

## Mass Media and the Recent Economic Recession in Nigeria: A Search for a Viable Solution: Study of Kano State Radio Nigeria

**Maryam Umar Mukhtar** Abstract

*Department of Mass  
Communication,  
Faculty of Communication,  
Bayero University Kano Nigeria*

Mass media plays a gigantic role in nation building such as acting as watchdog, interpreter of events, agent of change and gatekeeper in shaping and molding the national conscience of the society. Economic recession affected the industry globally which also manifested in Nigeria. The economic recession had massively affected the viability of Kano State radio, because the station rather than making profit is now operating at a loss, the subvention the station receive from the State government is no longer enough to sustain the station in the area of programmes, payment of casual staff and the general maintenance of the station. System theory was adopted while qualitative methodology was used. Findings revealed that the establishment of many private stations in the state also contributed immensely to the current predicament of the station. The station during economic recession was no longer considered the right channel for information dissemination. Corporate and individual bodies' preferred to patronize many of the private stations for their advert placement rather than approaching Kano State Radio. At that moment, the over ten private stations in Kano State were making huge profits while Kano State radio was seriously feeling the negative impacts of economic recession/slowdown. Findings also revealed that after recession and the change of leadership in the station, new equipment were procured, modern studios were constructed with latest broadcast equipment installed. Base on the above findings the study recommends that Government should increase the amount of funds given to the station. New equipment should be procured for the station so that high productivity could be achieved.

**Keywords:**

Communication,  
Mass media,  
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*Corresponding Author:*  
Maryam Umar Mukhtar

### **Background to the Study**

Mass media comprises of newspaper, radio, television and the platform of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and many more. It has a tremendous impact on the way of life and attitudes of the people. In addition, the mass media have the capacity and the responsibility for gathering and dissemination of knowledge, skill, experience and all forms of information that can promote and facilitate socio-economic progress and political consciousness for the development of an individual citizen and the whole nation. Besides, the mass media have the capacity for producing and disseminating information, belief, views, and opinions, ideas and so on in which the people actively and continuously use to help them understand issues and the world in general.

Besides, the need for all citizens in respect of sex, tribe, race, age, and so on, to be educated and enlightened for the development of the society has brought about the necessity for using the media to effectively reach the citizens. Pascal and Chukumekwu (2013), held that media is popular tool for transmitting information to people at a large scale and bring about changes in behavior and the thinking style of the people.

### **Radio broadcast in Northern Nigeria**

Broadcasting in Nigeria started by the foreign service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on a trial basis; in the year 1932, this came into being with colonial administration's and the establishment of a re-broadcasting station, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in Lagos. Pascal and Chukumekwu (2013) argue that broadcasting in Nigeria is traceable to 1932 when the British government established broadcasting the British (BBC)'s "Listening Post" in Lagos and some other strategic places, which are under colonial rule in West Africa; so as to monitor the (BBC) studios in London. The listening post was later transformed into Radio Distribution Services (RDS) in 1936 and was dedicated to the relaying of news coming from BBC studios in London to Nigerian audiences through the distribution service. Also, the content of the programmes has no direct relevance to the primary needs and the general lifestyle of the indigenous audience, since the rebroadcasts were meant to satisfy the listening needs of the colonial masters.

The establishment of Northern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation with its headquarters in Kaduna in the year 1962; gave birth to more Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) with both radio and television stations. Equally in 1978, the federal government restructured broadcasting system in the country by taking away the radio section from all the three regions - Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS), Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Services (ENBS) and Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

Radio Kano was formally established in 1978 when it is handed over by the federal government as provincial station. It went through a lot of metamorphosis as its currently operating on two channels AM and FM. The motto of Kano State radio is "serve the people" and the primary task of the station is to inform, educate and entertain. Kano State

radio now has a second channel known as Radio Kano II FM Stereo, it was established in 1986 and transmission started in 1987. The establishment of the channel is mainly for musical entertainment and revenue generation since the FM system worldwide is mainly used for musical entertainment. The FM channel is the main source of revenue generation for Kano State radio. While the AM mostly produce programs that are more informative and educative in nature, at the moment Kano State radio has 6 departments each headed by either director or deputy director, the departments are admin and general service, programs AM, programs FM, engineering, news and current affairs and commercial services. Kano State radio has its headquarters at No 1 Ibrahim Taiwo Road Kano, which is popularly known as Gidan Bello Dandago, the head offices, houses the studios and one of the FM transmitters. The station has sub stations located at tukuntawa, Jogana and ARTV at Hotoro. At the moment Kano State radio transmits on the following channels

