Structures of FM Radio Talk Shows Listened to by University Students in Eldoret Town, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The majority of the consumers of radio stations' programming are the youth, most of whom are students in high schools, colleges, and universities. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to examine the structure of FM radio talk shows listened to by university students in Eldoret town. Uses and Gratifications theory guided this study. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study were 3000 students from university campuses within Eldoret, and the sample size was 300. The researcher adopted a stratified sampling and simple random sampling technique to arrive at the sample that would best fit or present the intended purpose of the research. Data was collected using a questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques that included frequencies, percentages. The findings revealed that FM radio talk shows typically feature a mix of news, interviews, and light entertainment to engage listeners at the start of the day. The study established that interactive formats allowing listeners to call in with requests or opinions, countdown formats featuring popular music tracks, and narrative-driven programs were popular among respondents. The study findings from focus group discussion revealed that FM radio talk shows in Eldoret Town typically follow a similar format, often beginning with an opening segment where the host introduces the topic and guests. This is followed by an in-depth discussion led by the host, with opportunities for audience participation through call-ins, SMS messages, and social media interactions. Radio stations targeting university students should create a balanced format that includes a mix of news, interviews, and light entertainment. The study concluded that FM radio talk shows in Eldoret Town typically follow a similar format, with an opening segment, in-depth discussions led by the host, and opportunities for audience participation. The study recommended that Radio stations targeting university students should create a balanced format that includes a mix of news, interviews, light entertainment, structured segments, in-depth discussions, sports coverage, interactive formats, countdown formats, live performances, music genres, structured discussions, narrative-driven programs, informative segments, and light-hearted content.

Keywords: *FM Radio Talk Shows, Structure, University Students*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Proficient communication is essential for students to achieve their professional aspirations. However, many undergraduate students still struggle with their presentation skills (De Grez & Valcke, 2010). Ohnishi and Ford (2015) also note that students frequently encounter challenges in their communication abilities. The choice of instructional language significantly affects undergraduates' capacity for effective communication. It has been noted that communication issues persist among students, highlighting the need for greater emphasis on developing 21st-century presentation skills that align with contemporary societal demands.

Ubiquity as a characteristic of mass media explains the fact that the media are pervasive sources of information. The media being pervasive sources of information means that the media is everywhere. This implies that individuals consume media either consciously or subconsciously every day of their lives, wherever they are. Therefore, the media, to a certain degree, has a direct influence on their presentation expertise. The media is also a pervasive medium that enhances personal communication, access to information and freedom of communication. Based on the above views, the media is indeed very powerful in shaping the way people communicate (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022).

Contrary to the assertion by Ihejirika (2021) that the use of social media is strengthening communication among people, social media is currently one of the greatest hindrances to effective communication among young people, including university students. While social media interactions may resemble oral tradition due to their conversational nature, they are primarily non-verbal. The internet and social networks constantly introduce new words to our vocabulary but simultaneously reduce the amount of oral communication in general (Atzori et al., 2012). In today's fast-paced society, the almost instant ability of social media to share thoughts with the world has also affected our behavior in actual communication.

One of the main roles of FM talk shows is to educate listeners through oral communication. These talk shows can be utilized to reverse the worrying trend created by social media and its impact on verbal communication skills. In classroom situations, it has been observed that most students struggle to deliver effective communication during presentations. Certain factors can influence students' ability to communicate effectively and verbally during their presentations. This scenario is also prevalent among undergraduates, who often lack the skills and confidence to conduct effective presentations.

This situation invokes researchers to investigate the reasons that have impaired undergraduates' communication abilities. Previous studies have found insufficient knowledge on structure of FM radio talk shows listened to by university students (Ames & CQU, 2012). Good communication is crucial and can be cultivated through the impact of practice-based learning, where students learn to present by practicing and overcoming the factors that hinder them from giving effective communication (De Grez et al., 2014). Therefore, this study aims to examine the structure of FM radio talk shows listened to by university students in Eldoret town.

