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## **Influence of Radio Messages on Security Alertness among Residents of Bayelsa East Senatorial District**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The study assesses the influence of radio messages on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa East Senatorial District, investigating whether these messages effectively foster security consciousness in a region prone to kidnapping, sea piracy, and election-related violence.

**Methodology:** A survey research design was adopted, utilizing a sample size of 384 residents selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a quantitative questionnaire and analyzed with simple frequencies and percentages to determine exposure levels and behavioral influence.

**Results:** Findings reveal that exposure to security alertness messages is low, with 51.5% of respondents reporting no exposure and 36.6% hearing messages only once a week. Furthermore, 65% of residents were not influenced by these radio messages, as they prioritised political and community development programmes over security-related broadcasts.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that the influence of radio on security alertness in the district is weak. It recommends that the state government partner with media outfits to increase the frequency of qualitative, persuasive, and simple security messages to enhance public vigilance.

**Keywords:** Bayelsa East, Radio Messages, Residents, Security Alertness, Security Consciousness

## Introduction

Nigeria has faced a series of security challenges that have caused significant unrest across the country. Attacks occur in various sectors of society, particularly in Northern Nigeria, perpetrated by groups such as Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram, and bandits. These activities hinder human development and sustainability, specifically threatening food security. According to Ugwu et al. (2022) banditry has caused chaos in Northern states like Borno, Katsina, Kaduna, and Zamfara through the killing of farmers and businessmen, the seizure of farmlands, and the blocking of local trade routes. Amnesty International (2018) estimated that between January 2016 and October 2018, at least 3,000 to 4,000 people were killed in such attacks.

The rising frequency of these disasters jeopardises the entire food system and poses a significant threat to nation-building (Owoo, 2018; Otekunrin et al., 2023). Furthermore, these multifaceted challenges have compelled the Federal Government to expend billions in an effort to curtail persistent threats to national security and ensure stability (Obi, 2015; Nzubechukwu et al., 2022). Section 14, Subsection 2b of the 1999 Constitution stipulates that the security and welfare of citizens shall be the primary responsibility of the government. Beyond state protection, consciousness is a biological type of conduct regulated by the brain's cortex, making public awareness essential.

Broadcast media, particularly radio, remains a potent tool for reaching extensive, heterogeneous, and dispersed audiences. It serves the tripartite function of informing, educating, and entertaining the public while simultaneously shaping moral conduct; furthermore, research suggests that the nature of such broadcasting—reaching a large, anonymous audience—significantly influences the type of content shared and its subsequent impact on social behaviour (Barasch & Berger, 2014). Radio stations have responded to the security crisis by broadcasting alertness messages. For instance, Silverbird Rhythms 93.7 FM in Yenagoa uses the slogan Shun Violence and Embrace Peace to encourage environmental consciousness. Similarly, Radio Bayelsa 97.1 FM airs neighbourhood watch programmes, though their effectiveness is questioned due to the prevalence of kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, and sea piracy in the state. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) also attempts to infuse security consciousness through programmes like Watch 360 and the provision of emergency contact numbers.

### *Brief History and Geography of Bayelsa State*

Located in the centre of the Niger Delta, Bayelsa State was created in 1996. It shares boundaries with Delta State to the North, Rivers State to the East, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West and South. The state's name is an acronym derived from three Local Government Areas: Brass (BALGA), Yenagoa (YELGA), and Sagbama (SALGA). Bayelsa is known as the cradle of Ijaw culture and contains Nigeria's largest deposits of crude oil and natural gas.

Despite its oil wealth, Bayelsa East (comprising Brass, Nembe, and Ogbia LGAs) remains plagued by security issues including militancy, maritime piracy, and election violence. Conflict often arises between the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) over the control of oil-rich territories. This volatile environment has deterred investment and heightened poverty. Radio has emerged as the most convenient means of educating the public about these

potential threats. As an environmental watchdog, broadcast radio warns society of upcoming dangers and encourages residents to shun violence for the betterment of society.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to assess the influence of radio messages on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa Eastern Senatorial District. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the frequency of exposure to radio messages on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa East Senatorial District.
2. Ascertain the influence these radio messages have on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa East Senatorial District.
3. Find out the types of programmes through which residents of Bayelsa East get exposed to security alertness messages.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Conceptualising Security and Insecurity in the Nigerian Context*

Security remains a contested and essentially challenged concept in academic discourse, often defined by the absence of threats to acquired values (Baldwin, 2000). While early definitions focused heavily on physical protection and the absence of risk, modern scholars have increasingly broadened the term beyond traditional military boundaries. This evolution involves conceptualising security through more diverse, non-traditional lenses that account for the shifting nature of global and domestic threats (Smith, 2000).

