

Role of *Africa Media Review* in the Sustainable Development of African Communication Research

By David O. Edeani

Abstract

This study examines the nature of communication research published in *Africa Media Review*, with particular reference to the subject areas of the published studies, and the extent to which the researchers have used some of the minimal scientific procedures in executing their studies. Since the *AMR* is the leading African communication journal which regularly publishes African communication research, it is an appropriate place to begin this process of empirical excursion into the present state of communication research on the continent.

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Le Role de la "Revue des Media Africains" Dans le Developpement Soutenable de la Recherche Dans la Communication Africaine

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Résumé:

Il s'agit d'une étude centrée sur la nature de la recherche publiée dans la "Revue des Média Africains" (African Media Review-AMR) et, tout particulièrement, les domaines soulignés dans les études déjà publiées. De plus on fait une analyse du niveau jusqu'auquel les chercheurs ont profité des procédures scientifiques, dans la réalisation de leurs études. Puisque l'AMR (qui publie régulièrement des travaux de recherche sur la communication) occupe la première place parmi les journaux de la communication en Afrique, il s'avère ainsi le forum approprié pour cette excursion empirique, qui cherche à élucider la situation actuelle de la recherche dans le domaine de la communication dans ce continent.

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Introduction

The volume, scope, and quality of research and theory development in any academic discipline are among the important yardsticks for the assessment of the status of the discipline. The quantity of research and theory produced, and the extent to which the major issues and problems of the discipline are reflected in the available theories and research, all provide concrete evidence of scholars' awareness of and genuine concern with the real interest of the discipline. The quality of the accumulated theory and research demonstrate vividly the scientific skill and capability of scholars in the field.

It is through periodic and careful studies of the intellectual activities of the community of scholars in the field, in the areas of theory development and research productivity, that the vitally needed information on these crucial factors of awareness, concern, scientific skill, and capability is obtained.

There have been a number of studies on the various aspects of communication research at various periods of time, and the findings have usually pointed to progress of one kind or the other. For example, in one of the earliest assessments of the status of communication research in the United States of America, Swindler (1954) reported a significant increase in quantitative research carried out by graduate degree candidates and journalism staff members in universities across the country. In his study of "Twenty Years of Journalism Research" as published in some of the leading journals in the field, Schramm (1957) found a clear-cut trend toward the study of the communication process in its relation to society, as well as an increasing methodological emphasis on the use of the various quantitative approaches of the behavioural sciences.

Relatively recently, other studies on scholarly activities in our field have found increasing attention being paid to economic aspects of communication in American mass communication research published in some of the major journals in the field (Miller and Gandy, 1991) and "a shift in the character of communication research in Latin America ... toward intellectual

self-sufficiency built around an emerging school of Latin American critical scholars, journals, and institutions" (Chaffee, Gomez-Palacio, and Rogers, 1990, p. 1023). With respect to the situation in Britain and other parts of Europe, "much mass Communication research is now neither simply administrative nor critical ... (and) the argument in favour of empirical investigation of any amenable theoretical development has largely been won" (Livingstone, 1993, p. 7). Also in Asia, "there has been a considerable shift from media studies to message studies (and) the focus has shifted to the broadcast media from the print media" (Behera, 1992, p. 78).

How about Africa? What is the status of communication research in Africa at the present time when definite trends in-progress toward maturity are steadily being recorded in other parts of the world? Are there any clearly identifiable features which can be used to characterize African communication research?

Not very long ago, two African communication scholars now based in the United States asked the very pointed and challenging question: "What contributions have African communication scholars made to the perennial questions of the definition of mass communication research or to the debates over what constitute appropriate problems or appropriate modes of inquiry for studying communication problems?" They answered their own question by stating that "as a group, the contributions of African scholars ... have generally been minimal" (M'Bayo and Nwanko, 1989, p. 9). Theirs was by no means an isolated viewpoint, for Okigbo (1987) had earlier decried what he observed as "a lack of theoretical orientation in African communication research" and the failure of African communication scholars to develop "authentic theories of African communication," all of which he attributed to the absence of a philosophy of African communication.

