

Listeners' Assessment of the Role of Radio in the Coverage of Electoral Violence During the Edo State 2024 Gubernatorial Election

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates listeners' perceptions of the role of radio in covering electoral violence during the Edo State 2024 Gubernatorial Election, with broader implications for electoral violence coverage in Nigeria. Employing a survey research method with structured questionnaires, the research assesses audience views on radio effectiveness, objectivity and contribution to peacebuilding amid electoral tensions. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study explores how radio content influences public perception and social stability. The findings reveal that respondents generally perceive radio coverage as positive and peace oriented. However, they also express dissatisfaction with its overall effectiveness in mitigating electoral violence. Despite high exposure to peace messages, the perceived impact of radio coverage remains limited, showing challenges such as media bias, sensationalism and ownership influence. The study includes hypothesis testing which examines the relationship between listeners' exposure to radio and its effectiveness in the coverage of electoral violence. The analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship, suggesting that higher exposure correlates with more positive perceptions of radio role in electoral violence coverage. The study recommends the critical need for ethical journalism, editorial independence and targeted programming to enhance radio role as a credible tool for promoting electoral peace and democratic stability in Nigeria. It recommends the strengthening of editorial practices alongside continuous professional development to unlock radio full capacity in reporting electoral conflicts responsibly.

Keywords: Electoral Violence, Peacebuilding, Media Ethics, Conflict Management

INTRODUCTION

Electoral violence in Nigeria remains one of the major obstacles to national stability and democratic consolidation. Despite over two decades of uninterrupted civilian rule since 1999, elections continue to be marred by intimidation, ballot snatching, arson and politically motivated killings. As a vital institution shaping public perception and political behaviour, the media, particularly radio, plays a crucial role in informing citizens, monitoring power and promoting civic engagement. Radio importance in Nigeria cannot be overstated; it is affordable, accessible and widely consumed, especially in rural and semi-literate communities (Moloo et al., 2025).

Gupta et al. (2023) assert that credible elections are the foundation of sustainable national development, as free, fair and transparent elections are indispensable to democratic governance. Ali et al. (2018) stress that periodic elections enabling citizens to hold leaders accountable foster political stability and social peace. Within this context, radio ability to provide timely, accurate and balanced information on electoral violence is central to sustaining Nigeria democratic trajectory.

Since the return to democracy in 1999, election-related violence in Nigeria has grown in scale and complexity. Birch and Muchlinski (2020) observe that electoral violence has become a recurring feature of African politics, with Nigeria reflecting the same pattern seen in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. Such conflicts stem from intolerance, ethnic rivalry, and a "do-or-die" political mindset. Media sensationalism, biased framing, and unverified

reporting often heighten tensions, while radio talk shows and phone-ins can either foster peace or fuel conflict, underscoring the need for ethical and balanced journalism.

Cervera-Marzal (2024) notes that democracy provides legitimate means to resolve disputes, but violence arises when political actors disregard the rule of law. The 2011 post-election riots, which left hundreds dead highlighted the need for reforms, media responsibility and civic education (Obakhedo, 2011). Despite innovations like BVAS, elections in 2015, 2019 and 2023 still recorded violence, including disruptions in the 2024 Edo gubernatorial election (Ubanyionwu, 2024).

Radio remains essential for civic education and conflict-sensitive reporting. Oni (2018) emphasizes its accessibility and role in countering disinformation and promoting dialogue. However, its effectiveness depends on independence and professionalism. This study therefore examines radio role in reporting electoral violence in Nigeria, focusing on ownership structure, editorial policy and regulatory influences on reportage quality and peace promotion.

Statement of the Problem

Electoral violence remains one of the most enduring threats to Nigeria democratic development, eroding citizens' trust in the electoral process and undermining national stability. Nigerian elections have long been marked by violence, including ballot box snatching, intimidation, vote-buying and hate speech. The 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election reflected these same patterns, with reports of violent clashes, ballot theft and disruptions at collation centres. These recurring incidents reveal deep-rooted political intolerance, weak institutional enforcement and the manipulation of socio-economic vulnerabilities. Within this volatile context, the media, particularly radio, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, promoting peace and fostering accountability during elections.

