

Patterns of Gender Equality Mobilization by Broadcast Stations in Rivers State



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Abstract

The study examined patterns of gender equality mobilization by select broadcast stations in Rivers State with a view to ascertaining media roles in promoting gender equality. The study was anchored on the radical feminist theory. The peculiarities of the study necessitated a survey research technique with questionnaire as the instrument. A sample of 247 was drawn from a population of 650 with a retrieval rate of 100%. Analysis was done using simple percentages and weighted mean scores. Findings showed that Women have played significant roles in Nigeria which were manifested in several ways such as national development, promotion of peace and security, promotion of socio-economic development and political transformation of Nigeria society. But it is quite appalling and conspicuous that women have not been respected, supported and recognized. Findings show that the broadcast stations have programme bouquets that feature specialized content on gender equality. More so, limited air- time was accorded to such programmes with poor funding as a common denominator. It was also found that cultural constraints hindered women's participation in socio-economic and socio-political interlocutions. From the above findings, it was concluded that there is a need for state assemblies to enact laws that should promote gender equality in all socio-economic and socio-political spheres of Nigeria. It was recommended that all hands must be on deck to ensure that gender inequality is made a crime against humanity with the media continuously setting the agenda on pathways through which gender equality can be actualized. Feminist organizations and non-governmental organizations should help to call the attention of politicians and proprietors of organizations to give equal treatment and opportunities to both men and women in Nigeria to promote cross-fertilization of ideas, experience and knowledge which will eventually lead to socio-economic development. Federal and state governments should fund and sponsor programmes and campaigns via the use of broadcast programmes to sensitize women and people on the evils of gender inequality

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and the need to promote gender equality for enthroning peace, order, stability and progress in Nigeria, and, by extension, Rivers State.

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Introduction

Gender equality means that everyone is provided with what they need to succeed in life. Colleagues in the same position should be treated equally without discrimination or preferential treatment. Allowances and benefits should be shared equally or distributed to both men and women without discrimination based on gender. Unfortunately, contemporary events around the globe show that gender inequality has been prevalent. Gender inequality entails unequal treatment given to male folks and their female counterparts in terms of opportunities, obligations, rights, benefits and promotions in favour of the male gender.

Yet it is generally accepted that women play a vital role in national development, politics, families, democracy, decision making and the representative process of every country. Women's participation in politics and democratic activities includes voting, speaking in public meetings, joining political parties, campaigning for candidates and being part of the demand for justice.

Disregarding the foregoing role of the women brings about apathy on their part. Nyekwere and Nyekwere (2012) argue that women in Nigeria have become apathetic because of the prevailing cultural and social status they have found themselves in and the way they have been relegated to the background. They argue that the mass media can influence women's participation in Nigerian politics through public enlightenment programmes, advocacy campaigns, regular jingles, opinion articulation and lobbying federal and state governments to formulate policies and make legislations that would support, protect and encourage women's participation in all areas of human endeavour and persuade men to accord equal opportunities to women because they are useful in contributing ideas, skills, knowledge and potentials to promote national development.

Ohaja (2013) opines that the mass media can help mobilize society towards promoting gender equality by regularly and constantly portraying gender-sensitive reporting, creating platforms for women to contribute their ideas and showing historic and significant contributions of women in the world, Africa and Nigeria in particular. Ohaja further states that the mass media engage in advocacy campaigns and programmes via Voxpopuli, using advertising campaigns and public relations techniques through press releases, press conferences, face caps, rallies, seminars, symposia and workshops to create awareness and remind government and institutions to always uphold the practice of gender equality in all facets of life and decision-making process. The mass media engages in features, programmes, editorials and presentation of gender issues to society (Smart, 2021).

Chukwu and Mbazie (2020) aver that the mass media especially radio and television are the most formidable institutions in creating awareness and carrying out mobilization programmes on gender equality in Rivers State. It is believed that gender advocacy and mobilization through the mass media are aimed at promoting women's rights and equality in all areas of human endeavour. In this situation, men and women are treated equally. This is borne out of the social, educational and cultural discrimination of women in society which inhibits women from reaching their full potential thereby denying them

equality and freedom (Amadi, 2018). It was for this reason that this study sought to find out the patterns of gender equality mobilization by media organizations in Rivers State.

