

Imo State Residents' Perception Of The Influence Of Orient Fm And Heartland Fm "Issues Of The Moment" And "Matters Arising" Radio Programmes On Government's Efforts To Manage Economic Recession In Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: The study was on Imo State residents' perception of the influence of Orient Fm and Heartland Fm "Issues of the Moment" and "Matters Arising" radio programmes on government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria. It was aimed to find out Imo State residents' level of awareness of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria through exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm "Issues of the Moment" and "Matters Arising" radio awareness programmes; ascertain the extent to which exposure to radio programmes broaden the knowledge of Imo residents on government's efforts to manage economic recession and determine whether exposure to radio programmes influence Imo State residents' attitude towards embracing government's efforts towards managing economic recession. The study was anchored on development media theory.

Method: Sequential explanatory mixed research design was used to generate quantitative and qualitative data. A sample size of 385 was determined from the population of 4,882,595 using Australian online calculator. Also, 18 persons were purposively selected for the interview. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted on the selection of Local government areas and communities used for the study. A questionnaire and interview guide were used for data collection.

Results: Findings revealed that Imo State residents' level of awareness of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria through exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm "Issues of the Moment" and "Matters Arising" radio awareness programmes is minimal at 51.2%. Also, it was found the extent to which exposure to radio programmes broaden the knowledge of Imo residents on government's efforts to managing economic recession is low at 49.1%. In essence, finding revealed that "Issues of the Moment" and "Matter Arising" radio awareness programmes do not influence Imo State residents' attitude towards embracing government's efforts towards managing economic recession at 44.7%.

Conclusion: It was therefore, concluded that radio has succeeded in creating awareness of government economic policies and activities but has failed to influence respondents' engagement to such programmes.

Keywords: Effort to manage, economic recession, government programmes, influence perception, and radio awareness

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, Nigeria economy is in limbo given the sharp fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) an indication that the country is in recession (Adebumiti, 2016). Economic recession is a downturn in the economy. It is often characterized by symptoms such as rising prices of goods and services, inability of government to meet its financial obligations, exchange rate fluctuations, and poor performance of other macroeconomic variables which defines the state of the economy per time. Economic recession is a current issue because of the cynical nature of the global economy. Little wonder countries, especially developing ones, often diversify the structure base of their economy to withstand any external shock (Farayibi, 2016). It could be recalled that the structure of the economy remains highly import dependent, consumption driven and undiversified and previous economic policies left the country ill-prepared for the recent collapse of crude oil prices and production (Ukwu, 2016). In order to stabilize and revamp the economy President Muhammadu Buhari led administration has initiated certain economic policies like the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), Treasury Single Account (TSA) and Social Investment Programmes(SIP). These programmes aimed to restore the nation economic status following the high rate of inflation and recession. The ERGP is basically a foundational plan by

the present administration to actualize at least 7 percent economic growth by the year 2020 with the intent of uplifting the country out of recession by changing the economic fortune to export dependent nation. The main objectives of the ERGP are to restore growth, invest in our people and build a globally competitive economy.

To achieve government's efforts in managing recession, there is need for effective communication to educate, inform, persuade and mobilize the Nigerian public on the need to be supportive of these policies and programmes geared towards managing recession. The Nigerian government often times comes up with developmental policies, programmes and projects from time to time, the success or otherwise of such efforts is largely determined by the ability of the government to mobilize the support of the masses for such programmes, policies or projects through effective communication. Orjiakor, Ani, Anyanwu & Nnabuike (2015) observe that the media provide vital information which enhance knowledge and generate awareness about matters, issues, events or the happenings as the requirement for organizing or restructuring public influences, minds and opinions for public interest. According to them, broadcast media have helped people discover their abilities, impact and improve their own lives. Asemah (2011) opines that the media cover information about people's alertness to health, agriculture, education, economy, politics among others. The media charge this dissemination via lectures, news, entertainment, drama, discussions etc, can be used. Radio stations in Nigeria often relay special programmes that promote rural development. More so, radio has the capacity to mobilize support for government programmes. Thus, the government at various levels- local, state and national utilise radio as a medium to galvanize support for their programmes.

It could not be out of place to use the medium to shape the desired attitude towards managing economic recession in Nigeria. To this end, this study focused on economic programmes aired on Orient FM and Heartland FM stations with “Issues of the Moment” and “Matter Arising” in focus that promote government policies and actions on economic recession in respect to the Economic Recovery Growth and Plan (ERGP), Treasury Single Account and Social Investment Programmes of the present administration, given the fact, that the duo are government owned radio stations and as such should be supportive of government programmes and policies.

