AKSU Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS) Vol. 1, No. 1, 2021 – P. E. Umoren & A. A. Udonquak. Pp 286 - 296

RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Philomena EffiongUmoren
Department of Mass Communication
AkwaIbom State University, ObioAkpa Campus, Nigeria
philoumoren12@gmail.com

&

AniekanAniefiokUdonquak
Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria
aniekanudonquak@gmail.com

Abstract

The absence of community newspapers in Nigeria has left information and communication void in all spheres of rural development issues for the hinterland dwellers. In the same vein, the emergence of social media could not have come at a better time for the rural settlers' vis-a-vis their developmental issues. Tellingly, social media have seemingly taken a stranglehold of the communication and information spectrum in rural development issues thereby bridging the gap created by the extinction of the community press in rural and national development. This paper therefore, examines the role which social media can play in meeting the information and communication deficit of the rural areas and by extension, contributing to Nigeria's national development. This study drew its strength from the democratic participant theory of the mass media as well as the social exclusion theory. The study employed the critical discourse analysis approach to strike a nexus for harnessing the potential of social media in Nigeria's rural development pursuit. Findings from the analysis reveal that the dearth of community newspapers has created information and communication vacuum for Nigeria's rural population thereby hampering national development. Thus, the submission of this paper is: in the absence of community newspaper to aid information and communication needs of Nigeria's rural population, social media if properly harnessed can bridge that gap effectively through balanced and objective citizenship journalism from members of the rural communities.

Keywords: Rural development, social media, national development, citizen journalism.

Introduction

Arguably, we live in a realistic world not an idealistic world. Everything is far from perfect. We still have the poor and the needy living in and around us. Despite all the efforts towards the eradication of poverty in the world, the gap between poverty and standard living and lifestyle seems to grow wider and wider. In the Holy Bible, Christians are admonished to always look for the poor and needy because according to Jesus Christ, "You will always have the poor among you…" (John chapter 12 verse 8, *New Living Translation*). And this statement has proven to be true and nothing but the truth. The poor and the needy are always there amongst us. This explains, why we still have rural development issues in contemporary society: because there will always be the rural dwellers amongst us and we ought to look out for.This leads us rural development issues.

Interestingly, every society has got its rural population. No matter how developed a society is, it will always have rural development issues to grapple with; albeit, such rural development issues come in different degrees depending on the stage of the country's development, and truly so. However, rural development issues are more pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Nigeria in particular, rural development are on the front burners. In fact, they are palpable. While there are many items that constitute rural development issues, lack of access to information and proper communication channels are at the cornerstone of their needs.

Thus, Islam and Ahmed (2012) state that "people living in poor communities are frequently denied access to information which could improve their lives. This situation is particularly severe in many rural areas of the developing countries." Whether this denial is intentional or situational, the fact remains, there is colossal information and communication divide and this is, if not the major contributor to the underdevelopment of the rural areas especially in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. And without gainsaying, access to the right information by rural communities can help them to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence leading a nation's development (Islam and Ahmed, 2012).

According to media scholars such asAmadi and Enyindah (2017) and Zambuko (2016), community newspapers in ideal sense are supposed to bridge the information and communication vacuum mentioned above for the rural dwellers. A rural community newspaper is a medium that operates, circulates and serves the interest and needs of a particular geographical location with distinguishable socio-cultural, political and economic characteristics (Amadi and Enyindah 2017). It can also be described as a newspaper published in a specific locality, whose editorial thrust, reflects the interest of that specific environment and circulation range is usually limited to that locality.

The idea of the community newspaper was formulated as means of bringing news to the people in the rural locale as well as providing a platform where their needs and opinions can be heard as the same time. The community press initiative sought to fill the information gap that was left void by the big daily newspapers which basically cover stories within big cities. Events occurring in the smaller towns no matter how news worthy they may be, are often left out or are simply flight in a corner of a page. In addition, stories occurring in remote rural areas often do not get recognition by the mainstream media. As such small communities had no coverage in terms of print media news. Important events in the rural areas were not covered and as such the idea of community newspaper was incorporated (Zambuko 2016).

