PROGRAMS IN COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS FOR PEACEFUL POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS WITHIN MIGORI COUNTY IN KENYA

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Abstract: Due to its ability to reach and influence large audience, radio stations have immense power in shaping a political environment. Media programs that build peace have the potential to prevent political violence. Migori County is considered by the National Commission on Integration and Cohesion as a violence hotspot during elections and political campaigns. The objectives of the study included: to establish the availability of community radio stations and to establish the programs that are used in the radio stations to promote peaceful political campaigns. This qualitative case study involved twenty one participants. Focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, and document analysis supplied qualitative data, whose analyses were done in tandem with the research questions. The study found that while community radio stations in Migori County have large potential to propagate and mobilize their audiences for peace during political campaigns, this potential is not adequately utilized among all the community radio stations, since there are no programs specifically designed for peaceful political campaigns. It is recommended that strategic radio programming for peace should be enhanced to enable community radio stations in Migori County thwart campaign and political violence during elections.

Keywords: Radio stations, community radio, peaceful campaigns, elections

INTRODUCTION

Technological Kenya, just like most African countries has a long history of political violence which dates back to the 1980s during the one party system's dominance in Kenya. Ethnic animosity fueled by political differences among local Kenyan communities mostly resulted into serious clashes in several parts of Kenya. Ethnic polarization was frequently used by the only single ruling party during those days, to influence voter registration, voter turn-out and even the actual vote casting. The Kenya's post-election violence in the electioneering year of 2007-extended to the year 2008 was partly related to hate-speeches by politicians through their local media. Consequently, among the individuals prosecuted at Hague based international criminal court following the crimes against humanity committed during the violence was a Kenyan radio journalist.

This draws attention that the relationship between radio communications during political campaigns and election environments, whether hostile or friendly ought to be considered at scholarly levels. This concern has intensified academic interest on the role of Kenyan media in peace mobilization and/or violence instigation. Whenever violence brakes out after controversial elections, Migori county experiences loss of property and displacement of persons, fighting, destruction of property and loss of lives - as have been reported by the local media, and as witnessed in the year 2007 elections. Therefore, in this study, the researchers have explored the

role of community radio, especially the type of programs aired by radio stations in violence prevention or instigation in Migori County.

Statement of the Problem

As we approach the 2022 general elections, there is heightened media activity as various political parties and their respective contestants compete to have their development promises reach electorate through local media outlets. In previous elections, there have been many cases of fear and worry of possible eruption of violence. Community radio stations in Migori County can play roles in setting political tones which may affect the campaign and election environments as has occurred in the recent past. However, the existence of programs in community radio stations that are likely to affect political environments within Migori County still remains unclear among scholarly publications. It is against this scarcity backlash that this study sought to explore the existence of such programs in community based radio stations within Migori County.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to establish community radio stations and the programs in their list to promote peaceful political campaigns in Migori County.

Objectives of the study

The study was guided by two main objectives;

1. To identify the community based radio stations in Migori County

2. To establish the programs for peaceful political campaigns in community radio stations within Migori County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Radio communication is a one way communication system where sound signals flow from a single communication point called transmitter to multiple audiences called radio receivers, (Oguk, 2016). The sound signals are called audio signals and are carried through a form of medium called electromagnetic waves, which move from the transmitter to the receiver, via ordinary aerials called antenna, (Oguk, Karie, & Rabah, 2017). The antenna basically picks up the audio signals and directs them to the receiver, which is usually called radio by the listeners.

According to Ouma, Kinya, Sangai, and Oluoch, (2018), community radio is a non-enterprise venture into building humanity, in the sense that it involves local people producing and broadcasting their own programs while participating in operating their station. This is to help in fulfilling the basic desire for community communication and self-expression that reaches large audience. Community radio has ownership and programming provided by volunteers and local community members. Stations are usually responsive to the needs of the community and consistently seek feedback from very listeners. The input from audience helps in enriching individuals and communities in many ways. Studies have found that community radio plays a great role in highlighting cultural, political, economic and artistic voices and opportunities which are usually excluded. In this study, the researcher was focused on the type of programs which community radios in Migori County have for promoting peaceful political campaigns.