Conversely, insecurity is defined as a state of anxiety or exposure to risk arising from a perceived or real lack of protection (Achumba et al., 2013). This condition is driven by both remote and immediate factors. Remote causes include institutional inadequacies, pervasive material inequalities, and the erosion of communal value systems. Immediate drivers include terrorism, unemployment, poverty, and rural-urban drift. Furthermore, a lack of security awareness amongst both rural and urban dwellers often exacerbates these challenges, as ignorance of specific dangers prevents the adoption of precautionary measures (Achumba et al., 2013).

The structural dimensions of security are increasingly understood through the interplay between individual and societal levels, where the referent object of security often shifts from the state to the person (Bilgin, 2003). These dimensions are further complicated in regions where competitive authoritarian regimes must negotiate rapidly changing security environments that threaten social stability (Hill & Cavatorta, 2019). Furthermore, the security dimension is frequently tied to the management of regional politics and the stability of economic systems (Zagorsky, 2002). Within these frameworks, the inability of a state to deliver essential services or manage its resources effectively creates a pool of resentment that can easily translate into systemic violence.

### *The Role of Radio Messages in Promoting Security*

The media, often described as the fourth estate of the realm, wields significant power in reshaping public opinion and influencing citizen behaviour regarding safety (Ejike et al., 2012; Yusuf, 2019). Amongst various channels, radio remains a dominant force due to its accessibility and capacity to deliver timely updates that inform the daily lives of residents (Zheng & Lu, 2020).

The influence of media on national stability is significant, as the relationship between mass communication and national interests is fundamental to the promotion of a security culture (Munteanu, 2020). In particular, radio serves as a vital tool for addressing security threats at the grassroots level; for instance, in Northern Nigeria, radio has been utilised to monitor and address attacks on farmers by groups such as herdsmen and bandits, though its effectiveness often depends on being proactive rather than merely reactive (Suemo et al., 2022). Beyond physical safety, the medium plays a crucial role in broader security dimensions, such as food security, by combining traditional broadcasts with interactive ICTs to provide smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa with essential information (Hudson et al., 2017). Because the media is a primary source of information during conflicts, the way these security issues are framed—whether through straight news or investigative reporting—dictates how the populace perceives threats and adopts security-conscious behaviours.

### *Security Consciousness amongst Residents*

Security consciousness is defined in this study as the state of alertness, knowledge, and capacity to identify and avoid actions that endanger lives or property. In regions like Bayelsa East, persistent threats from pipeline vandalism, cultism, and political assassinations have necessitated a higher degree of vigilance. However, a lack of awareness often leads to ignorance of the consequences of crime, which further hampers socio-economic development (Gever & Michael, 2014).

The Nigerian Constitution (1999) mandates that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. Despite this, the burden of consciousness often falls on the individual. Psychological perspectives suggest that such consciousness is a regulated behaviour that allows individuals to respond to environmental risks (Kotchoubey, 2018). While broadcast outfits like Glory FM 97.1 attempt to raise this awareness through weekly programming, the frequency and reach of such messages remain points of academic concern.

Empirical studies offer a mixed assessment of media performance in the security sector. Udeze and Chukwuma (2013) highlight that while the surveillance function of the media is vital for national security, broadcast media have yet to play this role effectively.

Empirical assessments suggest that while broadcast media hold significant potential to enhance public safety, systemic challenges often prevent them from maximising this impact. The media typically operates through two primary watchdog roles: the instrumental watchdog, providing utility-based information, and the warning/surveillance watchdog, designed to alert the public to impending threats. However, effective communication during disasters is frequently hindered by pressing organisational and structural problems within the press (Lowrey et al., 2007). Furthermore, the success of such media interventions often depends on their ability to shift

personal risk perceptions and increase self-efficacy amongst the populace (Agha, 2003). In the Nigerian context, evidence indicates that the warning function remains particularly underutilised, leaving a gap between the media's potential to safeguard the public and its actual performance during crises.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Agenda Setting Theory*

The Agenda Setting Theory is a cornerstone of mass communication research, primarily concerned with the ability of the media to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda. The origins of this theory are often traced to Walter Lippmann's 1922 work, *Public Opinion*, where he theorised that the media are responsible for the pictures in our heads. Lippmann argued that the world is too complex for most individuals to experience directly; therefore, they rely on the media to map out a version of reality.