Radio remains one of the most accessible and trusted information sources in Edo State due to its affordability, linguistic diversity and wide reach, especially in rural communities. Its immediacy and local language broadcasts make it a powerful medium for civic education, yet issues of fairness, balance and sensationalism persist. While some stations exacerbate political tensions through biased reporting, others promote peacebuilding and voter awareness. Understanding how listeners perceive these roles is vital to evaluating radio impact on managing electoral violence.

According to Bayo and Idowu (2025), few studies examine audience perceptions of radio performance during conflict-prone elections. Existing research focuses mainly on media practitioners, neglecting listeners' evaluations of credibility, neutrality and effectiveness. This study, therefore, assesses listeners' perceptions of radio role during the 2024 Edo election, examining trust levels, perceived bias and radio's contribution to peacebuilding and democratic participation.

Objectives of the Study

The researcher embarked on this study with the intent of achieving the following objectives:

To assess audience perception of radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Edo State.

- ii. To determine the level of effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Edo State.
- iii. To find out the extent of audience exposure to media messages on political conflict management and reconciliation.

Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

How does audience perceive radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Edo State?

- ii. What is the level of effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Edo State?
- iii. To what extent are audience exposed to media messages on political conflict management and resolution?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between listeners' exposure to radio and its effectiveness in the coverage of electoral violence.

Limitation of the Study

This study focused only on residents of Benin City, so the findings may not fully represent the views of people in other parts of Edo State or Nigeria. Different areas may have varying levels of access to radio, differences in literacy, and different media consumption habits, which could influence how radio is perceived.

Also, the study captured people's opinions at just one point in time during the election period. Because of this, it cannot show how perceptions may have changed over time or prove that radio exposure directly caused certain views about its effectiveness.

Although issues such as ownership bias, government regulations, and political interference were mentioned, they were not examined in detail. These factors could have influenced how radio performed and how people judged its coverage of electoral violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Electoral Violence

Obiam et al. (2022) define electoral violence as any organised act of threat or coercion aimed at intimidating or injuring political opponents before, during, or after elections to influence political outcomes. Pally (2022) describes it as riots, protests, killings, looting, arson and kidnappings linked to elections, whether planned or spontaneous. Kovacs (2018) includes verbal or physical intimidation, hate speech, disinformation and assassination intended to manipulate or delay elections.

Sisk and Reynolds (2019) explain electoral violence as threats or acts of coercion designed to obstruct or influence electoral processes. Such actions, they note, distort voting patterns, disrupt elections and undermine credibility. Electoral violence, therefore, represents a form of political violence that occurs throughout the electoral cycle, including kidnapping, murder, ballot box snatching and attacks on electoral officials and polling centres.

Across Africa, pre-election violence tends to be more severe than election-day violence, often involving attacks, intimidation and manipulation. Post-election violence manifests as protests, arson and attacks on participants, including voters and the media. Abdulazeez (2021) views electoral violence as a deliberate strategy to suppress opposition and secure political advantage. Albert (2007) defines it as structural, psychological and physical acts of blackmail intended to influence election outcomes, while Ochoche (2017) adds that violence can be systemic, emerging at various electoral stages through manipulation and corruption.

According to Yusuf (2019), electoral violence threatens Nigeria democratic development, weakening institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He stresses the need for credible democratic structures and adherence to "one man, one vote" for sustainable governance.

The Concept of Radio

The concept of radio has long been explored in communication studies as a powerful tool for mass information dissemination and social engagement. Emerging in the early 20th century, radio became a vital platform for news, entertainment and education through the transmission of audio signals across wide areas. Hamill (2022) describes radio as an intimate medium that creates a personal connection between broadcaster and audience,

making it a dominant information source in developing nations. Its portability, affordability and accessibility sustain its relevance in both rural and urban contexts.

In regions with low literacy rates, radio bridges communication gaps by broadcasting in local languages, making information more inclusive (Davtyan, 2024). It plays vital roles in political communication, health education and community mobilization. In Nigeria and other African countries, radio content often reflects local culture and language, fostering trust and engagement. Busolo and Manalo (2023) note that radio adaptability and communal appeal promote national integration and development. Through phone-in shows and discussions, it encourages audience participation and supports democratic communication.