Community Radio Programming

The nature of programs should be of direct benefit and relevance to the host community, and should also be community specific (UNESCO, 2015). Gabo-Ratio and Fujimitsu, (2020), study in the Phillipines, cites a

community programs called "Genpeace". This programs focus is mainly on literacy for women and girls. Still in the Philippines, Gimoto and Panyadee, (2018) study on community radios on programs meant to empower residents of a small town known as Comval. The radio had programs that broadcast content majorly agricultural information to the farming community in the audience. In Indonesia, community radio programs have been successfully used to advance democratization processes and help re-inventing democratic communication (Leen et al., 2008).

In Africa, Senegal's community radio – Forgy FM succeeded in restoring peace in the Casamance region when it encouraged dialogue during violence. In another case, Project Radio Madagascar located in Southern Madagascar delivers information to remote rural village audiences via Freeplay radiosm, whose aim is to empower local people by developing programmes that promote ways particularly for reducing poverty and increasing food security. Okwengu, (2010) provided showed more insights into community radios and how the programmes can serve specific interests of the community. Simli Radio of Ghana shows that the community radio station's focuses was specifically on livelihood improvement.

Here in Kenya, a study by Ong'ayo (2008).), revealed that the first community-based radio station installed around the year 1982 was in Homa-bay county as an initiative by the Kenyan government and UNESCO. Today, the country has over ten community based radio stations including; Koch FM, Mang'elete FM, Radio Maendeleo, Ghetto FM, Pamoja FM, Kangema FM and Shinyalu radio. Ndirangu (2012) showed that Kangema FM, which supports the farming community by providing weather forecasting information and other important agricultural information. In the study by Mwende (2006), it was found that there are several ways through which community as well as faith-based media promotes building trust and inter-community resilience.

While the capacity of community based radio stations in Kenya aim to promote peace through fostering diversity, tolerance and intercultural dialogue, much scholarly work is still needed on the type of programs that promote these. Analyses of literature from the previous studies however, indicated limited research on the actual programs employed by community radio stations for violence prevention during elections, hence the focus of this study
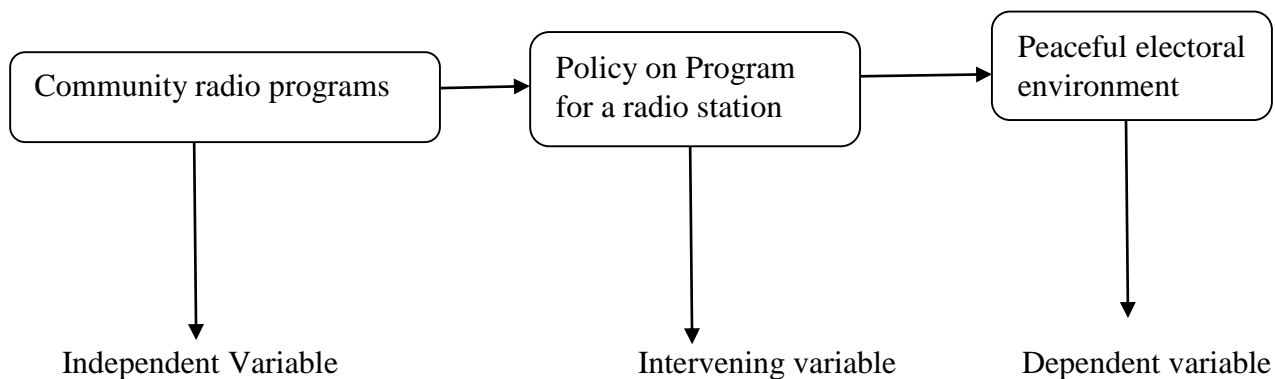
Conceptual framework

Community radio programs → Policy on Program for a radio station → Peaceful electoral environment

Independent Variable   Intervening variable   Dependent variable

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to establish the community based radio stations in Migori County, and the types of programs they air in facilitating peaceful campaigns. Radio Tarumbeta 90.4, Milambo Radio 103.8 FM, FM and Radio Rameny 88.3 FM were found to be the community based in Migori County. This research

registered twenty one participants; wherein face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions as well as documents' analyses supplied qualitative data. The data analysis was done according to with the research objectives.

