# EMPOWERING THE MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN MULTICULTURAL NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY RADIO

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**ABSTRACT:** In a country like Nigeria, characterized by people of different races, ethnicities, religion and nationalities, there are bound to be marginalised communities. These set of people are being treated insignificantly and rendered powerless in the society they live in. Community radio stations across the nation have taken it upon themselves to empower these marginalised communities and be the voice for the people, as it is vital in combating marginalisation because it gives marginalised people a forum to speak up, obtain pertinent information, and engage in public conversation. The aim of the study was to identify and examine the role of community radio in empowering the marginalised communities in a multicultural society like ours. This study adopted the development media theory, using qualitative methodology while secondary data was utilised. Other academics' studies, as well as press articles served as sources. The study concludes that community radio is considered a very important aspect in rural areas and plays an active role in rural development. It helps cater for the information needs of the marginalised society in a multicultural society. In addition, community radio could be used as a tool to empower the marginalised or underprivileged and speak out against discrimination and social injustices in society. The study recommended that community radios should ensure access and participation, diversity, independence and locality. This is to make sure that members of the marginalised groups can express their problems and difficulties via the station.

**Keywords:** Empower, Marginalised Communities, Multicultural Society, Community Radio

## INTRODUCTION

In a country like Nigeria, characterised by people of different races, ethnicities, religion and nationalities, there are bound to be marginalised communities. These groups of people experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across various dimensions (Igbafe, 2021). These sets of people are being treated insignificantly and rendered powerless in the society they live in. Marginalised communities sometimes confront particular difficulties connected to social exclusion, economic hardship, and political underrepresentation in multicultural societies, where multiple groups coexist (Amin, 2019). These communities—which might include women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and others—often struggle to be heard in mainstream media, which is usually dominated by stories that more privileged groups form. In these kinds of cultures, marginalisation results in restricted access to social services, knowledge, and civic engagement possibilities.

Community radio stations across the nation have taken it upon themselves to empower these marginalised communities and be the voice for the people. Community radio stations, or CRSs, are an important part of the media environment in many different countries throughout the world. Public and commercial radio make up the other two tiers of the three-tier radio system,

which includes community radio stations. Community radio shows itself to be a potent instrument for inclusion and empowerment in this setting. Community radio, as opposed to corporate or government-run media, is a grassroots endeavour that aims to represent and fulfil the unique requirements of its surrounding areas (Seidu et al., 2011). Giving underrepresented groups a forum to speak their thoughts, tell their experiences, and get important information in their native tongues and cultural contexts serves as a voice for the voiceless.

In the past 20 years, community radio stations have experienced tremendous growth in many different countries across the world. The main reason for its development, according to Ojomo et al. (2015) is that, in comparison to previous broadcasting methods, it has the ability to democratise and offer a horizontal form of communication, making a more significant contribution to development and empowerment initiatives. Community radio plays a significant role at the grassroots level in rural development and empowerment. These stations come up with various programmes that will get the people to talk and speak their minds, and the station will, in turn, stand in the gap for these people and voice out their issues to those in places of power (Adams, 2024).

This paper investigates how important it is for underprivileged populations in multicultural cultures to have access to community radio. It looks at how localised content, cultural variety, increased civic engagement, and addressing exclusionary mechanisms that frequently stifle minority voices are some of the ways community radio promotes inclusion. It also emphasises how this medium helps underrepresented groups speak up in national discourse, impact local development, and defend their rights – all of which contribute to the creation of a more democratic and egalitarian society.

