

Electoral Participation Among Participants and Non-Participants in Radio Newspaper Reviews in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Radio's presence is more visible than that of any other mass medium in Oyo State. Having considered radio's prominence as a political facilitator and scarcity of studies in the literature of English medium audience-participatory radio newspaper reviews, this study set out to examine the difference in electoral participation among participants and non-participants in radio newspaper reviews in Oyo State. McLuhan's Technological Determinism was adopted as the theoretical framework; the data were gathered through a 19-item questionnaire. Through stratified random sampling, 308 respondents (154 participants and 154 non-participants) were selected. The data were first analysed through descriptive statistics in which responses of both sub-samples were compared in tabular forms. To ascertain the statistical significance of the results, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was further employed. The results showed that participants were more active than non-participants in the following: contesting elections (12.9%; 11.7%), boycotting elections (12.4%; 12.3%), enlightening others on electoral processes (57.2%; 49.4%), encouraging participation in elections (69.5%; 59.7%) and encouraging recall of non-performing political office holders (16.8%; 16.2%), respectively. However, non-participants engaged more than participants in activities such as voting (63.6%; 61.7%), campaigning for political candidates (39.6%; 35.7%) and attending political campaigns (42.2%; 38.3%), respectively. The results of inferential statistics revealed no significant relationship between participation in radio newspaper reviews and involvement in electoral activities ($r = 0.14$). The study concluded, therefore, that promoting electoral participation would take more than participation in radio newspaper reviews.

Keywords: Electoral participation; Participants; Non-participants;

1. Introduction

Oyo State has experienced a significant proliferation of radio stations, particularly privately owned ones, surpassing other forms of mass media within the state. At the time this study was conducted, a total of 23 radio stations were operational, comprising three community stations, three federal stations, four state-owned stations, and thirteen privately owned stations. This rapid expansion has intensified competition among broadcasters, especially within the private sector, compelling radio stations to adopt innovative programming strategies to attract and retain audiences. One prominent strategy is the incorporation of audience participation

into programme formats, particularly in radio newspaper review programmes. Although these programmes address a wide range of socio-economic issues, political discussions consistently generate the highest level of audience engagement.

The growing prominence of audience-participatory radio programmes raises important scholarly concerns, particularly in light of the established role of radio in fostering political awareness, civic engagement, and democratic participation (Asemah, 2011; Edegoh et al., 2015; Bhatti et al., 2016; Ahmed, 2017; Mamdani et al., 2018). While existing studies have extensively examined the influence of mass media on political

participation, they have largely concentrated on conventional media exposure, political mobilisation, and the effects of radio and television newspaper reviews on newspaper readership and general political engagement (Agba, 2002; Ishengoma, 2013; Ismail, 2013; Nyarko, 2016). As a result, empirical evidence on whether active participation in radio newspaper review programmes translates into enhanced electoral participation remains limited.

More critically, prior research has rarely distinguished between individuals who actively participate in radio newspaper review programmes and those who engage with such content only as passive audiences. Studies by Ojebuyi (2012) and Adeduntan (2018), for instance, mainly focused on participation in translated newspaper review formats without explicitly examining implications for election-related participation. In addition, the emergence of multi-platform participatory environments where audiences engage through telephone calls, SMS, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and other digital communication channels has not been sufficiently explored. Consequently, a clear gap persists in understanding how such convergent forms of participation influence citizens' electoral behaviour.

Against this backdrop, this study addresses this empirical and contextual gap by comparatively examining election-related participation between participants and non-participants of radio newspaper review programmes in Oyo State, Nigeria. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on audience participation within a multi-platform radio environment and its comparative analysis of electoral participation between active participants and non-participants. In doing so, the study extends existing media effects scholarship by providing new insights into the democratic implications of interactive radio journalism in contemporary media ecologies.

