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Community Radio, Women and Family Development Issues in South Africa: An Experiential Study

By Choja Oduaran¹ and Okorie Nelson²

Abstract

In South Africa, community radio outlets have adopted the use of indigenous languages to address local issues affecting women and family development. This study examined how community radio give attention to the perspectives of women on family development issues in South Africa. Furthermore, this study examined the types and direction of radio frames, in the area of indigenous language usage and community radio broadcasting. This study was anchored in framing theory to understand how community radio promotes women's rights and family development issues. The method adopted for this study was content analysis, which examined the manifest content of radio messages on family development-oriented issues. Also, three hypotheses were tested using Chi-square and Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis to determine the relationship that exists among variables. The findings of this study showed that that 50% of female listeners were optimistic about the solutions proffered on issues of family development. Also, almost 18% of female listeners were indifferent to solutions proffered on issues of family development. This study concluded that community radio plays an essential role in making large numbers of people aware of their basic rights and duties. Not only limited to solving problems which women face in their day-to-day lives, community radio provides women with a strong platform from which they can freely disseminate their ideas among community members in the best possible manner.

Keywords: community radio, family development, women, South Africa

Introduction

In the realm of Communication Studies, community radio is seen as an arm of radio broadcasting that is funded, managed and operated by the community. Aderinoye and Ojuade (2013, p.315) have reasoned that "community radio in its simplest definition may be seen as a radio by the people and radio for the people". It is this type of thinking that inspired Oduaran, Okorie and Setlalentoa (2017) to aver that "a community radio requires a community to establish and manage a radio station for the ultimate objective of meeting the communication needs of its

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members". Thus, the ownership and management of community radio is jointly coordinated by the community.

Across the globe, scholars have acknowledged the role of community radio in promoting civic engagement and community development (Okorie & Bwala, 2017; Okorie & Bigala, 2016). Alumuku (2006, p. 24) believes that community radio can be seen as, "the oil which helps the community development machine to keep running without breaking down. It provides new ideas and facilitates relationships and promotes collaborations which are necessary for the process of change and development". Also, Aderinoye and Ojuade (2013, p.316) reasoned that "community radio is designed to improve the social conditions and the quality of life" Thus, community radio serves as a nexus that promotes relationships, collaborations and development in any community.

Interestingly, a major uniqueness of community radio is the power of localism. Scholars such as Kur and Meliadu (2013, p.201) observed that "community radio utilizes appropriate indigenous materials and resources which are imperative in defining, creating and maintaining a group identity. In the same vein, Oyero, Joshua and Aduradola (2013, p.107) believed that "community radio engages in audience research in conjunction with other stakeholders to determine the issues of conflict and package programmes that will address these issues". These perspectives indicate that community radio promotes localism by addressing local issues with local solutions in any community.

In South Africa, community radio outlets have adopted the use of indigenous languages to address local issues affecting the community. Oduaran, Okorie and Setlalto (2017) observed that "South Africa has more than 200 community stations, broadcast in a number of languages with content as diverse as the country...the content of community radio programmes originates from the local community people; it is community specific and situation relevant" in essence, community radio programming in South Africa are produced in their indigenous languages to address the local issues that negatively affect the community. For example, Jozi FM and Star FM 102.9 Mhz. are community radio stations that use of Tswana and SeSotho languages to addresses local issues in the community.

Importantly, most of the community radio outlets focus on local issues that negatively affect women in South Africa. These local issues range from sexual violence, parenting, reproductive health issues, career coaching, etc. For example, Radio Takalani, which means "joy", broadcasts from Aliwal North, South Africa, targets women and young adults.

Against this background, this study examined how community radio give attention to the perspectives of women on family development issues in South Africa. Furthermore, this study examined the radio frames using Jozi FM and Star FM 102.9 Mhz as study examples.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess the the prominence of female listeners' responses on family development issues
2. Identify the direction of radio frames of female listeners' responses on family development issues
3. Determine the recurring sentiments of female listeners on family development issues

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- Hypothesis 1: There is a significant correlation between the prominence of female listeners' reactions and recurring sentiments on family development issues;
- Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the direction of radio frames and major areas of family development issues;
- Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between the prominence of female listeners' reactions and major areas of family development issues.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in framing theory to understand how community radio promotes women's rights and family development issues. Framing theory is an extension of the Agenda Setting theory. The thrust of framing theory stipulates that "the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning". In news media, frames serve as tools through which journalists recount a story in a limited amount of space and place an event within its broader context (Hallahan 1999:207). Framing is a means through which the media shapes perception of individuals about perennial issues in any modern society. Essentially, framing theory suggests, that how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Framing theory has been used to explain how the media creates and place emphasis on issues of national and global importance.