The mix of respondents sampled for this study included community radio programs managers, radio broadcasters, and radio listeners above the age of 18 and living within Migori County. The study focused on respondent's perceptions on the part played by the radio stations in promotion of peace during political campaigns in the County. The mix of respondents in the study included radio listeners above 18 years old, radio programs managers, and studio broadcasters. This study used a mixed sampling approach to identify participants. Purposive samplings as well as convenience sampling approaches were employed to select the focus group discussion participants. Purposive sampling was employed to select the radio stations and staff for the study. These respondents were rich in the core information with regards to the research questions.

Table 1: Sampling for broadcasters and programs managers

Radio station	Female	Male	Experience	Total
Milambo Fm	1	1	At least 3 years	2
Radio Rameny	0	2	At least 3 years	2
Radio Tarumbeta	0	2	At least 3 years	2
Total	**1**	**5**		**6**

Table 2: Sample distribution and size for the focus group discussion

Ethnic Background	Female	Male	Preferred language	Total
Luo	4	4	Dholuo	8
Kuria	2	2	Kuria	4
Luhya	1	2	Kiswahili	3
Total	**6**	**6**		**15**

FINDINGS

The researcher had sought to answer the following research questions: What are the community radio stations in Migori County? What type of programs do community radios in Migori County have for promoting peaceful political campaigns?

Table 3: Sampling of respondents by age and gender

Age bracket	Female	Male	Total
19-25	6	4	10
26-35	4	4	8
36-55	1	2	3
Total			**21**

Program genres designed and produced by Community Radios

Table 4: Prominent themes discovered by the researcher during data coding

Current radio programs
Education, business, investment, economy, family stewardship, news, spiritual nourishment, peace and security, politics and entertainment.
Regular broadcast content to radio audience:
Education, investment, news, economy, business, peace and security, family stewardship, politics and entertainment, spiritual nourishment,.
how to improve the role of radios for peaceful campaigns:
Inclusion of peace programs on radio menus, inviting peace experts to the studios, training radio journalists on "peace journalism, collaborating with the IEBC involving audience in peace discussions, , Collaborating with peace networks.

Study findings on a Community Radio Broadcasting in Dholuo, Kuria and Kiswahili.

The study showed that Radio Tarumbeta, generally broadcasts the following programs: security, economics, health, education, stewardship, and spiritual outreach. The station broadcasts in three languages namely; Kuria, Kiswahili and Dholuo. This Community Radio is popular in region, especially among The Seventh Day Adventist believers (SDA). SDA members constitute about 45% of the entire religious group in Migori County. In addition, the study revealed that the core role and mission of the radio station is evangelization, making the majority of the programs to be dedicated to divine nourishment through music, preaching as well as motivational talks.

However, the study found that there is no program that specifically focuses on peace building during political campaigns. A program close to a piece related was found to be "Usalama Nyumba Kumi", which translates into something like "community policing". However this program is on general peace, as a security matter, but it is not designed for fostering peace during political campaigns.

Also, the radio staff respondents indicated that guests are invited to the studio only occasionally, to discuss peace, hormonal co-existence and public security, mainly on the realms of the "Usalama Nyumba Kumi" programs. It is in such programs where.

