Full Length Research

The Importance of Radio Broadcasting in the Informal Leadership Roles of Women in Grassroots and Community Development

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Abstract

The role of women in leadership in the grassroots development in Nigeria is usually unacknowledged but significant. This paper investigates the role of radio broadcasting in women's informal leadership by synthesising 20 empirical studies, comprising 13 studies conducted in Nigeria and 7 studies from other sub-Saharan African countries across West, East, and Southern Africa.Drawing on participatory communication,social capital, and gender-and-development, the findings demonstrate that community radio enhances access to information by women, agenda-setting and mobilisation, as well as coordination of local initiatives. The paper redefines community radio as a leadership infrastructure and conceptualises the women influence as informal relational leadership where the implication of such research is to inform gender related media policy and grassroots development practice.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Grassroots development in Nigeria and most of the developing world depends on local self-organisation, where communities determine their needs, organise resources, and maintain collective effort without the structure of formal states. This form of development is often characterised by participatory decision-making, shared responsibility, and the utilisation of locally available knowledge and resources. In many rural communities, formal government institutions may be weak, distant, or slow to respond to local development challenges. As a result, community members frequently rely on indigenous systems of organisation such as community associations, cooperative groups, and informal leadership structures to initiate and sustain development projects. Through these locally driven processes, communities are able to address issues such as access to clean water, education, healthcare, and agricultural productivity. Such initiatives demonstrate that development does not always originate from top-down governmental programmes but can emerge organically from within communities themselves, guided by collective interests and social cohesion.

Women are key players in these processes, mobilising collective action and the empowerment of

social networks, as well as maintaining development activities without much access to formal authority (Ifeanyi-Obi & Ndee, 2023). Across many Nigerian communities, women's groups, market associations, cooperative societies, and faith-based networks play significant roles in identifying community needs and coordinating responses to them. These organisations often function as platforms through which women pool resources, share information, and provide mutual support. Despite limited representation in formal political and administrative structures, women frequently exercise considerable influence in grassroots development by sustaining community initiatives, organising labour contributions, and ensuring continuity of projects over time. Their involvement extends to areas such as education advocacy, healthcare awareness campaigns, agricultural cooperatives, and microfinance initiatives. Through these activities, women not only contribute to local development but also strengthen social solidarity and resilience within their communities. The collective agency of women therefore becomes a crucial component of sustainable grassroots development, even when institutional recognition of their contributions remains limited.

Radio broadcasting is the most available development communication medium in rural Nigeria because it is cheap and wide and can be used by both literate and illiterate people. The affordability of radio receivers and the relatively low cost of operating radio stations make the medium particularly accessible in rural and semi-urban areas where other communication technologies may be limited. In addition, radio does not require advanced technical skills or literacy to access information, which allows a broad range of community members—including farmers, traders, and homemakers—to participate in the communication process. Community radio programmes, local language broadcasts, and interactive call-in segments further enhance the inclusiveness of the medium by allowing listeners to share experiences, ask questions, and contribute to discussions about issues affecting their communities. Through these mechanisms, radio functions not only as a channel for transmitting information but also as a platform for dialogue and community engagement.

In areas with poor internet connectivity and limited educational infrastructure, radio remains a primary source of information distribution, societal discourse, and social involvement (Asemah, Anum, & Edegoh, 2017). Many rural households depend on radio broadcasts for news, agricultural advice, health education, and announcements about community events or development programmes. Because radio programming often incorporates local languages and culturally relevant content, it helps bridge communication gaps that might otherwise exclude rural populations from national conversations. Furthermore, radio's immediacy and wide coverage enable it to reach dispersed populations quickly, making it an effective tool for public awareness campaigns and grassroots mobilisation. In the context of development communication, radio therefore plays a vital role in facilitating knowledge sharing, promoting civic participation, and strengthening the link between communities and broader development initiatives. By serving as a bridge between information producers and rural audiences, radio continues to support grassroots development processes and community empowerment across Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Although radio is extensively used in rural Nigeria, the role of women in community development has remained as participation rather than as informal leadership with strategic power. The field of leadership elites the formal office and institutional power and does not focus on the way women establish agendas, mobilisation networks, and organise collective action in daily community life. Likewise, the research on development communication approaches radio primarily as a behaviour change or information dissemination tool, hardly relating it to leadership processes or gendered power relations.

