



**COMMUNITY RADIO AND SOCIAL CHANGE: EXPLORING HOW COMMUNITY RADIO
AMPLIFIES MARGINALISED VOICES IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND
COMMUNICATION (UniMAC), IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

DECEMBER 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God, the author and finisher of my faith, and to Rev. Klaus Hymns, a devoted father in the faith, whose guidance, prayers, and support have been instrumental throughout this academic journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply grateful to my lovely parents and siblings for their unwavering love, encouragement, and sacrifices throughout this academic journey. Their constant support, patience, and belief in my abilities provided the strength and motivation needed to successfully complete this study.

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ABSTRACT

Community radio has long been recognised as a participatory medium with the potential to promote inclusive communication and democratic engagement at the grassroots level. This study examined the role of community radio in amplifying marginalised voices within local governance, using Latenu Radio in the Labadi community of Ghana as a case study. Anchored in Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory, the study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach to explore how community radio facilitates citizen participation, shapes governance agendas, and influences accountability and responsiveness by local authorities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with twenty participants comprising community members, radio practitioners, and local governance actors. The data were analysed using manual thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and relationships across the dataset. The findings revealed that community radio provides accessible and trusted participation pathways through interactive programme formats such as call-ins, studio discussions, and community dialogue programmes. These platforms enabled marginalised groups to articulate concerns, increase civic awareness, and engage local authorities on governance issues. The study further found that radio-mediated discussions enhanced public accountability by increasing issue visibility and compelling local leaders to respond publicly to citizen concerns. However, the translation of citizen voice into concrete governance action was uneven and constrained by institutional capacity, resource limitations, socio-cultural norms, and technical barriers such as limited phone lines. The study concludes that while community radio plays a significant role in fostering participatory local governance and social change, its effectiveness depends on sustained institutional responsiveness, inclusive programming practices, and supportive policy and resource environments. The study contributes to scholarship on participatory communication by demonstrating how community radio operates as a complementary communicative infrastructure for democratic inclusion at the local level.

Keywords: Community radio, social change, marginalised voices, local governance, participatory communication, Ghana

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Community radio has become a globally recognised platform for participatory communication and democratic inclusion, particularly where mainstream media and formal institutions under-represent marginalised groups (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). UNESCO’s framing of community radio as “voice for the voiceless” positions it as a civic space where local people can articulate concerns, debate priorities, and influence decisions that shape everyday life (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). In local governance contexts, community radio can reduce the “distance” between authorities and citizens by enabling public dialogue, scrutiny, and responsiveness key ingredients for social change (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Gumucio Dagron, 2001). This chapter introduces the study, “Community Radio and Social Change: Exploring how Community Radio Amplifies Marginalised Voices in Local Governance,” situating the issue from global debates to African realities and finally Ghana’s decentralised governance setting, where law and policy emphasise citizen participation but practice remains uneven (Republic of Ghana, 2016; National Communications Authority [NCA], 2019).

1.1 Background of the Study

Across the world, community radio has developed as a response to communication inequities especially in rural, minority-language, and low-income communities where commercial media markets offer limited incentive to serve “small” audiences (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Community broadcasting is typically defined by local ownership or control, non-profit orientation, participatory programming, and public-service goals rather than shareholder value (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Myers, 2009). Within democratic governance, these features matter

because they create a “public forum” for deliberation and collective problem-solving, where citizens can name issues, propose solutions, and demand accountability (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). International development communication scholarship similarly links participatory media to empowerment, arguing that social change becomes more sustainable when communities co-produce information rather than merely receiving it (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

The participatory communication tradition emphasises dialogue, local knowledge, and shared decision-making as the pathway to meaningful development outcomes (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Within this view, community radio is valuable not simply because it transmits messages, but because it structures interaction such as call-ins, community debates, local-language talk, citizen reporting, and issue-based programmes that create an ongoing civic conversation (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). UNESCO-supported learning tools, including ethnographic action research approaches, also stress that communication initiatives work best when grounded in the communicative ecology of communities details how people actually share information, negotiate meaning, and build trust (Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003). Therefore, the social-change potential of community radio is closely tied to whether marginalised groups can access airtime, shape agendas, and be heard by local authorities and peers.

Globally, local governance reforms have increasingly recognised that citizen voice and oversight improve policy legitimacy and service delivery. In that environment, community radio can act as civic infrastructure, an accessible mechanism for “public accountability” where local officials face questions, clarify budgets, and explain implementation challenges (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Evidence-based development communication work identifies radio as uniquely suited for civic engagement because it is relatively affordable, widely owned, and usable without high literacy barriers (Myers, 2009). As a result, community radio often becomes a practical interface

between citizens and institutions, particularly where public meetings are infrequent, travel is costly, or social hierarchies discourage open speech.

In many African countries, radio remains the most geographically extensive and socially embedded medium, particularly outside capital cities (Myers, 2009). Donor and policy discussions have repeatedly noted that radio's reach and low-cost access make it central to development and governance communication across the continent, even amidst digital expansion (Myers, 2009). Community radio growth in Africa has been linked to democratisation waves, decentralisation reforms, and civil society efforts to create local platforms for languages and groups marginalised by national media (Myers, 2011). These conditions have made community radio a strategic tool for supporting participation in public life especially for rural residents, women, youth, and minority communities who are often peripheral to elite political conversation.

“Amplifying marginalised voices” goes beyond giving airtime; it includes agenda-setting power, culturally safe participation, and the ability to influence outcomes. Community radio can achieve this through local-language programming, community correspondents, listener clubs, women's forums, disability-inclusive formats, and interactive programmes that validate lived experience as knowledge (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Myers, 2009). However, participatory communication scholarship warns that participation can become symbolic if stations reproduce local power hierarchies allowing a few vocal actors to dominate while others remain silent due to stigma, time burdens, or fear of reprisals (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). This tension is central to studying community radio's role in local governance: the key question is not only whether marginalised people speak, but whether their speaking changes what authorities prioritise and deliver.

Ghana's constitutional and legal framework supports citizen participation in local governance, and decentralisation is intended to bring decision-making closer to communities. The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) outlines structures and expectations that encourage engagement between elected representatives and residents (Republic of Ghana, 2016). Yet participation in practice can be uneven, affected by political mistrust, limited civic information, gender norms, and the practical costs of attending meetings. In this setting, community radio is positioned to reduce participation barriers by offering mediated access to governance discussions, allowing residents to question, comment, and seek clarification without needing to be physically present at assembly venues.

In Ghana, the NCA's classification describes community broadcasting as non-profit service for a specific marginalised community, with ownership and management representative of that community (NCA, 2019). Policy discourse has also framed community radio as "about, for, by and of" marginalised communities, linked to participatory social agendas (Ministry of Communications, 2005; Ghana Community Radio Network [GCRN], 2020). Contemporary Ghanaian scholarship continues to argue that community radio's core principles such as participation, local relevance, and accountability make it a credible platform for development communication and democratic inclusion (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). However, questions remain about whose voices are amplified, how local governance actors respond, and what constraints (funding, regulation, political pressure, elite capture) limit community radio's social-change role making the present study timely and necessary (Amadu, 2023; Diedong & Dzisah, 2023).

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite global norms supporting participatory governance, marginalised communities often experience persistent exclusion from decision-making due to poverty, geography, language,

disability, and social discrimination. In many contexts, public communication spaces are dominated by elites, while local grievances circulate informally without reaching decision-makers. Community radio is frequently presented as a corrective, but the real extent of its influence on governance responsiveness is not always empirically demonstrated (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Gumucio Dagron, 2001). This creates a research problem: the assumed link between community broadcasting and social change in governance requires closer, context-specific examination, particularly regarding marginalised voices and tangible outcomes.

Participatory communication research highlights that “participation” can be shallow that is being reduced to call-ins and slogans without shifting power over agendas, resources, or institutional behaviour (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Some stations may unintentionally reproduce community inequalities, privileging men, educated speakers, or politically connected individuals, while women, poorer residents, and stigmatised groups remain underrepresented. Where this occurs, community radio may appear inclusive while failing to transform governance relationships. The problem therefore is to distinguish symbolic participation from meaningful amplification that influences local governance priorities, accountability, and service delivery.

Although radio is widely accessible across Africa, structural barriers can limit its governance impact: weak local government capacity, low transparency, political interference, and limited institutional mechanisms for responding to citizen feedback (Myers, 2009). In some cases, listeners may raise concerns repeatedly on air without seeing changes, which can produce frustration and civic disengagement rather than empowerment. This suggests that amplification is not only a media question but also a governance system which questions how authorities receive, process, and act on public voice. Understanding this interaction is essential for assessing community radio’s social-change potential in local governance.

Ghana's decentralisation framework promotes popular participation, but many communities still face barriers to influencing local governance, including limited access to information about assembly decisions, budgets, and development plans (Republic of Ghana, 2016). Where public engagement channels are weak, citizens may rely on radio as their primary arena for civic expression. Yet it remains insufficiently clear, across contexts, whether community radio consistently amplifies marginalised voices or whether certain groups still struggle to access airtime and shape narratives due to cultural norms, gatekeeping, or fear of local backlash (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023; Amadu, 2023).

While Ghana's regulatory framing recognises community radio's purpose as service to a specific marginalised community, many stations operate under financial and operational pressures that can distort participatory goals (NCA, 2019; Ministry of Communications, 2005). Resource constraints may reduce community outreach, limit training for volunteer contributors, and increase reliance on sponsorships that shape content priorities. Such vulnerabilities can weaken the station's capacity to function as an independent civic forum, especially when local political and economic actors attempt to influence programming. This raises a critical problem: the same stations expected to empower marginalised voices may lack the stability needed to sustain inclusive governance programming.

Although Ghanaian research increasingly acknowledges community radio's relevance to development communication and democratic participation, there is still a need for focused inquiry into how community radio amplifies marginalised voices within local governance processes, and what forms of amplification lead to observable social change (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023; Amadu, 2023). Specifically, there is limited clarity on the mechanisms through which marginalised citizens gain voice (formats, languages, programme designs), the barriers that persist, and the ways local

authorities respond to radio-mediated citizen demands. This study therefore addresses a practical and scholarly gap by exploring community radio as a governance interface, testing the assumption that voice leads to influence in decentralised decision-making.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To explore how community radio amplifies marginalised voices in local governance and contributes to social change within Ghana's decentralised governance context.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the community radio practices and programme formats through which marginalised groups access airtime and participate in local governance discussions.
2. To assess how marginalised voices aired on community radio shape local governance agendas, accountability conversations, and responsiveness by local authorities.
3. To identify barriers that limit effective voice amplification on community radio, including socio-cultural norms, gatekeeping, political influence, and resource constraints.
4. To propose practical communication and governance strategies for strengthening inclusive participation through community radio in local governance.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do community radio stations enable marginalised groups to participate in local governance discussions and public decision-making?
2. In what ways does community radio influence local governance agendas, accountability, and responsiveness to citizen concerns?
3. What barriers constrain the amplification of marginalised voices in community radio governance programming?

4. What strategies can strengthen community radio's capacity to support inclusive participation and social change in local governance?

1.5 Scope of Study

Conceptually, the study focuses on community radio as a participatory medium and its social-change role in local governance specifically, how it creates civic dialogue, enhances accountability, and supports inclusion of marginalised groups. The analysis is bounded to voice amplification in governance settings rather than community radio's broader functions (such as entertainment, commercial advertising, or national electoral campaigns). It examines both enabling mechanisms (local languages, interactive formats, community correspondents, issue-based programming) and limiting factors (gatekeeping, elite capture, resource constraints), consistent with participatory communication insights that participation must be evaluated by its depth and influence (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Tacchi et al., 2003).

