



## INFLUENCE OF RADIO NIGERIA “POLITICS NATION-WIDE” PROGRAMME ON THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS: A STUDY OF ELECTORATE’S IN IMO STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The study was on the influence of Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation Wide” programme on the 2019 general elections: a study of electorate’s in Imo State. The objectives of the study were to ascertain whether Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” programme broadened Imo State electorate’ knowledge of the 2019 general elections and influenced them to participation in the 2019 general elections. The study was anchored on agenda setting theory. Descriptive survey research method was used for this study. Australian online calculator was used to determine the sample size of 385 from the population of 2,272,293 voters in Imo State. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used for this study. Closed-ended questionnaire was adopted for data collection. Data obtained were presented and analyzed in simple percentages and frequency tables for research questions. Findings revealed that Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” broadened Imo State electorate knowledge of the 2019 general elections at 56.7%. It was also found that exposure to Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” programme influenced Imo State electorates’ participation in the 2019 general elections at 54.5%. Therefore, it was recommended that stakeholders, political parties and candidates standing for an election should use radio during their electioneering to canvas for votes in view of radio influence on the electorates.

**Keywords:** Broadcast, Influence, Politics, Political Education, Radio.

## Introduction

One of the most volatile moments in the life of every nation or country is the period of transition from one government to the other. This is volatile because there are often several interests who constitute themselves into formidable structures for the ultimate goal of gaining access into distinguished positions of authority. In a democratic society this is done via elections. Elections are competitive processes; unleashing conflict and tensions that, if not constructively managed, could potentially destabilize the fabric of states and societies that are participating in the process to identify who leads. During this period, politicians are often clouded with competitive language, rising tensions, and occasional political violence, sometimes even resulting in violent. Elections all over the world is a hallmark of representative democracy, which allows the electorate regular input in choices about who leads and what policy or policies are ingrained into the system constitution (Nwokefor, 2015).

However, democracy has become a reality in Nigeria and most Nigerians appear to be apathetic to election matters. Voters’ apathy and its resultant low participation among Imo State electorates in elections can be attributed to the low level of awareness on electoral matters by the citizens. Hence the need for political education to mobilize and persuade on the need to actively participate in the general elections. Bitrus (2007, p.14) wrote that “political education is the process of facilitating knowledge by those who are more politically informed to those who are less politically informed”. Political education is the act of promoting what one knows, feels and sense of political competence. Political education is the process of indoctrinating the society on human rights issues, rule of law, transparency as well as other normative behaviour that will enhance the political culture of the state. It is the process that promotes the political socialization of the masses (Coleman as cited in Okoro& Ani, 2011). Therefore, the decision to vote in any election by the electorates could depend on the level of political awareness of people at a given time, hence the need for political education to enlighten the voters on electoral process.

One of the ways of achieving this is through the mass media. According to Agba (2007, p.3) “mass media has a very important role to play in channeling electioneering campaign to serve the goal of national development. This is because the mass media is described as a pivotal of social interaction, seeking to use the power of mass information to solve the problem of national cohesion and integration, which are both critical to the growth of healthy electioneering campaign”. Akpan (as cited in Aghamelu, 2013, p.5) “the media must clarify issues during campaigns, bring aspirants close to the electorate and teach the differences between party and candidate to enable the electorate make a wise choice”.

Ansah (as cited in Ityough, 2010, p.4) was of the view that radio can be used to motivate a country politically towards national unity, or to arouse the public against a common external enemy, or to motivate a group towards a self-development activity. Given the ability of radio to overcome the barriers of distance and illiteracy, it is a very powerful medium for promoting national integration by fostering national anthem, slogan and campaign. This means that radio can be used to motivate, encourage and mobilize the people for participation in the 2019 general election. To this end, the study examined the influence of Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation Wide” programme in the participation of Imo State electorate towards the 2019 general elections. Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” is a current affair programme aired on the network service. The programme aimed at educating the people on the political happening in country and beyond.