Aims and Objectives

To conceptualise and critically examine the importance of radio broadcasting in enabling and shaping women's informal leadership roles in grassroots and community development in Nigeria, using a literature-based analysis grounded in development communication and gender theory.

The Objectives are as follows:
1. To clarify key concepts linking radio broadcasting, grassroots development, and informal leadership.
2. To review how radio broadcasting supports or limits women's informal leadership practices (including voice, mobilisation, agenda-setting, coordination, and legitimacy).
3. To analyse socio-cultural, media governance structuresand institutional factors that condition women's leadership through radio in Nigerian grassroots settings.
4. To draw implications for research, development practice, and policy on participatory communication and gender-inclusive leadership.

Significance of the Study

The research makes contributions to both the theory and development communication study as it frames community radio as a leadership infrastructure and not a peripheral instrument. Although past studies have reported the empowerment potential of community radio in amplifying the voices of the marginalised and facilitating participation (Ajisafe, 2025), there is scanty literature that has directly attributed radio to the leadership participation at the grassroots level by women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

In this paper, radio broadcasting will be described as the systematic communication of information through audio channels to disseminate, educate, and communicate with populations that are inaccessible to print and digital media because of poverty, low literacy, and infrastructural restrictions (Asemah, Anum, and Edegoh, 2017; Ajisafe, 2025). Radio has historically functioned as one of the most inclusive communication technologies in developing societies because it transcends barriers related to literacy, cost, and technological infrastructure. Unlike print media, which requires reading skills, or internet-based platforms that depend on stable connectivity and digital devices, radio can be accessed through relatively inexpensive receivers and does not demand advanced technological literacy. As a result, radio broadcasting has become a vital medium for public information dissemination, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities where alternative communication infrastructures remain limited. Scholars in developmental communication emphasise that radio plays an important role in facilitating the diffusion of innovations, public awareness campaigns, and civic education initiatives. Through carefully designed programming, such as educational broadcasts, public service announcements, and interactive talk shows, radio can influence social behaviour, promote knowledge sharing, and strengthen public engagement with development issues (Asemah, Anum, and Edegoh, 2017; Ajisafe, 2025; McQuail, 2010; Servaes, 2020; Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

One key point is community radio, which is a non-profit community-centered broadcasting service where local languages, participation, and development advocacy are central (Ajisafe, 2025). Community radio differs significantly from commercial and state-owned broadcasting systems because its primary objective is not profit generation or political messaging but rather community empowerment and participation. In many contexts, community radio stations are established and managed by members of the local community, allowing programming to reflect the everyday experiences, cultural values, and development concerns of the population they serve. The use of local languages and culturally relevant content enhances accessibility and encourages audience participation, particularly among populations that may feel excluded from mainstream media discourses. Furthermore, community radio creates opportunities for marginalised groups—including women, youth, and rural populationsto express their perspectives and share knowledge about local challenges and solutions. Through participatory programming formats such as call-in shows, community forums, and listener feedback segments, community radio strengthens democratic communication by transforming audiences from passive listeners into active

contributors in the communication process. In this sense, community radio operates not merely as a channel of information but as a participatory communication platform that fosters social dialogue and community problem-solving (Ajisafe, 2025; Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Servaes, 2020; Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

