

REVIEW OF STUDIES FOCUSING ON COMMUNICATION THEORY AND RESEARCH IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

OLAIMOLU, EMMANUEL DIEKOLOLA

olaimoluemmanuel@gmail.com

Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

&

IFEDUBA, EMMANUEL

emmanuel.ifeduba@yahoo.com

Department of Mass Communication
Redeemer's University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The human mind is one that seeks to know more. The insatiable urge to know more is embedded in every individual, hence the need to continually research. Communication research is very fundamental to the success of human race, because as times are changing, new trends are coming up, and new propositions are emerging, and the need to postulate new theories are being birthed. This study seeks to review communication research and communication theory in Nigeria. To achieve this, a systematic review on articles relating to communication research and communication theory was carried out. Findings from this study revealed that the trend of communication research has new emerging areas which are due to the advent and inclusion of technology in communication research. The study also revealed that more communication research and communication theory scholarly materials were written in 2022. Findings also revealed that most articles that sought to research on communication research and communication theories did not have any theoretical background. In conclusion, researchers are encouraged to further research on how to know more about communication research and communication theories in Nigeria. This recommendation is due to the limited resources that were available to the researcher as regards communication research and communication theory in Nigeria.

Keywords: review, studies, communication theory, communication research, Nigeria.

Introduction

The word "research" refers generally to an activity that involves learning new information in a methodical fashion. Research is interpreted literarily as the discovery of previously unknown information. The goal is to expand the boundaries of knowledge. The study of mass media requires and benefits from research just like other areas of study do. Any field that demands intellectual focus and has proven its strength will only thrive and become useful and purposeful if research is done in it. The means by which researchers gather, classify, and analyze data in order to draw conclusions are known as research methodologies. Investigate birth hypotheses. A theory is a claim or a group of ideas that attempt to explain something, especially one that is based on fundamental notions unrelated to the explanation's focus. Research in the area has led to the development of communication theories. A communication theory consists of a framework of communication phenomena, their linkages, a narrative

detailing these links, and an argument in favor of these three elements. There are numerous varieties of communication theories, just as there are numerous varieties of communication studies. Quantitative research and qualitative research are the two primary categories of communication research. Examples of communication theories include the diffusion of innovation theory, normative theory, uses and gratification theory, gate keeping theory, and agenda setting theory.

This study seeks to carry out a systematic review on articles relating to communication research and communication theory in Nigeria, with the purpose of finding out the trends of communication research in Nigeria. The study also seeks to find out the year with the most publication of articles that focuses on communication research and communication theory in Nigeria. The study also seeks to find out how research have theoretical framework and which theories were used. Finally, this study seeks to find out which types of scholarly material have the most publication in the selected articles.

Methodology

This study used systematic methods to gather and classify important data from the target publications in order to completely and impartially determine the status, boundaries, and gaps in the existing scholarship. The sample was gathered using the following procedures to ensure that journal articles had a clear focus on communication theory and research:

1. Developing eligibility criteria
2. Determining search terms
3. Collecting the main sample

Academia, Research gate and Library source, were used as the primary database for this study. First, the authors identified eligible articles by following inclusion criteria for each article to be:

1. written in English;
2. electronically or physically accessible;
3. Communication research or communication theories are the main research theme of the article or book
4. The article or book must be a Nigerian publication

Second, to locate relevant articles, the research developed a list of keywords and synonyms of communication research and communication theory in preliminary searches. The relevant papers were searched using a mix of keywords, including "communication research," "communication theories," "communication research in Nigeria," "communication theories in Nigeria," and "research and theory in Nigeria." These search terms can be found in the indexing fields such Systematics, Taxonomic Words, and Descriptors as well as the titles, abstracts, and keywords. 48 items in all were gathered. Between January and February 2023, data was collected. Due to lack of access to the complete document of the articles, 18 articles were eliminated.

Literature Review

Theories and models: as theories are birthed from models, it applies to communication theories too. Communication models birth communication theories. A visual depiction of the communication process, thoughts, concepts, or notions using diagrams, etc. is known as a

communication model. Anateo et al., (2008) stated that theories and models of communication are tools on which researchers are based. Asogwa and Esimokha (2015) also noted that communication models and theories building are indisputable characteristics of scholarship. Examples of communication models as stated by Anateo et al., (2008) and Asogwa and Esimokha (2015) include linear communication model, Aristotle's communication model, The Shannon-Weaver communication model, Laswell's communication model, Interactive communication model, and many more.