Scholars (Aalberg, Stromback, &Vreese 2011, Patricia &Ojomo 2015) have identified four directions of framing namely: (a) Distance framing: This direction of framing that create emotional distance between the audience and victims of a conflict; (b) Empathy framing: this frame creates emotional attachment between the audience and victims of a conflict; (c) Support framing: these frames emphasize the involvement of government, non-government agencies and groups to curb societal issues; (d) critical framing: reports on the inactions of the government as well as negative coverage of societal issues.

As it relates to this study, community radio outlets can frame issues that affect women and family development in South Africa. Furthermore, community radio outlets can create media messages that reflect current realities about family issues in South Africa and provide a platform for solution provisions for such issues.

Brief Review of Literature

Community radio as instruments of mass communication, are the avenues through which information is communicated to the general public at the same time (Okorie *et al.*, 2013; Oduaran & Okorie, 2018). Community radio messages influence the thought processes of the receivers in any local environment. Okorie (2011) believe that community radio journalists can be regarded as the 'watch-dogs' of any local community because they serve as a voice to the voiceless and defense for the weak. These journalists achieve this function by providing information on relevant local issues in the community.

In the realm of development communication, the goal of community radio is to foster community engagement and development. Scholars agree that community radio possess unique characteristics that foster community development. Asemah (2013) reasoned that some key

features of community radio are: (1) Audience as protagonist in community programming; due to the significant involvement of the audience in community programming, they become the actors in community development; (2) Special slant on news, entertainment and education; there is a unique emphasis on news reporting about local issues in the community. Also, the community radio outlets promote the activities and programmes of local entertainers in order to promote community empowerment; (3) public access and partnership- this refers to community residents are actively involved in the planning and management of community radio outlets.

Also, community residents have unhindered access to reliable information about their environment; (4) ownership- this means that community radio facilities are mostly owned by the community (5) editorial independence; this means that community radio outlets have editorial independence from local and regional governments. These radio outlets operate with no external influence and interference.

In South Africa, there are several community radio outlets that promote indigenous based programmes. Okorie and Bigala (2016) observed that “South Africa has more than 165 community stations, broadcast in a number of languages with content as diverse as the country itself. Community radio outlets serve as development enterprises for the promotion of social change in South Africa. Scholars agree that community radio serves as a vanguard for promoting racial tolerance, social change and community development. Okorie and Bigala (2016, p.) observed that “community radio programmes originate from the local community...it is community specific and situation relevant. For example, if a community identifies promiscuity as a major cause of HIV/AIDS, then the community should air safe sex programmes encouraging people to use condoms”. Thus, community radio can be regarded as a development communication channel for social change in South Africa.

Method

The method adopted for this study was content analysis to examine how female listeners use community radio for family development purposes. This method is essential to examine the manifest content radio messages and published materials. Also, this method can be used to explore the themes, images, frames and tones of radio listeners. In addition, the unit of analysis for this study includes commentaries, views, radio analysis, and radio programme types. These units of analysis were tested based on prominence, direction or tone of media frames, the depth of the coverage, the frequency of the coverage, as well as the quality of reportage.

For this quantitative study, the simple random sampling technique was utilized to select 96 editions from two radio stations in South Africa. This sampling technique was adopted because it allows every unit of the population an equal chance of being selected from the sample. For the purpose of emphasis, the researchers selected 3 editions per week and then multiplied by 4 weeks to arrive at 24 editions each month. Therefore, 24 editions in each month were now multiplied by the 4 calendar months of study to arrive at 96 editions for two radio outlets. The method/technique gives equal opportunity or chance to issues selected each day or date without any form of bias.