Several studies indicate that radio remains a vital tool for communication in Kenya, yet the content often skews towards entertainment rather than educational value, particularly in FM stations that dominate the airwaves. For instance, many FM stations focus on music and sensational news, leaving little room for educational discourse that could enhance good communication among listeners, especially students who are in formative stages of their professional and personal development. Furthermore, the interactive nature of talk shows it is underutilized, as many programs do not engage students meaningfully, failing to stimulate critical thinking and articulate expression.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Eldoret Town, Kenya, university students encounter notable challenges in effective communication, which is reflected in their struggles with articulating ideas, engaging in discussions, and exhibiting confidence in public speaking (Chebunet et al., 2024). These communication deficiencies are particularly pronounced during interactive platforms such as FM radio talk shows, which are intended to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of ideas (Marokoh, 2021). However, the structure and content of these shows may not sufficiently cater to the communication needs of students, resulting in a disconnect between the educational objectives of these broadcasts and the actual outcomes for their audience.

The research gap lies in the lack of targeted content on FM radio talk shows tailored to meet the communication needs of university students in Eldoret Town. Existing studies do not examine how specific structural elements like guest selection and audience interaction impact students' communication skills (Hora et al., 2019). On the other hand, the underutilization of interactive features in these shows fails to engage students effectively, leaving a gap in enhancing their public speaking and critical thinking abilities.

The central research problem focuses on how the structure and content of FM radio talk shows impact the communication skills of university students in Eldoret Town (Ochwada, 2021). Despite radio's popularity as an information medium, there is a notable lack of targeted content that resonates with this demographic, potentially exacerbating their communication challenges. This study aims to investigate the relationship between FM radio talk show programming and effective communication among students while identifying specific gaps that hinder their communicative abilities.

1.2 Research Objectives

To examine the structure of FM radio talk shows listened to by university students in Eldoret Town

II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

This study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Blumler and Katz in 1974, which emphasizes the active role of audience members in selecting media that fulfills specific needs. According to this theory, individuals engage with both media and non-media sources to satisfy various personal drives, leading to what are termed media gratifications. This perspective shifts the focus from the media's influence on audiences to how audiences actively seek out media to meet their own goals.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory categorizes these needs into a fourfold system, as outlined by Wang et al. (2021) Cognition of Ideas: This aspect pertains to the audience's desire for information and understanding. Media serves as a source of knowledge, enabling users to learn about different topics, enhance their awareness, and develop informed opinions (Mbozi, 2021).

Diversion of Attention: Here, media is utilized as a means of escape from reality. Audiences often turn to entertainment options such as films, music, or talk shows to relieve stress or distract themselves from daily life challenges (Hassoun, 2019).

Social Tools with People in Society: This dimension highlights the role of media in facilitating social interactions (Lin & Kishore, 2021). Media platforms allow users to connect with others, share experiences, and engage in discussions about shared interests or current events, thereby fostering a sense of community.

Withdrawal from Reality: This aspect reflects the audience's need for escapism. Media provides a temporary refuge from real-life issues, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in fictional worlds or narratives that offer comfort or excitement (Morosan, 2023).

The theory posits that individuals are not passive consumers but rather active participants who choose specific media forms based on their unique needs and motivations. This active engagement implies that if a particular media source fails to satisfy these needs, audiences will seek alternatives that better fulfill their desires.

By applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to the context of FM radio talk shows listened to by university students in Eldoret Town, this study aims to explore how these programs can be structured and content tailored to effectively meet the diverse communication needs of students. Understanding these dynamics will provide insights into enhancing the educational value of FM radio broadcasts while also addressing the social and psychological requirements of the student demographic.

2.2 Empirical Review on structure of FM radio talk shows

The structure of FM radio talk shows has been widely studied, with different regions offering unique perspectives. In the United States, radio talk shows, particularly those focused on politics, have a reputation for being confrontational and highly partisan. A study by Dagnes and Dagnes (2019) revealed that these shows often feature hosts who engage in heated debates, frequently resorting to personal attacks to captivate their audience. This structure appeals to listeners by reinforcing their pre-existing beliefs, making the shows engaging and polarizing. These talk shows' intense and emotionally charged environment has been criticized for promoting extreme views and deepening societal divides, reflecting the polarized nature of American politics.