However, the truth in contemporary Nigeria is that there is a near if not total absence of community newspapers. This is not unconnected to the harsh economic realities of Nigeria today and the fluctuating and sometimes bleak economic fortunes of the newsprint industry globally as documented by Batta, Ekeanyanwu, and Batta (2017); Umoren and Udonquak (2020) and many other media researchers. Thus, not many communities in Nigeria can boast of and can afford to run community newspaper. Also, not forgetting that newspaper production requires a great deal of resources – human, material and financial which not many people and in this case, not many communities can afford (Udoakah, 2006).

The closest we have in Nigeria to community newspapers are local government established newspapers. But that again is very farfetched and very handful. The financial challenges of Nigeria's third tier of government have been well documented and venturing into such economically unknown terrain it a big ask for

nearly if not all the local government administrators in Nigeria. What they normally do are occasional news bulletins. What is obtainable and very common are state government established newspapers in Nigeria. So, this begs the question, in the absence these community newspapers, can social media bridge the gap in information and communication needs of the rural dwellers? Or mean it mean that they have been completely cut off? These questions are the thrust of this research.

Literature Review

The idea of rural development is nothing but a process where the standard of living of rural people increases continuously. It may be defined as "improving the living standards of the low income people living in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining (Goel and Goswami, 2010). As a concept, rural development refers all round development of rural areas including the improvement of lifestyle of rural people; as a phenomenon it implies the interaction between physical, environmental, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors in the rural areas and as a strategy, rural development is nothing but an approach or operational design to bring about desired positive change in socio-economic and cultural life of the people living in rural areas (Haloi, 2015).

Rural areas play traditionally important role in a nation's economy and maintaining social stability. The development of most of them is entirely dependent on natural resources in the area, so that the economy of the rural areas is specialised in a limited number of industries - agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, mining, rural tourism. The number of population in these regions ranged from 200 to 30 000 inhabitants (Surchev, 2010). About one in every five people in the world live in extreme poverty (1.2 billion people) and more than 900 million people suffer from under nutrition. Poverty is predominantly rural. Three quarters of the worlds' poor live in rural areas where they are mainly involved on agriculture and related activities. So poverty target goals can't be achieved unless address rural poverty (Begalli, 2009).

Rural development is a multilevel, multifactor, and multifaceted process that is affected by different elements including developmental model, the relationship between agriculture, industry and society, social and economic aspects and rural economic activities individual farm and local policies and institutions (Long *et al*., 2011). Rural development involves economic emphasis on various non-farm activities, ecotourism, handicrafts, off farm activities, and extended social and physical infrastructures. The level of economic activities contained within local economies is an important consideration in the theme of rural economic development. Indeed, the ability and strength of local economic interactions are pre-requisite for sustainable economic development (Namdar and Sadighi, 2013).

Rural development is, therefore, the development of rural areas in such a manner that each component of the rural life changes/transforms and proceeds in the desired direction with the other components as envisaged in the plan. Besides, rural development also encompasses structural changes in the socio-economic situation in the rural areas in order to bring about human welfare, which is the primary goal of all the developmental activities. In addition, it is achieved at the earliest. Thus, the rural development should embrace all the objectives of enrichment and betterment of the overall quality of rural life through an appropriate development of manpower resources, infrastructure facilities and provision of minimum needs and livelihood.

In relation, development is a qualitative change, which entails changes in the structure of the economy, social environment, and political disposition. The overall object of rural development is human development, the purpose of which is to enlarge

people's choices for-- greater access to knowledge; better nutrition and health services; more secure livelihoods; security against crime and physical violence; political and cultural freedoms; and a sense of participation in community activities(Khalid, Ahmed and Mufti, 2015). However, as lofty as the above may sound, the rural areas and their development issues will always get rarely mentioned by and in the broader mass media. This leaves the ruler dwellers lagging behind and begging for media attention.

Furthermore, in events where local and rural news items and reports find their way in to the mainstream press, Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012), posits that the press hardly reports any good news about the rural communities in Nigeria. For example, initiative towards peace, harmony and self-efforts at rural development are hardly given attention to, by Nigerian press and this has made rural poverty and rural-urban migration increasingly unabated. The existing lacuna already created following the discriminatory allocation of resources by those in authorities can be eliminated through the establishment of the rural newspapers in the various communities of Nigeria (Amadi and Enyindah 2017).

