



ANALYZING THE ROLE OF MEDIA, ICTS, AND COMMUNICATION NETWORKS IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT GOALS, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the transformative impact of media, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and communication networks in influencing development outcomes, driving social change, and promoting political participation, with a particular focus on Nigeria. This study explores how these tools have become crucial for reaching sustainable development goals at a time when technological breakthroughs define society's progress more and more. Combining theoretical models with thorough case studies and empirical analysis helps the article expose the several ways in which media platforms and ICTs empower communities, increase civic participation, and advance openness in government.*

The study not only points up important issues including digital divisions and unequal access but also reveals the great chances to use technologies to overcome social disparities. In a society where the need for constant improvement in social, political, and economic institutions is ever-present, the results provide practical advice for development practitioners, legislators, and interested parties on how to use the whole potential of these discoveries. The report ends with strategic recommendations to maximize the use of ICTs for development, therefore addressing study constraints and suggesting paths for future research.

KEYWORDS: Mass media; ICTs; Communication networks; Political participation and Transformation.



INTRODUCTION

Advancing development goals, enabling social transformation, and improving political involvement depend on the junction of media, knowledge, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and communication networks. Drawing on pertinent theories, case studies, and empirical research, this paper investigates the functions these components perform in modern society.

Good communication networks help promote cooperation on development initiatives so stakeholders may effectively pursue shared objectives. Strong communication networks help social movements push for significant change inside and outside communities and increase their influence. Media, ICTs, and communication networks working together can produce all-encompassing plans that propel good social benefits via projects for sustainable development.

Greater awareness has been achieved via the media, ICTs, and multiple communication networks regarding development issues and the need to change with the changing times in various aspects of society. Currently in Nigeria, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become very visible in their roles in driving social, political, and policy changes. Also sensitizing the populace on issues of concern and galvanizing them into action, the media and communication networks have been at the core

Many case studies show that effective integration of these components promotes social transformation and increases political engagement, therefore proving their value. Policy suggestions meant to maximize the possibilities of media, ICTs, and communication networks can help to achieve development goals, promote social transformation, and inspire active civic participation within societies all around.

Effective communication networks help stakeholders coordinate their activities and so enable them to effectively pursue common development goals. Strong communication networks enable social movements to increase their impact and promote radical change on a more general worldwide level as well as locally.

Combining media, ICTs, and communication networks provides a complete strategy to create thorough plans that, via sustainable development projects, propel favourable effects on society. Using their combined abilities fosters broad political involvement and helps to bring about long-lasting social change. Effective case studies show how well these components combine to highlight the need for policy suggestions in releasing the full potential of media, ICTs, and communication networks in supporting active civic engagement worldwide and thus promoting development goals.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Media and Development Goals

Promoting development goals, changing public opinion, and increasing awareness all depend on media in some capacity. Especially to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations stresses the need for media to promote development (United Nations, 2015). Health problems like the worldwide reaction to the HIV/AIDS epidemic have been greatly addressed via media initiatives (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). Even the not-too-experienced COVID-19 pandemic is another striking evidence to show how the media and various communication networks proved effective in curtailing its further spread and consequent casualties. By stressing topics like gender-based violence and women's rights, media campaigning has also pushed gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

According to Okoro (2018), development communication in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria, has changed dramatically, emphasising the interdependence between media and politics, new media and the spread of innovation, and the sustainability of political development. Academics, professionals, and independent consultants are drawn to this reconceptualization more and more, which forces a re-evaluation of present media viewpoints and theoretical frameworks directing discussions on development communication.

Deane (2007) examined two topics that defined the media's involvement in facilitating the accomplishment of the MDGs. The themes encompass the following:

- The media's function in promoting and actively striving for the accomplishment of the MDGs.
- The media's role in providing information to people most affected by issues connected to development and giving them platforms for public expression of their opinions.

Deane noted that the media are also expected to provide a forum for the expression of several contradicting points of view, therefore impacting and improving public policy. As such, he supported more all-encompassing media strategies that would enhance news coverage and present a more objective perspective on the problems.