Radio newspaper review programmes in Oyo State vary in terms of language of presentation, audience involvement, duration, and broadcast frequency. To maintain methodological consistency, this study focuses exclusively on English-language, audience-participatory programmes aired on a Monday-to-Friday basis. Accordingly, three inclusion criteria were applied: (1) weekday broadcasts (Monday–Friday), (2) English-language presentation, and (3) audience participation features. Based on these criteria, five programmes were selected: *Rise and Shine* on Impact Business Radio (92.5 FM), *Paper View* on Inspiration FM (100.5 FM), *Newspaper Reviews* on Jamz FM (100.1 FM), *Freshly Pressed* on Fresh FM (105.9 FM), and *Newspaper Review* on Petals FM (102.3 FM). Notably, all selected programmes are broadcast by privately owned radio stations, highlighting the dominant role of private broadcasters in facilitating interactive radio journalism in Oyo State.

2. Theoretical Perspective

2.1 Political Participation

Meaningful democratic development is closely linked to the extent of mass political participation within a society. In general, there appears to be a strong relationship between citizens' political engagement and the level of national development, in which higher participation tends to correspond with stronger democratic consolidation. Conversely, political apathy among citizens may hinder societal progress and weaken democratic governance. Several studies have identified political apathy as a major barrier to development and effective governance (Theocharis, 2011; Falade, 2014; Agu, 2015; Daniel, 2015). In this sense, political participation remains a fundamental civic behaviour required in any democratic system.

Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities broadly categorized into electoral and non-electoral forms. Electoral participation is primarily associated

with election-related activities such as voting and contesting for public office, which are among the most visible indicators of democratic engagement (Norris, 2001; Skoric & Kwan, 2011; Tang & Lee, 2013; McManimon, 2014). However, participation is not limited to voting alone. As Tucker (2013:114) emphasizes, participatory democracy requires more than electoral acts, as a healthy democracy depends on citizens who are engaged, vigilant, and well-informed.

In broader theoretical terms, political participation is defined as behaviour that has the potential to influence governmental action, either directly through policy influence or indirectly through the electoral process that determines policy-makers (Verba et al., 1995; Yamamoto et al., 2013). Thus, the essence of political participation lies in citizens' attempts to influence government decisions that affect collective welfare. Activities that lack the capacity to shape governmental outcomes fall outside this definition.

Although often used interchangeably, political participation is conceptually distinct from political engagement. Scholars such as Anduiza, Jensen, and Jorba (2012), Hooghe et al. (2014), and Nunes et al. (2018) distinguish engagement as a psychological orientation characterized by interest, attention, and emotional investment in politics. Dahlgren (2006:24) further describes engagement as "a mobilized focused attention on some object," which, while necessary, does not constitute participation itself. Participation, in contrast, represents the behavioural expression of such engagement. Nevertheless, engagement and participation are closely interconnected, as meaningful participation is often driven by prior cognitive and affective involvement.

The importance of participation is central to democratic theory. Democracy thrives on active citizen involvement (Davis, 1999; Mutz, 2002), without which it risks degenerating into a mere procedural system devoid of public influence. In this regard, Olorunnisola and Ojebode (2013:338) argue

that reducing democracy to periodic elections undermines the deeper principle of self-determination, which requires citizens not only to participate but also to feel meaningfully engaged in governance processes.

Within this framework, electoral participation serves as a key dependent variable in this study, particularly in relation to citizens' involvement in radio newspaper review programmes. Electoral participation itself includes various activities such as voting, campaigning, political mobilization, and contacting public officials through different communication channels (Verba et al., 1995; Dalton, 2008; McNair, 2011; Loader et al., 2014; Vandamme, 2020). These forms of participation remain essential for democratic sustainability and development.

2.2 Radio and Political Participation

Since its early development as a wired communication technology, radio has functioned as an important political instrument. Historically, it has played a significant role in disseminating critical information, ranging from the transmission of the Titanic disaster in 1912 to its extensive use in political communication and presidential campaigns in the United States since the 1920s (Delli Carpini, 1993; Chukwu, 2015). Despite the emergence of more advanced media technologies, radio continues to maintain its relevance due to its unique characteristics such as affordability, portability, immediacy, and wide accessibility.

In contemporary media systems, radio coexists with digital and visual media, yet it remains particularly significant in bridging information gaps, especially among rural and economically disadvantaged populations. Unlike television and internet-based platforms that often require subscription or stable infrastructure, radio remains freely accessible and widely utilized. In Nigeria, for instance, radio is recognized as the most dominant news medium, with FM stations accounting for the

highest level of audience usage (Nigeria Research Brief, 2014; Asemah, 2011; Edegoh et al., 2015).

