

Research Article

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Community Radio for cohesion and integration during Kenya's 2017 post-election violence: A study of Migori County

Nicholas Anyuor^{1*}, Rose Achieng²

^{1&2}Communication, Journalism and Media Studies, Rongo University, Kenya,
nanyuor@gmail.com¹, achiebet@gmail.com²

*Corresponding author



Abstract: Kenya's elections are mostly marred with violence, especially after announcements of presidential results. Peace and media experts on the other hand have blamed Kenyan media for fueling cases of post-poll conflicts. It is in this understanding that this study assessed the contents of community radios in Migori County to investigate the role they played in promoting cohesion and integration during the 2017 Kenya's post-election violence. The research, which was conducted in Migori town, studied five radio stations namely; Milambo, Onagi, Anyuola, Rameny and Tarumbeta which are located within Migori County. The specific objectives were: to assess the extent to which the 2017 post-election violence affected residents of Migori town; to establish if the five stations developed contents that promoted cohesion and integration during the violence and to assess the extent to which the contents aired on the radio stations promoted cohesion

and integration among residents of Migori town. Study was a survey that utilised mixed research approach where qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. Systematic random sampling was employed to administer 399 questionnaires. For qualitative data, 21 key informants were purposefully selected and interviewed. The quantitative data collected was analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis. From the study it was found and concluded that Community Radio, if professionally used, promotes cohesion and integration during post-poll conflicts. The study has recommended that in order to reduce incessant post-poll violence in Kenya, the relevant stakeholders should work together to air contents that enhance cohesion and integration in order to curb violence recurrence. Policies should be developed and funding availed to help facilitate matters media and peace.

Keywords – Community Radio, Integration and cohesion, Post-election violence, Vernacular radio

1. INTRODUCTION

Media are powerful influencers that play crucial role in shaping opinions of members of the public and their world views (McCombs, 1994); 'the media therefore through various forms of programmes provide a space where societies can dialogue and articulate solutions to problems that easily trigger conflicts among them and promote peaceful co-existence' (Mwangi, 2017: 1).

Role of media, particularly community radio in promoting peace, has been witnessed globally. In Columbia, for example, community radio was included in peace-building initiatives after the signing of peace agreement between the Colombian State and the FARC-EP guerrillas (Vega et al., 2019).

Since 1997, with Decree 1447, the Colombian State had said that community radio should be a space for community reflection, consultation, and conflict resolution in the country. As a result, during the last 20 years, community radio stations emerged and generated popular and citizen reflections on peace and conflict, which translated into communicative processes with the capacity to foster diversity, intercultural dialogue, and tolerance. As a consequence, community media became privileged partners in conflict resolution and reconciliation (Pereira & Cadavid, 2011 in Vega et al., 2019: 1392).

In Africa, Mwangi (2017) argues, the influence of radio has continued to grow and has been utilised in peace building process and in conflict resolution. Community radios have been used in peace building in some war-torn countries. This has led to attainment of certain level of cohesion and integration among the people in the regions. In countries like Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, among others, community radios have been accused of being destructive, but at certain point treasured for their constructive contents. In Burundi, for instance, Ijambo studio's role in promoting cohesion among the people cannot be gainsaid. It brought together journalists from different tribes who developed peace-building programmes to restore order and integration in this country (Gilboa, 2002 in Mwangi, 2017).

The setting up of studio Ijambo in 1995 saw a team of journalists drawn from Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups initiate programs aimed at promoting dialogue, reconciliation and peaceful co-existence...this enabled the two tribes reach a common ground in the conflict that afflicted the region (Gilboa, 2002 in Mwangi, 2017: 1).

In Kenya, the need to have community and vernacular radios made the government to liberate airwaves, offering invaluable opportunities for the opening of many radio stations-the commercial radios, faith-based radios, among others. Some of these stations have also been accused of fueling violence while others have been promoting peace among conflicting parties. For example, KASS FM, a vernacular radio station in the Rift Valley region, was accused of fueling 2007/08 post-poll violence after by introducing partisan programming (Waki et al., 2008). On the other hand, some radios developed peace-building programmes in efforts to restore cohesion and integration in Kenya after the 2007/08 post-election violence. Community-cum-faith-based Radio Amani, based in Nakuru County, developed peace-building programme that 'provided a platform for peace building through community participation' (Waki et al., 2008: 2).

