



COMMUNITY RADIO AND MANAGEMENT OF RURAL VIOLENCE IN OGUTA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE: AN APPRAISAL

NNAH, Florence C.

Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri

Corresponding author: NNAH, Florence C, florachika69@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining the role of community radio in the management of rural violence in Imo State. The objectives of the study were to: determine the effectiveness of community radio in the management of rural violence, assess the extent to which violence prevention messages are incorporated into community radios' programs and examine the major constraints of community radio stations in the management of rural violence in Imo State. The theory was hinged on the agenda setting theory, which provided theoretical background knowledge on the subject matter. The study employed the mixed method research design, in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed. A structured questionnaire was used in collecting primary data from a sample of 377 respondents randomly selected from Oguta Local Government in Imo State. Interview was also conducted on key individuals who have vast knowledge on the establishment, operations and effectiveness of community radio, especially as regard their role in the management of rural violence. Manifest content analysis was also applied to qualitative data obtained from program schedule and contents of ten (10) selected community radio stations in Oguta Local Government in Imo State. Thus, triangulation was done combining the three methods to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings. The study found that community radio is effective in the management of rural violence in Oguta Local Government in Imo State. It also found that community radio protects the interest of both the minority and marginalized groups, hence averting disputes which could lead to violence. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that the community and other agents of development in the society support and fund the operations of community radio for sustainability.

Keywords: Community radio, community media, rural violence, management, community participation

Introduction

Community radio provides an effective means of communication. It is a small-scale radio station owned and operated by a community or its representative to be heard, informed and become more decisive agent for its own sake when it comes to any contextual issues (Mefalopulos, 2005). It is a mode of communication that is "pervasive, immediate, comprehensive, scalable, accessible, readily understood, intimate, compact, swift, and effective," and has thus created a new partnership between a medium and its listeners (Wikinson, 2017; Mtimide, Bonin, Maphiri & Nyamaku, 1998). The first two community radios in the history of Latin America were launched with the goal of reducing poverty and social inequality in the year 1947 (Fraser & Estrada, 2002).

Community radio, as distinguished from commercial and public service radio broadcasts; aims to draw together state level, rural groups, reflects on day-to-day issues of the general population and seeks to meet civic needs and ambitions. In this context it aims to improve the local people's wellbeing through the content produced by the people and for the people of the city (Wadia, 2007). In various parts of Nigeria, rural violence has been an ongoing occurrence over the years. Most of the rural violence occurrences result from communal clashes, land dispute, domestic violence and farmers-herders conflict. Ongoing attacks and violence have been overly prominent in rural areas, with both ethno-religious, political and cultural undertones (Amadi, Igwe & Ukachikara, 2019).

The particular issue of rural violence in Nigeria has been both critical and topical in recent decades as it is one of the most incendiary in the ongoing debates of insecurity in communities. This is evidence especially in the incessant conflict resulting in the dispossession and deprivation of the rural farmers of their land and water for agriculture leading to dialectic struggle for survival hence persistent violence.

The problem of violent attacks has been identified in various dimensions including the spate of killings that currently characterize the nature of rural violence. Nweze (2005) observed that both farmers and herders lost their lives in conflicts while there has been reduction in productivity for both groups. There are further arguments in the literature which rearticulate how rural violence is related to economic disempowerment (Kwaja, 2014). For instance, rural violence is a social construct related to incompatibility of economic goals.

Various studies have been conducted on the establishment of community radio and its role in cultural and rural development (Khan, Khan, Hassan, Ahmed & Haque, 2017; Hussain & Tongia, 2007; Fraser & Estrada; Rahman, 2013; Balan & Norman, 2012; Sharma & Kashyap, 2015), but none of these studies linked community radio with the management of rural violence. It is based on the above premise that this study sought to provide valuable contributions in knowledge and fill the gap in literature exploring link between community radio and the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State, Nigeria.

This study's objectives are to:

-) Oguta LGA,
-) Determine the effectiveness of community radio in the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State.
-) Examine the major constraints of community radio stations in the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State.

Literature Review

The concept of Community Radio

Community radio has been defined by scholars in various ways and from different perspectives; the common definitions are reviewed under this section. Kasoma (2002) defines community radio as a sound broadcasting station that serves a specific section of a society known as a community, which is a collection of people, usually living in the same area, with common interests that include having a common history, traditions and cultural background. Macedo (2007) and Rennie (2006) both defined community media as that which allow for access and participation in programme making by members of the community with non-profit and owned by or accountable to the community that they seek to serve.

