs in local languages (Adeyeye *et al.*, 2020; Igbinoba *et al.*, 2020) to effectively suit the information needs of rural women on issues of gender equality.

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