



Influence of Radio Listenership on Voters' Preference for Political Candidates during the 2023 General Elections in South-West, Nigeria

¹Jerry Adewale, ²Innocent Emenike OKOYE, ³Olayiwola Ajisafe IBIKUNLE, ⁴Festus Ayodimeji AKINTOYE, ⁵Adenike Olajumoke ADUROGBOLA & ⁶Aliu Bazhi ADAMU

^{1&4}Bamidele Ilumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere, Ekiti State, Nigeria

^{2&3}Department of Media and Communication Studies, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

⁵Department of Mass Communication, the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

¹<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4391-4361>

²<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0808-3969>

³<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1883-9746>

⁴<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1012-1779>

⁵<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5283-0768>

*Corresponding author: bernardlucas2017@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Despite the growing influence of digital media, radio remains an important source of political information for a significant proportion of the population in South-West Nigeria. However, the extent to which radio listenership influences voters' preferences for political candidates remains under-researched, particularly within the sociopolitical and cultural context of the 2023 general elections.

Objective: To examine the influence of radio listenership on voters' preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria.

Results: Findings revealed that radio election messages influenced respondents' voting choices. Respondents also reported verifying information about political candidates obtained from radio before accepting it. However, the findings indicated that radio stations sometimes framed political candidates through propaganda, biased and partisan reporting, false and misleading information, and sensationalism.

Conclusion: The study concludes that radio political messages influenced voters' preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in South-West Nigeria, despite concerns about bias, propaganda, misinformation, and sensationalism.

Unique Contribution: By examining the relationship between radio listenership and voters' preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, the study addresses an empirical gap in understanding radio's role in electoral decision-making in South-West Nigeria. The findings offer insights for media owners, politicians, government institutions, and researchers seeking to improve election-related communication.

Key Recommendation: Radio stations in South-West Nigeria should clearly distinguish factual reporting from opinion-based content and disclose potential conflicts of interest when reporting political issues.

Keywords: Radio listenership, political candidates, voter preference, credibility, trust



INTRODUCTION

Elections are fundamental to democratic governance because they provide citizens with opportunities to choose their political representatives and influence the direction of government (McChesney, 2015). The quality and sources of political information available to voters can significantly shape their political perceptions, evaluations of candidates, and electoral choices. Among the various channels of political communication, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, radio remains an important medium for political communication and information dissemination. The persuasive characteristics of radio messages contribute to their potential to shape voters' decisions and influence their preferences during elections (Mtembe, 2018). Studies further indicate that radio's affordability, accessibility, and cultural relevance sustain its use by political actors and their supporters. Radio also serves as an effective medium for mobilising voters and encouraging electoral participation across different countries (Davis & Owen, 2018; Kamau & Waweru, 2017).

Evidence from different countries underscores the role of radio in election-related communication. For example, Nafiz (2012) reports that Kothmale Community Radio in Sri Lanka have been used to promote electoral awareness among rural communities. Similarly, Pinto (2018), in examining the power of radio in India, acknowledges that the medium has historically played a significant role in the country's democratic process. The author further reports that radio accounts for approximately 60–70% of India's electoral information needs (Pinto, 2018).

In Kenya, Mogambi and Ochola (2015) argue that Radio Nam Lolwe is used to mobilise voters and encourage electoral participation. Local politicians have also found the station useful for communicating their proposed policies and programmes to prospective voters. Similarly, in Tanzania, radio remains a prominent source of information, with more than 80% of the population reportedly using it weekly for various information needs, including election-related matters (Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority, 2025). In other African countries, political jingles and radio debates have been associated with changes in voting patterns and increased political knowledge (Makinde & Abati, 2024; Martínez-Roa & Ortega-Erazo, 2018; Verma et al., 2020).

Despite the rise of digital media, radio retains its relevance because of its accessibility, affordability, and extensive reach across rural and urban communities. This is particularly evident in South-West Nigeria, where a strong tradition of broadcasting in local languages coexists with an electorally active population. Radio serves as an important source of political information in Nigeria, contributing to political education and opinion formation. During election periods, political actors and parties use radio to communicate their manifestos, defend their records, and persuade voters to support their candidates. In South-West Nigeria, a region characterised by high population density, ethnic diversity, and a history of political engagement, radio provides a platform for political discourse and competing electoral narratives. Through its programming, radio can shape public opinion and influence political attitudes among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.



However, the availability of political information through radio does not necessarily mean that such information translates directly into voters' preferences for particular candidates. Voters may evaluate radio messages differently depending on their perceptions of the credibility of the information, the impartiality of the stations, and the manner in which political candidates are represented. Furthermore, biased reporting, propaganda, misinformation, and sensationalism may complicate the relationship between radio exposure and electoral decision-making.

