

## Media and Communication Responses to Rural Education in Taraba State, Nigeria: Education Planning and Management as Pathways for Protecting Vulnerable Children<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examined media and communication responses to rural education in Taraba State, Nigeria, with particular attention to how educational planning and communication strategies support the protection of vulnerable children. The problem addressed is the persistent exclusion of rural children from basic education despite policy interventions, largely due to weak communication systems, limited community engagement, and poor coordination between education planners, media platforms, and local stakeholders. These gaps continue to sustain high levels of out-of-school children, especially in underserved and crisis-affected communities. The study adopted a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire administered to 400 respondents drawn from parents, teachers, community leaders, and education administrators across the three senatorial districts of Taraba State. A total of 381 valid responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. Findings show that awareness of education-related campaigns is generally high (mean  $\geq 3.70$ ), with radio (mean = 3.95), community meetings (mean = 3.84), and faith-based organizations (mean = 3.79) emerging as the most dominant channels of information dissemination. Traditional and community-based communication strategies, particularly radio jingles (mean = 3.86) and town hall engagements (mean = 3.79), were found to be more effective than digital

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platforms such as SMS (mean = 2.40) and newspapers (mean = 2.53). Results further indicate that structured engagement strategies, especially parent–teacher meetings (mean = 3.84) and community volunteer initiatives (mean = 3.72), significantly enhance participation in rural education programmes and strengthen perceived protection for vulnerable children. The study concludes that rural education outcomes in Taraba State are strongly influenced by the effectiveness of localized, culturally embedded communication systems rather than digital-only approaches. It recommends the institutional strengthening of community radio programming in local languages, formal integration of religious and traditional leaders into education communication planning, and the establishment of structured feedback systems between schools and communities to improve accountability and sustained enrolment of vulnerable children.

**Keywords:** Equity in education, social capital, Taraba, rural communication, vulnerable children

### **Introduction**

Children in Taraba State, Nigeria, face severe impediments when trying to access education. Such impediments are defined by inadequate infrastructure, poverty, poorly trained teachers, social insecurity, and ineffective linkages and communication between planners and rural communities. Oruonye et al. (2024) define rural Taraba as creating conditions that induce a cyclical and brutal poverty. A lack of quality education will only compound inequalities within the cycle. Akume (2019) also refers to the educational deprivation of southern Taraba as a consequence of poorly governed neglect and poverty. Furthermore, Agolli and Hasmeta (2025) describe children in rural or crisis-affected areas as disproportionately marginalized due to a lack of resources and the institutional inadequacies of passive policies that have poorly adapted to the local context. Deficient educational resources, inadequate safety, and poorly organized schooling presents inconsistent communication between the education system and the local community. This situation illustrates the importance of communication and media.

For years, local media, and especially radio, has had the functions of creating focal points and mobilising users within rural communities of Nigeria. Still, their adoption within educational paradigms remains inconsistent. For Pwashikai (2023), the educational advocacy possibilities of the Taraba State Broadcasting Service, during the coverage of conflict and issues around farming and rural development, is notable. Similarly, these authors (James & Olaniyan, 2024) point out that radio and other

indigenous communication media assisted in outreach to rural families concerning school enrolment and encouraged the abolition of child labour, early marriage, and other practices that hindered school access for girls. The suggestion of integrating community media within educational communications champions the views of Woodruff, Meerow, Stults, and Wilkins (2022), who discuss planned and dynamic concepts. Therefore, Taraba has to deal education planning for a resilient system. It is therefore important for local communication systems should be put in place to foresee educational crises, instill community ownership, mobilize for the retention of children in school, and protect them from societal exclusion.

In fact, incorporating contextual frameworks like SDG 4 into education planning and management from national and international perspectives is very vital. According to Rad et al. (2022), stagnation of equity within any educational system is the direct outcome of government failure to balance streamlining system coordination among policymakers and educational administrators, and the streams of social knowledge communication. Ngomba, Nwadiogbu, and Philip (2025) compared educational assistance frameworks and humanitarian aid policies concerning educational assistance to displaced people in Taraba, demonstrating that policies for emergency humanitarian education response insufficiently engage local stakeholders. Similarly, Rwang (2023) discusses the case of poorly articulated educational policies in the northern states of Niger, which directly resulted in the lack of education access for displaced persons in Nigeria. Situations in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh exemplify the findings of Shohel (2022), which documented lack of communication, awareness, and mobilization of community resources as barriers to improvement of education during emergencies. The cases presented above and Shohel (2022) in particular, draw attention on the need to adopt strategic communication in educational policy planning and implementation.