## Statement of the Problem

It is an acknowledged fact that the mass media influence how people experience their political life. Media, comprising newspapers, magazines, bill board, radio, television, film, internet and even the GSM as well as leaflets are important sources of information and education. One wonders why political apathy remained a serious threat to our nascent democracy given that most of the electorate seem not to be interested to participate actively in the electoral activities. Notwithstanding, the political educational campaigns have been launched over the years in radio stations in Imo State. This could be that the level of political awareness among electorate seems to be very low. Most of the voters seem to have lack of basic knowledge about the entire electoral process to take reasoned decisions on election matters.

## Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Find out the level of exposure to Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” by Imo State electorate.
2. Ascertain whether exposure to Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” programme has broadened Imo State electorate knowledge of the 2019 general elections.
3. Ascertain whether Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” programme influenced Imo State electorate participation in the 2019 general elections.

## Mass Media, Political Education and Electorates Participation in Election

The media enhance the orientation of former violent electorate, while promoting political awareness and understanding of the internal dynamic of the electoral registration and voting patterns of a given election time. The mass media should enable the electorate to analyze campaign messages of politicians (Okoro& Ani, 2011). Media focus should be to set the correct political agenda for the audience and not allowing the politician to do. Journalists writing commentaries, editorials, articles, reviews, columns, broadcast discussion should raise and answer pertinent question that help to elucidate confusing issues, particularly those relating to policies and leadership (Ciroma, 2005).

Concerning candidates, Olukotum (2002, p. 220) observes that it is imperative for voters to know their qualifications, opinions, voting records, where they exist and personality traits of equal importance is the need for voters to have information about the policies and manufactories of the respective parties in order to make a clear choice. One sure means of achieving this aim is through the mass media through coverage and presentation of news, information, facts, editorials and other analytical pieces about in issues (Enahoro, 2010, p. 300). In the same vein, Onovbaire (1992) cited in Udende (2011, p. 4) observes that the Nigerian electorate is getting more politically enlightened, voters, therefore, become knowledge about the voting process.

## Empirical Studies

Udende (2011) in a study on mass media, political awareness and voting behavior in the Nigerian’s 2011 presidential election found that: The electorate’ were exposed to political mass media message on daily basis. The electorate had general knowledge concerning all the presidential contestants and the platform on which they contested for n the 2011 April polls. The electorate had knowledge about the voting process which ranges from registration, accreditation, thumb/finger printing to casting of

voters; Charisma, popularity/fame, influence from relatives, religion and ethnicity were the major determinant factors responsible for voting behaviour.

Yung and Leo Jeffres (2012), on the effects of attitudes towards political advertising in the 2006 senatorial and gubernatorial elections in Ohio, U.S.A. Finding revealed that: Political advertising has negative influence on the direction of votes. People who consider political ads to be negative are less likely to vote for the candidate debasing an opponent in the ads. The media play an important role in encouraging citizens to participate in the political process. People who belong to different social categories have different attitudes towards political advertising.

Aririguzoh, (2011), investigated television influence on political knowledge of the 2007 Nigeria presidential elections among residents of Ado-Odalota, Ogun State. Finding indicated that: Television made voters in Ado-Odo-Local government to know about the last Nigerian presidential election. The information offered through television broadcasts increased the knowledge base of the respondents by making them to know about this particular election, the contesting candidates and the various political parties. Television broadcasts also improved voters’ awareness of specific contents names, their political parties, their different party Logos or distinguishing marks and where to thumbprint in the election.

Ajajaiye (2014) in a study on the “impact of social media on citizens’ mobilization and participation in Nigeria’s 2011 general elections” found that: social media had positively influence to some extent, on the outcome of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, considering its usage by various electoral stakeholders.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on agenda setting theory. Agenda setting theory has been used by politicians and scholars who are interested in media role in political communication. The dynamic nature of politics entails that every participant in the scheme will use some form of communication. Graber (1990), as cited in Nwokeafor and Adekunle (2013, p. 12) opines that the mass media are expected to structure voter’s perceptions of political exigencies and reality. The entire thinking of the mass audience is expected to be a result of the reportage and coverage of issues by the media. This is where the considerable influence and agenda setting perspective grows from. Through such processes of political communication, the make-up of the most vital angels of discuss in a polity become an agenda for any particular election.

