

Full Length Research Paper

Nigerian urban women's use of information media: The challenges for women in leadership

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The study surveyed urban women's use of information media and drew attention to the implications for women in leadership positions and non-formal education. A questionnaire containing structured and unstructured items was administered to 300 women resident at Nsukka urban town Enugu State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty-five usable copies were used for the data analysis. The findings show that oral media are the most popular among women irrespective of level of education and type of occupation. The level of education influenced the use of radio and television. Popular radio and television programmes among women include newscasts, socio-cultural programmes, music and drama. Problems hindering women's use of radio and television include time constraint, poor reception, poor condition of available sets and lack of money for repairs among others. Based on these findings the implication for the achievement of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) objectives with reference to non-formal education was discussed. Also the challenge for women in leadership are highlighted which include that they should dismantle the obstacles in the women's use of information media in developing countries.

Key words: Information media, Programme of interest, Problems, Universal Basic Education, Challenge for women in leadership.

INTRODUCTION

During the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995, it was declared that:

Education is a Human Right and essential tool for achieving goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminating education benefits both boys and girls and thus contributes to more equal relationship between men and women... investing in formal and non-formal education and training... Has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth (UN-1995:46).

If education is a basic human right, then everybody must have access to it, the ratification of this international policy on education led to the introduction of Basic Education in Nigeria, which is "aimed at equipping every individual child; youth and adult with such knowledge and skills as will enable him/her to develop to his/her fullest capacity, derive maximum social, economic and cultural

benefits from his/her society and fulfill civic obligations (FME and YD 1993). One of the objectives of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria is to provide "out of school, non-formal programmes for up – dating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning" (Obanya 2000). Ukeje (2000) emphasized this objective of UBE in Nigeria when he stated that opening access to education for those who missed the opportunity at school age would be a major significance of the Basic Education Scheme. Okeke (1998) has indicated that access to education goes beyond the creation of opportunity to learn but includes creating the conditions that will enable the potential learner utilize the opportunity. Basic Education is expected not only to provide for non-formal education but also provide conducive environment to promote it.

Non-formal education is not new in the Nigerian Education System (FRN, 1981). Ivowi (1997) observed that a lot of non-formal education programmes are on at higher institutions, federal/state/community levels, adding that non-formal education is the alternative to formal education and how to make it more effective is the concern of every educationist.

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There can be no better way of enhancing the effectiveness of non-formal education if not by the use of the information or communication media in the programmes. They include the mass media (the means of sending same message to a large number of individuals from a single source), usually the radio, television and the printing press; the interpersonal media (where individuals select whom to communicate with) such as mails and telephone; the self-media (with which one communicates to oneself) such as audio cassettes and video-tapes and the oral media (which involve face-to-face oral communication with persons or groups).

Apart from the oral media, the rest are often referred to as modern communication technologies. Computer, Internet and CD-ROM are more sophisticated modern technologies for communication. Remarkable features of these modern technologies are their non-restriction in time and fantastic speed of mass production which meet the needs of the ever-ready market. They can be found in the offices, homes, farm lands cars, markets, forest and even remotest villages. They have also been found effective in non-formal education (Perraton 1981; Valerian, 1981). Most of them can be shared so those who do not personally own them benefit from them.

Women in Nigeria more than any other group need non-formal education through the information media because they constitute the majority of the illiterate. Due to responsibilities, time constraint and lack of financial resources, they may not go for organized formal education and will thereby depend on media and non-formal education. The overwhelming rate of information explosion is fast out-dating the training of those who obtained formal education. For women to benefit from UBE non-formal education programme, a lot depends on not only their access to media but on appropriate media habits. Women in leadership have some role to play with reference to women's access to information media.

Literature review

Gallagher (1981) in a review of media distribution reported that in Kenya, men more than twice the number of women are likely to watch television while 70% men and 60% women listen to the radio; in India 80% of rural women and 30% of urban women never listened to the radio. Contrary to this report, Hobson (1996) found that housewives in the United States of America consider radio and television important day-to-day experience. Perhaps, this difference led Gallagher to recommend the use of traditional communication media such as story telling, drama, puppet and lower modern technology of information for women in developing countries.

