



Network Radio News Coverage of the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria: A Content Analysis Approach

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Abstract: In the Nigerian context, the broadcast media have continued to participate as active stakeholders in the electoral process. They produce various adverts, jingles, programmes and shows that aimed at encouraging people to exercise their voting rights, reject electoral violence, and advocate peaceful elections. They also play important roles in social sensitization and mobilization ahead of the elections with many broadcast stations hosting debates for political aspirants. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of programmes contents of FRCN's Politics Nationwide on voters' participation and voting patterns in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The study adopted mixed methods design of the exploratory type. Sample comprised of 204 respondents, including key stakeholders drawn from six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data was collected using three instruments; FRCN Network Programme Contents Analysis Checklist (NFN Pro CAC); Voters' Electoral Participation Questionnaire (VEPQ) and Key Electioneering Personalities Interview Schedule (KEPIS). Content analysis data was analyzed quantitatively, while survey data was analyzed using SPSS V25 for the descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that FRCN's Politics Nationwide adequately featured voter education contents prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria. Also, majority of the respondents were regular viewers and listeners and were adequately exposed to the FRCN's featured more of voters' education contents. Further, findings revealed that there was an overall significant relationship in the electorates' perception of featuring voters' education contents on FRCN radio programmes. Lastly, more voters participated during the last general elections as a result of their exposure to FRCN network programmes prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The study recommended that radio stations should increase the strength of nationwide programmes for effective voters' education.

Keywords: Agenda-setting, Election, Mass Media and Political programmes

1. INTRODUCTION

Elections around the world today are focus of intense media attention and coverage. The elections in the United States draw attention across the world, with innovative strategies being studied, analyzed and adapted in planning election campaigns in most democracies. Election strategies and issues also get extensive coverage (Graber, 2010). The greater dependency on media for getting information on the electoral process, the parties and campaigns in the media are closely followed by citizens for deciding on their voting behaviours and over the years new media technologies are being extensively used in reaching the electorate and also for interacting with the electorate (Jackson & Lilleker 2009; Zittel, 2009).

Radio advertisements are assigned by law to political parties according to their vote share in the previous elections and mandates the time of the day at which advertisement are aired to be determined randomly (Ewen, 2014). They exploit this arguably exogenous variation in viewers' exposure to political advertisement by different parties and longitudinal electoral survey data to estimate the effect of advertisement on voting intentions during Mexico's 2012 presidential campaign (Ewen, 2014). They found that political advertisement on radio had a positive, significant and sizeable effect on voting intentions. This effect is short-lived (about two weeks), and is stronger in the early weeks of the campaign. Advertisement tend to have no significant impact on voters' knowledge of candidates' political message, and to be more effective at convincing individuals that are more educated, and

those who voted for the party in the past. Taken together these findings suggested that ads do not influence voters by conveying new information but that other mechanisms of persuasion, centered on advert non-informative content, may be at work (Ewen, 2014).

It is an indisputable fact that mass media is the watchdog of any society. It is this enormous responsibility that the Nigeria Constitution (1999) in Chapter iv, Section 39, Sub-section 2 like all modern constitutions across the globe, provided that people be free to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions. Over and above this provision, the 1999 Constitution gives a charge in Chapter ii, Section 22 which categorically states that “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people”. It is against the backdrop of this provisions that the mass media could monitor governance in a democracy.

Taken together, the mass media and democracy are inextricably linked. The Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM, 2007) clearly understands this link when it avers that modern democracy and the mass media are vital, indispensable link between those who govern and those who are governed. If the mass media do not inform the citizens thoroughly and impartially about government policies and their consequences as well as about the alternatives of government policy proposed by opposition parties and civil society, the people’s democratic choice is severely limited (Ugande, 2010). Umaru and Abdullahi (2012) equally confirm that the mass media are very important and centrally located in the lives of the people and the democratic process. They when further to establish that because of this centrality, the media justifiably focus their attention and accord high priority to government programmes. Lending credence to this Ende (2013) citing Balkin (1998) argued that the mass media stimulate political transparency for “without the mass media”, openness and accountability is impossible in contemporary democracies. He further contend that transparency would entails the assistance mass media give to citizens to understand the operations of government; participate in political decisions; and hold government accountable to the people.

The media, throughout the history of Nigeria have always been in the forefront of the struggle to establish democracy in the country. Lending credence to this assertion, Obilade (1999), opined that the “press in Africa constitutes an active force in the realization of the goal of the evolution of sustainable democracy in the continent of Africa. He also observed That the press in Africa is playing a prominent role in the democratization process in African states which have non-democratic governments” Going back to the history of the country, during colonial period, it is an establish fact that the media is the main agent with which the Nigerian nationalists used to struggle for independence, and by extension the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria nationalist leaders like Chief Anthony Enahoro and Chief M.C.K Ajuluchuku used their newspapers as veritable weapons to fight against and dethrone colonialism and establish an independent democratic Nigeria. This giant stride by the Nigerian media was carried all through to the first, second, third, and fourth republics respectively. Even during the periods of military rule, Nigerian media fought gallantly for the restoration of democracy. This struggle culminated and usher the nation to a new era of the fourth republic in May 1999 with a former military head of state in the person of president Olusegun Obasanjo as the democratically elected leader of Nigeria.