Many studies have looked at how mass media might affect Nigeria's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) attainment. Examining the effect of the Nigerian press on the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), a reform project aiming at reviving the nation's economy, Oyero and Areoye (2008) found. According to their studies, the Nigerian press did not cover the topic of economic reforms enough. They urged the press to perform its responsibility. Emphasized was the need to establish a favourable environment that supports media involvement in economic development and good performance. This is necessary to go from a condition of conflict to one of coordination. They also backed the concept of quality media ensuring efficient media management.

Olatunji (2008) studied how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Nigeria might help to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He examined closely the corporate social responsibility projects carried out by several manufacturing companies in two southern states of the nation. According to his findings, more corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects in the manufacturing sector are needed to help achieve the goals of universal primary education,



poverty eradication, improvement of mother and child health, including reduction of HIV/AIDS, and encouragement of sustainable environmental practices. Furthermore, he supported more community involvement and participation in developmental projects as opposed to the present approach that emphasizes financial donations and the unorganized application of corporate social responsibility projects.

With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as their case study, Kayode and Adeniran (2012) looked at media coverage of Nigerian development concerns. Their research anchored itself on ideas of agenda-setting and development media. The study concentrated on two well-known Nigerian national newspapers, The PUNCH and The Guardian, examining all 182 editions of each daily published between January 1, 2008, and June 30, 2008, so producing a total of 364 editions being content examined.

This study revealed that Nigerian media coverage of development concerns varied. Particularly, some problems got regular attention while other equally important developmental concerns were mostly ignored. This selective reporting revealed an unequal media coverage of several development issues.

Moreover, the study showed that the Nigerian media did not significantly inform, enlighten, or inspire the people about the need to reach the stated developmental goals. This lack of proactive participation points to a lost chance for the media to be more powerful in raising public knowledge of and action toward development goals.

The study emphasised the important part media plays in influencing public opinion on development concerns and the need for more fair and strong media coverage to assist national development objectives.

ICTs and Social Change

ICTs have changed the dynamics of social movement and campaigning. Social media, mobile technologies, and the internet help to rapidly spread knowledge and enable group action. For example, the Arab Spring showed how information-sharing and protest organizations using ICTs may inspire social change (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Moreover, ICTs enable underprivileged groups by giving them venues for their opinions, therefore fostering variety and inclusiveness (Castells, 2012). In Nigeria, the card reader technology was introduced to reduce anomalies associated with elections earlier conducted and improve the credibility and transparency of elections. Although it was adjudged not to have been successfully used, its potential to reduce some fraudulent practices cannot be doubted.

ICTs have been especially important in Nigeria in improving educational results and closing the digital divide. Through high-speed internet access to educational institutions, the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) seeks to promote inclusive development (Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, 2020). Still, issues including poor infrastructure and digital literacy continue to limit ICTs' ability to fully propel societal transformation.

Communication Networks and Political Participation

Improving political involvement depends on communication networks since they allow public debate, promote openness, and let citizens participate. Habermas (1989) emphasises the value of the public sphere in democratic countries where networks of communication encourage



public participation and public conversation. The public sphere has been enlarged by digital communication networks like social media, blogs, and online forums, therefore enabling more citizen involvement in political processes (Kreiss, 2012). Also in Nigeria, we have several political forums via the media where political discourses are held which not only broaden political knowledge for the public but help bring to the fore areas that require urgent attention to right the wrongs and bring change in the political domain.

One prominent instance of how social media could increase political involvement is the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria. This campaign shared information, and coordinated demonstrations against police violence using Twitter and Facebook to draw global attention (Olonisakin, 2020). The movement emphasizes how capable digital communication networks are, to inspire people and affect political results.

In recent years, the study of political participation has significantly advanced through increased attention to the role of social networks. Historically, theories of political engagement have mostly emphasized personal traits. Although these personal-level correlates—such as education, religious attendance, political knowledge, political conviction, and civic responsibility—have been successful predictors of participation, including social networks offers a more complete picture of the elements influencing democratic involvement.

