PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF AITPROGRAM "HEROES OF OUR TIME" ON WOMENEMPOWERMENT IN KADUNA STATE

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ABSTRACT
Using primary and secondary data, this paper attempts to explore women's perception of the influence of the programme "Heroes of our Time" on women empowerment. The study is premised on two theories; Social Learning and Agenda Setting theories. Survey research method was used to sample the opinion of 100 women in Kaduna Metropolis who are purposively drawn from the population that watch the programme. 90 questionnaires were retrieved validated and used for the analysis using SPSS 21.0. The study found that the programme "Heroes of our time" is seen by women as educative, enlightening, informative and emancipatory. Women agree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" contributes to the development of women's capacity in the society. AIT produces gender emancipatory programmes that are meant to contribute to women's empowerment in the Nigerian society. The programme also provides women with role models to inspire them for greater heights in the society as it influences their behaviour. It is recommended that the programme should educate girls on the important of skills acquisition for building competence. This paper therefore recommends that, media station should give prominence, to programmes that will educate women on the gains of skills and competences for gainful employment, to enable them to be economically productive members of society.

Introduction
Gender issues have for some time now become important aspects of discourse globally and Nigeria is not an exception. The reason for the surge in interest among lay people and scholars in gender discourse has been the perceived and observable disparities, inequalities and injustices concerning the relations between the sexes in society. United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1981) through its International Commission for the Study of Communication problems notes that "equal rights for women and full participation of women in all spheres of social life are necessary for the holistic development of a country". Having noted this, UNESCO regrets that, "of all the violations of human rights, the most systematic widespread and entrenched is the denial of equality of women".

A policy document released by the Federal Ministry for European and International affairs Austria, described "women, especially in the developing countries, of being denied reasonable income, no healthcare and no security, even as they have limited opportunities owing to isolation, exclusion from decision making processes, low mobility, overwork and violence". Also, part of the agenda of the World Bank on gender equality in Africa, is the belief that granting equal opportunity to both genders, will lead to better lives. Similarly, among the six commitments to gender equality, a focus is made on gender role in national poverty reduction strategies. According to Zoellick (2010), World Bank President, the World Bank is working to remove the persistent barriers faced by women in accessing social services, participating in labour and product markets and becoming leaders in the public and private sectors. Similarly, under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) of the World Bank, its aim is to promote

equitable growth, improve efficiency, reduce conflicts, and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The focus on gender-responsive activities in the region will remain in a priority in the years to come.

Furthermore, the World Bank strongly believes in increasing women's agricultural productivity and access to land, also advancing female entrepreneurship, enhancing women's access to better infrastructural and improving girls and women's health and education.

The mass media, most especially television have become a part of our daily lives, and sources of information, education and entertainment have been described as the primary functions of the media, Lasswell (1948) as cited in Baran and Davis (2012) assigns three functions to the media: Surveillance of the Environment (the news function); Correlation of the different parts of the Environment (the editorial function) and the Transmission of the cultural heritage from one generation to the other (the cultural transmission function).

The representation of women in all aspects of our societies has become an issue of concern in the last few decades in which media are not out of the discussion. There seems to be a general agreement in the fact that in all human societies women are not treated as equal to men even as they form more than half of the world's population and do play vital and crucial roles in the survival of any society (Omenugha, 2005).

In order to make sure that we don't live in a patriarchal society, television programmes are being produced to educate and to enlighten women on how to get emancipated in the spheres of the society. One of such programmes is AIT "Heroes of our Time**. This programme is designed to educate women on how they can get liberated economically, politically, socially and other wise. The programme invites women who have made an impact in the society to share their experience with other women. Through the programme, role models are created. Women learn lessons on how they can also impact on the society. Against this backdrop, this study sets out to investigate the influence of ATT programme "Heroes of our Time" on women's emancipation and empowerment.

Research Questions

1. How frequently do women watch the programme "Heroes of our Time" on AIT?
2. How do women interpret the messages on the programme "Heroes of our Time"?
3. To what extent does "Heroes of our Time" contribute to women's empowerment?

Theoretical Overview

This study is anchored on two theories of mass communication- Social learning and agenda-setting theories.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura, who suggests that individuals are likely to imitate what they see. For example, a lad learning to brush his teeth is likely to watch an adult do it before he imitates or copies what the adult has done. So also, the kind of outfit celebrities wear, young adult get to copy the style easily. Banduara therefore, argued that

individuals learn or imitates certain responses by observing others, either personally or through the media and the environment (Baran & Davis, 2012).