To the extent that these observations have any basis in fact, they constitute a serious cause for concern. Unless we have some readily identifiable methodological orientations or paradigms which appropriately order our research results, we

cannot legitimately claim that we are effectively addressing African communication problems, not to talk of making any meaningful contributions to the advancement of the field. As Alfred G. Smith (1977, p. 79) has rightly argued:

Unless our view of communication is somehow systematic, our work in communication will be chaotic. Individual studies, courses, and operations can be adequate without a comprehensive framework, but the output of the total field will be an unholy mess. Unless we view communication through some sturdy principles that are profound and sweeping, flexible yet well ordered, the field will be just a grab bag of odds and ends.

Well over a decade ago - precisely in August 1981 - communication researchers met at a UNESCO-sponsored emergency meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, "to take stock of the communication research capabilities of the African region, to define research needs and priorities, and to propose concrete actions for developing and strengthening regional capabilities" (Ugboajah, 1987, p. 11). In making its extensive recommendations on how and where emphases should be placed in African communication research, the meeting noted that "the interplay between communication processes and the forces of Africa's culture and history (is) bound to give communication in Africa a different profile from that in other regions of the world," and strongly expressed "the need to achieve regional self-reliance in the development of communication research" by African communication scholars (p. 11).

The "different profile" identified for African communication was clearly a call for a definite African research approach to the understanding of African communication problems, and the urging for "self-reliance" was a suggestion that this research approach should widely permeate African communication scholars' work, with the approach not being inferior to the contributions being made by communication scholars in other parts of the world. Of course, a self-reliant community of scholars would not by any means ignore the scientific work and activities of fellow scholars elsewhere, but it must ensure that

there are full use and progressive development and refinement of its own theoretical perspectives and research methodological orientations and instruments, which are in essence an important part of its own contributions to the universal pool of scientific knowledge in the particular discipline in question.

In an effort to explore the present situation in the African world of communication research, the following six questions have been posed for investigation:

1. To what extent do published articles in *Africa Media Review* contain new theoretical propositions?
2. To what extent do published research studies in *Africa Media Review* contain instances of theory testing?
3. How far do published articles in the journal contain proposals for the use of new research methodologies?
4. How many of the published studies in the journal are focused on problems pertaining to development communication?
5. To what extent are there empirical studies among the articles published in the journal?
6. What is the nature of statistical tests applied to published research in the journal?

Answers to these six questions would enable us to know, at least as a beginning, whether and in what ways we are really clearly aware of African communication's "different profile" which we as scholars have a responsibility to analyze and study. The answers will also enable us to know how far, and in what respects, we are working toward the development of an African identity in communication research—an identity which we could rightly claim to be our own legitimate contribution to scholarship in our field. As the framing of each of them shows, these questions are deliberately meant to be exploratory in tone, without any suggestion as to what the results are likely to look like.

The definitions of the major terms contained in the above questions are as follows:

Theoretical Proposition: This is a full-blown theory or theoretical model specifying some important variables or concepts that are said to be related, showing how and why they are related, and indicating through some kinds of data how their relationships would help to solve some communication problem or problems.

Theory Testing: By the term theory testing is meant the verification of a hypothesis or other theoretical statement derived from a theory or model through an empirical research procedure that is capable of being repeated by other researchers.

New Research Methodology: This is a research procedure that is completely different from the ones that have usually been applied to the study of certain communication problems and which is meant to produce more valid scientific information.

Development Communication: Development communication is the use of all forms of communication in the reporting, publicizing, and promotion of development at all levels of society.

Empirical Study: This is a systematic and controlled scientific investigation that contains evidence, usually in the form of data, that are amenable to verification by other researchers.

Qualitative Study: This is a scholarly research analysis of historical and contemporary events through which evidence usually in the form of nominal information, is produced.

Statistical Test: What is meant here is the application of a statistical technique to the analysis of data with a view to producing reliable and valid information to be used in making scientific inference.

Method

All issues of *Africa Media Review* from Volume 1 No. 1 published in June 1986 to Volume 8 No. 1 published during the first four

months of 1994 were used in the study. These made a total of 22 issues, and all published articles in every issue were content analyzed. In other words, the total population of articles in all the issues rather than a sample was used, since the population was conveniently manageable and the objective of this exploratory study is not so much to make inferences to any larger population but rather to see what the published research looks like (Erippendorff, 1980; Stempel III, 1981; Lacy and Riffe, 1993).

The articles were coded in terms of the seven key variables defined above and of a few other related terms such as the following: Research Method Used, Use of Hypothesis, Data Illustrating New Research Methodology, Mass Media Focus, and Kind of Development Emphasized. The coding was done by the author with the help of two other coders. The three coders coded all articles in the same two issues of the journal in turn, and the inter-coder agreement arrived at was 87%.

