

Achieving Rural Political Participation through the Radio: A Study of Idemili North and South Local Government Areas in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study entitled *Achieving rural political participation through the radio: a study of Idemili North and South local government areas in Anambra State, Nigeria* was a survey of 200 rural residents drawn from Ojoto, Alor, Umuoji and Ideani. The study was conducted to ascertain respondents' opinion on the role of the radio in disseminating political campaign information to rural residents and to assess the kind of political information disseminated to them through the medium of radio. A sixteen-item, multi-choice, close-ended questionnaire was used to collect data and data analysis was done using the percentage method. Findings show that radio has been very effective in mobilising rural residents in Idemili North and South council areas for political participation and radio has been used for disseminating political information such as political campaign schedules of politicians, voter education, election dates, etc. The paper concluded that radio is the most effective available mass medium for mobilising rural residents for political participation and may remain so for a long time to come. We therefore, recommended that political parties and politicians should make more effective use of the many opportunities that the radio provide in communicating political messages to people living in the rural areas of the state.

Keywords: Radio, Achievement, Rural, Political participation, Idemili North and South, Anambra State

1. Introduction and Justification for the Study

The fact that political participation emerges from credible and adequate information that can guarantee a well informed citizenry, competent to participate in governance is no longer in doubt. The citizens need authentic communication channels through which to access political information that can provide them with comparative political information, necessary for encouraging partisan considerations in politics (Ezeh, 2015). It is perhaps, the ability to provide political information as a vital pillar of democracy that has made radio relevant to politics and civic education.

Radio is the most available and accessible modern mass medium of communication in rural African. As noted by Asemah (2011, p. 343) "Of the mass media generally, available to Africans, radio is the most widespread and accessible". The indispensability of radio in achieving development in rural communities is predicated on its capacity to break illiteracy barriers, penetrate into the remote areas with clear signals to inform, educate and entertain the audience (Edegoh, Asemah and Nwammuo, 2013). Radio is used to articulate design, package and air pertinent development messages to listeners in form of various programmes to address basic developmental needs of individuals in the society. This explains why Nwabueze (2007, p. 65) notes that radio is believed to be the most effective, popular and credible medium for reaching a large and heterogeneous audience. Radio programmes inform and educate the audience on new issues inherent in society, such as political issues, business, current affairs, religious issues, etc., which are aimed at creating awareness. Radio could also be used for mass mobilisation of people, particularly in the rural areas, to achieve social, political, economic or cultural goal.

A good number of radio stations operate in Anambra State. These include Radio Nigeria; Anambra Broadcasting Radio, Awka and Onitsha; Minaj Radio, Obosi; Odenigbo FM, Obosi; Radio Sapientia, Onitsha; Blaze FM Radio, Oraifite; Rhythm FM, Awka; Brilla FM, Onitsha; Purity FM, Awka; Madonna Radio, Okija (owned by Madonna University); and Unizik FM Radio, Awka (owned by the Nnamdi Azikiwe University). These stations air programmes to educate, inform and entertain the audience in Anambra State. The programmes of these radio stations are accessed by residents in Idemili North local government area (LGA) (with headquarters at Ogidi) and Idemili South LGA (with Ojoto as the headquarters).

Through these radio channels the rural residents of Idemili North and South LGAs access diverse programme types designed for their relaxation and other needs. Thus, the increase in spread of radio stations has led to questions and research to establish its role in mobilising rural dwellers for political participation.

These media programmes, if well organised can provide avenues for mobilisation and participation (McQuail, 2005) of people in political activities. The use of communication channels like radio to reach a

particular target audience, in this instance, the audience in Idemili North and South LGAs with a predetermined process message can harness the psyche of the audience and help build a platform through which political thoughts and expressions can become articulated (Ezeh, Chukwuma and Enwereuzo, 2015).

Idemili North and South LGAs like other LGAs in Anambra State enjoy a variety of radio programmes from many stations on different subject areas, particularly on party politics; but what remains unclear is the effectiveness of the radio programmes aired from these stations in addressing the many concerns they focus on. Thus, the question which motivated this study was: What roles does the radio play in achieving rural political participation in Idemili North and South LGAs of Anambra State?

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to ascertain the role radio could play in achieving rural political participation in Idemili North and South LGAs of Anambra State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Ascertain the level of exposure of the rural residents to political programmes on radio.
- ii. Determine the radio channels through which they obtain political information.
- iii. Find out the role of the medium of radio in mobilising residents of Idemili North and South LGAs for political participation.
- iv. Access the kind of political information disseminated to residents of Idemili North and South LGAs through the radio.