Statement of the Problem

Do exposure to radio programmes influence Imo State residents' attitude towards government's efforts in managing economic recession in Nigeria? This study become necessary because radio's role in this direction is germane given that radio is an indispensable medium of communication in public information campaigns in every society (Nwodu & Ezeoke, 2013). Radio has the capacity to create awareness and knowledge about issues. The knowledge of this will help in attitudinal change of the audience. The dissemination of information is crucial after the provision of the necessary policies and programmes geared towards managing economic recession in the state. Thus, bringing the recession under control requires effective communication. However, it appears that most Imo residents lack basic knowledge about government policies and programmes geared towards managing economic recession in Nigeria so as to take reasoned decision on the issue. It is also not clear whether radio broaden their knowledge so as to influence their participation towards government efforts in managing economic recession in the country.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Find out Imo State residents' level of awareness of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria through exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes “Issues of the Moment” and “Matter Arising” radio programmes.
2. Ascertain the extent to which exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm “Issues of the Moment” and “Matter Arising” broadened Imo residents' knowledge of government's efforts to managing economic recession in Nigeria.
3. Determine whether exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm “Issues of the Moment and Matters Arising” radio awareness programmes influence Imo State residents' attitude towards embracing government's efforts towards managing economic recession.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Economic Recession: An Overview

Economic recession seems to be the general slowdown in economic activities for two consecutive time quarters. This period witness a decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, employment, investment spending, capacity utilization, household income, business income, and inflation, with the resultant high increase in unemployment (Ngene, Ugwu & Nwambam, 2018). A recession is when the economy declines significantly for at least six months. That means there's a drop in the following five economic indicators: real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), income, employment, manufacturing, and retail sales. It is when the GDP

growth rate is negative for two consecutive quarters or more. Nigeria's economic situation is in its worst possible time” (Finance Minister Kemi Adeosun cited in Osalor, 2016).

Noko (2017) outline the followings as causes of recession in Nigeria: poor economic planning and no concrete implementation of her economic planning is the major cause of Nigeria current recession occasioned by budget delay and exchange rate policy; government banning the importation of certain essential agricultural products like rice without considering gestation period is a policy done in error; it is only in Nigeria that government charge high tax rate during economic recession. Small businesses are slaughtered with high interest rate; the interest rate is between 26-77- 27% is extremely high thereby discouraging to investors; and the economic policies appear conflicting.

Government Efforts to Manage Economic Recession in Nigeria

To ensure the stability of Nigerian economy out of recession by President Muhammadu Buhari led administration has set up certain economic policies like the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) which are captured under the social investment programme. These programmes are intended to lift many Nigerians out of poverty and other forms of social problems. It is said that 110 million people are poor and with about 30 million living in extreme poverty situation. There is no doubt that the current economic situation in the country has left many Nigerian exposed to the vagaries of economic difficulties. It is therefore, thoughtful on the part of the Buhari led administration to initiate a programme to ameliorate hardship faced by the most vulnerable, poor and unemployed people (Blueprint, 2017).

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on media and publicity in the office of the Vice President, Mr. Laolu Akande said that the four aspect of social investment programme include: the N-power, initiated to cater for unemployed graduates, was allocated the sum of ₦26.41 while the Home grown school feeding (HGSFP), Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and Government Enterprises Entrepreneurship programme (GEEP) received ₦7.092bn, N800m and N7.301bn. Under the N-power job scheme, which is operational in 36 states and the FCT, 162, 024 unemployed graduates have been enrolled and they are receiving the N30,000 monthly stipends. This figure was cut short from the 200,000 originally engaged last year, the statement added.

Under the Conditioned Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme, 26, 942 beneficiaries are getting, monthly, N5,000 stipend in nine states namely: Borno, Cross River, Niger, Kwara, Ekiti, Kogi, Oyo, Osun Bauchi and 84 local government areas of Nigeria. Government Enterprise Empowerment Programme (GEEP) designed for the empowerment of market women, traders and artisans have also recorded progress with the disbursement of 57,234 of interest free loans. National Homegrown School Feeding Programme has recorded 1,051, 619 million meals served to primary school pupils across the seven states, namely: Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Ogun, Osun, Oyo and Zamfara. Not less than 11,847 cooks have also been employed.

Influence of Radio in Managing Economic Recession in Nigeria

Wilson (2003) as cited in Fab-Ukozor and Okalla (2017, p. 150), contends that “the Nigerian society is ready to be motivated and mobilized in order to participate in good cause, that the society is actually conscious of what it can do to strengthen the social, cultural, economic and political structures”. It is believed that the application or adoption of the right communication approaches will help increase people's participation in development oriented programmes. The mass media indeed are ever powerful and respected phenomenon that lubricates the engine of self-rule, human dignity, and egalitarian and emancipate polity. Its usefulness have become so recognized, established and institutionalized that no society either democratic or not, can attain actual progress without their indispensable potentials (Okoye, 2009).