Despite radio's continued relevance in political communication, empirical research examining the influence of radio listenership on voters' preferences for political candidates in South-West Nigeria remains limited, particularly in relation to the 2023 general elections. This study therefore examines the influence of radio listenership on voters' preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of radio listenership on voters' preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria.
2. To assess voters' perceptions of the credibility and trustworthiness of radio political information and its relationship with their preferences for political candidates during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria.
3. To examine voters' perceptions of the coverage and framing of political candidates by radio stations during the 2023 general elections in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Radio is a powerful force in shaping public opinion and influencing election outcomes due to its accessibility, affordability, and ability to reach diverse demographics (Edem et al, 2023). Okinda (2020) in a study on the nexus between women voters radio exposure and grassroots electoral participation under the new devolved political dispensation in Kenya, affirms radio is seen as a powerful tool for candidates. Radio's ability to reach voters and provide a significant return on investment makes it a valuable component of political campaigns. Further, Nwachukwu (2023) explores how political adverts on radio influence voting pattern of people in rural communities. Using descriptive survey, the study obtains data from 400 participants in Lagos State, Nigeria. Results of the study demonstrate that radio is a useful communication tool because it is used to encourage people to participate in political activities such as voting and listening to candidates' manifestoes. The findings further indicate that political messages on radio motivate electorates to attend political rallies so that they can be fully informed about each candidate and how to vote such candidates. The study thus sheds light on the influence of political messages on radio and how they affect the voting behaviour of electorates. The study, however, recommends the need



for positive influences, rather than reports that convey ethnic bias, religious sentiments against candidates and their political parties.

In Nwachukwu's study, the primary emphasis is on understanding the influence of political advertising campaigns on voting behaviour among voters in Lagos State. The current research, however, delves into the ways in which radio reportage affects the voting pattern of electorates within the context of the 2023 general elections in Ekiti, Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

Evaluation of the role that radio play during the 2024 reportage of electoral conflict in Edo State governorship election is the focus of Muhammed et al (2026). The study assesses the views of listeners concerning the radio coverage. It uses the survey research approach. It examines the respondents' perspectives regarding how radio messages are effective, objective and the contribution of radio messages to bring peace and reducing electoral tensions. It adopts the uses and gratifications theory. Results of the study demonstrate that though radio plays crucial role in reducing the tensions and bringing peace during the tensed 2024 governorship election in Edo State, Nigeria, some of the messages disseminated through radio show challenges such as media bias, sensationalism and ownership influence. The study further reveals that the participants received frequently peace-building messages from radio. The researchers, therefore, suggest the need for ethical journalism, radio operation that is free from owners influence and targeted programming that will make radio a reliable, credible and trustworthy tool for promoting electoral peace and democratic stability in Nigeria.

Olaoluwa (2016) uses the survey design to examine views of respondents concerning the role that broadcast media organisations play during the 2015 election activities in Nigeria. The outcomes of the study indicate that broadcast media outlets in the country played decisive and impactful role in motivating the citizens, especially voters to participate in the elections. The study highlights that those who own media organisations in Nigeria and journalists, as well as editors worked hand-in-hand to ensure that the voters receive credible and reliable election messages. The investigation draws the conclusion that broadcast media extensively contributed to building political consciousness among the people.

Hamid and Machika (2017) explore the influence of radio political campaign messages on the electorates' voting behaviour in Kano Nigeria, with a focus on the 2015 general elections. The study seeks to ascertain the extent that the electorates in Kano, Nigeria, were exposed to radio political campaign messages, as well as the extent to which such messages influenced their voting decisions. Accordingly, the study seeks to determine whether or not there is a relationship between radio political campaign messages and voters' behaviour during the elections; and the outcome of the elections result. The study adopted the survey method with the questionnaire as research instrument. Through multi-stage sampling, 435 respondents were selected in the nine (9) local government areas, three (3) each from the three senatorial districts in Kano, using multi-stage sampling techniques to administer the questionnaire. The study was anchored on the multi-step flow of communication theory. The findings from the study indicated that the majority (90.0%) of the respondents were exposed to political campaign messages on radio. Explaining further, respondents (58.3%) said they listen to political party-related campaigns and were influenced by them while casting their ballot. The study concluded that political campaign



messages aired by local radio stations were an essential factor in the political decisions of the electorate in Kano. Similarly, it was recommended that producers of political campaign messages should make optimum use of their right sense of judgment in packaging their messages to avoid deception on voters.

