Virtual Radio Listener's Group and the Production of Ramogi FM's

***Wang' Onyango* Programme**

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A research project submitted to the school of Journalism and Mass Communication as

the requirements for the award of Master's Degree of The University of Nairobi
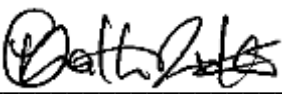
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Declaration

This proposal is my original work and to the best of my knowledge it has not been submitted by anybody to any university, college, or institution other than University of Nairobi for academic credit.

Signed: _____ Date: _10th October 2021_

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Recommendation

This research proposal has been submitted for examination with my approval as the appointed university supervisor

Signed: _____ Date: _10|10|2021_

Dr. George Gathigi
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Acknowledgement

This academic journey has not been easy but I thank that God it's ultimately accomplished. God tops my appreciation list not only for my physical and intellectual help to achieve this but also for connecting me with the following people whose timely and valuable support ensured this success: My supervisor Dr. George Gathigi who walked me through this with wise and professional guidance and advice in highly appreciable patience and understanding. His remarkable intelligence and skill in guidance made such an interesting and eye-opening learning experience for me that has significantly increased my interest in research. Through him, I now feel I should do more and more of this. I am also indebted to all my lecturers from The Director Professor Ndeti Ndati, Dr. Sam Siringi, Professor Kiai, Professor Mogambi, Dr. Oriaso, Dr. Oranga, Dr. Sam Ngigi and all. Grateful too to all my classmates who trusted me to lead them and who gave me all the peer support I needed to accomplish this task.

Dedication

Betty, Ian, Maya and Dellah, I owe you in multiple ways.

Abstract

A paradigm shift in the value of publics (i.e., publics as participantsin the production process); speaker–to–listener relation (i.e., the evidence of a new form of intimacy); the listener–to–listenerrelationship; and new role the radio producer (i.e., more curatorial, yet less productive), have drastically changed the radio production process. This research project probedhow Virtual Radio Listeners Groups operate and the rolesthey play on media production, a case study of "*Team Wang' Onyango*" which is a virtual radio listening group of Ramogi FM – Royal Media Services Kenya. Through non-probability - convenience sampling, Qualitative data wascollected by observation in virtual ethnography then Key Informant Interview done for presenter, producer, group founders and usual interviews conducted to members of the virtual listeners' group. Data wasthematicallyanalysed with anexploratory research design.

This study found out that*Team Wang'Onyango*, a virtual radio listening group, to a great extent directly contribute content and ideas for production of *Wang'Onyango* (Mid-Morning) Programme of Ramogi FM with a margin that one can comfortably demonstrate that they are the producers of that programme. As a result, they show is among the highest rating in its category. The study also demystified how the group operates to achieve such a marvellous work and its unexploited potentials which may need further studies and investment to increase its gains and also make radio broadcasting adaptive to this quickly changing and volatile media operation environment.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter covers the background of the study, the problem statement, study objectives, the research questions, justification of the study, rationale, scope and limitations of the study and the operational terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

The importance of radio in relaying information cannot be overstated. Radio is the widely used communication medium globally, and in Africa, it is the leading source of information in comparison to Internet, newspapers and television. In Kenya, it is the highly known and available medium with 95% of Kenyans being regular listeners of radio (Communication Authority of Kenya, n.d). Radio remains a medium of communicating developments either by developmental officers of experts for the purposes of disseminating relevant messages, especially to the rural dwellers. Anifowose (2013) argues that radio is multi-faceted, playing the role of passing messages, improving calling upon capability, organising a groups of people, expanding social dialogue forums, providing effective communal capability to create awareness and access to knowledge on societal issues, bringing the voices of people together, and mobilising the community in tackling issues.

The relationship between the public and radio has been pegged on the mutual act of faith, in which the radio is not aware of the listeners. In fact, both entities have been strangers to one another. Particularly, listeners are oblivious of radio presenters. On this basis, both the radio and audience tend to believe on each other without knowing one another. Before the radio in-phone calls, audiences or listeners would only listen minus participation. Nonetheless, invention has

since made it possible to incorporate live telephone calls. Though with a top-down hierarchy with no room for giving feedback on the part of both entities. With the advancement in the communication mode viaInternet streaming, social media, e-mail, and blogs, two-way communication has been possible in favour of the public. Indeed, contemporary radio is participatory in nature with social networking sites presenting a paradigm shift regarding the relationship between radio and listeners. The listeners are becoming privileged as real content creators for radio. In the words of Levinson (1999), "in electronic media, user is content" (p.39). This phenomenon is becoming a fact in the contemporary society.

The incorporation of listeners as producers or potential influencers of radio contents is what has led to listener's group. Listeners' group plays a critical role in creating content which everyday listeners can relate to and interact with. The participation and interaction by the audience not only leads to creation of content, but also determinants of social, political, and economic paradigms. Socially, the listeners' group bring with them the members of their social network, which plays a critical role in increasing listenership (Willems, 2013). Therefore, the programme has a wider audience. Consequently, political underpinnings are exacerbated more by the listeners' group than any other force since they being frequent contributors to particular programme(s) and the same time being considered as normal listeners, their influence in promoting a particular political candidate or political ideology cannot be underestimated among the wider audience. Moreover, with the wider audience created, the same listening group can be used in marketing certain social or economic products, which the audience has a high likelihood of endorsing or buying due to being in the same cadre (i.e., the listeners' group and the wider audience are considered as normal people in the same class of living) (Willems, 2013). Being

slightly different from normal radio programmes, *Wang' Onyango*is a programme of Ramogi FM a vernacular radio station owned by Royal Media Services Kenya while *Team Wang' Onyango*is a virtual radio listeners' group which is the main actively participating group of listeners and which this study at investigated. Its operations and roles in content creation for consumption by the wider audience was the main aim of this study.

1.3 Problem Statement

The space between media/media producers and public is perpetually shrinking in the wake of new electronic media, majorly social media. In the history of radio, listeners, previously termed as invisible, passive and private, have become deeply rooted as public actors coupled with visibility, networking, and audibility, thanks to the new media or social media. Traditionally, radio has been one-way traffic medium in terms of content production, especially by producers who then subject it to the audience for consumption. This has long been changed in the new dispensation of radio-audience relationship, which is characterised by participation and interaction by the public (Benjamin, 2014).The radio listeners' group allow the audience to have their voices heard in the production process of radio programmes. The listeners' group is the ideal-radio system that keeps constant interaction with listeners; receiving feedback in terms of participation in making better the programme under consideration. Indeed, audience is part of the content creation, and feel and see themselves in what they are listening to. Listener's group is more than the content, itis also the social space, political space, and economic space.

Additionally, listener'sgroup can be used to mobilise the public towards listening to a particular content. Despite the critical role played by the radio listener's group, little is known concerning

how they functioning (Willems, 2013), another gap this study seeks to suffice.Virtual listener's Group formation and how it operates is a new area of study, which is worth investigating.

My caseTeam *Wang'Onyango* is a virtual radio listening group of Ramogi FM which broadcasts in Dholuo vernacular language. The group specifically listen to a mid-morning program called *Wang'Onyango*, which is a Luo word for mid-morning. The show airs every weekday from 10am to 1pm.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Main objective

The aim of this researchwas to investigate the roles, operations and effectiveness of the virtual radio listening group on the *Wang'Onyango* programme of Ramogi FM.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The following are the specific objectives:

1) To investigate the operationsof the virtual listeners' group

(Team*Wang'Onyango*).

2) To examine the relationship between the virtual radio listening group and the aired content of *Wang' Onyango* programme.

3) To examine how virtual radio listeners' group, interact with the socio-political broadcasting context.

1.5 Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

1) What is the nature of the virtual radio listening group?

2) What is the relationship between the virtual radio listening groupand the aired content of *Wang' Onyango* programme?

3) In what way(s)do the virtual radio listening group interact with the socio-political broadcasting context?

1.6 Rationale

For years, media producers have been the sole generators of the media content. This however has been informed by research on what the audience need and want. A rapidly and quickly changing field of communication needs a multiple approach to content generation and production in general. This work has helped show one of them which has embraced the virtual radio listening group to an extent directly contribute to or shape the production.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study was helpful to media production researchfraternityin both academia and practice for example Ramogi FM, and by extension to the Royal Media Services Radio network, in enabling content producers to run programmes without the hustle and bustle of brainstorming on topics to be covered since this catered for by virtual radio listeners. Additionally, the programmes will experience increased listenership since the listeners themselves would be involved in deciding on topics to be covered, music played or any other content created by them.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

Most of this study was conducted through members of *Team Wang'Onyango* and done virtually via WhatsApp without physical meeting. Virtual as opposed to physical meeting can lead to some questions or inquiries not being answered sufficiently, nonetheless, a larger audience can be reached.

1.9 Operational Definitions

Virtual Radio Listening Group – A group comprising of members outside the employed staff, which brainstorm and cover contents for radio production.

Wang'Onyango – A programme by radio Ramogi FM produced by a virtual radio listening group.

Genre and Formats –Film and television use genre in referring content types, whereas radio employ the use of the term format in referring to the same thing.

<center>**Chapter Two: Literature Review**</center>

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents literature review on the influence of virtual radio Virtual Listening Groups on media production, a case study of "Team Wang' Onyango", a virtual radio listening group of Ramogi FM – Royal Media Services Kenya. Both empirical literature and theoretical literature have beenreviewed. Theoretical review was helpful in obtaining a deeper understanding of the present body of knowledge on the research topic. Empirical literaturealso helped in understanding studies that have been done on the same area by other researchers. A conceptual framework has also been presented.

2.2 Content and Content Production Practices

Content is critical as far as media channel is concerned. By definition, radio content simply refers to the producedprogrammes. Radio content comprises of a programmetimeline, indicating time allocation for each programme and the format as well. Format presents an idea regarding what is expected in a particular programme. Genre hybridisation and mixing of contents across formats are becoming norms in the contemporary media industry. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that media content is impactful both on its own right and also as indicator of fundamental forces. Content provides an opportunity for studying the audience and organisations as well. According to Wright (1986) and Lasswell (1948), media content plays four functions. To begin with, surveillance is related to the environmental information, and is useful in the determination of future actions. Similarly, Christians et al. (2009) relate surveillance to the monitorial role of the media content. Correlation is the second function, and it simply means the manner in which events are interpreted coupled with possible action by the audience on the basis of provided information. Editorial content and propaganda are related to the correlation function of the media content. Transmission falls under the third function, and it refers to the conveyance of norms and values. Media content achieves this role by reinforcing societal standards either implicitly or explicitly. Lastly,

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entertainment as the function of media content includes designation of media content as causing relaxation and leisure with the music played through radio playing a critical role in this domain.

Despite the delineations of media content functions as presented above, it still does not fit exclusively into a specific context. For example, hybridised genes like infotainment (i.e. information and entertainment) can be categorised under both surveillance and entertainment. A classic example is the case of talks shows based on news. To this end, content formats and genres are not sharply delineated, rather combinations or creations of new forms, resulting into new media functions. In the Kenyan context, exploration of radio content gives insight into the ideology and nature of radio station apart from being studied as news sources.

The average Kenya radio station spends between one and two hours on news bulletin within the 24-hour schedule aired content. The remaining 22 or 23 hours are the differentiating elements from one radio station to another. Particularly, as determined by music, which in most cases occupies the greater portion of radio content during programming, various music genres can be presented and analysed in terms of source and target audience with the aim of offering insight into the influence posed by domestic and global music industries and patterns ofdistribution. By the fact that media content is neither self-generating nor arbitrary, but an outcome of people and organisation's effortswithin the jurisdiction of media production, the production processes' study related to media can give a hint onto the aired content by a particular media entity. Practices of journalistic production are used in illustrating how such practices influence programme content's nature.