Result

The 22 issues of *AMR* used in the present study contained a total of 153 research articles which were all content analyzed. Nearly one-half of these published articles (48%) were devoted to one kind of the "mass media" or the other, close to that number (45%) were given to "communication" in its various forms, while the remaining 9% were devoted to the study of the professional practice of "journalism."

In terms of the first research question posed in this study pertaining to new theoretical propositions in the published research articles, only seven new such propositions were made during the period covered by the study. The seven propositions which come close to meeting the definition and some of the conditions explicated about a theory/theoretical model are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: New Theoretical Propositions Published in the Journal

Name of Theory/Model	Theory	Model	Author/s
Multi-Media Model for Information Campaigns	No	Yes	I.E. Nwosu
Agenda Dynamics Model	No	Yes	C.B. Pratt
Verbal Model of Journalism	No	Yes	M. Traber
Rural Concentric Circle Philosophy (RCCP) Model of Rural News Reporting	No	Yes	I.E.Nwosu
Ethnic Harmony Model	No	Yes	O. Mgbejume
Mass Mobilization Model	No	Yes	W.M.F.Shija
Need-Based Integrative Model of Communication	No	Yes	P.O. Nwosu & E. Megwa

As can be seen from that table, none of the seven propositions is a full-fledged theory, rather, each of them is a theoretical model which needs a great deal of clearer conceptualization, definitions of terms, justifications of claimed relationships between and along the key terms, and so forth in order for these models to really aid us in African communication research.

While a few of the authors made some attempts to go beyond the mere naming of their models to state what roles these models are capable of performing in the communication process, the majority did not. In order to present a theory or theoretical model for serious and meaningful use in scientific research, the theorist must at minimum do the following: (1) clearly specify the concepts making up the theory or model and provide their conceptual and operational definitions; (2) indicate the relationships of the concepts; (3) justify the concepts' relationships by

marshalling out convincing arguments on the *why's* of these relationships as indicated by existing theory, by previous research, by social structure or other societal factors, or by sheer common sense; (4) show how the theory or model is likely to solve the particular scientific problem or problems in question; and (5) provide some data or analytical evidence yielded from the testing of one or more of the hypotheses or research questions derived from the theory or model to see if, and to what extent the relationships specified for the components or concepts of the theory or model are tenable in practice (Reynolds, 1975; Winton, 1974; Stinchcombe, 1968; Stogdill, 1972; Chafetz, 1979; Donohew and Palmgreen, 1981; Ugboajah, 1987).

A great deal of ingenuity went into the conceptions and constructions of the models identified, but what they lack are careful explications and illustrative evidences or data. Shija (1990) made an attempt to do a study related to his Mass Mobilization Model, but the study was based neither on a hypothesis nor on a research question derived *directly* from a theoretical statement contained in his model in question.

Very surprisingly, only six of the 153 studies published set out to test substantive hypotheses derived from any existing theories or theoretical perspectives. Thus, even in the few instances where there were some hypotheses here and there, most of those hypotheses were not backed up by any identifiable theories. What all these meant, therefore, was that a large majority of the research published in *Africa Media Review* during the period covered by the present study were devoid of any conceptual bases one could think of.

With respect to the question pertaining to the extent to which published articles contained any proposals for new research methodologies, there were only two such new¹ substantive research Methodologies proposed, as are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: New Research Methodologies Proposed in Published Studies

<i>Name of Methodology</i>	<i>Author/s</i>
Focus Group Method	I. Obeng-Quaidoo
Q-Survey Method	P.O. Nwosu& E. Megwa

The two new Methodologies were the Focus Group Method by Isaac Obeng-Quaidoo (1987) and the Q-Surv Method by Peter O. Nwosu and Eronini Megwa (1993). The Focus Group Method is a research method in which several respondents or people are interviewed together in groups as against the practice in survey research where respondents are usually interviewed individually. The Q-Surv Method is a combination of the usual survey research method with a Q-sort research method in which respondents are each given a relatively large number of cards containing statements pertaining to the subject matter of the research, and are asked to arrange the statements in certain orders (usually normally distributed) which truly represent how each of them feels about this subject-matter of the study. In other words, how each respondent arranges the cards containing the Q-sort statements represents his or her own perception of the issue in question.

