



Channels Television's *Politics Today* Programme and Women's Political Engagement in Kogi State, Nigeria

Israel Oguche^{a*} & Abdul Sule Yakubu^b

^aDepartment of Mass Communication, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria

^bDepartment of Mass Communication, School of General and Communication Studies, Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Nigeria

*Corresponding email: oguche.israele@gmail.com

Abstract

Women's political engagement in Nigeria has always been an issue of debate over the years. This is why the mass media, particularly television, has been at the forefront in engendering women's political engagement, including the right to vote and be voted for. This study was aimed at ascertaining the level of exposure, influence, and political engagement resulting from exposure to *Politics Today*. It also examined how the programme has influenced women's involvement in politics and the factors affecting that influence. Cultivation theory was used to provide a framework for understanding how women actively seek and use media content to satisfy specific political information needs and how such content motivates participation. A survey research design was adopted for this study, with a sample of 384 respondents drawn from the female population of Kogi State. Multistage sampling was employed in selecting respondents from the three senatorial districts. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection, and the data collected were analysed using tables and percentages for demographic data, as well as mean averages with standard deviations. Findings from the study revealed a high level of exposure to *Politics Today* among women in Kogi State, while the programme has positively influenced women's political knowledge and interests. It was therefore recommended that television stations should produce more gender-inclusive political programmes and that policymakers should collaborate with the media to encourage women's political participation across Nigeria.

Keywords: Channels TV, *Politics Today*, political engagement, women participation, television programme.

Introduction

The debate about women's political engagement has existed since time immemorial in Nigeria. However, there appears to be a low level of women's participation in politics. The mass media have served as vital instruments for political sensitisation and mobilisation, as they are an integral part of the democratic process. The mass media whether print, electronic, or digital serve as vital instruments for informing, educating, and shaping public opinion in every society. Beyond their basic informative role, the media are also expected to foster civic consciousness and act as watchdogs over social and political activities. According to Abdul (2019), the extent of the media's influence on political and social enlightenment depends largely on the media systems in place, the nature of the society in which they operate, and the characteristics of their audiences. Kolawole (2018) similarly observes that factors such as culture, technology, and political context shape the degree to which the media can influence public awareness and participation.

The media are not merely conveyors of information; they are active participants in social transformation. Tosanisunmi (2020) argues that, in addition to informing and entertaining, the media persuade and mobilise citizens towards shared goals. Because of their wide reach and credibility, media organisations possess a unique ability to set public agendas, frame issues, and influence how audiences perceive political realities (Foster, 2020). In a country as culturally diverse as Nigeria, this role is particularly crucial, as the media help to bridge information gaps and encourage inclusive political discourse. Wright (1960), as cited in Akindele and Lamidi (2021), categorised the essential functions of the media as surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission, and entertainment functions that remain central to the promotion of democratic values.

Political participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance, ensuring that all segments of the population, including women, are involved in decision-making processes. Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality, women's participation in politics across Nigeria remains low due to persistent cultural, economic, and institutional barriers (Akinboye, 2016). Television, as one of the most influential media forms, plays an important role in addressing these barriers by educating citizens, shaping public perceptions, and promoting inclusive participation.

Channels Television's *Politics Today* stands out as one of Nigeria's most influential political discussion programmes. Through interviews, expert analyses, and debates, it provides a platform where political issues and governance are critically examined. By highlighting women's political roles and discussing issues affecting female participation, the programme has the potential to raise awareness and inspire more women to engage in politics. McQuail (2017) emphasises that television can foster political discourse, provide real-time updates, and influence public opinion, making programmes such as *Politics Today* significant tools for civic education and empowerment.

Empirical evidence supports the connection between media exposure and political engagement. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) first demonstrated how political communication shapes voter behaviour and decision-making. More recently, Ojebuyi and Salawu (2020) found that political television programmes can increase engagement among marginalised groups, including women. Accordingly, *Politics Today* can be viewed as an important platform for promoting political education. However, despite the programme's popularity in Nigeria, there remains limited empirical evidence on the extent to which it has contributed to women's political engagement in the country, and in Kogi State in particular. This gap in the existing body of knowledge underscores the necessity for the present study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite sustained advocacy and policy commitments aimed at improving women's representation in appointive and elective positions, women's political engagement in Nigeria remains markedly low. Deep-rooted socio-cultural and religious norms, coupled with limited access to political information, continue to constrain women's active participation in political processes. This persistent underrepresentation raises concerns about the inclusiveness and effectiveness of Nigeria's democratic system.