Radio has also been extensively utilized for political communication and civic education. Governments use radio platforms to disseminate policies and engage citizens through interactive talk shows, thereby enhancing public understanding of governance processes (Al-Hassan et al., 2011). Additionally, radio has been deployed as a tool for political sensitization, particularly in addressing electoral malpractice such as vote buying, which has become a growing concern in Nigeria's democratic process (Ejue & Etika, 2018).

Beyond electoral contexts, radio has played a critical role in conflict and crisis communication. In regions affected by insurgency and civil unrest, radio has been used to disseminate peace-oriented messages and counter extremist narratives. For example, in Northern Uganda, FM radio programmes were used to encourage defection from rebel groups through targeted messaging such as "Come Home" campaigns, which included testimonies from former insurgents and family appeals (Olken, 2009; Lancaster et al., 2011; Rigterink & Schomerus, 2016). Similar applications have been documented in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic.

However, radio is not inherently positive in its influence. Like other communication technologies, it is susceptible to misuse for political manipulation and violence. Historical evidence includes its use in Nazi Germany for propaganda and incitement, as well as its role in the 1994 Rwanda genocide through hate broadcasts by Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (Paluck, 2009; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). These cases demonstrate that radio can function as both a tool for democratic engagement and political violence, depending on how it is deployed.

Despite technological advancements, radio continues to maintain a unique position

in global communication systems. It remains particularly effective in reaching rural and marginalized populations where other media are less accessible (Hussain, 1997; van Crowder et al., 1998; Nakabugu, 2001; Pavarala, 2003; Tucker, 2013). Its adaptability and accessibility ensure its continued relevance as a medium that bridges informational inequalities across societies.

2.3 Technological Determinism Theory

Marshall McLuhan (1964) argues that media technologies significantly shape human behaviour and social interaction. From this theoretical standpoint, individuals exposed to specific communication technologies are likely to develop different attitudes and behavioural patterns compared to those with limited exposure. In the context of this study, such exposure is reflected in participation in radio newspaper review programmes, where audience interaction occurs through multiple communication channels, including Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, telephone calls, and SMS.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the present study examines whether technologically mediated participation in radio newspaper review programmes is associated with differences in electoral participation. Specifically, it compares the level of electoral participation between individuals who actively participate in such programmes and those who do not, thereby assessing whether technological engagement contributes to enhanced democratic participation in Oyo State, Nigeria.

3. Method

The study was designed to compare electoral participation between two sub-populations in Oyo State, namely participants and non-participants of English-medium radio newspaper review programmes. To achieve this objective, a survey research design was employed in order to examine the potential relationship between participation in radio

newspaper review programmes and levels of electoral participation.

The study population was divided into two categories: resident participants and non-participants of radio newspaper review programmes in Oyo State during the period of investigation. Participants were defined as individuals who actively engaged in the programmes through at least one of the following modes: regular listening, telephone calls, SMS, Facebook, WhatsApp, or other ICT-enabled platforms. In contrast, non-participants shared similar socio-demographic characteristics but did not engage in any form of participation in the programmes.

An equal allocation sampling approach was adopted, with 154 participants and 154 non-participants selected for the study. Participants were recruited through multiple channels, including social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter) as well as telephone numbers obtained from radio stations' call logs. Meanwhile, non-participants were selected from public spaces such as newsstands and institutions of higher learning across Oyo State. Although this approach is not strictly probabilistic in the classical sense, it was considered appropriate given the absence of a definitive sampling frame due to the open-ended nature of programme participation. Consequently, random sampling was applied within these practical constraints.

The use of random sampling was further justified by the structure of the participant population, as participation in radio newspaper review programmes is not systematically distributed across demographic or geographic segments of Oyo State. Instead, participation occurs organically and voluntarily, without a predefined representative framework. Measurement of variables was conducted using an adapted version of Talo and Mannarini's (2014) Participatory Behaviours Scale (PBS), which was modified into a 19-item questionnaire titled the Radio and Electoral Participation Questionnaire. The ins

trument was structured into three sections: familiarity with selected radio programmes (items 1–5), election-related participation (items 6–12), and demographic characteristics (items 13–19). Reliability testing through a pilot study yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.722, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data collection for participants was conducted through multiple access points. Initial contact was made via radio station call logs, followed by telephone communication and social media platforms to obtain consent. Participants who agreed were provided with either electronic or hard-copy versions of the questionnaire depending on their preference. Electronic questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms, with responses collected through Google Drive. Channels of distribution included email, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Twitter direct messages. Some respondents who preferred physical copies were accommodated within Ibadan, while those outside the city were encouraged to complete the electronic version due to logistical considerations.