The formalisation of the theory occurred through the groundbreaking research of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972). During the 1968 presidential election, they discovered a nearly perfect correlation between what the news media reported as important and what voters perceived as the most significant issues of the day. Their research advanced the hypothesis that editors, broadcasters, and newsroom staff play a pivotal role in shaping political reality by choosing which stories to display and how much prominence to afford them.

### *Core Tenets and Mechanics*

The basic premise of agenda setting is that the media do not necessarily tell people *what to think*, but they are stunningly successful in telling them *what to think about*. This occurs through various editorial mechanisms:

- **Repetition and Frequency:** Regular reporting on a specific subject, such as kidnapping or sea piracy, signals to the audience that the issue is of high priority.
- **Placement and Prominence:** The amount of information provided and its position—such as a lead story on a radio news bulletin—determine the importance the public attaches to the issue.
- **Visual and Auditory Emphasis:** Use of dramatic headlines, specific timing on radio broadcasts, and repetitive jingles or slogans helps the audience attach significance to the issues.

### *Application to the Study*

In the context of security in Bayelsa East, the Agenda Setting Theory suggests that when radio stations frequently highlight security situations, it prompts the public to think or respond to those issues. If the media emphasises the prevalence of kidnapping and sea piracy through consistent reporting and dedicated security alerts, the residents are more likely to develop a heightened sense of security consciousness. However, if the media agenda is dominated by political or entertainment content, the public may perceive security as a secondary concern, even in the face of imminent threats.

### *Social Responsibility Theory*

The Social Responsibility Theory was propounded in 1956 by F.S. Siebert, T.B. Paterson, and W. Schramm. It emerged as a response to the perceived pitfalls of the Libertarian Theory, which allowed for a free press without any ethical or regulatory control. The Social Responsibility Theory seeks to balance the freedom of the press with an obligation to the public interest (Commission on Freedom of the Press 1947).

#### *Ethical Obligations and Public Interest*

This theory posits that while the media should be free from excessive government control, they must operate under an obligation to report all aspects of society, especially those that have a direct impact on public welfare. It identifies the traditional functions of the media as:

- Information and Education: Providing the public with the facts necessary for informed decision-making.
- Entertainment: Offering cultural and leisure content that does not compromise societal standards.
- Surveillance: Acting as a watchdog that monitors and alerts the community to potential dangers.

#### *Application to the Study*

The Social Responsibility Theory is highly relevant to the study of security alertness in Bayelsa State. It affirms that radio stations are socially responsible for relaying security reports that help the audience adopt safety measures. In the absence of such responsible reporting, residents find it difficult to access news geared toward enabling security alertness, which can lead to increased casualties when security issues persist.

The theory suggests that being the first estate of the realm, the media are obliged to perform their surveillance functions by providing security updates and information on the best ways to adopt security-conscious measures. For the residents of Bayelsa East, this means that radio stations should not just broadcast for profit or political interest but must prioritise the security and well-being of the community as a moral and professional duty.

#### *Synthesis of Theories*

The integration of these two theories provides a holistic framework for evaluating radio messages in Bayelsa State. While Agenda Setting explains *how* the media can heighten public awareness through frequency and prominence, Social Responsibility provides the *why*—the ethical mandate that drives the media to alert the public to dangers like piracy and kidnapping.

Together, they suggest that effective security alertness is not just a matter of transmitting information, but of strategically placing security on the public agenda as a responsible act of civic duty. This study utilizes this framework to determine if radio stations in Bayelsa are successfully setting a security agenda and fulfilling their social obligations to their listeners.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

The study adopted a survey research design, utilising quantitative methodologies to assess the influence of radio messages on security alertness. This design was selected to elicit first-hand information from a pre-defined group of respondents.

### *Population and Sample Size*

The study population comprises 494,664 residents across the three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bayelsa East Senatorial District:

- Brass: 184,127
- Nembe: 130,931
- Ogbia: 179,606

Using the Australian sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level and a 0.05 confidence interval, a sample size of 384 was determined.

### *Sampling Technique*

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure appropriateness and prevent bias.

