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INFLUENCE OF RADIO ON CONTINUOUS VOTERS REGISTRATION AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE AMONG WOMEN IN ASABA, DELTA STATE

BY

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Abstract
The focus of this study is to ascertain the level of awareness and knowledge of continuous voters' registration that radio has been able to create among women in Asaba, Delta State. The study also sought to determine the specific continuous voters' registration awareness campaign messages relayed on radio and its impact on the women. The views of the respondents were sampled, applying the survey research method. Findings from the study show that the respondents (women) are sensitized by the electoral management body (INEC) and other stakeholders through radio and the messages have positive impact on them. It makes some recommendations that would help to strengthen the awareness campaign to achieve its desired result whenever the exercise comes up

Keywords: Impact, Radio, Voters, Voters' Registration, Awareness, Knowledge.

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Introduction

One of the basic features of modern democracy is the election of people into various offices on a periodic basis (Ayobulu, 2003; Mbaku, 2024; EISD, 2024). Appadorai (2002) posits that regular elections enable the people to choose those who will represent them and drop those who are not representing the people's interest. In carrying out this exercise, Adegboruwa (2003) and Idike and Ezeah (2025) contend that the media, which are expected to be impartial umpire are by law supposed to be neutral in the coverage of the electoral process.

A free and fair election is central to the survival of any democratic dispensation (Otjes, 2025; Xiangyun, 2024). For an election to be adjudged free and fair, there must be a credible voters' register. Voters' registration is a necessary requirement for citizens' participation in the electoral process (INEC Nigeria, n.d). The registration of voters is the practice of placing citizens' names on an official list of voters before they are eligible to exercise their right to vote.

In most democracies, apart from the United States, governments have the responsibility to register voters (Janda, Berry and Goldman, 2005; Ferrer et al., 2025). The absence of a credible voters' register is a pointer to disputed elections. Once elections are disputed, the government in power becomes discredited and this will lead to loss of confidence by the electorate. It is against this backdrop that stakeholders at a summit organized in March 2011 by Vintage Press Limited, publishers of The Nation Newspaper and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the body charged with the conduct of elections, in Abuja identified a credible voter registration as one of the eight key issues critical to a successful outing in the April 2011 general polls.

A fundamental axiom of democracy is that citizens must be informed if they are to play an active role in the growth of their country. Free and responsible media are critical sources of information for citizens who want to choose the best leaders for their country and make sound decisions about the issues in their nation (Odunlami & Aro, 2024). This correlates the statement of Bussiek (1995) "The establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development, maintenance of democracy in a nation and for economic development".

The traditional mass media usually consists of radio, television, newspaper, and magazine. The radio has been regarded as the most effective medium in reaching the country's widely dispersed, heterogeneous audience. It is reputed worldwide for being the cheapest, simplest and most popular medium of mass communication for reaching people. Everywhere, radio informs the public of important affairs. But it does more than that. It provides information on which many listeners form opinion. Over the past centuries radio has shaped culture, influenced politics played an important role in business and affected the daily lives of millions. The listening to radio daily affects listener's conduct attitudes and even their fundamental moral values.

In Nigeria, radio is an important medium. Its messages are consumed by literate and non-literate members of the society. A recent (2015) snap poll conducted by NOI Polls, a Nigerian survey and polling firm shows that "majority of Nigerians (62 percent) got access to daily news via radio stations. This was followed by television, social media and newspapers etc. with 49 percent, 37 percent and 30 percent respectively. Radio provides an arena for critical social discourse. Part of this discourse involves political issues such as coverage of voters' registration. Registration periods, locations as well as progress of the exercise are

usually publicized by radio to enable the citizens know when or where to register and assess the coverage of the exercise.

Statement of the Problem

In every voters' registration, government uses radio to publicize the exercise to enable people participate in the political process that precedes election. Information about when, where and how to register are usually relayed on radio to keep citizens, including women abreast with the registration exercise. However, it appears that despite the efforts of government in keeping people informed about the continuous voters' registration exercise, the women in Asaba, Delta State still show apathy towards the exercise, hence the need for this study.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the influence of radio on continuous voters' registration awareness and knowledge among women in Asaba, Delta State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

(i) To find out if the women in Asaba are exposed to continuous voter registration awareness campaign on radio.
(ii) To ascertain the specific continuous voters' registration awareness campaign relayed on radio.
(iii) To determine the influence of radio on continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on women in Asaba.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

(i) Are the women in Asaba exposed to continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on radio?
(ii) Are there specific continuous voters' registration awareness campaign relayed on radio?
(iii) What is the influence of radio on continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on the women in Asaba?

Significance of the Study

Voters' registration is very fundamental to the survival of any democracy. Over the years, it has become an essential prerequisite to the act of voting in most democratic societies.

In view of the above, any research conducted in this area would be considered worthwhile. To a large extent, democratic societies have come to realize that voters' registration is an integral part of the electoral process that should be properly handled.