Even though there are lots of problems such as insecurity, poverty, displacement, and the impacts of globalization on rural education in Taraba, there are also examples of context-sensitive resilience planning. According to Woodruff et al (2022), extensive resilience planning concentrates on feedback loops that empower communities to adapt, learn, and reorganize. Various forms of media and other communication methods trigger these loops. In Taraba, community-responsive educational policies can reconcile educational policies so that communities can understand the relevance and applicability of policies pertaining to education. Oruonye et al (2024) stress that planning with media

and community traditional leaders from different spheres improves governance for rural and community development. Media is a powerful tool for advocacy to justify the mobilization of the public to champion the rights of children and the socio-economically marginalized and voiceless. There is a need to consolidate the management of education with the rural Taraba culture-sensitive approaches to communication. Rwang (2023) and Pwashikai (2023) elaborate on the integration of the Town Crier's Indigenous communication and the local public discourse coupled with (mass) media to foster trust and build accessibility. In addition to this, the global discourse on education continues to touch on community engagement as a critical factor for the closure of the protection gap for vulnerable learners (Rad et al., 2022; Agolli & Hasmata, 2025). This holds true for the design of educational programmes in Taraba. The media should be viewed as a partner in advocacy and social accountability, alongside the community, rather than solely as a means for transmitting information.

The researchers, therefore, studied the media and communication approaches and the rural Taraba education strategies: education planning and management as pathways for the protection of vulnerable children.

### **Statement of the problem**

In the last several decades, Taraba State, Nigeria, has implemented policy interventions and reforms to the educational system, yet it has not achieved equal access to the basic educational system. There continues to be inequities shaped and compounded by structural, administrative, socioeconomic issues, and systems built around the education that result in the exclusion of the most vulnerable children. The educational deprivation of the rural communities in Taraba State is also bound to the cycles of displacement, poverty, insecurity, and violence (Oruonye et al., 2024; Akume, 2019). The lack of spatially equitable planning of the school system, alongside the dysfunctional school infrastructures and inequitable distribution of education personnel, has created scenarios in which children in rural areas of the State live through humanitarian crises and lose their childhood to the unsustainable burdens of inequity, poverty, and childhood malnutrition, while their potential to thrive is lost.

Moreso, policies regarding education have had a patchy impact on reaching out to remote areas and communities. Most of the risk to the most vulnerable children has not been mitigated, especially because the linkages between advocacy and planning and the education systems tied to rural communities have been weak. Pwashikai (2023) pointed

out that in the context of Taraba State, education management systems and planned advocacy in the community around education have excluded local education facilitators, especially those using radio. Although the Universal Basic Education policies and the SDG 4 global frameworks claim to be prioritizing and focusing on the inclusive and equitable integrated education, the rural context Taraba exemplifies gaps that those policy frameworks were aimed at (Rad et al, 2022; Agolli & Hasmata, 2025).

The gaps within and the broken pathways between educational actors and local communication and local community connectivity manifest in the growing numbers of school-age children not attending school and the unschooled internally displaced school-age children in the State. Rwang(2023) and Ngomba et al. (2025) point out that in addition to the extreme and violent disruptions to schooling and the systemic educational gaps in Rwang's displaced context and the North East region of Nigeria, the community is left disengaged, without knowledge of educational possibilities and community supports.

The lack of cooperation among planners, media personnel, and school management also hampers the educational attempt to provide children the tools to redress exploitation, illiteracy, and marginalization. For children in rural Taraba, educational marginalization goes hand in hand with the environmental impacts of climate change and floods, which displace communities and create livelihood crises (Woodruff et al. 2022, Oruonye et al. 2024). Here, too, there is a lack of integration of proactive planning approaches that juxtapose collaboration, communication, and regional integration. The management educational systems remain in place while the rest of the organization continues to act as hierarchically structured bureaucracies, and not as adaptive systems that engage in community involvement to formulate flexible inclusive resilient frameworks. Unharmonized educational planning and communication systems contribute to the social marginalization of these children on the development continuum.