1.2 Research Questions

Pursuant to the aforementioned objectives of the study, the under listed questions were posed to guide the conduct of the study.

- i. What is the level of exposure of the residents in Idemili North and South LGAs to political programmes on radio?
- ii. What are radio stations through which they obtain political information?
- iii. What role could the radio play in mobilizing rural residents in Idemili North and South LGAs for political participation?
- iv. What kinds of political information are disseminated to residents of Idemili North and South LGAs through the radio?

2. Theoretical Underpinning

This study was anchored on the Agenda-setting and Uses and Gratification theories of the mass media.

2.1.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

As noted by Asemah (2011), the notion of agenda-setting can be traced back to Walter Lipman (1922) who suggested that the media were responsible for the pictures in our heads. Forty years later, Cohen (1963), cited in Asemah (2011) further articulated the idea by arguing that the media may not always be successful in telling people what to think, but they are successful in telling what to think about. Lang and Lang (1966), cited in Asemah (2011) reinforced this notion when he observed that the mass media pay attention to certain issues; they are constantly presenting objects; suggesting what individuals should think and have feeling about. Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw asserted in 1972 that in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality (Edegoh and Asemah, 2014).

The major assumption of the Agenda-setting theory, therefore, is that most of the pictures we store in our heads, most of the things we think or worry about, most of the issues we discuss, are based on what we have read, listened to or watched in different mass media. The mass media present certain issues as more important than others in our society. In line with this thinking, Wimmer and Doninick (2000), cited in Edegoh and Ezeh (2014, p. 42) opine that “The Agenda – setting theory of the mass media proposes that the public agenda or what kind of things people talk about, think or worry about are shaped and directed by what the mass media choose to publicise”.

The relevance of the Agenda-setting theory to the current study is predicated on the fact that radio as a medium of mass communication set agenda for the public to follow and has the ability to influence what the audience thinks about. The radio through the numerous political programmes it carries set political agenda and influences the rural audiences as well as their urban counterparts to think about those agenda.

2.1.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification theory was propounded in 1974 by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. The major assumption of the theory is that members of the audience are not passive; they take an active role in interpreting and integrating media offerings into their own lives (Edegoh, Ezeh and Samson, 2015). The theory attempts to underpin the motivating factors underlining the use of media contents by the audience. The theory highlights what people do with the mass media and the gratifications they derive from using media contents.

The Uses and Gratification theory is primarily audience-centred and addresses such human needs as

surveillance, excitement, guidance, relaxation, tension release, social integration, entertainment, escape, identity, socialisation, and information acquisition (Ojobor, 2002). The theory is adequate in explaining how the audiences use the media to satisfy a variety of needs. The theory therefore, could be used to explain how the rural dwellers in Idemili North and South LGAs of Anambra State utilise the radio to gratify (satisfy) their political information needs.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

2.2.1 Overview of Radio

Radio, no doubt, is the most effective, spontaneous means of mass communication and an electronic information carrier. As noted by Edegoh (2015) the radio with its ubiquitous presence, warmth, portability, power adaptability and most importantly, the capacity to break barriers of illiteracy and language, has the potency to penetrate into remote villages with clear signals. Corroborating this view, Konkwo (2010, p.174) opines

The relative prominence of the radio as the most effective medium of mass communication with ruralites has been attributed to a number of factors, namely: (a) its capacity to transcend the functional barriers of illiteracy, illiteracy being a contentious issue in developing societies, including Nigeria with an estimated illiteracy rate of 60%; (b) in such a society radio has become a medium for all and sundry enjoying tremendous popularity among the populace; (c) being relatively cheap and available, radio has become the medium of choice for all farmers, market women, artisans, fishermen, cooks, etc., since it is portable and practical; (d) its quality makes it suitable for use while engaging in or performing other tasks, such as driving, writing, eating, etc. In view of these qualities or characteristics, communication experts and development organisations have, over the past 50 years, recommended radio as the most appropriate medium through which the rural people globally, can be reached, sensitised and mobilised to embrace rural development in all its ramifications.

This position that the radio can be used to achieve significant development (especially in the rural areas) is as universal as scholarship. The UNESCO reporters on Indian rural forum, cited in Asemah (2011, p.344) note thus:

In the developing countries, the greater part of the people live on the land, they are frequently isolated by illiteracy and lack of transport. Effective communication with rural people and their active participation in the life of their country is essential for developing societies. Thus, radio broadcasts, when skillfully used, have proven to be the most effective medium of communication with the population.