Like in many African countries, Nigeria is one of the countries that are in transition to a democracy since 1999 after the military dictatorship ended in 1999. The media system is gradually developing and there is greater dependency on the media especially radio which show distinct support for the political parties and give wide coverage during elections. This study through a content analysis of FRCN network examines the coverage given to the last presidential elections in 2019. The coverage of presidential elections in developing democracies presents an awkward moment for the news media, where they ought to strike a balance between fair coverage of all candidates as well as tapping into the advertising boom that an election cycle offers. But the election’s end opens another door for media scholars to delve into the questions of who did what and how (Ladoke, 2021).

1.1. Research Objectives

- To analyze the contents of the FRC Nprogrammes, i.e *Politics Nationwide* on FRCN prior to 2019 General elections in Nigeria.

- To ascertain the extent of exposure of voters to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria.
- To ascertain the perception of respondents on the extent of featuring voter education content on FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria.
- To determine the extent of voting patterns and electoral participation of electorates in 2019 general elections in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria.
- To determine the significant relationship in the voters' perception of featuring of voters' education contents in FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Framework

2.1.1. Radio as a Mass Media

The radio as a mass media instrument, the products of media culture provide materials out of which people forget their very identities; their sense of selfhood; their notion of what it means to be male or female; their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of "us" and "them". Thus, media images help shape the view of the people and their deepest values; what they consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil (Kellner and Douglas, 2010). Mass media channels and contents have enabled people pass down their cultural, political and social heritage from generation to generation all over the world, more so media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which people constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which they insert themselves into their culture (Kellner and Douglas 2010).

Mass media is very essential to democracy in all societies, because access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons; firstly, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation and secondly, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them (Centre for Democratic Governance 2009). Since the inception of fourth republic in Nigeria in 1999, there have been six general elections in the country namely 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections.

According to Akinfeleye (2003), the relevance of the mass media (communication channels) in any polity is generally drawn from the fact that information is necessary for effective governance and administration. Lack of information or misuse of information or hoarding of information will be counterproductive in governance and/or administration". It is suffice to say that in the modern society, information occupies a very important position in the day to day activities of the modern man. As Akinfeleye opines, any inadequacy concerning information gathering, processing and dissemination will give room for rumour networking. It is pertinent to make some conceptual clarifications about certain communication channels used in this study in order to avoid ambiguity and provide ground to make inferences. The concepts that are reviewed below are newspaper, radio, television, internet and interpersonal communication process. This is in line with the focus of the study.

Omotola, (2010), explained political history of Nigeria reveals that records of electoral events, which indicate that the products of some past elections were not true representation of the people and thereby, did not make those elected to be responsible to the people which elected politicians claimed to represent. Rather, elected politicians were responsible to what the people call "cabals" that helped the politicians through manipulation to get to the elective position in the first instance. Members of this "cabal" were also responsible for their political future (Premium Times, 2014).

Based on this understanding and realization, political parties and their candidates resulted to embarking on massive campaign for votes from the people using political marketing tools like public relations, advertising, radio, television, outdoor media, print media, handbills, social media as well as mobile phone message broadcast and direct engagements with the electorates. Some and indeed all of these media channels were collectively useful to canvass for votes in any election, in 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria. It signals the fact that people have high interests in politics in the Nigeria, such that the elections attracted varied participation by the electorates (Ladoke, 2021)

The purpose of political participation is wrapped up in the concept of representation, the linking of the interests of the citizens with the policies of the state. Additionally, Political participation is closely linked to voter education; which is hinged largely on the role of the media industry. The media is expected to play prominent role in educating the members of the public through various channels. Therefore, free, independent and professional journalism both online and offline serves an essential role in democracies, provides information that allows citizens to make informed decisions inside and outside the voting booth. This holds the powerful to account for the integrity, peace and fairness of an election. Journalism can also contribute to the electoral agenda by requiring politicians to respond to the public, and to focus on subjects of real public interest (Myers, Mary, 2004).

This mediation is not neutral but affects how political processes are communicated. Talking of general elections, it is clear that “talk is endlessly circulated around (media, politics, public relations, press conferences) in practices of commentary, quotation and polemical reformulation. Statements are thus re-presented in different discursive domains, and in this re-presentation they are transformed” (Ojekwe, and Izeghe.2015).Among the notable mass media is the radio and it is the most important medium of mass communication in Nigeria, since about 50% of the population of the country is largely illiterate, that is, unable to read and write. Radio is a universal and versatile medium when communication with the mass of the people is required and can be used for the benefit of the society also throughout the world (Djupe, and Peterson, 2010).

Nwuneli, (2017), describes political parties and their candidates are becoming increasingly aware of the effectiveness of radio programmes and its influence on getting the electorates to choose a particular candidate or party over the other by way of informing them. Radio programmes, particularly the indigenous ones during election periods can increase electoral process participation and voting patterns because they bridge the communication gap between political parties, candidates and electorates. Hence, political parties and candidates all around the world devote a lot of financial resources to radio commercials to sell themselves as the preferred brand to the electorates. Interestingly, most questions raised during elections are concerned with voting patterns i.e. why the electorates voted for a candidate over the other and the implication of their choice (Nwuneli, 2017)

Olatubosun, (2013), says many media scholars have established the fact that Nigerians love listening to radio and the medium is with largest audience; it has been argued that radio is the most accessible of all the mass media types in Nigeria. Radio is the most patronized means of mass communication in Nigeria (Keyton, 2006). Feric and Posavec, (2013), analysed the radio capacity to influence people towards voting patterns, there have been debates on whether or not radio alone has the capacity to influence behaviour.