Community radio not only meets the informational requirements of underrepresented groups but also encourages their active engagement in changing their communities by fostering spaces for conversation and providing useful, easily available information (Jape, 2024). Despite extensive studies on community radio, limited research focuses on its role in addressing marginalisation within multicultural societies in Nigeria. This study examines the role of community radio in empowering marginalised communities in multicultural Nigeria, emphasizing its potential for fostering inclusion, cultural preservation, and civic participation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Marginalised Communities

Groups of individuals who are excluded or disadvantaged in different ways as a result of social, economic, political, or cultural circumstances are referred to as marginalised communities. These groups frequently encounter structural obstacles that restrict their access to opportunities, resources, and equitable social involvement (Baah et al., 2019). Based on a variety of factors, including class, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability, marginalisation can happen. Thus, in comparison to dominant or more privileged groups, marginalised groups typically endure greater levels of poverty, discrimination, and social isolation.

### Key Characteristics of Marginalised Communities

1. **Social Exclusion:** Communities on the margins frequently face exclusion from the dominant political, social, and economic spheres. They could not be represented in

decision-making processes and had restricted access to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Due to institutionalised prejudices or discriminatory practices, social exclusion can also take the form of limited civic engagement or restricted access to public services.

2. **Economic Disadvantage:** Poverty and economic inequality are common experiences for marginalised communities. This might be restricted access to financing for launching firms, uneven pay, or unequal access to job prospects. Inadequate infrastructure or remote location can further exacerbate economic marginalisation by reducing prospects for upward economic mobility.

3. **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Marginalised populations frequently experience prejudice stemming from factors such as colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other social identities. This may result in discriminatory behaviours in housing, work, education, and social assistance access. More covert types of discrimination include systematic bias in institutions, cultural erasure, and microaggressions.

4. **Limited Access to Education and Healthcare:** Due to the lack of access to high-quality education, many disadvantaged groups continue to experience cycles of poverty and social disadvantage. Healthcare inequalities are a widespread occurrence, since underprivileged populations frequently encounter obstacles such as inadequate health insurance, geographic constraints, or biased medical practices.

5. **Political Marginalisation:** The term "political marginalisation" describes the exclusion of some groups from representation or involvement in politics. This might include being underrepresented in government institutions, having restricted voting rights, or being disenfranchised. The persistence of inequality may result from these groups' lack of representation in the decision-making processes that impact their lives.

6. **Cultural Marginalisation:** When a community's language, customs, and beliefs are suppressed or undervalued by the dominant culture, cultural marginalisation occurs. This may lead to forced assimilation or a loss of cultural identity. For example, indigenous peoples frequently experience cultural marginalisation as a result of the erasure of their history, customs, and languages.

One of the strategies for addressing marginalisation in a country like ours is by ensuring that marginalised groups' experiences and voices are fairly represented in the media; we may dispel myths and raise public understanding of the struggles and accomplishments these groups have made. To address marginalisation and build more inclusive and equitable communities, systemic changes in beliefs, laws, and behaviours are needed. Community radio is vital in combating marginalisation because it gives marginalised people a forum to speak up, obtain pertinent information, and engage in public conversation. Community radio is administered by and for the local community, which makes it more sensitive to their particular needs and problems than commercial or state-run media (Gasana & Habamenshi, 2023). Because of this, it is an effective instrument for promoting inclusivity, giving underrepresented populations more clout, and filling in the coverage gaps in mainstream media.

**Multicultural Society**

According to Song (2010), a multicultural society is referred to a society that is made up of individuals from many linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious origins. In these civilisations, people or groups preserve their own cultural identities while engaging with a common national or societal framework, coexisting with different cultural traditions. Many times, multiculturalism is viewed as a diversity management strategy, with the aim of advancing the

inclusion, equality, and respect of all cultural groups while acknowledging their distinct contributions to society at large (Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