Geographically, the study is situated within Ghana's decentralised governance framework as outlined in the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), focusing on citizen–authority interaction at local levels (Republic of Ghana, 2016). Institutionally, it centres on community radio as defined within Ghana's regulatory and policy environment, including the NCA's classification of community broadcasting and the national policy framing that emphasises service to marginalised communities (NCA, 2005; Ministry of Communications, 2005). While drawing lessons from global and African literature, the study's conclusions are anchored in Ghana's specific governance and media ecology.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in four ways. Academically, it strengthens Ghana-focused evidence on participatory communication by clarifying the concrete mechanisms through which “voice”

becomes “influence” in decentralised governance (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). Practically, it can guide community radio managers and producers in designing more inclusive governance programming that reaches those often excluded from public deliberation. Policy-wise, the findings can inform regulators and local government stakeholders seeking to deepen popular participation envisaged under Act 936 by integrating radio-mediated feedback loops into governance practice (Republic of Ghana, 2016; NCA, 2019). Socially, the study supports equity by highlighting the conditions under which women, youth, rural residents, and other marginalised groups can speak, be heard, and shape local development priorities through community radio (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Myers, 2011).

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study by presenting the background to the research, the problem statement, research objectives and questions, the scope and significance of the study, and the structure of the thesis. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature and theoretical perspectives on community radio, social change, marginalisation, and local governance, providing the conceptual and analytical foundation for the study. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the research design, study area, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings of the study, drawing insights from participants’ experiences and perspectives on how community radio amplifies marginalised voices in local governance. Chapter Five summarises the key findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study by situating community radio within broader discussions on social change, participation, and local governance, moving from a global perspective to the African context and finally focusing on Ghana. It has highlighted the importance of community radio as a platform for amplifying marginalised voices and facilitating citizen engagement in local decision-making processes. The chapter has clearly outlined the research problem, objectives, and questions that guide the study, as well as the scope and significance of the research. By establishing the contextual, conceptual, and practical foundations of the study, this chapter provides a clear roadmap for the subsequent chapters and sets the stage for a deeper examination of how community radio contributes to inclusive governance and social change.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyses existing scholarly literature relevant to the study of Community Radio and Social Change: Exploring how Community Radio Amplifies Marginalised Voices in Local Governance. The purpose of the chapter is to situate the study within established academic debates on participatory communication, development-oriented media, and democratic governance, while identifying conceptual, empirical, and theoretical foundations that inform the research. By examining literature from global, African, and Ghanaian contexts, the chapter provides a critical understanding of how community radio has been conceptualised, practiced, and evaluated as a platform for citizen participation and social change. The chapter further highlights key gaps in existing research, particularly the limited empirical attention given to the mechanisms through which radio-mediated citizen voice influences local governance outcomes. In doing so, it establishes the intellectual and analytical basis for the study and guides the theoretical and methodological choices presented in subsequent chapters.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature is a systematic and critical examination of existing scholarly writings, theoretical contributions, and empirical studies relevant to a given research problem, aimed at establishing what is already known, how knowledge has been produced, and where gaps remain (Ridley, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the context of this study, the review functions as an analytical framework that situates community radio within broader academic debates on participatory communication, social change, marginalisation, and local governance, rather than treating these concepts in isolation (Hart, 2018). By engaging with global, African, and

Ghanaian scholarship, the literature review contextualises community radio as a participatory medium embedded in specific socio-political environments, where power relations, institutional arrangements, and communication practices shape whose voices are amplified (Servaes, 2008; Howley, 2010; Myers, 2009). Furthermore, the review enables the identification of dominant theoretical positions, empirical patterns, and methodological approaches, while revealing limitations in existing studies particularly the limited attention given to how radio-mediated citizen voice translates into influence within local governance structures in Ghana (Gumucio Dagon, 2001; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). Through this critical engagement, the review provides the conceptual grounding and scholarly justification for examining the community radio–local governance interface as a site of social change and democratic inclusion.

2.1.1 Community Radio

Community radio is globally conceptualised as a non-profit, participatory form of broadcasting that is owned, managed, and programmed by the community it serves (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Rennie, 2006). Unlike commercial and state broadcasters, community radio prioritises social objectives such as inclusion, cultural expression, and grassroots participation (Howley, 2010). Scholars argue that this model emerged as a response to media concentration and the exclusion of minority voices from dominant public spheres (Rodríguez, 2001). Community radio therefore functions as an alternative communicative space where local knowledge and everyday experiences are legitimised (Carpentier, 2011). Its defining characteristics such as local ownership, volunteer participation, and social accountability position it as a democratic medium rather than a market-driven one (Rennie, 2006).

Participation is widely recognised as the defining principle of community radio, distinguishing it from other broadcast forms (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Carpentier, 2011). Participation extends beyond access to listening and includes involvement in programme production, management, and decision-making (Servaes, 2008). Scholars argue that participatory media redistribute symbolic power by allowing marginalised groups to shape narratives that reflect their lived realities (Rodríguez, 2001). However, participation is not inherently emancipatory and may reproduce local hierarchies if access is uneven (Carpentier, 2011). This insight underscores the need to examine how participation is structured within community radio institutions.

Within development communication scholarship, community radio is valued for its dialogic rather than transmissive approach to social change (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). The communication for development paradigm emphasises horizontal dialogue, cultural relevance, and local ownership as foundations for sustainable development (Servaes, 2008; Tufte, 2017). Community radio enables these processes by facilitating collective reflection on development challenges such as health, education, and governance (Waisbord, 2019). Empirical research demonstrates that locally produced radio content enhances trust and relevance, increasing civic engagement (Myers, 2009). As a result, community radio is understood as both a medium and a process of development.

In Africa, radio remains the most accessible and trusted medium, particularly in rural areas where print and digital media penetration is limited (Myers, 2009; Berger, 2010). Community radio stations often broadcast in indigenous languages and reflect local cultural practices, strengthening social cohesion and participation (Boafo, 2006). Studies from West and East Africa show that community radio supports civic education, peacebuilding, and grassroots mobilisation (Skjerdal, 2012). However, African scholars caution that political pressure and funding constraints can

undermine editorial independence and participatory ideals (Nyamnjoh, 2005). These dynamics shape the real-world functioning of community radio across the continent.

Community radio's relevance to governance lies in its ability to create interactive public forums where citizens and authorities engage directly (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Through phone-ins, public debates, and community forums, radio enables citizens to question leaders and demand accountability (Gaventa, 2006). Such interaction strengthens transparency and democratic legitimacy, particularly in decentralised governance systems (UNDP, 2014). Scholars argue that mediated dialogue can complement formal participation mechanisms by reaching those excluded from physical meetings (McQuail, 2010). Nevertheless, the governance impact of community radio depends on institutional responsiveness.

In Ghana, community radio is recognised as a platform for local development and civic engagement (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005; Gadzekpo, 2008). Empirical studies indicate that community radio stations address governance, sanitation, gender equality, and social accountability issues at the district level (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). Amadu (2023) demonstrates that community radio can amplify rural voices in local governance deliberations. However, Ghanaian scholarship also highlights challenges including sustainability pressures and political interference (Karikari, 1994). These tensions shape the effectiveness of community radio as a participatory governance tool.

2.1.2 Social Change

Social change refers to long-term transformations in social structures, norms, and power relations (Servaes, 2008). Development scholars associate social change with increased equity, participation, and collective well-being (Sen, 2009). Communication is central to these transformations because it shapes how societies define problems and mobilise action (Waisbord,

2019). Media platforms that enable dialogue and reflection are therefore critical to social change processes (Tufte, 2017). This perspective challenges linear models of change that prioritise information transfer over participation.

The communication for social change approach emphasises dialogue, community ownership, and cultural relevance (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Servaes, 2008). Rather than persuading individuals, this paradigm focuses on enabling communities to negotiate meaning and collective action (Tufte, 2017). Media that support sustained interaction are therefore central to social transformation (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). Scholars argue that social change emerges from communicative processes embedded in everyday social relations (Waisbord, 2019).

Radio has historically played a key role in social change due to its reach, affordability, and adaptability (Myers, 2009). Community radio contributes to incremental social change by reinforcing norms of participation and accountability (Rennie, 2006). Repeated discussion of local issues can gradually reshape attitudes and expectations regarding governance and citizenship (Berger, 2010). This cumulative effect distinguishes radio-driven change from short-term information campaigns.

African social change processes are shaped by colonial legacies, inequality, and political transitions (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Community radio has supported social change by promoting literacy, health awareness, and civic engagement (Boafo, 2006). However, structural constraints such as poverty and weak institutions can limit transformation (Skjerdal, 2012). These realities highlight the importance of contextual analysis.

Social change within governance contexts involves shifts in power relations and decision-making practices (Gaventa, 2006). Media platforms that amplify citizen voice can challenge exclusionary governance arrangements (Fraser, 1990). Community radio facilitates such change by making governance processes visible and contestable (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Yet institutional responsiveness remains a critical mediating factor (UNDP, 2014).

In Ghana, social change through community radio is often gradual rather than transformative (Gadzekpo, 2008). Sustained radio discussions increase awareness of civic rights and local governance responsibilities (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). However, translating awareness into policy outcomes remains uneven (Amadu, 2023). This gap justifies further investigation.

2.1.3 Marginalised Voices

Marginalised voices refer to the perspectives of individuals and groups who are systematically excluded from social, political, and economic decision-making processes due to structural inequalities embedded in society (Sen, 2009). Such marginalisation limits not only material opportunities but also communicative participation, as access to public platforms is unevenly distributed (Couldry, 2010). Democratic theorists argue that when public discourse excludes certain groups, governance outcomes reflect elite interests rather than collective needs (Fraser, 1990). Communication scholars therefore conceptualise marginalisation as both a social and communicative condition that silences particular experiences (McQuail, 2010). Addressing marginalised voices requires institutional mechanisms that recognise everyday experiences as legitimate contributions to public debate (Gaventa, 2006).

Voice is increasingly understood as a democratic capacity that involves not only speaking but also being recognised and taken seriously within decision-making arenas (Couldry, 2010).

Recognition is crucial because expression without acknowledgement does not alter power relations or policy outcomes (Fraser, 1990). Scholars argue that media institutions shape whose voices are considered credible by controlling agenda-setting and framing processes (McQuail, 2010). Consequently, marginalised groups may speak but remain unheard if communicative structures privilege elite norms and languages (Carpentier, 2011). Effective voice therefore depends on inclusive media systems that link expression to deliberation and influence (Gaventa, 2006).

Marginalised groups face numerous barriers that constrain their participation in public communication, including illiteracy, language hierarchies, time poverty, gender norms, and fear of social or political repercussions (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). Participatory communication research warns that initiatives labelled as inclusive may still reproduce inequality if dominant actors control access and agenda-setting (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Local elites, traditional authorities, or political actors may monopolise media spaces even within community-oriented platforms (Carpentier, 2011). These dynamics underscore the importance of analysing who participates, under what conditions, and with what consequences for governance (Waisbord, 2019).

In many African societies, marginalisation is shaped by intersecting factors such as rural residence, gender, youth status, disability, and poverty (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Radio remains the most accessible medium across the continent, making it a critical tool for expanding communicative inclusion among disadvantaged populations (Myers, 2009). Community radio stations that broadcast in local languages and foreground community realities have been shown to enhance participation among groups excluded from national media (Boafo, 2006). However,

African media scholarship also documents challenges including elite capture, political pressure, and sustainability constraints that affect whose voices are prioritised on air (Berger, 2010; Skjerdal, 2012). These findings suggest that inclusion through community radio is contingent rather than automatic.

Amplifying marginalised voices is particularly significant within local governance contexts because accountability depends on the public visibility of citizen concerns (Gaventa, 2006). When grievances and questions are aired publicly, authorities face increased pressure to justify decisions and respond to community needs (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Communication for social change scholarship emphasises that dialogue becomes transformative when it enables collective reflection and action rather than isolated expression (Tufte, 2017). However, the effectiveness of voice amplification depends on institutional responsiveness and political will within governance structures (UNDP, 2014).