According to Hanitzsch (2006), journalistic conduct and professional ideologies are almost similar across cultural borders" (p. 169). This points out the observed differences across various cultures of journalism, and at the same time provides taxonomy. Accordingly, the

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journalistic cultures can be categorised in six groups (Hanitzsch, 2006). First is the territorial, spanning from defined spatiality systems like nations. Second is essentialist, pegged on intrinsic features likeethnicity and race. Milieu-specific journalistic culture is on the basis of lifestyles of media personnel, which Hanitzsch (2006) describes distinctive practices that are social in everyday life, and play a critical role in signal identity, distinction, and identification. The fourth categorisation is the value-cantered journalistic culture defined by underlying values, beliefs, and attitudes springing from collectivist versus individualistic cultures. Organisational journalistic culture is the fifth grouping, and is based on particular organisations, which are defined by collective practices and values distinguishing members from one organization to another (Hanitzsch, 2006). Finally, the sixth classification is the professional journalistic culture, which is characterised by orientations, values and predispositions exhibited by a particular group of professionals (Hanitzsch, 2006), and controlled by the professionally body with code of conduct to be followed by members. These cultures of journalism do not coexist independently, and often overlap in the day-to-day activities of media personnel. To this end, journalistic cultures ought to be viewed as multi-layered component as opposed to be being homogenous.

In light of the above journalistic cultures, Nyamnjoh (2005) argues that universalism in journalistic values may interfere with such classification due to factors such as shared approaches of training in various parts of the world. The taught journalistic technical aspects of journalism together with transmitted universal values ranging fromparticular line of thought, result in analogous approaches, to news worldwide. The development of curricular in training schools of journalism further leads to further convergence. Nonetheless, a study done in Tanzania relating to journalistic values by Ramaprasad (2001) argues in favour of context-specific journalistic values. Collectivism is entrenched in the African society making journalistic roles to be pronounced in country contexts in areas such as developmental journalism, public advocate, citizen education, cultural promotion, positive portrayal of

acountry, and social good of news in the contextof development (Ramaprasad, 2001; Ramaprasad& Kelly, 2003). Subsequently, Nepal et al. (2003) highlightsparticular journalistic values in two nationswhile lining them to communal postcolonial background. Therefore, it can be concluded that political and social contexts create distinguished journalistic cultures. Notably, examining the journalistic cultures, especially at community radio stations, showcase shared national setting, though within varying social contexts. As such, Zelizer (1993) recommendsperceiving journalism as both a profession and an interpretive community united via its shared nature and key events' collective interpretations. Informal networking among news reporters in addition to other factors portrays the day-to-day behaviour. Zelizer (1993) continue to state that communal journalist functions have shared interpretations of prevailing events by discouraging individuals, even if they are disorganisedalong professional lines.

Berkowitz and Terkeurst (1999) considersources of media as interpretive societiesthat are resident in certain geographical location, and are typified by both members' socioeconomic background, and the social world's common interpretation modes. Thus, media personnel are able to interpret occurrences in the community through the unlimited possible meanings championed by media organisations. The experiences and the shared sources are actualised through reporter-source relationship coupled with negotiation depending on the source and reporter's relative power, and efforts put across in making meaningful events to happen.

Nyamnjoh (2005) and Zelizer (1993) emphasize on journalistic values emanating from transmission and training viajournalistic relationships. Nonetheless, Hanitzsch (2006)emphasizes on a wider approach of concentrating on societal and personal characteristics, organisational rules, and relationships. In the same vein, Ramaprasad (2001) while taking into consideration journalistic values, suggest that the impact of political and social contexts. In relation to this, Zelizer (1993) discusses the effect of informal practices

and relationships among journalists. Berkowitz and Terkeurst (1999) add that relationships shape the ultimate produced media content. Regarding production practices at the community radio stations, examination of strands of different overlapping journalistic cultures is vital. Influences of sources and social milieu are significantly considered in the eventual production of content. These micro and macro-level factors fit within the influential hierarchical models according toShoemaker and Reese (1996), which are useful exploratory toolsof data collection. Additionally, Molotch and Lester (2009) provides a good framework, claiming that news lacksnaturally occurring events (objective realities), but rather reflectthe interests of news generators. In the news productionprocess, three groupings of people are involved. To begin with, promoters of news areassociates and individuals thatidentify aphenomenon's special worth brining into the public domain. News assemblers, whileworking with the provided materials, transformphenomena into public events via publication or broadcast. News consumers attend to specific occurrences availed by the media. Thus, media researchers ought not to be mindful of media content reality, but rather "for purposes whichunderlie the strategies of creating one reality instead of another" (Molotch & Lester 2009, p.300).Similar to the categories of people, there are also ways through which processes become news. Promoting is the first process, whereby the creation of certain event by an actor is made known to others through press conferences, campaigns, and publication relations practices(Molotch & Lester, 2009). Often promoters are influential in their positions in the societyand, therefore, regarded as more knowledgeable and credible. By the virtue that they communicate important things, they usually easily access the media and can stage-manage disruptive non-routine occurrences in making their voices heard and at the same time seeking media attention.

Assembling, is the second step in news making, and it is the selection processwherebyjournalistsdecide on whichnews to air. According to Molotch and Lester (2009) assembling refers to fact investigation process of researching on news stories,

verifying facts, and negotiating the pressure by various promoters in highlighting some stories and avoiding others. In the process of assembly, the news media have to balance between various interests. Nonetheless, alternative media appear to be subjective and not objective during the assembling of news. Such media strive to create a room for the common community members in reporting their lived struggles and experiences, the exercise of native reporting (Atton, 2002). The last step is consuming, and it refers to the audience's use of news presented to them. In particular, consuming refers to the selection by the audience on which news to listen to, and how its interpreted. The consumption of news is in tandem which what the promoters and assemblers do as far as news processing is concerned. However, the selection seems to be different as a significant stock of occurrences are reduceddue to truncation via the news work of other agencies. The second difference is that consumers do not have institutional means of broadcasting news. It is through these definitions (i.e., consumers, assemblers, and promoters) that the news production processes are to be explored.

2.3 Audiences, Communities, and Publics

Atton (2015) highlights the disappearing instance of audience when putting into consideration the alternative media practice as the focus of participatory media production. The audience has long since attracted a multiplicity role as far as media use is concerned and, therefore, it should not be assumed that the alternative media's audience would be different from others (Atton, 2015). The audience should be examined from the historical, cultural, geographical, economical, and political perspectives. According to Willems and Mano (2016), the audience is depicted as living being justified by producers and prosumers. Indeed, the audience plays a participatory role in terms of content production. In relation to this, Willems and Mano (2016) propose a media cultural approach of not focusing on the media, but the society, which acts as a judge on media-related activities in matters social, political and economic. By focusing on the audience and user engagement within the state

and the larger market, it is possible to capture experiences of people, which is relevant to both Western and African contexts.

Further Friske (1992) puts emphasis on the importance of looking at audiences' practices, also known as audiencing, which is "the social circulation of meanings, pleasures, and values" (Fiske 1992, 353). Audiences can as well be regarded as 'social formations' occurring about a shared activity, like in the case of audiencing a programme as a team (Fiske, 1992). Fiske (1992) continues to differentiate social categories from social formations. A social category is stable and defined by the status of a person, while a social formation is not stable and depends on the activities of members. Thus, one can be able to belong to more than one social formation simultaneously. To this end, audiences vary and can be a market segment to be addressed, a commodity to be subjected to trading, a socialisation or acculturation site, and when positioned in the everyday life's materiality, the audience no longer becomesa social category, but a process element in a way of living (Fiske, 1992). The varied social formations coexist in similar people, possess continuities, and are inseparable. Such moments are significant making them to be loci of study since they represent the entire audience by being part of the system's practice, and indicator of system and way of living in a cultural practice.

2.4 Communities or Publics?

Community radio is often related with identity politics consisting of people that define themselves as communities that exercise their societal rightful existence. Communities, according to Milioni (2009), can either be space independent or space-bound: space-bound communities tend to be organic and distinguishable by shared lived experience, homogeneity, stability, strong ties, firm boundaries and internal consensus. The communities and public are different as determined by publicity, identity, and discourse. Particularly, publicityleads to the formation around text with the aim of extending circulation, and communitiesare sensitive and even mark their territories while delimiting their boundaries (Milioni, 2009). Co-presence is not required by the publicdue to uncertain boundaries, and it also accommodates heterogeneous perspectives and internal differences. The public permits diversity of worldviews. On the other end, community is dependent upon an objectified similarity, which, can be invented when it is lacking and thereby undergoing symbolic construction that occurs via the emotional or ideological support of common concepts and symbols (Milioni, 2009). In the case of communities,there is a predefined relatively permanent and solid bond, which is the prompting factor for people joining such communities. However, in publics, there is formation and enactment of social identities, and have the possibility of "self-transformation towards a non-predefined direction" (Milioni 2009, p.275).

In the African context, a nuanced view of publics is presented, whereby the citizenscan identify with their culture or ethnicity leading to what is known as ethnic cultural citizenship, and national belonging (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Calhoun (1993), from the western perspective, argues that nationalism or ethnicity is non-existent. A modern categorical identity as presented by the elites and others of high social and political class, is prevalent. Such identity is shaped everyday life and offers tools of grasping pre-existing difference and homogeneity. Ethnic identities and solidarities are often claimed coupled with recognition of internal and

cross-cutting national boundaries, and not seeking of national autonomy. Homogenous society is non-existent due to the presence of various and overlapping social relations networks(Calhoun, 1993). Calhoun (1993) continues to state that while the cosmopolitan elite consider ethnicity and also battle mobilisation, the less privileged is dependent on social solidarity (i.e., ethnic, communal, and national solidarities) in getting things done. On this basis, Calhoun (2003) presents six forms of social solidarity as guided by various unifying factors: mutual interdependence; common culture; culturally defined membership; networks (social relations structure); public communication; and material power. These social solidarity types are geared towards accomplishingoffered tools in various communities. In the Kenyan community radio contexts, constant communal formation and reformation of communities and publics at variousstages of the participatory processes are evident. To this end, the disparities between publics and communities, and the varioussocial category's social solidarity, are further tools used to examine various formations, and participation in, the Kenya's community radio.

2.4.1 Publics and Counterpublics

According to Coleman and Ross (2010), the public is a social actor compromising of persons, a zone of transparency, and social openness. Whilst crowds are on the basis of congregation, public are determined by the social presence. Public as a social space constitutes a set of spatial relationshipsfor social actionand, therefore, should be taken seriously as a social configuration with practiced and experienced relationships of interaction, and not as a narrow typological logic and a physical dimensionless sphere (Coleman & Ross, 2010). These authors continue to argue that the public, social space, is typified by three items: accessibility, universality, and visibility. Accessibility is the freedom for all to make an entrance. Universality is associated with dealing with agreed collective priorities by the public. Butuniversality is a fluid term as the boundaries between the private and public are constantly

negotiable. Visibility is the availability for scrutiny and observation like in the case of televised proceedings. The "spaces of publicness" (Coleman & Ross, 2010, p.29) can take three forms. The first form is homogenous public sphere, as presented or conceptualised by Habermas, in which the bourgeoisie thinks in a similar manner. The second is the listening audience whereby the media embraces a paternalistic mode in tackling issues. According to Coleman and Ross (2010), such a space is also known as "cultural management." The third form, which is the democratic space, consists of active citizenship, and it is the space whereby participation and reciprocity principles are nurtured (Coleman & Ross, 2010). In this context, the media is the space via which publics are provided with the opportunity of shaping their own culture without interference from the state power or economic inequality (Coleman & Ross, 2010).