Campbell (2013) notes that the contrast in participation research—between academics who stress social networks and those who give individual considerations top priority—is not inevitably contradictory. Rather, these strategies are complementary. The individualistic elements connected with political engagement have a social component by nature, implying that social networks and personal traits interact to shape political activity.

By including social networks in the analysis of political involvement, one can investigate more closely how social settings and personal relationships affect people's choices to participate in the democratic process. This all-encompassing viewpoint enhances the body of current research by stressing how closely social settings and personal characteristics interact to encourage political participation.

Work by Campbell (2013) emphasizes the need to combine social networks and individual-level strategies to create a more complex knowledge of political involvement. Understanding the social aspects of usually individualistic elements helps researchers to clarify the complicated dynamics motivating people to engage in democratic activities.

Emphasizing the participatory effects of human capital and organizational participation, La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) examined the creation of social capital within a population using interdependence and social interaction patterns. Using social network and participation data from the 1992 American Cross-National Election Project, their study looked at how social capital in personal networks influences political involvement.

The results suggest that personal networks offer politically relevant social capital, which motivates political involvement. Social interactions among the discussants of people generate this form of social capital as a side effect. Higher degrees of politically relevant social capital, the study found, raise people's political participation prospects.

Many aspects inside an individual's network influence the creation of politically relevant social capital, according to further studies: the political experience of network members, the



frequency of political contacts, and the size or extensiveness of the network. These results remained robust even after accounting for personal characteristics and organizational participation, therefore underlining the notion that social linkages inside networks cannot be easily justified by human capital or organizational involvement by itself.

The research of La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) underlines the main importance social networks have in generating social capital that promotes political participation. Beyond the impact of personal characteristics and organizational environments, it reveals that understanding the dynamics of social interactions inside personal networks is necessary for appreciating the processes inspiring political involvement.

The expansion and creativity of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have attracted intense interest in both theoretical and pragmatic debates on the purpose of digital media in political involvement. Individuals in emerging democracies, like Nigeria, have increasingly exploited their online presence to participate in political debates as digital media have emerged, therefore fueling political demonstrations in undemocratic and developing democracies.

Although earlier studies on digital activism and political communication have mostly indicated favourable links between digital media diffusion and socio-political demonstrations, there is a dearth of research looking at the long-term effects of social media use in digitally coordinated protests on political participation and efficacy development, especially in young democracies like Nigeria. Uwalaka (2021) fills up this void in the research.

Examining the effects of social media use and protest experience on political engagement and efficacy development among Nigerian students was the goal of Uwalaka's (2021) study. Comprising 680 face-to-face paper survey responses and 34 semi-structured qualitative interviews with Nigerian university students, the study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach.

The results showed that students' inclination to participate in politics more than on social media was much raised by protest experience and political efficacy. Political efficacy turned out to be the best predictor of the intention to engage in politics among the factors under research. Furthermore, the study showed that experiences of group and connective activities increased the probability of more political involvement among Nigerian students.

Uwalaka (2021) ends with a suggested flowchart showing how political efficacy among Nigerian students is created. Emphasizing the need for more research on the long-term effects of digital media on political involvement. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the significant role of protest experiences and political efficacy in fostering political engagement in young democracies, emphasizing the need for further research on the long-term impacts of digital media on political participation.



Theoretical Frameworks

Development Communication Theory

The theory of development communication stresses the part that communication plays in social and economic growth. It supports the calculated use of media and communication instruments to advance constructive social change. Development communication, according to Rogers (1976), is the sharing of knowledge meant to inspire changes in behaviour and promote projects for development. This theory supports the part media plays in increasing public knowledge of and influencing development concerns.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Proposed by Everett Rogers, the diffusion of innovations hypothesis clarifies the way fresh ideas and technologies proliferate inside a society. This theory holds that acceptance of innovations follows a predictable pattern driven by elements like perceived benefits, match with current values, and the existence of opinion leaders (Rogers, 2003). This theory emphasizes in the framework of ICTs and social change how fast information can be shared and how digital technology can inspire group action.