For these reasons, this research sought to explore how the integration of communication and media into educational planning and management might enhance accessibility and equity while strengthening the protective mandate for the most vulnerable children in Taraba State.

### **Research objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the awareness level of the media campaigns and communication strategies in Taraba State about education in the rural communities with vulnerable children
2. Ascertain the main media through which rural residents receive information on education programmes
3. Find out the main communication strategies used in rural education campaigns in Taraba State
4. Ascertain the engagement strategies promoting community participation in rural education in Taraba State
5. Assess the perceived efficacy of media and communication strategies in education management and planning in Taraba State

### **Overview of media and communication responses to rural education in Taraba State**

Educational development challenges in Taraba State, particularly in its rural areas, are some of the most persistent and severe in the region. Consequently, for the past few years, educational access for vulnerable children has been the most adversely affected by the state's poverty, neglect, poor policies, and infrastructures, as well as insecurity and other development challenges, which are mostly interrelated and cumulative. In Taraba, the challenges are particularly acute, as the state educational statistics for 2024 show that about 38% of children in rural areas of school age are out of school entirely, and of those that do enroll in primary education, about 45% do not complete the primary cycle (Pwashikai, 2023). This is particularly concerning, given that UNICEF reported in 2024 that Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children, over 60% of whom are in the North East. This is especially concerning given Taraba's educational access challenges. Oruonye, Dinshiya, Anger, and Ahmed (2024) illustrate the cycle of poverty and educational neglect in Taraba, wherein weak institutional frameworks and under-enrolment exclusion, exacerbated by displaced livelihoods, culminate in chronic educational neglect.

It is precisely for these reasons that rural areas continue to remain stagnant in times of crisis. Educational programs introduced by the various levels of government become trapped in the gaps of the government's poorly integrated communication frameworks, which in turn poorly transmit information on educational opportunities. For instance, Abaneme et al. (2021) noted that educational advocates underutilized radio and other forms of traditional media which have become educational readily available and

powerful educational advocacy tools. Similarly, the radio-based educational initiatives that Okeke, Nwosu, and Ono (2020) evaluated during the COVID-19 lockdown met only partial success because the communication frameworks that interfaced with local educational structures were poorly coordinated and inconsistent. The digital gap in Nigeria is further isolating educational innovations on rural families, as noted by Vitalis et al. (2025). Children's education and educational materials for remote learning, integrated with social media, are simply out of reach for many families in Taraba, who are cut off from electricity, have little to no internet, and are lacking in digital literacy.

Frameworks that address the nexus of communication, education, and rural marginalisation must take into account the socio-economic realities of Taraba's predominantly agrarian communities. The southern and central regions of Taraba have long suffered educational stagnation that has been described as intergenerational. Akume (2019) cites the intergenerational stagnation of education amongst farming families, many of whom hold negative attitudes towards government literacy initiatives, as a key reason. The communication problem is not the dissemination of information, but rather the cultural framing of the issue. As Oruonye et al. (2024) and PWSHIKAI (2023) point out, it is the lack of dynamic ties between educational planners and communicators and local actors that lies behind the stillbirth of educational initiatives in Taraba. Consequently, the scale and scope of educational initiatives in Taraba has been the result of weak institutional relations, rather than a lack of available resources.

#### **Access and vulnerability in rural education**

There are unique sets of blocks inhibiting children in rural Taraba State from accessing and engaging in learning opportunities. These limitations can be attributed to poverty, insecurity, and general infrastructural deficits within the region, which in turn result in low enrolment figures and poor academic performance. As highlighted by Bettenhausen, Winterer, and Colvin (2021), rural child poverty in Nigeria is the most pronounced and grave issue that affects children's physical and mental development, ultimately resulting in a greater drop out and poor school performance within the educational system. Lack of access to safe school transport is a major reason to explain the chronic absenteeism in Taraba, Gashaka, and Wukari local government areas, where children are required to walk 5 to 10 kilometres each day to school (James & Olaniyan, 2024). These conditions were worsened during the COVID 19 pandemic. Martens et al. (2020) reported on the exclusion of most remote communities of the North East Nigeria,

Taraba particularly, from digital interventions like e-learning platforms and mobile networks that were designed to bridge gaps in learning, consequently leaving about 70% of children with no access to educational learning opportunities. According to Okeke et al. (2020), access and vulnerability in rural education within the emergency radio classes expanded reach under universal basic education. Moreso, inadequately scheduled classes, reacting to feedback and unsophisticated feedback provided turned the classes into a system of incomplete and inadequate learning.