The media industry including the broadcast stations, as well as other government and non-governmental organizations are also involved during preparations toward general elections. One of such strategies has been the use of voter education programmes on indigenous radio stations as purveyor of eliciting change in the electorates’ participation, especially among the rural communities. Therefore the need to investigate the performance of indigenous radio broadcasting programmes in terms of their impacts on listeners especially in relation to voters’ education as entrenched in the media code of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria (Ladoke, 2021).

2.2. Radio as Instrument for Political Awareness and Election in Nigeria

Awareness of political party is important especially in a democracy and it is important to ascertain at some point or another whether the supply streams are constantly flowing in order to keep political awareness at an appreciable level. A series of experimental studies done to examine the impact of mass media advertising on political behavior have found positive effects. After conducting a series of experimental studies on Hispanic voters in Latin America in 2006, it revealed that grassroots mobilization efforts through the mass media can raise voter turnout while more impersonal tactics such as direct mail seem ineffective (Ladoke, 2021). The media serve critical roles throughout the electoral process, because in addition to promoting public debate and educating citizens, they monitor the integrity of the electoral process and can be a primary vehicle for accountability demands. Also, social media have made it easier to create, share and consume media stories. Perhaps more than ever before, the media have the potential to significantly impact perceptions and behavior during elections

(Arolowo and Aluko, 2012). Furthermore, radio forever blurred the boundaries between the private domestic sphere and public, commercial, and political life. Even with the advent of television, which was supposed to make radio obsolete, radio remained a thriving cultural and political force. Hence, instead of dying after the advent of television, radio managed to thrive by adapting to an audience that sought the portability and immediacy that radio offers (Ladoke, 2021). Radio can follow us everywhere, a medium that we can use while doing something else. Radio is thus possibly the medium that best illustrates how our everyday lives are pervaded by mass media. Radio is universal and virtually every household has at least one working radio.

Radio has many qualities, which are absent in other media, whether its programmes are pre-recorded or transmitted live. The radio has immediacy which enables the listener get breaking news on the spot. The radio has realism, it enables the listener get a feel of the occurrences as the reporter is on the scene, and the tone of his voice communicates shades of meanings which other forms of media such as the newspaper cannot provide. Radio can overcome barriers of space and time through on-the-spot broadcasts whilst also carrying emotional impact as it brings dramatic feelings to the listener. The human voice is the most significant way of reaching people and can convey feelings and attitudes even when the eyes of the listener are closed. Similarly, radio is one of the most ubiquitous, the most effective and cheapest medium of communication available to man, today. It provides opportunity for man to understand both his immediate and distant environment (Nwuneli, 2017).

Moreover, radio feature or programmes may not change voting patterns and lead people to participate in politics. Early voting behavior literature concluded that most voters select a candidate based on sociological characteristics and or partisan identification before the campaign and media reportage even begin. This implies that campaign of any type, including media reportage, be it on radio, television or print have minimal effect on voting patterns. But no matter the level of effect they might have, for any democratic system to thrive, it is vital that political parties, candidates and the mass media provide the electorates with adequate information on party policies, clear-cut vision as well as their political agenda to enable electorates actively choose their candidates based on full information (Olatubosun, 2013). To achieve this, political parties use the media in campaigns to drive home their promises and intention for the electorates and as part of their own contributions, mass media also design programmes that will assist the electorates to make informed choices. It does not matter the level at which the election is taking place, local, state or federal, political candidates are usually the subjects of media discussions, this is apart from the advertisements of different types to woo voters to their side.

In addition, media workers and organization in the broadcast section are also bound by, and obligation to comply with the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, now in its sixth edition which outlines “the minimum standard for broadcasting” in Nigeria. As part of these standards, it lays out general principles to guide the conduct of broadcasting as well as guidelines for the editorial and technical aspects of broadcasting (Keyton, 2006). It also contains specific guidelines for political news and current affairs broadcasts in different contexts. The general guidelines relate specifically to issues such as live coverage, news interviews and discussion programmes. Political News and Current Affairs broadcasts are regulated the code and political advertisement (Keyton, 2006). The code contains sanctions which can be imposed on a station for any breach of the guidelines contained in it. Possible contained in it revocation of a station’s license if it commits if it commits a serious breach of either the technical or non-technical aspects of the Code, reprimand or warning, fines, suspension if license, seizure or forfeiture of transmitting equipment, etc, depending on the gravity of the offence. Most of the ethical and professional standards contained in the Code are of a general nature, similar to those contained in other professional codes of conduct. Moreover, regarding the regulation of political broadcasts, the Code contains additional requirements such as enjoining broadcasters to avoid inflammatory and divisive matters in using political material for news. They should also accord equal airtime to all political parties or views, regarding the amount of time and belt, during political campaign periods while also regularly announcing that every political party is entitled to equitable air-time during campaigns (Keyton, 2006).