One of the commonest, everyday functions of radio is information dispersing and enlightenment of listeners. Radio performs this function by providing adequate, relevant and timely information to alert people about their health, about agriculture, education, security, economy, politics, etc. Radio broadcasts in Nigeria contain rich contents designed to provide basic information on political issues in the country to the listening pleasure of most people (including rural people) in order to make them able to take informed political decisions.

Asemah (2011), citing Tafida (1986) notes that broadcasting (radio) is so powerful; it brings political economic and social news to any community or any group of communities. Wigwe (1988) argues that radio broadcasting has credible role to play in disseminating information to the masses at the grassroots level for development purposes. In his own contribution, Adaba (1987), cited in Asemah (2011), contends that there is an essential communication role for radio broadcasting at the local level. He further noted “within an overall national system, there is a clear need for radio broadcast to be used to motivate, and mobilise the people at the grassroots, so that they can participate actively in the development of their own society” (Adaba, 1987, cited in Asemah, Anum and Edegoh, 2013, p.27).

2.2.2 Related Studies

Many scholars have undertaken to study the influence of radio in bringing about development and the general use of the radio for the benefit of rural people. Acholonu (2009) conducted a study titled *An Assessment of the Role of radio Nigeria Enugu National Station in promoting political Education among Residents of Enugu Metropolis* in which she investigated the roles Radio Nigeria Enugu played in the political education of the people, the programmes of the radio station that were meant to enhance political education, and the extent to which such programmes achieved their objectives, among others. The researcher used the survey research method and the questionnaire as the research instrument to survey 150 respondents using stratified random sampling technique.

The researcher reported that the roles played by Radio Nigeria Enugu in the political education of the

people investigated include: Sensitising the people to exercise their political rights {50(41.6%)}, playing the role of middleman {40(33.3%)}, and projecting the image of political authorities in power {30(25%)}. On the knowledge of Radio Nigeria Enugu political programmes among the respondents examined, Acholonu (2009) reported that the political programmes were *Media link, News, Eagle square, Human rights, State of the Nation* {50(41.6%)}, *Media link, Human rights, News, Eagle Square* {35(29%)}, and *Media link* {5 (4.4%)}. On the extent to which the programmes achieved their objectives which the researcher measured in terms of the extent the respondents derived satisfaction from that station's political education programmes, the researcher indicated that 58.4% of the participants claimed that the station's political education programmes satisfied their needs by creating political awareness and the knowledge about their rights to political participation were adequately and very much, 53.3% were adequately and very much satisfied with regard to the programmes' clarification of complex political issues and provision of information; while 54.4% indicated adequate and very much satisfaction in this regard.

Acholonu (2009) concluded that although Radio Nigeria Enugu did carry out its political objective of sensitising the political consciousness of its audience through its numerous political programmes' broadcasts, it was yet to achieve that objective to its maximum.

Edegoh, Asemah and Nwammuo (2013) investigated *Radio Listening Habit of Rural Women in Idemili South LGA of Anambra State, Nigeria*, in which they examined, among others, how often the rural women in Idemili South LGA listen to radio, the type of radio programmes that interest rural women in Idemili LGA, and the gratifications the rural women derived from listening to radio. The study surveyed 740 rural women, purposively drawn from the seven towns that make up Idemili South and used structured questionnaire to elicit data. Findings of Edegoh et al (2013) indicated that 57% (408) respondents listened to radio programmes on daily basis, 28% (200) listened on weekly basis and 6% (40) reported that they rarely listened to radio programmes, among others. Similarly, the researchers reported that the type of radio programmes that interest rural women in Idemili South LGA included Health programme {260 (36%)}, Agricultural programme {242(34%)}, Religions programme {106(15%)}, Entertainment programme {5 (34%)}, and "others" response category {70 (10%)}. On the gratifications which rural women derived from listening to the programme on radio, the researchers reported that "the gratifications were located in the areas of health issues, agriculture issues, and religions issue, in descending order of importance" (Edegoh et al, 2013, p. 26).