Nonetheless, counter-publics have resulted as a way of cementing the voice of the "oppressed".According to Fraser (1990), counter-publics as "parallel discursive arenas" in which subordinate members of the social groups articulate counter discourses, permitting them to develop or formulate oppositional innuendos (Fraser, 1990). Counter-publics operate on dualism, in which on one hand, they act as spaces of withdrawal and re-groupment, and on the other hand, they are training grounds and bases for confrontational activities targeting the wider publics (Fraser, 1990). The emancipatory potential is generated from the dialectic between these two functions. Accordingly, broadcasters from Kenya are tasked with the responsibility ofbroadcasting issues not captured by the mainstream media. Whether the self-proclaimed broadcasters are the counter publics spreading counter discourses or they help in drawing the attention of people towards broader national public discourses, community broadcasters' function in shaping the contour of public discourse. In the next section, I focus on radio and the multiplicity of functions that it has been found to have the potential to play.

2.5   Why Radio

Radio is regarded as a very important communication mediumglobally. As early as the 19th century, radio used to be "a means of communication for public life" (Brecht, 1967, p.30). Brecht (1967) envisioned a two-way communication in helping leaders address people as well as explaining and justifying their actions, and also the citizens communicate and question their leaders. Since then, radio has been a democratic space purposely for engagement, participation,and empowerment in the public sphere.   Within the African context, a plethora of studies have highlighted the role played by radio in creating new publics and counter-publics (Gunner et al., 2011; Odhiambo, 2011; Mudhai, 2011). Traditionally, in the Kenyan context, radio has been considered as avitalchannel of communicationtranscendingliteracy and language barriers. It creates new public spheres and offer participation possibilities being a key information source, sociability resource, enabler of identity creation, citizen journalism, and enhancer of democratic process (Gathigi 2009; Gustafsson, 2013; Kijana, 2012; Ogenga, 2010; Ogola, 2011; Ojwang, 2015; Okoth, 2015; Wekesa, 2015). Indeed, the loosening of the grip by the state on broadcastingwithin the African continent post-1990, thanks to the licensing of many private FM stations, resuscitated the radio culture (Mudhai 2011). However, the Kenyan radio fosters violence (Howard, 2009; Mercier, 2009) via provocative broadcasts. However, it is arguable whether radio enhance violence as mobilisation of people to engage in violence was done viashort message service (SMS) of mobile phone (Nyabuga & Booker, 2013). Generally, radio is intertwined with daily life being a popular choice media as majority of the citizens get news and information via the radio (AudienceScapes, 2010).

2.6 Topics that Matter on Radio

Radio is defined by the topics by aired to the target audience. Indeed, dynamic and compelling listener interaction is the secret of a great radio show. The tendency to engage

callers reinforces the intimacy and immediacy, which plays a critical role in distinguishing radio from other mass media. The liveliness, entertaining potential, and interactivity between the host and callers or listeners inform the latter beyond reasonable doubt that they are fans to a radio that caters for their needs. According to Lynch (2020), globally there are five topics that have proved to be interesting to radio listeners, and they include food, shelter, money, relationships, and animals. In other words, radio shows that capitalise on basic needs are preferred by audiences globally.

Coming closer, the African continent, to a greater extent is food insecure and, therefore, discussion of matters food appeals to listeners. Gathigi (2015) claims that malnutrition (undernutrition) is rampant with radio hosts often inviting experts in the areas of food, and generally agriculture on how best to produce safe and quality food, which meet the needs of the publics, especially those below the pyramid (low-class citizens). Additionally, nutritionists usually provide free advices to the listeners on how to eat the right diet in terms of frequency of eating and types of food to be consumed. Shelter is also a force to reckon with Gathigi (2015) arguing that most radio show in African continent have realised the need for insufficient shelter facing the citizens, and try as much as possible to rally support for the affected persons. Money is everywhere, and discussions on possible ways of generating, spending, and being accountable for it are ubiquitous. Martínez-Costa and Prata (2017) talk of money as the magic in attracting the attention of listeners. With majority of Africans living below one US Dollar a day, radio hosts identify this as the epicentre of getting the attention of people, and as such topics of money are covered or discussed on a daily basis. Nonetheless, Gathigi (2015) argues that the same radio stations lure their listeners of answering some questions, which upon giving the correct answer, are rewarded monetarily especially during the morning shows. In this context, Gathigi (2015) attributes radio stations

to be synonymous with betting firms, which after accumulating the excesses in terms of revenues, only give-out minimal percentage to a few listeners selected on a random basis.

Relationship is also a critical topic, with marriage counsellors being invited to give their advices on how people should harmoniously live in the case of married people. Additionally, during radio-call-in sessions, fellow listeners based on their experiences advice one another on how to co-exist peacefully with one another. This, according to Martínez-Costa and Prata (2017), has given rise to the increasing number of partners being advised devoid of professional grounding, worsening the already bad situation. Additionally, created stories on broken relationships have been aired with the aim of maintaining continued radio programmes, which is morally wrong.

In the Kenyan context, radio programmes often focus on consumer issues, current affairs, and complaints from the members of the public. Mostly, these programmes are augmented by call-in sessions. Specifically, current political affairs, family issues, consumer concerns, greetings, especially on local language radio stations, and others. Adipo (2016) describes Kenya as a politicking country beginning immediately after general election and until another election, and radio shows seize this opportunity during the morning the hours to discuss such matters. On this premise, radio stations have been blamed for heightening high level of political animosity with the players defaming one another, which trickles down to their supporters. Consequently, some local language radio stations were to be blamed for increasing the likelihood of the 2007 post-election violence, in which about 1,000 people were killed and several others displaced and still are lurking in internal displaced camps. On another matter, radio stations in Kenya have turned into mediums, in which single people are connected to one another for the purpose of finding their soul-mates. Additionally, for the

married, who have broken-up, due to misunderstand and deliberate misdeeds, are given the platform to talk to one another with the aim of uniting their union.

A classic example, is the case of *Patanisho* morning programme hosted by Radio Jambo, in which the most affected partner (i.e. the supposed individual who made the other partner to leave), send his/her concern to the radio host prior. The discussion is then initiated, and the involved parties are given the chance to talk to one another, and later the audience is granted with the opportunity to provide their advices. One of the trends in Western Kenya, where Radio Ramogi, the radio under discussion in this study, has the majority of its fan base, is sending greetings to relatives, friends, and associates. In killing monotony and making programmes more engaging and entertaining as well as interactive, radio stations have incorporated comedians to co-host programmes, who crack jokes and make light of weighty matters, some of the things callers say during such segments can make for great comedy. However, Gathigi (2015) attributes to lack of professionalism on the part of comedians, as they have not been trained to flourish in such roles making the rightly and trained persons to eb jobless at the expense of using comedians. This notwithstanding, radio listeners are after engaging, interactive, and entertaining radio programmes that would make them to be active.

2.7 Relationship between Radio Producers and Listeners

According to Harbemas (2009), the mass media and public sphere are intricately linked; the mass media contributes to the depoliticization of the public sphere, and also the engendering of mass consumption. The public sphere, a space subjected to discussion on the formation of public opinion, has gone through changes, otherwise referred to as manipulation sense. To this end, the public sphere is no-longer mono-directional i.e. the mass media having full control on what the public consume, but bi-directional (the public sphere plays a critical role on what they consume). Since producers or radio programmes are after attracting the attention and interest of many listeners as possible, such a change has been welcomed so that

the resulting programmes are appealing to the masses. In this regard, Bonini and Monclus (2015) present five fundamental changes to the relationship between radio and its publics or listeners: change in the publics' publicness, change in the speaker-listener relationship, change in the listener-to-listener relationship, change in the value of publics, and change in the role of the radio author.

2.7.1 The publicness of publics

In the wake of social media dispensation, the publics have become more visible, audible, and measurable (Bonini & Monclus, 2015). The listeners connected to a social network site of a radio station have a face, a name, a personal space for discussion, a bio-cultural profile. Being networked, means potentially having more power. According to Rainie and Wellman (2012), networked individuals are privileged to possess new powers in creating media and projecting their voices to a larger audience. Networked listeners can potentially become extremely popular, through the exposure and the attention gained on digital platforms. According to Marwick (2013), social media are technologies of subjectivity that teach users how to succeed and reach popularity in postmodern consumer societies. Marwick (2013) claims that social media empower users in learning marketing techniques (i.e., micro-celebrity, self-branding and life streaming), a successful strategywhereby one thinks of himself/herself as a brand and utilises social media for promotion by creating, presenting and maintaining an edited self. Borrowing from Foucault, Marwick (2013) argues that "social media have become a way that people govern themselves" (p.11). Accordingly, the integration of social networking sites (SNS) as away of radio production routines is responsible for the immaterial capital evident in the case of networked listeners (public and tangible). Today, listeners are online making radio programs aired online to be susceptible to their emotions and opinions.

Nonetheless, with the such a propensity of enabling the publics to raise their concerns, negative comments and opinions can have a drastic damaging effect on a radio channel (Marwick, 2013).Africans, specifically Kenyans are active on social media, and in a study conducted by SIMElab, an entity of United States International University of Africa in conjunction with the United State Embassy, Kenya is the "Silicon Savannah" with the majority of Kenyans using numerous social media platforms in connecting with one another, engaging with news content, sharing information, and entertaining themselves. Additionally, in this particular study, types of social media and frequency of usage are as follows: Facebook (88.5%), WhatsApp (88.6%), Google+ (41.3%), YouTube (51.2%), Instagram (39.0%), Twitter (27.9%), Yahoo (18.6%), LinkedIn (9.3%), and Snapchat (9.3%). To this end, majority of radio stations often broadcast their programming online via SNS, especially Facebook to capture the attention of social media users (no wonder Facebook is one of the highly used SNS in Kenya as per the study above). On the flipside, SIMElab and US Embassy (2018) reveal that Kenyans are the most social media bullies, and can damage the reputation of an individual or a firm online and, therefore, it is critical that radio stations have to be deliberate on the contents delivered mainstream or online.*Wang'Onyango* programme is majorly developed online, in which the listening group, decide on topics via WhatsApp, then post them on Facebook, whereby the presenter is tagged who then executes the programme as outlined. On this basis, the current study will be investigating the effectiveness of this paradigm shift in radio production.

2.7.2 The speaker-to-listener relationship

The mix between SNS and radio to a greater extent adjusts both the vertical relation between the public and speaker, and the horizontal relationship amonglisteners. Both relationships are almost similar to a less hierarchical dynamic peer-to-peer relation.Broadcasting logic – filter than publish – is replaced here by a networking logic, publish than filter: networked listeners do not have to wait to be selected to talk on air, they can publish a post on the Facebook page

of the radio programme they like (Bonini & Monclus, 2015). Networked listeners and radio hosts can become "friends": when a presenter of programme becomes friends to his/her listeners via the social media networking sites– even if their relationship is still asymmetric in terms of power – they establish a two-way tie: there issteering on of each other's profile, and monitoring of each other's online presencemaking both the listener and the presenter to become actors. Both can endorse two performances' types, private and public: they are granted with the opportunity of posting and commenting on each other's wall, sending of private message, or communicating real-time, and throughout the history of the world, the presenter and the listener can communicate without other audiences listening. According to Goffman (2009), this is a backstage behaviour between the listener and the host.

This change is a double-edged sword: it has an emancipatory side and a "dark" side. The emancipatory side is that this change allows the listener and the speaker/producer/host of the radio to "tune in" and listen to each other online, exchanging knowledge and ideas (Bonini & Monclus, 2015). According to Crawford (2009), the metaphor of listening can be an avenue ofproductive analysis of the online engagement forms that were formerly overlooked, while permitting a deeper scrutiny of the online attention's emerging disciplines. On the other hand, the dark side allows radio producers to gather information about consumer habits, tastes and opinions. However, this monitoring function (i.e., of the number of people liking/commenting/talking of/sharing their content)is related to surveillance than with paying attention to listeners (Bonini & Monclus, 2015). Listeners do not want to be subjected to surveillance, they want to listen and to be listened to. Even if surveillance and listening cannot be easily differentiated in this context, a major difference exists between the two: the aim of the surveillance is to track behaviours of listenerswith the aim of commodifying them, while listening is aimed attuning in to listeners' thoughts/opinions/comments in serving them better quality content based on their needs. In the Kenyan context, a doctoral study by

Gathigi (2015) reveals that with the high usage of social media by the citizens, the emancipatory side is supported to a greater extent. Additionally, SIMElab and U.S Embassy (2018) argue that the high usage of WhatsApp and Facebook is critical in re-engineering the listener-listener relationship as far as the consumption of items over SNS is concerned, making it possible to have a successful virtual radio listening group. Nonetheless, the dark side of surveillance should also be put into consideration.