In Ghana, marginalised voices are often excluded from formal governance spaces due to educational barriers, socio-cultural norms, and political patronage systems (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005). Empirical studies show that community radio has expanded opportunities for women, youth, and rural residents to participate in discussions on local development and governance (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). Interactive radio formats such as call-in programmes and community forums have enabled citizens to articulate concerns directly to local authorities (Amadu, 2023). Despite these gains, participation remains uneven, with some groups still underrepresented in on-air discourse (Gadzekpo, 2008). This highlights the need for critical examination of how community radio structures participation and whose voices ultimately influence local governance.

2.1.4 Local Governance

Local governance refers to the processes and institutions through which public affairs are managed at the sub-national level, involving interactions between local authorities, citizens, and civil society actors (UNDP, 2014). Decentralisation reforms worldwide promote local governance as a means of enhancing participation, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs (World Bank, 2017). Effective local governance depends on inclusive decision-making structures that allow citizens to influence policies affecting their daily lives (Gaventa, 2006). Communication is central to these processes because it enables information sharing, deliberation, and public oversight (McQuail, 2010).

Transparent and interactive communication is widely recognised as fundamental to democratic governance and institutional legitimacy (McQuail, 2010). Media systems shape public understanding of governance by influencing agenda visibility, framing, and access to information (Berger, 2010). Where communication channels are weak or inaccessible, citizens may lack the information required to hold authorities accountable (UNDP, 2014). Scholars therefore argue that governance effectiveness is closely linked to the availability of inclusive and trusted communication platforms (Servaes, 2008).

Community media, particularly radio, plays a strategic role in local governance by facilitating two-way communication between authorities and citizens (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Unlike national media, community radio focuses on local issues and actors, making governance processes more visible and relatable (Howley, 2010). Interactive radio programmes enable local officials to explain policies while allowing citizens to ask questions and provide feedback

(Rennie, 2006). This interaction supports transparency and accountability, especially where formal participatory mechanisms are limited (Gaventa, 2006).

In Africa, decentralisation has been widely adopted to improve service delivery and citizen participation, yet outcomes remain uneven across countries (World Bank, 2017). Limited civic engagement, low trust in institutions, and weak communication infrastructures often undermine decentralisation efforts (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Community radio has emerged as a practical tool for bridging communication gaps between local governments and citizens by using local languages and culturally relevant formats (Myers, 2009). However, sustainability challenges and political interference can restrict critical debate and limit governance impact (Skjerdal, 2012).

Local governance systems frequently face challenges such as resource constraints, political patronage, and limited administrative capacity, which affect participation and accountability (UNDP, 2014). Community radio can mitigate some of these challenges by fostering public dialogue and scrutiny of local authorities (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Communication for social change scholarship argues that dialogue strengthens governance when it leads to collective problem-solving and institutional response (Waisbord, 2019). Without such response, however, participation may generate frustration and disengagement among citizens (Servaes, 2008).

Ghana's decentralised governance system is guided by the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), which emphasises citizen participation in district-level decision-making (Republic of Ghana, 2016). The Act provides institutional structures intended to bring governance closer to communities and enhance accountability (Republic of Ghana, 2016). Ghanaian studies demonstrate that community radio complements this framework by creating accessible platforms for civic dialogue and public oversight (Amadu, 2023). While radio-mediated discussions have

increased awareness of local governance responsibilities, translating dialogue into concrete policy action remains inconsistent across districts (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023).

2.1.5 Community Radio and Local Governance Interface

The interface between community radio and local governance refers to the communicative space where citizens, media, and local authorities interact to shape public decision-making and accountability processes (Gaventa, 2006). Governance scholars argue that participatory governance depends not only on institutional structures but also on communication systems that enable dialogue, scrutiny, and feedback (UNDP, 2014). Community radio functions within this interface by translating governance processes into accessible public discourse and by transmitting citizen concerns to decision-makers (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Media theorists emphasise that such interfaces are critical because they determine whether citizen voice remains symbolic or becomes influential (McQuail, 2010). The effectiveness of this interface therefore hinges on both media openness and institutional responsiveness (Waisbord, 2019).

Community radio strengthens the governance interface by enabling deliberative participation through interactive formats such as call-ins, panel discussions, and community forums (Howley, 2010). Deliberative governance theory suggests that public reasoning and dialogue enhance the legitimacy of decisions when diverse perspectives are included (Habermas, 1989). By making local governance issues publicly discussable, community radio contributes to transparency and accountability (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). However, scholars caution that deliberation alone is insufficient if citizen inputs do not feed into decision-making processes (Gaventa, 2006). The radio–governance interface is therefore most effective when dialogue is coupled with mechanisms for institutional response (UNDP, 2014).

The community radio–governance interface is shaped by power relations that influence whose voices are amplified and how issues are framed (Carpentier, 2011). Media are not neutral conduits but mediating institutions that shape public understanding of governance through agenda-setting and framing (McQuail, 2010). Where community radio maintains editorial independence, it can challenge dominant narratives and expose governance failures (Rodríguez, 2001). Conversely, political interference or elite capture can weaken the interface by limiting critical debate (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Analysing this interface therefore requires attention to both communicative practices and local power dynamics (Waisbord, 2019).

Across Africa, community radio has emerged as a key platform linking citizens to local governance structures, particularly in decentralised systems (Myers, 2009). Empirical studies indicate that community radio enhances civic awareness by explaining local government roles, budgets, and development plans in accessible language (Boafo, 2006). In contexts where formal participation mechanisms are weak, radio often becomes the primary arena for public accountability (Skjerdal, 2012). However, African media scholars note that sustainability challenges, donor dependence, and political pressure can limit the depth of governance engagement (Berger, 2010). These factors shape how effectively community radio mediates citizen–authority relations.

The interface between community radio and local governance contributes to social change when citizen expression leads to shifts in governance behaviour or priorities (Servaes, 2008).

Communication for social change scholarship emphasises that dialogue becomes transformative when it supports collective problem identification and action (Tufte, 2017). Community radio can facilitate this by sustaining public attention on unresolved governance issues and mobilising

collective pressure (Waisbord, 2019). Nevertheless, scholars caution that without institutional follow-through, repeated expression of grievances may result in frustration and disengagement (UNDP, 2014). Assessing governance outcomes therefore requires examining both communicative processes and policy responses.

In Ghana, the interface between community radio and local governance operates within a decentralised system that formally promotes citizen participation (Republic of Ghana, 2016). Ghanaian studies show that community radio stations provide platforms where district officials engage citizens on development planning, service delivery, and accountability (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005; Amadu, 2023). Radio-mediated dialogue has increased public awareness of governance responsibilities and citizen rights (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). However, the influence of such dialogue on policy outcomes varies across districts due to differences in political will, institutional capacity, and media independence (Gadzekpo, 2008). This variation highlights the need to empirically examine how community radio mediates governance relationships at the local level.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical research from different global contexts demonstrates that community radio plays a significant role in enhancing citizen participation by providing accessible platforms for dialogue and local expression. Studies conducted in Latin America and South Asia show that community radio stations increase civic awareness and encourage marginalised populations to engage in discussions on governance, development planning, and public accountability (Rodríguez, 2001; Servaes, 2008). These studies consistently find that participation is most effective when community members are involved not only as listeners but also as content producers and

programme contributors. Evidence further indicates that locally produced radio content enhances trust and relevance, which are essential for sustained community engagement (Howley, 2010). However, these studies also reveal that participation does not automatically translate into policy influence without supportive institutional frameworks.

Empirical studies focusing on voice and empowerment reveal that access to participatory media platforms can strengthen individuals' sense of agency and political efficacy. Research conducted within community media settings shows that participation in radio discussions enhances confidence among marginalised groups, particularly women, rural residents, and linguistic minorities, enabling them to articulate concerns more openly (Carpentier, 2011). Nonetheless, empirical evidence cautions that empowerment through voice remains limited when governance institutions fail to recognise or respond to citizen input (Gaventa, 2006). These findings highlight the importance of examining not only opportunities for expression but also the outcomes of such communicative engagement.

Evidence on the accountability role of community radio presents mixed findings across contexts. Some empirical studies document improved transparency where local officials regularly engage with citizens through radio programmes, resulting in clearer communication of policies, budgets, and development priorities (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). In contrast, other studies report that repeated broadcasting of grievances without tangible responses from authorities can lead to public frustration and declining trust in both media and governance institutions (Waisbord, 2019). These findings suggest that the accountability function of community radio is shaped more by governance responsiveness than by media participation alone.

Empirical research across Africa consistently identifies radio as the most accessible and trusted medium for rural and marginalised populations. Studies conducted in countries such as Mali, Uganda, and Tanzania show that community radio significantly improves awareness of civic rights and local government responsibilities, particularly among non-literate audiences (Boafo, 2006; Myers, 2009). Broadcasting in local languages has been empirically linked to higher participation levels and deeper audience engagement. However, African studies also highlight persistent challenges, including financial instability, political interference, and dependence on donor funding, which can constrain participatory practices and editorial independence (Berger, 2010).

Empirical studies examining gender and marginalisation in African community radio contexts indicate that radio has the potential to amplify women's voices in public discourse. Research shows that women-focused programmes increase awareness of rights and encourage participation in community discussions on governance and development (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Despite these gains, empirical findings also reveal that patriarchal norms, time constraints, and socio-cultural expectations continue to limit women's sustained participation (Skjerdal, 2012). These studies suggest that while community radio can lower access barriers, broader social structures continue to shape participation outcomes.

Research linking decentralisation and media in Africa provides further empirical insights into the governance role of community radio. Studies show that where community radio is integrated into decentralised governance systems, citizen engagement and information flow tend to improve (World Bank, 2017). However, empirical evidence also demonstrates that weak institutional capacity, limited political will, and low trust in local authorities often undermine the effectiveness

of media-enabled participation (UNDP, 2014). These findings underscore the importance of examining governance conditions alongside media practices.

In Ghana, empirical studies reveal that community radio plays an important role in local development communication and civic engagement. Research shows that community radio stations frequently address governance-related issues such as sanitation, education, and district planning, thereby increasing public awareness of local government functions (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005; Gadzekpo, 2008). Listener participation through phone-ins and community forums has been empirically shown to enhance citizen understanding of governance processes and rights. However, these studies also indicate uneven participation across regions and social groups.

More recent Ghanaian empirical research provides deeper insights into the relationship between community radio and local governance. Amadu (2023) demonstrates that community radio stations facilitate dialogue between district assemblies and rural citizens, enabling marginalised groups to articulate development concerns that are often absent from formal governance spaces. Similarly, Diedong and Dzisah (2023) find that community radio contributes to participatory governance by providing inclusive platforms for discussion and feedback. Both studies, however, observe that the extent to which radio-mediated voice influences policy decisions varies across districts.

Empirical evidence from Ghana also identifies structural constraints that limit the effectiveness of community radio in amplifying marginalised voices. Studies point to financial instability, limited technical capacity, regulatory pressures, and political interference as key challenges affecting community radio operations (Karikari, 1994; Gadzekpo, 2008). Research further suggests that reliance on sponsorship and donor funding can shape content priorities, potentially undermining

participatory objectives (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005). These constraints affect the sustainability and inclusiveness of governance-focused programming.

Overall, empirical literature confirms that community radio can enhance participation, amplify marginalised voices, and support local governance, but outcomes are highly context-dependent. Existing studies tend to emphasise participation and awareness outcomes, with limited attention to the mechanisms through which radio-mediated voice translates into governance influence and social change (Waisbord, 2019; Amadu, 2023). In the Ghanaian context, there remains a gap in qualitative, community-level research that closely examines how marginalised voices are amplified and how local authorities respond. This empirical gap provides a strong justification for the present study.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory. These theories are appropriate because they provide complementary lenses for understanding how community radio operates as a participatory platform and how media are expected to support development and governance in developing societies.