Therefore, the findings and recommendations of the study will provide a viable framework for government and concerned stakeholders to handle media sensitization of the electorate (including women) effectively. It will also add to the existing literature within the topic area

Clarification of Concepts

The following key terms have been defined in this study to ease their understanding:

Influence: It means to persuade, sway, or induce someone to do something.

Radio: It is a broadcasting medium. According to Hasan (2013), "radio broadcasting is an audio (sound) broadcasting service, traditionally broadcast through the air as radio waves (a form of electromagnetic radio) from a transmitter to an antenna and thus to a receiving device. Stations can be linked in radio networks to broadcast common programming, either in syndication or simulcast or both. Audio broadcasting also can be done via cable FM, local wire networks, satellite and the Internet. The best known are the AM and FM stations..." Radio has moved slowly into the digital age. Thousands of radio stations (Dominick, 2002) have websites, and many now offer streaming audio. For the most part, however, these sites are used primarily to supplement the on-air station and its traditional analog signal.

Voters: Those who are eligible to cast their ballot during election are called voters. Most countries that practice democracy fix an age limit for voters. In Nigeria, according to the Electoral Act (2010), if a citizen is not up to 18 years, he or she is not eligible to register and vote during election.

Voters' Registration: The act of placing voters on an official list (voter register) for the purpose of voting is called voters' registration.

Awareness: The process of having or showing realization, perception, or knowledge about something.

Knowledge: The fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the uses and gratification theory. The main thrust of the theory is that the media do not do things to people; rather, people do things with the media. Specifically the objective of uses and gratification theory, according to Burgeon, Hunsaker & Dawson (1994), is to explain how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs. Putting it explicitly, the theory explains why one person rushes home, for example, to stay up late at night to watch the local news or read a medium. It also highlights the positive consequences of individual media use. Baran and Davis (2001) averred that audience members actively seek out the mass media to satisfy individual needs. These needs include learning, passing time, companionship, escape from tension, excitement and relaxation.

Baran (2002) and Devito (1991) posit that mass media audience make active use of whatever the media have to offer. Subscribing to the tenets of the uses and gratification theory, Bittner (1989) who drew from one of the earliest studies on the uses of the media conducted by Herta Herzog, describes the gratification the audience receive from watching programmes. According to him, viewers use programmes as entertainment as well as a tool for social interaction with others; and this condition them to be part of the viewers' routine. Similarly, with the media, audiences reduce tensions and also solve their personal problems.

Quoting Wright (1974), McQuail (2005) adds that the media serve the various needs of the society, which include cohesion, cultural continuity, social control and large circulation of public information of all kinds. This pre-supposes that individuals also use media for related purposes such as personal guidance, relaxation, adjustment, information, and identity formation.

Literature Review

Mass Media, Voter Registration and Public Awareness

The dimensions of the contribution of mass media to social change and development in many different parts of the world have been well documented by several writers (Coldevin, 1987; Hartmann, et al., 1989; Sinha, 1985; Zandam, 2022).

There is a wealth of evidence from case studies to suggest that newspapers, magazines, posters, radio and television can be applied in stimulating and encouraging critical awareness, discussion and decision-making and generating active involvement in social change among different segments of the population. Hence, Golding (1974) postulates that, "the mass media are central in the provision of ideas and images which people use to interpret and understand a great deal of their everyday life".

Given the appropriate mix of factors, radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines and other communication paraphernalia offer the channels for disseminating development-oriented information, including information relating to voter registration and election.

Although the mass media are not the panacea for the problems posed by or which cause apathy towards voter registration, disruption of the exercise by political parties and individuals, the efforts to generate a shift in attitude towards such problems or practices are information-related or information-dependent in one way or the other. What this means is that the provision of information and education through the mass media is essential to efforts to create awareness of voter registration and its relation to political development.

The importance of information in the creation of public awareness cannot be overestimated. There is a relation between the creation of public awareness and the mass media (Zandam, 2022; Gambo, et al., 2024). On the one hand, through coverage and presentation of news, information, facts, figures, editorials, and other analytical pieces about voter registration, the media have considerable influence over the creation of public awareness of voter registration. On the other hand, the media can serve as channels for the expression of public opinion which is a manifestation of public awareness. Baofo (1994) affirms that "public awareness and its overt manifestation (public opinion) require information for their creation and proper functioning. Information dissemination is a necessary precondition for the existence of public awareness. Without knowledge of an issue, there cannot be awareness about that issue".

Social scientists and communication scholars have observed that the communication media can be used to effectively inform broad masses of people about a problem of public interest; they can inspire ideas and feelings, stimulate discussion and an exchange of ideas and assist in forming or creating public awareness. Such scholars as Mansurov (1988) have identified several factors which determine the creation through the media of public awareness and the stimulation of public interest in certain issues. These include: (i) how the issue is presented in the media, especially the use of clear and accurate information and facts; (ii) periodical repetition and frequent references; (iii) the amount of time and space devoted to the issue in the media; and (iv) presentation of adequate analytical pieces on the issue and information and its effect on the society.

