
Influence of Community Journalism Practice on Political Participation

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Abstract

Community journalism is a media that usually focuses on a particular community to keep the government abreast of their needs. It is an aspect of journalism that always covers local news. This study identifies the principles of journalism on how to ethically and effectively share stories and information about a particular community. The study adopted observation theory to substantiate the usefulness and the challenges of practicing community journalism, especially during the election period in the country. The fact is that the election period entails a series of violence and hostility in the country especially in a remote community. The paper will work on how community journalism will positively change the mindset of the people at the grassroots to participate in politics.

Keywords: Community Journalism, Violent, Hostility, Negative Mindset

Word Count: 125

Introduction

The influence of community journalism on political matters especially in rural areas cannot be enumerated in the sense that the media provide all necessary information and enlightenment that could assist both literate and uneducated people in the region. The fact remains that government cannot be everywhere as only God is ubiquitous. The influence of community journalism plays a significant role in intimating those who

are in a position of authority to acknowledge the needs of the residents of a particular community. Before the advent of media technology, people at the grassroots had encountered challenges when it came to the dissemination of vital information.

The only available information for the residents of a particular rural community in those days was information from the traditional ruler of the region which it was difficult to receive information from the government before the advent of practicing community journalism.

The fact is that journalism cannot be effectively practiced without reaching out to the general public either on electronic media that comprises radio and television or print media in terms of daily newspapers and magazines. The latest medium is social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter Instagram, etc. The review on the subject matter is intending to validate the truth about the roles of the community journalism practice in political participation.

The primary function of a journalist is to gather news that will be thoroughly processed and disseminated to the general public either by publication in the newspaper or broadcast on radio and television to accomplish the purpose of disseminating information. The truth of the matter is that the people who reside in a remote community are backward in everything and the standard of their living should be improved in terms of rehabilitation of roads and various infrastructures such as the building of schools and medical health centres in the community. The above-mentioned infrastructures cannot be in place without the awareness of the government and people in positions of authority. Agidigbo radio station can be classified as one of the community radios that usually broadcast community news to intimate the Oyo state government about what is happening in the affected community.

Many communities immensely benefited from the practice of community journalism being organised by the AGIDIGBO radio station, especially during the March 15th governorship election. In the area of politics, community radio usually serves as a medium to reach out to the people at the grassroots especially when the various elections are fast approaching in the country.

Agidigbo as a community radio station usually hosts many politicians on its radio station where they normally discuss political matters. In the course of engaging them in discussion, the presenter will inform the guests about the needs of the affected community. Many residents benefited from the broadcast of community journalism. The residents of Ajia in Egbeda local government cannot forget the roles of community journalism in the area of the electrification project being carried out by the governor of Oyo State.

It was broadcast on Agidigbo Radio station during the political program that the Irepodun Community had no transformer for several years in the past administration did not do anything to solve their problems in that regard. The residents of the Irepodun community were actively involved in casting their vote for the governor during the March, 15th election to reciprocate the gesture they received from Governor Seyi Makinde. This study validated the trust that people at the grassroots are now participating in politics due to the vital roles that media workers play when it comes to community journalism. In the past, the people at the grassroots never participated in politics because of their negative perception when it comes to political matters. In recent years, the influence of community journalism practice has changed people's mindset to participate fully in politics as they are benefiting immensely from democratic leadership, especially in a community where they were massively voted for during the elections.

Statement of the Problem

Community journalism on political participation entails a series of problems in the sense that many politicians had previously disappointed the people at the grassroots on many occasions making the people who reside in under-developing communities jump to logical conclusions not to participate in politics anymore. The fact is that many of the rural communities lack infrastructure such as good roads and necessities of life. The truth of the matter is that many politicians used to flag off their campaign exercise in some of these communities by pasting their postal on the walls of their houses but they usually disappeared after winning the elections. The people in the rural communities have the following mentality against the politicians:

- a. The people at the grass root are conservative
- b. They lack exposure
- c. They see the government as their enemy
- d. They have a wrong notion about politics.

Objectives

The aim and objectives of the study are to change the mindset of the people on the grass root about their negative perception when it comes to participating in politics. The fact remains that people in rural areas had the wrong notion about politics especially those who had encountered the violence and hostility where many lives and properties were destroyed during the clash between NCNC and Action group more than six decades ago.

The study will explore observation theory to the explicit influence of community journalism practice on political participation across the country.

Research Questions

- 1) Is it true that the influence of practicing community journalism can bring development into a community?
- 2) Is it true that the practice of community journalism can cause setbacks for the people at the grassroots?
- 3) Can the people at the grassroots benefit from democratic government without the intervention of the press?
- 4) It takes the efforts of the press to improve the standard of living of the people at the grassroots. True or false?
- 5) Is it true that the participation of the people at the grassroots brings development into their community?

Methodology

This paper adopted observation theory to draw a questionnaire through the resident's reactions about the roles of the influence of community journalism in a particular developing community. The questionnaire paper is in a closed-ended format to validate the truth about the resident's opinion on the subject matter.

Results

The residents of Ajoda town had narrated the effectiveness of community journalism in the region due to the construction of good roads by the past administration led by Governor Abiola Ajimobi. It was made known that the road to Ajoda town was in deplorable condition as it caused incessant accidents to the extent of claiming the lives of several people before the emergence of the press to carry out their investigation about the causes of regular accidents in the region.

It has been confirmed by the residents that there is no occurrence of accidents in the region anymore. No more blackouts in the community as a result of the installation of a 4.5-kilowatt transformer that brings power supply to the region regularly. The mindset of the residents in the region

had positively changed to participate during the governorship election that took place on March 15, 2023.

Discussion of Finding

The residents of Irepodun Ajia Community had attested to the fact that the influence of community journalism had improved the standard of their living in the sense that the blackout in the community had become the history of the past because of the installation of the transformer that was in place before March 15th Governorship election 2023. The landlord chairman, Mr. Badmus, narrated how Agidigbo reporters had intensified their efforts to broadcast the needs of the community on radio until the information reached out to the people in positions of authority eventually led to the installation of a 4.5-kilowatt transformer in the community.

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It was the BCOS television that did a comprehensive report about the poor conditions of the road that used to claim the lives of the residents. The study of the subject matter revealed that the level of participation of the residents in politics had increased as they had a new orientation when it came to performing their civic rights during the time of election at any level.

This paper revealed the vital roles of community journalism in a rural environment and its impact on political participation among the residents

of Irepodun Ajia and Ajoda Town communities in Egbeda Local Government and Ona-Ara Local Government, Oyo State.

It was made known that it will be difficult for the people at the helm of affairs to be aware of the needs of grassroots people without the assistance of the media as the political leaders are ubiquitous i.e. they cannot be present everywhere at the same time.

Conclusion

The influence of community journalism practice has improved the standard of living of the people in a remote community as they are now enjoying the dividend of democracy in all ramifications.

Many people at the grassroots are ready to support the government if the people in positions of authority are doing the needful to improve the standard of their living at all times.

Recommendations

- i. There is a need to establish community radio in each of the local governments that will be giving the people in authority an update about what is lacking in that community.
- ii. The residents of the rural community should endeavor to take part in politics to benefit from the government in various ways that will bring development into their community.
- iii. The government should encourage the media industry by giving them an incentive to reach out to people at the grassroots.
- iv. The public radio station and community radio station are expected to maintain synergy to improve community journalism that will cut across the rural areas in the country.
- v. The government should prioritize the needs of the people who are living in a remote community after casting their votes for them during the election period.

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