Folarin (1998), in his book categorized communication theories into four segments, namely normative theories, social-scientific theories, working theories, and common-sense theories. Folarin (1998) listed the four press theories—authoritarian theory, libertarian theory, social responsibility theory, and soviet media theory—under the heading of normative theories. The magic bullet theory, the two-step flow theory, the uses and gratification theory, the cultivation theory, etc. are a few examples of the working theories mentioned by Folarin (1998).

An example of a communication theory is the gatekeeping theory. The gatekeeping theory posits that information has to be filtered before it is disseminated. In his article titled "The Challenges of Media Gatekeeping in Nigeria," Ekeli (2007) claims that gatekeeping is used by the media in order to achieve coordination in every society because it helps to determine the kind of information that will ultimately be disseminated to the public and how it should be produced. According to the report, there are some impediments resulting from ownership and editorial policies that prevent many media outlets and professionals in Nigeria from applying gatekeeping as efficiently as they should. According to the report, there is little to no distinction between private and government media companies in Nigeria, which presents a significant issue for the gatekeepers of both media groups. In recommendation and conclusion, the study avers that even though gatekeeping is not an easy task, reporters and editors must not run away from it.

An investigation by Onwubere et al. (2020) into the exposure of Nigerian youths to geospatial data and artificial intelligence technology was based on the cultivation theory. According to the study's findings, youths make up over 65% of Nigeria's electorate and are frequently unwittingly the targets of deceptive propaganda. This study further noted that it is imperative to continue to find means that youths will cultivate the habit of verifying stories before spreading. This study reveals a trend in research that needs more focus. Researches need to research ways that theories will speak to fighting fake news as it has now become a common trend in Nigeria. Even Wonodi et al. (2022) claim that COVID-19 conspiracy theories and false information are pervasive and have been proven to be the cause of vaccine reluctance and rejection. In order to identify key themes and appropriate message framing for communication efforts to increase vaccine uptake, Wonodi et al. (2021) thoroughly collected the false information and conspiracy theories regarding COVID-19 that were being spread among the Nigerian population.

Communication research and methods: the main purpose of research is to discover answers to the meaningful questions through scientific procedures and systematic attempts. The systematic attempts of every research must go through methods. Research is not complete when there is no systematic explanation as to how data was gotten for the research; hence, the

need for a systematic methodology. It is necessary to research on how to improve research methods.

In their study, Abdullahi et al. (2012), explored current ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological discourses in Nigeria using a qualitative research strategy. The report made the case that the qualitative technique must be properly utilized in Nigerian health communication research. Asemah et al., (2012), in their book also provided a guide on how to go about conducting research in the field of mass communication. Asemah et al also pointed out the three methods in communication research to include qualitative research, quantitative research and mixed-method research that combines the qualitative and quantitative method. Focusing on the renaissance of qualitative methods, Gobo (2005) notes that qualitative research was first done more than a century ago, but texts that first defined the qualitative method appeared only in the late sixties. Gobo (2005) continued by stating that formalization, data analysis, the marriage of qualitative research with computers, the need for qualitative methods in a diverse nation, and implications for applied research are some of the future prospects for qualitative research.

Theories, research and management: Abubakar and Hassan (2017), in their paper notes that communication theories are related to the management of mass media. The study notes that for effective management of media houses, it is necessary for the management to apply different theories that will aid progress in the media house. Amadi (2011), contends that the qualitative research approach should be stressed more in mass media in addition to the use of successful theories in the administration of a media station since it helps journalists develop their critical thinking abilities. Although it is important to note that that has been a neglect of vital components of broadcasting, such as ratings which emanates from research (Konkwo, 2007).

Trends in communication: The institutions of mass communication as well as the field of media studies as a whole are under great scrutiny and criticism as a result of the ongoing revolution in communications technology (Ogwuche, 2021). People are no longer limited in their ability to access media information in the African setting, and particularly in Nigeria, by their immediate social group, their surroundings, and the physical availability of a few media channels that are regulated by authorities and other agencies.