Statement of Problem

The rise in gender inequality and imbalance in our contemporary society has assumed a dangerous dimension (Chukwu & Mbazie, 2020). The culture of denial of the girl-child the right of ownership of her father's inheritance in the name of culture before and after death is prevalent in Ahoada, Kalabari, Ikwerre, Ogoni and Etche ethnic nationalities in Rivers State. Many critics have labelled this culture obnoxious, unprogressive, inhuman, uncivilized and family slavery against the girl-child. This practice which is repugnant to natural justice needs to be abolished since every human is born free, equal and in dignity.

Gender inequality is so common amongst the Ikwerre people of Obio/Akpor that it led to the landmark court action on the case between Her Lordship, Hon. Justice Daisy Okocha vs. O.C.J Okocha in a matter concerning who should take share in their father's property. It is given this, that the Rivers State House of Assembly recently passed a Bill into law known as "The Girl-child Right to partake in her Father's Inheritance, 2022". This law was received with mixed feelings by some religious organizations, the civil society, the Federation of Women Lawyers and other non-state actors. Some supported the law while others kicked against it.

However, it is not clear how the media campaigns have been able to change or are changing the narrative in Rivers State. The problem of the study was, therefore, carried out to find out the patterns with which broadcast organizations in Rivers State - AIT, Rivers State Television (RSTV), Radio Rivers FM, Nigeria Info and Wazobia FM- address issues of gender imbalance and inequality.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. investigate ways citizens of Rivers State are mobilized by the media against gender inequality;
- ii. evaluate the nature of the influence of broadcast organizations on promoting gender equality in Rivers State;
- iii. identify the challenges facing media organizations in their bid to mobilize Rivers State people towards gender equality.

From the above objectives, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. In what ways are citizens of Rivers State mobilized by the media against gender inequality?
- ii. What is the influence of media organizations on the promotion of gender equality in Rivers State?
- iii. What are the attendant challenges facing media organizations in their bid to mobilise Rivers people towards gender equality?

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study is anchored on the Radical Feminism Theory. This theory was propounded by Haralambus and Holborn in 1974. The proponents of this theory frowned on men's

oppression of women in politics, economy, culture, tradition, family, etc. This theory deals with how men maltreat women in our communities, in the workplace, politics in society. The theory resists men's domination of women in society. The theory argues that men's oppression of women in society is deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the people. This places women as inferior and as second-class citizens. The theory, however, advocates the liberation of women in a male-dominated society.

Women's empowerment is a step towards their liberation. Empowerment refers to the increase in the political, social and economic strength of an individual and communities. Empowerment It is a strategy that seeks to transform the structures of subordination through changes in legislature, property rights and all those other institutions that reinforce and perpetuate total male dominance.

Women empowerment, according to Azikiwe (2009) means raising the awareness and consciousness of women towards acts and laws that are useful to their progress and survival. Some observers see the empowerment of women as encompassing development in education, social, economic and political fields. Considering these definitions, it can be argued that women's empowerment means giving women the authority and legal power to participate in the social, cultural, economic, educational and political fields.

In a study carried out by Kolawole, Abubakar, Owonibi, and Adebayo (2012) on political representation of gender equality in Nigeria. They posited that the equality of the male and female genders in Nigeria will facilitate national and economic development. They posit that presently, the female gender is being oppressed and emasculated from politics by their male counterparts, thereby excluding them from fully participating in the political discourses, including on those issues that are prominently female-related. The study highlighted the role of women in pre-colonial Nigerian politics.

A study undertaken by Anorue, Ifeanyi, Obayi, and Onyebuchi (2012) on the mass media, gender balance and politics in Nigeria, was aimed at finding whether the media have succeeded in creating a smooth and equal playing field for both the male and female folks on Nigerian politics through aggressive campaigns on gender balance using agenda-setting theory. The survey method was employed to elicit the opinion of the people on how well the media have fared in mobilizing for gender equality. A total of 46 respondents were sampled with the questionnaire serving as the instrument for data collection.