**Key Features of a Multicultural Society**

1. **Cultural Diversity:** A multicultural society has a great deal of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural variety. This indicates that many worldviews, customs, and cultural practices coexist in the same social, political, and economic spheres. Living together, people of many nations, faiths, and racial or ethnic backgrounds weave a varied social fabric.
2. **Recognition and Tolerance of Differences:** Instead of imposing conformity to a single dominant culture, a multicultural society strongly emphasizes appreciating, respecting, and acknowledging cultural diversity. This frequently entails implementing laws and regulations that uphold the rights of minorities, encourage tolerance, and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, or culture.
3. **Cultural Exchange:** Different cultural groups engage in connection and exchange even as they preserve their own identities. By sharing and celebrating various customs, cuisines, artistic creations, and viewpoints, this interchange enhances the social and cultural life of the community.
4. **Social Cohesion and Inclusion:** In multicultural communities, policies and initiatives are attempted to guarantee that every group has a sense of belonging and may fully engage in public life. The goal is to prevent certain groups from being marginalised or segregated and to promote a sense of shared citizenship and belonging among all members of society.

Community radio is essential for fostering inclusion, fostering communication between disparate groups, and giving marginalised voices a voice in a multicultural society. People from different cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic origins make up a multicultural society, and community radio acts as a link between these groups, promoting communication and enhancing social cohesiveness. Community radio transforms into a vital instrument for strengthening disadvantaged groups and guaranteeing that everyone has equal access to information and engagement by providing a platform for local material, languages, and opinions.

The mainstream media frequently fails to fairly portray all cultural groups in a multicultural society, particularly minorities and marginalised populations. On the other hand, more inclusive and varied representation is possible on community radio since it is locally oriented and managed by community people. Cottle (2000) believes that community radio gives marginalised groups, including indigenous peoples, refugees, immigrants, and ethnic minorities, a forum to voice their concerns, tell their stories, and engage in public debate in ways that are authentic to their own cultural identities.

Marginalised groups frequently experience exclusion from mainstream media, politics, and decision-making processes. Examples of these groups include immigrants, Indigenous communities, and racial minorities. Sprague (2015) claims that by giving these organisations the resources and forum to spread awareness of their problems and fight for their rights, community radio gives them more influence. A lot of community radio stations also provide training programs so that people in these communities may pick up skills in broadcasting, journalism, and media creation. This gives individuals the information and abilities to shape local narratives in addition to amplifying their voices. In this sense, community radio is essential to creating multicultural cultures that are more peaceful, inclusive, and egalitarian.

## Community Radio

According to UNESCO (2001), community radio is a vital component of democratic processes and communication in societies because it provides a voice to the voiceless and acts as a mouthpiece for the underprivileged/marginalised. Community radio provides a platform for residents to voice their opinions on issues that affect them. It is a radio run by the community, for the community and about the community.

Community radio is a non-profit medium that enables people to share their experiences, tell their unique tales, and have an active role in creating and producing media. The community and voluntary sector, civil society, organisations, non-governmental organisations, and individuals can collaborate through community radio to advance community development. Community radio remains a vital tool for informing and communicating issues that impact and interest the listeners it serves, particularly in rural areas with unreliable internet access. It also serves as a medium for the revival and transmission of indigenous languages, cultures, and worldviews. In a multicultural society, community radio gives disadvantaged rural and impoverished people a forum to talk about concerns that affect them.

Small community-owned and locally managed radio stations are known as community radios. The concept of community radio is that it is the voice of the voiceless, the medium that elevates the voice of socially and economically deprived people, and it is generally seen as a tool for development (Adams, 2024). These radio stations serve people, promote expression and participation, value local culture, increase access to information, and empower communities by working to highlight the fundamental rights of marginalised communities and the voice of the poor and voiceless, the landless peasants and impoverished indigenous people.

They assist in simplifying scientific jargon and assist in presenting research findings and scientific data in a more approachable, common language. By offering important details in the local languages, they promote the growth of the communities in which they operate. A primary advantage of this type of radio, as highlighted by Ibrahim (2024), is that it gives the locals the confidence to advocate for themselves. Local radios offer a venue for the sharing of knowledge, information, and experiences because they are the only reliable source of information in rural regions. Consequently, it offers rural residents a voice. These local radios may also highlight local champions who are making a variety of contributions to their communities, as well as rural residents and talented locals.