- Stage 1 (Cluster Sampling): The population was grouped into the three LGAs representing the senatorial district.
- Stage 2 (Cluster Sampling): The LGAs were further divided into their respective political wards (10 in Brass, 13 in Nembe, and 13 in Ogbia).
- Stage 3 (Purposive Sampling): One central ward from each LGA was selected based on the prevalence of security issues and literacy levels: Brass Ward 1, Ogbolomabiri Ward 1 (Nembe), and Ogbia Town Ward 1.
- Stage 4 (Proportionate Sampling): Questionnaires were distributed based on the population size of each LGA:
  - Brass: 143 copies
  - Nembe: 102 copies
  - Ogbia: 139 copies

### *Instrument for Data Collection*

Data were generated using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: Section A for demographic data and Section B for psychographic data. The instrument utilised a mix of open-ended questions to allow for in-depth responses and close-ended questions to ensure uniformity in analysis.

### *Validity and Reliability*

Validity was established through face validity, with the instrument being reviewed and validated by the project supervisor and an additional lecturer. Reliability was determined by calculating the consistency of measures, resulting in a reliability score of 72%.

### *Method of Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were analysed using simple frequencies, percentages, and tables to ensure clarity and accuracy in presenting the respondents' opinions

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study based on the research objectives and questions. The data were processed using simple frequency distributions and percentages to ensure clarity in interpretation.

## **Results**

### *Description of Sample and Response Rate*

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the target population. Out of these, 369 copies were successfully retrieved and found valid for analysis, representing a 96% response rate.

### *Presentation of Demographic Data*

The personal variables of the 369 respondents were analysed to provide a context for their psychographic responses.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Age	25–29	87	23.6
	30–34	180	48.7
	35–39	81	22
	40 and above	21	5.7
Sex	Male	185	50.1
	Female	184	49.9
Occupation	Civil Servant	138	37.4
	Business	122	33.1
	Student	109	29.5
Religion	Christianity	190	51.5
	Islam	179	48.5

Marital Status	Married	126	34.1
	Single	122	33.1
	Divorced	121	32.8

The demographic data as shown in Table 1, shows a relatively balanced gender distribution. A plurality of respondents (48.7%) falls within the 30–34 age bracket, and 37.4% are civil servants.

*Presentation of Psychographic Data and Research Objectives*

*Research Objective 1:* The frequency of exposure towards radio messages on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa East

Analysis reveals that a significant majority of respondents (81.3%) own a radio set, citing portability, lack of reliance on electricity, and the use of local dialects as primary reasons for preference.

**Table 2: Patterns of Radio Consumption**

Item	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Duration per session	15–20 minutes	123	33.3
	21–40 minutes	126	34.2
	Above 41 minutes	120	32.5
Weekly exposure to security alerts	Once a week	135	36.6
	Twice a week	90	24.4
	Once a month	83	22.5
	Twice a month	61	16.5

The result of the study as presented in Table 2, shows that regarding exposure, 51.5% of respondents indicated they were not adequately exposed to security alertness messages, while 48.5% responded in the affirmative. The data suggests that while radio ownership is high, the frequency of specific security-related content is perceived as low by the majority.

*Research objective 2:* influence of radio message on security alertness among the residents of Bayelsa East

**Table 3: Perceived Influence of Security Alerts**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Influenced by messages	129	35
Not influenced	240	65

Total	369	100
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When asked about the extent of this influence as shown in Table 3, 46.2% of respondents rated it as low, 36.5% as moderate, and only 17.3% as high. This indicates that existing radio messages have yet to significantly alter the security consciousness of the target population.

*Research Objective 3:* The programme types through which residents get exposed more than security alertness messages

**Table 4: Preferences for Radio Programming**

Programme Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Political programmes	105	28.4
Community development	73	19.8
Relationship programmes	69	18.7
Neighbourhood watch	62	16.8
Music programmes	60	16.3

The results, as shown in Table 4, show that political programming is the most consumed content (28.4%), while dedicated security programmes like neighbourhood watch receive comparatively lower attention.

*Alternative Sources and Improvements*

Other significant sources of security information identified include interpersonal communication (26.8%) and television (27.6%). To improve security alertness, 32.7% of respondents suggested increasing the frequency of security messages, while 26.5% recommended the public release of emergency numbers through radio broadcasts.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of the intersection between radio broadcasting and security consciousness in Bayelsa East. Following the presentation of data, this section discusses the results in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

The first research question sought to determine the frequency of exposure to radio messages on security alertness among residents. The findings established that while a vast majority of the residents possess radio sets and engage with the medium, there is a distinct lack of prominence given to security-related content. Although respondents are active radio listeners, many indicated that they do not regularly encounter messages specifically designed to foster security alertness.