The study found that the media still have a long way to go in the campaign for gender equality as the much they have done is still insignificant considering the miles yet to be covered. It was, therefore, recommended that the media should devote more time to the campaign for gender balance and that women should change their mindset politically and lay off all forms of political apathy.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design. The population of the study was 650 comprising staff members of five (5) broadcast media houses in Rivers State namely: AIT, RSTV, Radio Rivers FM, Nigeria Info FM and Wazobia FM. Statistically, the staff strength of the five (5) broadcast media houses was 650 people. A breakdown is presented below;

- i. AIT = 50
- ii. RSTV = 200

- iii. Radio Rivers FM = 180
- iv. Nigeria Info FM = 120
- v. Wazobia FM = 100
- Total = 650

The sample of 247 respondents drawn from the five broadcast media houses in Rivers State was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for sample determination. The sample for the study was worked as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Required sample size
 N = Total population of the study
 e = The expected error (0.05)
 1 = Constant

The computation in the light of the above is shown below:

$$n = \frac{650}{1 + 650 \times (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{650}{1 + (650 \times 0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{650}{1 + 1.625} = \frac{650}{2.625}$$

$$n = 247$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 247

This study adopted the systematic random sampling technique. The research instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by the project supervisors and other media professionals. They modified the instrument to make it more effective before distribution to the respondents.

To test the reliability of the research instrument of this study, the researcher carried out a pre-test on a few members of the population of this study to ascertain its reliability, coherence, suitability, comprehensiveness and its capacity to elicit responses from the respondents before it was administered to the actual population of the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.72 was statistically arrived at and the instrument was accepted as reliable.

The data gathered in the study were presented in tables, analyzed and interpreted using simple percentage and weighted mean scores.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One (1)

In what ways have the media in Rivers State mobilized against gender inequality?

Table 1: Ways the media in Rivers State have mobilised against gender inequality

Statement		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
a.	News programmes	120 (480)	71 (213)	20 (40)	36 (36)	769	3.1	Agreed
b.	Specialized infotainment	100 (400)	127 (381)	15 (30)	5 (5)	816	3.3	Agreed
c.	Radio/TV drama	147 (588)	68 (204)	12 (24)	20 (20)	836	3.4	Agreed
d.	Community visits	6 (24)	5 (15)	98 (196)	138 (138)	373	1.5	Disagreed
e.	Jingles	141 (564)	66 (198)	24 (48)	16 (16)	826	3.3	Agreed
f.	Others	7 (28)	11 (33)	123 (246)	106 (106)	413	1.7	Disagreed

Table 1 above states that the respondents agreed that the media in Rivers State mobilize against gender inequality through news programmes presented daily; specialized infotainment; and radio and television drama series to enlighten and mobilize women and men towards eradicating gender inequality and jingles.

Research Question Two (2)

What is the nature of the influence of broadcast organizations on the promotion of gender equality in Rivers State?

Table 2: Nature of influence of broadcast organizations on the promotion of gender equality in Rivers State

Nature of Influence		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
a.	Negative	20 (80)	17 (51)	70 (140)	140 (140)	411	1.7	Disagreed
b.	Positive	190 (760)	50 (150)	2 (4)	5 (5)	919	3.7	Agreed
c.	Cannot tell	1 (4)	1 (3)	45 (90)	200 (200)	297	1.2	Disagreed

Table 2 indicates that the respondents stated in the affirmative that the media organizations had a positive influence on the promotion of gender equality in Rivers State.

Research Question Three (3)

What are the challenges facing media organizations in their bid to mobilize Rivers people towards gender equality?

Table 3: The challenges facing media organizations in a bid to mobilise Rivers State people towards gender equality?

Challenges		SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	DECISION
a.	Limited airing time constitutes a challenge against gender equality campaigns in Rivers State.	140 (560)	50 (150)	7 (14)	50 (50)	774	3.1	Agreed
b.	Poor funding of campaigns is a challenge to gender equality mobilization in Rivers State.	160 (640)	80 (240)	5 (10)	2 (2)	892	3.6	Agreed
c.	The limited number of female journalists in Rivers State makes it difficult to advocate gender equality in Rivers State.	8 (32)	15 (45)	38 (76)	186 (186)	339	1.4	Disagreed
d.	The economic status of women and cultural limitations reduce the number of sponsors of media campaigns for gender equality.	150 (600)	82 (246)	5 (10)	10 (10)	866	3.5	Agreed

Table 3 above indicates that the respondents agreed that the challenges facing the media organizations under study in a bid to mobilize Rivers State people towards gender equality were limited airing time, poor funding of campaigns and the economic status of women.