1. Tukuntawa 1549khz
2. Jogana 412meters
3. Radio Kano FM 89.3zkhz
4. Blink 360.72mhz
5. Tukuntawa TX link 96.9mhz

Economic recession on the other side is as old as the history of humanity itself. It dated back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century which was the period of a military anarchy also known as Imperial Crisis (AD 235 – 284). This was the period which the Roman Empire came close to the collapse as a result of economic depression, civil crisis, invasion and disease.

Economic recession is a period of decline in economic activity in practical terms, recession is a period of time when a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decline for at least two consecutive quarters in a quarter to quarter comparison (Mazurek and Metcova, 2013).

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), a well-known economic research organization in the United States see recession as when “a significant decline in economy spreads across the economy, lasting more than a few months to more than a year, normally visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, real personal income, employment (non-farm payrolls) industrial production and whole sale retail sales,” (NBER 2010).

But the NBERs definition criticized by many scholars such as Knoop (2015:14) which on his side put the first problem with his own definition as that a lag exists between getting data and making decisions. Output must be falling for at least “a few months,” before the NBER will declare a recession, in practice the economy has typically been in a recession for at least six months before it has been officially recognized as one by the NBER. According to Knoop (2015:14) the research that was started in the United States of America in December 2007 was not recognized as recession until a full year after it began. Generally, recession can be caused by two broad factors. Internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous). The endogenous is usually caused as a result of conflict of ideas,

misapplication of economic theory and regulatory negligence or policy inconsistency. According to Wong, (1999) The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 – 1998 was caused partly by internal factors; banks were lending a broad in pursuit of high profit margin, due largely to slow downs at home and the desire to pursue development without due consideration of economic fundamentals, corruption and structural and policy distortion.

But the external causes of recession have to do with factors that are exogenous to the economy over which policy makers have little or no control. This has to do with natural disaster, climate change, revolution and wars. An agricultural economy could face crop failure resulting in general economic slow-down. Further to the external factor the neoclassical economists are of the view that state interference in the market, labour union, monopolies and technological shocks are external causes of recession, the global crisis in economy affects all aspects of life.

### **Problem statement**

Media in Nigeria struggle very hard to survive during economic recession with insufficient fund to safeguard their operation. For most of them to restructure, they have to take additional bank loans, but all the terms of obtaining bank loans have worsened due to the effect of global economic crisis. Economic recession affected the industry globally which also manifested in Nigeria and had massively affected the viability of Kano State radio, the station rather than making profit is now operating at a loss, the subvention the station received from the State government is no longer enough to sustain the station in the area of programmes, payment of casual staff and the general maintenance of the station. The establishment of many private stations in the state also contributed immensely to the current predicament of the station. The station during economic recession was no longer considered the right channel for information dissemination. Corporate and individual bodies' preferred to patronize many of the private stations for their advert placement rather than approaching Kano State Radio. Base on the above, the study aims at finding out how economic recession affects Kano State radio, how do they struggle to survive during recession and to find out the possible measures taking for the station against their smooth operation.

The research has the following research questions: To what extent does economic recession affect Kano State radio? To what extend do they struggle to survive during recession? And what are the possible measures taking for the station against their smooth operation?

### **Conceptual Review**

Mass media has performed different role in educating, entertaining and informing people. This made the media to be sword arm of democracy, the watchdog that protects public interest against malpractice and also creates public awareness, agenda setter and the fourth estate of the realm. These roles have made the media a very significant vehicle in the dynamics of nation building and by extension an indispensable tool in every society. Wood (2006, p2) in his attempt to highlight the importance of media put it thus;

Unlike some of the subjects you study communication is relevant to almost aspect of your life. We communicate with ourselves when we worked through ideas, psych ourselves up to mere challenges, release ways to approach someone about a difficult issue and talk ourselves into or out of various causes of action. We communicate with others to build and sustain personal relationship, to perform our jobs and advance our careers and to participate in social and civic activities.