In the United Kingdom, the structure of radio talk shows has been scrutinized for its inclusivity and diverse voices. Moore and Ramsay (2021) conducted a review in 2020 that highlighted significant issues related to the need for more diverse perspectives on these shows. The structure often centers around dominant voices, typically those of the hosts, who guide the conversation in specific directions. This debate has raised concerns about the need for better moderation to ensure that discussions remain respectful and do not propagate harmful content. As the UK media landscape evolves, there is increasing pressure to create more inclusive and balanced talk shows that accurately reflect the diversity of the population (Donders, 2019).

In Australia, talkback radio has long been a platform for public discourse, characterized by a structure that encourages open participation from listeners. According to Motsaathebe and Tsarwe (2021), these shows often feature unmoderated caller participation, allowing a wide range of opinions to be expressed. However, this open structure also has its drawbacks, as it can lead to the spread of misinformation and the marginalization of minority voices. The shows need more stringent moderation to maintain a balance between open discourse and responsible content management, highlighting a broader tension within the media.

In Africa, radio talk shows have played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and facilitating democratic processes. In post-apartheid South Africa, for example, talk radio became a vital platform for public debate and the inclusion of marginalized voices. Afrika (2021) found that these shows were instrumental in the country's democratic transition; although they also pointed out the need for better regulation to prevent hate speech and incitement. The structure of these shows often encourages open dialogue, reflecting the democratic ideals South Africa sought to establish. However, the balance between freedom of speech and the prevention of harmful content remains a critical issue in the structure of South African talk radio.

In Nigeria, radio talk shows have been identified as essential tools for promoting national unity and development. Ihechu (2019) examined these shows and found that their structure typically emphasizes informative content, with a mix of expert opinions and caller participation. This approach is intended to foster discussions on governance and development, but the study also highlighted the need for more educational content and better training for radio presenters. By improving these aspects, radio talk shows in Nigeria could play an even more significant role in nation-building and fostering informed public discourse.

Ghanaian radio talk shows have similarly been influential in promoting good governance and accountability. Blankson (2019) found that these shows often feature confrontational discourse, with hosts and callers engaging in heated debates that sometimes escalate into personal attacks. While the structure can be engaging, it also risks polarizing audiences and detracting from the shows' fostering accountability and governance objectives. The study

suggests that a more balanced and moderated structure could enhance the effectiveness of these talk shows in achieving their goals.

In Kenya, the structure of radio talk shows has been a subject of interest, particularly their impact on public discourse and youth engagement. Alela (2021) studied citizen radio in Kenya, finding that the unmoderated caller participation often seen in these shows allows for a diverse range of voices to be heard. However, this open structure also increases the risk of misinformation and the marginalization of minority voices, highlighting the need for more effective moderation. The rise of vernacular radio in Kenya, as examined by Peshut and Mogambi (2024), has introduced a new dimension to the media landscape. These stations often cater to specific linguistic and cultural groups, with a structure that heavily emphasizes entertainment. While this approach has led to high levels of listener interaction and loyalty, it sometimes overshadows the stations' potential to provide informative and educational content.

FM radio stations in Kenya have also been pivotal in efforts to empower the youth. Mohapanele and Odhav (2024) evaluated the structure of these stations and noted that they often prioritize music and entertainment over substantive discussions. This focus on entertainment limits the stations' ability to engage young people in meaningful dialogue, thereby constraining their potential to contribute to youth empowerment. A more balanced structure that integrates both entertainment and educational content could significantly enhance the role of FM radio in supporting the development and empowerment of Kenyan youth.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design
This study employed a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey design is used to explore educational aspects relevant to policymakers and educators, focusing on the opinions and attitudes of a selected sample from the population.