Community Radio and Rural Violence

Using community radio to reach the isolated communities with communication difficulties in the rural areas could play an important role in educating the isolated communities on several issues including human rights, peace building, conflict management and crimes. Any meaningful discussion of the role of community radio in facilitating the management of rural violence must take into cognizance the goals of community broadcasting. These goals are summarized by Kur (2010) in the words: “to stimulate members of a community to galvanize their potentials for sustainable development of the community and the nation at large.”

Hence, community radio is seen in this perspective as an authentic tool in ensuring early warning and monitoring signal, mediation, facilitating and perfecting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and contributing significantly to societal orientation on issues of diversity that are often the cause of conflicts and violence when poorly managed. This could be achieved through the education role of community radio. Lack of effective peace education is a vital missing link in the attainment of peace and security in most rural communities affected by conflicts and violence in Nigeria (Alimba, 2010).

It is the conviction of many peace scholars that peace education is a veritable pathway to managing violence. Community radio, as a credible socializing agent, could contribute meaningfully in peace education. It could promote local identity, character and create diversity of voices and opinions, encourage open dialogue and the democratic process, and promote civil society, good governance and professional responsibility (Alumuku, 2006). All these roles could contribute immensely to bring about an effective education that could promote peace and shun all tendencies of violence and disunity.

Theoretical Framework

The agenda setting theory is a theory that discusses on how the mass media influences in making a certain issue as a public agenda. The public agenda is the main focus or prime issue which the members of the society or public concern about. Agenda setting theory describes the ability of news media to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda. Agenda setting is also the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. The study of agenda setting explains the way media attempts to influence viewers, and establish a hierarchy of news prevalence (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Rogers & Dearing, 1988).

The proposition of agenda setting theory affirms the basic proposition of this study which proposes that community radio which is a media outlet can use its educational and interactive role (airing programs and providing interactive platform directed at managing rural violence) to effectively manage rural violence in Imo State. Thus, this theory is relevant to the study and is adopted for the theoretical framework of the study.

Methodology

This study employed the mixed method research design. The mix method research design refers to the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. By combining the two research traditions, the researcher is able to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from a single method, single-observer, and single theory studies. The purpose of using the mixed method in research is to increase the credibility and validity of the results. Data for the study was sourced from both primary and secondary sources (Greene, 2007). A structured questionnaire and interview were used to collect data from respondents, while manifest content analysis was also applied to qualitative data obtained from program schedule of selected community radio stations in Imo State.

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in the study. In the first stage, the study selected Oguta Local Government Area out of the 27 Local Government Areas in Imo State, for primary data collection using purposive sampling technique. Oguta Local Government Area was purposively selected because it provided adequate opportunity to explore rural communities (it has 27 villages and a community radio station that provided a wide range network).

In the second stage, the sample size of the study for questionnaire administration purpose was obtained from the target population of the study (Oguta Local Government population) which is 20,096 (NBS, 2012). Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample size of 377 was obtained. The respondents in the sample were selected from Oguta using simple random sampling technique. Data obtained from the questionnaire administration and interview exercises were analysed using quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, respectively. The community radio stations targeted in this study are: 1 Radio (radio Oguta), Federal Polynek and IMSU Star FM; although 'One Radio station' was given special emphasis because of its location in the selected Local Government Area (Oguta LGA, Imo State) for the study.

Results and Discussions

Data collected were analysed using manifest content analysis and simple percentages and presented with tables and relevant charts. The aim was to provide evidence that depicts the effectiveness of community radio in the management of rural violence and extent to which violence prevention messages are incorporated into community radios' programs aired as vital variables in determining the role of community radio in the management of rural violence in Imo State.

Assessing the Extent to which Violence Prevention Messages are Incorporated into Community Radios' Programs Aired in Oguta LGA, Imo State

Table 2: The Extent to which Community Radio Stations Promote the Interests of Different Groups in Oguta

