

**THE ROLE OF OZIZA FM RADIO PROGRAMME “AKUKO SIRI” IN
OPINION MOULDING AMONG IMO STATE RESIDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of Oziza FM ‘Akuko Siri’ in opinion moulding among Imo State residents. The study was anchored on the agenda-setting theory. The survey method was adopted; the study has a population of 555,500 from which a sample size of 385 was arrived at using the Australian sample size calculator. The study adopted the multistage sampling technique, and the questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Findings revealed that 54% of respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM. 94% of respondents confirmed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM presents matters probing government policies and programmes for public debate. 56% of respondents agreed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM is an eye-opener programme to the residents on government dealings. Furthermore, it was revealed that 61% of respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri program on Oziza FM has helped in carrying the masses along by presenting government issues for public discussion, while 70% of respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri programme has provided space for public reviews, evaluation, and contributions on government affairs. According to the findings, radio continues to be the principal mode of communication for reaching the vast majority of the general population in shaping public opinion. Hence, the study recommended that the respondents avail themselves of the opportunity of being highly exposed to the programme (Akuko Siri), as being moderately exposed is not enough. Also, other media organizations should follow suit by creating equivalent programmes.

Keywords: Radio, Opinion Moulding, Ozisa FM, Akuko Siri, Programmes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For the vast majority of people, radio remains their primary source of communication. The most common platforms for mass media include newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. The general public frequently turns to the media for information on political, social, and entertainment issues, as well as pop culture news (Awatade, 2014). The media has evolved into the ultimate source of information, which must be accurate at all costs. As a result, it enables persons who use mass media for personal gain permission to change people's beliefs and hence have a negative impact on society (Murshed, n.d).

The role of the media in shaping public views and opinions on significant political and social issues has long been a topic of speculation and disagreement (Wilson & Wilson, 2001). Outside of firsthand experience, it is widely assumed that how events are reported in newspapers and broadcast on radio and television influences, and some would claim orchestrates, what we know, think, and feel about what happens in the world. The media can impact public opinion by broadcasting specific stories or emphasizing certain features of tales. One of the most common themes in the media is that the most crucial parts in a tale are perceived as the most significant (Apuke, 2017). The media plays a significant role in the lives of ordinary people. It is impossible for people to visit all of the locations in order to learn about the current situation. As a result, they pay attention to the media. People rely on them for news, general information, and direction, among other things. The press has the ability to make or break a country.

In today's society, the mass media play an important role. As it influences our social, civic, cultural, political, economic, and aesthetic outlooks, it has the potential to bring about drastic changes and improve social situations. Radio, as a mass media, is a crucial and fundamental part of any political community's democratic process. Their legislative tasks of enlightenment, education, and entertainment have elevated them to a position of vigilance and alertness, making them an integral aspect of social government (Sambe, 2008). Through their different programs and news commentary, they inform the public, set the agenda for social dialogue, and hold public opinion. They bring bad government deals to the public sphere that, in most cases, undermine people's basic freedoms through their watchdog scrutiny. The ideals of good governance are respected through these checks. The libertarian media theory is based on this premise. It posits that journalists' role is to protect citizens' rights against government officials' abuses, rather than the media's duty to protect the government from public criticism (Oboh, 2014).

In light of this, the purpose of this study was to look into the role of the Oziza FM radio programme "Akuko Siri" in opinion formation among Imo State citizens.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The media is seen as an essential agent of political socialization since it has the ability to educate people on specific political opinions or ideals. Apart from socializing, the media also serves as a "watchdog," drawing more attention to government misbehaviour or errors and fostering government transparency and accountability through its agenda-setting role. In a similar vein, radio's role as a mass medium in moulding public opinion and public service cannot be understated.

The media's involvement in shaping public perceptions of government and government policies has been proved several times, in the sense that it disseminates messages that promote societal progress and cohesion. Most politicians occasionally use the media (especially government-owned media) to spread lies and propaganda to the population.

Because of the centralized media organization in Nigeria's urban areas, rural dwellers are sometimes left in the hands of opinion leaders who employ propaganda tactics to persuade rural residents to act rashly in critical decision-making situations. This, however, warrants an

examination into the role of Oziza FM's Akuko Siri radio show in shaping Imo State residents' beliefs.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. To what extent are Owerri metropolis residents exposed to Akuko Siri Programme on Oziza FM radio?
2. What is the knowledge level of residents of Owerri metropolis on their exposure to Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM radio?
3. In what ways does Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM radio help in moulding the opinions of residents of Owerri metropolis on issues?