Grassroots and community development are locally inspired collective actions meant to advance social welfare and economic security by self-organisation and mutual support where Nigerian women do significant operational work, although many do not have access to formal leadership roles (Soyinka, 2022; Ejiogu et al., 2024). Within many Nigerian communities, developmental initiatives frequently emerge from informal networks and community-based organisations that mobilise local resources to address pressing social and economic needs. These grassroots initiatives often focus on areas such as cooperative farming, microfinance schemes, health awareness campaigns, and educational advocacy. Women play a particularly important role in sustaining these activities through participation in cooperative societies, market associations, savings groups, and community development committees. Although women are frequently responsible for organising labour, coordinating activities, and maintaining the continuity of development programs, their contributions are often underrecognized within formal leadership structures dominated by men. Nevertheless, women's collective agency continues to shape the success of many grassroots initiatives by strengthening social solidarity, facilitating knowledge exchange, and sustaining community-based development efforts. Scholars studying gender and development emphasise that empowering women within community decision-making processes can significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of developmental interventions (Soyinka, 2022; Ejiogu et al., 2024; Cornwall, 2016; Kabeer, 1999; Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

Here, informal leadership is a process, not a position, which appears as a result of interaction, coordination, and meaning-making in the daily practice of social life (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff, 2010). This conceptualisation challenges traditional leadership models that focus primarily on hierarchical authorities and formal organisational roles. Instead, leadership is understood as an emergent social phenomenon that develops through continuous interaction among individuals within a group or community. Through everyday practices such as discussion, collaboration, and negotiation, individuals gradually assume influence and responsibility for guiding collective activities even in the absence of formal titles or institutional authority. In grassroots contexts, informal leadership often arises organically, as individuals

demonstrate competence, commitment, or the ability to mobilise others toward shared goals. This perspective emphasises that leadership should not be viewed solely as the personal attribute of designated leaders but rather as a relational process embedded within social networks and community interactions (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff, 2010; Northouse, 2022; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

This moves leadership away towards the processes by which power is generated and is maintained within networks, such as information broking, agenda-framing and mobilisation. Rather than being concentrated in formal authority structures, influence circulates within social networks where individuals contribute to shaping discussions, coordinating activities, and mobilising collective action. Information brokers—individuals who facilitate the flow of information between different members or groups—often play a particularly important role in this process by connecting diverse actors and ensuring that knowledge circulates effectively within the community. Similarly, agenda-framing enables certain individuals or groups to influence which issues receive attention and how they are interpreted within public discourse. These dynamics highlight the relational nature of leadership and demonstrate how communication processes contribute to the formation of collective action within communities. Community radio is conceptualised based on this as leadership infrastructure: a socio-technical stage on which people are conditioned to speak, what circulates, and how people organise collective action. Through its role in facilitating dialogue, disseminating information, and amplifying local voices, community radio provides a communicative space where informal leadership can emerge and evolve. In this way, radio broadcasting functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a platform that shapes social interaction, community mobilisation, and participatory governance within grassroots development processes (Servas, 2020; McQuail, 2010; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on three theoretical traditions to understand how radio broadcasting can influence women's informal leadership in grassroots and community development: participatory communication theory, social capital theory, and gender and development (GAD).

The participatory communication theory was coined as a response to the top-down development communication, which, according to Freire, replicated domination where communities were viewed as mere receivers of information (Freire, 1970). The approach was later formalised by scholars like Servaes (1999) and Mefalopulos (2008) as a model with an emphasis on dialogue, local knowledge and community participation in the process of defining development priorities. This paper

uses the theory on how community radio forms spaces of community voice, agenda articulation, and collective problem definition as central practices of informal leadership.

The social capital theory dates back to the writings of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), who abstracted social networks, trust and channels of information as assets that facilitate coordinated action and access to power. The theory describes the way of influence creation not based on formal positions but on the basis of relational embeddedness and reputational credibility. In this work, it takes into consideration how women transform radio-enabled visibility and information into leadership using the available community networks.

Gender and development (GAD) perspectives, including empowerment concepts, emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a reaction to development models that saw women as passive recipients, not as agents of politics and economics (Moser, 1993). Kabeer (2002) also further conceptualised empowerment as the interplay of resources, agency and achievements in structural constraint. It is through this framework that the role of women in communication through radio does not instinctively translate into recognised authority in the face of institutional gatekeeping, gender ideals, and unequal access to media production factors.