Asemah and Okpanachi (2014) conducted a study titled *Enhancing Rural Women's Access to Information on behavioural Change in Plateau State: a Clarion Call for Community Radio* in which the researchers employed focus group discussion to elicit data from 60 women selected from the 17 local government areas that make up Plateau State. The objectives of the study were to find out whether community radio was one of the best ways to reach rural dwellers with information on behavioural change, and to ascertain the areas in which rural women need information on behavioural change.

Finding of Asemah and Okpanachi (2014) showed that community radio has a very important role to play in passing information about behavioural change. The researchers also found that rural women need information on health, politics, etc., to enable them act appropriately.

3. Method

This study adopted the survey research method to achieve its objectives. The sample size of the study was 200 rural residents purposively drawn from Alor and Ojoto (in Idemili South LGA), Ideani and Umuoji (in Idemili North LGA) in equal proportion of 50 respondents per town. The reason for adopting purposive sampling procedure in the study was to ensure that only respondents who meet certain criteria were included in the study. The choice of 200 respondents as the sample size was informed by the principle set forth by Comrey and Lee (1992), cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 101) that "one guideline recommended for multivariate studies is as follows: 50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good; and 1000 = excellent". Further justification for the use of 200 respondents was based on Nwana's (1981), cited in Edegoh et al (2015, p. 65) argument that "if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do; and if several thousands, a 5% or less will do".

The study used structured questionnaire as data gathering instrument. The 18-item questionnaire contained two sections: section A consisted of 6 items carefully designed to obtain data on demographic variables of the respondents while section B comprised 12 items designed to generate data to answer the research questions. The questionnaire was used because of its capacity to facilitate the collection of large amount of data in a relatively, short period. The analysis of data obtained was done using the percentage method.

4 Results

All the 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed were returned and found usable, yielding a 100% return rate.

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	120	60
Female	80	40
Total	200	100

Table 1 contains data obtained to determine respondents' sex characteristics. As could be gleaned from the table, respondents in the study were made up of 60% males (n = 120) and 40% females (n = 80). The reason for more number of male participants in the study was because men are more politically enlightened and participate more than women in politics, particularly in the rural areas.

Table 2: Respondents' Age Characteristics

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25 years	49	24.5
26 – 35 years	65	32.5
36 – 45 years	62	31
46 years and above	24	12
Total	200	100

Data on the age characteristics of the participants in the study as shown in table 2 above indicate that 32.5% of the respondents (n = 65) were within 26 – 35 years age bracket, 31% (n = 62) were aged 36 – 45 years, 24.5% indicated that they were 18 – 25 years old while 12% (n = 24) were aged 46 years and above.

Table 3: Respondents' Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	124	62
Single	76	38
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows data obtained to determine the marital status of participants in the study. Sixty – two percent of the respondents (n = 124) were married while 38% (n = 76) were single. The participants in the study were therefore more of married men and women than singles.

Table 4: Respondents' Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Traders	40	20
Farmers	56	28
Civil servants	20	10
Students	36	18
Unemployed	40	20
Others	8	4
Total	200	100

Data in table 4 were obtained to establish the occupation of respondents. Data in the table reveal that farmers constituted the majority of participants investigated in the study (28%, n = 56). They were followed by the traders and the unemployed which got 20% (or n = 40) respondents each, and the students (18%, n = 36). Other occupations indicated by respondents include civil service which got 10% (n = 20) and "others" response category which include artisans and apprentices (4%, n = 8). Farmers were more in number because of the rural nature of the study.

Table 5: Respondents Academic Training

Academic training	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	50	25
Secondary school	100	50
Tertiary institution training	46	23
Post degree training	4	2
Total	200	100

Respondents academic training as shown in table 5 indicates that majority of the respondents had secondary school training (50%, n = 100), followed by those who had only primary education training (25%, n = 50), those who had training in tertiary institutions (23%, n = 46), and few participants who indicated that they

were trained beyond first degree (2%, n = 4). It could be inferred from data in table 5 that the academic level of most participants include secondary, primary and tertiary education.

Table 6: Respondents' Town of Residence

Town	Frequency	Percentage
Alor	50	25
Ideani	50	25
Ojoto	50	25
Umuoji	50	25
Total	200	100

Table 6 shows data on the town of residence of the participants in the study. Each of the four towns studied had 25% (n = 50) respondents investigated. Since the two LGAs examined had two towns each in the study, Idemili North LGA (Ideani and Umuoji) got 100 respondents and Idemili South (Alor and Ojoto) obtained 100 respondents.

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of the residents in Idemili North and South LGAs to political programmes on radio?