Nnomeh (2010) cited in Obayi, Agbo, Nwosu and Nzekwe (2017, p. 156) observes that the mass media play a crucial role in social institutions when it comes to influencing the participants or the participants use the mass media in propagating or mobilizing docile and active audience into realizing their goals. He maintained that one of the institutions is the economic institution which deals with economy. However, it is believed that socio-economic transformation can be realized through change of information which the radio as a medium of mass communication is well suited for (Isika, 2015). Ojebode (2003) cited in Asemah, Anum and Edegoh(2013, p. 27) concurs when he says that with few years of its emergences, radio has metamorphosed from being an object of private concern, to a political and development instrument in the hands of governments and NGOs. The information dispersing and the enlightenment role of radio is the commonest of its functions.

A Brief History of Heartland FM “Issues of the Moment” and Orient FM “Matters Arising”

“Issues of the Moment” is one of the public affairs programmes on Heartland FM Owerri. Listeners are encouraged to call or send text messages in reaction to issues discussed. It is a public affairs programmes that features public officers, civil, society activities, society activists, experts, professionals, private and ordinary people to discuss issues especially current and burning issues that are of public or national interest. It could be

that “Issues of the Moment” has been used to promote the policies and programmes of the President Muhammadu Buhari’s led administration on Saturday at 10:30.

With the coming of democracy in 1999, Sister Eee conceptualized and introduced “To whom it may concern” a daily phone-in programme to spread ethical re-orientation policy and generally the Tripod vision of the then government of Governor Achike Udenwa. However, the programmes has metamorphosed into what is presently known as ‘Matters Arising’ an interactive programmes on radio on which government officials give account of their stewardship to the populace through this programme efforts are made to bridge the gap between the government and the governed. It allows for the discussion of issues public interest.

Empirical Review

Obayi, Agbo, Nwosu, and Nzekwe (2017), examined the influence of the mass media in diversifying Nigeria’s Oil based economy. The researchers found that most occupants in developing areas of Eastern region are aware of diversifying the economy of the country; the media have also exposed Nigerians on diversifying the economy of the nation and that the mass media have influenced the attitudes of Nigerians.

Omolade (2013) examined the influence of broadcast economic programmes on rural community development in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria. Findings revealed that a good number of the respondents were enlightened based on the information conveyed in the economic programmes broadcast through radio and television, thereby improving their standard of living, economically. The informative attributes of broadcast economic programmes improve respondents’ awareness in the following areas economic knowledge, training and management.

In the same vein, Familusi and Owoeye (2014) in a study on the “use of radio and other means of information dissemination among residents of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria” found that radio is the most essential medium in information dissemination because it has a wider reach irrespective of their location; it promotes the level of awareness of the people on socio-political and economic issues and as well enable people to be adequately informed about programmes and activities of the government.

Similarly, Ekwueme, (2017), assessed newspaper coverage of the economic recession under the Buhari administration: A study Guardian and Vanguard. The researcher found that low significance was given to the coverage of the economic recession as most of the stories by both newspapers appeared in the inside pages coupled with the fact that most of the stories were not illustrated. Also, the finding showed that most stories were not reported through the human interest angle.

In corroboration to this, Ajaero, Okoro, and Ajaero (2016) investigated the perception of and attitude the public toward mass media reportage of the 2012 flood in rural communities in Nigeria. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents at 75% received information about the flood from either radio or television, and there significant spatial variations in perceptions of flood reportage. Also, the finding indicated that generally, mass media reportage of the flood was not two effective in influencing people’s attitude..

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on development media theory. The development media theory was formulated by McQuail in 1987 .This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviours of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as developing countries. The theory owes its origin to the UNESCO's MacBride Commission set up in 1979. This theory is opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. Press freedom should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and the development needs of the society. In the interest of development ends, the state has the ultimate control (Ndolo, 2005).

The theory holds that the media have a role to play in facilitating the process of development in the developing countries. According to the development media theory, the media are to be used to serve the general good of the nation. The media are seen as agents of development and social change in any community thus, the theory says that the media should be used to complement government's efforts by carrying out programmes that will lead to positive behavioural change among the people (Asemah, Anum & Edegoh, 2013). The theory is relevant to the study because it lays emphasis on using the media to develop the society. This implies that the media have the capacity to positively affect the society. Thus, the media need to be employed to bring about social, political and economic development down to the rural areas.