Despite the rise of digital media, radio remains resilient through innovations such as online streaming and podcasting. Chukwu (2023) notes that these digital transformations expand radio reach and relevance in the age of media convergence. Its low production cost ensures sustainability, particularly in low-income regions. Radio reliability in crises, such as natural disasters or conflicts, demonstrates its enduring utility (Chernobrov, 2018).

The concept of radio also aligns with media effects theories. According to Camaj (2019), agenda-setting theory explains radio influence in shaping public priorities through issue framing. In political communication, radio immediacy and credibility make it essential for electoral coverage. Naaikuur et al. (2022) emphasize that community radio enhances grassroots participation and empowers marginalized groups. Thus, radio technological, social and political dimensions affirm its continued relevance in shaping public opinion.

The Role of the Media in Curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

In contemporary politics, the media serves as a vital link between politicians and the electorate. Stromer-Galley (2019) notes that television commercials have become a central and costly aspect of campaigns, while Baum and Potter (2019) emphasize that democracy suffers when citizens lack accurate political information. However, politicians often exploit the media for self-promotion rather than public enlightenment. Carlson et al. (2021) observe that although politicians and the media are not inherently adversaries, both aim to shape public opinion, politicians for power and the media for audience retention.

Media institutions are expected to promote socio-political development and resist manipulation. During elections, they should provide voters with accurate information about parties and candidates to aid informed decision-making. Chukwudi (2024) advises journalists to deliver objective reports emphasizing candidates' competence over empty promises. Ball et al. (2019) affirm that voters rely on media coverage to assess manifestos and qualifications, underscoring the need for balance and fairness.

Media bias undermines credibility and democratic ethics. All candidates should have equal access to communicate their agendas, ensuring citizens make confident and informed choices. Ugwu and Abah (2020) highlight that political education can combat religious or ethnic bias, discouraging support for corrupt politicians. According to Olley et al. (2024), political participation only becomes meaningful when voters are adequately informed, emphasizing competence and integrity as vital electoral qualities.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

McGarr (2023) explored audience perceptions of journalists' emotional tone during contentious political events through surveys and interviews. The findings indicated that audience trust in radio depends significantly on emotional engagement and perceived bias. When journalists maintain fairness and composure, listener trust strengthens; however, emotional hostility reduces credibility and weakens the media peacebuilding role.

McGarr's study relates closely to this research by emphasizing trust and audience perception as central to radio social influence. Both recognize that credibility and neutrality are essential for maintaining public confidence, especially during elections.

However, McGarr's focus differs in scope, his study centres on journalists' emotional behaviour and its effect on audience reaction, while the present research evaluates radio overall effectiveness, objectivity and peace-oriented coverage of electoral violence during the Edo State 2024 gubernatorial election.

Oni (2021) examined how radio counters disinformation and hate speech during Nigerian elections through content analysis and listener feedback. The study found that while radio possesses great potential for fostering civic engagement and peace, sensationalism, bias and weak editorial control often undermine this potential. Oni argued that prioritizing political and commercial interests over ethics compromises credibility, allowing misinformation to thrive. His findings align with the present study emphasis on ethical reporting as a foundation for peace journalism. Both highlight the vital role of radio in shaping public perception and mitigating tensions during elections.

However, Oni (2021) research focuses on ownership structures and regulatory frameworks influencing radio integrity, while the current study assesses listeners' evaluations of radio balance and effectiveness in addressing electoral violence. Oni focuses on institutional and regulatory factors, whereas the present study explores how audiences perceive these dynamics in real electoral contexts.

Birch and Muchlinski (2020) conducted a cross-national analysis examining the relationship between media freedom, professionalism and electoral violence. Their study developed a global dataset of countries at risk of electoral conflict, finding a strong correlation between media ethics and reduced violence. Where media outlets maintained impartiality, violence levels decreased; biased or inflammatory reporting, however, heightened distrust and unrest. Their work aligns closely with this study in emphasizing responsible journalism as key to preventing electoral crises. Both underscore the dangers of sensationalism and bias in eroding trust and escalating political conflict.