2.3.1 Participatory Communication Theory

Participatory Communication Theory emerged as a critical response to early development communication models that relied on linear, top-down information dissemination. These early models, rooted in modernisation theory, assumed that underdevelopment resulted from a lack of information and that social change could be achieved by transmitting expert knowledge to passive audiences (Servaes, 2008). Scholars later demonstrated that such approaches often failed because they ignored local contexts, power relations, and cultural realities (Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

Participatory Communication Theory therefore reframed communication as a social process rather than a technical tool, emphasising dialogue, inclusion, and collective meaning-making (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

The intellectual roots of the theory are strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's concept of dialogical communication, which views dialogue as a process through which people develop critical consciousness and agency (Freire, 1970). Freire argued that communication should enable people to reflect on their lived experiences and challenge oppressive structures rather than simply absorb information. This philosophical grounding shaped later development communication scholarship, which positioned participation as central to empowerment and social transformation (Servaes, 2008). As a result, participatory communication places people, rather than institutions or technologies, at the centre of development processes.

A core assumption of Participatory Communication Theory is that communities possess valuable knowledge derived from their lived experiences. Rather than treating external expertise as superior, the theory recognises local knowledge as essential for identifying problems and designing solutions that are socially relevant and sustainable (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Communication is therefore understood as horizontal and interactive, allowing different voices to engage on relatively equal terms (Tufté, 2017). This assumption directly challenges hierarchical communication models that privilege elites, professionals, or state actors.

Another key assumption is that meaningful participation requires more than access to communication platforms. Participation involves involvement in agenda-setting, decision-making, and the interpretation of information (Carpentier, 2011). From this perspective, simply allowing people to speak does not guarantee empowerment if their contributions are ignored or

marginalised. Participatory Communication Theory therefore stresses the importance of recognition, inclusion, and influence within communicative spaces (Waisbord, 2019). This emphasis makes the theory particularly relevant for analysing whether marginalised voices are genuinely amplified.

One of the major strengths of Participatory Communication Theory lies in its focus on empowerment and social inclusion. By prioritising dialogue and local ownership, the theory addresses power imbalances that often characterise development and governance processes (Servaes, 2008). Empirical studies show that participatory communication enhances trust, community cohesion, and sustainability of social initiatives (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). These outcomes are especially important in marginalised communities where formal institutions may lack legitimacy.

The theory is also praised for its cultural sensitivity and contextual flexibility. Unlike universalist models, participatory communication allows communication practices to be shaped by local languages, traditions, and social norms (Tufte, 2017). This adaptability makes the theory applicable across diverse socio-political contexts, including rural and marginalised settings. In media studies, this strength has been linked to the effectiveness of community radio as a culturally grounded communication platform (Howley, 2010).

Despite its strengths, Participatory Communication Theory has been criticised for being overly idealistic. Critics argue that the theory often underestimates structural constraints such as economic inequality, political power, and institutional resistance that limit genuine participation (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). In many contexts, participation is constrained by factors beyond community

control, including elite domination and state authority. These criticisms caution against assuming that participatory spaces are inherently empowering.

Another critique is that participatory initiatives may reproduce existing inequalities within communities. Research shows that local elites, men, or educated individuals may dominate participatory forums, marginalising women, youth, and poorer residents (Carpentier, 2011). This challenges the assumption that community-based platforms automatically ensure inclusion. Participatory Communication Theory therefore requires careful empirical application to assess who participates and whose voices matter.

The theory has also been criticised for insufficiently explaining how dialogue translates into concrete policy outcomes. While it emphasises process and inclusion, it does not always specify mechanisms through which participation influences institutional decision-making (Waisbord, 2019). This limitation is particularly relevant in governance contexts where authority and resources remain concentrated within formal institutions.

Nevertheless, Participatory Communication Theory is highly applicable to the study of community radio. Community radio embodies the theory's principles through local ownership, interactive programming, and emphasis on dialogue (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Call-ins, community forums, and listener participation reflect participatory communication in practice. The theory provides an analytical lens for examining whether these practices genuinely empower marginalised groups.

In the context of local governance, the theory helps explain how community radio can function as a space for civic dialogue and public accountability. By enabling citizens to articulate concerns

and question authorities, community radio aligns with participatory ideals of inclusive decision-making (Gaventa, 2006). The theory also allows for critical examination of power relations that shape access to radio platforms and governance responsiveness.

Participatory Communication Theory is therefore appropriate for this study because it foregrounds marginalised voices and democratic participation, which are central to the research problem. In Ghana's decentralised governance system, where participation is formally encouraged but unevenly realised, the theory provides a robust framework for analysing how community radio facilitates or constrains citizen engagement in local governance processes (Diedong & Dzisah, 2023).

2.3.2 Development Media Theory

Development Media Theory originated in the 1960s as part of normative media theory that sought to explain the role of mass media in developing societies. Early proponents argued that media in developing contexts should actively support national development goals rather than operate purely as commercial or libertarian institutions (McQuail, 2010). The theory emerged in response to the limitations of Western media models when applied to societies characterised by poverty, low literacy, and weak institutions. As such, Development Media Theory situates media within broader socio-economic and political development agendas.

The theory assumes that media have a responsibility to contribute to social progress by promoting education, national integration, and civic awareness (McQuail, 2010). Unlike libertarian models that prioritise press freedom above all else, Development Media Theory emphasises social responsibility and collective goals. Media are expected to support development planning and governance by informing citizens and encouraging participation in public life (Servaes, 2008).

A central assumption of Development Media Theory is that development priorities may justify certain regulatory frameworks guiding media operations. In this view, media freedom is not absolute but balanced against development needs (McQuail, 2010). This assumption reflects the realities of many developing societies where media are expected to contribute to nation-building and social cohesion. The theory therefore legitimises a developmental role for media institutions.

One strength of Development Media Theory is its contextual sensitivity. It recognises that media systems operate within specific economic and political environments and that development challenges require tailored communication approaches (Servaes, 2008). This perspective allows scholars to analyse media roles in relation to local governance, education, and development rather than abstract ideals of press freedom. Empirical studies show that development-oriented media can enhance civic awareness and public participation (Boafo, 2006).

The theory is particularly useful for analysing media in African contexts, where radio has historically been used for development communication. Community radio stations often broadcast programmes on health, agriculture, education, and governance, aligning with development objectives (Myers, 2009). Development Media Theory provides a framework for understanding why such expectations are placed on community radio by governments and development agencies.

Another strength of the theory is its emphasis on media as partners in governance. Media are viewed as facilitators of communication between authorities and citizens, helping to disseminate information and explain policies (UNDP, 2014). This role is especially relevant in decentralised governance systems where citizens require information to engage meaningfully with local authorities.

However, Development Media Theory has attracted significant criticism. Critics argue that it can be used to justify state control and limit media independence under the guise of development (Nyamnjoh, 2005). In authoritarian or semi-democratic contexts, appeals to development have sometimes resulted in censorship and propaganda. This criticism highlights the risk of conflating development goals with political interests.

Another limitation is that the theory places insufficient emphasis on citizen participation and bottom-up communication. By focusing on media support for development agendas, it may marginalise grassroots voices and reinforce elite-driven narratives (Waisbord, 2019). This limitation makes the theory less suitable when used alone to analyse participatory media.

The theory has also been criticised for assuming consensus around development priorities. In reality, development is contested, and different groups may have competing interests (Servaes, 2008). Development Media Theory does not fully address how media should navigate such conflicts, particularly in pluralistic societies.

Despite these criticisms, Development Media Theory remains relevant for understanding the institutional expectations placed on community radio. In many countries, including Ghana, community radio is expected to contribute to development and governance education (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005). The theory helps explain policy frameworks that emphasise the developmental role of media.

In the context of local governance, Development Media Theory provides a lens for analysing how community radio supports decentralisation by informing citizens about local government structures, plans, and services (Republic of Ghana, 2016). It also allows examination of how radio contributes to accountability by making governance information accessible.

Development Media Theory is therefore appropriate for this study when combined with Participatory Communication Theory. While Participatory Communication Theory centres citizen voice, Development Media Theory explains the normative and institutional expectations placed on community radio within development and governance frameworks. Together, they provide a balanced analytical framework for examining how community radio amplifies marginalised voices while operating within Ghana's local governance and development context.

2.3.3 Synthesis and Relevance of Theories to the Study

The synthesis of Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the role of community radio in amplifying marginalised voices within local governance contexts. While Participatory Communication Theory foregrounds dialogue, inclusion, and citizen agency, Development Media Theory emphasises the normative responsibility of media to support development and governance objectives in developing societies (Servaes, 2008; McQuail, 2010). Together, these theories enable the study to examine both bottom-up communicative processes and top-down institutional expectations that shape community radio practice.

Participatory Communication Theory is particularly relevant to this study because it conceptualises communication as a dialogic and empowering process through which marginalised groups articulate concerns and participate in decision-making (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Community radio embodies these principles by providing interactive platforms such as call-in programmes and community forums that allow citizens to engage directly with local governance issues. This theoretical lens enables the study to assess whether such participation is meaningful, inclusive, and capable of challenging existing power relations (Carpentier, 2011).

However, participatory processes do not operate in a vacuum, and this is where Development Media Theory complements the analysis. Development Media Theory situates community radio within broader development and governance frameworks, recognising that media in developing contexts are often expected to educate citizens, promote civic awareness, and support decentralisation (McQuail, 2010; UNDP, 2014). This perspective allows the study to examine how policy expectations, regulatory environments, and development agendas influence the content and orientation of community radio programming.

The integration of both theories addresses key limitations when either is applied in isolation. Participatory Communication Theory has been criticised for underestimating structural and institutional constraints on participation, while Development Media Theory has been faulted for its top-down orientation and limited attention to citizen voice (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Waisbord, 2019). By combining the two, the study is able to analyse community radio as both a participatory space for marginalised voices and an institutional actor operating within governance and development systems.

This synthesis is especially relevant in the context of local governance, where citizen participation and accountability depend on effective communication between authorities and communities. Participatory Communication Theory explains how community radio facilitates dialogue and expression, while Development Media Theory helps to interrogate whether and how such dialogue aligns with governance structures and leads to responsiveness (Gaventa, 2006; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Together, they support an analysis that moves beyond participation as an end in itself to participation as a potential driver of social change.

In the Ghanaian context, the relevance of this combined theoretical framework is particularly strong. Ghana's decentralised governance system formally promotes citizen participation, yet

empirical evidence suggests that marginalised groups often remain excluded from effective influence (Republic of Ghana, 2016; Diedong & Dzisah, 2023). The synthesis of the two theories enables the study to examine how community radio navigates this tension—creating participatory spaces while operating within development-oriented policy and governance expectations.

Overall, the integration of Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory provides a robust conceptual lens for addressing the central research problem of this study. It allows for a nuanced examination of how community radio amplifies marginalised voices, the conditions under which voice translates into governance influence, and the limitations imposed by institutional and structural factors. This theoretical synthesis therefore directly informs the study’s research questions, methodological choices, and interpretation of findings, ensuring strong alignment between theory and empirical inquiry.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of literature relevant to the study on community radio and social change, with particular emphasis on how community radio amplifies marginalised voices within local governance contexts. The chapter examined key conceptual issues including community radio, social change, marginalised voices, local governance, and the interface between community radio and governance, drawing on global, African, and Ghanaian scholarly perspectives. Empirical evidence reviewed in the chapter demonstrated that while community radio has significant potential to enhance participation, voice, and accountability, its impact is shaped by contextual factors such as institutional responsiveness, power relations, and sustainability constraints. The chapter also articulated the theoretical foundations of the study by examining Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory, highlighting their relevance, strengths, and limitations. By synthesising these theories, the chapter established

a robust analytical framework for understanding community radio as both a participatory platform and a development-oriented medium. Overall, the chapter has identified critical knowledge gaps particularly regarding how radio-mediated voice translates into influence within local governance which justify the focus, direction, and methodological approach of the study discussed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological procedures adopted to examine how community radio amplifies marginalised voices in local governance and how these communicative practices contribute to social change. It explains the research approach and design, describes the population, and justifies the sampling techniques used to recruit participants. The chapter also outlines the instruments and procedures for data collection, clarifies the sources of data, and details how data were handled and analysed using a manual thematic analysis process. Ethical considerations that guided engagement with participants and the management of research data are also discussed. Overall, the chapter provides the methodological basis for assessing the credibility and rigour of the findings presented in subsequent chapters (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018).