The findings of this study are apt and very appealing. Findings indicated that the ways the media in Rivers State mobilized against gender inequality were through news programmes, presentation of specialized infotainment, presentation of radio and television drama series and jingles. This justifies the statement that the media have been proactive and courageous without fear of intimidation or death. In Nigeria, the media have successfully drawn the attention of the people to cases of gender inequality and have employed programmes, drama, news, jingles and infotainment to sensitize and persuade the people and government both at federal and state levels to shun all forms of gender inequality and embrace equality which is the answer to progress, peace and unity in the country. The relative adjustment and opportunities in politics, business, church, media and families given to women are attributed to media roles in mobilizing the people towards gender equality.

The media organizations had a positive influence on the promotion of gender equality in Rivers State. This is seen in the past and present political regimes giving attention to women in all areas. The recent bill that was passed into law by the state recognized the position of women and the girl-child in their father's inheritance. This was a welcome development that serves as a role model to other states of the nation to see women as equal partners in promoting development and progress

Limited airing time, poor funding of campaigns and the weak economic status of women were challenges facing media organizations in their advocacy and mobilization for gender equality.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigerian society is a male-dominated one where women are relegated to the background. Women have made significant inroads in the history of Nigeria. There were intelligent and exceptionally good women who contributed their ideas, experience and knowledge to make this country progress. Among them are the late Professor Dora Akunyili, Okonjo Iweala and Oby Ezekwesili.

But their noble roles remain unsung and uncelebrated. The men have held tenaciously the positions that women are not supposed to hold public offices let alone to handle power and that their duties begin and end in the kitchen where they do domestic chores.

Also, it is significant to note that the media daily have been able to spotlight the activities and actions of both men and women in Nigeria. A lot of people are awash with a series of media campaigns on gender issues bordering on equality with men. It was discovered that men do not give women equal opportunities in political offices, or top media positions. Worse still, Nigeria's barbaric and unwholesome traditions and culture place women in disadvantaged positions where they do not exercise the same rights as men. They are treated with contempt and mockery and as outcasts. The media organizations in Rivers State have been able to champion this cause by engaging radio and television jingles, awareness campaign rallies, seminars and workshops, engaging in daily and aggressive news and news programmes employing public relations technique of using fez caps and T-shirts in promoting gender equality revealed that feminist and non-government organizations and the media organizations in Rivers State should prevail upon the National Assembly lawmakers and state lawmakers to pass bills and make them laws to protect the women from male domination and neglect in Nigeria.

No meaningful development can thrive in any society or country that neglects women. Women over the years and all over the world have made significant socio-economic and political development. Nigeria and especially Rivers State cannot be an exception. The rate at which women have been manhandled, maltreated and dominated by men in society, if not checked and controlled, could spell doom in the future.

This is where the media come in. The Nigerian media should be objective, truthful, sincere and are expected to be sensitive to keenly monitor the environment, report and carry out advocacy and public enlightenment campaigns that are geared towards condemning gender inequality because it is a menace that can adversely retard the development of Nigeria.

Furthermore, federal and state governments are expected to fund the media campaigns. They are expected to formulate laws that would protect the men and women in society to avoid embarrassment and abuse. When the media take this task seriously and judiciously, the dream of promoting gender equality in Nigeria, especially in Rivers State will be a total success.

From the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn above, the following recommendations are made:

- i. National and state lawmakers in Nigeria should pass bills into law that would protect both men and women to eliminate obnoxious and barbaric cultural practices in our society to promote national development.
- ii. Federal and State governments should fund and sponsor programmes and campaigns via the use of media organizations to sensitize women and people on the

evils of gender in equality and the need to promote gender equality for enthroning peace, order, stability and progress in Nigeria.

- iii. Feminist organizations and non-government organizations should help to call \the attention of politicians and proprietors of organizations to give equal treatment and opportunities to both men and women in Nigeria to promote cross-fertilization of ideas, experience and knowledge which will eventually lead to socio-economic development.
- iv. Federal and State governments should appeal to traditional rulers and opinion leaders in the communities in the rural areas to discontinue the odd and crude culture and tradition and embrace positive modernization and civilization.
- v. Traditional rulers and opinion leaders in various communities should create awareness about the dangers of gender disparity in families.

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