Broadcasters must ensure that political broadcasts are in decent language and ensure that the only partisan political broadcast allowed is one in which the political party seeks to explain its manifesto and programmes. Broadcast stations are also obliged to clearly identify political broadcasts as such,

and not present them in a manner that would mislead the audience into believing that the programme is of any other type. Broadcasters are prohibited from using any vote obtained at different polling stations or from exit polls, project or speculate on the chances of the candidates and are only allowed to relay election results or declaration of the winner as announced by the authorized electoral officer for the election.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study was situated within some theories; the theories include:

2.3.1. Agenda Setting Theory

The basic assumption of Agenda Setting Theory is that the mass media may not be particularly successful in telling their audience what to think, but has stunningly successful in tell them what to think about (Scammell, 2015). Indisputably, a macro and direct consequence of the gate-keeping function of the media is the agenda setting function of the media. Agenda setting hypothesis is an indispensable component of media functional studies, which explains how the media, through their contents, determine issues that attract public attention and the importance attached to such issues by the public (Scammell, 2018). Tracing the historical background to the agenda-setting paradigm, there has been investigation into understanding how the media shape the perception of the audience about issues in their environment. Meanwhile, it has been acknowledged by scholars who had empirically examined and fine-tuned the theorist work by conceptualizing and popularizing agenda setting theory with the statement that; the media may not be particularly successful in telling their audience 'what to think' but they are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about (Schriner, 2014). Thus, the agenda setting hypothesis to an empirical research have been noted with regards to the 1968 Presidential Election in the United States of America. Findings revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by media and voters judgment on the importance of such issues (Schriner, 2014).

In essence with Agenda setting theory the audience tends to regard topics and issues highlighted or which are given prominence by the media as high on the agenda of public discourse. The researchers further give a practical and more articulate interpretation of the agenda-setting theory, implying that; in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (Tulloch, 2016).

Invariably, the mass media may well determine the important issues that is, the media may set the 'agenda' of the campaign. The spectrum of the agenda- setting theory has been widened, such that some branded their scholarly revelation as agenda-building (Wring 2016). This explains the phenomenon as a collective process by which the media, the government and the citizens reciprocally influence one another when it involves formulation of public policies. The basic premise of agenda-building is that the media profoundly affect how a society determines issues of importance by mobilizing the various societal institutions towards a consensus (Wring, 2017). This suggests that the media are conditionally powerful in determining societal agenda for public discourse.

Nevertheless, the media remain a key factor in that process because of their enormous influence on other institutions. Albeit, agenda-setting researches have shown that in many cases, the media audiences do perceive some issues as important, following the nature of coverage given such issues by the media. Though, the use of influence is an acceptance of the fact that the media may not constitute necessary and sufficient causes, some studies have demonstrated that changes in behavior patterns can arise from the nature of media coverage (Zavala, 2011). Consequently, possible factors that account for agenda setting have been identified as follows:

- (1) The quality or frequency of reporting on an issue;
- (2) Prominence given to the reports; through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics, or timing on radio and television;
- (3) The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and
- (4) Cumulative media-specific effects over time (Falade, 2014).

Therefore, the opportunity for agenda setting by the mass media becomes enhanced when the value-structure of a society is in a state of flux. Thus, if these hypotheses are true of agenda-setting, it is obvious that media emphases (and more specifically newspaper emphases) can also be responsible for escalation and de-escalation of personality-induced political conflicts, consequent upon the coverage given to such conflicts by the newspapers or other media such radio or television put in another way, the agenda setting tenets and propositions create a context in which public opinions about personality-induced political conflicts as reported by newspapers and the electronics media are created and crystallized. Thus, how positive or negative are these opinions may be contributory to the escalation and de-escalation of the conflicts (Ojo2014).

Perhaps a brief insight into the nature of the audience of the mass media could offer some understanding of how media audience are affected by media messages, which are arrived at through gate-keeping and agenda-setting operations of the media. The media audience can be defined as a new form of collectivity, made possible by the condition of modern societies, this audience from other social forms, such as a group, a crowd, and the public, by referring to it as “mass” of audience (Ugwu-Daniel, 2015). The essential feature of this audience is that it is large, heterogeneous, widespread, and its members could not know each other and this is very true of radio and television broadcasting.

These were distilled from audiences of theatres and musical performances, where people from diverse backgrounds are brought together in a particular place. Such audiences historically are found in urban centers and they are often gathered with commercial motives. Another author’s commentary on the framework, posited that because of the public and anonymous character of these audiences, their behaviour is subject to surveillance and social control by producers and disseminators of information (George-Genyi, 2015). Comparatively, the modern mass media audience show similar characteristics, but are also different in a number of ways.

Almond and Verba, (2015), point that mass media audience is separated by time and distance, much more diversified, scattered, and heterogeneous and globalized. Drawing from the insights and inspirations provided by some other scholarly works, an attempt was made on description of the features of the audience of mass media as being both products of social context and a response to a particular pattern of media provision. They are characterized and defined in terms of place (as in local or international media), people (as in, segmentation into gender, age, political beliefs, income, among others), medium or channel (as in type of media), content (as in genre, subject matters, style), time (as in, day-time or prime-time audience) and by fleeting or enduring attention span (Osumah, and Ikelegbe2009). Therefore, the agenda setting theories related to this study in that FRCN programmes on politics programmes are examined. It is assumed that this radio programmes contents could positively influence voters’ electoral participation and voting patterns in the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

2.3.2. Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory refers to the propensity of media audience use a particular medium based on the gratification they will get through that medium (Bennet and Iyengar (2008). It is the opposite of the assumption of Agenda Setting Theory which states that it is the gratifications or benefits that attract and hold users to different media and various contents that fulfill the user’s psychological and social needs (Bennet and Iyengar2008).