Although the mass media particularly television are widely recognised as powerful tools for political sensitisation and civic education, empirical evidence on how specific political television programmes influence women's political engagement remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on general media effects or broad patterns of political participation, with insufficient attention paid to programme-specific analyses that examine how televised political

content shapes women's political awareness, interest, and involvement, especially at the state level in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to assess Channels Television's *Politics Today* as a political communication platform political engagement among women. for sensitising women in Kogi State.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of Channels TV's *Politics Today* as a tool for sensitizing women for political participation in Kogi State. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine respondents' level of exposure to *Channels TV's Politics Today* as a platform for political sensitization in Kogi State.
2. assess respondents' level of awareness regarding political participation messages conveyed through *Channels TV's Politics Today*.
3. analyze the influence of *Channels TV's Politics Today* in encouraging women's participation in politics in Kogi State.
4. identify the factors hindering the effectiveness of *Channels TV's Politics Today* in sensitizing women for political participation in Kogi State.

Literature Review

Women, Political Engagement and Civic Engagement in Nigeria

Political participation, according to Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2019), takes a number of different forms, including both conventional forms, which involve electoral processes (such as voting, election campaigning, etc.), and nonconventional forms, which occur outside electoral processes (for instance, signing petitions, participating in political demonstrations, among others). Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck, and Nord (2017) argued along similar lines, stating that political participation can be categorised into two types: conventional and unconventional. According to them, conventional participation refers to the behaviour of being a responsible citizen by attending and participating in regular elections, while unconventional participation involves legal activities that may sometimes appear inappropriate, such as signing petitions, organising or supporting boycotts, and staging demonstrations or protests in public spaces. Arising from the above, it can be understood that political participation encompasses multiple dimensions, but is most visible during election periods.

Political participation is the involvement of every individual, organisation, and group in a nation throughout the political process. It is the process through which individuals play a role in the political life of their society and have the opportunity to influence what the common goals of the society are, as well as the best means of achieving these goals (Adelekan, 2019). The individual is central to this system and may act either alone or as part of a group. A political system is incomplete without the participation of the people, who constitute the core of any society, especially in a democracy. Leaders do not unilaterally decide what the people want; it is the people who determine their needs at any given time. Thus, citizens not only define national values but also decide who should govern them. Akamare (2018) defines political participation as an aspect of political behaviour, focusing on how individuals engage in politics. It is a voluntary activity, and participation may be either direct or indirect. It is important to note that political participation is not compulsory. Forcing someone to participate in an electoral process, for example, constitutes a breach of electoral law. Individuals, as free moral agents, may choose whether to participate and to what extent; this explains why some people register to vote but may not turn out on election day.

Nigeria's democratic landscape has evolved significantly since independence in 1960, yet women's political participation remains disproportionately low, despite women comprising approximately 49% of the population. The political arena continues to be dominated by men, with women facing substantial barriers to equal representation. Traditional patriarchal values, deeply embedded in Nigeria's diverse cultures, often relegate women to domestic roles while positioning men as natural leaders and decision-makers in public spheres (Nwogwugwu & Osakede, 2022). These cultural norms are further reinforced by certain religious interpretations that sometimes limit women's public engagement. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2023), Nigeria ranks among the lowest countries globally for female parliamentary representation, with women occupying less than 10% of seats in both national legislative chambers, well below the 30% benchmark recommended by the United Nations.

Constitutional provisions and legislative frameworks in Nigeria theoretically guarantee equal political rights for all citizens, regardless of gender. The Nigerian Constitution of 1999 explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender, while recent policy initiatives advocate for a minimum of 35% representation for women in both elective and appointive positions (Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, 2023). Nevertheless, implementation gaps persist, as these legal frameworks often lack enforcement mechanisms. Women politicians face structural challenges, including limited access to campaign financing, political party nomination processes that favour established male networks, and electoral violence that disproportionately targets female candidates (Quadri, 2022, p. 92). The Electoral Act amendments of 2022 introduced some reforms but did not include specific provisions for gender quotas or other affirmative action measures that might accelerate women's political integration.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), Nigerian women experience higher unemployment rates and lower wages compared with men, limiting their financial capacity to compete effectively in increasingly monetised electoral processes. Political parties often impose prohibitive nomination fees without gender-sensitive considerations, creating additional barriers. Research by UN Women (2022) indicates that female candidates typically receive less financial support from political party structures than their male counterparts. Educational disparities further compound these challenges, particularly in northern Nigeria, where female literacy rates remain significantly lower. Despite these obstacles, professional women's organisations and networks have emerged as critical support structures, providing mentorship, campaign assistance, and solidarity for women aspiring to political leadership.

