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ORGINAL ARTICLE

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH INNOVATIVE RADIO BROADCASTING STRATEGY – INSIGHTS FROM ABUJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Abuja, Nigeria's capital, represents a microcosm of ethnic diversity and socio-political complexity. Despite radio's historically significant role in shaping public opinion, promoting social cohesion, and peacebuilding across diverse communities, there is a notable gap in examining how radio stations in Abuja strategically innovate broadcasting for sustainable peace. The study aims to fill this gap. This study is anchored on peace journalism theory, which advocates for a shift from traditional adversarial to approaches that highlight common ground, humanise all parties, and expose opportunities for reconciliation and cooperation. Using a quantitative survey and secondary data, the study surveyed 384 respondents from various area councils of Abuja. Descriptive statistics were applied, including means and standard deviations, to determine the level of agreement and general perception trends among respondents. Findings show a strong majority of respondents (92.1%) agree that radio programming in Abuja features diverse peace-related content, including music, talk shows, drama, and interviews. In addition, listeners experience opportunities to express their views and provide feedback through call-ins, social media, and SMS, indicating healthy audience participation in peace discourse. Despite successes, there are challenges. The study, which contributes to existing knowledge, recommends more content and audience participation in peace-related messages and the active collaboration of radio stations with both government and private sector investment to expand digital platforms and infrastructure, as well as improving reach and engagement.
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Keywords: Innovative**,** Peace, Radio Broadcasting, Sustainable.

Introduction

Radio has the power to shape opinions and influence listeners in profound ways. Throughout history, it has been used to stir up conflict and violence, and it has also been a tool to promote peaceful cohesion. The media are believed to be able to influence how people react to circumstances based on the kind of information they hear or read on the media (McLuhan, 2016). Media is accused of being an instrument

of conflict in some instances - the complication of the Rwandan genocide that claimed over 10,000 lives happened because a radio presenter from the Hutu majority described the Tutsi minority on a live broadcast as cockroaches that would be stamped with his foot (Balogun, 2016). The power of the media as an instigator or pacifier of conflict was amplified further by McCombs and Shaw (1972) when they argued that media discourse may or may not provoke conflict instantly, but it does set an agenda for sustained peace or conflict in society.

In Nigeria's capital, Abuja, a vibrant hub of political, cultural, and key national institutions and social activity, radio stations have become laboratories for innovative approaches to conflict resolution and sustainable peacebuilding, especially as they recently grapple with the challenges of ethnic tensions, misinformation and religious differences. Thus, the continued need for innovative radio broadcasting strategy through participatory programming, localised contents while leveraging technology. Abuja, despite being perceived as relatively safer, has not been immune to rising conflict, including land disputes, demographic pressures, and criminal activity such as kidnappings and protests. For instance, the controversy over the appointment of non-indigene ministers of the FCT still lingers (Sahabi, 2023) as indigenes of the FCT feel denied of the benefits of the state. Although there are instances of land disputes between natives and settlers, there are also concerns regarding land ownership, where individuals claim their lands were unjustly appropriated by the FCT Administration without compensation (Chiedozie, 2022).

Additionally, its rapidly growing population and the proliferation of urban slums have contributed to new dimensions of conflict, including crime and social unrest (UN-Habitat, 2007). Over the last years, the National Bureau of Statistics claimed that kidnapping incidence in the country was estimated at 2,345,954 between May 2023 and April 2024, with an estimated total ransom of ₦2.2 trillion; the North-central was estimated at 317,837, including various locations within the Abuja Municipal (Akubike, 2024). There are also interpersonal conflicts that occur every day, such as domestic violence, human assault, raping, battery, fraud, withholding of wages, road, and reckless driving that amount to abuse of human rights.

The concept of peace journalism has gained prominence as a framework for understanding the media's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Peace journalism advocates for reporting practices that emphasise nonviolence, conflict analysis, and solutions-oriented storytelling (Lynch, McGoldrick, & Heathers, 2015). Drawing on Galtung's distinction between negative and positive peace, peace journalism seeks to move beyond mere absence of violence to promote cooperation and reconciliation (Galtung & Fischer, 2013). This approach contrasts with traditional "war journalism," which often frames conflict in adversarial, zero-sum terms. By adopting peace journalism principles, media practitioners can contribute to a more informed, balanced, and constructive public discourse. Peace journalism, regarded

by many scholars as a moral imperative, is a goal-driven approach that intentionally redefines the role of journalism to consciously, actively and systematically foster peace (Lee, 2020).