Collectively, these theories approach radio broadcasting as a leadership-enabling infrastructure, the impact of which is contingent on participatory opportunities, network forms, and gendered power relations and not technology as such. Among them, participatory communication theory is the most analytic framework, as social capital theory and GAD perspectives can be used to complement each other and explain network-based influence and gendered structural limitations.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies in Nigeria and other African contexts consistently demonstrate that radio broadcasting plays a significant role in improving knowledge, awareness, participation, and community engagement among women in development processes. In many rural and semi-urban communities across Africa, radio remains the most accessible medium for public communication due to its affordability, linguistic flexibility, and ability to reach both literate and non-literate audiences. As a developmental communication tool, radio has long been recognised for its capacity to facilitate the dissemination of information related to health, education, agriculture, governance, and gender empowerment (Asemah, Anum, & Edegoh, 2017; McQuail, 2010; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Servaes, 2020; Manyozo, 2012). Empirical research further indicates that radio does not merely transmit information

but also supports participatory dialogue, community mobilisation, and knowledge exchange among marginalised populations, particularly women in rural areas who may have limited access to formal information networks (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003; Bosch, 2014; Myers, 2008; and Girard, 2007).

In Nigeria, Soyinka et al. (2022) reported that radio programs in rural Badagry played a significant role in increasing awareness of female gender equality issues, such as girl-child education, domestic violence, reproductive health, and political participation. Although the research did not directly study the leadership outcomes, it indicates that radio enhances women's information strength. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the role of mass media in shaping public discourse around gender norms and women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Cornwall, 2016; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). By repeatedly broadcasting programs that address gender-related social issues, the radio helps challenge entrenched cultural attitudes and encourages women to recognise their rights and opportunities for participation in community decision-making processes. In many cases, women who regularly listen to development-orientated radio programmes become more confident in discussing social issues and more willing to participate in community meetings or local initiatives (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Manyozo, 2012; Bosch, 2014). Although Soyinka et al. (2022) primarily focused on awareness outcomes rather than leadership outcomes, the increase in knowledge and communicative confidence among listeners may contribute indirectly to the emergence of informal leadership roles within grassroots community structures.

A more development-specific example is given by Ejiogu, Ibe and Adiele (2024), who determined the role played by Magic FM local radio in the participation of women in the Nigeria for Women Project in the Obingwa Local Government Area in Abia State. Based on a mixed-methods design that used 363 valid survey responses and in-depth interviews, the authors demonstrate that radio had a significant impact on program awareness and initial participant decision-making. Women who frequently listened to local radio broadcasts were more likely to learn about the project's objectives and the benefits associated with joining the women's affinity groups created under the program. This finding reinforces the argument that media exposure can serve as a catalyst for community participation by bridging information gaps between development programmes and potential beneficiaries (Servaes, 2020; McQuail, 2010; Manyozo, 2012). Nevertheless, sustained engagement remained limited due to structural barriers such as time poverty, household responsibilities, and restricted access to project resources. These constraints reflect broader patterns identified in gender and development scholarship, where women's participation in development initiatives is often shaped by socio-economic and cultural factors that limit their available time, mobility, and access to resources (Kabeer, 1999; Cornwall, 2016; Agarwal, 2018). Although the study successfully links radio exposure to development participation, it does not examine whether women subsequently assumed coordinating or leadership roles within the project's institutional structures. Consequently, the relationship between media exposure and the emergence of informal leadership among women remains an area requiring further empirical exploration.