In addition, limited educational opportunities can be attributed to the digital divide in rural areas. Kormos and Wisdom (2021) noted that children in rural areas do not have opportunities to learn and use technologies, thus, losing the opportunities to acquire the necessary skills to compete with peers in more technologically integrated areas. Vitalis et al. (2025) argues that the digital divide covers more than the lack of technological devices; it includes the gaps relating to information and infrastructure, and information in and out of the community, and the various ways the community accesses and processes information. For example, in Taraba in underserved areas such as the Banki–Bali corridor, over 80% of the population is reliant on a radio, and the internet connectivity is below 30% (Pwashikai, 2023), which illustrates a heavy reliance on legacy forms of media. Also, as noted by Santamaria López and Ruiz (2023), the most marginalized learners, and especially learners with disabilities, or those displaced by conflict are most likely to be using inexpensive distance and blended learning approaches that employ radio, SMS, and loudspeakers as the dominant means of instruction. These situations are indicative of the flexible use of communication technologies for educational purposes that responds to the infrastructural and socioeconomic realities present in the community.

An examination of culture and gender is necessary to understand vulnerability. In some of the social structures within Taraba communities, early marriage and the domestic responsibilities placed on girls keep girls from schooling (Abaneme et al., 2021). Consequently, girls have and will probably continue to have weak educational prospects. Some rural teachers within these communities have described challenges in engaging parents and the communities in education because of the limited digital tools that these communities have. Furthermore, there is a prevailing suspicion towards education integration efforts from outside coordinators (Williams, 2021). While Galbin (2021) recognizes the transformative potential of certain models of online schooling, she

also points out that students whose parents lack the digital tools and skills to access online schooling are excluded. Therefore, Taraba is an example of the urban-rural communication deficit, which poses educational inequalities and generational exclusion of certain social groups.

### **Media, communication and educational protection frameworks**

Across the globe, education constitutes not only an academic right, but also a form of social protection embedded in the fabric of a society, particularly for its most vulnerable children. UNESCO, in its 2024 Global Education Monitoring Report, argues for the necessity of “synchronised” communication for comprehensive education for resilience among the arms of state government agencies, families, and civil society organizations. Yet, the 2024 report, as well as Oruonye et al. (2024) describe the lack of synchronization of communication among these stakeholders as a fundamental weakness towards the attainment of equitable learning outcomes for the country. As remarked by Williams (2021) and Abaneme et al. (2021), social and traditional media can serve as the tools for sustained communication between the public and policymakers and, thereby, foster social trust and accountability. Gever et al. (2021) identifies the recent trend of blended media learning telelessons as integrated resources for the education of children in the formal education system and for developing their literacy and critical thinking skills.

Notably, educational resource utilization as tools in Taraba's rural areas have not developed significantly, though they continue to show promising trends. Vitalis et al. (2025) emphasize that educational planning resilience involves the convergence and hybridization of innovative educational media, including the 'sliding' range of educational media (both digital and analogue). For instance, during town hall meetings, radio broadcasts can be integrated with social media messages to aid and retrieve communication within the community. Koch and Brandt (2021) state that digital media amplifies the voices of marginalized children, allowing them to share their stories and advocate for their rights. This inclusion makes education a dialogical and constructive process, not merely a bureaucratic one.

Therefore, addressing the humanitarian and environmental challenges in Taraba will necessitate the construction of adaptive communication infrastructures. According to Oruonye et al. (2024), floods in the Karim Lamido and Takum regions caused school closures and displaced thousands of people in 2023. Equally, Ja'afaru et al. (2024) noted

that the series of crises in Taraba State rendered many homeless and sends many citizens to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp. Woodruff et al. (2022) observed that according to the Resilience Planning Theory, sustainable planning must include flexible, communicative, and cooperative planning which will reward collaborative efforts of a community. With the disruptions that communication and planning to educational activities will bring, educational activities should still be flexible to accommodate the disruptions. Taraba State will be able to shift its focus on inflexible educational management systems to remove apprehensive communication practices and strategic information to protect children in the community.