Accordingly, since stories occurring in remote rural areas often do not get recognition by the mainstream media and small communities have no coverage in terms of print media news. Important events in the rural areas are not covered and as such the idea of community newspaper was incorporated (Zambuko 2016). With the attendant extinction of community newspaper, herein lies the gap in literature which this study intends to bridge. Through the review of research works, this paper seeks to find the nexus between the extinction of the community press and the emergence of social media and its attendant impact on the coverage and reportage of rural development issues in Nigeria in furtherance of Nigeria's national development objectives.

Social Media: Conceptual Analysis

Social media has been defined in a variety of ways as there are many mass media researchers. According to Kapoor *et al*., (2018), "social media comprises communication websites that facilitate relationship forming between users from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a rich social structure". Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social media as a "platform to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships". Specifically, social media refers to the use of social networking sites such Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. for the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions which at the same time has given birth to a cultivation of a large pool of audience which enables mass information gathering and dissemination at the same time.

According to Gupta (2016) "social media refers to the web-based tools and media that allow users to personally and informally interact, create, share, retrieve, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media includes social networking sites, blogs and micro - blogs, online forums, discussion boards and groups, wikis, socially integrated text messaging services, videos and podcasts, and many more." The roots of social media stretch far deeper than you might imagine. Although it seems like a new trend, sites like Facebook are the natural outcome of many centuries of social media development (Hendricks, 2013).

However, it is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world. Social media is not a new

concept - it has been evolving since the dawn of human interaction. In recent times, social media has impacted many aspects of human communication, thereby impacting business (Edosomwan, *et al*., 2011). Social media, therefore, has strong potential to foster social innovation by enabling remote communication, but in rural areas, social media use may be low because of an aging and decreasing population (Onitsuka, 2019). These impacts without gainsaying have spread to all facets human endeavours and most importantly, social media is engendering rapid and sustained development of our rural communities.

However, it is no longer news, rural areas are often characterised as information-poor and information provision has always been a central component of rural development initiatives. The rural poor typically lack access to information vital to their lives and livelihoods. The rural poor depend primarily on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood; agriculture provides the bulk of their income and their main source of nutrition (Shailashree, 2019). Thus, realising the importance and powerfulness of social media, it is used in rural development for agricultural activities like proper guidance to the farmers about use of fertilizers; how much amount of fertilizer should be added, to the nature of soil, for which crop the soil is more beneficial. The technology is too beneficial in the increment of yield of crops due to which the farmers will be in profit. Agriculture researchers of developing countries are also believed that social media are important tool to disseminate their findings (Choudhary, 2019).

In relation to the above postulations, Onitsuka (2019) studied how social media can foster social innovation in disadvantaged rural communities. The study examined community-level adoption and use of social media in rural areas in Japan, with a focus on Facebook, for the purpose of sharing community information and facilitating networking with a variety of actors to promote rural social innovation. It involved a comprehensive search and case studies targeting 139,063 rural communities and 10,922 rural joint-communities, all of which were legally designated agricultural communities throughout Japan. The search found that disadvantaged rural communities' adoption of Facebook was scarce, and most of the communities that had adopted Facebook did not expand their social networks. Furthermore, investigation into the communities that had adopted social networking to a larger extent revealed that external supporters or migrants had essential roles in successful networking.

From the perspective of developing countries, Gupta (2016) looked at the impact of social media in rural development. The study described the connection between social media and rural Indiahow rural development could be enhanced. It looked at a few examples where social mediahad benefitted rural development to draw a positive inference for India's rural communities. While in Nigeria, Ukomadu (2018) assessed the role of social media in community development in Nigeria. The paper concluded that one cannot talk of effective community mobilization and development in modern times, without the use of social media and recommended that communities desirous of development in Nigeria should embark on self-help efforts, as it is an impossible task for the government to develop every community simultaneously, due to paucity of funds.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Democratic Participant Theory of the Mass Media and the Social Exclusion Theory. The democratic participant theory expounded by Denis McQuail**(**1987)is part of the working normative theories of the mass media. The theory advocates for the democratization of the media for the purpose of

accessibility to all. In simple term, the theory calls for the establishment of local media by local communities and groups so that they can meet their own needs and that potential users of the media can have access to it (Asemah, 2011). This theory emphasizes the concept of small-scale communication and reply, coupled with the principle of interactive and participative tendencies. The application of this theory will open more space for inclusiveness of the rural people (Samson, Ita and Etim, 2017). The application here lies that threshold for the use of social media in rural communication and underscores it relevancy to this study.