In the same order, the crux of Edem et al (2023) investigation centres on the impact of political information on voting patterns of electorates during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The study examines the respondents' perceptions based on political messages disseminated by some radio and television organisations in the country. The researchers conduct the study in Imo State. The study analyses the extent of exposure to political content, views of the voters regarding the election messages and the influence of such messages on their voting behaviour. The study, which adopts the social judgment theory, collects data through the employment of the survey design approach. The findings of the study reveal that political parties and candidates used radio and television to a large extent to disseminate their proposed policies and programmes, however, such campaign messages do not get the needed reception from the voters apart from the ones that come from the political parties they like. The results of the study further demonstrate that the campaign information on the radio and television do not have much influence on the voting decisions of the electorates even when they might be appealing enough to do so. The study thus recommends that political parties and politicians should explore the advantages of other media such as social media, aside radio and television to deliver their campaigns messages to the would-be voters since radio and television do not have a wholesale effect on voter behaviour.

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

From the empirical studies reviewed, it is evidenced that radio remains important in political communication. The reviewed literature suggests political contents on radio do influence the voters' perceptions either positively or negatively, which in turn either encourage or discourage people from participating in electoral activities. In Nigeria, where the radio is polarised along political lines, studying the influence of radio listenership on preference for political candidates during the 2023 elections in Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti States, South-West, Nigeria, is essential. This is the gap in literature that this study closed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Uses of Gratification Theory. The theory, developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch at different phases, focuses on the active role of the audience in media consumption. This theory assumes that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs, information, entertainment, or personal identity. Voters may listen to radio to better understand political candidates, thus aligning their preferences accordingly.

Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs. Uses and Gratifications sees users as active agents who have control over their media consumption. It suggests that receivers need influence the choice of media, their use and what gratifications radio programmes gives to them. This theory regards audiences as active media users as opposed to passive receivers of information (Larson, 2009). Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasises motives and the self-perceived needs of audience members. Larson (2009)



concluded that people use the same communication message for different purposes. The same content may gratify different individual's needs. This suggests that audiences use radio programmes to meet different needs and motives.

Therefore, the theory of Uses and Gratifications Theory is so much relevant to this study because radio election messages have further affected voters' decision on candidate of their choice, especially during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey research design. The population comprised all registered voters in the selected states. According to data from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the registered voters in Oyo State was 3,376,673, that of Ondo State was 1,991,344, while the registered voters in Ekiti State was 987,647. Therefore, the total population was 6,255,666.

Further, from the total population (6,255,666), the study utilised Taro Yamane (1967) sample size formulation to arrive at a sample of 400. The formula is as calculated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + n(e)^2}$$

Where:

N= Total Population

n= Sample Size Determination

1= Constant Number

e= Margin of Errors

Thus

$$n = \frac{6,255,666}{1 + 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{6,255,666}{15,639}$$

$$n = 400$$

The study adopted simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Simple random sampling technique was used to select Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti States to represent the six states in South-West Nigeria. The purpose of adopting the simple random sampling method is to avoid bias, meaning all the states were given equal chance of being selected. Also, purposive sampling was utilised. The study purposively selected two Local Government Areas in the state capitals. For Ondo,



Akure North and South LGAs were selected. In Oyo, Ibadan North and Ibadan North West were included in the study. For Ekiti state, Ado Local Government and Ado West LGA were selected. The purpose of selecting urban-based local government areas was because most of the radio states are concentrated in these areas and also due to the educational level of the urban residents, which the researchers believed would provide answers relevant to the objectives of the study.

The structured questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. Descriptive statistics using tables, frequencies, percentages and mean deviation of five-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), which the criterion mean was put at 3 is accepted result, while 2 is rejected result were used to present the quantitative data.

DATA PRESENTATION

A total of four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered, out of which 371 were returned and found valid for analysis. Also, data of 30 in-depth interviews were presented and analysed. Percentage representation of the response rate is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Response Rate

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Retrieved	371	93
Not Retrieved	29	7
Total	400	100

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 2: Election-Related Content on Radio Influence Respondents' Preference for Candidates during the 2023 General Elections

Options	SA	A	SD	D	UD	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
Radio election messages influence my voting choice	79	238	21	14	19	371	3.9	Accepted
I change my preferred candidate after listening to radio discussions	219	91	7	24	30	371	4.1	Accepted
Hearing about candidates' manifestos on the radio affect your voting decision	236	69	34	10	22	371	4.3	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026



It could be deduced from data in Table 2 that the election content disseminated on radio during the 2023 general elections influenced the voters in many areas. These diverse areas of influence have proven to be highly effective methods for politicians to appeal to and persuade voters, showcasing the versatility of radio platform in political communication.