Channels TV and the *Politics Today* Programme

Channels Television has emerged as one of Nigeria's most influential broadcast media platforms, consistently upholding high journalistic standards while delivering incisive political coverage across multiple formats. Founded in 1995, the network has evolved into a premier source of political news and analysis, with its flagship programme, *Politics Today*, serving as a critical forum for national political discourse. According to the 2023 Reuters Institute Digital News Report, Channels TV ranks as Nigeria's most trusted television news source, with approximately 67% of surveyed Nigerians identifying it as their primary platform for political information (Newman et al., 2023). The station's commitment to journalistic independence and balanced reporting has earned it numerous accolades, including the Nigerian Media Merit Award for Television Station of the Year for five consecutive years, from 2018 to 2022 (Nigerian Media Merit Awards Foundation, 2022, p. 5). Within Nigeria's complex media landscape, characterised by increasing political polarisation and government sensitivity to critical coverage, Channels TV has

maintained a reputation for editorial integrity while navigating significant pressures (International Press Institute, 2021).

Politics Today has demonstrated a notable impact on Nigeria's political processes by providing a platform for government accountability while facilitating public understanding of complex political developments. The programme's coverage of electoral processes has been particularly influential, with its comprehensive analysis of voting patterns, results verification, and electoral irregularities contributing to greater transparency in Nigeria's democratic processes (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2023). During the 2023 general elections, the programme's real-time analysis of results transmission challenges and voting discrepancies brought technical electoral issues to public attention that might otherwise have remained obscure. Research by Adebayo and Mohammed (2022) indicates that regular *Politics Today* viewers demonstrated significantly higher levels of knowledge of electoral processes compared with consumers of other news sources. The programme has also shaped policy outcomes by highlighting implementation failures and governance shortcomings, with several investigative segments prompting official responses and policy adjustments from government agencies (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2022).

The digital transformation of *Politics Today* represents a strategic response to evolving media consumption patterns, with Channels TV implementing comprehensive distribution and engagement strategies across multiple platforms to extend the programme's reach beyond traditional broadcast audiences. The programme maintains dedicated social media accounts with substantial followings 3.2 million Twitter followers and 1.8 million Facebook followers as of April 2023 that distribute content highlights, behind-the-scenes material, and engagement prompts (Statista, 2023, p. 12). Research by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (2021, p. 17) identified *Politics Today* video clips as among Nigeria's most widely shared political content across WhatsApp groups, demonstrating the programme's penetration into private messaging networks that increasingly function as primary news distribution channels. Its YouTube channel has accumulated over 500,000 subscribers, with full episode uploads and thematic compilations generating significant viewership beyond the broadcast audience (Social Blade, 2022, p. 25). This multi-platform approach enables *Politics Today* to maintain relevance among younger, digitally oriented audiences while creating valuable content archives that extend the programme's influence beyond its initial broadcast window.

Review of Empirical Studies

Research on women's political engagement and political participation in Nigeria has highlighted the critical role of media in shaping civic awareness, mobilising electorates, and addressing gender disparities in governance. Media serve not only as a source of information but also as a tool for agenda-setting, political socialisation, and empowerment. Ire (2025) examined the influence of broadcast media on women's political participation during the 2023 general elections in Rivers State, applying agenda-setting theory. Through interviews with female politicians, journalists, and electoral officers, the study revealed that women were significantly underrepresented in broadcast coverage and often portrayed through gendered stereotypes rather than as credible political figures. The findings underscored gender bias as a persistent barrier to equality and emphasised the need for gender-sensitive media policies.