2.7.3 Listener-to-listener relationship

The listener-listener mode of interaction is also changing. For example, fans of a radio programme are able to establish links online, and comment on the programme's wall online while appreciating or downplaying the content delivery coupled with exchanging of messages across their personal walls. Indeed, the publicness of the radio has gained greater visibility. According to Anderson (2013), today the public comprises of a visible network of listeners cum producers, and is no longer an imagined one.People listening to a radio programme, for the first time, have been granted with the opportunity of seeing and recognising each other in communicating, recommending new contents, and creating new connections while bypassing the radio programme itself. "The gatekeeping function of mass media is challenged as individuals use digital media to spread messages much farther and more widely than was ever historically possible" (Gurak, 2011, p.13). The radio public has been an invisible group, but with the SNS, the radio programme's audience is now visible with connected links between themselves and with the radio presenters. By exchanging and sharing content on the SNSs of a radio station, they establish new social ties or reinforce the existent ones. As Rushkoff (2010) has put it, "content is just a medium for interaction between people" (par.3). This change has a dark side as well. Listeners can network together and tune in to each other's social media profiles, exchanging content, opinions, ideas and making new valuable connections, while at the same time engaging in practices of "coveillance" (Mann et al., 2013), which means that people can observe and monitor each other as if they were in a

collective digital panopticon. According to the SIMElab and U.S Embassy (2018), the listener-listener relationship in Kenya has drastically changed, thanks to the SNSs, in which people share content with one another. In fact, the level of sharing items on WhatsApp is a culture evident in the lives of Kenyans. It is not surprising that Team *Wang'Onyango* uses WhatsApp to brainstorm on the topics to be endorsed by the producer via Facebook.

2.7.4 The value of publics

The hybridisation caused by SNS is responsible for the visibility of radio listeners. A network of friends or fans on SNSs of a radio programme is a social capital on itself (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The social caporal is very key in making a programme become famous, hence, investment into the media house associated with the radio according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), social capital refers tothe cumulative total of resources (actual or virtual)accruing to an individual or a group due to being in possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships governed byrecognition and mutual acquaintance.However, the effectiveness of social capital created via social media is controversial. Ellison et al. (2011) noted that, "researchers had emphasized the importance of Internet-based linkages for the formation of weak ties, which served as the foundation for bridging social capital'' (p.56). In the same vein, Donath and Boyd (2014) argues that SNS has the potential of increasing the weak ties, since the technology is known for maintaining cheap and easy ties. This notwithstanding, a networked publicbehind a radio programme bridges the social capital since the listener-based network produces both emotional and substantive support needed for media organisations to thrive (Bonini & Monclus, 2015). For radio presenters, an extensive network of listeners is highly needed for sustainability in terms of reputational capital. Scholars like Eleanor Baird Stribling point out that the engagement of fans with a media company could also provide some kind of economic value. Stribling (2013) categorizes the "broad spectrum of fan behaviours into four groupings; watching, listening or attending,endorsing, and sharing or commenting" (p.23). Accordingly, SIMElab and U.S

Embassy (2018) emphasise on the value than can be tapped when organisations, especially those related to media when services are transferred online; the average Kenyan spend at least six hours on social media, which is ideal for virtual radio listening group that carries their operations via SNSs.

2.7.5 The role of the radio author

Today's radio producers do not look for content in the same way they did in the 20th century. They select and co-create, and not seeking and creating. Listeners are empowered to engage in enacting cultural tastes online, whereas the radio author are involved in re-interpreting and re-elaborating such, providing the audience with a dramaturgically constructed listening experience. Consequently, listeners comment and provide new material to the other listeners' community, and the recursive process restarts.Andrejevic (2013) studied the productivity of the fan communities of TV shows, and interpreted it as a double form of value-enhancing labour for television producers: fans were allowed to co-produce a show, which was interesting for themselves, and providing feedback on the same to the producer. As Australian scholar, Edmond (2014), pointed out, creation ofsocially and immersive engaging radio projects fosters a commercially valuable emotional attachment, what Jenkins et al. (2013) calls "affective economics."

Audience engagement is being considered more and more commercially valuable. But does this change of radio authorship promote co-creation or exploitation of listeners? Radio makers and listeners, upon being connected via SNS, are on the same horizontal and multipolar network. Within SNS, everyone (radio makers and listeners), is provided with the opportunity to perform, take part, and play the role of the actor and of the audience, and this entire process is the co-creation. Nonetheless, the extent of co-creation is decided upon by the radio makers. Andrejevic (2013) argues that the co-creation depends on the private ownership of productive resources. In other words, there is free-labour exploitation (Fuchs,

2014).Accordingly, Andrejevic (2013) claims that exploitation especially in social media happens when audience labour, though playing the role of co-creation, isunpaid, and also when users cannot control their productive and creative activity. Ippolita and Rossiter (2009) argue that exploitation is part of SNS in the context of data-mining process. The typical Kenyan usage of social media with the probability of consuming radio programs on SNSs is high. SIMElab and U.S Embassy (2018) claim that exploitation by organisations is likely because the listening group will be overworking in developing the topic for the day in addition to playlists, yet the producer is just staying idle in the name of facilitating audience authority in the context of co-creation. This notwithstanding, high usage of SNSs plays a significant role in shifting the role of the radio authorship to the listeners.

2.8 Radio Listening Group and Socio-Political Broadcasting Context

Citizens have increasingly featured in media as creators of content by being invited

to facilitate a radio or television programme. The increasing visibility of the citizenry or 'ordinary person' in the media of today, has led to the phenomenon termed the 'demotic turn' (Turner, 2019). However, scholars in media studies have raised concerns about the audience participation's quality culminating into a detailed analysis of the nature and intensity of such kind of participation (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2008; Carpentier & Hannot, 2009; Carpentier, 2011). While 'old media' (radio and television) have attempted to incorporate audience participation into the manner of programming, 'new media' (the Internet and social media), also known as 'technologies of freedom'', have led to more democratic and participatory modes of governance and citizenship (Jenkins, 2006; Willems, 2010). While earlier audience scholarship (primarily on television)delved on 'active audience' by acknowledging the diverse ways in which audience got and consumed media texts, recent scholars have focussed themselves on new media emphasizing on the blurredness between producers and consumers/users (Nightingale & Ross, 2013; Livingstone & Press, 2016; van Dijck, 2019).

Through the Internet, the citizenry has the ability to create own media content, creating a power relation between media producers and consumers(Paterson & Domingo, 2018; Fenton 2019).

Listening groups, in most cases consisting of about 10 people who either live in close proximity to each other orrepresent targeted, are in no way limited to phenomena involving radio programming. Listening groups are the community's pulse by informing and improving all program levels from research design, implementation, and monitoring to evaluation stage (Internews & USAID, 2017). In relation to radio listening group, as majorly mediated by the new media, have created opportunities for the audience to participate in media production and at the same time change the production practices. There is more than just content production relinquishing the professional producers of programmes from their roles. The radio listening group, apart from adding listenership coverage by the "user-friendly" programmes production, also bring with them members within their social network, leading to a cumulatively large listenership. To this large group is listeners, the radio listenership group influences both sociologically and politically. According to Editorial Board (2017), radio has not, "lost the value that it gained as a tool for political and social change during the twentieth century, but … only repositioned itself" in relation to the twenty-first century's digital media (p.23). Sociologically, the listening group inform the fan-base on various issues relation to their social life like relationships, diseases, human rights, and social evils to be avoided among others. In fact, according to Editorial Board (2017), the social change brought by radio listening communities is far much beyond the impact of radio presenters. Since radio is about making the voice of the voiceless heard, it begins with talk: talking about the everyday concerns within the community, talking about the actions and decisions and actions giving rise to these issues, and talking about how to deal with issues and the individual(s) involved (Bello & Wilkinson, 2017). On the flipside, such listening groups can deviate from the line of

discussion or personalised the discourse making a section of the listeners to be distracted from the intended message, due to the lack of professionalism by members of these groups.

Radio listening groups also play a critical role in political awareness creation. According to Gaynor and O'Brien (2011), stimulation of information acquisition or creation of political awareness is a major contribution to community development by radio. Studies have indicated that political awareness is paramount to prediction of significant change in attitude(Bello & Wilkinson, 2017). Also, political awareness is only possible when the political attitude and participatory behaviour are congruent. To this end, political awareness is paramountsince effective democratic governanceis dependent on the informed electorate. If the electorate lacks understanding or knowledge, populist contributions to government will be vacuous regarding the policy debates.Radio listening group through political talk programmes abreast the public on political issues normally in local languages, and have become popular in many African countries (Tettey, 2011).

2.9 Theoretical Framework

In this section of the paper, two theories are discussed, namely Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Public Sphere Model.

2.9.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory (U&G), considered as one of the oldest and influential theories in the field of communication and media research (Roy, 2008), dates back to the mid of last century when emphasis was laid on what people do with media. Particularly, early studies on U&G pinpointed the need sought by the audience through the media. Accordingly, Katz, Gurevitch & Haas (1973) realised five basic groups of needs: cognitive needs (e.g., acquiring information); affective needs (e.g., emotions and feelings),personal integrative needs (e.g., credibility and stability), socialintegrative needs (e.g., interacting with familyand friends),and tension release needs (e.g., escape and diversion). This confirms the notion

behind U&G approach in determining what people do with the media (Katz et.al, 1974). chiefly U&G theory posits that the audience use mass media to satisfy their needs.

To provide content and actively participate for three hours every day from Monday to Friday, my case Team *Wang'Onyango* is voluntarily working, has done so for over 5 years and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon and they get no monetary remuneration or any other material favours for what they do. U&G theory therefore came in handy in exploring the need the Team *Wang'Onyango* would satisfy by engaging in radio content production as a virtual listening group: possibly, information, convenience, entertainment, and social interaction.

2.9.2 Public Sphere Theory

Public sphere as a concept was first defined and outlined by Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher, where he linked democratic community and media formations through a discussion of a deliberate framework of democratic society, one whereby communication is key to maintaining and sustaining inclusive or good governance.Habermas continued by arguing that the public sphere's evolution made it possible for the public opinion to be prioritised as way of countering the excesses of the bourgeoise society. According to Habermas, the classical bourgeoise in relation to the public sphere was established around rational critical pronouncements furthered by participant identity rather than merits of ideas. Therefore, the public sphere was considered as a communicative fulcrum whereby the bourgeoise were able to learn and constituted themselves into counter hegemonic force to reckon with as far as generation of collective power was concerned. Louw (2001) suggests that "at heart, the public sphere issue seems to be about creating alternatives to one dimensional, narrowed, manipulated, or closed communication" (p. 101).