This reinforces the concept that the media has a fundamental role in promoting national security interests, yet its efficacy is tied to how well it captures general attention (Munteanu, 2020). The high level of radio ownership in Bayelsa East suggests a ready infrastructure for security communication; however, the current low frequency of such messages aligns with the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that if the media does not grant salience to an issue, the public will not perceive it as a priority (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The second research question aimed to ascertain the influence of these messages on the security consciousness of residents. The findings revealed a concerning trend: the majority of respondents were not significantly influenced by current radio security alerts. This outcome aligns with findings that broadcast media security awareness campaigns often fail to trigger high levels of alertness if the messaging is not strategically frequent or impactful (Gever & Michael, 2014).

Furthermore, the data suggests that broadcast media in the region have yet to fully realise their potential in the fight against militancy and sea piracy. This supports the observation that Nigerian broadcast media surveillance is often perceived by audiences as performing below expectations (Udeze & Chukwuma, 2013). The results imply that for radio to be effective, it must overcome pressing organisational problems to ensure communication is proactive rather than just reactive (Lowrey et al., 2007). Without a focus on shifting personal risk perception and self-efficacy, such campaigns remain weak (Agha, 2003).

The third research question sought to identify the types of programmes that receive more audience attention than security alerts. The findings indicate that residents are more heavily exposed to political, sports, and educational programmes. In Bayelsa East, these genres receive higher prominence, leaving security programmes as a rare occurrence.

This lack of airtime for security concerns suggests a gap in the Social Responsibility of the press, which dictates that the media has an obligation to provide a truthful and comprehensive account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning for public safety (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947). Interestingly, the study revealed that while radio is the primary medium, the way audiences share information changes based on the perceived size of the audience, with 'broadcasting' to large groups often leading to less personal engagement than 'narrowcasting' through interpersonal channels (Barasch & Berger, 2014).

Ultimately, the results suggest that security in Bayelsa East must be viewed across multiple dimensions—individual, societal, and regional (Bilgin, 2003; Hill & Cavatorta, 2019). To bridge the gap, a multi-channel approach that integrates radio with social media and interpersonal communication is necessary to foster a true culture of security alertness.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the influence of radio messages on security alertness among residents of Bayelsa East is currently insufficient. While radio remains a ubiquitous medium in the region, its potential to foster a security-conscious populace has not been fully harnessed. This research addressed a significant geographical and contextual gap in the literature; while previous studies, such as those by Gever and Nwabuzor (2014) in Enugu State, identified similar lapses in broadcast

efficacy, this study provides the first empirical evidence of these pitfalls within the specific security landscape of Bayelsa East.

Data gathered indicates that the level of security alertness among residents remains low, primarily due to the inconsistent performance and poor programming strategies of media outfits. The lack of frequency and prominence given to security content has left residents vulnerable and uninformed about environmental threats. Ultimately, for radio to fulfil its surveillance mandate, it must move beyond mere entertainment and politics to prioritise consistent, high-impact security education.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study makes several vital contributions to the field of Mass Communication and Security Studies:

- It provides fresh data on the influence of radio in a region heavily impacted by maritime and environmental security challenges, extending the work of previous scholars like Gever (2014) into a new geopolitical context.
- The findings offer a roadmap for the Bayelsa State Government to better equip and partner with media houses to combat specific local threats such as sea piracy and militancy.
- For media practitioners, the study unveils the lack of prominence currently given to security alerts, serving as a call to re-evaluate editorial priorities and airtime allocation.
- The research serves as a valuable resource for students and academics, highlighting radio as a primary tool for social engineering and security management.
- By identifying the weaknesses in current communication channels, the study indirectly encourages residents to seek more active roles in their environmental security.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Bayelsa State Government should formally partner with private and state-owned radio stations to subsidise and mandate the frequent broadcast of security alerts and emergency protocols.
2. Broadcast media houses must move away from weekly security slots and adopt a daily rotation for security alerts. Frequent repetition is essential for transforming information into ingrained security consciousness.
3. Media outfits should ensure that security messages are produced using simple, persuasive language and local dialects where necessary. Qualitative programming that includes phone-in segments and expert interviews will increase audience engagement and influence.
4. Radio stations should integrate their security broadcasts with social media platforms and interpersonal communication networks to ensure that messages reach the youth and those in remote areas of the Senatorial District.

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