For non-participants, data collection was carried out in selected public settings, including newsstands, marketplaces, and higher education institutions across Oyo State, where individuals with similar socio-demographic profiles could be conveniently accessed. This approach was adopted to ensure that respondents in the non-participant category were comparable in characteristics to the participant group, despite not being engaged in radio newspaper review programmes. In certain instances, assistance from participant respondents was utilized to help identify potential non-participant individuals who met the inclusion criteria for the study. All completed questionnaires, whether collected in electronic format or through printed copies, were systematically compiled, verified for completeness, and securely stored using Google Drive to facilitate organized data management and subsequent

analysis. Table 1 provides a detailed presentation of the distribution and retrieval rates of the administered questionnaires across both respondent categories.

Table 1. Breakdown of Participants' Questionnaire Administration

Platforms	Sent Copies	Retrieved Copies
Hardcopies	79	79
Facebook	58	38
E-mail	35	27
Twitter	20	12
WhatsApp	14	03
Total	206	159

Non-participants were approached across various accessible public spaces, including newspaper stands, shopping malls, eateries, religious gatherings, motor parks, and campuses of higher education institutions within Oyo State. Prior to questionnaire administration, a brief oral screening was conducted to confirm that selected respondents did not participate in any radio newspaper review programmes and that they were residents of Oyo State, thereby ensuring the appropriateness of the sample for the non-participant category.

Following data collection, responses from both participants and non-participants were compiled and analysed concurrently to enable a systematic comparison between the two groups in relation to radio newspaper review engagement and electoral participation in Oyo State. Data addressing the research questions were first subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using frequency counts and percentages to provide an overview of response patterns. This was subsequently

followed by inferential analysis using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the stated hypothesis and determine the nature and strength of the relationship between variables.

4. Result and Discussion

The research question sought to determine the extent of differences in election-related participation between participants and non-participants of radio newspaper review programmes in Oyo State, Nigeria, and whether any discernible pattern could be established between both groups. To address this, respondents' perceptions were measured using a Likert scale of frequency (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Always), and the results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants and Non- Participants' Responses to Election-related Activities

Election-related Participation	Participants	Non-Participants
Voting during elections	61.7%	63.6%
Contesting as a party aspirant in elections	12.9%	11.7%
Campaigning for political candidates	35.7%	39.6%
Attending political campaigns	38.3%	42.2%
Boycotting elections	12.4%	12.3%
Enlightening others on electoral processes	57.2%	49.4%
Encouraging people to	69.5%	59.7%

participate in elections		
Encouraging recall of political office holders	16.8%	16.2%
Average	38.1%	37%

Each percentage presented in Table 2 represents the combined proportion of respondents selecting “Often” and “Always” for each item. Overall, the findings reveal only marginal differences between participants and non-participants across most indicators of election-related political participation. For instance, non-participants recorded slightly higher involvement in voting (63.6%) compared to participants (61.7%). Similarly, in campaigning for political candidates and attending political campaigns, non-participants also exhibited marginally higher participation rates (39.6% and 42.2%, respectively) than participants (35.7% and 38.3%).

In contrast, participants in radio newspaper review programmes demonstrated higher engagement in several other dimensions of political participation. Specifically, participants reported greater involvement in contesting elections (12.9%) compared to non-participants (11.7%). They also showed slightly higher levels of election boycott behaviour (12.4% versus 12.3%), although the difference is negligible. More notably, participants were more active in civic and communicative forms of participation, including enlightening others on electoral processes (57.2% compared to 49.4%), encouraging electoral participation among others (69.5% compared to 59.7%), and encouraging the recall of political office holders (16.8% compared to 16.2%).