The concept of public sphere relates centrally with the involvement of the citizens in politics. Notably, features such as free expression, access, openness, and participatory debate are

evident as principles and ethos of radio presentation, thanks to public sphere activism. According to Tucker (2013), community radio inoculates community involvement towards dealing with corporate and governmental power due to mobilization of citizens around the problems facing them. To this end, radio as alternative to mainstream media is cable of re-invigorating the public sphere through reflection of local cultures (Meadowset al., 2005), and stimulating discussions and debates. Fairchild (2001) claims that radio is helpful to the participants through realisation of their democratic goals. Public sphere model is useful in this study because it advocates for free expression, openness, access, and participatory debate, which are key to thriving of radio listening group. Besides, *Team Wang'Onyango* is a group of peers whose economic levels are almost the same. Them coming together to produce content for fellow millions of listeners is a perfect application for Public Sphere. For us-by-us policy. No up to down programs designed by those are most clueless about what people actually go through.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

Based on the study's discussed variables, the conceptual framework as diagrammatically represented as shown. The independent variable is the Virtual Radio Listening Group, and the *Wang'Onyango*programme is the dependable variable.

Virtual Radio Listening Group

- Curators

Wang'Onyango Programme

- Information

- Entertainment

- Convenience

- Social interaction

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on the research methodology. It covered the research philosophy, research design, validity and reliability, and ethics.

3.2 Research Design

According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2017), a research design is the configuration of requirements in order to collect and analyse data in such a manner that it integrates research relevance with the objective and significance. Sekaran (2011) refers to the research design as comprising of decisions surrounding what, where, how and when concerning the research.Various study designs are available, but this study embraces the exploratory study design in investigating the roles, modes of operations andinput of the virtual radio listening group on the *Wang'Onyango* programme production.

3.2.1 Study site

The study was conducted in the social media fora of *Team Wang'Onyango* Virtual Radio Listening Group and production offices of Radio Ramogi.

3.2.2 Research Approach

Deductive and inductive are the approaches used in research. To start with, deductive approach involves the normal way of carrying out an inquiry as guided by the existing theory, while the inductive approach is on the contrary: it involves theory formulation after the study has been done (Nkwi et al., 2001). Therefore, based on these two approaches, an inductive research will be vulnerable to subjectivism, whereas the deductive one would be objectively carried out. As such, this study embraced the deductive approach.

3.2.3 Virtual Ethnography

Virtual ethnography is an online ethnographic research carried out over the Internet, and in the current study, it was conducted in a WhatsApp group and Facebook. Ethnographers show

much interest in studying culture while engaging in fieldwork. But virtually, ethnographers study the culture of communities virtually. Contextually, virtual ethnography has attracted a plethora of researchers.   Robert Kozinets coined the term 'netnography' by combining the word 'internet' and 'ethnography' (Kozinets, 2010). Additional terminologies have been used to describe ethnographic research online such asonline ethnography, digital ethnography, and cyber ethnography. I chose to use virtual ethnography since it blended well with my study. Kozinet concisely definesnetnography or virtual ethnography as that type of ethnography carried out over the Internet; "a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediatedcommunications" (Kozinets, 2006, p. 135). Team *Wang'onyango* in my case is such a community which has a culture that can only be easily studied online since most of their operations are online.

Approaches in the ethnographic study includes digital ethnography, Internet ethnography, connective ethnography, cyber ethnography, networked ethnography, and virtual ethnography which is used in this study. Doing virtual ethnography differently is dependent on the Internet conceptualisation of culture and the context of social interaction. The more we get advanced technologically the more this method is going to be used. Moreover, this study was conducted at a time when a highly infectious respiratory disease called Covid 19 was on the rise and physical meetings were highly discouraged hence the essence of virtual ethnography. The label "virtual ethnography" involves an array of methodological approaches with the aim of answering the complexities of the object of research and the different ways in which this object has been constructed like *Team Wang'Onyango* as a group came out of blues to become a well-known force among Ramogi Fm listeners yet they rarely met physically.

On the flipside, virtual ethnographersare faced with the challenge of using heterogenous data, for example, audio-visual data and text,during analysis. A perennial point of tension lies between the apparent ease of data collection and the difficulty of getting access and participating in the virtual field like I was almost denied access to *Team Wang'onyango* WhatsApp Group, had to do a lot of explanation and even go through a registration process.when using the Internet as the object of ethnographic research, a broad reflection on central concepts of ethnography is needed.

Various disciplines use ethnography in approaching their research objects i.e., sociology, philosophy, pedagogy, economics or psychology. These disciplines incorporate ethnography as another methodological option for researching the cultural facets of phenomena related to their areas of interest. This multi-disciplinary espousal of ethnography enriches it and broadens the set of answers to the methodological questions raised.

3.2.4Research Method

Qualitative and qualitative are the mostly used research methods. Quantitative method involves collecting and analysing data using numerically, whereas in qualitative studies, data collection and analysis are non-numerically done. This study was qualitative in nature.

3.2.5 Data needs, types, and sources

Data collection method is a process through which the researcher gathers data from the respondents selected for a research study. Since it is a qualitative research, the researcher collected primary data using KII, interviews and virtual ethnography. For KII, four respondents shall be used that is the producer and presenter of the show plus the founder and the current chairperson of *Team Wang'onyango.* I got access to *Team Wang Onyango*WhatsApp group for virtual ethnographic study. It's a requirement that ethnographic study be done for at least four months, a period I covered and even tripled. However,

secondary data was conducted by the researcher in order to execute the chapter of a literature review of this study which it is important to gain information and knowledge published by researchers in the past.

3.2.6 Population, sampling procedure and data collection

In research, the term sample size refers to the numbers of individuals who are chosen of selected for providing the information and data for a research study. The researcher anticipated to use a total of 40 respondents, who were all members of Team *Wang'Onyango,* who were interviewed virtually via WhatsApp and via phone interview for those who were not online when required due to various reasons. This study used ethnographic strategy. Ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system where the researcher examines the group's observable and learned behaviour, customs, and ways of life (Miller & Salkind, 2002). The objective of ethnography is to understand a culture from the native's point of view, trying to grasp people's subjective concerns of the social environment (Moores, 1993). Ethnography involves recording the interests and interpretations of others (Gathigi, 2009). In particular, virtual ethnography was used, in which the researcher observed the daily activities of Team *Wango' Onyango* in the WhatsApp group and Facebook.

Data in a virtual ethnography can be collected in a variety of ways, the first being in-person. Often, however, interviews take place via chat or email. Observations can occur offline, while participants use the internet or talk about its use, or online as the ethnographer observes the web interface, visuals, text, threaded discussions, changes to the environment, and participant interaction. Documents can also be gathered that relate to the culture of study; for example, an online community's rules and regulations, an "About" page, or news articles related to the community.

There are two main sampling techniques that are used in research, namely: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, the population items have higher selection chances, as compared to non-probability sampling where elements have low likelihood of being selected (Silverman, 1993). In this study, non-probability sampling was used, in particular convenience sampling to gather information from participants, which have already been identified.

3.3.7 Data analysis and data presentation

In tandem with reflexivity, Merriam (2008) discusses several approaches to data analysis, including ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, thematic analysis, phenomenological analysis, and constant comparative method. A variety of data analysis techniques are employed with regard to virtual ethnographies. Textual analysis is common. For example, Denzin (1999) uses discourse analysis alongside a "method of instances" (p. 113). Psathas (1995) argues "The goal is to achieve a strong reading and an adequate analysis of a particular instance or sequence of experience" (p. 50). Mitra and Cohen (1999) espouse a critical textual analysis as a way to "focus on the central aspect of the WWW [Worldwide Web] - its textuality - and begin to answer questions about the WWW by considering the unique characteristics of the text" (p. 181), including its intertextuality, nonlinearity, interactivity, multimodality, and connectivity. Textual approaches seem well suited to a virtual ethnography. While it is outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that narrative approaches to inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) can also be an appropriate methodology for virtual research. Content/textual/discourse analysis techniques are advocated by virtual ethnographers, but are also used in conjunction with other analytic methods. A sort of general grounded and a priori theorizing is another technique used often by virtual ethnographers and has become popular for ethnographers in general (Boellstorff, 2008; Correll, 1995; Darwin, 2017; Hine, 2000; Markham, 1998; Miller & Slater, 2000; Schoneboom, 2007).

With these studies, the specific method of data analysis not explicitly stated; rather they tended to mentioned that analysis was ongoing alongside data collection and that themes were generated. Also important to data analysis in virtual ethnography is the consideration of the unit of analysis. Early studies in computer-mediated communication, a socio-psychology-centred field that works to understand how human beings relate via computer technology, focused on the individual. Work such as Turkle's the Second Self (1984) and Life on the Screen (1995) looked at the experiences of individuals using the computer interface and communicating with others through the interface. Turkle observed and interviewed her participants in "real" life as individuals having an online experience. Others such as Garton, Haythornwaite, and Wellman (1999) call for a network approach, in which the individual is part of a virtual community and must be explored as such. Types of data, data collection, and data analysis, though similar in form and function to a traditional ethnography, are mediated differently in the context of the new materiality of a virtual environment. The issues surrounding how to conduct a virtual ethnography are not, I argue, in tension with what counts as ethnography, but instead are a chance to rethink the underlying assumptions, ontology, and epistemology that traditional ethnography has been afforded in the past.Ethnographic analysis, which was used in this study, involved identifying categories related to a culture's economy, demographics, human life, particularly family, education, and healthcare issues, and the environment. Here, data was analysed and presented thematically.

3.4 Research Ethics

In conducting an inquiry, ethical and moral issues should be considered. In particular, ethical issues in the likes of authenticity, personal closure, credibility, participant rights, and reliability should be adhered to while carrying out an inquiry (Saunders et al., 2012). In effect, this research ensured anonymity, respondent rights, and personal disclosure by making

the process to be voluntary and not disclosing whatsoever opinion of respondents to anyone else except for the study purpose. While validity, rigor, and quality continue to be fleshed out, ethical issues involved in virtual ethnography resulted in ethical guidelines created by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) in 2002and revised in 2010 (Markham & Buchanan, 2010); these allowed for consideration of a variety of projects. Several issues spurred these guidelines, including protection of participants, anonymity of participants, and the conflation of public and private in this new space.

Protection - Regarding the protection of participants, Murthy (2008) and Wittel (2000)both discuss the age of participants as a potential problem. Due to the mediated nature of communication via the internet, it is difficult to know if the person you are interacting with is really who they say they are. This may be less important when understanding the culture of that space, but it becomes more important when one considers the ethics of the situation. If this person is under 18, or even a member of some other vulnerable group, (such as a person with a disability), they should be afforded more privacy and protection. If the researcher cannot know if misrepresentation is a factor, protection becomes more difficult to achieve.

Consent - In the same vein, consent becomes a thornier issue on the internet. How can a researcher achieve comprehensive consent to study a message board with thousands of participants? The AoIR's (Markham & Buchanan, 2010) guidelines suggest whether consent is necessary, and if so, obtaining consent from facilitators or administrators of the site. If individual consent is necessary, then the researcher should consider how to obtain it –through print or digital signatures, virtual consent tokens, or clickboxes (p. 11).

Anonymity – Consent brings to light another ethical concern, that of the anonymity of the participants. Especially in the age of "big data" we should consider that accessible does not

necessarily mitigate ethical concerns (Boyd & Crawford, 2012).If the participant uses a pseudonym and wants to participate, emailing or mailing a consent form may reduce the level of anonymity. In addition, and in opposition to the problem of increased anonymity offered by a mediated environment, the searchability and replicability of the internet, as noted by Beaulieu (2004) and Boyd (2008), contributes to a reduced anonymity. Even if researchers use pseudonyms of pseudonyms, if they put direct quotes from a message board in their published work, a reader could easily use a search engine to find a direct quote and the participant. The AoIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2010) guidelines suggest that a researcher gain consent from the moderator of a group rather than individual members to protect anonymity as well as considering paraphrasing text (p. 10-11).