Similarly, Seember (2024) investigated the role of radio programmes in promoting women's political participation in Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State. Using a survey of 400 women, the study found that interactive formats, including discussion and phone-in

segments, enhanced women's awareness of political processes and encouraged engagement. These findings suggest that media formats allowing direct interaction with political leaders can democratise access to political information and foster participation. Odudu et al. (2024) explored broadcast media's role in mobilising women for political engagement in Lagos State, employing a survey method underpinned by agenda-setting and status conferral theories. Findings indicated that media play a significant role in mobilising women, but structural and cultural barriers continue to restrict political participation. The study highlighted the need for safe and supportive environments free from harassment and violence to facilitate women's full engagement in governance.

Other studies reinforce these insights. Fanawopo and Ifeduba (2023) found that radio positively influenced political mobilisation among women in Ede North, Osun State, although gaps remained in promoting gender equality. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2023) examined the 2019 general elections in Kwara State, revealing that private radio stations, complemented by social media, were effective in mobilising electorates, particularly through interactive programmes, jingles, and phone-in segments. Both studies emphasise the enduring relevance of broadcast media for political education, sensitisation, and mobilisation. Media representation also shapes women's political participation. Adeniran (2020) observed that female politicians were underrepresented on national television and frequently depicted through stereotypes, limiting their visibility and discouraging political engagement. Bello and Olayemi (2021) further demonstrated that community radio significantly enhanced women's political awareness and participation, particularly in rural areas, by providing accessible information and fostering civic engagement.

Despite these studies, gaps remain in understanding television's specific role in promoting women's political engagement in politically complex states such as Kogi. While previous research has explored national media representation, community radio influence, and the interaction between media and societal norms, little is known about how television can actively cultivate political awareness, challenge gender stereotypes, and encourage women's participation at the state level during elections. This study addresses these gaps by providing a localised, empirical analysis of broadcast media's impact on women's political participation in Kogi State during the 2023 general election. By focusing on Channels Television's *Politics Today*, the study examines how television contributes to political education, agenda-setting, and gender-inclusive civic mobilisation, offering insights that could inform media policy reforms and strategies to enhance women's political engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory (1960s), which examines the long-term influence of television on viewers' perceptions of social reality. Gerbner posited that television functions as society's "*central storyteller*," transmitting consistent messages that shape audience beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. Over time, heavy viewers internalise these televised narratives as reflections of real life. Cultivation refers to the long-term effects of television, with a primary focus on extensive exposure to television's reconstructed realities, which may result in a distorted perception of reality (Cohen & Weimann, 2000, p. 99). Scholars have described the theory as the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). The theory is structured around three orders of effects: cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural. However, two major concepts: *mainstreaming* and *resonance* define the application of the theory. Mainstreaming suggests that prolonged exposure to television content produces shared perceptions among diverse audiences, thereby

reducing individual differences. Resonance occurs when televised portrayals align with viewers' real-life experiences, reinforcing the perceived accuracy of media narratives.

Although some critics argue that Cultivation Theory oversimplifies audience interpretation, it remains highly relevant for understanding the cumulative effects of political programming. In societies where cultural norms traditionally discourage women's political engagement, sustained exposure to empowering media messages can gradually reshape perceptions and encourage broader participation. In relation to this study, *Politics Today* serves as a medium through which political norms and narratives are cultivated. Consistent exposure to the programme's content particularly when it features female politicians or gender-related discussions can shape women's perceptions of their roles in politics. By repeatedly portraying women as legitimate participants in governance, the programme can foster a sense of inclusion and political agency among female viewers in Kogi State. Furthermore, *Politics Today* can progressively sensitise women to political discourse, public policies, and the importance of participation in democratic processes. Through continuous exposure, the programme not only informs but also empowers viewers by framing politics as a space in which their voices matter.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, survey research design will be used. This is because it allows the researcher to study the population even though it is large and produce statistical data suitable for analysis. The population of this study comprises women residents in of Kogi State. The population of women in Kogi State as given by the National Population Commission (NPC) in 2006 was 506,890, with a growth rate of 3.25% (NPC, 2006). Therefore, to arrive at the current population, the NPC population estimate in 2024 pegged women's population in Kogi State at 1,455, 902. The sample size for this study is 384, which was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Sampling Table which pegs the sample size at 384. However, the total sample size for the study is 384. This research will adopt a multistage sampling technique, which involves dividing the sampling process into multiple stages, with a different sampling method applied at each stage. The procedure is structured into three (3) stages to ensure a systematic and representative selection of respondents from the selected LGAs in Kogi State.

Stage 1: At the first stage, the researcher will employ stratified sampling technique to divide the study area into three senatorial districts namely Kogi East, Kogi Central and Kogi West.