### **Methodology**

For this research, a survey research design was employed. This design enables the systematic collection of data regarding respondents' attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of behavior across several communities in Taraba State. This design is appropriate for research that is concerned with evaluating the audience's perceptions and the behavioral communication of an audience, and the social information systems of the community (Asemah & Nwaoboli, 2024). Surveys are more cost-effective than other research methods and, within a given time frame, provide a quantitative picture of the respondents' media use across a range of activities (Nwaoboli, 2023). In this study, the researcher focused on communication regarding the media and education responses in the planning and management of education concerning vulnerable children, and this method provided essential quantitative data concerning the respondents' awareness patterns on the information sources regarding rural education and the communication systems that were deemed most appropriate for rural education.

This research focuses on Taraba which is located in Northeast Nigeria. Taraba embodies the challenges facing Nigeria's rural education: physical distances, infrastructural inadequacies, and socio-educational vulnerabilities (Oruonye et al., 2024). Taraba's educational management challenges and community relations issues are also noteworthy, as evidenced by the large Out of School (OSC) population, the spatial neglect of educational provision, and the inequitable distribution of educational resources and policies (Pwashikai, 2023). The state is made up of 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) which are culturally and linguistically diverse. They are also information-poor and use community local radios, town hall meetings, and faith-based announcements as channels of communication.

This research comprises inputs from parents, teachers, civic leaders, and local education administrators across the three senatorial districts of Taraba: Northern, Central, and Southern zones. The inclusion criteria comprised parents, teachers, community leaders, and education administrators resident in rural communities of Taraba State who had direct exposure to or involvement in education-related communication or child welfare issues, while the exclusion criteria comprised individuals outside these stakeholder groups, respondents not residing in rural Taraba communities, and those without exposure to education or media-based awareness programmes.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics and the National Population Commission, Taraba State has 3,733,122 inhabitants. Based on the age-specific educational attainment distribution ratio from the United Nations Development Programme, 45 percent of this population, equating to around 1.68 million, lived in rural Taraba. This is important since awareness initiatives for educational improvement in the state's rural areas often target the entire household and community stakeholders. As outlined by Taro Yamane's sequential formula presented in 1967, sample size determination for the study was carried out as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where  $N=1,680,000$  (the total rural population), and  $e=0.05$  (the margin of error), therefore:

$$n = \frac{1,680,000}{1 + 1,680,000(0.05)^2} = 400$$

This study, therefore, involved a sample size of 400 respondents. Stratified sampling technique was used to proportionately distributed samples to the population density of the three senatorial districts, allocating 160 respondents to the Northern zone, while the Central and Southern zones received 120 respondents. This distribution mirrored and reflected the various ethnic and cultural plurality of the State of Taraba.

A careful consideration of both primary and secondary sources was undertaken for this research. Primary sources were collected using a structured questionnaire tailor-fit to the scope of the research. This questionnaire comprised different sections focusing on the level of awareness about the media campaigns, the educational information sources that were most preferred, the educational initiatives for rural communities were observed, the communication initiatives that were most recognized, and the media and other engagement strategies that were perceived to be most valuable. Each of these items was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 'Strongly

Agree'. Construct validation, which included content and face validation, of the instrument was done by two communication experts from Taraba State University and University of Jos. Reliability was determined during a pilot study conducted in Bali and Takum LGAs, which returned a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83, indicating high internal consistency.

The multimodal strategy used in this case stemmed from different methods coming together. The distribution of questionnaire in person through local research guides, and the growing use of digital technologies in semi-urban contexts, also meant that a digital version of the questionnaire was provided to research participants through WhatsApp and Facebook community groups. Community teachers and radio advocates that reach out to these villagers digitally also helped send forms to remote villages with no digital access. This combined approach to questionnaire administration, both physically and digitally, facilitated attendance and reduced sampling bias. The ethical dimensions of the study were covered by active informed consent, anonymity assurances, and the right to withdraw at any time. From the 400 questionnaire distributed, 381 were completed and returned, equating to a response rate of 95.3%. This response rate sufficiently justifies the response to a quantitative analysis and indicates a meaningful engagement in the survey from the target population.