On the other hand, the Social Exclusion Theory espoused by Emile Durkheim(1914) is essentially about the deprivation meted to the less-privileged people especially because of their location. This deprivation can be social, economic, political and even emotional. Social exclusion theory explains there are always situations or conditions which distance, people, groups, communities and territories from the centre of power while people from such communities and territories suffer from unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, and bad health programmes, and without corresponding attention from the government and other stakeholders including the press (Estivill, 2003). And these and more are abounding in the rural communities constituting part of the impediments to their development which can be ameliorated by the exploration of the power and accurate use of social media.

The Social Exclusion Theory is relevant to this study because it explains that once a group of people is disconnected from the centre of source of power in a state which can be caused by lack of access to information, such disenfranchised communities tend to suffer from underdevelopment. This has proven to be true in many instances. Thus one cannot help but wonder what will become of Nigeria's rural communities in the absence of community newspapers.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature, while the critical discourse analysis approach was adopted.Critical discourse analysis is a growing interdisciplinary research approach. In relation to the mass media it focuses on analysing, understanding and explaining new phenomena in our political systems, which are due to the impact of (new) media and to new transnational, global and local developments and related institutions. The paper reviewed select research studies on social media and rural development bearing in mind the absence of community newspapers with the aim to strike a nexus between social media and rural development issues in Nigeria and also identify some of the key issues and future research directions in this field.

Discussion of Findings

Overall, the study focuses on rural development issues, social media and national development in Nigeria. Thus, findings are discussed within the prism of education, politics and governance, economic, agriculture, etc. First, education; by definition, is the act of or process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgement, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. Evidently, rural areas in Nigeria are in dearth of infrastructures. One particular sector that has been badly hit by the infrastructure shortage is the education in the rural communities. Shortage of classrooms for conducive learning, lack of teaching aids and near absence or under supply of

teaching personnel are some of the issues that rural communities are facing in the education sector. But unfortunately, most times, these are not always making the front news burners. People in position of authority can therefore, fend ignorance to the existence of these issues due to lack or under reportage by the conventional mass media.

Social media can indeed play a vital role in ensuring that educational developmental needs of the rural dwellers are met. This can be achieved through various ways and by the exploitation of the various social networking platforms available.Citizen journalism as well, teachers in the hinterland and also the rural dwellers can exploit the global power of social media from their locale the highlight their developmental needs to the state and federal governments**.** For instance, social networking sites Facebook and Twitter allow for users to generate and upload content. This avenue of generating and uploading post leaves the window of opportunity for citizens especially those in the rural areas to generate and share the developmental needs Nigeria's rural communities. This process is called citizen journalism).This can in no little way bridge the gap created by the absence of community newspapers in the rural communities.

Second, politics and governance; this is concerned with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations between individuals or groups for the advancement of society. Without mincing words, the political interests and yarning of the rural communities for good governance and political inclusion has suffered in no less significant measure since the extinction of community newspaper. However, social media have in recent times provided an escape route out of the quagmire. The platform has helped to further and deepen the political inclusion for the local dwellers and help bring their issues to the front burner.This is made possible because when political needs and issues of the rural population are well reported in the media and addressed by those in positions of authority, it leads to peaceful co-existence which in the long run will contribute to the development of society because a peaceful society is a springboard for development**.** Political interest from the rural dwellers has contributed greatly to the growth of citizen journalism in recent times.

The socio-political and cultural development and interest of Nigeria's rural communities have always been treated with levity. An example can be seen in how the Federal Government of Nigeria handled the Boko Haram insurgency at its infancy.Boko Haram and other similar armed groups in Nigeria started-off as minute community issues and thus were not given full media attention and coverage until they became widespread and full-scale. Such previously ignored issues by the mass media are impeding rural development and by extension, Nigeria's national development. Though, with the proper use and exploitation of social media going forward, such socio-political issues can bring to the headlines on time and where proper attention will be given to it which will bring peace and development to Nigeria in the long run.