McQuail (2010, p.491) explains that, "Bandura's model posits four basic processes of social learning that occur in sequence: attention, retention, production and motivation". McQuail explaining the four basic processes, says that the television programmes relevant to peoples' lives draw their attention, then they retain what they have learnt from the programmes adding to the knowledge they had before, which will be seen in their behaviours, either negatively or positively, this will bring about reinforcement and reward incitingmotivation (McQuail: 2010:491). Thus, television programmes that geared toward emancipating women can be achieved that through the use of role models.

However, some of the assumptions that the mass media are not the only source of social learning and that the influence of the mass media on the masses depends on other sources, which might be parents, friends, teachers, etc.

Baran and Davis (2010) observe that agenda- setting theory is the media's capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage. The theory has its roots in the age-long belief that the media possess the power to set the agenda and raise issues of public importance (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Considerable evidence has accumulated that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality as they go about their day-to-day task of choosing and displaying news. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about (Cohen, 1963).

The implication is that the media, through their news selection, establish not only issues of public importance, but also determine how much importance to attach to a given issue. This, no doubt, is the role of the media, to bring to the attention of the public issues that are of tremendous importance, thereby eliciting some degree of sympathy or empathy from the masses or appealing to their intellect in order to win favourable advantage in their mind concerning topical issues. The argument and relevance of this theory to the work under review is that the media can pick the issue of gender and national development and break it down in the minds of the people with the aim of highlighting the demerits and merits, so as to win the minds of the people towards gender equality. This action can either be through comprehensive editorial writing, feature writing or interpretative news stories; while in the case of broadcast it can come in form of documentary, panel discussion, phone in programmes and events coverage. In fact, countless approaches abound through which the media can pass the message across to the people.

Media and Gender Portrayal

Fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty (White, 2009). Yet, unbalanced gender portrayal is widespread. The Global Media Monitoring Project finds that women are more likely than men to be featured as victims in news stories and to be identified according to family status. Women arc also far less likely than men to be featured in the world's news headlines, and to be relied upon as 'spokespeople' or as 'experts'. Certain categories of women, such as the poor, older women,

or those belonging to ethnic minorities, are even less visible. Stereotypes are also prevalent hi every day media. Women are often portrayed solely as homemakers and carers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention. Stories by female reporters are more likely to challenge stereotypes than those filed by male reporters (Gallagher et at, 2010). As such, there is a link between the participation of women in the media and improvements in the representation of women.

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media. They are typically characterized as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to demean men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose violence. Such portrayals can influence perceptions in terms of what society may expect from men-and women, but also what they may expect from themselves. They promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society.

Attention needs to be paid to identifying and addressing these various gender imbalances and gaps in the media. The European Commission (2010) recommends, for example, that there should be a set expectation of gender parity on expert panels on television or radio and the creation of a thematic database of women to be interviewed and used as experts by media professionals. In addition, conscious efforts should be made to portray women and men in non-stereotypical situations.

Gender and Media Representation in Nigeria

The unique position of the media in any country makes it an effective instrument for Gender awareness, public enlightenment, education, national integration and entertainment. The media can be a useful channel for energizing the audience for developmental goals and objective as well as gender equality. Sobawale (1989) agrees with the above supposition when he asserts that: 'The media is able to raise the expectation of the audience, arouse emphatic feelings within them and galvanize them into actions that may lead to the attainment of socially desirable, political and cultural goals."

Commenting on Gender in Nigeria and other countries, Tuchman (1978) wrote that, the television, radio and print media influence, shape and direct the public thinking. He therefore decried that the rationale for trivialization of women is expressed in stereotyping women's place in the home. Right from childhood, children (male and female) are thought to keep the roles associated with their sexes, for example, a boy cannot be taught how to cook in the kitchen, except the girls.

To drive this point home he adds that the Nigerian constitution is the only one to declare null and void the role of women as mothers in our homes, but only provides for equality in terms of voting and contesting election. What Tuchman means is that women (Nigerian) should be relieved of their child bearing and domestic duties that society assigned to them and also participate fully in the public affairs like their men. As Okunna (2012) points out that, when a group is construed negatively, it is easier to rally against such group. Such label makes it psychologically easier to discriminate against the members of the group.