Research Method

In this study, sequential explanatory mixed research approach was adopted because of its appropriateness. This method allowed to researchers to first collect quantitative data (through survey method) and then collect qualitative data (via in-depth interview) to explain or compliment the quantitative results. It offered the researchers opportunities to gather quantitative data through questionnaire and qualitative data through interview guide. From a projected population of Imo State at 4,882,595 using the UNDP's population

extrapolation index of 2.28% per annum, 385 became the sample size using Australian online calculator. In addition, 18 respondents who were opinion leaders in various communities were purposively selected for the interview section. A multi-stage sampling technique was used based on the Senatorial zones and 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State. Three LGAs were selected from each senatorial district and one autonomous community was chosen randomly from each LGA. Imo State was divided into 3 senatorial districts or clusters. The 3 zones or clusters were further divided into 27 Local Government Councils or clusters. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three Local Government Areas from each of the senatorial district. The researchers purposively selected one community from each of the selected local governments in each of the senatorial districts. The selected local governments and communities were as follows: Ihuoma- Orlu; Umunwaku- Ohaji/Egbema; Nnenassa-Isu/Njaba(Imo West), Orji-Owerri North; Nguru/Nweke- Aboh Mbaise; Ogbaku- Mbaitoli (Imo East); Ezianya- Isiala Mbano; Agbaja- Ehime Mbano; and Isinweke-Ihitte/Uboma (Imo North) LGAs, Imo State, Nigeria. A face validity test was done on the instrument and the outcome was good. Test-retest reliability indicated a coefficient correlation of 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha statistical formula.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 385 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in Imo state. Out of this, three hundred and sixty nine (369) were found usable, whereas the remaining nineteen (16) were not used.

Research Question One: What is Imo State residents' level of awareness of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria through exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes "Issues of the Moment and Matters Arising" radio programmes?

According to the table 1 below, that majority of the respondents at 75.1% agreed that they had radio set. This is because radio is popular and affordable medium of mass communication. The table 2 below shows that majority of the respondents' at 73.2% were ardent listeners of Orient Fm and Heartland Fm stations. The implication is that most of the respondent listened to government radio stations to keep abreast of happenings especially in the political, economic, educational sectors of the nation. The table 3 above implies that a good of the respondents at 69.4% were aware of Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes "Matters Arising and Issues of the Moment". This goes along way to show that these programmes are popular among radio listeners in Imo State. Table 4 indicates that majority or 51.2% of that respondents' level of awareness on government efforts to curb recession is minimal.

Table 1: Respondents view on whether they have radio set

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	277	75.1
No	92	24.9
Total	369	100.0

Table 2: Respondents view on whether they listen to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Agree	270	73.2
Disagree	99	26.8
Total	369	100.0

Table 3: Respondents view on whether they are aware of Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes "Matters Arising and Issues of the Moment"

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Aware	256	69.4
Not aware	95	25.7
Not sure	18	4.9
Total	369	100.0

Table 4: Respondents' view on their level of awareness on government efforts to curb economic recession based on their exposure to radio programmes

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	High	48	13.0
	Minimal	189	51.2
	Little	26	7.0
	Not at all	93	25.2
	can't say	13	3.5
	Total	369	100.0

Research Question Two: To what extent has exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm “Issues of the Moment” and “Matters Arising” broaden Imo residents' knowledge of government's efforts to managing economic recession in Nigeria?

Result from the table below indicates that majority of the respondents believed that the extent to which these programmes broadened their knowledge of government efforts to curb economic recession is moderately. The table 6 shows that majority of the respondents at 73.4% were able to mention some of the government economic policies like single treasure account, N-power, condition cash transfer, government enterprise empowerment programmes and national homegrown school feeding programmes.

Table 5: Respondents view the extent to which these programmes have broaden their knowledge of government efforts to curb economic recession

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Large extent	40	10.8
	Moderate extent	181	49.1
	Low extent	41	11.1
	Not at all	78	21.1
	Can't say	29	7.9
	Total	369	100.0

Table 6: Respondents view on whether they can mention any of the government programmes discuss in these programmes towards curbing economic recession

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single treasury account	51	13.8
	N-power	147	39.8
	Condition cash transfer	31	8.4
	Government enterprise empowerment programme	19	5.1
	National homegrown school feeding	23	6.2
	Others	98	26.6
	Total	369	100.0

Research Question Three: Do exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm “Issues of the Moment and Matters Arising” radio awareness programmes influence Imo State residents' attitude towards embracing government's efforts towards managing economic recession?