3.2 Study Area
Eldoret town, known for its academic institutions, serves as the primary field for data collection. The town's population offers a diverse sample for the study.

3.3 Target Population
The target population consists of students from four universities in Eldoret: University of Eldoret, Moi University, Kisii University, and Mount Kenya University, totaling approximately 3,000 students.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques
Using stratified sampling, 10% of the target population (300 students) was selected based on their FM radio listening habits. This method ensures representation across different strata.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments
Questionnaires served as the primary instrument for data collection, utilizing closed-ended questions for ease of analysis. Focus group discussions supplemented this data.

3.6 Data Analysis
Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted. Quantitative data was processed using SPSS for statistical analysis, while qualitative data was coded to identify recurring themes.

3.7 Validity and Reliability
The study ensured validity through carefully crafted questions and reliability through consistent evaluation of responses.

3.7.1 Trustworthiness of Data
Trustworthiness was maintained through criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, ensuring that findings could be replicated in future studies.

3.8 Ethical Considerations
Ethical guidelines were strictly followed to protect participants' rights, ensuring voluntary participation and maintaining privacy throughout the research process.This structured approach aims to provide meaningful insights into how FM radio talk shows influence communication among university students.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate
The study administered 300 semi-structured questionnaires for data collection. However, 224 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. This represented 74.7 percent overall successful response rates. The 74.7 percent response rate was attributed to the use of a self-administered questionnaire.

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents
The study sought to establish the gender of the respondents. The findings are presented in Figure 1.
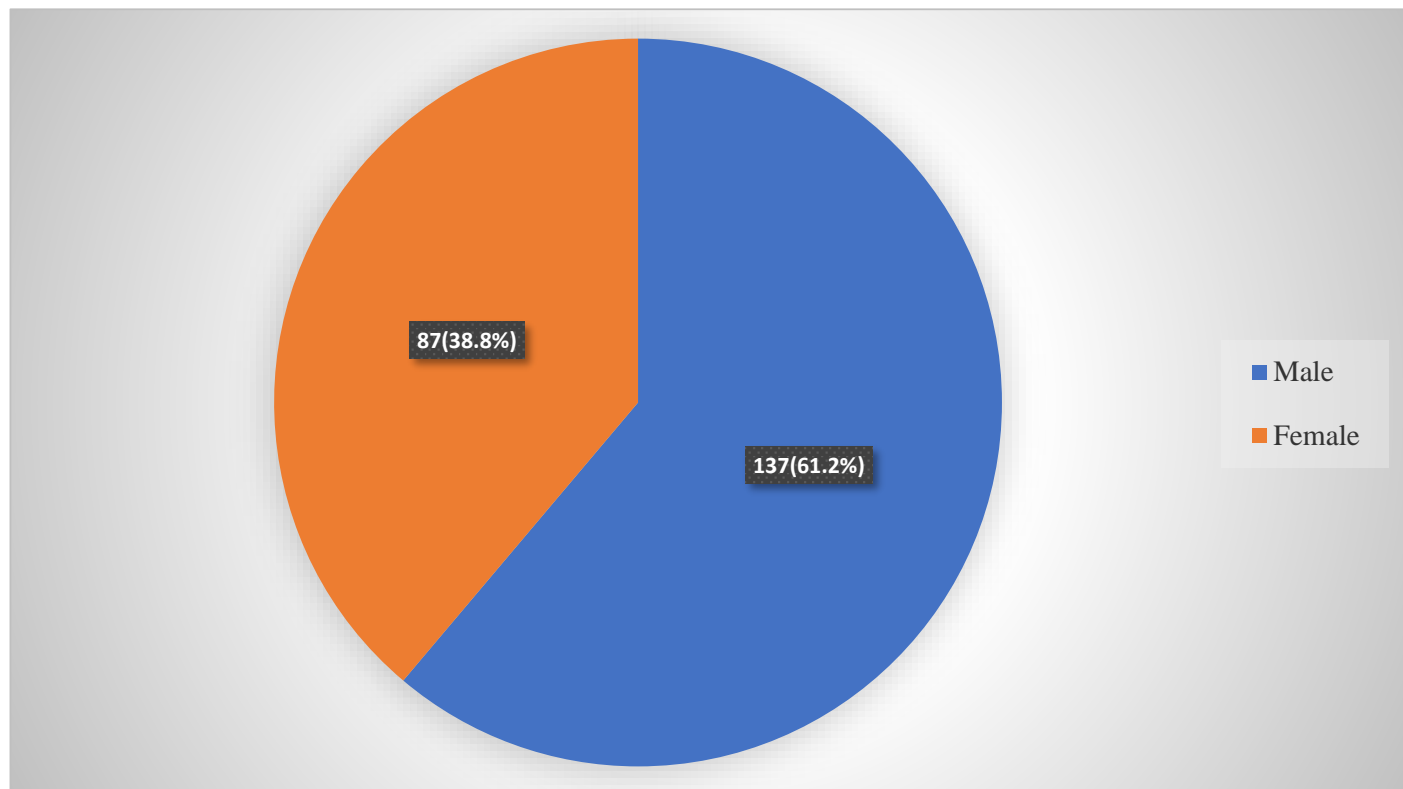