In every facet of life involves communication and by extension communication is life. Udoakha (2012: p8) state thus:

*“Over the years, there had been popular demands for freedom of the press for some reasons. Such reasons include the belief that the press incorporating all the mass media; would enhance the free flow of information in the society, promote peace, freedom, wealth and through and end conflicts by the advance of reasons, accumulation and dissemination of information and knowledge, this serve as the mission of communication in the society.”*

Yet inspite of this bold and gigantic posture of the media, a research by many scholars revealed that most of the media across the world have lost 45 up to 60% of their income due to the global economic crisis (Lishan, 2008 and Nelseh, 2012). Economic recession of the world influenced so many sectors in the economy which led to creation of losses, and unemployment. Though media houses in Nigeria are regulated by specific laws but still their profit continued to decrease during recession. (Shaohua 2009).

### **Effect of Recession**

A slowdown in economic activities affects all sectors. Recession has a devastating impact on employment worldwide. Almost 20 million jobs were lost by the end of 2009 due to the impact of the GFC mostly in construction, real estate, financial services and the auto sector bringing the world unemployment above 200 million for the first time (Central Bank of Nigeria 2012:14). In US, the rate of unemployment was 5.0 per cent – 10 per cent from December 2007 to October 2009. Recession also affects social life from tourism to certain consumption of household.

According to Zagat's (2009) US hotels, resorts and business travel has decreased in the past years as a result of the recession, even hotels in some countries affected by recessions were responding to the downturn by dropping rates. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2008) international travel suffered a strong slowdown during recession.

There were several civil unrests in Greece as a result of some conditions set by the trio of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), The European Commission (EC) and The European Central Bank (ECB) to bailout the country from sovereign default. Greece found itself in the condition as a result of debt overhang that resulted in its sovereign default in 2012. The GFC and recession worsen the debt crisis of Greece resulting in many failed election (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2012: 16). Economic crisis also affected the media houses which lead to a massive unemployment, the staff were demoralized with the situation as no functional equipment were available during the recession.



### **Types of recession**

According to Tule et al (2012) recession is business cycle contraction where there is decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as the GDP. As put by Leamer (2009), GDP is the market value recognized final goods and services produced in the country in a given period of time. From the stand point of Mazurek and Metcover (2013), recessions are often described by adjectives such as strong big or severe and they identify four classes of recessions, namely minor, major, severe recession and ultra-recession. According to them minor recession refers to the mildest recession with smaller magnitude. This typically last for only two or three consecutive years, and it means quarterly GDP decline is up to about 1.5%.

The recessions in USA between 1969 and 1970, and the one occurred in Japan during the year 2001 and another one in Sweden 2008 are clear example of quarterly GDP decline. But major recessions are economic events often on the global scale. They lasted from 2 to 4 quarters with mean quarterly GDP growth rate decline between 1 and 3%, while severe recession is a large scale economic downturn and typically lasted for 1 to 2 years with mean quarterly GDP growth rates decline from 3 to 5%. And the extreme recession category is ultra-recession in which GDP falls by 30% or even more and last for several years (Monday & Gerald: 2017:195).

### **Empirical Review**

Several studies were conducted on media and economic recession. In their study, Oyokunyi; Ekeanyanwu, and Aniebo (2017) of the Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo Nigeria, study on economic of decline and survival strategies of Nigerian print media industry study of the Guardian, the Sun and Leadership Newspaper. Their study explores the impact of the global economic recession on three national newspapers based in Lagos, the hub of the newspaper industry and they employed in-depth interview with senior editors of the newspapers to explain the economics of decline as well as investigate the survival strategic adopted by them. Their findings revealed that these newspapers are truly facing a bigger threat of extinction and that the survival strategies adopted by them to stay afloat are inadequate. The study recommended that an economic template that may involve mergers and acquisitions, shift in traditional news gathering methods, exploring local language publications among others should be embraced by the industry in order to survive beyond 2030.