Endorsing this viewpoint, Asogwa noted in his content analysis of mainstream media that Nigerian women are largely seen and not heard, their faces adorn newspaper but when it comes to important national issues and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the story only gains real prominence if mere is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene, (Asogwa, 2013).

Communication is the powerful means of bringing about social changes. The revolution in the media of communication has helped to accelerate the pace of social change during these few decades. Radio, television, newspapers and other mass media have not only made this world shrunk, but also have revolutionized the values, attitudes, interests and social milieu (Dare, 2000). Media have a powerful effect on people who subconsciously adopt and internalize attitudes, beliefs and values presented graphically or textually. People are unaware of how much they are manipulated by the glamorous or subtle messages conveyed through a variety of media.

Television, movies, magazines, newspapers and radio advertisements try to sell people various products and people also buy into-perhaps without fully realizing the-beliefs and attitudes that govern their lives as well as their way of thinking. Newspapers, television and radio carry a variety of messages and views on issues that affect women and their portrayal as common with the Nigerian home video. According to the Nigerian feminist, Molara, the power of the media to make and unmake the image of women to hasten or retard the progress of women in society cannot be denied or underestimated (Molara, 1990).

The images of women in mass media content-news, entertainment, advertising, etc. are thus seen by media experts as a crucially important topic because these images will undoubtedly be reflected in the attitudes of the society towards women in the long run (Sandman et al., 1976). Given the trend in journalism education in Nigeria, there is a strong possibility that as students graduate, the sum total of the learning acquired from the male-dominated teaching in the nation's schools of mass communication will predispose them to selecting and reporting events and issues to reflect a male ordering of priorities even when some of the reporters are themselves women. This type of and centric view in the media content is a major factor in deciding the status of women in the society, particularly through a reinforcement of andocentric attitudes already prevalent in the Nigeria society.

In Nigeria, both the larger society and the male sub-culture see women and women's aspirations as unquestionably subordinate and the marginalization, trivialization and stereotyping of women are incontrovertible aspects of Nigerian life. It is in a society, like this that a male porter could tell a woman, who has paid him to carry her shopping to her car that no matter what she is, she Is inferior to him because she is just a woman. In Nigeria, the male members of the society are effectively socialized into the norms of their social category and those of the society as a whole.
Media roles in Promoting Gender Equality for National Development.

The media, as an instrument for political mobilization, is widely expected to be at the fore-front of promoting women participation in Nigerian politics, by projecting educative and informative programmes that would bring about gender balance in politics. Several studies have, however, brought to lime light the issue of the mass media serving as a veritable tool in projecting key national issues. In the words of Adegoke(2001,p.93),

> "In a fast moving world, facts cannot always speak for themselves. Unexplained facts can sometimes actually confuse and deceive. The reader (and listener) not only needs information, but also needs analysis; he needs backgroundevents (information) in order to function as an effective citizen. The country needs effective mass media to give coverage to issues bordering on political communication, international relations and current national issues".

Based on the aforementioned, it means that there is need for the presence of the mass media in the campaign against gender inequality in the political sphere. This is because the media is a potent tool for greater mobilization of the masses.

Nwabueze, in her study in 2005 entitled "Mass media and Community Mobilization for Development: An Analytical Approach" concludes that the mass media can serve as a potent tool for community mobilization. According to her, the mass media are very vital to the mobilization of a large, heterogeneous people for any activity of interest to them and the society at large, that for people to be expected to contribute their quota in the achievement of any developmental program, they need not just to know about the existence of such programmes, but be adequately informed about the nature of the programme (Nwabueze, 2005, p. 1).

Using the Agenda-setting theory to drive home her argument, she opined that the proponents of this theory state that the amount of attention given to an issue in the press affects the level of importance assigned to that issue by mass media audience. She concluded by saying, "Much as the mass media have been identified as potent channels for mobilizing the public for participatory community, to constantly keep them abreast of strategies to adopt in mobilizing people for development (Nwabueze, 2005, p.7). The above study shows that the mass media is a potent tool in the actualization of a particular goal of national importance such as mobilization for development. This goes a long way to show the strength of the media in the society and the nature of roles they play.