Therefore, inasmuch as community radios can be destructive, they can also be used to air contents that promote peace as has been witnessed in different parts of the world. It is in this background that this study assessed the role community radio played in promoting cohesion and integration during the 2017 post-election violence in Kenya.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. Kenya's 2017 post-election violence

The voting process of Kenya's 2017 elections was peaceful until Uhuru Kenyatta was declared winner by Electoral body (Mutahi, 2019). Opposition supporters from different regions including Migori protested Uhuru's victory. Police then acted to quell the violence (Human Rights Watch, 2017); however, they were using force and live ammunitions and many people in these regions became victims (Mutahi, 2019). A lot of crimes such as sexual violence were committed during this poll violence not only by locals but also by State agents such as police officers (Reliefweb, 2021). According to Muhumuza (2017), 92 people were killed during the months of election violence in 2017 while 86 cases of sexual or gender-based violence were reported.

2.2. The impact of Community Radio in the society

Communication has been critical in the society as it is an ingredient that fuels development in all aspects. To communicate to wider audience, mass media such as radio, are invaluable. Radio communication ensures that information reaches the right and the relevant audience and offers opportunity for the people to exchange ideas. Community radio is important in the society as it offers communication services beyond commercial; not-for profit and acts as a watchdog (Seidu, 2011). In some countries such as Australia, community media have changed the societies into positive thinking about themselves and community at large. This was evident in the response of Australia's indigenous communities to the contents of their community media-as viewed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who trusted community media as a player of central role in organizing lives of the local people (Romano, 2010).

These indigenous audiences, according to Romano (2010), describe their community media as 'a primary source of news and information that helps to sustain social networks, promote social self-esteem, nourish community identities and kinship ties, maintain language and culture, educate people and support cultural dialogue' (Meadows, et al., 2007: 51-68 in Romano, 2010: 23). It is through community radio stations that in some countries such as South Africa, public journalism has been promoted, even though licenses here are given with stringent rules (Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999 in Davidson, 2020). This kind of framework makes community radios have their missions and identities that are different from public and commercial broadcastings. In Nigeria, community radios that have been established have spurred development and understanding among the people towards the good of the communities. It is argued that even though the Nigeria's population is over 150 million, newspaper circulation is low and the papers majorly use English, a language which is not understood by many in this West Africa State; leading to increasing influence of radio stations where, for example, Radio Nigeria claims more than 100 million listeners while Raypower FM claims to reach 23 million listeners (UNESCO, 2008 in Awoshakin, 2020).

This kind of proliferation of community radio outlets allowed journalists to play closer attention to community issues where they communicate these in their local languages and therefore, effectively engaging local communities (Awoshakin, 2020). Awoshakin (2020) argues that this scenario has been possible for the reporting of health concerns and political engagements; that through community radios, journalists are in position to report the 'issues that the local communities were wrestling with, brought local people into the studios to have conversations with politicians, and broadcast these conversations in local languages' (Awoshakin, 2010: 57). By adhering to this globally, the community radios have improved development initiatives at grassroot levels where they serve (Seidu, 2011). In East Africa, even though community radios have been sources of violence in some countries such as Rwanda, according to Ogenga (2020), they can also be used to mobilise and educate people on how to share resources in efforts to avoid conflicts.

For example, a successful peace journalism strategy that ended or rather reduced the Lord's Resistance Army conflict has been witnessed in Uganda sometime. Ugandan military resorted to use of radio after failed military interventions. The military established Radio Freedom for peace. This initiative drove away fighters, including child soldiers, from LRA back to their homes and handing over the firearms to the government (Laker, 2020). This means community radios are powerful and can be used to influence and shape communities. Therefore, it is on this note that this study was conducted to assess the impact of community radio in cohesion and integration during the 2017 post-election in Migori, Kenya.

2.3. Community Radio in Kenya

In Kenya, community radio can also be referred to as 'rural radio', 'people's radio', (Ochichi, 2013). Kenya produced the first Community Radio (CR), the Homa Bay CR in May 1982 in the current Homa Bay County, then Nyanza Province (Quarmyne, 2006). Currently, community based radio stations in Kenya have increased in

number from 10 in 1999 to over 120 in 2015 (Oluoch, 2020). Oluoch (2020) argues that such stations give invaluable local broadcasting where matters development are addressed.