"**Lurking**"- A few further ethical issues considered by other authors were lurking, access, and power. "Lurking" is tangentially considered by the AoIR, but is specifically mentioned by Beaulieu (2004), Hine (2000), and Boyd (2008). Lurking is visiting a site but not participating or letting the members of the site know that you are watching and/or studying them. Lurking is problematic in that it permits the appearance of a certain "objective distance," while not allowing for the intimacy and participation called for by virtual ethnographers such as Boellstorff (2008), Correll (1995), Schoneboom (2007), Hine (2000), and Kendall (1999). Lurking also violates the assumed privacy of many online participants, who intend to participate in public conversations, but not spied on or studied unknowingly. It might be helpful, according to AoIR (Markham & Buchanan, 2010), to ask: Is the site like a blog where the author is purporting to broadcast to an audience or is it a discussion site where participants have more of a sense of privacy (p. 10)?

Access and power - Access and power are two other important ethical considerations in a virtual ethnography. The digital divide (Voithofer & Foley, 2007) is a neglected factor in

many areas of education and educational research and should be considered with care, particularly in qualitative research in virtual settings. How does studying communities and interactions online limit the types of participants who can be studied? This is as much a question of access as of power. The question is not only who has access, but who has the ability to use that access in ways that researchers might find "analytically interesting." How has this use been shaped by gender, sexuality, and race? How are certain groups kept from certain communities by, for example, sexual innuendo (Kendall, 2009) or racial indifference or bigotry? And further, how will research on small groups of rather elite standing contribute to the exclusion of certain groups from new technologies? These ethical issues should be a concern to researchers as well, particularly if we follow the guidelines presented by Lincoln (1995) for quality in qualitative research as an activity for social justice.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis Results and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

The content of this chapter is about analysis findings and discussions of the results of the data generated from virtual ethnographic observations and interviews. The main objective of the study was to investigate the roles, operations and effectiveness of the virtual radio listening group on the *Wang'Onyango* programme of Ramogi FM, which was broken down to three specific objectives. The study targeted 40 active members of *Team Wang'Onyango*and 4 key informants, namely producers and presenters. The findings are hereby thematically analysed and interpreted.

4.2 Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of the Participants

The study sought to examine the demographic status of various listeners who participated in the programme relative to their gender, marital status, level of education, work status, monthly income, frequency of media utilization and motivating factors.

4.2.1 Gender

The importance of understanding the gender factor was that it would enable the programme organizers develop positioning programme strategies directed to particular target audience.Thus, gender categorization of participants of the programme was established. There was participation of both genders, although there were more females than male participants, not that it skewed the content in any negative way.

4.2.2 Marital Status

An analysis of distribution of marital status of the group showed that married persons constitute a large number of participants who take part in the programme. There were singles too, as well as others of undeclared marital status. All these people participated actively in the programme, suggesting that the programme content benefited from input of all these categories.

4.2.3 Level of education

Education was considered a key aspect with the potential to influence the extent and degree of participation of the group members. Accordingly, information on the distribution of education level was analysed, with the findings indicatingadiversity in the level of education from secondary school leavers to Diploma holders,Degree holders, Master's Degreeholders andPhD holders. One implication of this diversity of education level is that the programme benefited from a mix of qualifications were quite critical in the success of the firm through quality service. The other implication is that the management of the programme have the knowledge, capacity and goodwill to develop the relevant strategies relating to radio-audience relationship practices within the media industry.

4.2.4 Work Status

Work status representation was analysed to establish the latent relationship between employment and programme participation, if any. That the findings indicate the existence of different employment statuses from the employed to business owners to homemakers to the retired persons to students suggest a rich producer/audience profile with a huge potential to contribute varied ideas for rich programme content across abroad range of topical societal issues.

4.2.5 Monthly Income

A look at the income of the participants and revealed that they earned different salaries, which was determined from interviews to be as low as Ksh. 20,000 and as high as Ksh. 100,000. The rationale for seeking this sort of information was that the participants' economic status, of which income is a strong indication,was likely to affect their respective frequency of participation in the group activities,since there is a monetary cost to participation in form of data bundles.

4.2.6 Mode of Communication

During the study, the interviewer sought to know the mode of communication that most of its participants use in disseminating information. At *Wang'Onyango* programme the participants have been grouped in different categories that is *Team Sofaset* (those who only participate using text messages), *Team Livewire* (Phone calls), *Team International* (Twitter) and *Team Chafua* (Facebook). It was observed that *Team Chafua* (Facebook) constitute the highest membership, followed by *Team livewire*, *Team Sofaset* and *Team International*, respectively.

4.2.7 Motivating Factors

There were a number of factors that motivated the participantsand lured them into using the virtual programme, participating in the group. The factors included the virtual nature of the platform, the type of facilities, entertainment recommendations, and social status, respectively, listed in their order of importance.

4.3 Operations of the Virtual Listeners' Group, Relationship with the Content Aired and Interaction with the Socio-Political Context

The study sought to evaluate the following three specific objectives:

1. Operations of the virtual listeners' group (Team *Wang'Onyango*).

2. The relationship between the virtual radio listening group and the aired content of *Wang' Onyango* programme

3. To examine how virtual radio listeners' group, interact with the socio-political broadcasting context

4.3.1 Nature and Operations of Virtual Listeners Group

A yearlong observation and participation through virtual ethnography made me fully understand how the group operate. However, its history of formation of its growth was got via key informant interview to group founder Ms Pamela Obuya who is also the team leader.

4.3.1.1 The Genesis of Team Wang' Onyango

Team Wang'Onyango virtual radio listening group was started in 2015 by Ms Pamela Obuya.

As she was listening at her favourite programme *Wang'Onyango*presented by one Ruth

Nyajimo, a topic came up that she really liked. She, therefore, decided to invite three friends

to join in listening by making a Facebook post and tagging them. She also tagged the

presenter who at that time was just a Facebook friend and nothing more.

In Pamela's own words:

"We were surprised that our names were read loud on air and our comments

contributing to the topic also read. We were very excited and the following day, it was

one of the friends whom I had tagged the previous day who posted and tagged ten

friends, station's official Facebook account and the Presenter. Our names and

comments were read on air again and it became an everyday norm going on until now."

"In 2016, one of us lost her parent and she wrote it in the comments box. We decided to

contribute some money to assist her in burial arrangements. For us to be organized we

made a WhatsApp group where the treasurer posting list of contributions. That's how

we came up with *Team Wang'Onyango*which nolonger a mere welfare WhatsApp

group but a production room for *Wang'Onyango*show.

4.3.1.2 Audience Segmentation of Wang Onyango Show

The audience of *Wang'Onyango*show is not limited to *Team Wang'Onyango*. They are

however the main content producers. According to presenter who doubles as the deputy head

of radio, there are four audience teams in *Wang'Onyango*show;

There is **Team Live Wire.** These are the listeners who contribute through live studio call

inns. They are given specific time of doing so during the three-hour show. They however

seem to be the same people every time who gets through the line in almost all programmes

and even other radio stations. I also tried calling studio severally but was always

unsuccessful. My next study will be about these regular callers. I guess they can be used as influencers at their own classes and levels.

Another team is called *Team Sofa-set*. These are the audience who give feedback through texting the studio via provided text messaging number popularly known as SMS. They are also some days given a chance to say their opinions or vote for musicians, guests or outstanding people. According to the show producer, they prefer voting via SMS as it generates revenue for the station and encourage all to use it though only few do so unless there is competition.

The third team is *Team International*. These are audiences that give feedback through Twitter and they are called international because most of them are in diaspora.

The last and most active, innovative and fast-growing team is *Team Chafua*. These are listeners who give feedback through Facebook and this is where *Team Wang'Onyango* most participates. They are called team Chafua because they are many and therefore sometimes disorderly and playful. They are so many that the presenter cannot attend to even a quarter of the during the show so most of them get extraordinary to catch the attention of the presenter.

The presenter gives each team a day to arrange music playlist then at the end of the show, the other three teams that were not on duty that day rates the performance of the team on duty by giving them marks. The team that wins becomes the team of the week.

4.3.1.3 Nature, Growth and Development ofthe Group

The group has two faces. One is private and the other is public. Its private face is WhatsApp group where only registered members have access. Registration money is one thousand Kenya shillings for every member willing to join and there no more conditions beyond

registering. What they do so far besides being active radio audience is welfare responses to members with various needs but they also plan to invest in table banking, transport industry and agriculture. The membership of private wing is so far 200 members. The team is led by team leader who is also the founder, secretary, treasurer and organizer. The leaders have responsibilities just like other formal or informal groups.

Then there is a public face which has so far been joined by over two thousand people. Besides those who are in WhatsApp group, many people join them daily every time a Facebook post is made. These who join and aren't in WhatsApp group have no commitment besides active listenership. They are always welcome and well accommodated by the committed members and leadership to an extent that most of them are permanently retained to participate daily.

The team rarely physically meets but they daily meet virtually to organize and actively listen to *Wang'Onyango*show.

4.3.1.4 Their Role in Content Production

A key informant interview with the show presenter revealed to me that the elephant job of coming up with content has been 80% delegated to this virtual radio listening group. In her own words Ruth says:

> "I've been reduced to a mere voice. I do very little as far is content is concerned and it's really working for me. I run a social show and therefore need real experiences on the ground. When I have so many people in different geographical locations with diverse experiences, I at a point turn to a listener too and enjoy every bit of it."

This is how they do it; one of the leaders in the WhatsApp group initiates a dialogue on the programme of the day, which include topic of discussion, food to cook for the day's cooking programme, music playlist and all. The leader will then nominate one of the members to "initiate a home" which here means making a Facebook post and tagging official station

page, presenter and as many members as possible especially new members. By a quarter to Ten the post is already up whereas the show starts at a quarter past Ten after news briefs. When the presenter who is not a member of the private WhatsApp group starts the show, she finds everything lined up and just follows granting their requests as much as she can. What the group does, are consistent with the explanation of Jenkins et al. (2013) that radio makers (authors/presenters/producers) and radio listeners, once they are connected through SNS, belong to the same horizontal and multipolar network. Further, theyvalidate the authors'extended explanation that on the SNS stage, everyone, radio makers and listeners alike, is able to perform, to take part, to alternatively play the role of the actor (contributing with content) and of the audience (contributing with comments and liking), in the process of co-creation. Nonetheless, the extent to which listeners take part in these production processes is still controlled by radio makers, who decide how to give value to user-generated content.

4.3.2 The Relationship between the Virtual Radio Listening Group and the Aired Content of *Wang' Onyango* Programme

4.3.2.1How the Radio Benefits

According to the ratings shown to me by the head of radio, *Wang'Onyango*is on top of not only Ramogi Fm shows but also all Luo vernacular radio programs and always has highest sponsorships. Mr. Victor Juma attributes this to the fact that the show is listener driven. In his own observation, the show is so unique and robust such that it attracts listenership from all facets including those who are abroad. He says:

> "As head radio and coordinator of programming, we do task every presenter to submit how they intend to run the show at least two hours before they go on air but that doesn't apply to *Wang'Onyango*. We left it for the hands of virtual listeners'group team to run it as they are doing and their success rate is so impressive."

The presenter who is also the deputy head of radio says the content and ideas generated in one show cannot be fully aired in that single show and because it's done publicly on Facebook, other subsequent programs also borrow from it. Moreover, even other radio stations steal content from the postings of the team. Many a times I tuned to other radio stations and listened to the same content generated by *Team Wang'Onyango*being discussed by presenters of rival radio stations.

Besides content creation, there is also massive active listenership roped in by *Team Wang'Onyango*. The team leader says her first ever Facebook post attracted only twenty comments but now every post attracts over two thousand comments, a substantial increase she attributes to quality of the show and their accommodative character.

The benefits of the virtual listener-created content to TeamWang' Onyango and the indirect, unintended escalation of the content to other radio stations are consistent with the argument by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) that media content is impactful both on its own right and also as indicator of fundamental forces. Besides, that provides, for other stations as well, as the authors suggest, means radio content provides an opportunity for studying the audience and organisations as well.Further,to the extent that the Radio station has benefitted to the point of being top-rated in its category, the virtual listeners' group has enabled radio to fulfil the four major roles of radio in surveillance, correlation, transmission and entertainment (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 986).