Both sets of researchers made good efforts to describe in some detail how their proposed methods could be used in actual research situations. In fact, Dr. Obeng-Quaidoo did even much more than this. He, first of all, suggested his Focus Group Method in one journal article, using what he called African "core value boundaries" (1986) as his justification for preferring this method to the ordinary survey research. He used another article in another issue of *AMR* (1987) to fully describe the method, to define key terms, to explain how the groups to be interviewed could be selected and interviewed, and to discuss the strengths and limitations of the method. Finally, Dr. Obeng-Quaidoo used yet another article in the journal (1988) to present research

evidence arising from the actual research use of the Focus Group Method to illustrate the efficacy of the method.

For all these, Dr. Obeng-Quaidoo deserves the very sincere commendation of all of us in African communication research, for he has surely made an important contribution to the field with the Focus Group Method, irrespective of the fact that I disagree strongly with him on his discussion of the African concept of time as a part of his core value boundaries for his new method, and that I have equally strong doubts about certain other aspects of the Focus Group Method. But I believe that this is not the proper forum to allow the debate on these reservations to be joined.

Table 3 shows clearly that we in African communication research have not begun to embrace seriously the research methodologies that are increasingly dominant in our field.

Table 3: Research Methods Used

Research Method	N	%
Essay/Commentary	57	37.25
Descriptive Analysis	38	24.84
Survey Research	21	13.73
Content Analysis	18	11.76
Desk Research	9	5.88
Historical Research	6	3.92
Experimental Research	1	0.65
Focus Group Analysis	1	0.65
Legal Research	1	0.65
Secondary Analysis	1	0.65
	<u>153</u>	<u>100.00</u>

Ordinary essays/commentaries and verbal descriptive analyses of information took more than 60% of all published articles in the AMR for the nearly nine years covered by the present

study, whereas only three of the mainstream research methods in our field—history, content analysis and survey research (a mere 30% of the lot)—were given some recognizable attention for the period.

No tests for statistical significance have been attempted on the results in the present study because such tests are inappropriate in the present situation where the entire population of *AMR* was used in the content study.

Research Question No. 4 sought to know how many of the published articles in the *AMR* were focused on problems pertaining to development communication. Pleasantly surprisingly, a hefty 91% of all the articles published dealt with development in all its facets, and 35% of these (Table 4) pertained to development communication proper. Thus, only about 8% of all the articles published in the journal for the period did not address any topic of development.

Table 4: Extent of Research Focus on Development Communication

Area of Research Focus	N	%
Development Communication	54	35.29
Development/Modernization	86	56.21
Non-Development Issue	13	8.50
	153	100.00

Table 5: Frequencies of Research Focus on Different Domains of Development

Area of Research Focus	N	%
Development Communication		
National Development Comm.	39	25.49
Rural Development Comm.	10	6.54
Personal/Human Development Comm.	3	1.96

Institutional Development Communication	2	1.31
Technological Development Communication	0	0.00
	<u>54</u>	<u>35.30</u>
<i>Development/Modernization</i>		
National Development	47	30.72
Rural Development	12	7.84
Personal/Human Development	13	8.50
Institutional Development	13	8.50
Technological Development	1	0.65
	<u>86</u>	<u>56.21</u>
<i>Non-Development Issue</i>	13	8.50
	<u>153</u>	<u>100.00</u>

We have used the expression "pleasantly surprisingly" because even though we expected that African communication researchers would pay substantial attention to development matters, we never thought that such attention would be so massive as we have now found it to be.

Development issues were categorized into two - Development Communication and Development/Modernization in general terms—and each of the two was further broken down into five subcategories as are shown in Table 5. In the Development Communication category, national development took the lion's

share of research attention, followed by rural development, and technological development was completely ignored. In the Development/Modernization category, national development also received the highest research attention; practically equal attention was paid to rural development, personal/ human development, and institutional development, and only one study was done in the area of technological development.

The extent of empirical studies published in *AMR* during the period of the study was the subject matter of Research Question 5. But before going further, we must hasten to clear one misconception which very often exists in our research literature—that of equating quantitative research with empirical research without any qualifications. Empirical studies are usually quantitative, but a quantitative study may or may not be empirical in character. A great deal depends upon whether the study is carefully conceptualized, is executed systematically with the necessary definitions and controls applied, and the needed assumptions and techniques for the production of the required objective evidence (data) are all applied. If these conditions are lacking, the study may contain quantitative evidence and still fail to qualify as an empirical study, but rather would be regarded as a qualitative study. What this boils down to is that it is not just the mere containing of data that qualifies a study as an empirical one; a qualitative study could very well contain evidentiary data (Christians and Carey, 1981; Stevenson, 1983). What clearly distinguish these two traditions of scientific inquiry are their different procedures for seeking knowledge as we have defined them earlier in this paper.