In that case, the uses and gratification theory is the appropriate theory that explains why and how the public citizens use the media and information. In brief, the theory suggests that media use is motivated by needs and goals that are defined by audience members themselves, and that active participation in the communication process may facilitate, limit, or otherwise influence the gratifications and effects associated with exposure. Current thinking also suggests that audience activity is best conceptualized as a variable construct, with audiences exhibiting varying kinds and degrees of activity (Norris, 2013).

Principally, the uses and gratification theory and suggest that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Thus users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assume that the users have alternate choices to

satisfy their need (Gibson and Rommele 2014). The media and public citizens use messages to construct meaning about political practices. When people exercise power in support of public interests, their messages and interactions are a strategic means for influencing public policies. Power consists of political actors' abilities to acquire, maintain, and exercise authority in governmental affairs and to influence relationships and policies. Political elites (elected officials, party leaders, legislators, and agency directors) possess the power to influence large populations because they create laws and sanction behaviors, convey and withhold social and economic benefits to citizens, and influence mass media sources. The power of citizens comes from their legal rights, knowledge of political processes, and ability and willingness to engage in deliberations about public policies (Losco 2010).

Since that are dwell on and explain the processes which everybody within the society use messages to construct meaning about political practice, it then follows that public citizens will purposely seek for such information that will help them construct such meaning. In the same vein, they will also look for the specific mass media that will carry such information on its platform (Etzioni, 2014). In applying this theory to this study, Nigerians do listen to Radio Nigeria not because of their power dictate discourse around the 2019 general elections, but because the contents of the programmes agree and satisfy their psychological and social needs. It is safe to say that if Radio Nigeria contributes or influences voting participation and patterns of the listeners who are residents to participate in the elections, it would not be because the stations can just force any contents down their throats, but because they have the power to decide if the programmes benefit them or not.

2.4. Empirical Review

Amannah (2017) followed the scholarship tradition by studying the role of the media in national development. The author argued that media, including television, plays a very important and crucial role in enlightening and educating the populace. The media can aid public involvement through advocating issue and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people. While the survey method was used for the study, findings revealed that the media in Nigeria, its bid to effectively carry out its core responsibilities often face daunting challenges ranging from anti-press laws, inadequate remuneration seeming overriding interests of media owners, to lack of self-censorship. However, the study concluded that the media must continually take into consideration the socio cultural condition under which it operates, even as it does not lose sight of the universal commitments of the profession. The study had recommended among others that government gives a free hand to the media in carrying out their duties by expunging obnoxious laws that infringe on the effective journalism practice.

Sanni and Ojewale (2013) studied the media influence in awareness creation for government development projects in Lagos state, Nigeria. Agenda setting theory and Uses and gratification theory were used as the theoretical framework for the study. Using descriptive survey method, 172 respondents from four local government areas were interviewed via self-administered questionnaire. The study revealed that the media keep Nigerians averagely informed on government development projects, sways individual convictions of people in such a way that they consider projects given more coverage as truly important in comparison to their previously held beliefs. However fewer fractions of people affected by the media coverage are shown by this study as those who eventually participate in the development process by performing civic duties such as tax payment. It was therefore recommended that the media must equip the public with adequate information on basic rights and entitlements, public services, public budgets, health, housing projects, and road rehabilitation projects.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods design of the exploratory type owing to the fact that the researchers intend to view the coverage of radio political programme prior to 2019 elections. The population of the study comprised the entire FRCN's political programme between January and February 2019. Sample comprised of 204 respondents, including key stakeholders drawn from six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data was collected using three instruments; FRCN Network Programme Contents Analysis Checklist (NFN ProCAC); Voters' Electoral Participation Questionnaire (VEPQ) and Key Electioneering Personalities Interview Schedule (KEPIS). Content analysis data was analyzed quantitatively, while survey data was analyzed using SPSS V25 for the descriptive and inferential

statistics. The instrument was structured in two part parts of A and B, the Section A has questions on the demography of the respondents while the section B was prepared in a Likert Summation rating. The demographics of the respondents were analysed with aid of weighted average with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v 23).

4. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Two approaches were adopted to analyze data collected i.e. qualitative for FRCN radio programmes content analysis, and the key personalities interview while quantitative methods of analyzing was adopted for the survey data that was collected through the use of questionnaire. Thus, data that was obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software V25 for coding and computation. This study investigated the influence of FRCN radio programmes contents on electoral participation and voting pattern in 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

4.1. Presentation of Data

4.1.1. Demographic Data Analysis

Table1. Demographic Information of the Respondents (N=204)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Station Listenership	<i>FRCN</i>	204	100%
Gender	Male	113	55.0%
	Female	91	45.0%
Age	18 - 28years	35	17.0%
	29 - 39years	51	25.0%
	40 - 50years	78	38.0%
	51years & above	40	19.0%
Highest Educational Qualification	No formal education	16	14.4%
	SSCE	19	28.0%
	NCE/ND	37	35.2%
	HND/B.Sc.	76	18.3%
	M.Sc.	32	3.1%
	M.Phil/Ph.D	24	1.0%
	Missing data	18	9.5%
Marital Status	Single	23	11.0%
	Married	157	77.0%
	Separated	12	6.0%
	Divorced	8	4.0%
	Widowed	4	2.0%

4.2. Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What were the predominant contents of the FRCN programmes, i.e Politics *Nationwide* on FRCN prior to 2019 General elections in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, contents of the FRCN programmes were analyzed as presented in Table 2a.i.e *Politics Nationwide in FRCN* (between Jan 4th 2019 - Feb 22nd 2019).