2.4. Impact of Community Radio in cohesion and integration

The concept of media and peace or rather peace journalism was developed by a scholar Johan Galtung' in 1960s (Youngblood, 2020). Youngblood (2020) argues that journalism that promotes cohesion should focus on the importance of language that does not victimize other parties. This focus of using media in promoting peace would address conflicts that have been witnessed across the globe. Youngblood (2020) accuses Kenyan media of playing negative role when it comes to political conflict; giving an example with 2008/2007 election violence, arguing that media was ill prepared to cover it. Ogenga (2020), however, argues that community radio can be good media outlets or platforms for peace building and cohesion. He asserts that community radios can perform this act of enhancing cohesion in the society since they 'are owned by the community and serve the interest of the community' (Ogenga, 2020: 23). It is in this backdrop that community radio can be used to promote cohesion and integration among the people.

But Ogenga (2020) avers that for community radio to succeed in matters cohesion and integration, members of the public must be involved in discussing matters peace using language that is understood well by the community. It is through these radios that locals can easily be mobilized and educated on the importance of peace and on sharing of natural resources to avoid conflicts.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Political violence has not only been witnessed in Kenya, but it has been a global concern. Media on the other hand, regardless of the outlet, have been accused of fueling such violence. For example, in Rwanda, media outlets-radio and newspapers-were blamed for fueling the 1994 Genocide that left almost one million people dead in a span of 90 days. Kenya's 2007/2008 post-election violence never went without a blame on the media especially community radios. On the other hand, vernacular and community radios' contents have been utilised in promoting peace among warring communities worldwide. This was witnessed in Uganda to curb the Lord Resistance Army's incessant conflict. In 2017, Kenyans witnessed post-election violence where some people were killed and others displaced, and counties such as Migori were classified as hotspots. But eventually peace and harmony were restored. Was the community radio one of the actors used to promote peace, especially in Migori County? There is no single study that has been conducted to find out the role community radios played in peace-building process during 2017 post-election violence in Kenya's Migori County. This is the gap the study has filled after investigating the role five community radios based in Migori County played in promoting cohesion and integration in Migori during the 2017 post-poll violence.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed research approach where both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. It employed systematic random sampling to administer 399 questionnaires from a population of 71,660 residents of Migori town. Sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula to get 399 respondents from 71, 660 residents of Migori town, according to Census Report of 2019. For qualitative data, 21 key informants, purposively selected from relevant stakeholders, were interviewed. They were drawn from the newsrooms of the community radio stations and peace stakeholders in Migori County. Migori County was selected for the study since it had been identified as one of the hotspots during the 2017 poll clashes, according to report published by China's Xinhua in 2018; and is also a cosmopolitan county (Star, April 14, 2017) that is comprising different tribes and races such as Asia, Somali, Luhya, Kuria, Kikuyu, Kisii, among others and therefore, call for peace, cohesion and integration during this period was crucial. The investigated the contents of five radio stations namely; *Milambo, Onagi, Anyuola,*

Rameny and Tarumbeta, because they are the main community radios in Migori County with wider coverage of the county and Migori town.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. The key findings and analysis

This study used interview schedules and questionnaires as tools of data collection. A total of 399 questionnaires were administered to residents of Migori town. Out of the 399 questionnaires, 383 were filled and returned. This is 96% of the respondents, which is enough population for a study. 21 interviews were conducted where media, cohesion and integration, and human rights stakeholders were selected as the key informants. Out of this, 19 key informants responded; giving 95%, which is good response for research. This study looked at the contents of five community radio stations in Migori County, namely; *Milambo, Onagi, Anyuola, Rameny and Tarumbeta*. From the study, the quantitative data results were as follow:

Key findings

The first research question was to find out the extent to which the 2017 post-election violence affected residents of Migori town. To answer this, we compared percentage of responses from 399 questionnaires and from 21 key informants. The tables below show various results.

Table 1: Are you a resident of Migori town?

Responses	Frequencies	Valid Percent (%)
Yes	310	80.9
No	73	19.1
Total	383	100.0

Table 2: Did you experience the effects of 2017 post-election violence in Migori town?

Responses	Frequencies	Valid Percent (%)
Yes	266	69.5
No	117	30.5
Total	383	100

First analysis

Based on the responses from the participants, 69.5% (266 respondents) were affected by the post-election violence in Migori town while 117 respondents (30.5%) disagreed. From qualitative data, 19 key informants responded from a total of 20. This is a good response of 95% for research. From the 19 key informants, 17 (89.5%) agreed that indeed they were extremely affected by the 2017 post-election violence in Migori town. However, 10.5 % (Two key informants) said people were affected but mildly. During the interviews, *participant A*, a journalist in Migori with one of the community radio stations under study, averred that the violence indeed affected residents of Migori town. He gave an example with the People Living with Disabilities (PLWDs), women and children who were 'badly affected by the situation.'