Furthermore, the rapid advancement of digital media and the increasing competition from online platforms pose new challenges and opportunities for radio stations in Abuja to maintain their relevance and effectiveness in peacebuilding (Kustiawan, Hasibuan, Fitri, Hsb Daulay, Sitorus, Afriani, & Padang, 2024). Understanding audience perceptions and engagement with peace-oriented content is crucial to designing impactful programming (Thompson & Ip, 2018). Additionally, the role of media regulation and policy frameworks in curbing hate speech and promoting responsible journalism remains an area requiring further exploration, as existing oversight mechanisms may be inadequate in addressing the complexities of contemporary media landscapes.

While many scholars have studied radio's role in peace promotion, the strategic broadcasting towards peace by the radio stations in Abuja is understudied. Given Abuja's status as Nigeria's capital and a microcosm of its ethnic diversity, ensuring peace through radio broadcasting is crucial for national unity and integration. It is against this background that this study assesses the innovative radio broadcasting strategy for advancing sustainable peace in Abuja. It also assesses the limitations faced by radio stations in deploying peace-promoting broadcasts. The study proposes recommendations for enhancing radio broadcasting strategies to sustain peace and social cohesion more effectively.

Literature Review

Abuja, Nigeria's capital, was conceived in 1976 to serve as the new capital of the Nigerian Federation, and it replaced Lagos as the capital on December 12, 1991. The FCT comprises six Area Councils - Abaji, Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, and Kwali - with Abuja Municipal (AMAC) serving as the 'capital'. Unlike the 36 states of Nigeria, headed by an elected governor, Abuja is headed by a Minister appointed by the Nigerian President (Institute of Peace & Conflict Resolution, 2017). The population of Abuja is 1,406,239 (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2009). Abuja is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious capital city where people from over 500 mostly chauvinistic ethnic groups that make up Nigeria live side by side (Ekechukwu, 2020).

Abuja has over twenty-six radio stations. The telegraph and telephone were the first systems of communication in Nigeria. The first recorded use of wireless telegraphy in Nigeria occurred in 1913 (Adejunmobi, 1974). Before the deregulation and commercialisation policy in 1992, broadcasting was a state monopoly in Nigeria. Only the federal and state governments had radio and television stations based on the constitution of the country. The promulgation of Decree No. 38 of 1992 by the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, which has now become an Act of Parliament in this democratic dispensation, deregulated the broadcast industry.

Mass media are typically classified into two broad categories: electronic media and print media. The electronic media consists of radio, television, film and new media. The radio, which is the focus of the study, is ranked as the most populous means of disseminating information, regardless of the content. It has no visuals; messages are carried through voice, sound, music, noise and silence. It is appealing because of some distinguishing features of interactivity, its capacity to provide dialogue, and its ability to solicit the participation of the local population with lower production costs and extreme versatility (Porter and Mascaro, 2024).

Akpunonu classified broadcast programmes into scripted (e.g. news, documentaries, sports announcements), unscripted (e. g. discussion, commentary, interview), studio, outside broadcast and mother formats (Akpunonu, 2010). With the rise in technology, programming integrates digital platforms like streaming and podcasts to broaden wider reach (Adegbite, 2023). Modern radio stations in Nigeria are increasingly adopting digital tools to foster interactivity. For example, some innovative stations use artificial intelligence (AI) to manage content dynamically, allowing listeners to engage directly via requests and personalised experiences, as seen in Lagos with Tingo AI Radio FM, which uses AI-driven content and virtual DJs to enhance interactivity (Obari & Asak, 2025). Participation empowers listeners to contribute content, express opinions, and influence broadcasts in real-time, making radio a two-way communication platform.

Participation formats such as call-ins, live debates, SMS polls, and social media interactions allow audiences to be active collaborators rather than passive consumers (Moemeka, 2024). Participation in media is being physically present on a radio or television station and being involved in the operation of the station. It could be in one of these forms: discussion, interview, phone-in, show, drama, production of the programme, and scheduling of the programme (Wanless & Berk, 2020). Nelson (2021) notes that when a process allows ordinary people to dialogue and analyse situations among themselves and about issues affecting their lives, then communication is recognised as a social process.