Importantly, this study focused its strength on the analysis of two community radio stations of South Africa. This study was restricted to Jozi FM and Star FM 102.9 Mhz. These stations were selected because of their wide coverage area, women-centered programmes and listenership figures. Therefore, the study put its searchlight on the family development issues aired with use of Tswana and SeSotho languages on these two radio stations. For example, Jozi

FM has a wide coverage area of Soweto, Klerksdorp, Kempton Park, and Merafong. Interestingly, it has a listenership base of 59,000 per week. Also, Star FM 102.9 Mhza wide coverage area of Potchefstroom,, Klerksdorp, Ventersdorp and Maquassi hills. Also, it has a listener base of 117,000 per week. Importantly, only the viewpoints of female listeners on community radio stations were analysed. The choice of female listeners was because (a) women form more than 50% of South African population (Stats SA, 2017) (b) Most community radio outlets are managed by women (c) most community radio programmes have specialized programs for women and family development.

This study was premised on a timeline between January 2017 and April 2017. Furthermore, this study adopted the use of cross-tabulation and simple percentages. Also, the three hypotheses were tested with Chi-Square and Spearman’s Rank Correlation analysis at 5% level of significance (i.e. alpha= 0.05). Chi-Square tests were to determine the association that exists between the variables. Furthermore, Spearman’s Rank Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the associations between the variables.

Results

For this study, the findings were centered on 96 radio edition items of Star FM and Jozi FM. These 96 radio edition items were content analyzed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Table 1: Frequency of Family Development Issues

Family Development Issues	
Response	Percentage
Parenting	23.7
Business empowerment	19.8
Health issues	15.5
Issues with spouse	41.0
Total	100
Prominence of Female Listeners’ Reactions	
Responses	Percentage
High Level Reaction	33.0
Low Medium Reaction	39.6
Low Level Reaction	27.5
Total	100

Table 1 shows that more than 32% of the female listeners had high level reactions towards family development-oriented issues on selected radio stations n South Africa. The table also shows that almost 40% of the female listeners had medium level reactions towards family development-oriented issues on selected radio stations n South Africa. Importantly, more than 40% of radio programmes focused on issues with spouse in South Africa, while 23.7% of the radio programmes focused on parenting issues in South Africa.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: here is a significant correlation between the prominence of listeners' reactions and recurring sentiments in family development issues.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test on Prominence of Listeners reaction and Recurring Sentiments of Listeners

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.316	8	0.316
Likelihood Ratio	11.733	8	0.164
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.942	1	0.163
N of Valid Cases	91		

The test of independence between prominence of listeners' reactions and recurring sentiments of listeners is shown on Table 2a. The result shows that there is no significant ($p = 0.316$) independence between prominence of listeners' reaction and recurring sentiments of listeners. This, on the other hand, means that the recurring sentiments of listeners are dependent on the prominence of their reactions.

Table 2b: Spearman's Rank Correlation on Prominence of Listeners reaction and Recurring Sentiments of Listeners

		Prominence of Listeners reaction	Recurring Sentiments of Listeners
Prominence of Listeners reaction	Correlation Coefficient	1	-0.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.455
	N	91	91
Recurring Sentiments of Listeners	Correlation Coefficient	-0.079	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.455	.
	N	91	91

On the other hand, in Table 2b, the test for significant correlation is shown. While there is no significant correlation ($p = 0.455$) between prominence of listeners' reactions and their recurring sentiments, the correlation coefficient (-0.079), however, shows a negative correlation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the direction of radio frames and major areas of family development issues.

Table 3a: Chi-Square Test on the Direction of Frames and Major areas of Development Issues

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	67.109	12	0
Likelihood Ratio	66.796	12	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.84	1	0
N of Valid Cases	91		

Table 3a is the test of independence between direction of frames and major areas of development issues. In this case, there is significant ($p = 0.000$) independence between direction of frames and major areas of development issues. This means that the direction of frames does not depend on major areas of development issues.

Table 3b: Spearman’s Rank Correlation on Direction of Frames and Major areas of Development Issues

		Direction of Frames	Major areas of Development Issues
Direction of Frames	Correlation Coefficient	1	.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0
	N	91	91
Major areas of Development Issues	Correlation Coefficient	.550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.
	N	91	91

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Table 3b, the test of correlation shows that at 1% level, there is significant ($p = 0.000$) correlation between direction of frames and major areas of development. The coefficient of correlation shows a positive correlation.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between the prominence of listeners' reactions and major areas of family development issues.