Media programmes of interest to the women may differ according to their location, level of education and occupation. Gallagher (1981) observed with respect to Africa that media articles centre on urban women on themes such as fashion, social events crime and news items

about prominent women. Occasionally there were articles on women, law and general socio-economic issues. How these trends of media contents affect women's interest in them is not indicated. However, on the part of developed countries, Hobson found that urban house-wives in USA listen to media music, popular drama, light entertainment but comedy programmes are rejected but can be accepted when presented in the context of comedy.

A wide range of factors influence women's use of media. Some of them include the lack of programmes of interest to women (and predominance of masculine programmes), overwhelming domestic chores (and consequent time constraint) and restricted movement in the evening (Gallagher, 1981).

Purpose of study

In the case of Nigeria, with reference to urban women, this study identified the information media often used by women (ii) their programmes of interest in the radio and television and (iii) the problems hindering the urban women's use of media. It is hoped that the findings will be useful to NGOs working on women education, the Universal Basic Education Programme, the Media stations and other government agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA). The result of the study is especially useful to have implications for women in leadership positions, in the sense that it will bring into lime light the problems such women are cut up with and they will be better disposed to find solution to their problems.

In the context of this paper, women in leadership refer to women who are well educated and have reached the apex of their different professions. Because of their academic achievement, they are highly placed in the society and they hold responsible posts both in government and private sectors of the economy. These categories of women are looked upon as those who should see to the possible solution to the problems of women in our society, especially women in developing countries.

METHODOLOGY

Area of study

The study was conducted at Nsukka urban. This is a semi-urban city in Enugu State South-Eastern Nigeria. The choice is based on the fact that the community is not as highly sophisticated as most developed urban cities in Nigeria, neither is it as low as some new state head-quarters. It is therefore considered an average of urbanized communities in Nigeria.

Population and sample

The population of study constitute of adult women who are residents of Nsukka urban town (irrespective of state of origin). The sample of 300 women was drawn using convenience sampling technique. Stratification according to occupation and level of education could not be done before data collection. The respondents were assigned to strata based on the information provided by them.

This explains why the strata are not equal in number. Usable copies of questionnaire were received from 125 women (42% of the original sample).

The post-interview involved six respondents selected to represent the four educational categories (tertiary, secondary, primary and non-literate) as follows: one office cleaner/messenger with first school leaving certificate (FSLC) one non-literate hawkers, two hawkers with FLSC, library attendant with secondary education and one librarian with tertiary education.

Instrument and variables

An interpretative questionnaire was used for data collection. The post-study interview with selected representatives was aimed at verifying the findings of the research. The discussions with the respondents were guided by the findings. The major dependent variables studied are the media in use, the radio/television programmes of interest and the problems hindering the use of radio and television. The independent variables are the respondents type of occupation (formal or paid employment, informal or self-employment and unemployed, including full-time housewives), and their highest level of education (tertiary, secondary, primary and non-literate).

Data collection technique

The questionnaire was distributed by hand. For the non-literate, the researchers interpreted the questionnaire for them. The post-study interview was conducted by the researchers in work-locations of the respondents.

Data analysis

The items in the questionnaire have structured response format which the respondents responded to by rating. Others are open-ended items and check-lists. Statistical analysis involves coding, percentages, mean score and ranks. The interview provided qualitative information from which typical statement were lifted. The mean scores for each item and group are calculated and presented in tables. Hypothetical mean score of 2.55 is used in identifying the media often used by women.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

How often do you use the following media?

The data in Table 1 show how often the respondents use the media listed. Oral media as shown (or person to person or to group) is the most popular source of information among women irrespective of level of education and type of occupation. Women with secondary education and on paid or informal employment also use the radio. But of those with secondary and primary education who are on informal employment and the unemployed do not often use the radio. Those with tertiary education, especially, the unemployed use more media than others.

Further question on sources of oral media shows that they are diverse but the organized specialized sources are very few. The sources mentioned include friends, neighbours, husbands, children, professional colleagues,

church, elders, social groups and relations. None mentioned organized specialized sources in the responses to the questionnaire.

Information obtained from oral media is also diverse. They include health, politics, religion, education, fashion and beauty tips, music and business.

The interview confirms this finding.

Cecilia said: We don't have radio. The family doesn't have any. I don't have a radio, how much more of TV. I can't read the papers. I never went to school because I lost my parents early. I hear about what is happening from those that have radio, my children when they go out or neighbours.

Gloria said: We have radio. No, we don't have TV. Even my neighbours don't have. Yes I do get information from people but not from my husband. What I discuss with him is how to feed the children. People don't have time... unless during social gatherings. My children are too small to give such information to me. They are still in the nursery. I have primary education.