Audience engagement has become a key concept in contemporary discussions on how news stations relate to the public and create sustainable change (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Meier, Kras & Michaeler, 2018). Audience engagement in media is the level of interaction and involvement that an audience has with content. It is more than just passively consuming content; it is active participation. Engagement strategies include leveraging social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp), live call-ins, text messages, and interactive programs such as debates, quizzes, and participatory shows. For instance, some community stations have seen dramatic growth in followers and interaction through the strategic use of social media, reinforcing the bridge between broadcasters and the audience beyond traditional airwaves (Hassan & Sam, 2024).

Feedback systems are crucial for ensuring radio content remains relevant and responsive to the community's needs. Feedback can come through various channels such as voice calls, SMS, social media comments, and mobile apps, providing broadcasters with insights into listener preferences, concerns, and the impact of peace messaging (Mwangi, Muasya & Wachira, 2025). In the Abuja context, interactive technologies and feedback systems create more participatory media environments where marginalised groups can raise their voices, and communities can engage in dialogue that promotes understanding and conflict resolution.

Studies indicate that radio possesses the infrastructure and reach necessary to promote peace, harmony, and informed decision-making through responsible journalism. Ullah and Khan (2017) found that FM radio plays a significant role in both formal and informal education, aiding the public in making informed decisions through its programming. Mohammed (2019) asserted that radio is the most effective medium for promoting peacebuilding, with the majority of study respondents relying on it for information, especially during times of conflict.

However, radio stations continue to face several challenges erosion of trust. The pursuit of higher ratings and increased revenue sometimes leads to sensationalism and biased reporting (Oloyede, Okoji, Agwolo, Azeez & Okoli, 2024). As stations prioritise listenership ratings and financial gains, public trust in radio as an objective source of information has declined. Aliede (2013) highlighted the media's vulnerability to commercial pressures, which can compromise their role in serving the public interest. Studies indicate that peacebuilding content on Nigerian radio is limited, often confined to brief daily segments or a single dedicated program, which is minimal compared to the overall airtime dominated by entertainment and commercial programming.

Political and media ownership influence is another limitation for radio broadcasters. Ajibade and Alabi (2017) highlighted government's continued dominance over the airwaves, which restricts the operation of community radio due to legal and regulatory barriers Noting the ongoing difficulty of radio broadcasting in fostering peace, they argued that community radio could be vital for reaching rural Nigerians, supporting development, health, agriculture, literacy, and peaceful coexistence, while giving marginalised populations a platform to participate in local governance. In addition, Udomisor emphasised that the dominance of media owners can marginalise peace-oriented content and occasionally promote divisive narratives.

Abuja is characterised by a mosaic of cultures and languages, which presents unique challenges for the radio broadcasters. Crafting messages that resonate with all segments of the population and foster mutual understanding is complex and often fraught with risk. According to Orebiyi & Orebiyi (2017), collective

cultures allow shared interests, harmony, tradition, and the public good. To effectively promote sustainable peace, radio programmes must resonate with diverse audiences. However, language barriers and deeply ingrained cultural differences can limit the reach and impact of these broadcasts (Ijeh & Ufuophu-Biri, 2022). The challenge lies in creating content that is not only linguistically accessible but it is also culturally sensitive.

The rapid growth of digital and online media platforms has intensified competition, making it harder for traditional radio stations to retain their audience and remain relevant, especially among the younger demographic. A peace-focused radio programme may be aired on FM, but young people in Abuja might prefer Instagram, WhatsApp or TikTok for news and discussion. Understanding and engaging a diverse audience in the FCT—characterised by ethnic, religious, and socio-economic differences—remains a significant challenge for radio broadcasters seeking to promote peace. According to Akinola-Badmus and Ojebuyi (2021), many radio stations lack the resources to upgrade to digital broadcasting, improve sound quality or enhance interactive features.

Methodology

The study adopted a mix of descriptive survey and existing literature. A sample population of 2/820,261 in 2020 as projected by the National Bureau of Statistics, was used. Using the Krejcie and Morgan Table for determining sample size for a finite population, the sample size is 384. Olasehinde-Williams and Owolabi (2023) stated the sample size table is justified for its simplicity, precision, efficiency, statistical basis, ease of use and standardisation. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select respondents who listen to radio.

Results

The main objective of the study is to assess the innovative radio broadcasting strategy in advancing sustainable peace in Abuja.