Table 7: Respondents' Level of Exposure to Political Programmes

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	52	26
High	102	51
Average	40	20
Low	2	1
Don't know	4	2
Total	200	100

Data in table 7 were obtained to answer research question one which sought respondents' opinion on their level of exposure to political programmes on radio. Respondents' responses to research question one indicate, that 51% of them (n = 102) reported having "high" exposure to political campaigns on radio, 26% (n = 52) indicated "very high" as their response to the questions, and 20% (n = 40) chose the response option "average". However, 2% (n = 4) of the participants returned the 'Don't know' verdict to the question while 1% (n = 2) felt that their level of exposure to political programmes on radio was low.

The deduction that could be made from data obtained from the participants for research question one is that majority of the respondents had adequate exposure to political programmes on radio. This was the position of 97% (n = 194) of the respondents investigated.

Research Question Two: What are radio stations through which they obtain political information?

Table 8: Preferred Radio Stations through which Respondents obtain political information

Preferred Radio Station	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Radio Nigeria (FRCN)	200	3.13	1.304	
Anambra Broadcasting Radio	200	3.13	1.304	
Minaj Radio	200	3.82	1.079	
Odenigbo FM	200	3.06	1.342	
Blaze FM Radio	200	3.36	1.364	
Radio Sapientia	200	3.51	1.252	
Purity FM	200	3.19	1.441	
Others	200	2.32	1.181	

Data in table 8 were obtained to determine the preferred radio stations through which rural residents in Idemili North and South LGAs obtain political information. Data indicate that Minaj Radio and Radio Sapientia were the foremost stations that provide respondents with political information (3.82>3.0 and 3.51>3.0 respectively), Others include Radio Nigeria and Anambra Broadcasting Radio with 3.13>3.0 (for each station), Blaze FM (3.36>3.0), Purity FM (3.19>3.0), Odenigbo FM Radio (3.06>3.0), and others such as Brilla FM, Rhythm FM, Madonna Radio, and Unizik FM Radio were grossly insignificant at (2.32<3.0).

The inference that could be drawn from data on research question two is that though the rural dwellers in Idemili North and South LGAs significantly made use of radio in obtaining political information they

preferred, and obtained political information mainly from the privately-owned radio stations, as privately-owned radio stations like Minaj, Radio Sapientia and Blaze FM ranked higher than government-owned ones like F.R.C.N and A.B.S. Onitsha.

Research Question Three: How effective is the radio in mobilising rural residents in Idemili North and South LGAs for political participation?

Table 9: Effectiveness of Radio in Mobilisation of Rural Residents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely effective	56	28
Very effective	84	42
Effective	56	26
Not effective	4	2
Total	200	100

Table 9 contains data obtained to establish the effectiveness of radio in mobilising rural residents for political participation. In the opinion of the respondents, the radio is a “very effective” medium for rural mobilisation for political participation (42%, n = 84), the radio is both an “effective” and “extremely effective medium” (28%, n = 56 for each variable). However, four respondents, representing 2% stated that the radio is “Not effective” as a medium in mobilising rural residents for political issues.

The import of data on research question three is that rural residents consider the medium of radio as a very effective medium of mobilisation of people in the rural areas for political participation.

Research Question Four: What kinds of political information do residents of Idemili North and South LGA receive through the radio?

Table 10 Mean Rating of Political Information Received through Radio

Political Information on Radio	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
political schedules of candidates	200	3.26	1.188	
Election dates	200	2.81	1.145	
Voter education	200	3.69	1.147	
Information relating to PVC	200	3.60	1.137	
Airing views on political issues	200	2.47	1.102	

Data in table 10 were obtained to answer research question four which sought respondents’ opinion on the kinds of political information they obtain through the medium of radio. As could be gleaned from the table, the different political information on radio was rated. Information on, “Voter education had the highest mean score of 3.69 as the most significant political information on radio. “Information relating to PVC” came second with the mean score of 3.60, followed by “political schedules of candidates” at 3.26. The rest are insignificant at mean score < 3.0, as 3.0 is the decision point for this measurement. ‘Election dates” scored 2.81, while “Airing views on political issues” is grossly insignificant at 2.47.

The implication of data in table 10 is that the radio provided such information on political activities to rural residents in Idemili North and South LGAs as voter education, information on PVC and schedules of candidates (to a large extent). The insignificant level of audience airing of their views on political issues could suggest that though the radio stations provided enough political information that can help mobilise the audience, they did not provide enough opportunity for them to participate in political discussions on radio.