Data analysis necessitated creating and proportioning frequency distributions, as well as calculating the mean scores to condense the dominant feelings and attitudes associated with the various instruments. A mean score perception of 3.00 and above was regarded as acceptance, while a mean score rating of less than 3.00 was perceived as negative, or non-acceptance.

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

**Table 1**

*Awareness Level of the Media Campaigns and Communication Strategies in Taraba State about Education in the Rural Communities with Vulnerable Children*

| Statement  | SA (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Decision |
|--|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| I am aware of media campaigns and communication initiatives addressing rural education and vulnerable children in Taraba State | 49.6   | 30.7      | 9.8         | 6.4          | 3.5    | 3.83 | Accepted |

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|  |      |      |      |     |     |      |          |
|--|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|----------|
| I have seen or heard messages about rural education through radio or community-based campaigns | 46.8 | 32.3 | 10.4 | 6.7 | 3.8 | 3.77 | Accepted |
| I have noticed communication efforts promoting educational protection for vulnerable children  | 44.5 | 34.1 | 11.2 | 7.1 | 3.1 | 3.70 | Accepted |

The information in Table 1 demonstrates that education campaigns in the media are effective and popular. The respondents' ratings were greater than 3.70. The people that answered dialectically neutral were fewer than 10 percent which indicates that the larger population of the countryside people are education campaign consumers. People have used and interacted recently with the educational content. It suggests that communication campaigns for advocacy work are growing in importance and are effective in promoting advocacy in education.

**Table 2**

*Main Media through which Rural Residents Receive Information on Education Programmes*

| Medium  | SA (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Decision |
|---|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| Radio   | 55.2   | 25.7      | 9.1         | 6.4          | 3.6    | 3.95 | Accepted |
| Television  | 42.6   | 30.4      | 12.7        | 8.8          | 5.5    | 3.61 | Accepted |
| Social Media (Facebook, Twitter/X, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram) | 38.9   | 34.2      | 13.1        | 9.3          | 4.5    | 3.55 | Accepted |
| Community announcements and meetings                            | 48.5   | 32.9      | 10.0        | 6.3          | 2.3    | 3.84 | Accepted |
| Faith-based institutions (churches and mosques)                 | 45.1   | 33.5      | 11.4        | 7.2          | 2.8    | 3.79 | Accepted |
| Newspapers  | 22.6   | 27.2      | 19.8        | 17.5         | 13.0   | 2.53 | Rejected |
| SMS or Mobile alerts  | 16.9   | 20.4      | 23.5        | 22.1         | 17.1   | 2.40 | Rejected |

Data on the table above clearly identifies radio, community meetings, and faith-based institutions as the most prevalent sources of educational information across Taraba State. A portion of the respondents (13-20%) who did not express a definitive opinion on this question may have limited access to the internet or other digital media. The reason newspapers had a low mean score could be because of the low literacy level and reading

culture among residents in Taraba State. However, these findings capture the reliance on traditional methods of communication to reach the rural population.

**Table 3**

*Main Communication Strategies Used in Rural Education Campaigns*

| Strategy  | SA (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Decision |
|---|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| Radio jingles and educational programmes            | 51.8   | 27.7      | 10.1        | 7.4          | 3.0    | 3.86 | Accepted |
| Television documentaries and news segments          | 44.9   | 30.5      | 13.2        | 7.6          | 3.8    | 3.68 | Accepted |
| School-based sensitization programmes               | 42.0   | 33.9      | 12.6        | 7.8          | 3.7    | 3.65 | Accepted |
| Community town-hall sessions on education           | 47.1   | 32.2      | 10.8        | 7.5          | 2.4    | 3.79 | Accepted |
| Religious institutions as advocacy centres          | 45.4   | 33.7      | 11.0        | 7.1          | 2.8    | 3.77 | Accepted |
| Posters, flyers, and banners in markets and schools | 40.2   | 34.6      | 13.7        | 8.1          | 3.4    | 3.61 | Accepted |
| Social media posts and campaign messages            | 37.9   | 31.5      | 16.4        | 9.8          | 4.4    | 3.49 | Accepted |

The data in Table 3 indicate that radio jingles, community interactions, and religious advocacy serve as the most effective communication strategies in rural education campaigns. School-based sensitization also yielded strong results (mean 3.65). Neutral responses, averaging 10-16%, may reflect uneven access to print and digital channels. Therefore, the findings suggest that campaigns are most impactful when mediated through community-based and traditional networks.