In Nigeria in the twenty-first century, there has been a paradigm shift in the requirements for membership and access to media content; all of these dynamisms are due to the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs). And due to technology, the trend in research has also evolved. Onabajo (2011) noted that in the past, studying research has been cumbersome and unattractive. But with the advent of technology, not only has studying of research been made easy and attractive, research has also evolved, the trends or way people do research has changed, more tools are readily available due to technology. These aids research. Jolapoma et al., (2021) identifies three basic approaches to research, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies approach. In another study, Adelabu and Ikuesewo-Akinbami (2022), identified the emerging tools in communication research to include, email interviews, instant messaging interviews, online focus groups and forums, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and social media, etc.

Egbetokun et al., (2022), notes that with the large research system in Nigeria with nearly 200 universities, research in the social sciences which media research is part has a low research input. George (2016) buttresses this when he stated that there is minimal research on crisis communication which is a part of communication in itself. George (2016) goes on to argue that practitioners lack access to a body of information from which to draw conclusions due to the lack of crisis communication research and teaching in postsecondary institutions. To this end, it is imperative to note that communication research is very important in every sector of the society. Inyang et al., (2020), in their work examined how communication research and communication theory aids audience participation in the process of development in the society. Mentioning some of the theories that can aid development in the society, Inyang et al., (2020), posits that the participatory theory is the most preferred theory that is used by developing countries. The participatory theory argues that target audience participation in the process of development can be enhanced by employing effective communication techniques and appropriate channels.

As regards social media and communication research, Mojaye and Ogunyombo (2022), found that Nigerian scholars now focus on researching on how social media influences communication in Nigeria, and the world at large. According to Kareem and Akoja (2017), the presence of social media in modern life has raised questions about new kinds of communication study. In 2016, Musa et al. conducted a study to examine the benefits and gratification theory in the use of social media by Nigerian mass communication students. The majority of Nigerian students currently utilize social media, among other things, for communication research, according to the study's findings. The use and gratification theory has been reinvigorated by social media platforms, according to this study, which also found that they offer a wide range of media applications that conventional media never could. Tejumaiye et al., (2018), in their study that was hinged on uses and gratification theory, also discovered that students in the University of Lagos employ the use of the internet and social media to make communication research stress free. It is therefore evident that the use of internet and internet sources in communication research makes research stress free (Ogunyombo&Onwubere, 2018).

Amadi and Ekeanyanwu (2019), in their research that reviewed the quantitative research method to highlight how its mechanistic tenets spawn fake news, leading to the discourse on the weaponization of social media, acknowledge that there is an onto-epistemological assumption that undergirds what a communication researcher unintentionally maintains when examining a communication problem with either the quantitative or qualitative research method. In a system that emphasizes quantitative over qualitative methods as the true science, fake news, pollster errors, disinformation, and the like will continue to grow, according to their research's findings.

Researching various forms of communication is another trend in communication studies. This was proven by Odemelam (2020), who reviewed the literature on health communication research and examined its implications for the dissemination of health information in Nigeria. The paper provided an overview of recent studies on health communication. The study additionally gave a succinct overview of the state of health communication research in Nigeria. The difficulty to convey desired health messages and advocacy to its teeming populace was found to be a major worry in the study's examination of the literature. The study

recommended that there should be new ways and means through which health messages can reach the people more. This recommendation is very imperative so it points to the fact that communication research has to continue so new ways that will ease communication can emerge.

Results and Discussions

RQ 1: What are the trends in communication research in Nigeria?

Below are the trends in communication research in Nigeria based on the selected article analysis. Findings from the selected articles that were analysed reveals that the approach to communication in Nigeria has changed. The articles went further to highlight the following approaches as the emerging trends in communication research in Nigeria:

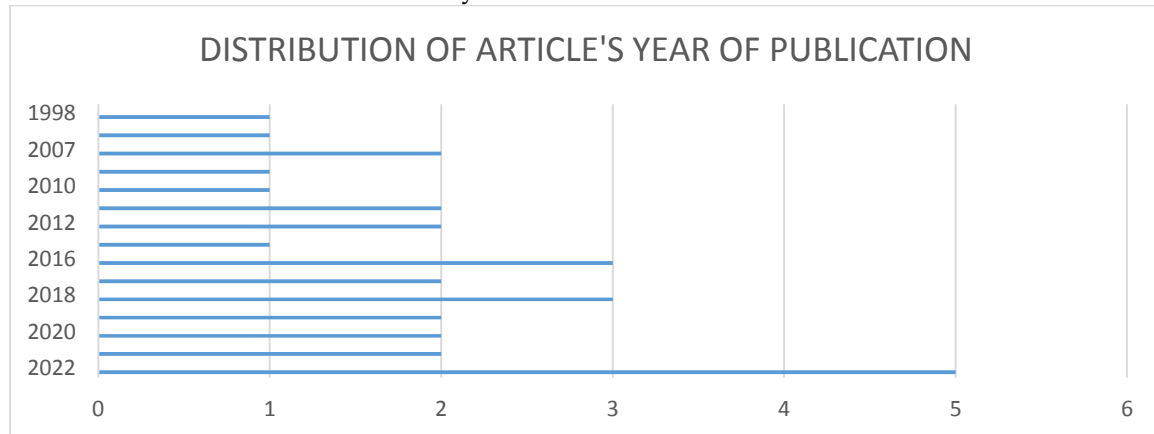
Digital Media Research Approach- this method can be described as a term that seeks to capture recent Internet-related research developments. Adelabu and Ikuesewo-Akinbami (2022), states that digital media approaches are methodological approaches that incorporate Internet-based data and other social media and communication platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, Twitch, and others.

Use of Mobile Devices for Data Collection- the internet, computers, and social networks have all revolutionized how people interact with one another, changing their habits, routines, and social hierarchies. According to Adelabu and Ikuesewo-Akinbami (2022), mobile devices have become multifunctional tools integrating many functions that previously required several separate devices. These functions include digital cameras to capture visual media, audio recorders and players, and laptops for processing data and reading e-mails. These functions and others are now integrated into Social Mobile Devices (SMDs) such as Smartphones and Tablets. The introduction of Social Mobile Devices has created a new dimension to communication research. Participants can now talk, text, and send videos while commuting to work, making dinner in the kitchen, or shopping.

Paradigm Shift- according to Yin (2011), cited in Adelabu and Ikuesewo-Akinbami (2022), the social research methodology has several scientific truths depending on the approach and methodology. A disagreement about how to define scientific truth arose in several studies, which sparked a debate on the various research methodologies. Both quantitative and qualitative research are the methodologies used. The paradigm argument over the many approaches to research techniques has never been resolved. It depends on the presumptions created by both strategies during the scientific thinking process. Since qualitative research explains the singular event of social communication behaviour, it has become more prevalent in communication research due to the paradigm change (digital shift). Qualitative research has gained ground in communication. Such trends include: i. Shift theories to the effect of interactive theories (ontology communications); ii. Approach and research strategy, from positivism to naturalism (epistemology); iii. The object of research, using research in micro and cultural approaches (groups of the unique subculture); iv. Research of information and communication technology (ICT), such as online media, social networking, and virtual media, form images more directly, spontaneously, simultaneously, and personally. The debate over methodologies ultimately leads to a consideration that is applied to these methods. Both methodologies are viewed as complimentary by methodological-pragmatic experts. They can be combined for the best outcomes in practice. Jolapamo et al., (2021) in their study also

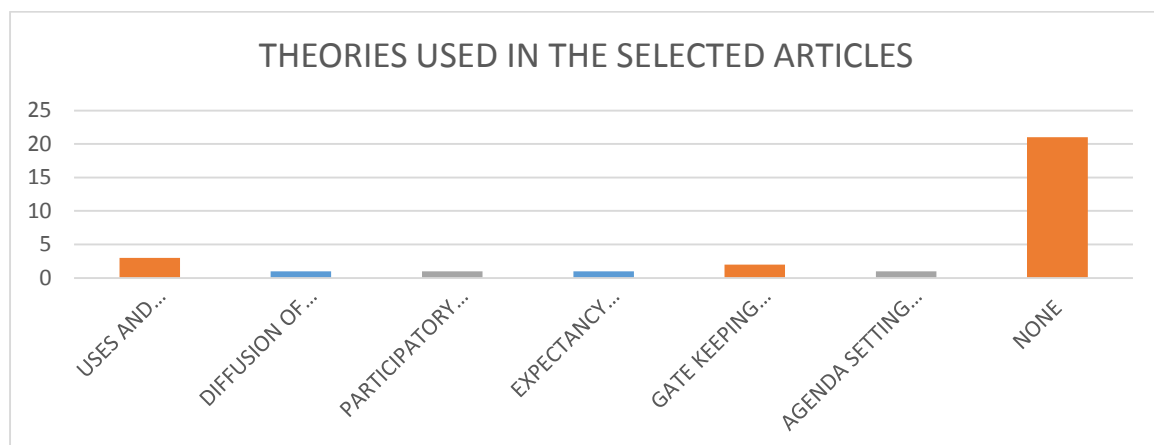
revealed that mass communication scholars adopt mixed-method in their approach in addressing communication research, with survey being the most adopted design.