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because the research problem was centred on meanings, lived experiences, and communicative practices through which marginalised groups had engaged local governance via community radio (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative inquiry was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to explore social processes and interpret participants' perspectives within natural settings rather than relying on numerical measurement alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since “voice amplification” involved subjective experiences such as feeling heard, recognised, or empowered, qualitative methods enabled the study to capture depth, nuance, and context in participants' accounts (Tracy, 2020). The approach therefore supported an in-depth understanding of how community radio practices had shaped inclusion within local governance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was guided by an interpretivist orientation, which assumed that social reality was constructed through interaction, language, and shared meanings (Schwandt, 2015). Radio programmes, call-ins, and community dialogues are treated as communicative spaces where citizens and local authorities negotiate meanings around governance issues, rights, and responsibilities (Servaes, 2008). This orientation allowed the researcher to examine how marginalised participants interpret their participation and how radio-mediated encounters have shaped perceptions of legitimacy, responsiveness, and influence (Waisbord, 2019). Interpretivism was suitable because the study sought explanation through contextual understanding rather than statistical generalisation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was exploratory and explanatory in a qualitative sense because it explored the mechanisms through which radio-mediated participation occurred and explained the conditions under which voice had become influential in governance processes (Stebbins, 2001). Exploratory qualitative research was relevant because prior empirical evidence had not fully explained how participation through community radio translated into governance responsiveness in specific local contexts (Yin, 2018). This approach supported the development of credible interpretations grounded in the experiences and narratives of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It also aligned with the study's aim of generating context-sensitive insight into radio-enabled inclusion and social change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative case study design because it enabled an in-depth investigation of community radio as a communicative interface for marginalised voices within local governance. Case study design is appropriate where a researcher seeks to understand a contemporary

phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context had been blurred (Yin, 2018). In this study, voice amplification could not have been separated from the political, cultural, and institutional conditions within which community radio operates. The design therefore supports a holistic, contextually grounded analysis (Stake, 1995).

The study had followed an instrumental case study logic, where community radio was examined to illuminate the broader issue of citizen participation and inclusion in local governance (Stake, 1995). This logic also enabled the researcher to draw evidence from multiple groups, including marginalised community members, community radio practitioners, and local governance actors, to capture diverse viewpoints relevant to the research problem (Yin, 2018). Such multi-perspective inquiry strengthened credibility by enabling cross-checking of perspectives and deepening explanatory power (Patton, 2015). It also enabled the study to interpret radio participation as a social process shaped by power relations and institutional responsiveness (Gaventa, 2006).

3.3 Population

The population comprised individuals and institutions that had been directly involved in or affected by community radio participation and local governance communication within the selected study setting. This included members of marginalised groups who had engaged community radio platforms, community radio personnel (e.g., presenters, producers, managers), and local governance stakeholders involved in civic engagement and communication (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Defining the population around relevance to the phenomenon had ensured that participants had possessed experiential knowledge required to answer the research questions (Patton, 2015). This population definition had strengthened the study's focus on the radio–governance interface as lived and practised.

The population had been understood qualitatively rather than statistically because the study had prioritised depth of understanding over numerical representation. Qualitative research had commonly treated populations as bounded by relevance and information richness rather than by countable membership (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This perspective had been appropriate because marginalisation had been context-specific and relational, and the study had sought to understand how exclusion and inclusion had been produced within local communication and governance practices (Schwandt, 2015). The population definition had therefore supported purposive selection of information-rich participants (Patton, 2015).

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study used a purposive sampling technique to select participants who could provide rich, relevant, and experience-based insights into community radio participation and local governance communication within the Labadi community. The case study focused specifically on Latenu Radio 96.1 FM, a community radio station operating in the Labadi area, because of its sustained engagement with community issues and local governance discourse. Purposive sampling was appropriate because it enabled the deliberate selection of participants with direct involvement in or exposure to the phenomenon under investigation, rather than relying on random selection, which is less suitable for in-depth qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015).

A total of twenty-one (21) participants were sampled for the study. The sample was drawn from three main categories. First, community members were selected from residents living within the Labadi community, as they constituted the primary audience and participants in Latenu Radio's programming. These participants included individuals who had participated in call-in programmes, community discussions, or regularly listened to governance-related broadcasts. Second, Latenu Radio personnel, including presenters, producers, and management staff, were selected based on

their direct involvement in producing and moderating programmes that addressed local governance and community concerns. Third, local governance actors, such as assembly members or unit committee representatives who had engaged citizens through Latenu Radio platforms, were included to provide institutional perspectives on radio-mediated civic participation.

Criterion-based sampling was applied within the purposive strategy to ensure that all participants met clearly defined inclusion requirements relevant to the study. Community members were required to be residents of Labadi and to have engaged with Latenu Radio's programmes on community or governance-related issues. Radio personnel were required to have active roles in programme production or presentation at Latenu Radio, while governance actors were required to have participated in or responded to radio-mediated civic engagement activities. The sample size of twenty participants was considered adequate because thematic saturation was reached, meaning that additional interviews no longer generated new themes or significant insights relevant to the research questions. Qualitative scholars argue that saturation commonly occurs within relatively small, information-rich samples when participants share meaningful engagement with the phenomenon under study (Guest et al., 2006; Malterud et al., 2016). The attainment of saturation indicated that the data collected were sufficient to support credible, in-depth analysis within a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018).

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The study used semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection instrument to generate in-depth qualitative data on how community radio amplified marginalised voices in local governance. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allowed participants to narrate their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of radio-mediated participation in their own words while providing sufficient structure to ensure alignment with the study's research objectives

(Kallio et al., 2016). This instrument was appropriate for exploring complex social processes such as voice, inclusion, and governance engagement, which required detailed and context-sensitive accounts rather than surface-level responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The interview guide was developed around the key themes of the study, including experiences of participation in Latenu Radio programmes, perceptions of whose voices were heard or excluded, and views on the influence of radio discussions on local governance practices. Open-ended questions were used to encourage reflection and allow participants to introduce issues they considered significant, while follow-up probes were employed to clarify meanings and explore emerging insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The exclusive use of interviews enabled the researcher to focus on depth, consistency, and analytical coherence across participant narratives, which is recommended in qualitative case study research where the aim is to understand meanings and lived experiences in context (Yin, 2018).

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out exclusively through semi-structured interviews after formal access had been obtained from the management of Latenu Radio 96.1 FM and consent had been secured from individual participants. Potential participants were first identified based on the sampling criteria and were approached personally or through referrals facilitated by community gatekeepers. Interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient to participants, including private spaces within the Labadi community or the Latenu Radio premises, to ensure comfort, privacy, and minimal disruption. Prior to each interview, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and their informed consent was obtained.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio-recorded with participants' permission to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. The researcher used the semi-structured interview

guide to maintain focus on the study objectives while allowing flexibility to probe responses and explore emerging issues in greater depth (Kallio et al., 2016). Interviews were conducted in English or a preferred local language where necessary, and clarifications were sought to ensure that participants' meanings were accurately captured. Field notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to record contextual details and initial analytic reflections (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The data collection process was iterative, meaning that insights from earlier interviews informed subsequent interviews in line with qualitative research practice. This allowed the researcher to refine probes and pursue emerging themes relevant to community radio participation and local governance engagement. Interviews continued until thematic saturation was reached, at which point additional interviews no longer yielded new or substantive information relevant to the research questions (Guest et al., 2006; Malterud et al., 2016). This procedure ensured that data collection was systematic, rigorous, and aligned with the qualitative case study design adopted for the study (Yin, 2018).

3.8 Sources of Data

The study relied solely on primary data generated through semi-structured interviews conducted with selected participants from the Labadi community, Latenu Radio personnel, and local governance actors. Primary data were considered appropriate because the study sought to understand lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of how community radio amplified marginalised voices in local governance. Qualitative scholars emphasise that primary interview data are essential when a study aims to capture participants' meanings, subjective realities, and

contextualised accounts of social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The use of interviews therefore enabled the researcher to obtain first-hand, experience-based evidence directly related to the research objectives.

Interviews served as the principal source of data because they allowed participants to articulate their experiences of participation, inclusion, and governance engagement through community radio in their own words. This approach was consistent with interpretivist qualitative research, which privileges participants' narratives as central sources of knowledge about social processes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By focusing exclusively on interview data, the study ensured depth, consistency, and analytical coherence across participant accounts. The reliance on primary interview data also strengthened the credibility of the findings, as interpretations were grounded directly in the voices of those involved in or affected by community radio practices within the Labadi community (Yin, 2018).

3.9 Data Handling and Analysis

All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and field notes were typed and organised immediately after each interview to preserve accuracy and minimise data loss. The data were anonymised by replacing participants' names with pseudonyms and removing identifying details that could lead to deductive disclosure (Tracy, 2020). All digital files were stored in password-protected folders, and access was restricted to the researcher to ensure confidentiality and data security (Orb et al., 2001). These data handling procedures supported ethical compliance and enhanced analytic traceability throughout the research process (Yin, 2018).

The study employed **manual thematic analysis** to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns across the dataset. Thematic analysis was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to systematically code qualitative data and develop themes that captured shared meanings as well as

variations in participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis began with data familiarisation through repeated reading of transcripts, after which initial codes were generated from segments relating to participation pathways, barriers to voice, perceptions of inclusion, and local governance responsiveness. These codes were then compared across transcripts and iteratively refined to develop candidate themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The identified themes were reviewed to ensure internal coherence and clear distinction between themes before being defined and named to reflect their conceptual significance. An audit trail was maintained to document coding decisions, theme development, and revisions made during the iterative analytical process, in line with recommendations for rigour in reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The final themes were interpreted in relation to the study's theoretical lenses, enabling meaningful links between empirical findings and participatory communication and development media perspectives (Servaes, 2008; McQuail, 2010). This systematic approach strengthened transparency, analytical credibility, and the overall trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2018).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval had been obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to the commencement of data collection. Participants had been provided with clear and comprehensive information regarding the study's aims, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits, after which informed consent was obtained before participation (Orb et al., 2001). Participation had been entirely voluntary, and participants had been informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any form of penalty or negative consequence. These measures had

safeguarded participant autonomy and ensured compliance with established ethical standards for qualitative research (Tracy, 2020).