Stage 2: At the second stage, the researcher will use simple random sampling to select one LGA from each senatorial district, based on population density, urban-rural population mix and political awareness level. The selected LGAs are Dekina (Kogi East), Okene (Kogi Central) and Lokoja (Kogi West). At the third stage, the researcher employs accidental sampling to administer copies of the questionnaire to households across three communities in each selected LGA. These are Anyigba, Abocho and Egume from Dekina LGA, Agasa, Acheze and Inozimi from Okene while Felele, Adankolo and Otokiti were selected from Lokoja LGA. The researcher arrived at this number by dividing the total sample size equally across the six (6) communities ($384 \div 6 = 64$) respondents per community. Therefore, 43 respondents will be selected in six localities, while 42 were selected in three localities making a total of 384. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire, administered through research assistants. The data collected using the research instrument will be presented and analyzed using descriptive methods. Simple percentages were used to calculate the demographic characteristics of the respondents while the Likert scale part of the questionnaire was analyzed using mean averages and standard deviation. All analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of Three Hundred and Eighty-Four (384) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents while three hundred and eighty (380) copies were retrieved. The remaining four (4) copies were missing and some were not properly filled. The data were presented in tables using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. This was followed by a discussion of the findings.

Table 1. Respondents' Level of Exposure to Channels TV's *Politics Today*

Items	Frequency					N	X Mean	SD	Decision
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
I regularly watch Channels TV's <i>Politics Today</i> .	120	140	70	40	14	380	3.72	1.20	Accepted
I have been watching <i>Politics Today</i> for more than one year.	100	130	90	50	14	380	3.52	1.25	Accepted
I often tune in to <i>Politics Today</i> for updates on political matters in Nigeria.	110	150	80	30	14	380	3.68	1.18	Accepted
I prefer <i>Politics Today</i> to other political programs on TV.	90	120	100	50	24	380	3.38	1.30	Accepted
I am exposed to <i>Politics Today</i> through social media platforms or rebroadcasts.	80	110	110	60	24	380	3.24	1.32	Accepted
Cumulative Mean							3.51		

Table 1 presents an analysis of respondents' level of exposure to the *Politics Today* program on Channels TV, using a Likert-scale format. Applying the decision rule that any mean score equal to or greater than 3.00 should be accepted, all five statements were accepted by the respondents, indicating a generally high level of engagement with the program. Specifically, the first item, "I regularly watch Channels TV's *Politics Today*", received a mean score of 3.72, the highest among the items, showing that a significant portion of respondents are regular viewers of the program. The third item, "I often tune in to *Politics Today* for updates on political matters in Nigeria", had a mean score of 3.68, indicating that the program is a major source of political information for many respondents. The second statement, which measured how long respondents have been watching the program, received a mean score of 3.52, suggesting that the viewership is consistent and long-term. Additionally, the fourth and fifth items "I prefer *Politics Today* to other political programs on TV" and "I am exposed to *Politics Today* through social media platforms or rebroadcasts" had mean scores of 3.38 and 3.24 respectively. These scores reflect that the program has a favorable comparative perception and reaches audiences through both traditional and digital media channels. Overall, the cumulative mean of 3.51 affirms that *Politics Today* is an influential and widely accessed platform for political sensitization among respondents in Kogi State.

Table 2. Respondents' Level of Awareness Regarding Political Participation Messages Conveyed through Channels TV's *Politics Today*

Items	Frequency					N	X (Mean)	SD	Decision
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
<i>Politics Today</i> helps me understand the importance of voting.	150	130	60	30	14	380	3.92	1.15	Accepted
The program highlights the role of citizens in democratic governance.	140	120	70	40	14	380	3.82	1.20	Accepted

I have become more aware of electoral processes through <i>Politics Today</i> .	130	110	80	40	24	380	3.70	1.25	Accepted
<i>Politics Today</i> educates the public about their civic rights.	120	125	85	40	14	380	3.75	1.18	Accepted
The messages in <i>Politics Today</i> motivate viewers to participate in political activities.	110	115	90	50	19	380	3.63	1.28	Accepted
Cumulative Mean	3.76								