I did news stories about PLWDs to highlight their plight. The blind and the crippled were extremely affected. The blind could not see, the crippled could not run away from the danger. We also ran stories about children and women who were most vulnerable during the violence. It was sad that even some children were shot by police, and women and girls gang raped by State agents. The situation was bad here (Participant A, March 14, 2021).

The comment concurs with literature by many scholars and reports by several agencies about the 2017 post-election violence in Kenya. Mutahi (2019) argues that people from Kisumu, Migori, Homa Bay, Mathare, Kibra, Kisii were heavily affected by the protests after Uhuru Kenyatta was declared winner of the August 8, 2017 election, 'with 24

fatal police shootings confirmed by Human Rights organisations during those fateful day' (Mutahi, 2019: 5). In a report by International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) in Reliefweb (2021), sexual violence was witnessed in Migori during the 2017 violence. According to a rape victims interviewed by FIDH in Migori town, police officers were also rape agents. Therefore, the 2017 post-election violence in Kenya affected people of Migori town differently.

The second research question sought to establish if the five radio stations in the study developed contents that promoted cohesion and integration among residents of Migori town during the 2017 Post-Election Violence.

Table 3: Did you listen to any of the following radio stations based in Migori County, during the 2017 post-election violence? Milambo, Onagi, Anyuola, Rameny and Tarumbeta?

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Yes	300	78.3
No	83	21.7
Total	383	100

From the results, 78% (300 respondents) listened to at least one of the named radio stations during the 2017 post-election violence. The listenership was as indicated below:

Name of the station	Percentage (%) / 100%
Milambo FM	50
Onagi Radio	31
Anyuola FM	8
Tarumbeta	6
Rameny	5

The third research question was on how the contents aired on the five community radio stations promoted cohesion and integration among residents of Migori town during 2017 Post-Election violence. The results from the questionnaires and interviews conducted during the study were as follow:

Table 4 (i): Did this station (identified in b above) have programmes and news items on matters peace?

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Yes	280	73
No	103	27
Total	383	100

Table 4 (ii): If yes, in 4 (i), were the contents geared towards cohesion and integration among residents of Migori town?

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Yes	250	65
No	133	35
Total	383	100

Table 4 (iii): If yes in 4 (ii) above, to what extent if you were to rate between 1 (Unsatisfied) and 10 (Very Satisfied), did the contents aired impact peace, cohesion and integration on residents of Migori?

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Unsatisfied	23	6
Don't know	32	8.4
Satisfied	256	66.8
Very Satisfied	72	18.8
Total	383	100

Second analysis

Table 4 (i) shows that 73% of the respondents (280 respondents) agreed that the five radio stations aired contents that were promoting peace in Migori town during the post-poll violence of 2017 while 103 respondents (27%) denied. This corroborates what was found during the key informants interviews where 15 key informants (78.9%) agreed that the contents aired promoted peace. 2 key informants (10.5%) disagreed.

Participants B&C, who are programmes' editors in one of the five radio stations studied agree that during the post-election violence of 2017, the radio station that they work for aired many programmes and ran several news stories about the violence and peace. They remarked that they developed initiative where political, community and religious leaders were invited to free talk-shows to address local communities on the need for peace.

We had many programmes on cohesion and integration for the people of Migori. We invited political, religious and community leaders during talk-shows to talk to people about the need for peace, cohesion and integration among themselves. It actually worked well for us. I hosted a number of talk-shows; both free and paid ones (Participant B, April 18, 2021).

Even though these stations hosted free talk-shows and ensured those invited were from different communities and backgrounds, some peace organisations paid for the airtime during the talk-shows to have discussions with people about peace. However, these radio stations still offered extra airtime for free for such programmes.

Some communities such as Luhya, Kuria, Luo, which are the majority in Migori County, also organized peace programmes that were aired on our radio almost on a daily basis. Morning hours we invited religious leaders to pray and offer spiritual guidance to people on matters peace. These were busy days for us and we also gave bonus/extra airtime for the paid shows as way of partnering with communities and peace agencies (Participant C, April 18, 2021).

These versions agree with the opinions of Media and Peace scholars who argue that it is the role of the community radios to promote peace in the society and to enhance cohesion and integration during times of violence. Ogenga (2020) observes that community radio can play imperative role in conflict resolution and peace-building in the society. He avers that for community radio to effectively perform its role, members of the said community should be engaged in discussing matters peace. Through this, these members find forum to engage and educate themselves on the importance of peace within the community and society at large.