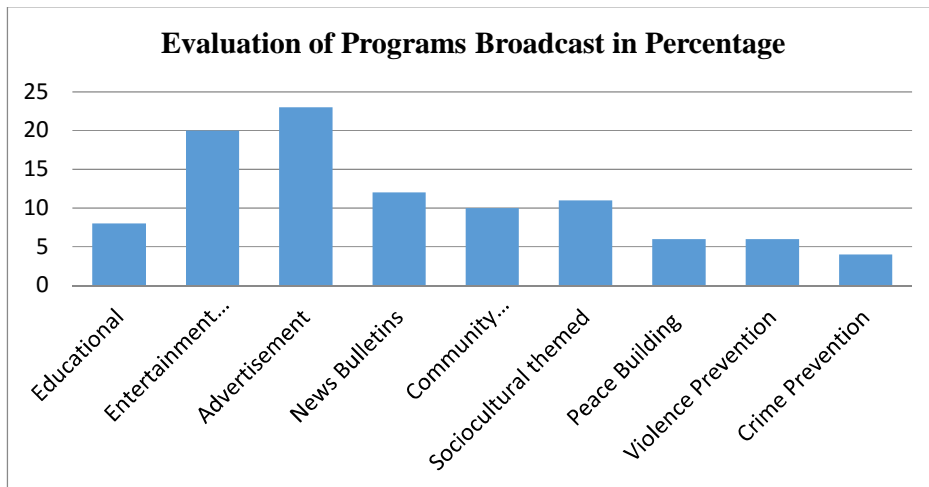
| Items | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------|----------------|
| Inclusion of minority and marginalized groups' interests | 356 | 94.4% |
| Only issues affecting majority are promoted | 7 | 1.9 |
| Only sponsored programs are broadcasted | 14 | 3.7 |
| Total | 377 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The result presented in table 2, revealed that majority 94.4 percent of the sampled respondents representing 356 indicated “Inclusion of minority and marginalized groups’ interests”, implying that community radio stations promote the interests of every groups in Oguta. However, 3.7 percent representing 14 respondents indicated that “Only sponsored programs are broadcasted” by community radio stations in Oguta. While the remaining 1.9 percent representing 7 respondents indicated “Only issues affecting majority are promoted”. This result implies that community radio stations majorly promote the interests of different groups in Oguta, irrespective of sponsorship of programs or sociocultural affiliations.

The participants in the interview corroborated the above result in their responses. According to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Oguta, “the community radio (Oguta radio) represents the interests of every group in the communities their radio network covers”. He was of the opinion that “the community radio in Oguta has overtime reduced marginalization and championed the course of the minority and the majority in the society”. This he said “made it possible to address salient issues that would have resulted to conflicts”. Akpatoyi (Chairman of Police Community Relations in Oguta, Imo State), another participant in the interview, expressed satisfaction with the fair and unbiased way the community radio projects issues of individuals and groups in the community, he described “community radio as a viable means of preventing conflicts that could lead to violence”.

Figure 1: Evaluating the Types of Programs Broadcast by Community Radio Stations in Oguta



Source: Field Survey, 2020

Based on the result presented in the chart above, it can be seen that the program segments of the community radio stations in Oguta is broad and encompassing. However, the programs segments proportions relevant to rural violence management seems to be limiting. It was observed that only 6 percent of the respondent indicated violence prevention as part of the programs broadcast of the radio stations in Oguta. Similarly, 6 percent of the respondents indicated peace building as part of the programs aired by the radio stations in Oguta, while 4 percent indicated crime prevention as part of the programs aired by the radio stations in Oguta. Advertisement had the highest responses representing 23 percent, which was followed entertainment. News bulletins, sociocultural themed, community development and educational segments had 12 percent, 11 percent, 10 percent and 8 percent respectively. The high proportion of responses obtained for advertisement could be because of the need for financial support which is not readily available.

A program director interviewed in a community radio station stated that “most community radio stations in this area have resulted to relying on paid adverts for source of funding, since the communities and stakeholders hardly provide financial support for our operations”. Programs schedule and previously aired programs were obtained from the websites and Facebook pages of the selected three (3) radio stations in Oguta LGA, Imo State. The schedules and contents of the programs were analysed using manifest content analysis. The thematic analysis approach was employed, using deductive method. Themes were preconceived based on the study’s objective. The themes were then defined and named in such a way that they guide the extraction of relevant messages and patterns in the data (programs’ schedules and contents).

The data showed that most community radio stations in Imo state generally, air programs that promote unity and peaceful coexistence among their audiences. This is evidenced in the programs such as ‘We are One’ broadcast by Oguta radio (1 radio) and others. These programs have similar messages which are directed towards enlightening the audiences on the benefits of peaceful coexistence and unity within the communities. Promotion of peaceful coexistence and unity among individuals and groups in rural communities are effective strategies for managing rural violence.