4.3.2.2 How the Listening Group Benefits
Many participantssay they benefit by being entertained and fame. It's true they have become household names to most homes which tunes to Ramogi Fm. Although this was not part of my study, I further got interested in their response and randomly asked 56 regular listeners of Ramogi to name one top fan or contributor of *Team Wang'Onyango*program and 16 of them

mentioned team leader Pamela Obuya while 14 mentioned chief chef Adundo, Ten mentioned organizer Selector Nyar Gem and Nine mentioned treasurer Mercy Ajiba and Seven mentioned Secretary Ahuyo.

A small numberof the participants said they benefit by making new friends and increasing their network. The friends, they say, often come through at times of need. The other 10 percent said they benefit through getting empowered and inspired emotionally, socially, economically and intellectually. The motto of the show is *Tich matek ema kelo chiemo, Mari mari oloyo gir akwaya* which can be loosely translated as *its only hard work that puts food on the table and what you earn through hard work is better that what you attain through begging* has inspired most listeners especially women from being just housewives doing nothing economical beyond domestic chores. These findings point to Team Wang' Onyango's activities being effective in fulfilling the core roles of radio of surveillance, correlation, transmission and entertainment (Lasswell; 1948; Wright, 986). Besides, as Anderson (2013), notes, virtual radio listenership has created a visible network of listeners/producers. Theresult is that for the first time, people who listen to a radio programme and are its fans on SNSs have the opportunity to see and recognise each other, to communicate, to recommend new contents and to create new links while bypassing the centre, this being the radio programme itself.

4.3.2.3 Listeners Control and Professionalism

University of Zurich communication Expert Isabelle Krebs opines that online audience engagement, such as rating or sharing news, commenting or creating content, can enhance users' loyalty toward online news brands. Yet recently, uncertainties have been discussed within journalism research and practice concerning the handling of online comment sections and potential negative influences – caused through comment reading – on news

brands(Krebs, 2017). This generally means that that audience participation also has its flipside besides many bright sides we've discussed.

Ruth Nyajimo, Deputy Head of Radio Ramogi who also presents the show *Wang'Onyango*revealed to me that she has on several occasions deleted comments or faded callers off air for being abusive, attacking another person, sometimes even leaders who are not there to defend themselves or for sometimes being vulgar. According to Ruth,

> "There was a time they nearly got me sacked. I was multitasking by letting a caller talk as I sampled the next Facebook comment to read. I saw an a rather disturbing comment and as I was figuring out whether to delete or keep it, my mind went off the caller who at that moment was horrendously attacking another ethnic community in hate speech and war mongering. Before I could fade him off, his unfortunate message was fully out and my boss who was tuned in the next office came running and signalling that I was already in trouble. It took me months to clear the mess."

The show producer Mr. Charles also asserted that other fans have even through Facebook comment announced that some prominent national leader had passed on. Before it was noticed and deleted, some people had taken screenshots and it was trending with stations' official logo.

These unfortunate ordeals are however minimal. For the whole year I was with the group virtually, it only occurred twice. One was a caller taking advantage of free air to announce the death of her cousin complete with mentioning relatives, burial meetings venue, burial contribution channels and burial date. I contacted the presenter later to ask why she didn't fade her off and she said she was absent minded. She was unfortunately billed by the

management for allowing obituary announcement go on air for free and it was chopped off her monthly pay.

Another incident was when somebody commented by posting a pornographic video and as the presenter clicked to delete it, unfortunately it played and the computer from which she was reading comments was on mixer volume up. Before she could stop or turn down volume, millions of listeners were treated to unimaginable sounds as those who were on face book page saw the visuals too. Although the person who posted it was blocked, a damage was already done.

Fortunately for the presenter, no senior noticed the scene. It was talked about in the social media but it's like it didn't reach the seniors it's been seven months now and nobody above her has ever asked her about it. Such deviations from the expected conduct while participating as content co-creators is a concern that media scholars have raised, while calling for more critical and detailed analysis of the nature and intensity of participation (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2008; Carpentier & Hannot, 2009; Carpentier, 2011). Incidents of unbecomingbehaviour on air is something that confirms the fears some scholars express that the listening groups can sometimes deviate from the line of discussion or personalised the discourse making a section of the listeners to be distracted from the intended message, due to the lack of professionalism by members of these groups (Bello & Wilkinson, 2017).

4.3.2.4 Promotion of Good Citizenry

Besides the above flipside, this study showed that being in this virtual listener's group has more positive impact especially on members. Of the 40 members sampled, 31 were able to demonstrate how being a member of the listening group has changed their lives.

One Mercy Ajiba narrated how she was a gossiping housewife who only waited for the husband to leave for her to go what she calls "*abila mar mine*", a luo word for women's

gathering point which was under some big tree in the village. There they would gossip about everybody as village salon made their hair.

The gossip landed them in trouble quite often and one day with Chief's wife. She was taken to public Baraza where she lost the case and the verdict was that fifteen village women should cane her three strokes each. Because she was in bad books with most women, they did it but that didn't stop her till she joined *Team Wang'Onyango*. She heard several women calling radio saying what they do is a segment called *itiyo ang'o to itiye kanye* translatable as *what are you working on and where are you working it?* Long story short, she asked her husband to enrol her to electrical school and now she's a prominent electricity installer and repairer with five workers on her payroll. She now has work and a place of work to mention during this segment and she's no longer in trouble with any village woman nor chief who now directs all women to emulate her hard work and changed behaviours.

The group is dominated by ladies and throughout the show, they usepositive peer influence as a tool teach each other to be responsible and caring besides being good cooks, good parents or partners and each of the 31 women had an interesting testimony. They even fundraised for three of them to start businesses. The findings indicate essential changes that have occurred with regard to the citizenry in many ways compare towhat Bonini and Monclus (2015) present as five fundamental changes to relationships. The authors point to changes in the relationship between radio and its publics or listeners: change in the publicness of publics, change in the speaker-listener relationship, change in the listener-to-listener relationship, change in the value of publics, and change in the role of the radio author.

4.3.3 The Virtual Radio Listeners' Group's (Team *Wang'Onyango*)Interaction with the Socio-Political Broadcasting Context

Having discussed how the listening group and *Wang'Onyango*show has transformed life of its known members and even maybe others who have not been reached and documented I had a question touching on how or if as a group the members have supported a social ideology or political stand. All the 40 respondents said no but, on a follow, up, thanks to qualitative approach of study, I found out that they have done so in some ways though not deliberately.

They were once having a public discussion on family planning and unanimously agreed that its important at least in this economically pressing generation. One of them told me it's since then that she convinced her husband that their seven children were more than enough. Because it was done on air and it was conceptualized by *Team Wang'Onyango*virtual radio listening group, chances are there that a listener somewhere unknown was also convinced and changed. They have also discussed topics like wife inheritance among members of the Luo community, HIV/AIDS prevalence, teenage pregnancy, girl chid education, and adult education among others.

The nature of issues discussed by the Team, and which went into the content broadcast on Radio Ramogi validates the views of the Editorial Board (2017) that the listening group inform the fan-base on various issues relation to their social life like relationships, diseases, human rights, and social evils to be avoided, among others.

Team Wang' Onyango's spectrum of activities, therefore,accomplished objectives that compare quite consistently to what Bello and Wilkinson (2017) consider to be giving voice to the voiceless, initiating and sustaining talk about—and suggesting solutions to—the everyday issues.

Politically, the show is entirely apolitical but a communication consultant of a Senator aspiring to be governor approached the team leader and asked her if he can buy data bundles worth Ksh.500 every week for every member and in return they mention his client's name over the radio or through the comments or use their own Facebook walls to market the candidate. The leader brought the matter in the group for discussion and at the end of the virtual meeting, it was agreed that the person should deal with individuals because the group is apolitical hence backing one politician could threaten group's future in case other members had different political interests.

Surprisingly, a very big number of the members privately messaged the team leader indicating they were willing and interested in selling the candidate, an initiative most of them individually do even up to the time am writing this report. When its turn of the member to virtually cook (over the radio) and invite guests to eat, the politician is always on the list. When they are given chances to greet people on air, the politician is always the first. Their profile cover photos are portraits of the politician, they often put him in their status and market a good deed he did even if he didn't do it.By providing a platform for consciousness raising and awareness, Team Wang' Onyango programme the associated activities are consistent with the Habermas' (2009) perspective of the mass media and public sphere as being intricately linked, with the mass media contributing to the depoliticization of the public sphere, and also the engendering of mass consumption.

The transformation of the nature of public discussion on topical societal concerns brought about by the virtual radio listeners' group aligns with the public sphere as a space subjected to discussion on the formation of public opinion, has gone through changes, otherwise referred to as manipulation sense. In this sense, then, the public sphere is no-longer mono-

directional i.e., the mass media having full control on what the public consume, but bi-directional (the public sphere plays a critical role on what they consume). Team Wang' Onyango's activities can be viewed from the same perspective of bi-directionality of radio.

Chapter Five: Summary Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings and makes conclusions followed by the recommendations of the study. It also outlines various limitation and suggestions for further study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The objective of the study was to establish the roles, operations and effectiveness of the virtual radio listening group on the *Wang'Onyango* programme of Ramogi FM. The study found out that *Team Wang'Onyango*, a virtual radio listening group, to a greater extent, not only influence content production of *Wang'Onyango* show of Ramogi Fm but also directly participate in content and idea generation that has made the show to substantially perform well as compared to other shows in its category. The study has also found out how the virtual radio listening group operates. This knowledge can help in catalysing the formation of similar groups which can help media enterprises adapt to now highly volatile media landscape.

Different factors that have been found to encourage listener's loyalty retention practices can also be used to attract and retain listenership. The study findings also proved that in this era of networked society and media diversity and convergence, people can make use of virtual spaces to organize themselves, meet and effectively manage a programme and participants by integrating and managing all aspects of interactions without participants physically meeting to air out their views. The fact that I entirely did this study virtually including a virtual ethnography reinforces the same. Finally, this study found out that virtual radio listening groups can be used to sell social, economic and political products just as influencers now do.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that virtual radio listening group is more effective for a radio firm's success in terms of listener acquisition, maintenance and programme management. More emphasis needs to be undertaken in terms of revisiting existing practices bonding listeners and participants with the radio station that's to help in retaining the participants and to help increase the number of listeners.

The study also concludes that there's a positive relationship between participants and the organizers of the programme especially in the areas of marketing, education and entertainment. Virtual radio listening practices helps the firm to access participants' information very easily, reduce control and operational costs, access to world class capabilities, taking advantage of technological innovations and firm's resources. These virtual listening group can help the firm to achieve operational efficiency and superior performance which in turn will enable the radio firm and the directors enhance in their competitive edge in the radio industry.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that similar studies be undertaken in the radio industry using an ethnographic approach so that similar findings can be compared with different radio firms in terms of their programmes participants acquisition, retention and management. The study further recommends that the virtual group participants should come up with different ways in which they can use the group in generating income. The study also recommends that similar studies be undertaken on individual radio stations as well as the entire media industry both locally and internationally.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Advertising through Virtual Radio Listening Group is one area that needs to be studied. There is a paradigm shift in advertising and companies are now going past traditional media to advertise through individuals like influencers. Thus, it would be important to study the possibility and viability of using self-organized listeners group like *Team Wang'Onyango*now that they are famous and organized. This is especially notable since such advertising may be a setback to media enterprises as callers may use the free air to advertise products, the same air the media companies want to sell to the same advertisers. This is however, a challenge media owner must prepare for as audience participation continues to rise in this era of media diversity, convergence and networked society.

Two other areas could be audience Participation and professionalism of media practices, and regular callers' driving force and their place in media economy.