Formal education can be replaced by listening to community radio. It helps spread knowledge about a variety of topics, including entrepreneurship, scientific farming, women's development, environmental preservation, and job opportunities. Local radios can facilitate interactive social communication among women, indigenous people, rural communities, and the impoverished by offering pertinent and timely information on topics of justice, opportunities, experiences, skills, development, and public interest. It empowers locals with a variety of concerns by fostering debate and discussion on many issues. Self-dignity is something that people may achieve through the empowerment process. It empowers individuals to speak out and resist acts of aggression, abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed at them. By enabling people to take control of their own lives, recognise their needs and concerns, and access knowledge and information, it fosters sustainable development, allowing them to make informed decisions.

Community radio has long been regarded as a tool for promoting inclusivity by amplifying diverse voices, particularly those of marginalised communities. However, there are conflicting

views on its effectiveness in achieving inclusivity, as it faces several limitations. Community radio has a limited geographic influence since it frequently operates in isolated locations. Despite being meant to represent a variety of groups, Jape (2024) noted that power dynamics within communities can cause some voices—like those of women and indigenous people—to be marginalised. Due to financial constraints, NCOP Public Enterprises and Communication (2020) in one of their releases stated that many community radio stations are unable to make investments in content that appeals to a wide range of listeners, infrastructure, and qualified employees. Content that prioritizes sponsors' preferences over the requirements of the community may result from a reliance on donations or local advertising. In many nations, community radio may not be able to cover delicate or contentious subjects freely due to severe government regulations or licensing requirements. By unintentionally excluding others, narrowcasting to particular communities might diminish inclusivity and promote echo chambers rather than intercommunal communication.

Contextual elements including finance, local government, and social dynamics frequently affect how well community radio works to achieve diversity. For instance, stations are more likely to be inclusive if they guarantee diverse participation in decision-making; integrating traditional broadcasting with online platforms can increase reach and attract younger audiences; continuing community consultation guarantees that programming meets the needs of a diverse population, and so forth. In the end, community radio has limits, but they may frequently be overcome by creative solutions and encouraging laws, strengthening its function as an inclusive medium.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Development Media Theory**

Development Media theory, propounded by Dennis McQuail (1987), is known as the use of communication to promote social development in developing nations. It makes the argument that national development initiatives and nation-building should be supported by the media. One of the normative theories of the press, development media theory was created as a part of a larger body of media theories that aim to explain the function of media in society. It first appeared in the middle of the 20th century, especially in the setting of developing and recently independent nations, where the media had a special role in promoting social transformation, economic advancement, and national growth.

As a reaction to the perceived shortcomings of previous press theories addressing the demands of developing countries, the development media theory evolved in the 1960s and 1970s. It was developed mostly by academics like Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner, and Lucian Pye. The recognition that Western media paradigms were not necessarily appropriate for nations experiencing fast social and economic development gave rise to this theory. Many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America tried to build their own media networks in the post-colonial era so that they could further their own national development objectives.

Basic assumptions of the theory include:

- According to the theory, the media is an essential instrument for promoting development. National interest topics like nation-building, education, health, and economic prosperity should be given top priority in the media. The development media theory contends that the media must favourably influence societal development, in

contrast to other theories (such as the libertarian theory, which emphasizes press freedom).

- Development media theory frequently encourages the media and government to work together. It is required of the media to support state policies and goals for development. Although it is widely acknowledged that the media should act in the public interest, this may entail some degree of governmental oversight or regulation, especially in situations where the government is perceived as the primary driver of development projects.

- It is the responsibility of the media to disseminate vital information that advances civic involvement, public health, agricultural development, and literacy. According to this theory, the media serves as a conduit for progressive social policies and educational content rather than acting as a watchdog as in some other ideas.

- Although the theory recognises the right to free speech, it does not treat it as absolute. The media may be subject to official regulation or restriction in cases where the objectives of national development collide with the freedom of the press. The premise is that, because developing nations confront unique difficulties, the media shouldn't operate in a completely autonomous manner but rather should cooperate with the government to advance societal welfare.