Public Sphere Theory

Public sphere theory developed by Jürgen Habermas stresses in democratic countries the need for honest, inclusive, and logical public debate. The public sphere is one in which people might participate in debates, exchange ideas, and affect political decisions (Habermas, 1989). This idea emphasizes how democratic government and political involvement might be improved via communication networks.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the agenda-setting hypothesis holds that by stressing particular problems and framing them in particular ways, media sources can help to create public agendas. This idea clarifies how public opinion can be changed by media and how development goals, social issues, and political subjects might be given priority. Media coverage of problems including gender equality, health, and governance has been very important in Nigeria in determining public opinion and governmental priorities.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies and secondary data analysis to explore the role of media, ICTs, and communication networks in Nigeria. The case studies focus on specific instances where these elements have significantly impacted development, social change, and political participation in the country.

Case Studies in Nigeria

1. Community Radio in Rural Nigeria

Rural Nigerian community radio stations have been especially important in advancing local culture, health consciousness, community development, and education. Especially in places



with limited access to mainstream media, these radio stations provide forums for distributing critical information. Myers (2008) emphasizes how community radio helps to promote local culture, offer health knowledge and information, and support community development through education.

Comprehensive analysis of archival records, policy papers, and reports from important organizations helped one to grasp the historical background and evolution of community radio in Nigeria. As reported by Akingbulu and Menkiti (2008), some groups started a campaign aiming at increasing national knowledge of community radio. The federal government responded by establishing a working group in 2004 to examine the antiquated National Mass Communication Policy of 1990 and a commission in 2006 chaired by the late Professor Alfred Opubor to create a policy framework for community radio stations.

Semi-structured interviews with important players—including members of the Nigeria Community Radio Coalition (NCRC), government officials, and representatives of NGOs engaged in media and communication—were done to get a deeper understanding. Established in 2005, the NCRC comprises around 200 groups committed to using community radio to advance social and grassroots development. These interviews looked at the difficulties encountered during the founding of community radio stations and the techniques applied to promote legislative and regulatory changes.

The programming and substance of some rural Nigerian community radio stations were evaluated using content analysis. To provide a varied representation, a sample of stations from several geographic areas was selected. The study concentrated on the kinds of programs aired, the subjects addressed, and the degree of community involvement. Using educational content, discussion of social and political issues, and encouragement of community involvement in local governance and development projects, helped ascertain how community radio supports development goals, social change, and political participation (Ajibade & Alabi, 2017).

Data collecting combined content analysis, interviews, and document study. While the content analysis involved coding radio programs depending on their themes and objectives, with an eye toward spotting trends of social and political involvement, the qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and coded to detect common themes. These several data sources were triangulated to offer a whole picture of the function of community radio in rural Nigeria. This methodical methodology made it possible to investigate closely how community radio may be an instrument for political involvement, social transformation, and development in rural settings.

2. ICTs in Nigerian Education

The integration of ICTs in Nigeria's education sector has improved access to learning resources and enhanced educational outcomes. The Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) aims to provide high-speed internet connectivity to educational institutions, bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive growth (Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, 2020). Both students and lecturers now have better access to the limitless educational resources available than ever before. All thanks to the internet world through critical development in ICTs.



3. Social Media and Political Activism in Nigeria

Political activity in Nigeria has been much aided by social media channels. Using Twitter and Facebook, the #EndSARS movement—which opposed police violence—organized demonstrations, distributed information, and attracted worldwide attention (Olonisakin, 2020). This movement is a shining example of how social media may enable political involvement and propel social change. The performance scorecards of the political Elites in Nigeria are laid bare on media platforms and this drives critical assessment of their transparency and accountability to the people who relinquish their power to them. The implication is that people get more interested in political affairs of governance and can thus advance improvements in their State. What is happening in Kenya currently is a case in point. The youths who are internet compliant and have access to various media platforms and communication networks have gathered sufficient evidence to demand a change in policy making and governance style, especially in the areas of financial management in Kenya. This, like the Arab Spring protests, can spread to other parts of Africa and generate similar consequences.