The impact of interactive radio formats on leadership potential is also apparent in research on political communication. Mbaave (2024), who conducted a survey of 400 women in Makurdi, identified discussion programs and call-in broadcasts as the most persuasive predictors of women's political awareness and engagement, with many respondents indicating that they gained direct access to experts and government officials through these programs. Interactive broadcasting formats encourage listeners to participate actively in public discussions, ask questions, and express opinions about issues affecting their communities. Although political participation differs from grassroots development leadership, these results suggest that participatory radio formats may cultivate communicative confidence, critical awareness, and public voice among women. Such communicative capacities are central to informal leadership processes, particularly within community-based organisations and grassroots movements where influence is exercised through dialogue, persuasion, and coordination rather than formal authority (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Northouse, 2022). Moreover, interactive media environments may strengthen the social networks through which information, resources, and collective action are mobilised, thereby contributing indirectly to the development of leadership capabilities among community members (Servaes, 2020; Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

Comparative African studies examining the role of community radio in local development processes have observed similar patterns. In northern Kenya, Mogambi and Ochola (2015) demonstrate that community radio improved women's access to information about development initiatives and created opportunities for community dialogue among pastoralist populations. Through locally produced programs delivered in indigenous languages, women were able to share their experiences related to livelihood challenges, health issues, and educational opportunities. The study emphasises that radio served not only as a communication tool but also as a social platform, through which community members collectively interpreted development challenges and discussed potential solutions. Likewise, Fombad and Jiyane (2016) found that community radio stations in rural South Africa significantly reduced information asymmetry and improved women's participation in community development activities. Their research suggests that

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women who regularly engage with community radio programs are more likely to attend community meetings, contribute ideas to development discussions, and collaborate with local organisations. However, similar to other empirical studies in the field, the research did not include explicit indicators measuring leadership outcomes or the emergence of informal leaders within these participatory processes.

Broader African communication research further supports the argument that community radio contributes to grassroots empowerment and participatory governance. Studies conducted in countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, and Malawi reveal that community broadcasting frequently provides marginalised populations with access to public discourse and encourages community-driven development initiatives (Myers, 2008; Girard, 2007; Bosch, 2014; Manyozo, 2012; and Banda, 2006). These studies show that when radio programming incorporates participatory formats such as listener call-ins, community debates, and local storytelling, it can facilitate the circulation of knowledge within communities and strengthen social cohesion. In addition, radio platforms often serve as informal spaces where community members develop communication skills, share leadership responsibilities, and coordinate collective action around shared concerns (Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Servaes, 2020). Although many of these studies emphasise empowerment and participation outcomes, few empirical investigations have explicitly examined how radio engagement contributes to the development of informal leadership roles among women in grassroots contexts.

Overall, the empirical literature demonstrates a strong relationship between radio broadcasting, women's access to information, and participation in community development initiatives across Nigeria and other African contexts. Radio programs, particularly those designed with participatory and community-oriented formats, have been shown to improve awareness of developmental issues, increase engagement in community activities, and strengthen communication networks among women. However, a notable gap remains in the existing literature regarding the extent to which these communication processes translate into sustained leadership roles for women within grassroots development structures. While radio may enhance knowledge, voice, and social interaction, further research is needed to understand how these communicative resources influence the emergence of informal leadership and women's long-term influence within community governance systems (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Servaes, 2020; Manyozo, 2012; Bosch, 2014; Myers, 2008).

Literature Gap

Empirical research has proved that radio broadcasting will improve knowledge and participation of women in development programmes and accessibility to

information about development (Soyinka et al., 2022; Ejiogu et al., 2024; Fombad and Jiyane, 2016). Nonetheless, the literature seldom theorises or quantifies women's informal leadership as a specific product of radio involvement. Specifically, the literature has not yet investigated whether radio involvement is converted to women becoming informal mobilisers, agenda setters or coordinators, or the ways in which communicative participation is transformed to longer-term leadership effects. It is on this basis that the current study concentrates on radio broadcasting as a possible structural source of women's informal leadership in grassroots and community development scenarios.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The paper follows the conceptual, literature-based design of integrative review to synthesize and critically analyze the scholarship on radio broadcasting and women informal leadership in grassroots and community development in Nigeria. Integrative reviews can be used when the purpose is theory formulation and concept elucidation but not data collection (Snyder, 2019). The review adhered to best-practice guidelines of standalone systematic reviews such as PRISMA-congruent screening and concept-based synthesis (Page et al., 2021; Webster and Watson, 2002).