4.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

4.1 The Media and Public Opinion

The media's power to define a country's agenda and focus public attention on a few key issues is vast and well-documented. Not only does the news provide accurate information about current events, but it also teaches readers and viewers how significant a subject is based on its presence in the news. In other words, the media has the power to set the agenda for the public's attention on the small number of subjects that shape public opinion. Obaze and Ogbiti (2004) emphasized this argument by using Thomas Jefferson's 1823 essay, which stated, "The press is the best instrument for informing the minds of man and improving him as a rational, moral, and social person." In his book *Public Opinion* (1922), Walter Lippmann detailed the major contours of this impact, which began with a chapter titled "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads." According to him, the media is the main source of images in our heads about the larger world of public events, which is "out of reach, out of sight, and out of memory" for most people.

4.2 The Meaning and Nature of Public Opinion

Man, as a rational being, has favourable or unfavourable attitudes toward problems, events, people, places, and situations. Opinion creation is one of the manifestations of man's rationality and freedom to express preferences toward the environment. Men, in addition to creating opinions, reason them, especially when faced with options (Worcester, 2013). What exactly is a point of view? An opinion, according to McQuail (2005, p.515), is "a statement of preference from one side of an argument or choice offered." The competitive nature of human society (especially a democratic society) allows for the free flow of information and the exchange of ideas. The premise of "the open marketplace of ideas" says that good and bad ideas fight for people's acceptance in modern democratic societies, and that man's reason leads him to form beliefs based on available knowledge. As a result, when it comes to issues, an individual's preference for a side of the debate given is his or her view (Murshed, 2014).

The journalistic maxim, "Facts are sacred, but opinions are free," emphasizes the ability of individuals to select any side of an issue as a preference. It is important to remember that man is not an island; he is depending on other people and everything in his surroundings. When

communications from the mass media are broadcast, they reach a diverse audience that is widely spread across different geographical places (Singer & Ashman, 2009). It should be recognized that there are groups within the heterogeneous audience who are united by common interests, aspirations, and demographic traits. Individuals in each interest or demographic group, as well as groupings of media audiences, could be grouped together to form "public opinion," according to experts (Gaur, 2014). Oriola (2012) defines public opinion as to the population's aggregated prevailing statement of preference, leaning, or overall perspective on a topic of public concern. It refers to the point of view of a group of people who have similar qualities about a topic, event, location, or situation. Worcester (2013) backs with this claim by defining public opinion as "a defined population's aggregate view" (p.1). His inclusion of the phrase "defined population" implies that media audiences are divided into demographic or interest groups, which can be used to target them, despite their heterogeneity. As a result, public opinion is defined as the prevalent leaning among a specific group of people, frequently represented as assertions of preference for one side in an issue. Though philosophers such as Plato, Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Hume, to name a few, have previously portrayed it in their writings, Walter Lippmann's classic, *Public Opinion*, published in 1922, set the way for a modern approach to scientific inquiries into public opinion (Worcester, 2013). The triangle relationship between the scene of an event, the human picture of the scene, and the human response to the picture working itself out on the scene of the event are recognized by Lippmann's (1922) analysis of public opinion. Lippmann's interpretation, when applied to news analysis, translates into the correlation between a news-reported event, the picture of the event presented to people in subsequent discussions and analyses, and the response (in terms of a statement of preference or opinion) to any of the sides/angles from which the event was presented and analyzed. By implication, people's perceptions of situations, events, places, and people are shaped by their mental images of themselves, others, their needs, purpose, and relationships. According to Lippmann, public opinion is formed by people acting on images in the name of groups.

5.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Oriola and Ogbemi (2017) carried out a study on media and public opinion formation. Findings revealed that informed opinions are based on adequate, accurate, and authoritative information, and by disseminating news and further engaging in discussion and analysis of major issues in the news, the media shape or influence public opinion. Bello and Wilkinson (2017) investigated the impact of community radio on political activity. Their findings suggest that listening to political talk shows on community radio might increase political interest and participation. Similarly, there is a link between involvement in talk shows and political efficacy, according to the findings. These findings are positive in that they show community radio to be a valuable democratic tool for empowering citizens by giving voice to individuals who are considered "marginalized" while also delivering important information at the local level. Barry is a man of many talents (2004) The media's influence in affecting public perceptions and opinions on major political and social topics has long been a source of conjecture and investigation. It was revealed that, outside of personal first-hand experience, how events are reported in newspapers and disseminated through radio and television has a significant impact on what we know, think, and believe about what happens in the world. Community radio for community development is a way for rural, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and hard-to-reach populations to express and share their views, thoughts, ideas, problems,

and opportunities with the mainstream population, according to a study by Khan, Khan, Hassan, Ahmed, and Haque (2017) on the function of community radio for community development. Community radio has recently acquired appeal as the media of grassroots people in underdeveloped areas, providing a new venue for both policymakers and grassroots people to participate in community development.