To further ascertain the actual content of the programmes, audio recordings of selected episodes were extracted and stored in compact disc.

Table 2. Content analysis of selected episodes of FRCN ‘Politics Nationwide’ Programme prior to 2019 General election in Nigeria (from Jan 5th 2019 - Feb 16th 2019)

Week/Date	Programme Contents	Guests status as at the time of programme broadcast
5/1/2019	Voter’s right to elect leaders	Politician
12/1/2019	Consequences of violence during election	Public Analyst
19/1/2019	Consequences of ballot snatching during election	Public Analyst
26/1/2019	Sensitization of voters on the importance of voting during election	Public Analyst
2/2/2019	Consequences of selling votes during election	Independent National Electoral Commission Official
9/2/2019	Featuring Presidential candidates (1)	Politician
16/2/2019	Featuring of Presidential candidates (2)	Politician

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 2 presentation is discussed as follows:

Week One: Voter’s right to elect leaders: The audience were educated on their various right provided for by the 1999 constitution of Nigeria and specifically their right to vote and be voted for as citizens of the country. The audience phoned in and contributed to the programme.

Week Two: Consequences of violence during election: The guest gave a detailed explanation of the various acts of violence which can be committed during election and their consequences. He gave the various punishments attached to each act of violence during election. The audience phoned in onto the show to add their contribution on the topic.

Week Three: Consequences of ballot snatching during election: The guest gave a detailed explanation of what ballot snatching means and it consequences. After he has given the information on the program the audience phoned in to ask questions add their opinions.

Week Four: Sensitization of the voters on the importance of voting during election: The guest who was invited into the radio programme educated the audience on what voting entails and its importance during election. The audience phoned in onto the radio programme and they gave their contributions.

Week Five: Consequences of selling votes during election: There are various consequences of selling votes during election and the guest who was invited gave a detailed explanation of these consequences and the audience also phoned in onto the programme to add their opinion on the matter.

Week Six: Featuring of major presidential candidates (1): The guest of the radio program for this week was a Presidential candidate contesting under the umbrella of All Progressive Congress and he informed the audience about his plans when he secures the second ticket to continue on his infrastructural development project of the state. The audience phoned in and asked questions which were answered by the guest.

Week Seven: Featuring of major presidential candidates (2): The guest was the presidential candidate contesting under the umbrella of People’s Democratic Party. He informed the audience about the problems in Nigeria and his intentions to solve them when he is elected as the president of the Nigria. The audience phoned in onto the radio programme to ask certain questions which were answered by the guest.

In summary, the findings emanating from the content analysis of selected episodes of FRCN ‘Politics Nationwide’ programme prior to 2019 General election in Nigeria revealed that the programme adequately featured election related topics such as voters’ registration, voters’ conduct before and during election, sensitization against violence and selling of votes during election, handling and maintaining of permanent voter’s card and ballot paper, voters’ understanding of electoral offenses, voters’ right to elect leaders, voters’ right to the choice of political party.

Table3. Key Personalities Interview with Independent National Electoral Commission Official, Professionals, Human Right Activists on the Impact of FRCN radio Politics Nationwide programme prior to 2019 General election in Nigeria

S/N	Construct	KPI-1 (Political personalities)	KPI-2 (Human right activist)	KPI-3 (INEC Officials)	KPI-4 (Professionals)	KPI-5 (Public Analyst)	Summary
1.	Perception about featuring of political conduct on radio programme.	The program helps the masses on their rights to vote.	Showcasing the political issues.	Educates the populace about the electoral process.	Encourage voters participation in voting process.	Enlightenment on political issues.	The programme had positive impact on voters' education.
2.	Perception about featuring political education conduct on the radio programme	The program give rooms to know the feedback from the politicians.	The program helps the audience to know much about voters education.	Right of the citizen about voting.	Generated great awareness to the public on politics.	It brought government to the people's doorstep.	The contents of the programme has great influence on voter's concerning awareness citizen right to vote.
3.	Perception about featuring content on electioneering	Meaningful political discussion on the programme.	Promote election processing.	Help in knowing about the right choice of candidate.	Educates people on voting guidelines.	Building bridges among voters and politicians.	The programs promotes meaningful discussions on electioneering processes
4.	Perception of the program impact on reaching out to listeners at the grass roots.	The program is an eyes opener to the listeners.	Opportunity to know the experienced candidate.	To know the right party and the candidate to be voted for.	Enlightening the grass root people on election.	It has greater impact on the voters to determine the winner during election.	The programme gives rooms for political enlightenment of the people at the grassroots.
5.	Perception of the program providing guide on choice of candidates.	Influenced the voting pattern positively.	It impacted knowledge into voters on political parties and candidate.	It helps voters to choose the best candidate.	Advise not sell their votes during election.	Shows clear picture of the best candidate.	The radio program guides the election on choice of candidate.

As presented in Table 3 the key personnel interview cut across political leaders, Independent National Electoral Commission officials, Professionals, Human Right Activists e.t.c. Findings revealed that *Politics Nationwide* programme on FRCN: The programme had positive impact on voters' education, The contents of the programme had great influenced on voter's concerning awareness citizen right to vote, The programme promotes meaningful discussions on electioneering processes, The programme gives rooms for political enlightenment of the people at the grassroots, The radio programme guides the election on choice of candidate.

Research Question Two: What is the extent to which voters were exposed to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior 2019 General elections in Nigeria?