Mrs Okeke said: I have radio but I don't listen to it regularly. Sometimes... one week might pass before I listen again. I don't read the newspapers, it is costly, ₦100. But when my office colleagues come with newspapers, I read. I have TV and I seldom watch it.

Grace said: From my office colleagues. My husband is not with me. My neighbours are in business and don't have time, unless a visitor comes. Also from meetings like women August meeting, we discuss issues such as politics and health. Professionals such as nurses speak to us about health and cleanliness during meetings. Also through the church, somebody taught us how to manage small business and how to raise capital for small business.

Mercy said: I am very poor at listening to media, especially radio... I enjoyed watching television... In my place of work I read all the newspapers because of job demand. But for my kind of job I will not read newspapers. I read magazines if there is any sensational news, I buy such magazines to read. I watch video films.... My sources of information are church gathering, children and husband. I don't go to neighbours. The kinds of information I get are things happening in our environment, politics, religion and crisis in education.

How often is the radio or television switched on in the house?

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the radio is always playing in the houses of women with tertiary, secondary and primary levels of education irrespective of type of occupation.

In the case of television, it is usually switched on only in the houses of women with tertiary education irrespective

of occupation. Which means that for those who have radio and television, they can be tuned on but the women do not listen to them most of the time. It shows that listening to the radio/television is different from having them on.

Which radio/television programmes are of interest to women?

In the questionnaire there is provision for the respondents, to list the media programmes of interest to them. Programmes enumerated are categorized into sections. The number of respondents indicating each programme is coded and organized according to the sub-headings. This is shown in Table 3.

The four most popular types of programme among women are news, socio-cultural, music and music requests and religious programmes. The number of respondents for each programme is coded and the results shown according to the block-headings in Table 4.

The three most interesting programmes to women are news, films, drama and cartoons and socio-cultural programmes. During our interview, with respect to the reference to radio and television programmes of interest,

Gloria said: I like listening to preaching and gospel songs. I also like news if it is in Igbo that is at 9 am. (Igbo is the native language)

Mercy said: Occasionally I listen to gospel music (for radio)... I listen to (television) news regularly, watch films, drama and music. I watch video films.

What problems hinder women's use of Radio and Television?

The problems ticked are coded. The frequencies and percentages of respondents ticking each problem are calculated and shown in Table 5 for both radio and television. Other problems not listed in the questionnaire but indicated by the respondents are also shown.

The first three problems, according to ranks, are poor audio/visual quality, lack of time and unsuitable timing of the programme. Our interview emphasized lack of time more than other factors.

Summary

Oral media (inter-personal or inter-group) are the most popular source of information for women irrespective of education level and occupation. Level of education is a factor in women's use of radio. Those with higher level of education use radio irrespective of type of employment. Women in paid employment (with up to secondary education) and the unemployed including the full time housewives with up to tertiary education use variety of information media more than any other group. Women use

more of informal oral media (such as friends, neighbours (such as extension workers). The three most popular type of radio programmes for women are, in order of rank, newscasts, socio-cultural programmes and music. This is particularly for women with tertiary and secondary education, who are in formal employment and the unemployed. The three most popular television programmes for women are, in order of rank, news, films/drama/cartoons and socio-cultural programmes eg. "Nnoko Ndi Igbo." Radio is on in most homes of women with tertiary, secondary and primary education though, those with lower levels of education do not listen to the programmes. Television is usually on in the homes of women and social gathering) than formal organized sources with tertiary education no matter the type of occupation. They also view the programmes. The three most common hindering factors to women use of radio and television are poor audio/visual quality of the media, lack of time, and unsuitability of the programme timing.

DISCUSSION

The study has shown that oral media that is, informal face-to-face contacts are the most popular sources of information for women. Their level of education and type of occupation do not have any influence on their use of oral media. This finding is consistent with the reports of Patel (1974) which showed that the communication process in African societies is a complex system. This system conforms in varying degrees to traditional system in that it depends upon face-to-face relations and tends to follow the pattern of social and communal life. Another important issue revealed that level of education is a factor in women's use of radio: Those with higher level of education (tertiary) listen to radio programmes irrespective of type of employment. Most of the other respondents that are the semi-literate and the non-literate seldom listen to the radio. In the first place majority of this group do not have radio set. Those who have, pointed out that they do not have time to listen to the radio but sometimes they listen to it in the morning hours before they go about their business. When they return home in the evening they have to prepare food for the family and also are too tired to listen to the radio after the day's hassle.