Table 4a: Chi-Square Test on Prominence of Listeners reaction and Major areas of Development Issues

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.030	8	0.002
Likelihood Ratio	33.093	8	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.502	1	0.002
N of Valid Cases	91		

The test of independence on Table 4a shows that, at 5% level, there is significant ($p = 0.002$) independence between prominence of listeners' reaction and major areas of development issues. This means that of listeners' reaction do not depend on prominence major areas of development issues.

Table 4b: Spearman's Rank Correlation on Prominence of Listeners reaction and Major areas of Development Issues

		Prominence of Listeners reaction	Major areas of Development Issues
Prominence of Listeners' reaction	Correlation Coefficient	1	.268*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.01
	N	91	91
Major areas of Development Issues	Correlation Coefficient	.268*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	.
	N	91	91

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In Table 4b, the test of correlation shows significant ($p = 0.01$) correlation between prominence of listeners' reaction and major areas of development issues. The correlation coefficient (0.268) shows a weak positive correlation.

Discussion

The provision of information and skills has gained popularity in the quest to empower communities with community radio as a unique and effective tool. Chapman *et al.*, (2003) reported that the growth of rural radio stations reflects both the improvements in information technologies and the shifting of a development paradigm towards a more participatory style of information and knowledge transfer. Kumar (2004) identified radio as an avenue for participatory communication and as a tool relevant in both economic and social development.

In this study, we have critically examined the exploratory data analysis and clean-up of the data. A cross tabulation, chi-square test and Spearman's Rank Correlation were used to analyze the data on the objectives. The summary of the findings indicated that 40% of female listeners focused on issues with their spouses they negatively affect family development. The results also indicated that more than 32% of female listeners had high level reactions towards family development-oriented issues on selected radio stations in South Africa.

The findings of this study in Hypothesis 1 confirmed that there is no association between prominence of listeners' reactions and recurring sentiments of listeners. Chi-square which is the test of independence, tested the prominence of listeners' reaction and recurring sentiments of listeners as shown on Table 2a, there is no significant ($p = 0.316$) independence between prominence of listeners' reaction and recurring sentiments of listeners. This, on the other hand, means that the recurring sentiments of listeners are independent from the prominence of their reactions.

Hypothesis 2 shows there is an association between the direction of radio frames and major areas of development issues. In this case, there is significant independence between the direction of frames and major areas of development issues. Also, the coefficient of correlation shows a positive correlation between direction of frames and major areas of development. The implication of this result denotes that radio frames define the narratives and interactions on family development issues. This result supports the tenets of the agenda setting and framing theories that stipulate that the media can predetermine the issues that are important by framing media reports from a specific perspective to stir public engagement. The implication of this result is that community media outlets can predetermine the issues that are important for women and family development. Furthermore, community radio outlets can redefine the perception of women development by projecting positive frames.

Hypothesis 3 shows there is an association between prominence of listeners' reaction and major areas of development issues. The chi-square for the test of independence as shown on Table 4a at 5% level of significant, there is significant independence between prominence of listeners' reaction and major areas of development issues. This means that of listeners' reaction do not depend on prominence major areas of development issues. And more so, the test of correlation shows significant correlation between prominence of listeners' reaction and major areas of development issues and the correlation coefficient is of a weak positive correlation. The implications of this result indicate that women can serve as vanguards for family development in any community. The viewpoints of women can shape the agenda on issues of family development in any modern society. It is this type of thinking that allowed Yalala (2015, p.245)

assert that “radio can change the lives of women, it gives them voice, it gives them courage to fight for their rights, it creates awareness about various issues from the beginning the rights of women, to health, maternity, violence, nutrition”. The implication of this result is that radio can positively influence family development issues affecting women such as marriage and parenting young people, which have been on the front burner in the media landscape. Some issues raised surrounding marriage included: (1) the significant rate of infertility among married couples in South Africa; (2) the increasing rate of co-habitation; (3) irresponsible attitude of married men; (4) external family member influence. Interestingly, the radio programmes invited psychologists and religious ministers to offer solutions on issues in marriage. Most of the radio programmes framed their messages to support tolerance in marriage in handling issues with husbands and extended family interferences.

Conclusion

Community radio performs a major role for creating awareness of basic rights and duties of women in most African societies. Not only limited to solving problems which women face in their day-to-day life, community radio provides women with a strong platform from which they can freely disseminate their ideas among community members in the best possible manner. Thus, community radio becomes one of the important instruments for strengthening their rights to freedom of speech and expression of women in many African countries.

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