Another study was employed by Lishan (2008) on media coverage of the economy during normal times and recessions on the index of consumer confidence using time series analysis and Granger Causal analysis. The study explores the causal relationship among economic reporting by media consumer sentiment and the real state of the economy reporting by media. The result indicated that interpretation by media have only limited effects on the level of consumer sentiment in general and the real state of the economy plays a more important role in shaping consumer sentiment. However, during recessions and times of economic slowdown, media have a more powerful effect on consumer sentiment though its impact is still smaller than the real state of the economy.

Another study on the impact of global economic crisis on media restructuring by Ercan (2012), in the Department of Economic, Economics and administrative sciences, Faculty Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University. His findings revealed that the economic recession of the world have influenced so many sectors in the economy. This later led to creation of losses, bankruptcies and unemployment. Though media is regulated by specified law due to its critical public roles their profit continued to decrease. This forced the media to change from grace to grass, while concentrating on personality centered and scandal oriented reporting. This therefore has been able to put pressures on the actual independence of the editorial policies and the honest of journalists and therefore prevents the public from participation. Their conclusion shows that there are more negatives that come with the global economic crisis to the media than there are positives, and therefore it is critical to note that restructuring under the current economic crisis can only take place on a small margin if not any.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To explore the relationship between Kano State radio, the government and the clients, the system theory was adopted to underpin this study and serve as theoretical framework for the study. System theory is general theory that began in the social and physical sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with George Hegel and was fully developed by biologist Lud Wing von Bertalanffy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Bertalanffy cited in Christian, Jacqueline and Francesco (2010) "everything is interconnected and therefore we should study interconnectedness as a means of understanding the world." Systems theory is easily summed up with simple definition, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," the most important core tenet of system theory is the notion of interdependence between sub-systems (Christian, Jacqueline, Francesco, 2010).

Systems theory represent the organization as a complex set of interacting interdependent components all components are dependent on another and any change in one affect the other. The government, Kano radio and the clients are all interdependence hence the theory can apply to this paper because system theory focuses on the relationship between subsystems in organizations. Kano radio is government owned radio station and is linked with government, 75% of its salary comes from government. It also linked with listeners and customers in terms of revenue generation and they interact with each other to achieve organizational goal.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative research methodology, which according to Mason (2002) is an approach that focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning of individual or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

Mason (2002) put that qualitative research is most commonly associated with some schools of thought which fall broadly within what is known as the interpretive sociological tradition, particularly phenomenology. He further argued that qualitative research whatever it might be, certainly is not a unified set of techniques or philosophies

and indeed has grown out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions. In arguing about the methodological advantages of qualitative approach, (Mason, 2002, p 1) put it thus:

“Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationship work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. We can do all of this qualitatively by using methodologies that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality and complexity”.

This clearly implies that qualitative approach is appropriate in conducting a research which aims at understanding emerging social phenomenon, so as to explore deeper range of views and experiences from the people who directly relate or engage with such phenomenon. To ensure the quality of findings Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview were used to generate the primary data from the two sets of respondents.

(Kitzinger, 1995), argues that interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups, because the interaction between participants highlights their views of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and belief about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. Based on the above background, focus group discussion was adopted to generate data from junior workers of the station. While in depth interview was conducted with the top management staff of the station.

Four different sessions of FGD were conducted. This followed the five steps of conducting high quality focus group

1. Defining a focus group
2. Designing focus group questions
3. Recruiting and preparing for participants
4. Conducting the focus group, and
5. Analyzing the data

In depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce, 2006 and Osuala, 2005). Boyce (2006), argued that, the most important advantage of in-depth interview is the wealth of detail that it provides, and that when compared to more traditional survey methods, it provides more accurate responses on sensitive issues under investigations (Boyce, 2006).

The study also used secondary sources particularly records from government agencies, documentary evidence interviews, reports books, journals articles conference papers and



other relevant materials derived from internet. The data were analyzed qualitatively using the narrative analysis techniques. The population of the study comprised the entire staff of Kano State Radio Corporation.