In table 4 (ii), the result shows that the contents aired were majorly aimed at promoting cohesion and integration. From the data collected by use of questionnaires, 250 respondents (65%) agree that the stations aired contents that were geared towards cohesion and integration, while 133 respondents (35%) disagreed. This again concurs with the results of qualitative data from key informants where all the 19 respondents (100%) agreed that the stations aired peace contents during the 2017 post-poll violence in Kenya.

Participants D & E who work with peace organisations within Migori County argued that as organisations, they were invited by the community radio stations during talk shows to discuss matters living together; co-existence among residents of Migori. Even though they were invited by the stations, at times they would pay for airtime to address members of the public on issues cohesion and integration.

Yes we partnered with these radio stations. They invited us to specifically engage people on matters cohesions and integration. However, sometimes we as the organisations would buy airtime to have our own related programmes run on air; though this also sometimes proved difficult when there were had no enough funding (Participant D, April 17, 2021).

Participant E argued that the conflict situation was so extreme that at times they would set an agenda of consoling the victims. This means they would send messages to particular families they knew had been affected by the violence and educate them, and other vulnerable ones on what to do in such scenarios.

We went to the extent of consoling the victims we knew. During our talk-shows and while on air we would also educate them on how to handle their specific situations and caution them. We also reached out to the relatives of the victims to inform them about the loss because some were not aware (Participant E, April 17, 2021).

This kind of spreading messages of cohesion and integration during violence is one of the key roles played by the media, more so community radios. For example, such strategy was witnessed in Uganda sometime back during the Lord's Resistance Army conflicts. Military intervention failed and so a community radio, *Radio Freedom*, was started in Gulu town in 1998, and later, a 'number of fighters slowly began escaping from the LRA camps-a positive step in the search for peace' (Laker, 2020: 16-17).

In table 4 (iii), 328 respondents (85.6%) were either satisfied or were very satisfied with the kind of cohesion and integration messages that were passed through the five radio stations, while 55 respondents (14.4%) were not satisfied (6%) or didn't know (8.4%). From the qualitative data, 17 key informants (89.5%) were satisfied with the contents while 2 (10.5%) said they felt not satisfied; that more would have been done to enhance cohesion and integration. *Participant F*, for example, a programme host in one of the stations under study, said that during their evaluations through in-calls, they realized many locals were satisfied with the kind of cohesion and integration messages the particular radio station was passing across. Some confessed that locals were changing their minds into embracing each other in the villages after listening to the programmes on the radios:

This violence went far. People resorted to settling their political scores around. But through our programmes and talks about the need to live together peacefully, many confessed to us that they were engaging in political strategies for peace. They were changing their mindsets (Participant F, April 17, 2021).

This is similar to what was evident with the military radio, the *Radio Freedom* in Gulu, Uganda whose impact was felt when the LRA conflict ended (Laker, 2020). Therefore, community radio stations in Migori County in one way or the other promoted peace, cohesion and integration among residents of Migori town during the 2017 post-election violence in Kenya.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

States and global peace agencies should fund establishment of peace community radios in conflict-prone areas to air contents that aim at promoting peace, cohesion and integration. Policies and guidelines should be developed on how community radios worldwide can engage communities they are serving on issues of cohesion and integration. Journalists and other media practitioners should be trained on peace journalism at all costs. Political, religious and community leaders should be actively engaged in peace initiatives and trained on how to handle media on matters cohesion and integration. Community radios can also have contents on resource allocation and good governance in efforts to enhance harmony and integration among the community members they are serving.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC, COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This is a social science paper whose findings are key in finding peaceful way of life of a community as a result of effective and proper use of community radio in promoting cohesion and integration. It reveals the destructiveness and constructiveness of community radios and gives scientific recommendations that when properly and efficiently implemented will be of great significance to communities and the society at large. By doing this, this research spurs majorly Sustainable Development Goal 16 that talks about need for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. More related study can be conducted to find out if social media can be utilised in a communal way by members of communities on matters peace, cohesions and integration.

8. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate how important community radios are in promoting peace, cohesion and integration. Through these radios, programmes and talk-shows can be organized to discuss need to peaceful co-existence with each other. Again, it is through community radios that local people can be engaged to address each other, and engage one another in enhancing peace, cohesion and integration. Apart from such messages and engagements, community radios can inform and educate people on how to handle conflicts, resource allocations and sharing, and

how to channel information to the relevant authorities. Therefore, community radios are key in promoting cohesion and integration for a better governance. *Milambo, Anyuola, Tarumbeta, Onagi* and *Rameny* community radios played role in promoting cohesion and integration in Migori County during 2017 post-election violence.

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