Figure 1
Gender of the Respondents

These results in Figure 1 indicated that a majority, 137(61.2%) of respondents, were female, while 87(38.8%) were male respondents. This was considered a fair distribution (within the 1/3rd and/3rds Kenya constitutional requirement) as it accommodated the opinions and views of both genders.

4.2 Structure of FM Radio Talk Shows Listened by University Students
The study determined the structure of FM radio talk shows listened by university students in Eldoret Town. Table 1 presents the study results.

Table 1
Structure of FM Radio Talk Shows Listened by University Students

		SD	D	N	A	SA
Typically features a mix of news, interviews, and light entertainment to engage listeners at the start of the day.	F	23	21	11	91	78
	%	10.3	9.4	4.9	40.6	34.8
Structured segments providing updates on current events and weather forecasts, often presented in a concise format.	F	17	25	11	97	74
	%	7.6	11.2	4.9	43.3	33.0
In-depth discussions with experts or commentators on current political and social issues, often including audience input.	F	18	19	11	94	82
	%	8.0	8.5	4.9	42.0	36.6
Covers sports news, live commentary, and interviews with athletes, structured around specific sporting events.	F	17	25	14	90	78
	%	7.6	11.2	6.3	40.2	34.8
Interactive format allowing listeners to call in with requests or opinions, fostering real-time audience engagement.	F	13	24	12	106	69
	%	5.8	10.7	5.4	47.3	30.8
Countdown format featuring popular music tracks, often interspersed with commentary and artist interviews.	F	10	26	8	96	84
	%	4.5	11.6	3.6	42.9	37.5
Features live performances, often with interviews or discussions about the music and artists involved.	F	10	21	8	113	72
	%	4.5	9.4	3.6	50.4	32.1
A mix of music genres with occasional commentary, focusing on entertainment rather than structured discourse.	F	14	23	11	100	76
	%	6.3	10.3	4.9	44.6	33.9
Structured discussions on various topics, often featuring guest experts and audience participation through calls.	F	6	19	5	116	78
	%	2.7	8.5	2.2	51.8	34.8
Narrative-driven programs that tell a story, often with a structured script and sound effects to enhance engagement.	F	7	25	7	96	89
	%	3.1	11.2	3.1	42.9	39.7
Informative segments focused on education, health, or community issues, often featuring experts and structured Q&A.	F	5	34	6	89	90
	%	2.2	15.2	2.7	39.7	40.2
Light-hearted content designed to entertain, often featuring skits, jokes, and humorous discussions.	F	8	35	7	79	95
	%	3.6	15.6	3.1	35.3	42.4