- In accordance with development goals, the rural populace and underprivileged groups should have greater access to media. Due to the unequal access to information in many developing nations, the development media theory highlights the necessity of inclusive communication systems. Public or state-run media are frequently regarded as essential to guaranteeing that crucial information is accessible to all segments of society.

We cannot talk about nation-building without including the underprivileged or marginalised community. The first and last assumption of this theory hammers the need for this set of people to have access to the media. This is where community radio comes in. Community radios have been given the responsibility by development media theory to partner with the government and curate educational and informing programmes that involve the supposed "marginalised" community so as to properly build the nation and be regarded as one.

Community radio is a fantastic fit for the framework that this theory proposes. It is aired in the local tongue, owned and operated by the community, and it is not for profit. It necessitates technical expertise in fostering personal development and mobility, advancing consumer demand, democracy (election), literacy, education, health, and population control. It is undeniable that the media serves as a catalyst for growth. The media may support growth in all of its forms if it is handled well. The media will act as development mobilisation agents in order to achieve this. According to this theory, community radio is appropriate for the roles given to the media.

**The Role of Community Radio in Empowering Marginalised Communities in a Multicultural Society**

Having explained who are the marginalised communities and what a multicultural society looks like, the study will continue by examining the role of community radio in empowering marginalised communities in a multicultural society. They include:

1. **Providing a Platform for Local Voices:** Community radio provides underprivileged and underrepresented groups with a platform to tell their stories, voice their concerns, and draw attention to problems that are important to them but are frequently overlooked by the mainstream media. Community radio, which frequently transmits in several

languages in multicultural societies, enables various linguistic and ethnic groups to interact with programming that speaks directly to their mother tongues and cultural experiences.

2. **Preserving and Promoting Culture:** In a multicultural setting, community radio acts as a platform for local cultures, customs, and traditions, aiding in the preservation of cultural identities. It encourages cultural pride and self-expression by giving local musicians, artists, and performers from underrepresented backgrounds a stage on which to display their abilities.

3. **Building Social Cohesion and Solidarity:** Different cultural groups can come together through community radio, which can promote communication and understanding between them. It provides a forum for communities to talk about problems like prejudice, social injustice, and cultural differences while fostering tolerance and respect for one another. Community radio promotes active citizenship and community participation by encouraging listeners to join in talks about local concerns through open discussions, interviews, and call-in shows.

4. **Information Access and Literacy:** In marginalised communities with limited access to mainstream media, community radio frequently serves as the main source of local news and information. It gives communities pertinent information about local affairs, politics, healthcare, education, and job openings. To help listeners make educated decisions about their lives, a lot of community radio stations offer educational programs on literacy, health awareness, social issues, and skill-building. In times of crisis, such as natural disasters, medical emergencies, or political turmoil, community radio plays a crucial role. It gives the community access to localised, real-time information in an easily understood format.

5. **Advocacy and Social Justice:** The rights of marginalised groups, including women, indigenous peoples, and other marginalised communities, are frequently promoted by community radio. It provides a forum for promoting equality, human rights, and social justice. Through increasing public knowledge of issues such as prejudice, poverty, and access to essential services, community radio supports advocacy efforts and gives communities the capacity to demand change from local authorities and governments.

6. **Empowerment Through Ownership and Control:** Usually, the community it serves owns, runs, and controls community radio. As a result, marginalised groups feel like they own the media that depicts them, giving them the power to shape stories and draw attention to their own concerns. Community radio frequently offers technical, journalism, and broadcasting training to locals, giving them new skills and opening doors to leadership and career prospects in their communities.

7. **Supporting Economic Empowerment:** Community radio boosts local economies by encouraging small companies and entrepreneurs, particularly in marginalised areas where mainstream advertising might not reach. Community radio programmes frequently encourage economic empowerment by focusing on livelihood alternatives, job openings, microfinance options, and agricultural advice.