With this clarification, we can now present the results obtained in respect of Research Question 5. As Table 6 shows, empirical/administrative research constituted only 27% of the total studies identified in the content study, whereas qualitative/critical studies made up the rest of 73%. A t-test or Chi-square test on the data in Table 6 is inappropriate since a whole population of *AMR* was used rather than a sample of it. As we have stated in the preceding paragraph, desk research, historical research, focus group procedure, and legal research

Table 6: Extent of Published Empirical Versus Non-Empirical Studies

Kind of Research	N
<i>Empirical/Administrative</i>	
Survey Research	21
Content Analysis	18
Experimental Research	1
Secondary Analysis	<u>1</u>
	41 (27%)
<i>Qualitative/Critical</i>	
Essay/Commentary	57
Descriptive Analysis	38
Desk Research	9
Historical Research	6
Focus Group Analysis	1
Legal Research	<u>1</u>
	112 (73%)

could each contain some kinds of data as parts of their results, yet they would not, by those means, qualify as empirical studies but rather as qualitative studies, but rather as qualitative studies.

Most of us are aware, I am sure, that empirical research has become synonymous with "administrative" research, and qualitative research is also known as "critical" research. In fact, one could even say that these are the two leading schools of intellectual thought in the field of communication theory and research, hence the use of the two compound terms "empirical/administrative research" and "qualitative/critical research" in this paper. This dichotomy of thinking is not new, for it has its very roots in the centuries-old philosophy of science empiricism versus rationalism debate, and despite Lazarsfeld's expressed confidence in the 1940s that there would eventually be an "integration" of administrative and critical theoretical stand-

points (Melody and Mansell, 1983), the debate continues.

The arguments on both sides of the debate are extremely complex, and we cannot afford to go into them in detail in this short paper, except to say that each side accuses the other of not doing science properly. According to Smythe and Van Dinh (1993) empirical research is "administrative" in character because scientists who are favourably disposed to large public and private organizations receive huge research funds from such organizations for studies that produce concrete statistical results showing how the organizations can operate successfully, and also how those which are profit-making can make more profits. Qualitative research is "critical" in nature because scientists who are not favourably disposed to large organizations rarely, if ever, receive research funds from such organizations, and are usually strongly concerned with how existing organizations can be reshaped to serve society better, using critical analytic research procedures to try to achieve this objective. McChesney (1993, p. 99) emphasizes this change aspect of the objective of critical research very strongly as follows: "The entire purpose of critical work is to not merely interpret the world, but to change it and change it radically...."

Smythe and Van Dinh's are perhaps two very extreme perceptions of "administrative" research and "critical" research. People who do empirical research do not necessarily have to be favourably disposed toward large organizations in all respects, neither do most of them have to receive research funding from any organizations in order to do their empirical research. By the same token, scientists who do qualitative studies are not by any means always throwing brick bats at public and private organizations in order to help achieve organizational reforms, neither do they necessarily shun research funding in carrying out their studies.

Decision as to which research tradition to embrace is perhaps more a function of a number of other salient factors such as subject areas of research interest, theoretical and research methodological skills, personal philosophical orientations, and even the kind of normative standards which one has

internalized from one's role-model professors during graduate education, rather than whether or not corporate research funding is available. Also, the nature of one's perception of the environment in which one is operating plays an important role in shaping the research practice. How does one perceive Africa's communication problems, for instance?

The concern of Research Question No. 6 is the nature of statistical tests applied to published research in *AMR*. About 33% of published articles contained some kinds of figures in the presentations of results, while 67% contained none. The various kinds of statistical strategies used in the analyses of data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Statistical Techniques Used in the Analysis and Presentation of Data

Statistical Techniques	N
Percentages	25
Raw Data*	9
Chi-Square Test	8
Analysis of Variance	3
Regression Analysis	2
Multiple Approach	1
Bar Graph	1
Correlation Analysis	1
Sub-total	50 (33%)
No Statistical Tests Applied	103 (67%)

(Raw data strictly do not constitute statistically analyzed data. They are included here merely to complete the listing of numbers of published articles containing quantitative information.)