According to Table 1, majority 169(75.4%) of the respondents agreed that typically features a mix of news, interviews, and light entertainment to engage listeners at the start of the day. On contrary, 44(19.7%) of the respondents disagreed that typically features a mix of news, interviews, and light entertainment to engage listeners at the start of the day. Also, the study findings noted that 171(76.3%) of the respondents agreed that structured segments providing updates on current events and weather forecasts, often presented in a concise format and 42(18.8%) disagreed that structured segments providing updates on current events and weather forecasts, often presented in a concise format. A finding that concurs with Bostrom et al. (2016) opportunities for improving the hurricane forecast and warning system in three main regards and also suggests, especially in the distinctiveness of one forecaster from the others, the system would likely be made more robust in the long term by cultivating a better shared understanding of the forecast and warning system as described here among those with the greatest scientific and forecasting hurricane expertise, though this would be resource intensive.

The study further revealed that, 176(78.6%) of the participants agreed that In-depth discussions with experts or commentators on current political and social issues, often including audience input. On contrary to that, 37(16.5%) of the respondents disagreed that In-depth discussions with experts or commentators on current political and social issues, often including audience input. In a study conducted by Lawrence et al. (2018) suggest variation in approaches to engagement that can be arrayed along several related dimensions, encompassing how news outlets measure and practice it (e.g. with the use of quantitative audience metrics methods), whether they think about audiences as more passive or more active users, the stages at which they incorporate audience data or input into the news product, and how sceptically or optimistically they view the audience.

The study nonetheless showed that 168(75.0%) of the participants agreed that they cover sports news, live commentary, and interviews with athletes, structured around specific sporting events. On contrary to those findings 32(18.8%) of the respondents disagreed that they cover sports news, live commentary, and interviews with athletes, structured around specific sporting events. On top of the above findings another, 175(78.1%) agreed that interactive format allowing listeners to call in with requests or opinions, fostering real-time audience engagement. However, 28(12.5%) of the respondents disagreed that interactive format allowing listeners to call in with requests or opinions,

fostering real-time audience engagement. One study conducted by Coleman et al. (2018) concurred with the previous findings, indicating that Thirty-five percent said that the tool "interfered" with their viewing of the debate. If watching political content while using Democratic Reflection is significantly different from watching broadcasting without using the app, it will not be possible to generalize our findings to broader populations, however representative our panel of respondents may be.

On top of the above findings another, 180(80.4%) agreed that countdown format featuring popular music tracks, often interspersed with commentary and artist interviews. However, 36(16.1%) of the respondents disagreed that countdown format featuring popular music tracks, often interspersed with commentary and artist interviews. On top of the above findings another, 185(82.5%) agreed that features live performances, often with interviews or discussions about the music and artists involved. However, 31(13.9%) of the respondents disagreed that features live performances, often with interviews or discussions about the music and artists involved. A study conducted by Pitts, (2020) found that appeal of live music is accompanied by the risk of feeling out of place in an unfamiliar concert setting and a desire to feel welcomed by approachable performers and staff, as well as through informative but accessible program notes or spoken introductions.

Furthermore, it was noted from the study that 176(78.5%) of the participants agreed that a mix of music genres with occasional commentary, focusing on entertainment rather than structured discourse, however, 37(16.6%) disagreed that a mix of music genres with occasional commentary, focusing on entertainment rather than structured discourse. Furthermore, it was noted from the study that 194(86.6%) of the participants agreed, however, 25(11.2%) disagreed that structured discussions on various topics, often featuring guest experts and audience participation through calls. One study conducted by Martin and MacDonald, (2020) demonstrate that the application of interpersonal communication strategies encourages conversational engagement, in terms of the number of comments and unique individuals involved in conversations.

Finally, it was noted from the study that 185(82.6%) of the participants agreed that narrative-driven programs that tell a story, often with a structured script and sound effects to enhance engagement, however, 32(14.3%) disagreed that narrative-driven programs that tell a story, often with a structured script and sound effects to enhance engagement. One study conducted by Russo et al. (2021) evidence that the narrative presentation supported student understanding of the mathematics through making the tasks clearer and more accessible, whilst the audio-visual mediums (movie clip, short film) in particular provided a dynamic representation of key mathematical ideas (e.g., transformation and scale).