Furthermore, needs in the area of business and economy can also be highlighted to the authorities for prompt action and social media platforms are there for the taking. Needs in this sector are concerned with organised efforts and activities of individuals of groups to produce and sells goods and services for profit in the rural areas. It also involves actions aimed regulating the business environment in their rural areas. These local economies keep the central economy ticking though their small and medium scale enterprises. And this equally extends to the rural health needs of the people: needs concerning with the improvement of the physical, mental and social

wellbeing of members of the rural society can be well publicized to attract appropriate and adequate attention to such plight.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the rural population in Nigeria and agriculture is a paramount constituent of rural development issues. It is a sector that has attracted interest from successive Nigerian governments.In this sector, the importance and powerfulness of social media, can be seen in rural development for agricultural activities like proper guidance to the farmers about use of fertilizers; how much amount of fertilizer should be added, to the nature of soil, for which crop the soil is more beneficial. The technology is too beneficial in the increment of yield of crops due to which the farmers will be in profit. Agriculture researchers of developing countries are also believed that social media are important tool to disseminate their findings (Choudhary, 2019). Accordingly, social media canhelp bridge the gap created by the absence of community press in Nigeria to ensure sufficient rural agricultural reportage through citizenship journalism.

Other key rural development issues such as crime and security, environment, religion and welfare can also be effectively covered and reported through the social media for the betterment of the country. For instance, in crime and security, Nigeria is still reeling from the brutal murder IniubongUmoren in AkwaIbom State. Though the process that resulted to the cold murder could not be stopped on time, Twitter and Facebook were effectively used to first break the news of her kidnap and subsequently unravel the identities of the hoodlums behind the murder. That was vintage use of social media through citizen journalism to fight crime and contribute to national development. And all these happened in the absence of community press.

Environmentally, social media is playing a vital role to improve and take care of the environment in AkwaIbom State in particular and Nigeria in general. The AkwaIbom State Environmental Protection and Waste Management Agency, a parastatal of government in the Ministry of Environment runs active social media pages from different social networks and the agency depends heavily on citizens' efforts in identifying those areas of their communities that require government attention. Such a commendable move would have been difficult to achieve without the social media. And it would have been worse due to the dearth of community newspapers in contemporary Nigeria.

Social media has equally offered religious organisations like churches an avenue to reach much more people in the rural areas and evangelise. Most churches in Nigeria own and run social media pages where messages of hope, motivation and faith are preached and spread to those in the rural communities who cannot make it to the mega cathedrals in the state capital. It also relatively easier now to keep taps on new converts by getting them into groups on WhatsApp, Facebook etc. This would not have been possible without social media. And through these media also, the welfare needs of the rural dwellers are equally reported by citizen journalist thereby drawing the attention of potential helpers to such needy people.

Social media offers enough room for information and communication flow between the rural population and the authorities in government. With sustained citizen reportage, most if not all the rural development needs can be met. That is the power of the social media. It bridges the information gap and serves as a marketing link between the governors and the governed. With the extinction of the community press in Nigeria, which should originally focus on the development needs of its immediate community, can bridge that gap for Nigeria's rural and national development.

Conclusion

The potential of social media for social engineering and rural development all over the world can never be overemphasised. Rural communities the world over bear the same characteristics of poverty occasioned by lack of access to information and communication. In Nigeria, rural communities suffer from lack of infrastructure in education, health, economy etc. to aid their development. Social vices like corruption, banditry, domestic and gender based violence have played a significant role in enhancing rural underdevelopment in Nigeria in recent times. The chances of these issues confronting the local communities getting addressed by successive Nigerian governments are very slim because of the near absence of the mainstream mass media coverage and reportage of these rural communities. Communities press would have readily solved this problem of insufficient mass media coverage of rural settlement issues. However, the sad tale is that community newspapers have since gone extinct in Nigeria. Therein lies the vast potential of social media.

Social media if properly harnessed can effectively bridge the void created by the extinction of community newspaper in Nigeria. With citizen journalism, social media can be used to draw the attention of the authorities to the plight of rural communities. And by so doing, the rural population can be connected to the central and state governments which will aid their development and trickle rural and national development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the issues and the discourse above, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. All Information, Communication and Technologies (ICTs) infrastructure that will facilitate unrestricted internet accessibility to the rural communities in Nigeria should be provided by the different tiers of government. This will enable the rural settlers to key into the ongoing social media wildfire inversion that is taking place the world over.

2. Rural dwellers are strongly encouraged to take active role in the coverage and reportage of their rural communities through the social media. This citizen journalism approach will help fill the void created by the extinction community newspapers. More so, it will help bring to the lamplight the issues begging for attention in their communities that have not been lighted by the mainstream press.