While the current study adopts a micro-level focus on Nigeria, specifically, listeners' perceptions of radio role during the 2024 Edo gubernatorial election, Birch and Muchlinski (2020) provide a macro-level, comparative view across countries. Their global findings reinforce the present research argument that media ethics and audience trust are crucial for sustaining electoral peace and democratic stability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory remains one of the most influential frameworks in media research, explaining how and why individuals actively engage with media. Developed by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in the 1970s, the theory shifted attention from media effects on passive audience to the active role of users in selecting and interpreting messages (Blumler & Katz, 1974). It assumes audience are goal-oriented, seeking media that meet cognitive (information), affective (emotional), personal integrative (self-esteem), social integrative (connection) and tension release (escape) needs (Katz et al., 1973). Thus, people consume media not only for information but also for entertainment, reassurance and social belonging, positioning the audience as an active evaluator of media usefulness.

A major strength of U&G lies in its adaptability to different contexts. It posits that people's psychological states and social circumstances determine their media use and satisfaction. For instance, an anxious citizen may seek political updates to reduce uncertainty, while another may pursue entertainment to avoid stress. This highlights that media effects are not uniform, the same content may inform one listener but distress another (Katz et al., 1973). U&G, therefore, provides a suitable framework for audience-centered studies employing surveys or interviews to understand individual motives and interpretations.

Applied to this study, U&G explains how Edo citizens used radio during the 2024 gubernatorial election. Some listeners sought cognitive gratifications, accurate information about polling, security and results, while others pursued affective and social gratifications such as reassurance and solidarity through discussions and peace-oriented programs (Ekhorugue, 2024). The theory clarifies why some perceived radio as peace-promoting while others viewed it as tension-inducing, depending on content quality. It underscores that effective election

coverage depends on aligning broadcasts with audience needs for credible, calming and balanced information to sustain trust and promote peace.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is the survey research design. Survey Research method was considered most appropriate because it is a type of research method that allows researchers to investigate problems that have to do with eliciting responses from human beings. It equally allows researchers to examine the interrelationships among variables and to develop explanatory inferences (Asenahabi, 2019).

The population of this study are residents of Benin City. The choice of Benin City for this study is informed by the fact that it is the State Capital where a lot of political activities normally take place. The population of Benin residents is estimated at 14,700,764 (Worldometer, 2025).

In order to ensure manageability of the study, the sample size of this study was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula which gives 400 as the appropriate sampling size. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 400.

The researcher employed the multistage sampling technique for this study. At the first stage, Benin City was stratified into its constituent Local Government Areas. From these, Egor Local Government Area was selected as the study area due to its strategic location, population density and active political participation within Benin City.

At the second stage, Egor Local Government Area was further divided into its political wards. A simple random sampling technique was used to select four wards of Otubu, Oliha, Uwelu, and Evbareke from the Local Government Area to ensure fairness and equal chance of selection.

At the third stage, the selected wards were divided into streets. From these streets, households were selected using systematic random sampling. This was done by selecting every *n*th household based on a determined sampling interval.

At the final stage, where more than one eligible respondent was present in a household, one respondent was selected through simple random selection to avoid bias. Only residents who met the criterion of being radio listeners were considered eligible for participation.

Data were collected by use of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to ask respondents to tick only the options that best agreed with the survey questions asked as well as indicating their opinions in writing where necessary.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 40 respondents drawn from areas outside the selected wards. The responses from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's alpha and a coefficient of 0.82 was obtained, indicating that the questionnaire had high internal consistency and was reliable for the study.

The validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review. The questionnaire was submitted to two lecturers and a research expert in communication studies to examine the content, clarity and relevance of the items. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the questions and ensure that the instrument accurately measured the intended variables.

Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire that was administered for the purpose of this study, 20 were invalid, making the return rate of copies of questionnaire distributed 380, representing a response rate of 95% of the respondents.

The data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which was employed to compute both simple percentage distributions and Chi-square statistics. The results were presented with the aid of tables for clarity and ease of interpretation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

During this research, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, but 20 were incorrectly completed and discarded, leaving 380 valid responses used for the study.