The findings agree with Gallagher (1981) who pointed out that in India 80% of rural women and 30% of urban women never listen to the radio. Women in paid employment who have tertiary education and those who have secondary education including full-time housewives use variety of information media such as, oral (face-to-face), radio, television and newspapers more than any other group. This finding has implication for Universal Basic Education (UBE) objectives which aims at providing out of school non-formal programmes for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school early before acquiring the basics needed for life long learning (Obanya, 2000). It also has implication for sustainable development. Mass media play an important part in

Table 1. Mean scores responses of women on the information media they use often

Media	Formal employment				Informal employment				Unemployed			
	T*	P	S	N	T	S	P	N	T	S	P	N
Oral	*4.4	*3.3	*3.3	*4	*3.9	*3.3	*3.1	*3.8	*3.3	*3.3	*3.0	-
Radio	*31	1.67	*3.0	1.9	*3.4	2.3	2.06	2.18	*3.12	2.00	2.00	-
Television	*2.7	1.33	*3.0	1.3	2.38	2.43	1.75	1.45	*2.82	2.25	2.00	-
Magazines	2.30	1.00	*3.3	1.0	2.00	1.71	1.08	1.00	*2.5	1.33	1.25	-
Newspaper	2.33	1.00	2.25	1.0	2.00	1.86	1.00	1.00	*2.53	1.33	1.25	-
Video	*2.6	1.00	*2.8	1.0	2.25	*3.0	1.67	1.18	*3.12	1.67	1.25	-
Audio Cassette	2.43	1.00	2.50	1.0	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.18	2.06	1.06	2.00	-
Journal	2.06	1.00	1.25	1.0	1.75	1.43	.00	1.00	1.78	1.06	1.00	-
Novels	2.45	1.00	1.30	1.0	1.38	1.43	1.00	1.00	*2.53	2.00	1.25	-
Text Books	*2.82	1.00	1.75	1.0	1.63	1.29	1.25	1.00	2.35	1.67	1.50	-

KEY: T – Tertiary, S – Secondary, P – Primary, N – Non-literate, *Often used media.

Table 2. The mean rating of the frequency at which the Radio and Television is switched on in the house.

	Occupation	Level of Education			
		Tertiary	Secondary	Primary	Non-literate
RADIO	Formal	2.46	2.00	2.00	1.89
	Informal	3.00	2.14	2.00	1.85
	Unemployed	2.42	2.07	2.00	0
TELEVISION	Formal	2.27	1.67	1.20	1.30
	Informal	2.18	1.67	1.20	1.30
	Unemployed	2.16	1.33	1.40	0

Table 3. Radio programmes of interest to women.

	Formal Employment				Informal Employment				Unemployed				Grand Total
	T	S	P	N	T	S	P	N	T	S	P	N	
Music & music request	20	25	0	0	25	14.3	11.8	9.1	25	66.7	0	0	16.8
Drama	7.5	0	0	0	25	0	5.9	0	0	0	33.3	0	5.6
Socio-Cultural	32.5	0	16.7	0	25	14.3	0	0	43.8	66.6	33.3	0	21.6
Health Specifies	7.5	25	0	0	12.5	0	0	18.2	0	0	33.3	0	6.4
News Casts	32.5	25	16.7	40	12.5	71.4	0	27.3	50	0	0	0	28.8
Religious	22.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.25	0	0	0	16
Schools Broadcast	2.5	25	0	0	0	14.3	5.9	0	0	0	0	0	3.2
Sports	5	0	0	0	12.5	14.3	0	0	6.3	0	0	0	4
Business	2.5	25	0	0	0	14.3	5.9	0	0	0	0	0	3.2

Key: T-Tertiary, S- Secondary, P- Primary, N – Non-literate.

changing peoples values or belief systems and behaviour patterns; and people can easily be taught to use better farming methods seed varieties in order to promote economic development, by persuading them to listen to agricultural lessons over the radio (Patel 1974).