8. **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Community radio continues to be an inexpensive and accessible medium, bridging the digital gap and guaranteeing that crucial information reaches people who need it most in marginalised and isolated places with little access to the internet or digital media.

Community radio plays a transformative role in empowering marginalised populations in a multicultural society by providing a forum for self-expression, cultural preservation, advocacy, and social participation. It is a potent tool for social empowerment and change since it promotes inclusivity, strengthens social cohesion, and offers crucial information and education.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study takes a conceptual approach in order to investigate the changing dynamics of inclusion in community radio. To create a thorough grasp of the subject, the process includes the synthesis and critical evaluation of previous theoretical frameworks, academic debates, and policy documents. The research draws on development media theory to examine the role of community radio as a tool for development in a marginalised community like Nigeria.

The study included a thorough analysis of reports, and peer-reviewed scholarly literature about the function of community radio in underserved areas. The selection of sources was focused on their contributions to current theoretical discussions and its applicability to inclusion. The lack of actual data in this conceptual study restricts the potential for testing the suggested paradigm. Nonetheless, it offers a theoretical framework for further empirical studies. This technique offers a methodical way to investigate and integrate theoretical viewpoints about the function of community radio in marginalised Nigeria. The study intends to offer useful tactics for improving community radio and add to scholarly discussions.

**Conclusion**

Community radio is considered a very important aspect in the rural area. It helps cater for the information needs of the marginalised society in a multicultural society. Community radio plays an active role in rural development. This community radio station's primary purpose is to inform the rural population about a range of modern topics that are happening on a daily basis in the town, the nation, and beyond. It focuses on the initiatives that would benefit those living in rural areas. Nonetheless, because it is one of the few or only forms of communication available in the area, it plays a variety of roles that eventually support the growth and social transformation of rural communities.

Additionally, community radio could be used as a tool to empower the marginalised or underprivileged and speak out against discrimination and social injustices in society. In addition, to serve as watchdogs, community radios could be extremely important in detecting and reporting on widespread crimes, corruption, and other anomalies that occur in the nation and community. A community radio station is a powerful tool for social transformation. It can be extremely important for advancing the local tongue, culture, growth, harmony, and cooperation within the community. Additionally, it educates the locals about their responsibilities and rights. Community radio provides a platform for the expression of issues, accomplishments, complaints, ideas, and talent. In all, community radio gives rural residents a voice, raises their level of awareness, gives them access to critical information, and helps the community develop sustainably.

**Recommendations**

Having considered the role of community radio in empowering marginalised communities in a multicultural society, the study recommends the following:

1. Encourage collaborations between international development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community radio stations as a way to obtain long-term support. In order to maintain financial independence without sacrificing the diversity of the material, it is recommended that a hybrid revenue model be adopted, which consists of grants, community donations, and local advertising.

2. To encourage local ownership and involvement, community members—particularly women and young people—should get training in technical skills, radio administration, and content development. Partnerships with educational establishments, such university radio stations, have to be formed in order to provide underprivileged individuals with internship opportunities and skill transfer.

3. Programs that focus on the unique issues that marginalized populations experience, such as gender equality, health, education, and conflict resolution, should be created by community radio stations. By giving community people, a voice through narrative, interviews, and interactive debates, they may promote empowerment and inclusivity.

4. The government should make it easier and less expensive for community radio stations to get licenses in order to promote their establishment in marginalised and rural areas; guarantee equitable distribution of frequencies to community radio stations, giving priority to underserved and multicultural communities; and protect the editorial independence of community radio stations by passing legislation that shields them from excessive political or governmental meddling.

5. The government should offer tax breaks or incentives to community radio stations and their supporters, such as nearby companies or non-governmental organizations that offer financial support, as well as grants or low-interest loans to help them start and run in marginalised areas. Additionally, special funding should be established for community radio stations that cover crises like public health emergencies or conflicts in marginalised communities.

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