Table 1: What is your gender?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male | 213 | 56.1 | 56.1 | 56.1 |
| | Female | 167 | 43.9 | 43.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 380 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Table 2: What position did radio take in the coverage of the electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Negative | 76 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| | Positive | 219 | 57.6 | 57.6 | 77.6 |
| | Can't say | 85 | 22.4 | 22.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 380 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Table 2 shows that most respondents (57.6%) viewed radio coverage of the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election as positive, while 20% saw it as negative and 22.4% were undecided, indicating radio was largely perceived as promoting peace and constructive reporting.

Table 3: How would you rate the effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State Gubernatorial election?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Excellent | 77 | 20.3 | 20.3 | 20.3 |
| | Very good | 71 | 18.7 | 18.7 | 38.9 |
| | Good | 49 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 51.8 |
| | Moderate | 15 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 55.8 |
| | Poor | 55 | 14.5 | 14.5 | 70.3 |
| | Very poor | 113 | 29.7 | 29.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 380 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Table 3 reveals that most respondents (44.7%) rated radio coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election as poor, while only 39% rated it good or excellent, indicating that listeners generally viewed radio performance as ineffective and below expectations.

Table 4: How would you rate the extent to which you are exposed to radio messages on political conflict management and resolution?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Very high | 215 | 56.6 | 56.6 | 56.6 |
| | High | 63 | 16.6 | 16.6 | 73.2 |
| | Low | 89 | 23.4 | 23.4 | 96.6 |
| | Very low | 13 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 380 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Table 4 shows that most respondents (73.2%) reported high exposure to radio messages on political conflict management during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election, indicating that radio effectively reached a wide audience with peace and conflict resolution content.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: There is no significant relationship between listeners’ exposure to radio and its effectiveness in the coverage of electoral violence.

How would you rate the extent to which you are exposed to radio messages on political conflict management and resolution? * How would you rate the effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State Gubernatorial election? Crosstabulation

| Count | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|------|----------|------|
| | | How would you rate the effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State Gubernatorial election? | | | | |
| | | Excellent | Very good | Good | Moderate | Poor |
| How would you rate the extent to which you are exposed to radio messages on political conflict management and resolution? | Very high | 77 | 71 | 49 | 15 | 3 |
| | High | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 52 |
| | Low | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Very low | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 77 | 71 | 49 | 15 | 55 |

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 640.997 ^a | 15 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 644.199 | 15 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 290.692 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 380 | | |

Decision Rule

At 0.05 level of significance:

- If $p < 0.05$, reject H_0
- If $p > 0.05$, accept H_0

Since $p = .000$, which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The chi-square analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between listeners' exposure to radio and its effectiveness in the coverage of electoral violence. This means that listeners' level of exposure to radio is significantly associated with how effective they perceive radio to be in covering electoral violence. In other words, exposure to radio influences listeners' assessment of its effectiveness during electoral violence coverage.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How does audience perceive radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Edo State?

The findings reveal that audience largely perceived radio as playing a positive, peace-oriented role in its coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election. Table 2 shows that 57.6% of respondents viewed radio coverage as constructive and responsible, indicating that radio effectively promoted calm, provided accurate information and discouraged conflict. This affirms radio continuing relevance as a trusted medium for peace advocacy and political communication due to its accessibility, immediacy and credibility (Okon, 2019).

The positive perception of radio performance can be further understood from the standpoint of Uses and Gratifications Theory. This theoretical perspective maintains that media consumers are purposeful and goal-oriented, choosing specific media platforms to meet particular cognitive and emotional needs such as information seeking, security and social orientation (Katz et al., 1973). In moments of electoral uncertainty and potential violence, audience naturally gravitate toward accessible and immediate sources like radio for clarification and reassurance. The favourable evaluation observed in this study therefore indicates that radio adequately fulfilled these audience needs, enhancing its credibility and affirming its function as a medium capable of supporting peace and stability.

This outcome aligns with Bayo and Idowu (2025), who identified radio as a key tool for fostering dialogue and peaceful coexistence when guided by ethical journalism principles like balance and fairness. Birch and Muchlinski (2020) found that media organizations adhering to professionalism and impartiality reduce the likelihood of electoral violence. These findings reinforce the view that ethical radio coverage strengthens democracy and enhances public trust.