Table 1: Strategy of Radio Broadcasting on Sustainable Peace

Item	**Statement**	**Degree of Satisfaction**					**Mean**	**SD**	**Decision**
		SA (5) n %	**A** (4) n %	**N** (3) n %	**D** (2) n %	**SD** (1) n %			
1	Radio has a combination of music, talk shows, interviews and special events on peace for a wider audience.	176 (47.7)	164 (44.4)	12 (3.3)	11 (3.0)	6 (1.6)	4.33	.81	General agreement and some diversity in responses

2	Radio has peace-themed drama and storytelling on topical issues.	107 (29.0)	213 (57.7)	34 (9.2)	12 (3.3)	3 (0.8)	4.15	.75	General agreement and some diversity in responses
3	Listeners are given opportunities to express their concerns and opinions in society.	146 (39.6)	164 (44.4)	34 (9.2)	22 (6.0)	3 (0.8)	4.15	.88	General agreement and some diversity in responses
4	Radio stations allow listeners to provide feedback.	128 (34.7)	181 (49.1)	42 (11.4)	12 (3.3)	6 (1.6)	4.11	.85	General agreement and some diversity in responses
5	Radio information on peace is credible.	78 (21.1)	185 (50.1)	88 (23.8)	12 (3.3)	6 (1.6)	3.85	.84	General agreement and some diversity in responses
6	Radio uses social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X to engage listeners.	141 (38.2)	165 (44.7)	36 (9.8)	24 (6.5)	3 (0.8)	4.13	.89	General agreement and some diversity in opinions
7	Radio represents diverse audiences regardless of their status.	151 (40.9)	185 (50.1)	21 (5.7)	12 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	4.28	.71	General agreement and some diversity in opinions

Source: Field survey, 2024

As shown in Table 1, out of 369 respondents, 340 (92.1%) either strongly agreed or agreed, while 12 (3.3%) remained neutral, 11 respondents (3.0%) disagreed, and 6 respondents (1.6%) strongly disagreed with Item 1. This indicates an overwhelming belief in the importance of radio's diverse content in promoting sustainable peace in the FCT. The mean score for perceived responses shows Mean (M) = 4.33 and Standard Deviation (SD) = 0.81, indicating a strong positive perception among respondents, with a mean close to "Agree" and low variability in responses.

The statement on item 2: Radio has peace-themed drama and storytelling on topical issues, shows respondents (107, 29.0%) strongly agree, (213, 57.7%) agreed, 34 respondents (9.2%) were neutral, 12 (3.3%) disagreed, and 3 (0.8%) strongly disagreed. The mean score for perceived responses, M = 4.15 (SD = 0.75), indicates a strong positive perception of radio's role in promoting peace through drama and storytelling. The SD indicates that there is relatively little variation in opinions, which are consistent across respondents. This suggests that radio is viewed as a significant medium for fostering peace in the FCT.

Item 3 above shows that 146 respondents (39.6%) strongly agreed, 164 respondents (44.4%) agreed, 34 respondents (9.2%) were neutral, 22 respondents (6.0%) disagreed, and 3 respondents (0.8%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, a mean score of 4.15 and SD of 0.88 shows a strong positive sentiment, with most respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that radio provides a platform for expressing concerns and opinions, with some variability in responses.

Item 4 also has a significant portion of 128 respondents (34.7%) and 181 respondents (49.1%) who strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. However, a significant neutral response of 88 respondents (23.8%) was neutral. Only 18 respondents (4.9 %) expressed disagreement. The mean score for perception of item 4, M = 4.11, suggests that, on average, respondents rated the radio's provision of listeners' feedback favourably. While SD = 0.85 indicates a notable diversity in listeners' feedback among the 369 respondents. This points to an opportunity for radio stations to further improve feedback mechanisms and engage listeners who may feel left out.

Item 5, radio information on peace is credible, was assessed, and a total of 263 respondents (71.2%) agreed related to the information on the radio is highly credible. A significant group (88 respondents, 23.8%) remained neutral. On the perception, M = 3.85 and SD = 0.84, indicating that the overall perception among respondents leans positively toward agreeing that radio information on peace is credible. While the majority agree or strongly agree, there is a small but noticeable diversity in responses, showing that not everyone shares the same level of enthusiasm about the opportunities provided by radio.