Confidentiality and anonymity had been rigorously maintained through the use of pseudonyms, the removal of identifying information from transcripts, and the secure storage of all research records. Given that discussions related to local governance could have carried perceived political or social risks, particular care had been taken to minimise the potential for harm and to avoid attributing sensitive statements to identifiable individuals (Tracy, 2020). All digital data were stored in password-protected devices and secure folders accessible only to the researcher. In line with institutional research ethics guidelines, all data gathered were retained for a period of five (5) years and were to be permanently deleted thereafter. These safeguards aligned with ethical guidance for qualitative research involving sensitive social and political issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The study had also incorporated ethical reflexivity by acknowledging how power relations, researcher positionality, and social context could have influenced participant responses and the interpretation of data. Reflexive practice enhanced ethical conduct by ensuring attentiveness to bias, representation, and respectful engagement with participants (Tracy, 2020). Engagements with marginalised participants were conducted with cultural sensitivity, and extractive research practices were avoided by planning to share an accessible summary of the findings with relevant stakeholders where appropriate. Such reflexive and reciprocal approaches had been widely recommended for ethical qualitative inquiry in community-based research settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological procedures that were used to investigate how community radio had amplified marginalised voices in local governance. It justified the adoption of a qualitative, interpretivist research approach, described the case study design, and explained the study population alongside the purposive sampling strategy employed. The chapter also detailed the data collection instrument, data collection procedures, and sources of data, as well as the manual thematic analysis process used to interpret the interview data. In addition, ethical safeguards relating to informed consent, confidentiality, data security, and researcher reflexivity were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. Drawing on in-depth interviews conducted with community members, radio practitioners, and local governance actors in the Labadi community, the chapter analyses how community radio facilitates citizen participation, shapes governance agendas, and influences accountability and responsiveness at the local level. The discussion is organised around the study's research questions and informed by the key themes that emerged from the data, while being interpreted through the lenses of Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory. By integrating empirical evidence with existing literature and theoretical insights, the chapter provides a critical understanding of the opportunities and constraints associated with community radio as a platform for inclusive governance and social change.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings involves the interpretive examination of the study's results in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing scholarly literature. In this section, the empirical evidence generated from the interviews is analysed to explain meanings, patterns, and relationships rather than merely reporting participants' responses. The discussion therefore situates the findings within Participatory Communication Theory and Development Media Theory, while also engaging with prior empirical studies on community radio and local governance to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and new insights. The subsequent sections are organised according to the research questions and their corresponding themes, with each section explaining what the findings reveal about community radio's role in amplifying marginalised voices, the

extent of its influence on governance processes, the barriers encountered, and the strategies required to strengthen inclusive participation and social change at the local level.

4.2 Background of Respondents

This study involved three distinct categories of respondents drawn from the Labadi community, Latenu Radio, and the La Dade Kotopon Municipal Assembly. To ensure clarity, confidentiality, and analytical consistency, each participant was assigned a unique identification code based on their respondent category. Thirteen (13) community members residing within Labadi and its surrounding broadcast catchment areas were interviewed and coded as P1–P13. These participants reflected diverse listening habits and levels of participation, including frequent callers, occasional callers, and non-participating listeners. Their responses provided grassroots perspectives on how community radio programmes enabled access to airtime, facilitated voice expression, and influenced perceptions of governance responsiveness within the community.

In addition, four (4) respondents from Latenu Radio were interviewed and coded as P14–P17, comprising the Station Manager, Programme Producer, Presenter, and Field Reporter. These participants offered institutional insights into programme design, moderation practices, inclusion strategies, and operational constraints affecting governance programming. Four (4) local governance actors from the La Dade Kotopon Municipal Assembly were also interviewed and coded as P18–P21, including one Assembly Member and three Unit Committee Members serving the Labadi area. Their perspectives were crucial for understanding how radio-mediated citizen voices informed governance priorities, accountability processes, and institutional responsiveness. This structured identification system enhanced analytical clarity and facilitated systematic comparison across respondent categories in the discussion of findings.

4.3 Research Question 1: How do community radio stations enable marginalised groups to participate in local governance discussions and public decision-making?

This research question sought to identify and explain the practical mechanisms such as community radio practices, programme formats, and engagement pathways through which marginalised groups accessed airtime and participated in local governance discussions. It further aimed to clarify how participation was structured in ways that either facilitated or limited inclusion, consistent with Participatory Communication Theory's emphasis on dialogue, access, and shared meaning-making and Development Media Theory's civic education expectations for media in developing contexts.

4.3.1 Outreach and Inclusion Practices for Marginalised Groups

Findings indicated that participation was enabled first through routine listenership, which created familiarity and trust in Latenu Radio as a civic platform. Community members described consistent engagement with the station, with P1 stating, "*Yes i always listen,*" and P7 noting, "*My radio set is also tuned in to Latenu. I'm familiar with all the programs.*" This pattern mirrors the empirical literature that positions radio as a highly accessible and trusted medium in African community contexts, particularly for rural and marginalised audiences (Myers, 2009; Bofo, 2006).

Participation was most visibly enabled through interactive formats, especially call-in segments that allowed citizens to contribute without physical attendance at community meetings. Many community members described call-ins as their primary mode of participation, including P1 ("*Yes, call in*") and P9 ("*Yeah call ins*"). This supports participatory communication scholarship that

emphasises horizontal exchange and dialogic interaction as foundational to inclusive public communication (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Servaes, 2008).

A distinctive participation-enabling mechanism was the prominence of a participatory programme identified repeatedly by community members: “*M3ni yaa n) y3 okutso mli.*” P1 defined it as “*a program where community members call to tell the host what's happening in their communities be it bad or good.*” The programme appeared to institutionalise citizen voice within a recognised schedule and format, consistent with arguments that participation is strengthened when communicative spaces are structured and socially legitimised (Carpentier, 2011; Servaes, 2008).

The programme also functioned as a space for perceived inclusion across Latenu’s broader catchment area. P4 noted that “*sometimes we in Teshie feel like we are not heard so this is a platform we share our grievance.*” This suggests that participation was not limited to the Labadi community alone but was shaped by the station’s identity as a multi-community platform. The empirical literature similarly notes that community radio can create alternative public spheres for communities excluded from dominant media spaces (Howley, 2010; Rodríguez, 2001).

In addition to call-ins, participation was enabled through programmes that supported civic sense-making and issue interpretation. P3 reported that governance and public matters were explained in accessible terms: “*they break things down for us to understand very well.*” P5 also highlighted “*The newspaper review section and the discussion after the newspaper review*” as a key governance-learning format. These findings align with Development Media Theory, which expects media in developing contexts to contribute to civic awareness and governance education (McQuail, 2010; Servaes, 2008).

Participation was further enabled through studio-based engagement, which some participants described as providing deeper involvement than remote call-ins. P13 confirmed, “*Yes, studio discussion,*” explaining that “*I was a witness to something and I had to go into the Studio to give my side of the story.*” Such forms of participation resemble participatory media practices where citizens act as co-narrators of community issues, aligning with the view that meaningful participation includes more than passive access (Carpentier, 2011).

Radio staff described the station’s programming as intentionally designed to enable civic engagement through multiple formats. P14 indicated that Latenu Radio ran “*Community Dialogue, Local Governance Hour*” and related talk shows through “*panel discussions, phone-ins, studio interviews, and outside broadcasts.*” This evidence is consistent with empirical claims that community radio’s participatory potential increases when formats diversify participation channels beyond call-ins alone (Howley, 2010; Myers, 2009).

Staff accounts also pointed to deliberate inclusion strategies aimed at marginalised groups. P14 stated, “*We deliberately allocate airtime to women, youth, persons with disabilities, and informal sector workers... allowing call-ins and voice notes.*” Similarly, P17 noted that inclusion was enhanced “*by going into communities to record voices of people who may not call into the studio.*” This demonstrates an intentional effort to reduce access barriers, reflecting participatory communication’s emphasis on inclusivity and the redistribution of communicative power (Servaes, 2008; Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

Local governance actors corroborated radio’s enabling role by identifying it as a key platform for governance communication. P18 explained, “*I communicate with residents through community durbars, WhatsApp and I also use community radio, especially Latenu Radio, to reach a wider*

audience and explain Assembly decisions and development projects.” This supports Development Media Theory’s proposition that media should function as a development partner facilitating governance information and participation (McQuail, 2010; UNDP, 2014).

Governance actors further perceived interactive formats as expanding access for residents excluded from face-to-face spaces. P18 stated that interactive programmes allowed participation from those who “*may not attend physical meetings,*” while P19 argued that phone-ins were effective because “*people feel free to speak anonymously and express honest opinions.*” Such accounts align with governance participation scholarship that highlights mediated participation as a pathway for inclusion when physical participation spaces are constrained (Gaventa, 2006; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002).

However, participation enabling was uneven because some listeners engaged with Latenu Radio primarily for non-governance content. P2 reported listening “*mostly at noon around 1pm when the sports show takes off,*” and stated, “*I don't participate...*” This suggests that while participation channels existed, governance participation depended on programme relevance, personal interest, and perceived utility, consistent with scholarship emphasising participation as socially situated and uneven (Waisbord, 2019; Servaes, 2008).

The station’s broader multi-community identity further shaped participation dynamics. P1 explained, “*Latenu isn't just for La, it's a combination of La, Teshie and Nungua hence the name Latenu.*” This implies that participation and governance discussions operated within an interlinked public sphere rather than a narrowly bounded locality, complicating how “*local governance*” is defined and how agenda priorities are distributed (Howley, 2010; Waisbord, 2019).

Participation was also mediated through editorial verification practices that legitimised citizen claims. P8 stated, “*They make sure all issues raised are true then they work on it,*” suggesting that participation did not simply involve unrestricted voice but rather voice filtered through validation. Such mediation can protect against misinformation and strengthen trust, reflecting Development Media Theory’s emphasis on responsible communication (McQuail, 2010) while also raising questions about gatekeeping, which participatory theory treats as a potential constraint on equal voice (Carpentier, 2011).

Overall, the findings indicate that Latenu Radio enabled participation through interactive programming, structured participatory spaces, civic interpretation formats, and outreach practices aimed at marginalised groups. These patterns reinforce participatory communication’s emphasis on dialogue and access (Servaes, 2008) and Development Media Theory’s emphasis on civic education and development-oriented communication (McQuail, 2010). However, the enabling environment remained conditioned by uneven interest and structural constraints, consistent with empirical claims that participation outcomes vary by context and institutional capacity (Waisbord, 2019).

4.4 Research Question 2: In what ways does community radio influence local governance agendas, accountability, and responsiveness to citizen concerns?

This research question sought to evaluate whether radio-mediated participation translated into governance influence, specifically by shaping local governance agendas, strengthening accountability, and prompting responsiveness from local authorities. It aimed to trace the pathway from citizen voice to institutional attention, consistent with participatory governance arguments that public deliberation must connect to decision-making and responsiveness to be meaningful

(Gaventa, 2006; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002), and with the empirical view that community radio's impact depends on institutional responsiveness (Waisbord, 2019).

4.4.1 ways does community radio influence local governance agendas, accountability, and responsiveness to citizen concerns?

Findings demonstrate that Latenu Radio influenced governance agendas by elevating community problems into public visibility and urgency. Governance actors described how on-air complaints informed their priorities. P18 indicated that sanitation and drainage complaints “*raised on air have influenced follow-ups with the Environmental Health Department,*” illustrating agenda influence through issue escalation. This aligns with the observation that community radio can increase civic visibility of governance issues, especially when authorities are attentive (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002).

Similar agenda influence was seen in P19's report that “*Complaints about poor street lighting discussed on radio prompted me to report the issue to the Assembly and follow up.*” This suggests that radio discussions acted as real-time feedback systems that communicated citizen priorities and prompted administrative engagement. Such patterns reinforce governance communication scholarship that emphasises information flow and public scrutiny as drivers of accountability (UNDP, 2014).

Community members also narrated instances where radio discussion initiated responses to local problems. P10 stated, “*I once reported an issue of drainage system in my area,*” noting that “*the assembly responded but took too long.*” While delayed, the response indicated that radio participation could prompt institutional recognition, supporting the empirical review's conclusion

that participation can stimulate action but may not guarantee timely implementation (Waisbord, 2019).

The findings also show that accountability was enacted through direct engagement with leaders on-air. Community accounts described authorities being called to respond publicly. P5 recalled that “*someone called to report*” a market concern and “*the queen of the market wa called and everything was back to normal.*” This demonstrates radio’s role as an accountability intermediary that facilitates direct leader–citizen engagement, consistent with empirical claims that community radio can promote transparency through public questioning (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002).

Radio also appeared to influence accountability through institutional naming and verification, reducing misinformation and prompting corrective action. P3 described an incident in which people collected money fraudulently “*in the name of the priest,*” after which “*he stated that he didn't send anyone so later they refunded the money.*” This indicates how radio can function as a rapid corrective mechanism and community protection platform, aligning with Development Media Theory’s emphasis on media’s social responsibility role (McQuail, 2010).