4. ICTs and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Olise (2010) emphasises how important ICTs are for sustainable development in Nigeria since mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into the country's development plan calls for ICT integration. By using ICTs to improve efficiency and effectiveness in several spheres, including health, education, and technology, this strategy seeks to solve different developmental issues through these sectors.

Evidence abounds in how effective ICTs have been in the service delivery of many sectors in many organizations and industries in Nigeria.

5. Political Communication and ICTs

Arguing that ICTs are effective tools in the realm of communication, Anorue et al., (2012) address the role of ICTs in advancing political development in Nigeria. As seen by the growing usage of social media platforms for political activities, the acceptance of new media technologies is essential for improving political communication and involvement. Various reforms in Nigeria's electoral system like electronic counting of votes, records, use of card readers to check registered voters, and announcement of results in record time, are all derived from the role of media, ICTs, and communication networks.

6. Social Media and Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Emphasizing the dual function social media serves in both encouraging political involvement and inciting violence, Shola et al. (2021) looked at how it influences electoral violence in Nigeria. The study emphasizes the importance of frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which aims to minimize the harmful impact of social media on elections through peaceful and inclusive communities. Highlights of early warning signs of violence via the media can easily put things under check and help security outfits be more proactive in curtailing political violence before they occur.



CONCLUSION

Drawing from the argument presented in the paper, the role of the mass media, ICTs, and communication networks in driving the dream of achieving holistic social transformation in diverse areas in communities and States can be deciphered. It remains the magic band that can lead to desired outcomes and improved lifestyles in this late 21st century. Growth in society will practically be impossible without synergy among these three variables. Therefore, encouragement must be given to ensure that as the media, ICTs, and communication networks evolve, we must meet up with the trends and not get stuck to outdated technology. This way progress, growth, or development will be assured and people become happier with their existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested to ensure that the media, ICTs, and communication networks play the expected roles in mitigating underdevelopment in Nigeria:

1. Large-scale awareness campaigns are necessary to educate people about the role of the three variables in driving the process of sustainable development, engaging more people in the political domain, and information sharing. This will also increase the interest of people to be acquainted with these new technologies and the necessary skills required to make adequate and appropriate use of them.
2. Training programs are to be organized for the acquisition of the relevant skills that will facilitate the ability of people to adapt and make use of these relatively new technologies in our organizations. This will make available well-skilled personnel that will spearhead the desired outcomes we look forward to having.
3. Infrastructural development is critical in the effective use of these technologies and Internet media platforms. Just as cars cannot drive on water without bridges, the use of ICTs cannot be possible without power generation too. Electricity generation is therefore very vital. Improved power generation through other sources like solar can be the panacea for the constant cry about poor electricity generation.
4. Systemic corruption prevalent in all sectors of Nigeria's institutions is the dream killer that stultifies development strides and economic growth. If only our leaders would be transparent, accountable, and have the political clout to decisively deal with this hydra-headed monster, Nigeria will fully enjoy the benefits that accrue from the use of these multiple technologies. In addition, appointments into positions that have to do with advancing our technology must be based on expertise, proven track records of performance, and integrity in not compromising the system. Together we can build a formidable and ICT-compliant nation.
5. The pitfalls associated with the use of ICTs in crime commission and the media in disinformation and creating unfounded rumours capable of heating the polity must be avoided. This can be achieved through relevant laws and the implementation of prescribed punishment for offenders. This will reduce cybercrimes that prevent people



and organizations from fully exploring the numerous possibilities associated with the ICT world.

6. Phased timelines may be necessary to encourage key sectors to become compliant with the ICT world once the enabling environment is provided by the government and other key stakeholders in society.

If these recommendations are implemented, we believe the transformation of Nigeria will become a reality and ensure continual sustainable development in all her sectors.

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