A Chi-square test on the data in Table 7 is not appropriate, since no sample was used in this study. It is clear from this table that very few statistical procedures were used in data analyses,

and that exactly one half (25) of the 50 instances in which statistical data were presented in the published studies were ordinary percentages which provided no more than descriptive² information in the studies concerned. Also, as many as 9 cases (18% of the 50 instances) contained only raw data³, which meant that the researchers made no attempts to use statistical analyses to make their results more understandable and meaningful.

Discussion

From the results presented in this study, would one say that African communication researchers, whose research contributions to the *AMR* as analyzed, are effectively playing the scholarly role of trying conscientiously to understand the communication problems of the continent and that the journal itself, by publishing these scholarly contributions as it has done, is really playing its role conscientiously toward the sustainable development of African communication research?

Surely, the 153 articles published in the journal during the period covered by this study can be legitimately regarded as 153 genuine, conscientious efforts by their authors to try to contribute to the scientific understanding, of communication problems in Africa. The *AMR*, by striving despite all odds to publish these articles regularly over the years can equally justifiably congratulate itself that it is playing an important role in this understanding and thus by extension is contributing to the sustainable development of Africa's communication research.

Having made these broad general statements, however, we must look at the results presented above more closely. The seven theoretical models identified in the study constituted a clear realization by their authors that new theoretical productions were needed for the effective study of some aspects of African communication problems, and the authors believed that their models would make the necessary contributions to that effective study. Unfortunately, the model-makers have not yet done a good job of conceptualization of their models, nor have they presented any data to demonstrate the utility of these

models. Also, this researcher is not aware that the model builders have made any attempts anywhere else to develop the models any further, either conceptually or empirically, nor that other scholars have picked them up to do this necessary work of development. Thus, what seemed at first sight to be enthusiastic and spirited new contributions to theoretical scholarship seem now to have been unable to make any impact in advancing African communication research.

The other extreme situation where the bulk of published research in AMR is devoid of any background theories or theoretical perspectives is equally problematic for African communication research—a problem which incidentally was discovered in a previous review of West African mass communication research (Edeani, 1988, p. 169). It means that this accumulated body of research in AMR is seriously lacking in the most important ingredient which makes organized scientific knowledge useful. These two serious problems taken together lead one to the painful agreement with Stevenson (1983, p. 269) in his argument that “data without adequate theory are intellectually sterile, but we also must acknowledge that theory, unless subjected to rigorous and wide-ranging empirical tests, is merely polemic.”

These theoretical problems are particularly troubling when one realises that this is one of the aspects of Western scientific influence in Africa we often criticize the loudest. We very often argue that it is inappropriate to use Western theories meant for Western societies to try to do research in Africa. Another aspect of the criticism is that it is inappropriate to use Western research instruments to collect communication data in Africa. If we make these criticisms, some of which are surely justified, we have an obligation to develop and use in African communication research better theories/models and better research instruments that are substantially indigenous to Africa. Unfortunately, the results of the present study indicate that, except for the Focus Group Method, we have not begun to make the necessary effort, if the articles published in AMR during the period covered by this study are a reflection of what we have

been able to do in this area of scholarship in African communication research.

Despite the theoretical and methodological problems we have just discussed, there is some cheering news nevertheless. That as many as 91% of the published articles were devoted to development in its various forms, including development communication, is something to be happy about. It shows that African communication researchers have correctly diagnosed some of the most urgent communication research problem areas of the continent and are tackling the problems head-on. This research attention to development is understandable in view of the central place which development occupies in Africa today, as it does in a number of other Third World regions. A little over one-third of the research was devoted to development communication, including rural development communication.

But the absence of studies in the area of technological development communication is an indication that we have not fully appreciated the great importance of the new communication technologies that are fast modifying and very often completely replacing much of the communication equipment, production processes, and distribution strategies that existed for ages. Another plausible explanation may, however, be that the new technologies have not found their way sufficiently enough into African media houses to prompt the attention of researchers. Whatever the reasons may be, the absence of research in this area of communication needs to be redressed.