Local governance actors described response strategies that involved acknowledgement, clarification, and referral. P18 stated, “*I acknowledge the concern respectfully, clarify issues and assure residents of follow-up action,*” adding that where issues were beyond mandate, the relevant authority was explained. This demonstrates procedural accountability where radio discussions clarify responsibility lines within local governance systems, consistent with governance literature emphasising transparency and responsiveness (UNDP, 2014).

Accountability was further strengthened through the public nature of commitments. P20 argued that Latenu Radio “*provides a public record of promises and commitments made by leaders.*” This is significant because accountability depends partly on public memory and traceability of commitments, consistent with deliberative governance scholarship (Habermas, 1989; Gaventa, 2006).

Radio staff described deliberate follow-up practices aimed at sustaining accountability. P15 stated that by “*following up on previous discussions and inviting leaders back to give updates,*” leaders were held accountable over time. This addresses a key limitation highlighted in the empirical review: accountability weakens when citizen voice is not linked to sustained follow-up and institutional response (Waisbord, 2019).

Several community members perceived that radio complaints could escalate beyond local leaders. P1 stated that issues raised could “*go as high as reaching... Assembly members, Member of Parliament and other stake holders.*” This suggests that Latenu Radio served as a bridging platform connecting community voice to higher-level authority attention, which aligns with development media expectations that media facilitate governance information and link citizens to institutions (McQuail, 2010).

Nevertheless, responsiveness was not uniform. P10 noted the assembly responded “*but took too long,*” and P1 described sanitation as improved but incomplete: “*Sanitation hasn't been delt with completely it's better than first.*” These findings reflect the empirical review’s position that radio’s governance impact is shaped by institutional capacity and resource constraints rather than by voice alone (Waisbord, 2019; UNDP, 2014).

Some accounts indicated that radio contributed to accountability through fiscal questioning and performance explanation. P7 reported that leaders were called “*to explain their budget allocation*” and justify delays. P11 similarly stated leaders were asked to explain “*their expenditure.*” These examples suggest that radio facilitated deliberative accountability by enabling justification and public scrutiny, consistent with democratic participation literature (Gaventa, 2006).

Latenu Radio’s reach across La–Teshie–Nungua also shaped accountability practices, with participants citing engagement beyond Labadi. P2 recalled that an MP was called to address issues in the “*Krowo constituency.*” Such accounts indicate that accountability practices operated across the station’s broader civic space, showing how community radio can extend public scrutiny across linked communities (Myers, 2009).

Skepticism about responsiveness was also present. P6 stated that “*some leaders are like dead goats,*” suggesting persistent non-responsiveness by certain authorities despite public discussion. This aligns with the empirical review’s caution that participation without institutional responsiveness can generate cynicism and disengagement (Waisbord, 2019).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Latenu Radio influenced governance agendas by elevating issues, strengthened accountability through public engagement and follow-up, and prompted responsiveness through direct leader participation and institutional referral. However, responsiveness remained uneven and constrained by resource, bureaucratic, and political conditions, supporting scholarly claims that community radio’s governance impact depends critically on institutional responsiveness and structural capacity (Waisbord, 2019; UNDP, 2014). These dynamics align with the study’s theoretical synthesis: participatory dialogue generates voice

and scrutiny (Servaes, 2008), while development-oriented expectations position the media as a civic education and governance support institution (McQuail, 2010).

4.5 Research Question 3: What barriers constrain the amplification of marginalised voices in community radio governance programming?

This research question sought to identify and explain barriers such as technical, social, institutional, political, and organisational that constrained the amplification of marginalised voices in governance programming. The aim was to examine how participation was limited in practice, consistent with critiques that participatory spaces can reproduce inequality and be restricted by resources and power relations (Carpentier, 2011; Melkote & Steeves, 2015) and by political pressures on media independence (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

4.5.1 Barriers constraining the amplification of marginalised voice

The most frequently cited barrier was technical: call-in congestion and limited access channels. P2 stated that “*traffic in the call ins makes its difficult for some people to call,*” and multiple participants later recommended more call-in numbers. This indicates that participation opportunities were constrained by infrastructure, reinforcing critiques that participatory ideals are undermined by resource limitations (Carpentier, 2011).

Participation was also constrained by listener disengagement or fatigue, which reduced willingness to contribute even when access existed. P2 noted that “*too many voices hitting on the same issue makes it irritating,*” which discouraged participation. P6 similarly stated that participation was not a priority because “*it's just the update i want.*” This suggests that participation barriers include motivational and experiential components, consistent with scholarship that sees participation as uneven and shaped by perceived value and effort (Waisbord, 2019).

Gatekeeping in the form of topic sensitivity restrictions also constrained voice amplification. P1 stated that issues were skipped when “*they are sensitive because they believe children also listen.*” P9 similarly referred to “*sensitivity*” as a reason certain discussions were constrained. This reflects a tension between ethical moderation and openness, which Development Media Theory frames as social responsibility but which participatory scholarship warns can limit critical voice (McQuail, 2010; Carpentier, 2011).

Moderation practices also restricted voice when callers were removed for perceived excesses. P5 stated that “*when they feel the caller is going over board they take the person off the line.*” Such regulation can protect public discourse but may also constrain marginalised expression where grievances are intense or framed in confrontational ways, echoing debates about the boundaries of participatory public spheres (Waisbord, 2019).

Socio-cultural barriers were repeatedly identified by governance actors, including low confidence and fear of retaliation. P18 cited “*Low confidence and fear of victimisation,*” while P19 identified “*cultural norms that discourage women and youth from voicing opinions.*” This illustrates how participation is shaped by wider social hierarchies, consistent with participatory communication critiques that community-level inequalities often persist within participatory forums (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Carpentier, 2011).

Language barriers were also raised by governance actors as participation constraints. P18 highlighted “*language barriers,*” indicating that participation may be limited when callers cannot express themselves comfortably or when programmes are not fully inclusive linguistically. This aligns with African community radio literature that shows local-language broadcasting increases

participation, while language hierarchies constrain communicative inclusion (Myers, 2009; Bofo, 2006).

Organisational barriers were emphasised by radio staff, including funding and airtime limitations. P14 reported “*Funding constraints and limited airtime,*” while P16 cited “*Limited transport, equipment, and staff.*” These constraints reduce the capacity for outside broadcasts, expanded participation channels, and sustained follow-ups, reflecting empirical findings that sustainability challenges undermine community radio’s participatory role (Berger, 2010).

Political pressure and interference were also identified as barriers. P14 listed “*political pressure,*” while P16 cited “*political interference.*” Such pressures can restrict editorial independence and reduce critical discussion, aligning with scholarship that documents political constraints on African media and community radio environments (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Skjerdal, 2012).

Power and voice inequalities were evident in staff accounts of socio-cultural dominance patterns. P14 stated that “*Women and younger people often hesitate to speak due to cultural expectations,*” while P15 observed that “*Elders and men tend to dominate discussions.*” This suggests that participation spaces can reproduce existing hierarchies unless deliberate corrective measures are applied, consistent with participatory media critique (Carpentier, 2011).

Perceptions of unequal access were also noted through claims of “*serial callers.*” P8 stated that there were people who call themselves “*serial caller*” and are “*picked over anyone.*” Although not universally confirmed, the perception itself can reduce trust in fairness and discourage marginalised participation, aligning with scholarship on gatekeeping and perceived exclusion in participatory media spaces (Carpentier, 2011).

Similarly, P5 mentioned complaints that “*some numbers are familiar to the hosts so they choose them most often.*” This implies perceived preferential selection or insider access, which can undermine inclusive participation. Participatory communication theory suggests that when participation is perceived as unequal, marginalised groups may self-exclude due to low expectation of being heard (Servaes, 2008).

Institutional barriers affecting responsiveness were also barriers to voice amplification because they shape perceived efficacy. Governance actors reported constraints such as “*bureaucratic delays*” and resource limitations (P18; P19). When citizens perceive that speaking on radio does not produce timely outcomes, participation may decline, consistent with empirical claims that ineffective responsiveness reduces trust and engagement (Waisbord, 2019).

Political misinformation was identified as another barrier to constructive dialogue. P18 noted that “*Political bias and misinformation can distort discussions,*” while P20 stated that polarisation “*undermines trust.*” Such dynamics can make the radio space less safe for marginalised voices and reduce deliberative quality, aligning with scholarship that misinformation disrupts civic participation and democratic communication (Waisbord, 2019).

Overall, the findings show that voice amplification was constrained by interacting barriers: technical limitations, socio-cultural norms, gatekeeping practices, organisational capacity constraints, and political interference. These results align with critiques that participatory media spaces are often shaped by power relations and resource limitations, requiring deliberate strategies to protect and broaden inclusion (Carpentier, 2011; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Nyamnjoh, 2005).

4.6 Research Question 4: What strategies can strengthen community radio’s capacity to support inclusive participation and social change in local governance?

This research question sought to generate practical recommendations based on participant evidence on how community radio and local authorities could strengthen inclusive participation, improve responsiveness, and support social change in local governance. It aligns with Participatory Communication Theory’s focus on empowerment and inclusive dialogue (Servaes, 2008) and Development Media Theory’s emphasis on civic education, social responsibility, and institutional partnership for development (McQuail, 2010).

4.6.1 Strategies to Support Inclusive Participation

A dominant recommendation was expanding call-in capacity to reduce participation exclusion caused by line congestion. P2 proposed “*get more call in numbers to reduce traffic,*” P7 stated that “*they should get more phone lines,*” and P10 noted that “*it takes luck to get through.*” This strategy directly addresses a key technical barrier, increasing equitable access to airtime and strengthening participation infrastructure.

Governance actors recommended stronger civic education and sensitisation as strategies for inclusive participation. P18 proposed “*More community education,*” and P19 recommended “*Community sensitisation.*” These strategies align with Development Media Theory’s expectation that media should support civic awareness and informed participation in governance (McQuail, 2010).

Inclusion strategies recommended by authorities included increased local-language use and targeted programming for women and youth. P18 proposed “*use of local languages, targeted*

programmes for women and youth,” while P20 suggested “*dedicating programmes to marginalised voices.*” This aligns with African radio scholarship emphasising local languages as key to broadening participation and inclusion (Myers, 2009; Bofo, 2006).

Strengthening follow-up mechanisms was repeatedly highlighted as necessary to link voice to outcomes. P19 suggested “follow-up programmes to update citizens on progress,” and radio staff described follow-up practices that invited leaders back to provide updates (P15). This responds to empirical evidence that accountability weakens when voice is not matched by visible institutional response (Waisbord, 2019).

Radio staff proposed outreach-based inclusion, particularly more outside broadcasts. P17 recommended “*More outside broadcasts,*” and earlier emphasised recording community voices. Such approaches expand participation beyond call-ins and can include those without phones, time, or confidence to speak publicly, aligning with participatory communication’s emphasis on enabling voice through inclusive design (Servaes, 2008; Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

Another strategy emphasised by participants involved improving moderation practices to reduce politicisation and hostility. P19 recommended “*neutral moderation,*” while P15 suggested “*clear moderation rules.*” These strategies reflect the need to preserve respectful civic discourse while avoiding gatekeeping practices that silence legitimate grievances, balancing participatory openness with development media social responsibility (McQuail, 2010; Carpentier, 2011).

Capacity-building and training were recommended to strengthen inclusive programming and moderation skills. P20 recommended “*Training moderators,*” and staff recommended “*staff*

training” (P14). Training can support better facilitation of sensitive topics, reduce misinformation risks, and strengthen the quality of deliberation in governance programmes.

Sustainable funding and resourcing emerged as central strategies for sustaining inclusive governance programming. P14 proposed “*Sustained funding*,” while P17 emphasised the need for continued support. This aligns with empirical evidence that community radio often struggles with financial instability, which undermines its ability to sustain civic programming and broaden participation infrastructure (Berger, 2010).