Determine the Effectiveness of Community Radio in the Management of Rural Violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State

Table 3: Determining the Effectiveness of Community Radio in the Management of Rural Violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Very Effective | 34 | 9% |
| Effective | 130 | 34.5% |
| Partially Effective | 189 | 50.1% |
| Not Effective | 21 | 5.6% |
| Indifferent | 3 | 0.8 |
| Total | 377 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2020

According to the result presented above, it can be observed that 50.1 percent which was the response with the highest percentage and representing 189 respondents indicated that community radio was partially effective in the management of rural violence in Imo State. About 34.5 percent representing 130 respondents indicated ‘effective’, 9 percent representing 34 respondents indicated ‘very effective’, while 5.6 percent representing 21 respondents indicated ‘Not Effective’ and 0.8 percent

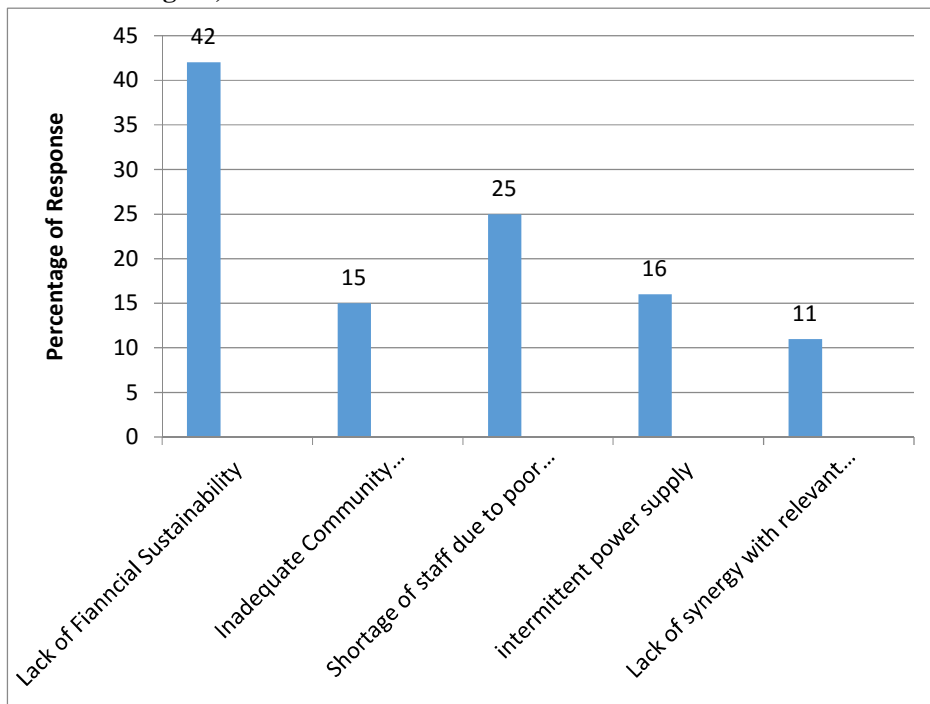
representing 3 respondents ticked ‘indifferent’. This implies that community radio was effective in the management of rural violence in Oguta, Imo State. However, critical observation of the pattern of respondents’ responses showed ‘partially effective’ had higher respondents than the other options, implying that many of the respondents perceived that community radio was just partially effective in the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State.

The thematic analysis approach used in the manifest content analysis was further used to generally analyse the programs’ schedules and contents of the three (3) community radio stations selected in the study. Preconceived themes that guided the data analysis include those centred and relevant to crime prevention, dispute settlement, violence prevention, social conformity, security, domestic violence reduction and mediation and conflict resolution. Various programs broadcast by the community radio stations in the study were found to relate to this theme in terms of messages and interactions. Educational programs such as *children club* (aired by Oguta radio) sponsored by Mrs. May Nwabiani Ani and *others* were found to be very educative to children and youths and especially effective in teaching the youth good morals, developing in them ideal personality, which is an effective strategy for preventing violent crimes and improving peace.

All the selected radio stations in the study broadcast interview programs, where prominent personalities are invited to discuss issues related to community development, security, peace and violent crime preventions. The audiences are given opportunity to participate through phone calls and properly enlightened in the process. Program such as *We are one* (aired by Oguta radio), provide opportunity for individuals in the community to voice out their grievances and express themselves. These programs also help to give attention on salient issues affecting different groups in the community for proper consideration by the relevant authorities. This helps to nip in the bud, unwholesome situations that could result to violence in the future.

Other programs such as *Service and Culture* with Adaobi Okoronkwo and Pricilla Amada and *People and events* with Cephas Ugoekukwu (aired by Oguta radio), are people-oriented programs that focus on leadership, selfless service and self-development. These programs inspire people to enhance their capacity in order to realize their inherent potentials by living a live free of crime, violence and ignorance.