Sources of Data and Search Strategy

The search was made in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost along with Research Gate, institutional repositories and backward citation tracking (Webster and Watson, 2002). Four blocks of concepts were searched using the following Boolean operators: radio broadcasting (OR community radio) and women (OR gender) and informal leadership (OR grassroots leadership) and community development (OR grassroots development). Geographic filters were applied to prioritize Nigeria as the primary focus, while also allowing the inclusion of selected sub-Saharan African countries with comparable grassroots development and community radio contexts.

Study Selection

The search yielded 170 records. Following the elimination of 38 duplicates, 132 titles and abstracts were filtered. Out of the 50 full-text articles evaluated on eligibility, 30 were rejected because of lack of focus on radio (n = 9), no gender analysis (n = 7), no community level development outcomes (n = 6), not thoroughly described methodology (n = 4), or unavailable full text (n

= 4). It was a final synthesis that included 20 studies, which is in line with PRISMA reporting standards (Page et al., 2021).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion

The studies were eligible when they:
1. analyzed radio broadcasting or community radio,
2. treated women or gender as an ultimate category of analysis,
3. addressed grassroots or community development results, and
4. presented empirical data or stringent conceptual evaluation.

Publications written in English published since 2000-2025 only were included. Technical broadcasting papers, opinion papers, editorials, and abstracts of conferences were excluded (Okoli, 2015).

Table 1. Characteristics of Included Studies (n = 20)

Author(s) & year	Country	Radio type	Design	Sample	Leadership-relevant outcomes
Soyinka et al. (2022)	Nigeria	Development radio	Survey	Rural women	Gender-equality knowledge, informational legitimacy
Ejiogu et al. (2024)	Nigeria	Community radio	Mixed methods	363 women	Programme mobilisation, participation coordination
Mbaave (2024)	Nigeria	Interactive radio	Survey	400 women	Public voice, mobilisation
Usoroh (2021)	Nigeria	Development radio	Survey	Rural women	Economic empowerment
Adeyeye et al. (2021)	Nigeria	Agricultural radio	Quantitative	Farmers	Information diffusion
Adeyeye et al. (2024)	Nigeria	Agricultural radio	Quantitative	Farmers	Behavioural change
Adams (2024)	Nigeria	Community radio	Survey	Not stated	Development information access
Mogambi & Ochola (2015)	Kenya	Community radio	Mixed	Women listeners	Mobilisation, coordination
Kamala (2021)	Tanzania	Community radio	Mixed	198 women	Public visibility
Ishengoma (2024)	Tanzania	Community radio	Qualitative	Community	Mediation roles
Manda (2015)	Malawi	Listening clubs	Case study	Clubs	Collective coordination
Fombad & Jiyane (2016)	South Africa	Community radio	Case study	Stations & women	Information brokerage
Chapman et al. (2003)	Ghana	Vernacular radio	Evaluation	Farmers	Collective learning
Thuranira (2020)	Multi-country	Community radio	Synthesis	Multiple	Participation effects
Ajisafe (2025)	Nigeria	Community radio	Review	Secondary	Voice & participation
Ifeanyi-Obi & Ndee (2023)	Nigeria	N/A	Survey	Women in CBOs	Informal leadership patterns
Asemah et al. (2017)	Nigeria	Development radio	Survey	Rural residents	Development information access

Quality Appraisal and Data Extraction

The qualitative studies were evaluated with the CASP checklist (CASP, 2024), and quantitative and mixed-methods studies were evaluated with Joanna Briggs Institute tools (JBI, n.d.). The results of the appraisal were used to weight the evidence in the synthesis and did not serve as rigid exclusion limits (Snyder, 2019). An organised extraction template picked up study context, design, sample, methods and findings which were pertinent to women's participation, mobilisation, coordination, agenda-setting and social legitimacy.