To answer the research question, questionnaire was administered among respondents and finding are presented in Table 4.

Table4. Extent to which Voters were Exposed to FRCN’s Politics Nationwide Radio Programme prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria (N=204)

Statement	Regularly (weekly)	Occasionally (twice a month)	Rarely (once a month)	Not at all	Mean	Std.Dev
How often do you listen to FRCN radio station	183 (89.7%)	16 (7.8%)	2 (1.0%)	3 (1.5%)	3.86	.481
How often do you listen to Politics Nationwide Radio programme on FRCN	110 (53.9%)	88 (43.1%)	5 (2.5%)	1 (0.5%)	3.50	.574
How often do you listening to Politics Nationwide Radio programme on FRCN between January 5 th 2019 to February 16 th 2019	104 (51.0%)	93 (45.6%)	6 (2.9%)	1 (0.5%)	3.47	.582
Aggregate mean = 3.61						

Decision mean = 2.50

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 3, revealed that the majority 197(96.6%) were exposed to the radio station either regularly or occasionally.

In summary Table 3a showed the extent to which voters were exposed to FRCN’s Politics Nationwide radio programs prior to the 2019 and 2019 general election in Nigeria. As shown in the tables, the mean scores of FRCN’s Politics Nationwide radio programs was 3.61 far greater than decision mean of 2.05.

This implies that great amount of voters were regularly and adequately exposed to FRCN’s Politics Nationwide radio programs prior to the 2019 and 2019 general election in Nigeria. The implication of this is that, the participants affirmed to the fact that the contents on voters’ education were regularly and adequately featured due to their high level of exposure.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of featuring voter education content on FRCN’s Politics Nationwide radio programs prior to the 2019 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data was gathered from respondents who were regular viewers and listeners of the FRCN radio programmes and participated in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria. Their responses are presented as follows:

Table4. Extent of Featuring of Voters Education contents on FRCN’s Politics Nationwide (N=204)

S/N	Politics Nationwide radio programme content	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std.Dev
1.	Procedures for voter registration.	175 (85.8%)	26 (12.7%)	3 (1.6%)	-	3.84	.403
2.	Conduct of Voters before the day of election	89 (43.6%)	110 (53.9%)	5 (2.5%)	-	3.41	.541
3.	Conduct of Voters during the election.	109 (53.4%)	85 (41.7%)	10 (4.9%)	-	3.49	.591
4.	Voters conduct after the election.	118 (57.8%)	80 (39.2%)	6 (2.9%)	-	3.55	.555
5.	Voting procedures before election.	105 (51.5%)	93 (45.6%)	6 (2.9%)	-	3.49	.557
6.	Handling of ballot paper by Voters.	124 (60.8%)	70 (34.3%)	10 (4.9%)	-	3.56	.588
7.	Understanding of electoral offenses.	117 (57.4%)	75 (36.8%)	12 (5.9%)	-	3.51	.608
8.	Handling of permanent voter’s card by Voters.	107 (52.5%)	89 (43.6%)	8 (3.9%)	-	3.49	.574

9.	Voter's right to elect leaders of their choices	111 (54.4%)	84 (41.2%)	9 (4.4%)	-	3.50	.583
10.	Voter's right to choose party of their choice.	103 (50.5%)	91 (44.6%)	10 (4.6%)	-	3.46	.590
11.	Voter's understanding of not to sell their votes.	125 (61.3%)	68 (33.3%)	11 (5.4%)	-	3.56	.597
12.	Discussion against use as a thuggery by politicians during elections.	112 (54.9%)	80 (39.2%)	11 (5.4%)	1 (0.5%)	3.49	.624
13.	Discouragement on collection of gifts such as money before election.	107 (52.5%)	84 (41.2%)	13 (6.4%)	-	3.46	.615
14.	Need for Voter's to monitor their votes during elections.	105 (51.5%)	84 (41.2%)	14 (6.9%)	1 (0.5%)	3.44	.644
15.	Discussion on voter's handling of voters card.	105 (51.5%)	84 (41.2%)	15 (7.4%)	-	3.44	.629
Aggregate mean = 3.53							

Decision mean = 2.50

Table 4a revealed that the majority Aggregate mean of 3.53 reported that the radio station featured prominently, Voter Education content prior to the 2019 General Election in Nigeria.

In summary Table 4a shows the perception of voters on featuring voter education content on FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programs prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. As shown in the tables, voters perceived that the contents of the station on voters' education were adequately featured and to a great extent as the mean scores of FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program was 3.51 respectively. The observed mean scores were far greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that the contents of FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program 2019 general elections in Nigeria were adequately featured.

Research Question Four: What is the voting pattern of the electorates in 2019 general elections in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program in the Nigeria general elections held in 2019?

To answer this question, voting patterns of the electorates 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen on their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program were subjected to t-test statistics and the result is presented thus:

Table 5a. Voting Patterns of the Electorates in 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen from their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programmes

Exposure	N	Mean	Std.Dev	Df	T	p-value
FRCN	157	11.06	0.729	353	2.228	0.026

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 5a shows the voting patterns of the electorates in 2019 General Election in Nigeria arisen on their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio. The table revealed the mean scores of voters as a result of their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio programme prior to 2019 were 11.06. The mean difference is 0.26. When subjected the data for further investigation, t-test statistics was carried out and the result showed that the difference in the mean scores is statistically significant.