A few women in the sample do not have radio and television due to financial problems and so cannot afford a radio or T.V set. Most of them are the semi-literate and

then on-literate, who also belong to the low income or non-income groups. The implication is that media potential such as mass socializers, educators and persuaders may not be realized because the messages they are transmitting will not reach the intended population. There is a popular saying that information is power, how can women be empowered when they do not have the information. It is also said that educating a woman is educa-

Table 4. Television programs of interest to women

	FORMAL EMPLOYMENT				INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT				UNEMPLOYED				Grand Total
	T	S	P	N	T	S	P	N	T	S	P	N	
Music & music request	2.5	25	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	25	0	0	0	5.6
Drama	27.5	100	16.7	30	50	28.6	29.4	0	43.7	0	0	0	29.6
Socio-Cultural	35	0	0	0	0	28.6	5.9	9.1	50	0	0	0	20.8
Health Specifics	10	0	0	00	0	14.3	0	0	6.3	0	0	0	4.8
News Casts	62.5	25	0	0	50	42.8	5.9	36.3	31.3	0	0	0	34.4
Religious	17.5	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	8.8
Schools Broadcast	12.5	0	0	0	12.5	14.3	0	0	6.3	0	0	0	6.4
Sports	22.5	0	0	0	0	28.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.8
Business	0	0	00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5. Problems hindering women's interest in radio and television.

Problems Listed	Radio					Television				
	T	S	P	N	TOTAL	T	S	P	N	TOTAL
Poor audio quality	57.8	21	42.3	42.9	48	72	28.6	15.4	33.3	48.8
Unsuitable Timing	48.4	21	7.7	0	28.8	38	35.7	15.4	4.8	27.2
Inability to operate	3.13	14	11.5	28.6	10.4	9.4	7.14	7.7	33.3	12.8
Too busy to listen or view	42.2	50	11.5	28.6	34.4	31	50	15.3	19	28

Key: T – Tertiary, S – Secondary, P – Primary, N – Non-literate

ting a nation. Unfortunately the aim of non-formal education may not be achieved, unless the means of disseminating information to this group of people is facilitated.

The challenges of women in leadership

Women in leadership represent the elites in the hierarchy of educated women no matter the set back they may be facing. They are really the voice of the less privileged women in the society. Those at the lower cadre look up to them for help in their employment. If they decide to ignore their expectations, women shall remain the minority in the crowd, where they are the majority. Information and education are empowering means and the strength of women is in their collective sisterhood, no matter the difference in tongue or culture. It is therefore a challenge to women in leadership, not only to enhance their own non-formal education but that of their numerous sisters who are wallowing in ignorance and poverty.

One way of facing these challenges is to constitute media education campaign groups in our localities. The groups will carry aggressive campaigns to encourage women of all ranks and files to use media, informing them of the consequences and merits to listening to radio and viewing the television programmes. They can also liaise with public radio and television stations in our localities to ensure that programmes of women's interest are represented at the right time and language. They should not

hesitate to serve as volunteers in media stations in our localities. By so doing, they will be able not only to represent women's interest in programmes but also bring in women, to speak of issues that are of interest to them. One aspect of our findings here is that women do not have time, but it is also true that women can find time for radio and television if the programmes are of interest to them.

The available radio and television sets in Nigerian market are neither cheap nor easy to maintain. Who should take the responsibility of convincing the Government that UBE non-formal education will be ineffective without the importation of cheap-easy-to-maintain radio and television set? It is the women in leadership who know the problems and not the men who can afford to buy whatever is available. They must convince the government to allow for the importation of radio that can use winners and solar cells. However, it is also a challenge to women in science (physics) to find ways of enabling women use the abundant solar energy, since they spend 60% of the day time under the sun.

Women in leadership can also embark on the establishment of local urban community media for communities in and around their working places. Such community media are usually operated by the community residents, presenting programmes that address local problems. Such community media are not new in the western countries (UNESCO, 1977). They range from local radio, video groups, cable television, and resource centres to

localized national and international broadcasting. Women in leadership in their local chapters, can raise fund, select equipment, apply for license and operate the station. It is also a challenge for women leaders to reach other women in the social and economics groups for organized talks. You will agree with us that almost all professionals are represented among women leaders. Since oral media is the most common channel among women, news can reach them in their social groups to teach them what we profess, health literacy, environmental management, to mention a few.

Information, education and communication are empowering tools and it is the challenge of women in leadership to dismantle the obstacles in the women's use of information media. No form of women empowerment will succeed until these challenges are met. They must get involved for the sake of down-trodden sisters. It is a challenge.

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