Synthesis Approach and Limitations

Themes were analysed through concept-driven coding centred on information broking, public voice and visibility, mobilisation and coordination, agenda-setting, social legitimacy and structural constraints (Webster and

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Watson, 2002). The review is prone to publication bias and language bias as well as unequal indexing of African journals. These constraints do not impact the internal coherence of the synthesis but the coverage breadth (Snyder, 2019).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Radio Broadcasting and Women Access to Developmental Information

In the studied literature, radio broadcasting has been identified consistently as the most available and relied-upon development communication platform among rural and semi-urban women. In South Africa, Fombad and Jiyane (2016) identified community radio as the sole regularly available information medium among most rural women, especially because of poverty, illiteracy, and inability to access state institutions. They noted that out of the total airtime of broadcasts, over half was allocated to development-related programmes such as health education, agricultural information, and community rule. Notably, the study reviewed police records that revealed that the cases of domestic violence reported in Maputaland had declined after continuous awareness programmes.

Nigeria experienced similar impacts. In the survey of 379 women (363 valid responses) in Obingwa Local Government Area, Ejiogu, Ibe, and Adiele (2024) found that community radio (Magic FM) was the primary source through which beneficiaries discovered the Nigeria for Women Project. The average scores on awareness were beyond the acceptability level (2.5 on a three-point scale), which proves the leading role of radio in the acquisition of knowledge about the program. Kamala (2021) surveyed 198 women in Iringa Municipality in Tanzania and identified extensive listenership but little involvement in programme production: only 35 per cent of women had ever been news sources, and 23 per cent had ever been interviewed. This opposition portrays that, although radio makes more information available, it does not necessarily democratise communicative authority.

Radio broadcasting and women's informal leadership practices

In addition to accessing information, radio broadcasting leads to the rise of women as agenda setters, mobilisers and community intermediaries. Mogambi and Ochola (2015) showed in Kenya that women who regularly listened to Serian FM became the reference point in community dialogue related to education, land use, health services, and early marriage. The involvement in radio-linked listening groups allowed women to situate local issues and orchestrate group interventions, thus exercising power without having an **36. Int. J. Arts Humanit.**

official role, which contributed to their increased influence in community decision-making processes. In Nigeria, political leadership routes were particularly active. In the survey of 400 women in Makurdi (instrument reliability = .95), Mbaave (2024) found that the discussion and phone-in programmes were the most powerful predictors of women participating in politics. More than 70 per cent of the respondents indicated that the interactive radio formats gave them confidence to speak out and mobilise fellow citizens in the electoral process and even in community gatherings.

Likewise, Chapman et al. (2003) reported in northern Ghana that participatory vernacular radio programmes resulted in quantifiable behavioural change among farmers, including the uptake of income-generating and soil conservation practices by women after radio-mediated discussion forums. Tanzania In the Sengerema community radio case, it was stated that about 90 per cent of broadcast media were community-related and that women were becoming mediators by referring victims of gender-based violence to legal and health services following programme discussions (Ishengoma, 2024).

All these examples suggest that radio is not just a source of information but a leadership infrastructural base on which women can direct priorities, organise efforts and authorise group action beyond formal politics.

Limitations to Leadership of Radio-Enabled Women

In spite of these developments, radio broadcasting does not eradicate structural barriers to women's leadership. Kamala (2021) discovered that the management and editorial roles in community radio stations were dominated by men, with women mostly being restricted to a caller or a listener. Lack of self-confidence, fear of social sanction, and cultural expectations further discouraged people to participate. Fombad and Jiyane (2016) noted that women-orientated programmes were usually aired during working days when the rural women were practising farming or homework, which restricted the long-term participation. Limited technical training, financial instability, and old equipment also restricted program continuity.