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) describe populations as the entire group of all persons who fit into a group by some pre-set criterion. This means that population may, among other things refer to a number of people living in a place, country and by extension, the universe. Wimmer and Dominic (2003, p.84) see population as a group of class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomena.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

Being a qualitative design, the study adopted non probability sampling. It is argued that, non-probability sampling represents theoretically, a valuable group of sampling techniques that can be used in research that follows qualitative, mixed methods, and even qualitative research design. There are several sampling techniques under non probability including convenience sampling, consecutive sampling, quota sampling, judgmental sampling, snowball sampling, purposive sampling etc. For the purpose of this research, purposive sampling was adopted for the top management staffs, the junior staff, and the technical workers of Kano State Radio.

Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective to studying a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts (Osuala, 2005). This means that selection of respondents using purposive sampling technique involves their identification as having both the ability and the desire to provide the information capable of achieving the aim and objectives of the study

### **Sample Size**

At the level of top management staff of Kano State Radio Six executive management staff were purposively sampled for the in depth interview. They are: The Managing Director; The Admin Manager; Director Commercial; Director Maintenance; Director News and Current Affairs On the other side, twenty-two junior staffs were sampled from different department; these form the group for focus group discussion. All the sessions were conducted at Kano State Radio Corporation, Gidan Bello Dandago.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings for both the focus group discussion and in depth interview revealed that majority of the respondents knows and do have knowledge of what economic recession is all about. It is obvious that majority of respondents attested that Kano Radio have lost 40 to 70% of their revenue due to the global economic crisis.

Some respondents during the interview disclosed that Kano radio as an organization and communication medium has started operation since 1978, but witnessed a very challenging period during the economic recession which started since 2010. The Managing Director of the station opine that the station was unable to cover its normal

broadcast area which comprised the entire state as well as its neighbors' such as Bauchi, Yobe, Borno, Plateau and Sokoto. In addition to the neighboring Countries such as: Republic of Niger, Cameroun and Chad, the Director News opines that the transmitters 2x25kw at Jogana and 2x50kw at Tukuntawa and the outside broadcast Van 153Mhz could not go beyond Kano state.

While Director of Admin and General Services in an attempt to answer the research question on how economic recession affects the viability of the station, opine that during the recession period, the staff of the station were demoralized with the situation as no functional equipment were available. He further opines that the station even went off air for several minutes. The management could not even meet its obligations as several workers and artistes spent months without payment. The Director Engineering add that the situation further worsen as transmission cannot take for several times due to obsolete and dilapidated equipments.

Some respondents from the focus group discussion opine that: a respite comes its way after the recession and the change of leadership in the station: according to them new equipment were procured, modern studios were constructed with latest broadcast equipment installed. Some respondents during focus group discussion attested that their station often went off air at varying degrees due to the problems with their equipments. Some respondents put the problem in technical hitched while others put the blame on lack of government funding; some of the respondents in the same vein attributed the problem to aged equipments.

Now for a station to have break in transmission is an indication that something is wrong with the way it is being managed. The finding is in line with the system theory adopted, because according to Von Bertanffy cited in Christian Jacqueline and Francesco (2010) everything is interconnected and therefore we should study interconnectedness as a means of understanding the world. Systems theory represents the organization as a complex set of interacting interdependent components. The government, the Kano Radio and the clients are all interdependence on one another.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, the economic recession had massively affected the viability of Kano State radio, because the station rather than making profit is now operating at a loss. The subvention the station received from the State government is no longer enough to sustain the station in the area of programmes and payment of casual staff and the general maintenance of the station. The establishment of many private stations in the state also contributed immensely to the current predicament of the station.

The station during economic recession no longer considered the right channel for information dissemination. Corporate and individual bodies' preferred to patronize many of the private stations for their advert placement rather than approaching Kano Radio. At that moment, the over ten private stations in Kano State are making huge profits while Kano State radio was seriously feeling the negative impacts of economic recession/slowdown.

## **Recommendation**

The paper examines the effect of economic recession on Kano State Radio. In the course of the research, many problems have been identified and it is hope that the recommendations suggested below will go a very long way in providing a lasting solution to the identified problems.

1. Government should as a matter of urgency increase the amount of funds given to the Kano State Radio for the day to day running of the station.
2. New equipments should be procured for the station so that high productivity could be achieved.
3. Effective mechanisms of monitoring should be put in place by the government so as to ensure prudent and accountable management in the station.
4. The staff of the station should be adequately motivated so that optimum result will be achieved.

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