4.2 Discussion

Findings of this study are as revealing as they are interesting. First and foremost, the researchers found that the level of exposure to political programmes on radio by residents of Idemili North and South LGAs was adequate as majority of the participants claimed that their exposure to such programmes was high. This finding is in tandem with earlier studies conducted by Edegoh et al (2013) and Acholonu (2013). Specifically, Edegoh et al (2013) found that 57% (408) respondents listened to radio programmes on daily basis, 28% (200) listened on weekly basis and 6% (40) reported that they rarely listened to radio programmes, among others.

Findings of the study also show that the radio stations through which residents of Idemili North and South LGAs obtain political information were mainly privately-owned radio stations like Minaj Radio, Obosi; Radio Sapientia, Onitsha; Blaze FM Radio, Oraifite; Odenigbo FM Radio, Obosi. These radios are more significant in providing political information than government-owned media like Radio Nigeria, Enugu, Anambra Broadcasting Service, Awka and Onitsha and Purity FM Radio, (Mgbakwu) Awka. This finding is in line with the Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media because the respondents tune to radio stations of their choice based on the specific needs they want to gratify.

On the role of radio in mobilising rural residents for political participation, the researchers found that an overwhelming majority of participants considered radio as a very effective medium for political mobilisation and participation in rural communities. This position that radio is an effective medium for rural political participation agrees with the outcome of many studies carried out in several places and at different periods. Examples include Konkwo, (2010); Edegoh et al (2013); Asemah, Anum and Edegoh (2013); Asemah and Okpanachi (2014). For instance, finding of Asemah and Okpanachi (2014) showed that community radio has a very important role to play in passing information about behavioural change in Plateau State.

Konkwo (2010, p.174) provides reasons why the radio is the most effective medium of mass communication with ruralites to include a number of factors, namely: (a) its capacity to transcend the functional barriers of illiteracy, illiteracy being a contentious issue in developing societies, including Nigeria with an estimated illiteracy rate of 60%; (b) in such a society radio has become a medium for all and sundry enjoying tremendous popularity among the populace; (c) being relatively cheap and available, radio has become the medium of choice for all farmers, market women, artisans, fishermen, cooks, etc., since it is portable and practical; (d) its quality makes it suitable for use while engaging in or performing other tasks, such as driving, writing, eating, etc. Konkwo further notes that communication experts and development organisations have, over the past 50 years, recommended radio as the most appropriate medium through which the rural people globally, can be reached, sensitised and mobilised to embrace rural development in all its ramifications.

Findings of the study further show that the kinds of political information disseminated to rural residents of Idemili North and South through the radio include; information relating to PVC, voter education, political schedules of party flag-bearers, election dates, and so forth. This position tallies with the outcome of the work of Edegoh et al (2013) who reported that the type of radio programmes that interest rural women in Idemili South LGA include health programme {260 (36%)}, agricultural programme {242(34%)}, religions programme {106(15%)}, entertainment programme {5 (34%)}, and “others” response category {70 (10%)}. This finding also upholds and reinforces the cardinal argument of the Agenda – setting theory of the mass media, namely: that the media set agenda for the audience to follow. Indeed, the radio set all kinds of political agenda which the audiences/listeners talk and think about.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the role of radio in achieving rural political participation in Idemili North and South LGAs of Anambra State. The paper was pegged on the Agenda – setting and the Uses and Gratification theories of the mass media. The researchers surveyed 200 rural residents using purposive sampling technique and used the questionnaire to elicit data. Findings of the study show that the radio has been very effective in mobilising rural residents in Idemili North and South LGAs for political participation. Findings also reveal that radio has been used to disseminate political information such as political campaign schedules of politicians, voter education, election date, etc. The paper, therefore, concluded that radio is the most effective available mass medium for mobilising rural residents for political participation and may remain so for a very long time to come.

Based on the findings of the study and the inevitable conclusion, the researchers made the following recommendations.

All political parties and politicians should make more effective use of the many opportunities provided by radio in communicating political messages to rural people rather than a few political parties and politicians doing so as the case is at present.

Radio messages should be created in line with the pre-existing attitudes of the rural residents for more effective result. That is, the culture, belief, etc., of the people should be taken into consideration when designing radio programmes.

Radio stations should not only increase the time allotment to programmes designed for political enlightenment of rural dwellers but also improve on the quality of such programmes to ensure that rural dwellers participate fully in political issues in the country.

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