3. Government and its agencies should pay attention to the yearning and desires of the rural communities they are reported on the social. Everything should not be discarded or regarded as mere propaganda and fake news. This is because observations have shown that there are a lot of genuine issues that have always been ignored by the mainstream media which the citizen journalists are always keen to bring to media prominence.

References

Amadi, R. N. and Enyindah, S. C. (2017).Community newspaper as catalyst for effective rural transformation - The Nigerian factor. *International Journal of Mass Communication and Human Development*. 7 (1).

Asemah, E. S. (2011). *Selected Mass Media Themes.* Jos University Press, Jos.

Batta, H., Ekeanyanwu, N. T. and Batta, N. W. (2017). Decline and survival strategies of the newspaper industry in a depressed economy: A study of *Daily Trust* and *The Leadership* newspapers. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication (TNJC)*. 14 (1): 281 - 320.

Begalli, D. (2009).Emerging rural development issues (Editorials).*Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics.* 1 (4).

Boyd, D. M. and Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 13, 210 - 230.

Choudhary, R. (2019). Social media – making pathways for rural development in India. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)*. 6 (2): 313 - 318.

Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S. K., Kouame, D., Watson, J. and Seymour, T. (2011). The history osocial media and its impact on business.*The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*. 16 (3).

Durkheim, E. (1914). *The Dualism of Human and Its Social Conditions In*. K. Wolff (Editor) *Essays on Sociology and Philosophy,* 1960. New York.

Estivill, J. (2003). *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

Goel, J. P. and Goswami, H. (2010). *An Introduction to Economics*. Assam: Tushar Publishing House.

Gupta, S. (2016). A study on: Impact of social media in rural development. National Seminar on Accelerating Rural Growth: By Empowering Women Through Innovation and Technology IJRTER - Special Issue.

Haloi, R. (2015).Media and rural development.*International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS*). II (I), 239 – 246.

Hendricks, D. (2013). Complete history of social media: Then and now. http://smallbiztrend.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-mediainforgraphic.html. (Retrieved on 29th January 2021).

Islam, M. S. and Ahmed, S. M. Z. (2012). The information needs and information-seeking behaviour of rural dwellers: A review of research.*International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions*, 38 (2): 137 – 147.

Kapoor1, K. K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N. P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y. K., and Nerur, S. (2018).Advances in Social Media Research: Past, Present and Future.*Information Systems Frontiers*.20, 531 – 558.

Khalid, M. Z., Ahmed, A., and Mufti, S. (2015).Media and development in society: Continuity and challenges.*IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. 20 (11), II: 47 – 54.

Long, H., Zou J., Pykett J. and Li, Y. (2011). Analysis of Rural Transformation Development in China since the Turn of the New Millennium. *Appl. Geography*. 31: 1094 - 1105.

McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass CommunicationTheory: An Introduction.* 3rd Edition. Sage: London.

Namdar, R. and Sadighi, H. (2013).Investigation of Major Challenges of Rural Development in Iran Utilizing Delphi Technique.*J. Agr. Sci. Tech*. 15: 445 - 455.

Onitsuka, K. (2019). How social media can foster social innovation in disadvantaged rural communities.*Sustainability* 11, 2697.

Samson, A. C., Ita, O. O. and Etim, E. (2017). Coverage of rural communities by localnewspapers in AkwaIbom State. *AKSU Journal of Communication Research (AJCR).*2 (2): 231 – 242.

Shailashree, B. (2019). Social media for grassroots development.*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI).* 8 (2): 27 -33.

Surchev, P. (2010).Rural areas - problems and opportunities for development.*Trakia Journal of Sciences*. 8 (3): 234 – 239.

The Holy Bible, *New Living Translation*, John chapter 12 verse 8.

Udoakah, N. (2006). *Issues in Media Practices*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers.

Ukomadu, C. (2018). The role of social media in community development in Nigeria: The Owe Unity Forum (OAF) model. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR- JHSS).* 23 (5): 34 - 43.

Umoren, P. E. and Udonquak, A. A. (2020). Survival strategies of local newspapers in Akwa Ibom State in a COVID-19 recessed economy. *AKSUJournal of CommunicationResearch (AJCR)*. 7: 231 – 242.

Wodak, R. (2009).Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory, and methodology. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Editors) *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*(pp 1-33) Sage.

Zambuko, G. (2016). Changing times: Prospects of community press in the information society: A case of *Gweru Times.International Journal of Network and Communication Research*. 3 (2): 21 – 30.