6.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because theoretical support for research findings is important, the study was based on the agenda-setting theory, which is directly related and more prominent to the topic under inquiry. The discussion is mostly influenced by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw's media agenda-setting hypothesis, which was formally formulated in research on the 1968 American presidential election (Konkwo, 2018). The idea discusses how the media can use editorial emphasis and persistent coverage of an event or topic to increase the relevance of that event or issue in the public's perspective (McCombs & Shaw, 1991; Konkwo, 2018). This means that when the media prioritizes a topic in their daily reporting, it elevates the subject to a degree of importance and draws continuing attention from the general public. His theory is relevant to the study because it describes how Oziza FM, through their program Akuko Siri, raises issues for mass audience utilization and deliberation, shapes information output so that certain issues are elevated in importance to the public at the expense of other events, and influences the public to be aware of the issues and ultimately form an opinion on them.

7.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study took a quantitative approach with the use of a survey. The participants in this study are citizens of Owerri metropolis, which has a population of 555,500 people, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2017). In determining the sample size, the researcher used the Australian sample size Calculator as represented thus; Confidential level= 99%, Population= 555,500, Proportion= 0.5, Confidential Interval= 0.06568, Upper= 0.06568, Lower= 0.043432, Standard Error= 0.02550, Relative Standard Error= 5.10, Sample Size= 385. The representatives of the sample were chosen using a multistage sampling procedure. First Stage: The researchers selected all the three local governments in the Owerri Metropolis, which include: Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, and Owerri West. Second Stage: Out of the three local governments, the researcher selected two communities from each of them. Selected communities from Owerri Municipality were Umuororonjo and Umuoyima. From Owerri North were Orji and Amakohia Uratta. While in Owerri West, which includes Nekede and Umuguma. This gives a total of six (6) communities to be studied. Third Stage: At this stage, the researcher selected 64 residents from each of the communities for the study, making a total of 385 residents from all the selected communities. Fourth Stage: From the selected 64 residents, 385 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to them for adequate representation. This means that the researcher purposively distributed 64 copies of the questionnaire to each of the communities at a different day interval. The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire. For the quantitative study, the researchers used simple percentages and tabulations.

8.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data collected from the field through a questionnaire as an instrument was presented in tables using numbers and simple percentages. The researcher distributed 385 copies of the questionnaire to the communities. From the numbers distributed, 376 (97.7%) copies were retrieved and found valid. This means that 9 (2.3%) copies were not returned. Therefore, analysis was done using a valid questionnaire.

Table 1: Analyzing the responses of respondents on the extent to which Owerri metropolis residents are exposed to Akuko Siri Programme on Oziza FM radio.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	58	15%
High	92	24%
Moderate	198	54%
Low	28	7%
Total	376	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

Analysis from table 1 above-disclosed that 54% of respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM. This suffices that the respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM.

Table 2: Analyzing the responses of respondents on whether Akuko Siri Programme on Oziza FM radio presents matters probing on government policies and programmes for public debate.

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	352	94%
No	0	0%
Can't say	22	6%
Total	376	100%

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Analysis from table 2 above indicated that 94% of respondents confirmed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM radio programme presented matters probing government policies and programmes for public debate. This implies that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM presents matters probing government policies and programmes.

Table 3: Analyzing the responses of respondents on Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM is an eye-opener programme to the residents on government dealings.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	162	44%
Agree	212	56%
Disagree	2	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	376	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

According to the results of the analysis in table 3, 56 percent of respondents felt that the Akuko Siri program on Oziza FM is an eye-opener for people when it comes to government affairs. The insinuation of the above confirmation is that the Akuko Siri programme exposes topical issues related to government policies and programmes.

Table 4: Analyzing responses of respondents on ways in which Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM radio helps in moulding the opinions of residents of Owerri metropolis on issues.