As a result of forgoing, the assumption is that agenda setting roles of the media is reflective in the way the media highlights other issues above some and indirect the perception of the masses to such issues above some and directs the perception of the masses to such issues as been most important, thereby setting the agenda. Despite the agenda setting role of the media as briefly discussed above, the Nigerian mass media played other considerable significant roles during the May 2019 presidential elections, thereby redefining the electoral process as the African most populous nation is committed to sustainable democracy.

### **Research Method**

The survey research approach was used for the study. Survey method was used because it will give the researcher an ample opportunity to ask direct and specified questions that are pertinent to the study that is to be carried out. Survey research method gives the researcher chance of focusing on measuring the behaviour of various individuals on whether radio played a crucial role in the mobilization of voters in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The population of the study is made up

of males and females of 18 years and above, who were registered voters in Imo State in the 2019 general elections. From the available record the number of registered voters in Imo State was 2,272,293. To calculate the sample size, Australian online calculator was used to determine the sample size of 385. Multi- stage sampling technique was used based on the Senatorial zones and 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State. Three LGAs were selected from each senatorial district and one autonomous community was chosen randomly from each LGA. Imo State was divided into 3 senatorial districts or clusters. The 3 zones or clusters were further divided into 27 Local Government Councils or clusters. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three Local Government Areas from each of the senatorial district. The researchers purposively selected one community from each of the selected local governments in each of the senatorial districts. The selected local governments and communities were as follows: Ihuoma-Orlu; Umunwaku- Ohaji/Egbema; Nnenassa-Isu/Njaba(Imo West), Orji-Owerri North; Nguru/Nweke- Aboh Mbaise; Ogbaku- Mbaitoli (Imo East); Ezianya- Isiala Mbano; Agbaja- Ehime Mbano; and Isinweke-Ihitte/Uboma (Imo North) LGAs. Also, in each of the selected communities, 43 persons were purposively selected. Closed-ended questionnaire was self administered to elicit data from the respondents.

**Analysis**

Out of the 385 copies of the questionnaire administered, 367 were found usable while 18 copies were unusable. It means that 97.7% of the returned questionnaire was used for the study.

**Table 1: Respondents radio ownership**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	323	88%
No	44	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

The result obtained from the above table shows that 88% or majority of the respondents have radio set. It means that most of the respondents have access to radio messages.

**Table 2: Respondents exposure to Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide”**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	277	75%
No	58	16%
Can’t say	32	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 75% of the respondents listen to radio political education messages. It means that majority of the respondents were exposed to radio political education broadcast in radio Nigeria.

**Table 3: Respondents level of exposure to radio political education broadcast through Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide”**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High	190	52%
Minimal	37	10%
Low	35	9%
Can’t say	105	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 52% representing majority of the respondents agreed that their level of exposure to radio political education broadcasts is high. This shows that majority of the respondents listen to radio political education programmes extensively.

**Table 4: Exposure to Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide” increased knowledge of the respondents on electoral matters**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	208	56.7%
No	47	12.8%
Not sure	112	30.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that majority representing 56.7% of the respondents believed that exposure to radio political education increased voters’ knowledge in the 2019 general election. This shows that majority of the respondents believed that exposure to radio political education increased voters knowledge about the 2019 general elections.

**Table 5: Respondents views on the areas they are knowledgeable of based on the information received through Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation-Wide”**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Candidate’s personality profile	14	4%
Party and candidates manifestoes	19	5%
Voting processes	29	8%

Voters card registration and collation	33	9%
All of the above	122	33%
Can't say	150	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the above table, a good number of the respondents agreed that they had received information about the candidate's personality's profiles, party and candidate's manifestoes, voting processes and voters' card registration and collation.