According to the results of Ejiogu et al. (2024), in Nigeria, even though radio helped raise awareness of development initiatives, the level of deeper engagement of women was also limited by time poverty, unpaid care work, and a lack of access to program resources. The dominance of men in station agenda control was also reported by Mogambi and Ochola (2015), which further supports the idea that women had no institutional leadership despite their growing influence in the informal field.

Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

In the twenty studies examined, radio broadcasting

has always enhanced women's informational capital, network visibility, and mobilisation power. These processes accord with the social capital theory that focuses on information channels and embeddedness in networks as sources of power (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Nevertheless, the same argument augurs in favour of gender-and-development scholarship, which posits that structural inequalities are the mediating mechanisms between participation and the acquisition of recognised authority. Women talk and organise but are largely locked out of institutional decision-making rooms (Ejiogu et al., 2024; Fombad and Jiyane, 2016; Kamala, 2021).

Conclusion of Analysis

The evidence reviewed indicates that radio broadcasting significantly improves women's informal leadership by enabling them to have more knowledge of development, greater agenda-setting power, and easier community mobilisation. There are statistically significant positive changes in awareness, participation, and social coordination related to radio engagement in quantitative surveys and in the fields of Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana (Chapman et al., 2003; Ejiogu et al., 2024; Mbaave, 2024; Mogambi and Ochola, 2015). The paper thus builds on the current literature by repositioning radio as a development communication medium as well as an infrastructural platform through which change leadership could be developed among women at the grassroots, appreciating the structural disposition that limits its radical potential.

Summary of Findings

This integrative review of 20 empirical studies presents major findings on how radio broadcasting influences women's informal leadership in grassroots and community development. First, radio broadcasting gives women great access to the development-related information at the grassroots level. Radio is the most available channel to rural and semi-urban women across the literature, especially where there is low literacy and a weak digital infrastructure (Asemah et al., 2017; Fombad and Jiyane, 2016).

Second, listening to the radio allows women to practise informal leadership by setting agendas and mobilising. It has been demonstrated that women participating in radio programmes affect community discourses and mobilise and organise developmental activities even though they do not hold informal positions of leadership (Mogambi and Ochola, 2015; Mbaave, 2024). Third, participatory radio shows are superior to one-way casts in enhancing the voice of women in society and communicative confidence. Forms of interaction, like phone-in programmes, generate forums of discussion

and joint problem definition which underlie informal leadership practices (Mbaave, 2024; Kamala, 2021).

Fourth, radio-enabled leadership is still largely informal and relational and not institutional. Though participation in the radio makes women more visible and influential in the community networks, it is not often translated into formal leadership positions because of the existing gender norms and institutional barriers (Kamala, 2021; Ifeanyi-Obi and Ndee, 2023). These barriers include societal expectations that prioritise male leadership and the lack of support systems for women seeking formal roles. Lastly, radio broadcasting has structural and socio-cultural restrictions in enhancing women's leadership. However, time poverty, paying no care, the time in programmes and lack of access to positions of production still inhibit sustained engagement and the mobilisation of influence to ascribed authority (Ejiogu et al., 2024; Fombad and Jiyane, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates that radio broadcasting plays a critical role in informal leadership by women in grassroots and community development in Nigeria. This study fills the development communication and leadership gap by defining the influence of women as informal relational leadership and community radio as a leadership infrastructure. In the future, they should also look at the results of long-term interaction with community radio on leadership paths and gendered power dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

According to the results of the current review, community radio must be viewed as an important infrastructure of female informal leadership in grassroots development, but not just as a source of information. Media regulators and development agencies must urge gender inclusiveness in the governance structures of community radio stations, focus on participatory and interactive programming styles and implement scheduling and capacity-building measures that meet the time-related constraints of women and increase their participation in content production. Future studies need to go beyond these measures of participation to empirically test the outcomes of informal leadership and determine whether the long-term involvement of community radio can help to turn relational power into formal leader positions over time.

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