Writing about the role of the media, Tejumaiye (2005:151) opines that

> "One of America's great philosophers and one of the most glamorous politicians of his time once said"; I know that all is well if I switch off my radio and television at bedtime and wake up the following morning with the early morning news. But, I know that all is not well, if at bedtime I switch off my radio and television and switch on the following morningwithout hearing anything from either my radio or television, or that I cannot even see the newspapers at the news stand. I will continue to be worried and ask myself, if the world is not being troubled with the absence of the mass media".

This statement succinctly captures the significant role of the mass media in anybody polity (Tejumaiye, 2005:151) especially in the campaign against gender inequality. The issue of marginalization of Nigerian women from mainstream politics should be an issue constantly

reported by the media with a view to projecting views that would favour gender equality. This is because when one considers the fact that Nigerian women account for 60% of its population, it is hard to believe the level of women's under-representation in the country's politics (Ajayi, 2007, Adu, 2008). Consequently, the media in Nigeria has been able to promote the Nigerian women economically. Baran and Davis (2010) acknowledged the role of the media in reducing poverty via: - raising public awareness and debate, and shifting public and political opinion.

They recommended the following functions for the media:

- Informing a wide range of audiences on poverty reduction issues;
- Providing an open forum to reflect different public views, including those of economically poor people;
- Providing an inclusive platform for public debate.
- Scrutinizing and holding all actors to account for their actions.
- In explaining gender bias, it has been noted that news is not one reporter's view of an event, but a social, consensual product molded by a variety of consideration.

Methodology

The paper employed survey method in order to explore women's perception of the influence of the programme "Heroes of our Time" on women empowerment. Working class women in Kaduna metropolis forms the population of the study, because middle class workers are believed to own television sets and have access the programme on AIT.

Through purposive and accidental sampling technique, 100 women who were audience of AIT "Heroes of our Time" television programme were examined. The questionnaire was used to get responses from the respondents.

Findings and Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze 90 valid retrieved copies of the questionnaire with the aid of SPSS 21.0.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The collected data is presented and interpreted below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demography	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-29 years	18	20.0
30-49 years	38	42.2
50-59years	24	26.6
60 years and above	10	11.1
Total	**90**	**100.0**
Marital Status		
Single	34	37.8
Married	56	62.2
Total	**90**	**100.0**
Occupation		
Public Servant	30	33.2
Students	20	22.2
Traders	38	42.2
Fanners	2	2.2
Total	**90**	**100.0**
Education		
Secondary	38	42.8
Higher Education	52	57.2
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Table 2: Awareness of "Heroes of Our time on AIT"

Variable	Frequency	Percentage *(%)*
Yes	90	90.0
Total	**90**	**100.0**

All the respondents are aware of *"Heroes of our Time"* programme on AIT.

Table 3: Frequency of watching the programme

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	27	30.0
Once in a while	63	70.0
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Majority of the respondent who accounted for (70.0%) said they watch the programme *"Heroes of our Time"* on AIT once in a while. While 30.0% watch the programme always. The programme *"Heros of our Time"* is a weekly programme and from the responses, one may be tempted to conclude that majority of the respondents watch the programme once in a while.

Table 4: Perception of *"Heroes of our Time"* Programme

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educative	27	30.0
Enlighten	22	24.4
Informative	18	20.0
Emancipatory	23	25.6
All of the above		
Total	**90**	**100.0**

According to the data in table 4 above, the majority of the respondents sees the programme as educative; while 30.0%. 25.6 % view the programme as emancipatory, 24.4% sees *"Heroes of our Time"* women programme on AIT as enlightening and 20.0% view the programme to be informative. This data show that women see the programme as educative, enlighten, informative and emancipatory. From this, it can be inferred that respondents have built some level of perception on *"Heroes of our Time"* programme of AIT over time. From the above, it can be deduced that the respondents allude to fact that the programme *"Heroes of our Time"*is educative and emancipatory in nature. This means that, women believe that, the programme liberates women.

Table: 5 The programme's contribution to improving women's capacity in the society

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	43	47.8
Agree	34	37.8
Disagree	13	14.4
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Respondents strongly agree that that the programme *"Heroes of our Time"* contributes in improving women's capacity in the society with (43 respondents representing 47.8%). 34 respondents representing 37.8% agreeing that the programme "Heroes of our Time" is contributing in improving women capacity in the society. 14.4% % disagree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" contributes in improving women's capacity in the society. From this, it can therefore be inferred that the majority of the respondents agree to the fact that the programme "Heroes of our Time" contributes in improving women's capacity in the society.