Partnerships with civil society organisations were proposed as strategies to strengthen inclusion and governance engagement. P14 recommended “*partnerships with civil society organisations*.” Such partnerships can help mobilise marginalised groups, support civic education, and reinforce follow-up mechanisms, aligning with participatory approaches that stress collective action and community ownership (Tuftte, 2017; Servaes, 2008).

Several participants recommended increasing expert engagement to improve the quality and accuracy of governance discussions. P10 suggested, “*They should get more experts on board*,” arguing that hosts’ views might not always be correct. Expert inclusion can strengthen informed deliberation and reduce misinformation, consistent with the development media emphasis on informative, development-oriented content (McQuail, 2010).

Digital expansion was suggested as a supplementary participation channel, particularly streaming and online engagement. P8 stated, “*I am always on the go so listen from online, that's where i mostly leave my comments*.” P13 suggested that programmes “*should be streamed online*.” Such

strategies can broaden reach and provide alternative participation pathways, complementing traditional call-ins.

Governance actors also emphasised addressing fear of victimisation by ensuring safer participation conditions. While not always stated as a strategy, the earlier barrier evidence implies that anonymous participation options and protective moderation can reduce fear and broaden inclusion, consistent with participatory communication's attention to safe dialogue spaces (Servaes, 2008; Carpentier, 2011).

Institutional responsiveness strategies were implied through governance actors' emphasis on follow-up, referral, and expectation management. P18 stressed clarifying responsibility boundaries and assuring follow-up. When formalised, such practices can improve trust and reduce frustration, supporting the empirical argument that responsiveness is central to meaningful participation (Waisbord, 2019; UNDP, 2014).

Overall, the strategies converge around four actionable directions: expanding access infrastructure (more lines and channels), deepening inclusion (local language and targeted programming), strengthening accountability systems (follow-ups and updates), and building institutional capacity (training, funding, and partnerships). These directions reflect the combined theoretical lens: participatory communication emphasises inclusive dialogue and empowerment (Servaes, 2008), while development media highlights the media's civic responsibility in governance and development (McQuail, 2010). Together, they support practical reforms that enhance community radio's capacity to amplify marginalised voices and contribute to social change.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study on how community radio amplifies marginalised voices in local governance, drawing on qualitative data obtained from community members, radio staff, and local governance actors in the Labadi community. The discussion was organised around the study's research questions and key themes, including participation pathways, agenda-setting, accountability, barriers to voice amplification, and strategies for strengthening inclusive governance through community radio. The findings showed that community radio provided accessible and trusted platforms for citizen participation, particularly through interactive programme formats, and contributed to increased visibility of community concerns within local governance processes. However, the chapter also revealed that the influence of radio-mediated voice on governance outcomes was uneven and constrained by institutional, socio-cultural, and resource-related factors. Overall, the discussion demonstrated that while community radio holds significant potential as a participatory and development-oriented medium, its effectiveness in fostering inclusive local governance depends on sustained institutional responsiveness, inclusive programming practices, and supportive policy and resource environments.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of the major findings of the study. It consolidates insights drawn from the empirical analysis and discussion of findings, and interprets them in relation to the study's research objectives and theoretical framework. The chapter summarises the key findings, draws overarching conclusions about the role of community radio in inclusive local governance, and proposes practical recommendations for policy, practice, and institutional improvement. It also outlines the limitations encountered during the study and offers suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the broader contribution of the study to knowledge on participatory communication, development-oriented media, and democratic governance.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study found that community radio provided accessible and culturally relevant participation pathways through which marginalised groups engaged in local governance discussions. Interactive programme formats such as call-ins, studio discussions, and community dialogue programmes enabled citizens who were often excluded from formal governance spaces to express concerns, share experiences, and question local authorities. These participation pathways reduced physical, literacy, and socio-economic barriers that typically limit engagement in decentralised governance processes.

The findings further showed that dedicated community-focused programmes served as institutionalised spaces for citizen voice. Regular governance-oriented programmes on Latenu Radio were perceived by community members as legitimate platforms for raising issues affecting

their daily lives. The consistency of such programmes strengthened public trust in the station and reinforced its role as an intermediary between citizens and local authorities.

Another key finding was that community radio enhanced civic understanding and governance literacy. Participants indicated that governance issues were often explained in accessible language and contextualised within local realities, which improved comprehension of district-level responsibilities, development processes, and citizen rights. This interpretive role of radio contributed to more informed participation and reduced misinformation within the community.

The study also found that issues raised on community radio influenced local governance agendas by increasing the visibility and urgency of community concerns. Recurrent discussions on sanitation, infrastructure, public safety, and market regulation brought neglected issues to the attention of local authorities. In several cases, radio discussions prompted follow-up actions, site visits, or public explanations by governance actors.

Relatedly, the findings revealed that community radio strengthened accountability by exposing local authorities to public scrutiny. Radio-mediated interactions compelled Assembly Members and Unit Committee Members to respond publicly to citizen concerns, clarify decisions, and justify delays. The public nature of these exchanges enhanced transparency and increased perceived accountability, even where responses were delayed or partial.

However, the study found that governance responsiveness was uneven and often constrained. While some issues raised on air resulted in concrete actions, others experienced delays due to bureaucratic procedures, limited resources, or competing governance priorities. This highlighted that community radio's influence on governance outcomes depended not only on citizen voice but also on institutional capacity and political will.

The findings also identified several barriers that constrained effective voice amplification. Technical challenges such as congested phone lines limited participation, particularly during popular programmes. Socio-cultural factors, including fear of victimisation, gender norms, and respect for authority, discouraged some marginalised groups from speaking openly on air.

Additionally, the study found that gatekeeping and moderation practices shaped participation outcomes. While moderation was necessary to manage sensitive topics and maintain decorum, it sometimes limited extended discussion of contentious governance issues. Political pressure, funding constraints, and limited airtime further restricted the depth of engagement on certain topics.

Finally, the findings revealed broad agreement among participants on strategies for strengthening inclusive participation. These included expanding access channels, targeting marginalised groups through tailored programming, strengthening follow-up mechanisms, and building partnerships between community radio, civil society, and local governance institutions.

5.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that community radio plays a significant but conditional role in amplifying marginalised voices within local governance contexts. As a participatory and development-oriented medium, community radio facilitates dialogue, enhances civic awareness, and creates spaces for accountability. However, its capacity to translate voice into sustained governance influence is shaped by institutional responsiveness, socio-cultural dynamics, and operational constraints. Community radio therefore functions not as a substitute for formal governance mechanisms, but as a complementary communicative infrastructure that can strengthen democratic inclusion when supported by responsive institutions and inclusive practices.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was its focus on a single community radio station within one municipal context. While this enabled in-depth analysis, the findings may not be fully generalisable to all community radio stations or governance contexts in Ghana.

A second limitation was the reliance on self-reported data from participants. Perceptions of influence and responsiveness may have been shaped by personal experiences and expectations, which could not always be independently verified.

Finally, the study did not include direct observation of governance meetings or programme production processes. Such observations could have provided additional insights into interaction dynamics and institutional practices.

5.4 Recommendations

First, community radio stations should expand participation infrastructure by increasing phone lines and integrating alternative participation channels such as voice notes and online platforms. This would reduce access bottlenecks and broaden opportunities for marginalised groups to engage in governance discussions.

Second, targeted inclusion strategies should be institutionalised within programming schedules. Dedicated programmes for women, youth, and other marginalised groups, delivered in local languages, would help address socio-cultural barriers and encourage sustained participation.

Third, community radio stations should strengthen accountability mechanisms by introducing structured follow-up segments. Regular updates on previously discussed issues would enhance transparency and reinforce public trust in both media and governance institutions.

Fourth, local governance institutions should formally recognise community radio as a partner in participatory governance. Assembly Members and Unit Committees should commit to regular engagement on radio platforms and integrate citizen feedback into planning and decision-making processes.

Finally, policy actors and development partners should support the sustainability of community radio through funding, capacity-building, and technical support. Strengthening editorial independence and operational capacity would enhance the ability of community radio to fulfil its participatory and developmental mandate.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Studies

Future research could adopt comparative designs involving multiple community radio stations across different regions to examine variations in governance influence and participation dynamics. Such studies would enhance generalisability and contextual understanding.

Further studies could integrate mixed-methods approaches by combining qualitative interviews with content analysis of radio programmes to examine how governance issues are framed and prioritised over time.

Longitudinal studies could explore how sustained engagement with community radio influences governance outcomes and citizen participation over extended periods.

Future research could also focus specifically on gendered participation in community radio governance programming to examine how women's voices are amplified or constrained within socio-cultural contexts.

Finally, studies could examine the perspectives of higher-level governance actors to assess how radio-mediated citizen voice influences decision-making beyond the local level.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesised the key findings of the study and demonstrated that community radio serves as an important participatory platform for amplifying marginalised voices in local governance. While the study confirmed the potential of community radio to enhance participation, accountability, and social change, it also highlighted the structural and institutional conditions that shape its effectiveness.

By drawing conclusions, proposing recommendations, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting areas for future research, the chapter reinforced the contribution of the study to scholarship on participatory communication and development media. Overall, the chapter positioned community radio as a vital but context-dependent instrument for inclusive governance and democratic engagement.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide for Latenu Radio Staff

1. What governance-related programmes does Latenu Radio run, and what formats are used to engage community members?
2. How does the station ensure that marginalised groups in Labadi gain access to airtime?
3. How are governance topics and programme guests selected for Latenu Radio discussions?
4. From your experience, how have radio discussions influenced community priorities or local governance agendas?
5. Can you give an example where issues raised on air led to a response or action by local authorities?
6. What role does Latenu Radio play in promoting accountability among local leaders?
7. What barriers limit effective voice amplification on the station (e.g., gatekeeping, political pressure, funding)?
8. How do socio-cultural norms (gender, age, status) affect who speaks and who remains silent on air?
9. What internal or external constraints affect your ability to run inclusive governance programmes?
10. What practical strategies can strengthen Latenu Radio's role in inclusive local governance in Labadi?

Interview Guide for Community Members (Residents of Labadi)

1. How often do you listen to Latenu Radio, and which programmes usually discuss community or local governance issues? (
2. Have you ever participated in a Latenu Radio programme on community or governance matters? Please describe how you participated (e.g., call-in, studio discussion).
3. What programme formats on Latenu Radio make it easier for people like you to speak about community problems?
4. Can you recall a community or governance issue raised on Latenu Radio that became widely discussed in Labadi? What happened next?
5. In your experience, do local leaders respond to issues raised by community members on Latenu Radio? How do they respond?
6. Do you think speaking on Latenu Radio helps hold local authorities accountable? Why or why not? (
7. What challenges prevent some residents in Labadi from speaking on Latenu Radio about governance issues?
8. Are there groups whose voices are heard more than others on Latenu Radio? Who, and why?
9. Are there topics people avoid discussing on Latenu Radio? What reasons explain this?
10. What practical changes should Latenu Radio and local authorities make to strengthen inclusive participation in Labadi?

Interview Guide for Local Governance Actors (Assembly Members / Unit Committee)

1. How do you usually communicate with residents of Labadi on governance and development issues?
2. How have you engaged with Latenu Radio in your role as a local governance actor?
3. Which Latenu Radio programme formats best encourage citizen participation, and why?
4. Have issues raised on Latenu Radio ever influenced your governance priorities or actions?
Please explain.
5. How do you respond when citizens raise complaints or concerns about governance on air?
6. In your view, does Latenu Radio strengthen accountability between leaders and citizens in Labadi? How?
7. What factors limit marginalised groups from participating effectively in governance discussions, even through radio?
8. What challenges do local authorities face in responding to radio-mediated citizen demands?
9. How does political pressure or misinformation affect engagement with community radio discussions?
10. What practical steps can local authorities and Latenu Radio take to improve inclusive governance participation?