The study further showed that while the Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) manages elections, there is no official collaboration between the community radio stations and the IEBC. Therefore, IEBC does not participate in programs aimed at promoting peaceful political campaigns through the radio stations. Indeed, it was found that there has not been any paid advertisement on peace or general public information to the radio stations from the IEBC.
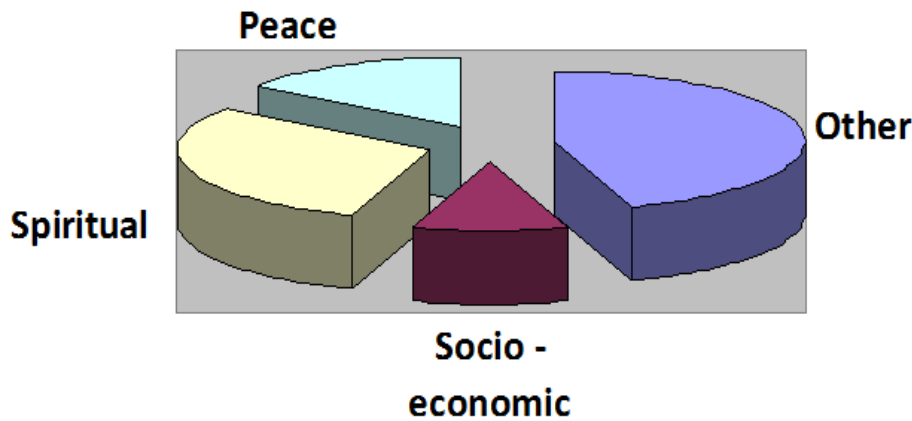
Figure 2: Distribution of key broadcast programs themes at Radio Tarumbeta

Study findings – Community Radio Broadcasting in Dholuo and Kiswahili

Milambo FM. is a community radio situated in Migori town, at the County Government headquarters. The study showed that the station is usually on air twenty four hours / seven and broadcasts in three main languages in the county mainly dholuo, Kiswahili and kuria languages, with predominance as Kuria 10%. Dholuo 80%, and Kiswahili 10%. The proportional diversity of the inhabitants was observed by the researcher during a data collection visit to the radio station.

The study indicated that even though campaign violence cases have been reported to the stations on several occasions, the radio stations do not have any programs that focus on peace during political campaigns. However, it was shown that measures followed as part of the ethical practices for studio journalists facilitate peace-building in the radio stations. These practices include: calling the police to verify any news received in relation to campaign violence prior to airing such news. Further, they practice editing the news to avoid panic and escalation of violence, while assuring the public that everything remains under control.

The study further revealed that the program hosted in the radio station which is close to facilitation of peace during political campaigns is known as "Tago Maliet". This loosely translated to "Hot Pan"; a program in which prominent personalities in business, politics, and civil society get invited to the studio station and involve live debates to discuss current issues. During such debates, listeners are involved as they are invited to participate through phone calls. It was however found that while the program is popular, it nevertheless handles the issue of campaign violence as it has no specific agenda set for peaceful political campaigns.

Study Findings – Community Radio Broadcasting in Dholuo only

Radio Rameny 88.3 FM, was found to be a community radio station broadcasting in dholuo only and most dominant in the Rongo area where the radio station is located. The radio transmits programs on education, economics, health, family life and spiritual nourishment. Also it was found that live phone calls from listeners are invited by the presenters during designated live debates in the programs.

The study found insecurity among the issues identified by the community radio station to be affecting the locals. It also found that most listeners are concerned with political issues, family relations and economy. However, study revealed that the radio station does not have any programs designed to promote peaceful political campaigns. In rare cases, politicians, security and peace experts are invited for debates on peace mobilization, but this does not amount to specific program on peace during political campaigns.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore safe to argue that design of programs by community radios, as well as airing of the said programs have got a direct bearing on what the public will view as important. If community radios in Migori County deem it necessary to design programs aimed at mobilizing peace for political campaigns in the run up to subsequent general elections, and proceeds to broadcast them, the public will participate by ensuring peace.

RECOMMENDATION

Since the community based radio programs have a direct bearing on what the public will view as important, it is recommended that the programs for peaceful political campaigns should be adopted by the radio stations, as this will alleviate chances of violent election environment.

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