1 Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There will be no significant relationship in the voters' perception of featuring of voters' education contents in FRCN radio programmes prior to 2019 general election in Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, responses from the respondents were subjected to chi square analysis and the result is presented in table 6(a).

Table6(a). Summary of Chi Square analysis of Voters’ Perception of Featuring of Voters’ Education Contents on FRCN Radio Programmes

FM station	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	X ²	p-value
FRCN	204	52.67	5.540	22	113.490	0.000

Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 6 (a) shows the Chi square analysis of the voters’ perception of featuring of voters’ education contents in FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio programmes. The table revealed that the FRCN, the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of confidence (df = 25, X² = 113.490). Thus, finding revealed that there was a significant relationship in the perception of featuring of voters’ education contents of FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio programmes.

Further, the hypothesis was further tested on the overall analysis by merging of the FRCN programmes on the two stations as presented in Table 6(b) presents

H0₂: There will be no significant relationship in the impact of voters’ participation arisen from their exposure to FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program in 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, responses from the respondents were subjected to Chi-square analysis and the result is presented in table 7.

Table7. Summary of chi square analysis of Impact of Voters’ Participation Arisen from their Exposure to FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program Prior to 2019 general elections in Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	X ²	p-value	Remark
Exposure arisen	204	10.93	1.023	7	626.095	0.000	Significant

Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 7 shows the Chi-square analysis of the impact of voters’ participation arisen from their exposure to FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The table revealed that the p-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of confidence (df = 7, X² = 626.095).

Thus, findings revealed that there was a significant impact of voters’ participation arisen from their exposure to FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program 2019 general election in Nigeria.

The implication of this finding is that, more voters participated in 2019 general elections in Nigeria and this could be as a result of their exposure to FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program general elections in Nigeria.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings from the contents FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio program selected for this study already was featuring election related contents such as procedure for voters’ registration, voters’ conduct before and during election, sensitization against violence and selling of votes during election, handling and maintaining of permanent voter’s card and ballot paper, voters’ understanding of electoral offenses, voters’ right to elect leaders.

Again, the FRCN’s *Politics Nationwide* radio programme featured voters’ right to the choice of political party, consequences of vote selling, violence and ballot snatching during election, voters’ right after election, sensitization against political thuggery and hooliganism, sensitization of voters on the importance of free, fair and credible election, featuring of major governorship candidates and voters’ conduct after election. All these election related matters were discussed by politicians, election experts or Independent National Electoral Commission officials, public analyst, professionals, human right activist. Therefore, there is a high possibility that the contents were well delivered towards educating listeners on election related matters. This implies that the indigenous radio programmes selected for this study are good platforms for qualitative political and voter education.

There is no doubt about voters’ right is an important topical issue in voter education. Therefore, if the programme had positive impact on voters’ education, it will significantly influence the awareness of voters about their voting right. In addition, the personalities reported that the programme promotes meaningful discussions on electioneering processes; gives rooms for political enlightenment of the

people at the grassroots; and guides the election on choice of candidate. This finding is in line with the findings of a study also found that voter education in Akoko land in 2015, impacted minimally on the respondents resulting in their skewed knowledge and voting patterns. This is a strong indication that broadcast media, when they are National Network links and when they feature key aspects of the life of the citizens like voting, could play a key role in ensuring that Nigerians participate in the electoral process and that its outcomes are credible and acceptable to the generality of the entire nation (Osita, 2016).

This finding corroborates a study on the significant effect of Voter Education Programme (VEP) on electorates' knowledge of voting in Anambra State. This implies that National radio programmes when used to feature election related topics, they significantly increased the knowledge of voting among electorates in Anambra State (Bormann and Golder, 2013). Such topics found in the Voter Education Programme (VEP) in the study were not so much different from the contents of FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This finding supports a study on the role of broadcast media as an instrument of change during 2015 electioneering campaign in Nigeria (Blaikie, 2015). The study reported that the coverage of politics and elections, the greatest challenge of the Nigerian media is that proprietors who are mostly persons with political interests discourage them from adhering to the fundamental principles of balance and objectivity in reportage (Bryman, Liao and Lewis-Beck, 2012). Similarly, the finding is in line with a study conducted in Mexico where it was found that political advertisement on both radio and TV have a positive, significant and sizeable effect on voting intentions (Akpan, and Onyebuchi, 2012). In summary, findings from the study revealed that FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program extensively feature voters education contents prior to 2019 General election in Nigeria.

With respect to listeners' level of education on the voters' education contents on the FRCN, the findings revealed that voters education contents on FRCN had nothing to do with listeners' level of education. This could be as a result of code mixing language used in disseminating information on voters' education contents on FRCN. This finding is in agreement with the work, who also found that voters' education had no significant effect on electorates. The finding of this study also supports the findings who found no significant differences between with higher education and those with lower education. However, the finding of this study is in contrast with the findings who reported that voting rates were strongly related to combinations of household income and educational attainment (Blaikie 2015).

Finding further revealed that there was a significant relationship in the perception of featuring of voters' education contents of FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program. Finding further implies that there was an overall significant relationship in the perception of electorates on voters' education contents in the two stations. This finding aligns with a related study on voter education (Blaikie 2015). Lastly, findings revealed that there was a significant impact of voters' participation arisen from their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Finding implying that more voters participated in 2019 general elections in Nigeria and this could be as a result of their exposure to FRCN's *Politics Nationwide* radio program prior to general elections in Nigeria, Hence the increased voting patterns.

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