Taken together, the pattern indicates that while non-participants slightly dominate in conventional electoral activities such as voting and campaign attendance, participants tend to exhibit stronger engagement in informational and mobilizational forms of

participation. However, these differences remain generally marginal across all indicators.

The overall comparison further confirms that electoral participation between the two groups is relatively close, with voting remaining the most dominant activity among both participants (61.7%) and non-participants (63.6%). Interestingly, non-participants recorded the highest score in this category, surpassing participants, which suggests that passive media exposure does not necessarily translate into lower electoral engagement. At the aggregate level, participants in radio newspaper review programmes recorded higher percentages in five out of the eight measured indicators, yet the overall average scores between participants (38.1%) and non-participants (37%) remain closely aligned. This indicates that differences in election-related participation between the two groups are not substantial.

Given the minimal variation observed, a more robust statistical test was required to determine whether the relationship is significant. Therefore, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to further test the hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship between participation in radio newspaper review programmes and election-related participation in Oyo State.

Table 3. Relationship between Election- Related Participation and Participation in Newspaper Review Programmes

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	R	Sig
Newspaper Review Programmes	154	17.94	6.20	0.142	> .05
Election-Related Participation	154	1.47	0.50	—	—

The results presented in Table 3 indicate a weak positive correlation between participa

tion in newspaper review programmes and election-related participation ($r = 0.142$), which is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that although a slight positive association exists between the two variables, it is not strong enough to establish a meaningful or statistically reliable relationship.

Consequently, the results do not provide sufficient empirical support for the stated hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis asserting a significant relationship between participation in radio newspaper review programmes and election-related participation is rejected.

4.3 Interpretation

The responses of both participants in radio newspaper review programmes and their non-participant counterparts have been presented and compared through the preceding tables. In this study, political participation was operationalized in terms of election-related activities as specified in the research instrument. A comparative analysis was conducted to examine differences between the two groups, after which the statistical significance of the observed patterns was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The descriptive results indicate that participants in radio newspaper review programmes were slightly more active in election-related participation compared to non-participants. However, the inferential analysis revealed that this difference is not statistically significant. In other words, although a marginal variation exists between the two groups, it is not strong enough to establish a meaningful relationship at the 0.05 significance level.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that participants in radio newspaper review programmes exhibit only a marginally higher level of engagement in election-related activities than their non-participant counterparts. Nevertheless, this observed difference lacks statistical significance. Consequently,

the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

This outcome aligns with several scholarly arguments on the persistence of political apathy, particularly in relation to conventional forms of political participation, as previously highlighted in the literature (Dalton, 2008; Anduiza et al., 2010; Christensen, 2011; McNair, 2011; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Thun, 2014). It suggests a gradual shift in participatory behaviour, where citizens may increasingly engage in non-conventional forms of political expression, such as discussion and protest, rather than sustained electoral involvement. While political communication activities such as news consumption and political discussion are widely recognized as components of political participation, they do not necessarily translate into active electoral engagement. Therefore, although these forms of engagement are important in shaping political awareness, they remain insufficient in explaining concrete participation in electoral processes.

5. Conclusions

Election-related participation remains a fundamental pillar of any functioning democratic system, as it reflects citizens' direct involvement in shaping governance and public accountability. Radio newspaper review programmes, as interactive media platforms, are often assumed to enhance political participation by fostering news attention, public discourse, and political discussion among audiences. However, the findings of this study indicate that such forms of mediated engagement do not automatically translate into concrete electoral participation.

Specifically, although radio newspaper reviews contribute to increased exposure to political information and stimulate discussion among audiences, these activities do not significantly culminate in core electoral behaviours such as voting, campaigning, or active political mobilisation. The results therefore suggest a disconnect between

discursive forms of political engagement and actual participation in electoral processes. This implies that media-driven political awareness alone may be insufficient to generate sustained behavioural participation in democratic elections.

In light of these findings, it can be inferred that strengthening election-related political participation requires more than the provision of political information and discussion spaces. There is a need for the integration of additional strategic elements within radio newspaper review programmes, such as targeted civic education, structured voter mobilization campaigns, and collaborative engagement with electoral institutions. Such enhancements may help bridge the gap between political awareness and actual electoral action, thereby increasing the democratic impact of participatory radio programming.

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