**Table 4**

*Engagement Strategies Promoting Community Participation in Rural Education*

| Engagement Approach                           | SA (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Decision |
|---|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| Community volunteer groups for school support | 44.7   | 33.1      | 11.4        | 6.9          | 3.9    | 3.72 | Accepted |

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|   |      |      |      |      |     |      |          |
|---|------|------|------|------|-----|------|----------|
| Parent-teacher meetings for public feedback       | 49.3 | 31.7 | 8.9  | 6.3  | 3.8 | 3.84 | Accepted |
| Scholarships and incentives for school attendance | 46.0 | 30.4 | 12.2 | 7.0  | 4.4 | 3.73 | Accepted |
| Feedback hotlines and suggestion systems          | 33.0 | 31.5 | 18.0 | 13.2 | 4.3 | 3.36 | Accepted |
| Cultural events linked with education themes      | 42.8 | 33.9 | 12.5 | 7.7  | 3.1 | 3.69 | Accepted |
| Social media discussion forums for education      | 38.1 | 34.3 | 15.4 | 8.4  | 3.8 | 3.49 | Accepted |

All community engagement strategies documented in Table 4 have mean scores above 3.30. This reflects a high mean score prevalence around community engagement in educational frameworks introduced programs. The 10–15% of Neutral responses may be due to older cohorts or those who are digitally disengaged. Therefore, parent-teacher meetings and volunteer programmes are highly effective in facilitating community engagement and feedback systems for rural educational contexts.

**Table 5**

*Perceived Efficacy of Media and Communication Strategies in Education Management and Planning( SA Strongly Agree, SD Strongly Disagree)*

| Statement   | SA (%) | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Decision |
|---|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|------|----------|
| Programmes aimed at the media audience encourage parents to both enroll and retain their children in school | 52.1   | 30.6      | 9.4         | 5.6          | 2.3    | 3.86 | Accept   |
| Better planning and management of education followed the communication campaigns                            | 46.3   | 32.7      | 11.6        | 6.4          | 3.0    | 3.76 | Accept   |
| Awareness of children and their rights to education was elevated through the media                          | 44.5   | 34.0      | 11.7        | 6.6          | 3.2    | 3.74 | Accept   |
| The Communication Initiatives have aided in the reduction of school dropouts in rural areas                 | 41.8   | 33.8      | 14.1        | 7.6          | 2.7    | 3.62 | Accept   |
| Collaboration of the  | 37.4   | 35.1      | 16.4        | 8.3          | 2.8    | 3.46 | Accept   |

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Media and Schools  
garners public  
accountability and trust

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The findings in Table 5 show that respondents perceive communication and media strategies to be effective in the management of education, especially in rural areas, and in safety of children. The variance in public perception, while strong, can be attributed to differences in exposure.

### **Discussion**

The study illustrates various media and communication methods used to advocate for rural education and for marginalized school-age children in Taraba State. It further illustrates the literature-informed application of integrated and unidirectional communication via digital and analogue technologies to bridge educational divides, expedite the implementation of policies, and strengthen rural community resilience. Woodruff, Meerow, Stults, and Wilkins (2022) discussed the role of adaptive methods and comprehensive communication frameworks in promoting the educational systems and other social structures' resilience and sustainability.

For the distribution of the educational materials and for encouraging enrolment of the children, the radio, community and religious sets of communication were most useful. This finding supports Abaneme et al, (2021) which states that in rural and communication for marginalized areas, especially in radio semi traditional media, communication is still very useful. Taraba's Pwashikai(2023) also described radio communication systems as having changed local communication of the area especially in the use of indigenous language to reach the people. All these reflect the radio's continuing cultural significance and the effectiveness of this medium in rural Taraba which has low educational attainment and in raising the level of education awareness and the need for education.'