Similarly, item 6 has a significant total number of 306 respondents (82.9%) who either strongly agree or agree with the statement: Radio has social media platforms that engage listeners, indicating a strong endorsement of the idea that radio is adapting to modern communication methods. 36 respondents (9.8%) remained neutral, and 24 respondents (6.5%) disagreed. Very few 3 respondents (0.8%) strongly disagree. The mean score of 4.13 indicates a consensus that radio utilises social media platforms to connect with its audience. A standard deviation of 0.89 indicated moderate variability in responses. This means that while many respondents agree with the statement, there is a range of opinions present.

A total of 336 out of 369 respondents, 91% (strongly agree and agree) in item 7, show a strong consensus in favour of the statement that radio represents diverse audiences regardless of their status. In contrast, only 33 respondents (29%) expressed neutrality or disagreement. Mean score of 4.28 (SD = 0.71) indicates widespread agreement with the assertion that radio caters to various demographic groups with some variability in opinions, pointing to a small number of respondents who felt differently about the assertion.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that radio broadcasting in the FCT employs a multifaceted content creation strategy - combination of music, talk shows, interviews, and peace-themed dramas effectively reaches and engages a broad audience. This is supported by the claim of Akpunonu (2010) that radio produces programmes in the form of messages, jingles, news, songs, discussions, calls-in, drama, storytelling, etc. However, Aladi and Okoro (2015) posited that the power of media in shaping or changing the attitudes of its audience is only made possible through the packaging of media content or messages with a persuasive undertone. The diversity in the response could mean that passive content creation does not significantly impact peace unless combined with interactive discussions and active participation. The insignificant effect of content creation, therefore, highlights that merely producing well-structured, peace-oriented programmes is not enough to promote peace unless there is active audience engagement.

The findings also indicated a general agreement that radio involves listeners through live shows and leverages popular social media platforms to maintain active communication with diverse audiences. This inclusive approach is further reflected in the representation of various social groups in programming, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion. Key engagement methods include involving listeners on live shows (M = 4.13), using social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X to connect with audiences (M = 4.13), and representing diverse audiences regardless of social status (M = 4.28). This finding is supported by the views of the radio broadcasters and Nelson (2021), who also posited that radio provides the platform for this dialogue that brings change and builds capacity for sustainable change and development.

This engagement also supports the Peace Journalism Theory, which suggests that audience participation enhances the relevance and impact of media content on social integration and conflict resolution. The use of social media further extends radio's reach and engagement, enabling real-time interaction and feedback, which are crucial for sustaining peace in diverse and dynamic societies. These strategies are consistent with broader peacebuilding principles that emphasise participatory communication and local ownership of media content, which are essential for sustaining peace in multi-ethnic and pluralistic settings like the FCT.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Using a descriptive survey and secondary data, as well as adopting peace journalism theory, the study has demonstrated that radio broadcasting plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable peace in Abuja. Noting some limitations of radio broadcasting in achieving its contributions to sustainable peace in Abuja, the study found that radio stations in Abuja use content creation, audience engagement strategies to encourage lasting peace. Talk shows, entertainment, and news broadcasts generally follow peace journalism principles by being inclusive and focused on solutions. The audience participated directly through call-ins, texts, and social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. This connection helped the stations build trust within the community and stay in touch with public sentiment.

The study therefore recommends the following:

i. Radio stations should increase interactive programmes such as call-ins, town hall discussions, community programmes, listener feedback mechanisms and social media integration to improve citizen participation and engagement in peace dialogue. Programmes should also incorporate storytelling, real-life testimonies and problem-solving discussions rather than relying solely on scripted news or educational segments. In addition, radio stations should create more special programmes that constructively and actively engage diverse voices, such as the marginalised groups, including gender, culture, and ethnic minorities, to ensure inclusivity in peacebuilding efforts rather than just representing.

ii. Addressing challenges to radio's effectiveness, policymakers, regulators such as the National Broadcasting Corporation, and media owners should resolve structural and institutional challenges. The government should not only increase funding and support for radio stations but also reduce interference to ensure press freedom.

iii. Due to the limited adoption of digital technology by radio stations in Abuja, this study recommends that these stations pursue support from both government and private investors to expand digital platforms, thereby enhancing their reach, engagement, and effectiveness in promoting peace.

iv. Media owners should provide training for radio presenters and producers on peace communication, conflict-sensitive reporting and ethical journalism to ensure that they are well-equipped to handle sensitive issues.

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