Table6: The programme's influence on women emancipation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	63	70.0
Agree		
Disagree	27	30.0
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Respondents strongly agree that that the programme *"Heroes of our Time"* is impacting on women emancipation in the society with 63 respondents representing 70.0%. 27 respondents representing 30.0% disagree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" contributes to women's emancipation in the society. From this, it can therefore be inferred that the majority of the respondents agree to the fact that the programme "Heroes of our Time" impacts on women's emancipation in the society.

Table 7: The programme provides women with role models inspire them for greater heights

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	12	13.3
Agree	73	81.1
Disagree	5	5.5
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Majority of the respondents strongly agree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" provides women with role models to inspire them for greater heights in the society with 73 respondents representing 81.1%. 12 respondents representing 13.3% agree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" provide women with role models to inspire them for greater heights in the society. 5.5% strongly disagree that the programme "Heroes of our Time" provides women with role models to inspire them for greater heights in the society. From this, it can therefore be inferred that majority of the respondents agree to the fact that the programme "Heroes of our Time" provides women with role models to inspire them for greater height in the society.

Table 8: The extent the programme has inspired women to achieve greater heights in the society

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To an extent	40	44.4
To a large Extent	50	56.6
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Majority of the respondents believe the programme "Heroes of our Time" inspire women to achieve greater heights in the society to a very large extent, while 44.4% believe it inspires women for greater height to an extent. It can equally be inferred that the programme "Heroes of our time" on AIT emancipates women in the society to a very large extent.

Table 9: The extent the programme contributes to women empowerment

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To an extent	40	44.4
To a large Extent	50	56.6
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Majority (55.6%) of the respondents believe the programme "Heroes of our Time" contributes to women's empowerment to a very large extent, while 44.6% believes it contributes less to their empowerment. It can hence, be inferred that, to a large extent, the programme "Heroes of our time" on ATT contributes to women's empowerment in the society.'

Discussion of Findings

The paper investigated the role of television programme on women empowerment. The paper found that women watch the programme "Heroes of our Time" aired weekly on ATT. The paper discovered that, women have positive interpretation of the programme 'Heroes of our Time". They see the programme as educative, emancipatory, enlightening and informative. That is, women get liberated as a result of television programme hence, become empowered in the society.

Furthermore, the programme contributes in improving women's capacity in the society with. AIT is producing gender emancipatory programmes that are meant to contribute to women's development in the Nigerian society. The data show that women sampled are in full agreement regarding the impact of the programme on their status in the society. They affirmed that it influences women's emancipation in the society, this is because, the programme "Heroes of our time" provides women with role models to inspire them to attain greater heights in the society. The paper observed that, women believe that the programme, "Heroes of our Time' contributes to their empowerment to a very large extent. Similarly, respondents argued for sustainability of the programme, considering how it significantly contributes to women's empowerment.

Conclusion

The paper attempted to empirically investigate women's perception of how the programme "Heroes of our Time[1] influences women's behavior towards empowerment. It found that, the programme positively influence women's behavior hence contributes to their empowerment. The data from respondents allude to the fact that, the programme immensely contributes towards women's emancipation in the society. This underscores the role of the media in women's empowerment. However, findings suggested that the media, have only shifted a little from the status quo by giving women little voice, demeaning them through various forms of behaviour and increasing their vulnerability. Yet, it is vital that this cycle is broken for the liberation of women as Roach suggests would imply the liberation of a host of other poor. Hence, the paper concludes that, the culture of relegating women to the background needs to be addressed by the Nigerian media as news regarding state of women socially, economically and politically seem gradually to disappear in media reports, obliterated by stories about their men counterpart, top government officials, heads of government and their relations. The paper also observes the imperativeness of gender mainstreaming, as the media have a great role to play in creating gender balance in Nigeria for national development. Broadcast media should give prominence, to programmes that will educate women on the gains of skills and competences for gainful employment, enabling them to be economically productive members of society.

Recommendations

1. Government agencies like the Ministry of Women Affairs should help to sponsor programs on gender promotion in all aspects of the society.

2. When packaging educational programmes, they should be packaged in such a way that they can motivate those that are resistant to change and it should be packaged in such a way that it will not affect any ethnic or religious group.
3. Also, the programme should educate girls on the gains of skills and competences for gainful employment, enabling them to be economically productive members of society. Educated mothers are likely to send their children to school.

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