Table 2 demonstrates a consistently high level of awareness of *Politics Today* among respondents in Kogi State. Using the acceptance benchmark of a mean score ≥ 3.00 , all items were positively rated, indicating strong programme visibility and relevance. The highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.92$) relates to improved understanding of the importance of voting, suggesting that the programme is particularly effective in clarifying core electoral responsibilities. Similarly, high ratings for civic education ($\bar{x} = 3.82$) and awareness of electoral processes ($\bar{x} = 3.70$) indicate that *Politics Today* functions as an important source of democratic information. While motivational influence on active participation recorded a comparatively lower mean ($\bar{x} = 3.63$), it still reflects a positive effect on political engagement. The cumulative mean score of 3.76 confirms that *Politics Today* plays a significant role in enhancing political awareness and reinforcing civic consciousness among viewers, thereby positioning the programme as a meaningful instrument for democratic sensitisation in Kogi State.

Table 3. Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Channels Television's *Politics Today* on Women's Political

Items	Frequency					N	X (Mean)	SD	Decision
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
<i>Politics Today</i> encourages women to take active roles in politics.	140	120	70	40	14	380	3.82	1.20	Accepted
The program features female political figures as role models.	130	110	80	40	24	380	3.70	1.25	Accepted
I know women who were inspired to engage in politics after watching <i>Politics Today</i> .	120	100	90	50	24	380	3.58	1.30	Accepted
The program addresses gender-specific political challenges.	110	115	85	50	24	380	3.55	1.32	Accepted
<i>Politics Today</i> promotes equal political participation for women in Kogi State.	100	120	90	50	24	380	3.52	1.28	Accepted
Cumulative Mean	3.63								

Table 3 presents an analysis of the extent to which Channels TV's *Politics Today* programme influences women's participation in politics in Kogi State, using a Likert-scale format. Applying the decision rule that any mean score equal to or greater than 3.00 should be accepted, all five statements were accepted by the respondents, indicating a generally positive perception of the programme's impact on women's political engagement. Specifically, the first item, "*Politics Today* encourages women to take active roles in politics", recorded the highest mean score of 3.82, showing that many respondents believe the programme plays a motivational role in promoting women's political involvement. The second item, "The program features female political figures as role models", had a mean score of 3.70, indicating that showcasing female leaders contributes to empowering and inspiring women viewers. The third statement, "I know women who were inspired to engage in politics after watching *Politics Today*", received a mean score of 3.58, which

further supports the idea that the programme has real-life influence on women's decisions to participate in political processes. The fourth item, "The program addresses gender-specific political challenges", had a mean score of 3.55, highlighting the show's responsiveness to issues affecting women in the political space. Lastly, the fifth statement, "*Politics Today* promotes equal political participation for women in Kogi State", had a mean score of 3.52, suggesting that the programme is perceived as supportive of gender inclusion in politics. The cumulative mean of 3.63 confirms that *Politics Today* is viewed by respondents as a significant platform for encouraging and enhancing women's participation in politics across Kogi State.

Table 4: Respondents' Perceived Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Channels Television's *Politics Today* in Women's Political Participation

Items	Frequency					N	X (Mean)	SD	Decision
	SA	A	N	D	SD				
Low female viewership affects the impact of <i>Politics Today</i> on women.	130	120	70	40	24	380	3.72	1.25	Accepted
Cultural barriers prevent women from acting on what they learn from <i>Politics Today</i> .	140	110	70	40	24	380	3.78	1.28	Accepted
The language used in <i>Politics Today</i> may not be accessible to all viewers.	120	115	80	50	19	380	3.65	1.30	Accepted
The program does not air at convenient times for many women.	150	100	70	40	24	380	3.82	1.32	Accepted
Lack of follow-up programs limits the long-term impact of <i>Politics Today</i> .	110	120	90	40	24	380	3.60	1.28	Accepted
Low female viewership affects the impact of <i>Politics Today</i> on women.	130	120	70	40	24	380	3.72	1.25	Accepted
Cumulative Mean							3.71		