The result also supports Udochukwu et al. (2024), who reported that responsible media practices reduce electoral tensions and promote transparency. McGarr (2023) observed that audience trust in radio depends on perceived fairness and professionalism, factors reflected in the positive ratings from Edo listeners. Together, these studies highlight that adherence to journalistic ethics enables radio to function as a peacebuilding medium.

However, Oni (2021) cautioned that sensationalism, partisanship and lack of editorial balance can undermine radio credibility, while Ayodele and Ibrahim (2022) noted that some Nigerian stations still serve partisan interests.

Overall, the findings confirm that audience in Edo State view radio as constructive and credible in promoting peace. Sustaining this role requires maintaining editorial independence, ethical reporting and professional training focused on peace-oriented election coverage.

Research Question 2: What is the level of effectiveness of radio in the coverage of electoral violence in Nigeria?

Findings from Table 3 show that respondents largely rated radio coverage of electoral violence during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election as ineffective. A combined 44.2% (113 very poor, 55 poor) expressed dissatisfaction, indicating that while radio remains an important communication tool, its conflict-sensitive reporting needs improvement.

This result contrasts with Bayo and Idowu (2025), who found that radio can promote peace and dialogue when managed ethically and independently. The present study suggests a gap between this theoretical potential and actual performance, possibly due to ownership influence or political interference, factors also noted by Oni (2021), who observed that sensationalism and lack of balance undermine radio credibility during elections.

The outcome also supports Udochukwu et al. (2024) and Birch and Muchlinski (2020), who emphasized that media effectiveness in preventing electoral violence depends on fairness, neutrality and professionalism. The low ratings in this study may reflect weaknesses in these areas, indicating that Edo radio coverage lacked depth or impartiality. McGarr (2023) further explains that audience perceptions of ineffectiveness may stem from journalists' emotional tone or perceived bias, which can erode public trust.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, audience actively select media platforms to satisfy needs such as surveillance, reassurance and guidance, especially during periods of political uncertainty (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In this case, listeners who turned to radio for credible information and conflict-sensitive updates during the election may have felt that their informational and security needs were not adequately gratified. The dissatisfaction recorded in this study therefore suggests a failure of radio to meet audience expectations, reinforcing the theory assumption that when media do not fulfill audience needs, perceptions of effectiveness decline.

Nevertheless, the findings confirm that audience in Edo State perceived radio as ineffective in addressing electoral violence. Despite its peacebuilding potential, radio performance fell short of expectations. Improving professionalism, editorial independence and conflict-sensitive reporting remain vital for enhancing radio's credibility and role in fostering peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Research Question 3: To what extent are audience exposed to media messages on political conflict management and resolution?

The findings to research question 3 reveal that audience were substantially exposed to radio messages on political conflict management and resolution during the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election. As shown in Table 4, 278 respondents (73.2%) reported a high level of exposure, confirming that radio served as a major source of peacebuilding information during the election. This aligns with Bayo and Idowu (2025), who emphasized that radio fosters dialogue, peaceful coexistence and understanding when guided by ethical journalism principles such as accuracy and fairness. The result also expands their study by providing an audience-based perspective, showing that listeners actively engaged with radio messages promoting electoral peace.

Oni (2021) identified radio as a vital platform for countering misinformation and enhancing public trust during elections through balanced reporting. This study supports Oni's conclusion, as most respondents confirmed exposure to peace-oriented broadcasts during the 2024 Edo election. However, while Oni focused on ownership and regulation, this study provides a people-centered insight, showing that radio accessibility and consistency can overcome structural limitations and sustain its peacebuilding role.

The results also align with Birch and Muchlinski (2020), who observed that societies with ethical and free media experience fewer instances of electoral violence. Their findings highlight the preventive role of responsible journalism, mirrored in the Edo context where high radio exposure demonstrated media effectiveness in promoting political stability. Likewise, Udochukwu et al. (2024) argued that ethical coverage reduces electoral tension, while irresponsible reporting escalates it. This study supports their claim, revealing that respondents' exposure to peace-driven radio content contributed to public enlightenment and reduced misinformation.