Akuko Siri programme has helped in carrying the masses along by presenting issues on government policies for public discussion.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	228	61%
Agree	140	37%
Disagree	2	0
Strongly disagree	6	2
Total	376	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

From table 4 above, the analysis alluded to, 61% of the respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM has helped in carrying the masses along by presenting issues of government for the public to discuss. This means that Oziza FM radio carries the residents along through their Akuko Siri programme.

It has given room for public reviews/evaluation and contributions to government affairs.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	265	70%
Agree	102	27%
Disagree	6	2%
Strongly disagree	3	1%
Total	376	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

Furthermore, 70% of respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri program has allowed for public reviews, evaluations, and contributions to government affairs. This, however, implies that the Oziza FM Akuko Siri programme has helped in making the masses part and parcel of government policies and implementations.

9.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of findings from table 1 revealed that 54% of respondents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM. Being moderately exposed could still lead to the formation of an opinion on certain issues of public discourse. The result of the finding is closely related to the findings of Bello and Wilkinson (2017), which revealed an association between participation in talk programmes and political efficacy. In line with the agenda-setting theory, as the respondents are exposed to Akuko Siri programmes, the possibility of influence on what to think about and then form an opinion will be likely.

Analysis of the data also indicated that 94% of respondents confirmed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM radio programme presented matters probing government policies and programmes for public debate. In addition, the study in table 3 shows that 56 percent of respondents believed that the Akuko Siri program on Oziza FM is an eye-opener for people in terms of government affairs. The insinuation of the above confirmation is that the Akuko Siri programme exposes topical issues related to government policies and programmes. Hence, it can be averred that the respondents have a wild knowledge of the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM. In line with Barry's findings, which showed that the media has a substantial impact on how people think about their political preferences and assessments by influencing what they think about. The agenda-setting theory, which describes the power of the mass media to enhance the importance of an event or problem in the public's perception through editorial emphasis and prolonged coverage of such an event, supports these findings. This means that when the media prioritizes a topic in their daily reporting, it elevates the subject to a degree of importance and draws continuing attention from the general public.

Findings also revealed that 61% of the respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM has helped in carrying the masses along by presenting issues of government for the public to discuss. Furthermore, 70% of respondents strongly agreed that the Akuko Siri programme enabled public reviews, evaluations, and contributions on government issues. By implication, the Oziza FM Akuko Siri programme has helped in making the masses part and parcel of government policies and implementations. This finding is consistent with the findings of Oriola and Ogbemi (2016) found that the mass media participates in the building and reconstruction of public opinion by setting and framing agendas. It proposes a model describing a cyclical process in which the media set the topic and define issues through discussions and analysis, thereby directing public opinion. Similarly, Khan, et al. (2017) found that community radio programs provide a way of expressing and sharing perspectives, thoughts, ideas, challenges, and possibilities in their research. In addition, community radio has been popular in recent years as the media of grassroots people in disadvantaged areas, providing a new venue for both policymakers and grassroots people to participate in their community's development process. The agenda-setting theory supports this conclusion theoretically. The agenda-setting theory establishes a debate agenda for the public, selects specific components of a topic, and emphasizes them in order to elicit specific interpretations and evaluations of the subject.

10.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is noteworthy that the strength of an opinion rests basically on the degree to which it is based on correct information. By implication, an opinion formed on wrong information may not stand the test of correct information if and when such is available. Informed opinions are

formed based on adequate, accurate, credible and authoritative information, while uninformed opinions derive from inadequate and inaccurate information, otherwise called As a result, radio continues to be the principal medium for reaching the vast majority of the general population and shaping public opinion. This fact underpins the power of the news media responsible for information dissemination, discussion and analysis to influence public opinion. In today's post-modern world, people rely heavily on the mass media for information about events from both their immediate environment and places beyond their personal contacts. Hence, radio remains the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public in moulding public opinion. Given the fact that Owerri residents are moderately exposed to the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM, the people are, however, encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunity of being highly exposed to the programme (Akuko Siri), as being moderately exposed is not enough. Since the respondents have proven to have a vast knowledge of the Akuko Siri programme on Oziza FM, more of such programmes should be created and space allocated with conducive time for airing. Considering the fact that the AkukoSiri programme helps in moulding public opinion by presenting matters probing government policies and programmes and giving room for reviews, evaluation, and suggestions from the masses, thereby making them part and parcel of government affairs, it is therefore recommended that other media organizations follow suit by creating equivalent programmes.

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