Moreso, the inclusion of parents and teachers in community engagements promotes synergistic accountability in the educational planning process. James and Olaniyan (2024) describe a culture of awareness in the exercise of educational rights fostered through community workshops, advocacy in religious spaces, and child-centered public functions. With respect to the current study, the case presented by Agolli and Hasmata (2025) regarding rural, isolated, and unsafe areas describes participatory civic communication that activated community rights and responsibilities regarding educational ownership. Most of the study participants, who fell into the 10-15% range of

neutral respondents, support Rwang's (2023) assertion that displacement and isolation, and in particular, the absence of communication, constitute significant barriers to educational involvement and engagement in civic duties.

Furthermore, the primary media campaign strategies identified for educational advocacy for rural communities and vulnerable children were Focus group discussions, Advocacy, Community Meetings, and School-Based Sensitization. These results affirm the findings of Sanusi, Olaleye, and Okunoye (2020) on the strengthening of community ties and local media access and learning through participatory approaches. There are also parallels with Shohel (2022) on the education of the Rohingya refugees, where the integration of community and mass communication was highlighted as essential in building coordination and resilience in crisis-affected areas. The results go beyond creating awareness and speak to the integration of cultural practices such as festivals, storytelling, and community theatre with formal media education. Oruonye et al. (2024) describes such hybrid approaches as informational and instrumental in galvanizing community action towards development.

Inclusive education depends on frameworks of equitable communication. In this scenario, communication fosters awareness, shifts mindsets, and encourages people to access available opportunities, which is what makes communication equity fundamental. This is the bias in research conducted by Vitalis et al. (2022) and Martens et al. (2020) on rural Nigerian communities. In the context of this research, inequity in access to the infrastructure of social provision explains the inequity of access to the Internet. The statement by Kormos and Wisdom (2021) that equitable access to complex learning technologies and methods will remain a goal if rural communities are ignored illustrates this inequity.

The findings illustrate the importance of the role of media in the evolution of educational planning, management, and accountability. Studies indicate that sustained communication through radio, the community educational organizations, and civic engagement builds trust in the governance of educational systems, which leads to lower school dropout rates and increased participation within the community. This partially supports the claim of Woodruff et al. (2022) that trust within fragile environments largely hinges on the existence of flexible communication. In a similar vein, Ngomba et al. (2025) notes that the emergency communication and community participation structures in Taraba, if scaled up, are well-positioned to promote dramatic improvements in public

responsiveness in the region. This research, therefore, validates the assessment by Koch and Brandt (2021) that the combination of civic and digital media and the integration of various communication channels in the public sphere are transformative interventions that deeply amplify the access and articulate the voices of impoverished, marginalized children and their families.

The rationale for incorporating media into the governance of education focuses on strengthening resilience and expanding incorporation, especially in rural areas. Communication reform aimed at the specific points made by Bettenhausen, Winterer and Colvin (2021) could alleviate the knowledge gap in rural education. Bettenhausen et al. do not view child poverty and learning gaps in rural areas as cultural failures, but rather governance failures. Williams (2021) and Galbin (2021) provide further corroborating evidence to argue that, in addition to building awareness, the functions of communication serve as the conduit for action among teachers, parents and policymakers. Such views converge on the idea that in rural Taraba State, the education system can only progress if bottom-up incorporation is facilitated through media communication resources that have been designed and developed at the community level.

### **Conclusion**

This study looked at media and communication responses to rural education in Taraba State: education planning and management as pathways for protecting vulnerable children. The result shows that for rural education to be effective, the communicative aspects of the education system must be addressed. The radio, community meetings, and faith-based organizations can help in securing and enrolling vulnerable children and protecting children's rights. The communication gaps may be filled with the new communication technologies, social media, and school-based sensitization activities.

Moreso, advocacy for education in Taraba State derives from the culture of accessibility, geographical proximity, and the use of participatory communication approaches. Consequently, communication and media, beyond the provision of information, foster social cohesion and serve as development instruments that forge linkages among policymakers, teachers, and the community. Furthermore, equitable education and inclusive learning, especially directed toward rural and vulnerable populations, calls for an urgent communication strategy that reconciles grassroots realities with the national and global agendas for education and development.

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