**Table 6: Respondents' view on whether exposure to Radio Nigeria "Politics Nation-Wide" influenced their participation in the 2019 general elections**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	54.5%
No	67	18.3%
Can't say	100	27.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the above table 57% or majority of the respondents agreed that exposure to radio political education broadcasts influenced voter's participation in the 2019 general elections. The implication is that those who are exposed to radio political messages are more likely to participate in electoral matters than others.

**Discussion of Findings**

In responding to the above research question one, tables 1, 2 and 3 were relied upon. The finding indicated that majority of the respondents at 52% agreed that the extent to which they got exposed to radio political education broadcast is high. This is majority of the respondents listened to Radio Nigeria "Politics Nation-wide" programme extensively at 75%. This was further justified as majority of the respondents at 88% had access to radio. The finding shows that majority of the respondents who have radio set, listened to Radio Nigeria "Politics Nation Wide" programme extensively. This finding is in accordance with the agenda setting theory. Radio is a mobilization and awareness creating tool. In Africa where majority of its population are illiterates who reside in the rural communities there is little or no access to other media of mass communication, the radio becomes the easiest and cheapest means of mass education and mass mobilization. Radio as a tool for mass mobilization breaks educational and class barriers because programmes are produced in both indigenous and foreign language effective comprehension of the intending listeners.

In answering the research question two, table 4 and 5 were relied upon. Findings revealed that majority representing 56.7% of the respondents believed that exposure to radio political education programme like "Politics Nation Wide" increased voters' knowledge in the 2019 general election.

This shows that majority of the respondents believed that exposure to radio political education increased voters knowledge about the 2019 general elections. This is because a good number or 59% of the respondents had received information about the candidate’s personality’s profiles, party and candidate’s manifestoes, voting processes and voters’ card registration and collation. It means that majority of the respondents believed that exposure to radio political education programmes about the 2019 general elections increased voters knowledge, shape their thought in their participation towards the 2019 election. Thus, they were able to remember or recall the type of information about the election they were exposed to. This finding was supported by the theoretical framework of this study.

In responding to this, table 6 was used. The result obtained from the table indicated that 54.5% of the respondents that got exposed to radio political education programmes influenced voter’s participation in the 2019 election. According to the agenda setting theory the media can help mobilize the people to participate in the electoral processes of the state, by the kind of coverage or report given to it by the media.

In relation to this findings, Aririguzoh, (2011) in a study found that television made voters to know about elections matters and as well increased the knowledge base of the electorate by informing them of the candidates and political parties standing for an elections. Similarly, Ajajaiye (2014) in a study concluded that the media had positively influenced to voters’ participation to an extent.

## **Conclusion**

Radio Nigeria “Politics Nation Wide” programme played a significant role in the mobilization of the voters towards the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The electorate became knowledgeable about the voting process, party manifestoes and background information about the candidates standing in an election. The high level of voter’s turn out witnessed in the last elections was as a result of the awareness created by mass media, especially radio. Radio offered the electorate an ample opportunity to be well educated. The sudden change experience in the way the electorate turned out during the election was influenced by their exposure to radio information. It is believed that the radio education programmes were capable of informing, educating, persuading and mobilizing the electorate in their participation towards the 2019 presidential election. This is a clear indication that high level of political awareness leads to high level of voters turn out in an election.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Radio stations should set up special political education programmes to give adequate information and easy accessibility to information concerning political activities, in order to give the electorate holistic information regarding electoral matters before, during and after general elections as this would enable them to be empowered information wise.
2. Stakeholders in electoral matters like INEC, Government and Non-governmental Agencies, politicians and media professionals should endeavour to properly utilize radio as a medium for social change, mobilize and encourage voters’ awareness before, during and after elections.
3. The relevance of radio in political participation should necessitate its utilization and adoption by political parties and candidates during electioneering campaign to canvas for votes in view of radio influence on the electorate.



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