Table 5 presents an analysis of the factors hindering the effectiveness of Channels TV's *Politics Today* in sensitizing women for political participation in Kogi State, using a Likert-scale format. Applying the decision rule that any mean score equal to or greater than 3.00 should be accepted, all five statements were accepted by the respondents, indicating that multiple barriers are perceived to limit the program's overall impact on women. The fourth item, "The program does not air at convenient times for many women", received the highest mean score of 3.82, showing that timing is a significant issue preventing many women from engaging regularly with the programme. The second item, "Cultural barriers prevent women from acting on what they learn from *Politics Today*", had a mean score of 3.78, suggesting that sociocultural norms in the region still pose serious challenges to women's political participation, despite media exposure. The first item, "Low female viewership affects the impact of *Politics Today* on women", recorded a mean score of 3.72, highlighting that the programme's influence is limited when its target audience women are not consistently reached. Similarly, the third item, "The language used in *Politics Today* may not be accessible to all viewers", had a mean score of 3.65, indicating that communication barriers may also be a factor in limiting understanding and engagement. Finally, the fifth statement, "Lack of follow-up programs limits the long-term impact of *Politics Today*", received a mean score of 3.60, showing that sustained sensitization efforts may be necessary to produce lasting outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

Mass media, particularly television have been at the centre of mobilisation for voter education and political engagement over time. This enormous role of television has placed it at advantage over other media since it elicits the senses of sights and sound. From the analysis, the data presented were in line with the sample while the respondents reacted in various ways to the issues raised. The findings from the analysis have been discussed in line with the research questions of this study in order to provide answers to them.

Research Question 1. What is the Respondents' Level of Exposure to *Channels TV's Politics Today* as a Platform for Political Sensitization in Kogi State?

From the first research question, which focused on the level of exposure to Channels Television's *Politics Today*, it was found that respondents in Kogi State exhibit a high level of exposure to the programme. Notably, respondents reported regular viewership, indicating consistent engagement. The programme's multi-platform presence, including social media and rebroadcasts, further demonstrates strong audience engagement across different channels. These findings are consistent with Okon (2022), who observed that exposure to political programmes is enhanced by diverse platforms, extending reach beyond traditional television viewing. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that high levels of exposure can lead to significant influence, provided that such exposure is accompanied by attention, perception, and retention. This study also aligns with Adebayo and Suleiman (2021), who found that programme familiarity and presenter credibility improve audience loyalty. In this context, the credibility of the presenter of *Politics Today* contributes to a high degree of audience loyalty. This observation is further supported by the principles of Gerbner's Cultivation Theory (1998), which posits that prolonged exposure to media content shapes viewers' perceptions of social reality. The consistent viewership of *Politics Today* suggests that the programme is gradually cultivating political awareness among its audience. Over time, repeated exposure reinforces democratic values, the importance of voting, and civic engagement as normative behaviours. This is consistent with the study's finding that regular viewers demonstrate higher political consciousness and are more likely to participate in governance processes.

Research Question 2. What is the Respondents' Level of Awareness Regarding Political Participation Messages Conveyed through *Channels TV's Politics Today*?

Research question two, which focused on the level of awareness of political messages, revealed a high level of awareness among respondents. The strongest awareness was reflected in respondents' understanding of the importance of voting. Respondents also reported that the programme enhances knowledge of civic rights and democratic participation, indicating effective political education. These findings are consistent with Eze and Okechukwu (2021), who emphasised that regular exposure to political programming enhances the public's capacity to understand and apply political information. The ability of viewers to recall and discuss programme content demonstrates how awareness transcends individual learning and fosters broader political consciousness (Ibrahim & Musa, 2019). The programme's structured repetition of democratic principles, such as voting and civic duties, has normalised these concepts in viewers' minds.

According to the tenets of Cultivation Theory, repeated messaging reshapes societal norms, making political participation appear more accessible and expected. For instance, respondents who frequently watch *Politics Today* were more likely to view voting as a civic obligation rather than a discretionary act. However, Perception Theory highlights that awareness does not always translate into action. While urban, educated audiences readily decode the programme's messages,

rural viewers particularly women may interpret content differently due to cultural norms or language barriers. This helps explain why some respondents, despite being aware of the programme, reported lower motivation to engage politically. These findings align with Adeniran (2020), who examined media representation and women's political participation in Nigeria. That study employed content analysis of political news coverage on major Nigerian television stations and surveys among female political aspirants and voters. It found that female politicians were underrepresented and often depicted in stereotypical roles that reinforced gender biases, discouraging active political participation. While both studies investigate how media representation affects women's political engagement in Nigeria, the current study differs in scope: it specifically examines the impact of a broadcast political programme, *Politics Today*, on women's political participation in Kogi State, rather than national-level media representation.

Research Question 3. To what extent does channels TV's *Politics Today* programme influences women participation in politics in Kogi State?