Figure 2: Major Constraints of Community Radio Stations in the Management of Rural Violence in Oguta, Imo State



Source: Field Survey, 2020

The result presented in the figure above, shows the major constraints limiting community radio stations in the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo state. According to the results, ‘lack of financial sustainability’ had the highest responses of 42 percent; this was followed by ‘shortage of staff due to poor remuneration’ which had 25 percent. Intermittent power supply had 16 percent response rate, while lack of synergy with relevant authorities/agencies had 11 percent. Inadequate community support/participation had 15 percent. From this result, it can be seen that community radio stations are constrained in their role of managing rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo state. Top among their constraints are: lack of financial sustainability and shortage of staff due to poor remuneration. Others include: Intermittent power supply, Lack of synergy with relevant authorities/agencies and inadequate community support/participation.

This result was corroborated by the qualitative data collected by conducting the study’s interview. Four (4) individuals (Mr. Iredibia – DPO, Oguta; Mr Akpatoyi – Chairman Police Community Relations Oguta; Kingsley Onwuka and Peshy – moderator of Zanders FM) interviewed were in agreement that lack of financial sustainability is a major challenge constraining the community radio stations in their role of managing rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo state. They further observed that financial constraints also prevent them from hiring and retaining the best skills in the industry.

The result of this study revealed that community radio stations majorly promote the interests of different groups in Oguta, irrespective of sponsorship of programs or sociocultural affiliations. This was corroborated by the data obtained from interview (qualitative). This implies that the interests of the minority and marginalized groups are promoted by the programs aired by the community radio stations in Oguta LGA, Imo State. When the interests of both the majority and minority are catered

for, there tends to be less animosity and tendencies for disputes becoming violent. Also as an agent of education, community radio, help to prevent violent crimes by exposing criminal intentions and educating the populace on the ills of participating crimes.

The study also found that a high proportion of the populace of Oguta LGA in Imo State, listen to programs broadcasts of community radio stations in the area. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were in agreement of that community radio stations in the region have wide coverage and wide audiences. An assessment of the content of programs broadcast by community radio stations in the area, showed that when compared with entertainment and advertisement, rural violence management related programs such as peace building, violence prevention and crime prevention had low priority.

The study further found that community radio is effective in the management of rural violence in Oguta LGA, Imo State. This finding is evidenced in the result presented in analysis. Content analysis using thematic approach revealed in the study that community radio stations in Imo state incorporate violence prevention messages in their programs broadcasts. The result presented in the analysis revealed the challenges constraining community radio stations in the management of rural violence Oguta LGA in Imo State, which are: lack of financial sustainability, shortage of staff due to poor remuneration, intermittent power supply, Lack of synergy with relevant authorities/agencies and inadequate community support/participation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The importance of providing a long-term and sustainable solution to rural violence in our society cannot be overemphasized. This study revealed that community radio station can play very important role in the management of rural violence in Imo State, as well as other states in Nigeria. The study has demonstrated that community radio can be an agent of development and a viable means of creating awareness on salient issues in the society especially in reaching the rural communities which have a large chunk of the vulnerable, marginalized and uneducated population. Inspire of the huge benefits of community radio in developing and sustaining peace in rural communities, various challenges continue to threaten it existence, among which is majorly the lack of financial sustainability as financial support is not readily available from the community, government or individuals. This makes the community radio stations to rely on paid adverts subscriptions and sponsored programs for their financing, thus almost operating similar to the mainstream radios.

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

-) There is a need for government to grant licenses for the establishment and operation of ‘true ‘community radio stations (rural radio) just as it has granted licenses for the operation of campus radio stations which is in the same class. This will further empower rural people and resolve specific rural challenges especially among farmers and herdsmen to have a sense of belonging as well as helping them to propagate developmental messages among themselves.
-) The communities, especially in the rural societies, should be encouraged to further embrace, support and participate in community radio programs, as they stand to gain enormous benefits (such as development, eradicating marginalization and having a voice to speak on salient issues affecting them).
-) The financing of community radio stations for sustainability should not be solely left to the hosting or owning community, which may not be able to provide adequate resources. In the case of the study area, which is Oguta LGA, Imo Sate in Nigeria, International

donors and NGOs can support in order to ensure the sustainability community radio in rural communities.

- J) Government could be involved in the support of community radio stations indirectly, through provision of equipment and training.

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