On both a long and short-term basis, the mass media can make substantial contributions to the process of creating public awareness about voter registration, whether the aim of such efforts is to (i) bring about an increase in the information or knowledge level of the public or target group and voter registration; (ii) to generate a change in their opinions or

attitudes towards voter registration; or to motivate the people to participate in the voter registration exercise; or (iii) to motivate the people to participate in the voter registration exercise.

Regardless of the purpose, the creation of public awareness and the generation of public action involve and require a purposive use of the mass media to disseminate voter registration information, create public awareness about and generate action on voter registration and its implication for sustainable political development form integral parts of strategies for addressing the problems associated with voter registration in the society.

Method and Materials

The survey method was adopted for the study. Survey research, according to Kerlinger (2000) is a useful scientific tool to employ when a researcher is interested in the opinion and attitude of people as well as the relationship of the attitudes to respondents' overt behaviour. Instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire elicited demographic variables of respondents and other relevant information about the level of awareness and knowledge of voters' registration provided through radio.

One hundred and thirty (130) women constituted the sample drawn from Nnebisi road (40), Traffic light area (20), Anwai road (10), Okpanam road (10), Summit road (20), Ibusa road (15), DLA road (10) and Jesus Saves road (15). Only those who made themselves available were sampled. Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher and his assistants on the respondents for a period of two weeks. In situations, where the respondents who were purposively selected were illiterates, the same copy of questionnaire was used to interview them. Responses from the same copy of questionnaire were then collated, tabulated and analyzed, using simple percentages.

Results and Discussion

Analysis was based on the 130 copies of questionnaire returned. This represented 100 percent return rate. The high response rate was as a result of the on-the-spot administration of the instrument on the respondents by the researcher and his team of research assistants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Characteristics	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage**
Age		
25-30	40	30.8%
31-35	36	27.7%
36-40	28	21.5%
41 and above	26	20%
Education		
Secondary	68	52%
Tertiary	62	48%
Total	**130**	**100%**

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents as they relate to age and education. Distribution of age groupings showed that 30.8% (40) were between 25 and 30 years, 27.7% (36) were between 31 and 35 years; 21.5% (28) were between 36 and 40 years; while 20% (26) were 41 years and above. Respondents' level of education indicated

that 52% (68) had secondary school education while 48% (62) respondents possess tertiary education qualification.

Exposure to Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign on Radio

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they are exposed to continuous voter registration awareness campaign on radio. Their views were collated and presented in table 2.

Table 2: Exposure to Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign on Radio.

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	130	100%
No	-	-
Total	**130**	**100%**

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 2 indicates that all the respondents were exposed to voters' registration awareness campaign on radio. This table was used to answer research question one.

Specific Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign on Radio

Responses on the specific voters' registration awareness campaign relayed on radio were as presented in table 3.

Table 3: Specific Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign Relayed

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Register to vote	30	23.1%
It is your right to vote	35	26.9%
No registration, no voting	32	24.6%
Don't be disenfranchised	33	25.4%
Total	**130**	**100%**

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 3 shows that the respondents identified the following as the specific continuous voters' registration awareness campaign relayed on radio: Register to vote 23.1% (30), It is your right to register 26.9% (35); No registration, no voting 24.6% (32); Don't be disenfranchised 25.4% (33). This table was used to answer research question two.

Influence of Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign on Women in Asaba

Respondents opinion on the influence of continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on women in Asaba were as presented in table 4.

Table 4: Influence of Continuous Voters' Registration Awareness Campaign on Women

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
It creates awareness of continuous voters' registration among women	35	26.9%
It helps them to know where, when and how to register	40	30.8%
It makes them appreciate the need to register during the exercise and avoid double or multiple registration	55	42.3%
Total	**130**	**100%**

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 4 shows the influence of continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on the women in Asaba: It creates awareness of continuous voters' registration among women

26.9% (35); It helps them to know where, when and how to register 30.8% (40); It makes them appreciate the need to register during the exercise and avoid double or multiple registration 42.3% (55). This table was used to answer research question three.

Voters' registration is a key component of the democratic process. It usually precedes election (actual voting). Because of its importance, concerted efforts are made by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties and other stakeholders to mobilize the citizenry to participate in the exercise whenever it comes up.

Findings from the study have shown that the respondents are exposed to continuous voters' registration awareness campaign on radio and that the messages have positive impact on the women. This corroborates the assertion of Rimal (2000) cited in Assay (2009,p.234) that awareness of an issue leads to knowledge and knowledge leads to behaviour modification. The behaviour modification in this case would mean participating in the voters' registration exercise.

Conclusion

The study has shown that radio plays an important role in the creation of awareness and knowledge of continuous voters' registration among women in Asaba, Delta State. If properly handled, radio can be used to drive other development policies of government that is information based which the media including radio is adequately prepared to promote on behalf of government.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion reached, the study recommends as follows;

1. The Electoral Management Body (INEC), political parties and other stakeholders should continue to use radio to mobilize people participate in the continuous voters' registration exercises.
2. The awareness campaign messages should be relayed on radio in local dialects to enable the target audience understand it better.
3. The sponsors of the awareness campaign messages on radio should endeavour to use all available radio stations in order to achieve the desire result.

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