Students indicated an eclectic range of preferences in terms of their preferred narrative mediums for exploring mathematical ideas and also concluded that educators and researchers focused on the benefits of teaching mathematics through picture story books consider extending their definition of narrative to encompass other mediums, such as movie clips and short films.

The study further revealed that, 179(79.9%) of the participants agreed that informative segments focused on education, health, or community issues, often featuring experts and structured Q&A. On contrary to that, 39 (17.4%) of the respondents disagreed that informative segments focused on education, health, or community issues, often featuring experts and structured Q&A. Finally, the study showed that 174(77.7%) of the participants agreed that light-hearted content designed to entertain, often featuring skits, jokes, and humorous discussions. On contrary to those findings 43(19.2%) of the respondents disagreed that light-hearted content designed to entertain, often featuring skits, jokes, and humorous discussions. Bowd (2019) creative means of communication are needed to increase engagement and counter dominant stereotypical narratives within the development sector. Humour is rarely considered as a communication strategy for development, but it has the potential to be an influential tool to lower societal barriers and challenge existing power relations.

The study findings from focus group discussion revealed that FM radio talk shows in Eldoret Town typically follow a similar format, often beginning with an opening segment where the host introduces the topic and guests. This is followed by an in-depth discussion led by the host, with opportunities for audience participation through call-ins, SMS messages, and social media interactions.

The shows incorporate various segments such as interviews with experts or newsmakers, panel discussions, and interactive games or quizzes. Some stations also include pre-recorded packages or features related to the main topic. The balance between host-led discussions and audience participation varies across different talk shows. Some shows are more host-centric, with the host guiding the conversation and occasionally taking questions from the audience. Others prioritize audience participation, allowing for more open-ended discussions and debates. Audience members noted that shows that strike a good balance between host-led discussions and audience participation tend to be more engaging and informative. They appreciate when hosts are knowledgeable and able to steer the conversation, while still making space for diverse perspectives from the audience.

The types of guests featured on FM radio talk shows in Eldoret Town range from experts in various fields, such as academics, professionals, and industry leaders, to politicians, activists, and cultural figures. Experts are often

brought in to provide in-depth analysis and insights on specific topics, while politicians and activists may be featured to discuss issues related to governance, social justice, and community development. Cultural figures, such as artists and entertainers, are sometimes invited to discuss their work and its impact on society.

Audience members noted that the quality of the guests and their ability to articulate their views and engage with the host and audience are crucial factors in determining the success of a talk show segment. Many talk shows incorporate elements of storytelling and narrative to engage the audience and make complex topics more relatable. Hosts and guests often share personal anecdotes or real-life examples to illustrate their points and make the discussion more accessible.

Some shows also feature pre-recorded packages or short documentaries that tell the stories of individuals or communities affected by the issues being discussed. These narrative elements help to humanize the topics and create a more emotional connection with the audience. While there are some similarities in the structure of talk shows across different FM stations in Eldoret Town, there are also notable differences in terms of the specific formats, segments, and overall tone and approach.

Some stations may prioritize more serious, in-depth discussions on political and social issues, while others may focus on lighter, more entertaining topics and formats. The choice of guests and the level of audience participation may also vary depending on the station's target audience and overall programming strategy. Audience members noted that they tend to gravitate towards talk shows that align with their interests and values, and that offer a unique perspective or approach compared to other stations

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

FM radio talk shows in Eldoret Town typically follow a similar format, with an opening segment, in-depth discussions led by the host, and opportunities for audience participation. The shows incorporate various segments such as interviews, panel discussions, interactive games, and quizzes.

5.2 Recommendations

Radio stations targeting university students should create a balanced format that includes a mix of news, interviews, light entertainment, structured segments, in-depth discussions, sports coverage, interactive formats, countdown formats, live performances, music genres, structured discussions, narrative-driven programs, informative segments, and light-hearted content.

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