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Appendix 1 – Filled Observation guide

    i)   How frequent do the Team Wan Onyango meet?

The team is in a WhatsApp group meaning they are ever together virtually. They however formally meet daily from 9am to plan/develop the show content, nominate the person to do the posting and make music play list. During the show which run from 1015hrs to 1315hrs, they can also come back to WhatsApp group to brainstorm on a question or an issue that has come up during the show. This however rarely happens.

    ii)   Are their meetings formal or random?

The meetings are both formal and random. They formally meet to plan the show and randomly meet to brainstorm and troubleshoot. If there is a problem, any member who has noticed it just posts it any time then the members just start reacting to suggest possible solutions. This is done any time any day.

    iii)   How long does it take them to reach a consensus?

It used to be averagely 30 minutes for formal planning meetings but with experience, they of late take as less as 10 minutes or sometimes more depending on the complexity of the issues to be covered.

    iv)   How do they come up with the content?

Most of their topics emanate from what a caller came up with the previous day for example if they were discussing table banking and a caller sites dishonesty as a major setback to it, then they can discuss dealing with dishonesty. Another major source of their topics are news items especially human interest or social news for example there was a week when there was a domestic violence story daily. Thrice the next week they discussed domestic violence from causes on Monday, condemning it on Wednesday and possible permanent solutions on Friday. Besides discussable topics, other contents are cookery and music playlist. For the cookery, the cook of the day just easily chooses what they want to cook and shares with the

rest of the group and the presenter the presenter later calls the cook of the day, she does it on air then invite team members and guests to eat by mentioning them one by one.

v)   What's their organizational structure?[

Formally it is Chairperson – Secretary – Treasurer – Org. Sec but when they post on Facebook and tag, there are other posts like chief chef, team doctor, team pastor, team slayer and all other funny titles.

vi)   How are they led

Democratically, they vote when there are stalemates and go with simple majority. The leadership mostly lobbies for what they want to carry the day. Discontented members sometimes leaves the group but request to be added back later, for the year I've observed them, four members at different points in time left in a huff after a disagreement but they all after about a week to a month requested to be added back.

vii)   How do they recruit more members?

An interested individual pays registration fees of one thousand Kenyan Shillings, this earns you addition to planning WhatsApp group. Majority of new entrants request to join through commenting on the public Facebook post then they are told the conditions for joining. They don't go around shopping for members or requesting people to join. It's those who want to join that show interest.

viii)   What else do they do?

They do welfare support for the bereaved members, they also gang up in support of a member who has been attacked virtually in facebook or any other social media platforms. Most of them are famous and therefore sometimes controversial therefore need the protection. They are often attacked by members of rival groups.

ix)   How do their day/week look like?

They look like they are ever present to listen to radio and comment on station's social media posts. Looks like they have mastered the art of multitasking their daily chores with listening and commenting.

 x) How do they solve their conflicts?

The ones on the wrong are openly told off by other members after which the wrong ones apologizes or leaves the group. The leader often records an audio condemning the vice and members follow the suit. One person was removed from the group on 4th October 2020 at 9.23pm when a member complained about him conning her Ksh. 1000 with a promise to help her get off CRB blacklist which he didn't. That is the only direct removal I witnessed. He was first asked to defend himself but he refused to reply to members' query.

 xi) How are they treated by producers and presenter?

They have developed tight friendship with the producer and presenter to an extent that they sometimes physically meet over lunch or to see a bereaved or sick member. On 15th March 2020, the presenter, producer and 30 members met at Nessy Osodo's house in Dagoretti to see him. He was attacked by the robbers the previous day where he lost a laptop, a phone, Ksh. 500 and two teeth. The producer and presenter refunded Ksh 3,456 he had paid that morning at Kenyatta Hospital as medical bill and the members collectively contributed for him Ksh. 21,600.

 xii) What kind of issues do they address?

Local (village) economics, human interest, food, human behaviours, trending stories, social issues and entrepreneurship.

 xiii) What are some of the challenges they face?

Infiltration by ill-intentioned people like conmen, attacks from rival groups or envious individuals, lack of funds to start their investment ideas, lack of professional aid to streamline their idea

 xiv) Which topics do they cover?

Table Banking, Chama, current affairs, cookery, starting a business, dealing with bad debtors, hand work, home keeping, domestic conflict resolutions, rebuking bad habits, adult education, raising fees, women and youth empowerment, growing a business, clothing and style, health/diseases prevention, family planning and all excluding politics.

xv)   How do they generally benefit?

Frequent radio mentions make them famous and promote their careers and businesses.

Appendix 2 – Key informant Interview transcribed - Presenter

i.   Have you heard of virtual radio listening group?

Yes I work with one

ii.   If yes, can you compare it with the normal radio listening group in terms of radio programme production?

This is my 16th year behind these Mics and I've worked with all sorts of listening groups. I started broadcasting when there was very little internet coverage and so there were only Salaams clubs who filled names in a card provided by the station which we read on air. The only way they contributed to production is by providing those names to be read on air and nothing more. Besides names, there was common taglines like salamu ya radio ni nusu ya kuonana, quite boring but it sufficed by then. Come now, there is radio listening group which is virtual. I only know team wang onyango for now but hope there are others I don't know. Theirs is a real deal. Real time interaction and constant flow of fresh ideas. They are with be before I start to after I've finished. Comparing the two is like comparing a typewriter with a tablet. The latter is much more superior, efficient and advanced but the former couldn't also be written off during its time.

iii.   What is your experience with *Team Wang'Onyango's* virtual listening group contribution *to Wangónyango's show*?

Marvellous! I've been reduced to a mere voice. I do very little as far is content is concerned and its really working for me. I run a social show and therefore need real experiences on the ground. When I have so many people in different geographical locations with diverse experiences, I at a point turn to a listener too and enjoy every bit of it. Before them, I spent the whole day researching on topics, statistics, trends, talks of town, latest music and all that could sustain my show for four hours a day five days a week. Now I finish my show and go home or to class. I come the following day

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around thirty minutes to my time and find virtual discussions already blazing. I just read and analyse them on air. I also find playlist ready with even YouTube links of those tracks. It is them that produce this show, the staff here and I do very little as far as production is concerned.

iv. How often do you decide the topics to be discussed as compared to when the group chooses?

I have not chosen a topic of my own for a whole year now. Not that am too lazy to do it but because the topics brought by the listening team are good enough. I sometimes suggest during a show that something which has come up during a discussion be made a topic the next day but you see that's not me but a follow up from their creations. So I can't claim credit for such. Besides, they flow better with their own topics since they start discussing them even before the show starts. I can't interject with another topic when I formally start for that can confuse my whole show and it's me who stand to lose.

v. Is what they provide adequate to run a whole show?

Yes! In fact, the content and ideas generated in one show cannot be all aired in that single show. It's always just a lot and because it's done publicly on Facebook, other subsequent programs also borrow from it.

vi. Are the topics chosen relevant and ideal with the normal topics expected of such a programme?

Yes, always. They know we discuss everything except music. They are also very current and updated so they are relevant. Besides, they also discuss what they have agreed on as a team. Team work hardly err.

vii. What is the participation of the rest of listeners regarding the production of *Wang'Onyango* by the virtual listening group?

I have several categories of listeners which can be classified in many ways but two major groups are active and passive listeners. Active listeners and this people who comment, call and do all sort of participation as this team that. Shock on you, they are less than one percent. Majority of my listeners are passive ones who listen while on their jobs working and don't have time for phones or computers. They are our consumers and I value them so much. If all listeners participated in creating content, who would be consuming the created content? Eaters much be many than cooks.

viii. Do you have challenges with ethics and professionalism for working with media untrained people*?*

Yes, they sometimes really give me hard time to a point of even threatening my career. I have on several occasions deleted comments or faded callers off air for being abusive, attacking another person, sometimes even leaders who are not there to defend themselves or for sometimes being vulgar.

There was a time they nearly got me sacked. I was multitasking by letting a caller talk as I sampled the next Facebook comment to read. I saw a rather disturbing comment and as I was figuring out whether to delete or keep it, my mind went off the caller who at that moment was horrendously attacking another ethnic community in hate speech and war mongering. Before I could fade him off, his unfortunate message was fully out and my boss who was tuned in the next office came running and signalling that I was already in trouble. It took me months to clear the mess.

ix.   What would you recommend to be done further in improving the program as currently produced by the virtual listening group?

You see am the one running the show, I'm also in the top management of this station. So whatever I deem fit to be done, I implement it. That's what I've always done since I incorporated them. Giving a recommendation is futile for to whom am I giving it? Myself? In the contrary, I expect some recommendations from you after the completion of this study.

Appendix 3 Key Informant Interview Transcribed - *Team Wang'Onyango Founder/ Chair*

i.   What motivated you in starting or joining Team *Wang'Onyango* virtual radio listening group?

I non-deliberately started Team Wang'Onyango in 2015 as I was listening to my favourite programme Wang'Onyango presented by one Ruth Nyajimo, a topic came up that I really liked. I therefore decided to invite three friends to join in listening by making a Facebook post and tagging them. I also tagged the presenter who at that time was just a Facebook friend and nothing more. We were surprised that our names were read loud on air and our comments contributing to the topic also read. We were very excited and the following day, it was one of the friends whom I had tagged the previous day who posted and tagged ten friends, station's official Facebook account and the Presenter. Our names and comments were read on air again and it became an everyday norm going on until now.

ii. How did you organize yourself as a team?

In 2016, one of us lost her parent and she wrote it in the comments box. We decided to contribute some money to assist her in burial arrangements. For us to be organized we made a WhatsApp group where the treasurer was posting list of contributions. That's how we came up with Team Wang'Onyango which is now nolonger a mere welfare WhatsApp group but a production room for Wang'Onyango show.

iii.   What has changed since you started?

So many things have changed. In the first two years, we were just radio fans waiting for what the presenter has for us then from 2017 we started suggesting topics for the presenter. She would take some, modify others and even reject some of them. This happened for around one and a half years when we had known types of topics she rejected and the ones she accepted. We then of suggested the acceptable ones until mid 2019 when she left us with full responsibility of formulating topics. The same to playlist which we get full control in early 2020. The presenter also used to decide for us what to cook but for three years now, we choose ourselves.

iv.   Are you meeting your objectives since you started or joined this project?

As I had said, this team just started spontaneously. We didn't deliberately start it. So we didn't sit down to write goals, aims and objectives. We later organized some meetings which got us organized to leadership positions and decided we should get a professional to help us see how we can earn from our efforts. Unfortunately, we haven't got one but we are moving strong and growing everyday.

v.   Which topics do often cover in *Wang'Onyango* programme?

Everything discussable except politics

vi.   Have you ever conceptualized a topic for the programme?

Yes

vii.   If yes, how many are they and how often do you do it?

I've conceptualized over 300 topics and am happy about it. Two weeks cannot pass without me suggesting a topic. Other days other members do it too. We also all participate in modifying or fortifying topics chosen by members to make it catchier, interesting or beneficial to listeners.

viii.   How is the experience with *Wang'Onyango* programme so far?

It has become inevitable part of my life. It has made me so famous everybody want to see or meet me. It has also given me a wide network of friends. Nowadays even famous musicians can't do an album without mentioning my name yet we don't know each other in real sense. The only undoing is that my friends and relatives think am wealthy as a result of fame which is not true. I struggle just like any average Kenyan.

ix.   Do you have a smooth operation right from deliberating on the details of the programme and reaction by the producer from Radio Ramogi?

Yes we are okay, we mostly communicate with the presenter and haven't clashed.

x.   What's is the wayward as far as *Wang'Onyango* programme is concerned?

Way forward? I don't know. That is the work of the owners of the radio the presenter

xi.   Where do you see team *Wang'Onyango* 10 years from now?

I have a dream that we shall be a company which gets some money. If we get sponsors, we will start some businesses which will be fetching us some profit.