The findings further resonate with McGarr (2023), who showed that neutrality and professionalism in reporting enhance audience trust and strengthen radio peacebuilding impact. The high exposure reported in this study suggests that Edo listeners trusted and regularly followed conflict management programmes. This corroborates Asemah and Edegoh (2022), who identified radio as the most pervasive and accessible tool for political education and peace campaigns in Nigeria, especially in semi-urban communities.

However, Yakubu (2021) cautioned that high exposure may not always lead to behavioural change, as political loyalties often limit message impact. Despite this, the present study confirms that in Edo State, radio exposure was both substantial and effective in promoting awareness of peace and conflict resolution. Overall, the evidence underscores radio's enduring role as a vital instrument for civic enlightenment, political stability and electoral peace through sustained ethical broadcasting.

Hypothesis

The chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 640.997$, $df = 15$, $p = .000$, $N = 380$) revealed a p-value less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding establishes that a statistically significant relationship exists between listeners' exposure to radio and their assessment of its effectiveness in covering electoral violence during the Edo State 2024 Gubernatorial Election. In practical terms, the more exposed listeners were to radio broadcasts, the more likely they were to perceive the medium as effective in reporting and managing information related to electoral violence. As McQuail (2010) explains, consistent interaction with a medium reinforces its perceived authority and influence in the minds of audiences. In this regard, exposure functions as both a channel of information and a mechanism for building trust.

The finding can be meaningfully interpreted through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory. The theory posits that audiences are active agents who deliberately select media to satisfy specific needs, including surveillance, guidance, reassurance and social integration. During periods of electoral violence, citizens experience heightened uncertainty and anxiety, which intensify their need for reliable information. Radio, due to its immediacy and reach, becomes a primary source of updates and interpretation. Listeners who actively turn to radio for such gratifications are likely to judge it as effective because it meets their informational and psychological needs.

In line with this finding, Perloff (2021) argues that sustained exposure to political communication enhances political knowledge and civic engagement, suggesting that repeated contact with political content increases perceived media relevance. Oluyemi and Badmus (2025) maintain that repeated exposure to media messages reinforces audience perception and shapes social reality.

Nevertheless, Schäfer and Taddicken (2015) opine that media effects are often mediated by opinion leaders rather than resulting directly from exposure alone. From this standpoint, listeners' assessment of radio effectiveness may be influenced not only by how frequently they listen but also by how community leaders interpret and discuss radio messages. Moy et al. (2016) argue that framing and agenda-setting power, rather than mere exposure, significantly shape public perception.

Despite these contrary views, the magnitude and significance of the chi-square result in this study indicate that exposure remains a central variable in explaining listeners' assessment of radio's role. While other factors such as credibility, framing, and message quality may interact with exposure, the statistical evidence demonstrates that frequency of listening significantly corresponds with perceived effectiveness. In the specific context of electoral violence coverage, radio appears to have functioned as a primary channel for information dissemination, conflict updates, and possibly peace advocacy.

CONCLUSION

The media holds a crucial responsibility to the public, requiring journalists to maintain objectivity, accuracy, accountability, professionalism and confidentiality. When guided by these standards, the media can play a constructive role in preventing political violence; however, in sensitive peace negotiations, excessive coverage may escalate tensions instead of resolving them. As a powerful force shaping public attitudes and behaviour, the media can be an effective tool for peacebuilding when used strategically to reduce polarization. Both media and peace professionals share the goal of mitigating conflict, though each faces limitations that must be understood and managed to ensure that communication fosters resolution rather than discord.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Radio stations should strengthen and institutionalize peace journalism practices by training journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting and maintaining editorial independence to sustain and deepen public trust in the medium.
- ii. Broadcast organizations and regulatory bodies should invest in capacity-building programmes focused on professional ethics, balanced reportage and conflict management techniques to enhance the quality and credibility of radio coverage during elections.
- iii. Radio stations should sustain and expand their peace-oriented programming by increasing the frequency and reach of such messages, especially in rural and grassroots communities, to consolidate public awareness and promote long-term peacebuilding.

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