Research question three revealed a significant influence of *Politics Today* on women's political participation, with a cumulative mean of 3.66. Respondents strongly agreed that the programme features female role models (mean = 3.74) and encourages women's political engagement (mean = 3.82). Additionally, the programme's focus on gender-specific challenges (mean = 3.55) appears to empower female viewers. These findings support the principles of Cultivation Theory, which suggest that consistent media representation can shape perceptions of social reality. By consistently featuring women in politics, *Politics Today* cultivates a context in which female leadership appears commonplace rather than exceptional. Over time, this representation reduces stereotype threats and motivates women to aspire to political roles, as reflected in respondents who reported knowing women inspired by the programme (mean = 3.58). Furthermore, Cultivation Theory recognises that cultural filters influence how women internalise these messages. For example, women in patriarchal communities may perceive political participation as risky despite media encouragement. This is consistent with findings on cultural barriers (mean = 3.72), which indicate that societal norms can override media influence for some viewers. These findings are aligned with Bello and Olayemi (2021), who investigated the role of community radio in women's political mobilisation in Nigeria. Their study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining focus group discussions with surveys of women who listened to community radio programmes. The research demonstrated that community radio significantly contributed to women's political engagement, particularly in rural areas, by providing accessible information on political participation. Similar to *Politics Today*, the study underscores the capacity of media platforms to enhance women's political awareness and motivate civic involvement.

Research Question 4. What are the Factors Hindering the Effectiveness of Channels TV's *Politics Today* in Sensitizing Women for Political Participation in Kogi State?

Finally, the study identified several significant barriers limiting the programme's impact, with cultural constraints (mean = 3.72) and inconvenient timing (mean = 3.82) emerging as the most prominent challenges. These findings are consistent with Cultivation Theory, which posits that inconsistent access to media content weakens its capacity to shape perceptions over time. The data indicated that frequent electricity outages and irregular viewing patterns disrupted the programme's cultivation effect, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure is less reliable. Additionally, language barriers (mean = 3.65) created a disconnect between the programme's content and viewers' ability to fully comprehend political messages. This was especially evident among older women and those with limited formal education, who often struggled with the

programme's predominantly English-language format. Collectively, these access issues undermine the programme's potential to consistently reinforce democratic values and normalise women's political participation across all demographic groups in Kogi State.

From the perspective of Cultivation Theory, these challenges reflect how deeply socio-cultural norms influence the reception of media messages entrenched. The data revealed that many women, particularly in conservative communities, filtered the programme's content through existing patriarchal frameworks that discourage female political engagement. Even when women had access to the programme, cultural perceptions regarding gender roles often led them to regard political participation as inappropriate or unrealistic. Furthermore, the lack of localised content (mean = 3.60) limited the programme's relevance to rural viewers' lived experiences. Perception Theory helps explain why some women, despite being aware of the programme, remained reluctant to act on its messages. These findings suggest that increasing exposure alone is insufficient; the programme must also address the perceptual filters that shape how different audiences interpret political content, particularly among women facing multiple layers of marginalisation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role that Channels Television's *Politics Today* plays in promoting political awareness and encouraging women's participation in politics in Kogi State. The programme has achieved a commendable level of exposure and is well-regarded for delivering civic education content that resonates with the public. It facilitates a deeper understanding of democratic engagement and promotes inclusive political participation through its messaging and media strategies. Despite these strengths, the programme's reach and impact are constrained by infrastructural, cultural, and content delivery challenges. Many women in Kogi State continue to face barriers to full engagement, particularly due to entrenched gender norms, language accessibility, and limited outreach efforts. These findings reveal a gap between the effectiveness of content and audience accessibility, especially among underserved female populations. Addressing these challenges could significantly enhance the programme's effectiveness and its contribution to democratic participation.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Given the high level of exposure to Channels Television's *Politics Today* among respondents, political engagement issues targeting women should be prioritised in order to mobilise greater participation.
2. More women should be invited to participate in television programmes such as *Politics Today* to increase awareness and foster political engagement among women across all levels of governance.
3. Since *Politics Today* positively influences women's political participation, strategic steps should be taken to leverage television as a tool for social and political mobilisation.
4. The programme should consider the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of its audience. To increase reach and comprehension, *Politics Today* could be broadcast in major Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, thereby enhancing accessibility and engagement among a wider female audience.

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