Table 3: Respondents' Perceived Credibility and Trust in Election Content Broadcast through Radio during the 2023 General Elections and how they Shaped Voting Decision

Options	SA	A	SD	D	UD	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
You trust the information provided by your preferred radio station about the candidates	125	184	14	28	20	371	3.9	Accepted
You verified the information you heard on the radio about candidates before accepting it	233	80	6	27	25	371	4.2	Accepted
Some radio stations were biased toward certain candidates	241	63	34	13	20	371	4.3	Accepted
You relied more on radio than other media for political information	99	222	18	10	22	371	3.9	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 3 is a clear indication that radio is one of the most trusted media for political information, especially among Nigerian voters.



Table 4: Issues with Radio Framing of Political Candidates during the 2023 General Elections

Options	AS	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
Framing of candidates along the line of political propaganda	155	152	33	12	19	371	4.1	Accepted
Bias and partisan reports about candidates	68	239	15	27	22	371	3.8	Accepted
False and misleading information on radio about candidates mislead your voting decisions	176	108	30	21	36	371	3.9	Accepted
Too much of sensational reports about candidates by radio stations, which negatively affected the way such candidates were perceived	219	95	23	19	15	371	4.3	Accepted
Coverage imbalances influence the visibility and viability of the candidates who received less attention by the radio stations during the 2023 general elections	144	146	19	28	34	371	3.9	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 4 suggest some of the wrong application of media in election-related matters, where political issues are framed by the media to electorate judgement negatively.

DISCUSSION

In discussing how the radio influence voter behaviour in the Western North Region, the respondents of the study area identified a number of issues such as political campaigns, music, and advertisements that run on broadcast, print, social media, support and transit media, and politician ownership of media outlets. Also mentioned was the hosting of political programmes on radio stations that are listened to by the majority of people for information on current issues in their constituency. Data as indicated in Table 2 showed that radio election messages influence voters preference of candidates. Similar findings were reported by Hamid and Machika (2017),



demonstrated that exposure to election content on public radio like BCC led to increase in voter turnout. The results of the study also justified the used of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that listening radio audiences know media content, which they can use to meet their needs.

The respondents were also interrogated on how credible they perceive and truth the information they received from radio stations during the 2023 general elections. The findings indicate that respondents trusted information from their preferred radio stations (3.9); relied heavily on radio for political information (3.9); but also verified information before accepting it (4.2); and believed some stations were biased (4.3). It suggests that trust in radio was conditional rather than absolute. Respondents used radio extensively but remained cautious and cross-checked political information. An earlier study by Nwachukwu (2023) revealed that political messages on radio motivate electorates to attend political rallies so that they can be fully informed about each candidate and how to vote such candidates. Also in line with the findings of this study is that of Olaoluwa (2016), which showed that broadcast media outlets in the country, due to the trust that members of the public have on them, they rely heavily on radio for political and election-related information.

The researchers further solicited for answers on the challenges with radio reportage political candidates during the 2023 elections. The findings as detailed in Table 4 indicated that radio stations framed candidates along the line of political propaganda (4.1); bias and partisan reports about candidates (3.8); false and misleading information on radio about candidates mislead respondents' voting decisions (3.9); too much of sensational reports about candidates by radio stations, which negatively affected the way such candidates were perceived (4.3); and coverage imbalances influence the visibility and viability of the candidates who received less attention by the radio stations during the 2023 general elections (3.9). The findings are in tandem with that of Muhammed et al (2026), which demonstrated that though radio plays crucial role in reducing the tensions and bringing peace during the tensed 2024 governorship election in Edo State, Nigeria, some of the messages disseminated through radio showed challenges such as media bias and sensationalism.

CONCLUSION

The crux of the study has been on assessing the impact of radio listenership on preference for political candidates during the 2023 elections in Southwest, Nigeria. From the data analysed, the study concludes that radio political messages were perceived by respondents as an important influence on their attitudes and preferences toward political candidates during the 2023 elections.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Radio stations in South-West Nigeria should comply with professional and regulatory standards of political broadcast.
2. Radio organisations in Southwest Nigeria should give **fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory access to election coverage**, while recognising relevant legal and professional regulations.
3. Radio establishments in South-West Nigeria should always fact-check, verify and present clear distinction between news, opinion, and sponsored political content, as well as avoid misinformation and deceptive framing of political candidates.
4. Voters should be encouraged to cross-check political claims from multiple credible sources before making electoral decisions.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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The study was not funded.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

All the authors contributed. JERRY, Adewale wrote the introduction and objectives of the study. IBIKUNLE Olayiwola Ajisafe handled the data presentation and analysis. Innocent Emenike OKOYE and AKINTOYE Festus Ayodimeji discussed the theory and literature review. ADUROGBOLA Adenike Olajumoke handled the collection of data. ADAMU Aliu Bazhi wrote the conclusion and recommendations. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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