RQ 2: What is the year with the most publication of articles that focus on communication research and communication theory?



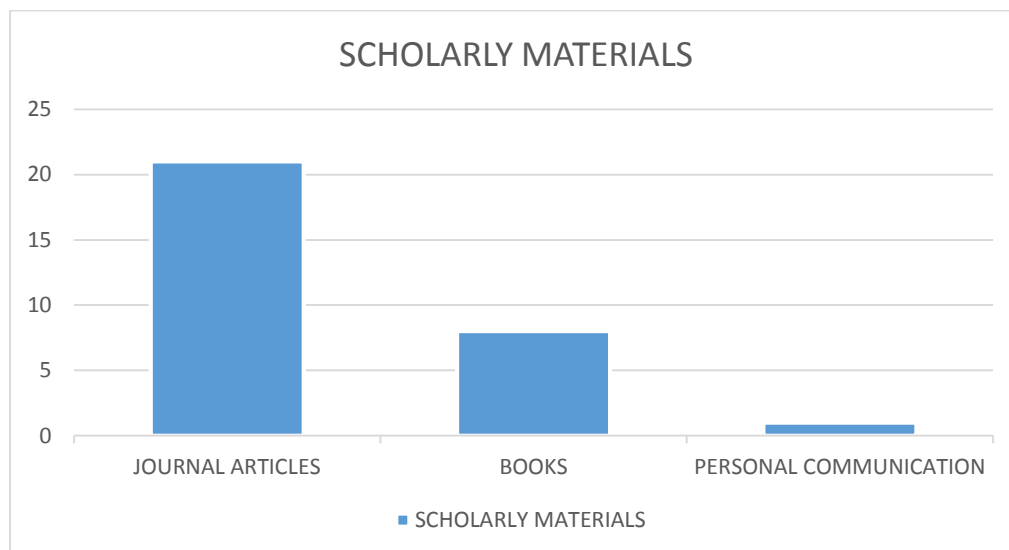
Based on the year of publication, there are 30 selected articles, with 5 published in 2022, 3 published in 2016 and 2018 respectively, 2 articles published in 2007, 2011, 2012, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021, and 1 article was published in 1998, 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2015.

RQ 3: How many articles backed up their research with theories and what were the theories? Based on the findings of this study, it is revealed that 21 articles out of the selected articles have no theoretical background, 3 articles adopted the uses and gratification theory, 2 articles adopted the gate keeping theories and 5 articles adopted the diffusion of innovation theory, participatory theory, expectancy value and perception theory, and the agenda setting theory, respectively.



RQ 4: How many of the materials selected are books and journal articles?

Based on the findings of this work from the selected scholarly materials, journal articles took the largest share with the number 21, followed by books which were just 8, and finally 1 personal communication.



Conclusion

Based on this study's results, the trend of communication research has new emerging areas which are due to the advent and inclusion of technology in communication research. Based on selected articles available to this research, most of the studies were carried out in 2022. Findings also revealed that most articles that sought to research on communication research and communication theories did not have any theoretical background. The study also revealed that there were more journals articles on communication research and communication theories. Further studies are encouraged to aim at having a book that explains in details the nitty gritty of communication research and communication theories in Nigeria. Further studies are also encouraged to back up their research with a theoretical framework. Also, researchers are encouraged to further research on how to know more about communication research and communication theories in Nigeria. This recommendation is due to the limited resources that were available to the researcher as regards communication research and communication theory in Nigeria.

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