The result in the table below indicates that a god number of the respondents at 44.7% could not actually say whether “Matters Arising” and “Issues of the Moment” radio programmes influence their participation towards government efforts to curb economic recession.

Table 7: Shows respondents view on whether their exposure to “Matters Arising” and “Issues of the Moment” influence their engagement towards government efforts to manage economic recession

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	23	6.2
	Disagree	69	18.7

Not sure	165	44.7
Agree	85	23.0
Strongly agree	27	7.3
Total	369	100.0

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicated that majority of the respondents' level of awareness of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria through exposure to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes "Issues of the Moment and Matters Arising" radio programmes is minimal at 51.2%. This is because 75.1% had radio sets. Again, 73.2% are mostly listeners of Orient Fm and Heartland Fm and 69.4% were aware of "Matters Arising" and "Issues of the Moment" programme. It means that majority of the respondents that have radio sets use them to listen to Orient Fm and Heartland Fm programmes and as such are aware of these programmes. However, their awareness of these programmes does not translate into high level of awareness on government efforts to manage economic recession. Given the fact that people are not adequately aware of these economic policies and how it can be of benefits to the society. This was also confirmed, as majority or 12 persons interviewed agreed that they aware of most of the government economic policies set to cushion economic recession. According to them, "Matters Arising" and "Issues of the Moment" brought these economic programmes and policies to lime light. This finding is in accordance with the theoretical framework. According to this development media theory, the media should be used to propagate government programmes and policies. In relation to this, Isika (2015) in his own study revealed that majority of the people listened to government programmes through radio regularly. Also, Obayi, et al. (2017) in a study conclude that most occupants in developing areas of eastern region are aware of diversifying the economy of the country through exposure to the mass media. Similarly, Familusi and Owoeye (2014) concluded that radio is vital in the dissemination of information which had increased people's level of awareness of socio-political and economic issues and as well enable people to be adequately informed about programmes and activities of the government.

In answering this, tables 5 and 6 were used. The finding showed that majority of the respondents at 49.1% believed that the extent to which "Matters Arising" and "Issues of the Moment" broadened their knowledge of government efforts to manage economic recession is moderately. It was further justified as majority of the respondents or 73.4% were able to recall and remember some of the programmes under the economic policies like N-power, single treasure account, condition cash transfer, government enterprise empowerment programme and national homegrown school feeding. Among, N-power was the highest recalled programmes of the government policies to manage economic recession. Also, a good number of the interviewees at 10 persons believed that "Matters Arising and Issues of the Moment of discussed President Buhari's economic blue print to curb economic recession, like N-power, single treasure account, condition cash transfer, homegrown school feeding, among others. However, they agreed that they have a shallow knowledge of these economic policies. This finding is line with an earlier study conducted by Omolade (2013) which revealed that radio and television economic programmes improved residents' awareness in terms of economic knowledge, training and management.

The finding showed that majority of the respondents at 44.7% held no specific opinion on whether exposure to radio broadcast influence their engagement towards government efforts to managing economic recession. It means they are neither in support or against on whether these programmes influence their participation. This could be as a result of the inability of radio broadcast to stimulate change in attitude as demanded. Further analysis justified that majority or 14 persons or interviewees agreed exposure to "Matters Arising" and "Issues of the Moment" do not influence their attitude towards embracing government economic policies. The implication is that majority of the residents were indifference to government programmes and policies because of the perceived failure of the government to implement previous policies. In corroboration to this, Ajaero, et al. (2016) in a study indicated that generally, mass media reportage were not too effective in influencing people's attitude.

IV. CONCLUSION

Orient Fm and Heartland Fm "Issues of the Moment" and "Matters Arising" radio programmes level of awareness creation of government's efforts to manage economic recession in Nigeria is minimal and as such do not engender behaviour change, given the fact that most of the residents were not empowered with proper information as to take a robust decision. In this study, it is clear that mass media, especially, radio do not give the much needed coverage and attention to government economic programmes and policies geared towards stabilizing the Nigerian economy, which means, there is poor knowledge of government economic policies among citizens. Also, there is clear indication that even those who were exposed to these programmes were not

even influenced given that most of them have lost interest in government programmes and policies meant for their well being because of the perceived failure of the government to implement previous policies.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should persistently use radio to create awareness of its policies and activities meant for the economic development of the people by given proper attention to them.
2. There is need for the establishment of special radio stations and or programmes on government economic policies so as to provide the people with vital information on economy on daily basis, in order to broaden the knowledge of the citizens.
3. To influence people's attitudes positively towards government economic policies stakeholders in the economic sector, as a matter of necessity should incorporate the people in the ideation and execution of such programmes through audience participatory radio programmes.

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