The percentage of empirical/administrative research (27%) as compared to that of qualitative/critical research (72%) for a relatively short research period of eight years compares favourably with situations in other places at similar stages of communication research development. For example, the percentage of quantitative research published in *Journalism Quarterly* in the United States between 1937 and 1946 was only about 15%, but then progress in the quantitative approaches was so rapid that a mere ten years thereafter, by 1956, the percentages of quantitative and non-quantitative studies were almost at a fairly even

balance—48% quantitative and 52% non-quantitative (Schramm, 1957). Schramm attributed this rapid progress in the application of quantitative approaches to "the growing availability of basic data, the development of (new) research tools, and increasing institutional support for field research" (1957, p. 91). One hopes that despite many problems of basic data, tools, culture, residential topography, and research funding, good progress in empirical research practice in African communication will continue to be made.

The 33% statistical tests applied to the data in the study were closely reflective of the proportion of empirical/ administrative vs. qualitative/critical research strategies we have discussed above. In fact what brought the percentage to 33% here was the nine studies that reported ordinary raw data (Table 7) without using any statistical analyses to produce more useful statistical results. The percentage of statistical tests, even if we subtract the portion of it reflecting the raw data, can be regarded as fairly adequate for the short period covered by the present study, and at this relatively early stage in African communication research. If more of the published studies were solidly anchored on theoretical conceptualizations, there would have been more research questions and more hypotheses formulated, and thus more statistical tests carried out.

Conclusion

A clearly identifiable trend in African communication research as reflected in the pages of *Africa Media Review* is researchers' focus on development problems, including development communication issues. There is a definite possibility that the strong research emphasis on development may one day lead to the construction of (an) African theory or theories that would truly replace the dominant paradigm of development given to our field by such non-African scholars as Schramm, Lerner, and Rogers. This will hopefully go hand in hand with an increasing reliance on, and refinements of, empirical and qualitative research strategies to establish an African communication research identity.

Surprisingly, however, some important areas, such as Oramedia and News Flow/New World Information and Communication Order, which had been expected to command good research attention, were nearly absent from the published studies, except for one or two studies on news flow, and passing references here and there to both areas by a number of researchers. The concept of Oramedia held a great deal of promise in the originality and authenticity of the ideas giving it life when Professor Frank Okwu Ugboajah introduced it and rooted for its use in the proper understanding and appreciation of the structure and culture of African traditional communication.

It was perhaps this originality and authenticity which sold Oramedia easily to African communication scholars, making them look inwards to identify and appreciate indigenous African communication channels of various kinds, and to begin to think of their possible relationship to the modern mass media. But careful research has not been done to test many of the claims made for Oramedia. Such research needs to be done.

In the News Flow/New World Information and Communication Order area, Western researchers have been trying to show that criticisms of Western media by African governments and scholars are unjustified because: (1) there is little evidence that Western media deliberately under-report Africa or distort African events, for the nature of modern world news constrains the Western news agencies to report the news in the way they do; and (2) African media do not report Africa better. While it is not necessary to engage these researchers in the debate of their results, African communication researchers need to be sufficiently concerned about what Africa can do to free itself from Western cultural domination through communication.

Specifically, (1) what are African governments and media organizations doing to facilitate the ability of the African media to report the world and Africa for Africans⁴ rather than depending on the Western news agencies? (2) what definite steps are African governments taking to encourage African entrepreneurs to go into the communication business in sufficiently big ways to be in a position one day to compete effectively with the giant

Western communication octopuses?, and (3) what short-term policies do African governments have in place to check the detrimental influences of these Western cultural invasions through direct broadcast satellites and imported films and videos, as in fact some Western nations themselves, such as Canada and Britain, are doing in respect of American cultural imports?

The outstanding limitation of the present study is the non-inclusion of African communication research published elsewhere than in *Africa Media Review*, such as those published as books and book chapters, and in the *Africa Media Monograph Series*. But this was not an inadvertent omission as we stated at beginning of this paper, but rather a deliberate decision to focus attention on our most important professional academic journal that is expected to be publishing the most important research productions of our scholars. Nevertheless, future research needs to look at what are being published in these other channels, to see how they differ from or resemble the studies published by *AMR* and analyzed in this paper.

Our purpose in this study has not been to cast aspersions on colleagues, for we ourselves have sometimes been guilty of some of the flaws we have pointed out. Our purpose has rather been to highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses, with the hope that we all can work together to reinforce our strengths by improving upon them and take steps to eliminate the weaknesses as far as we can in the interest of building a virile African communication research. It is clear from the results of the study that the editors of *Africa Media Review* need to do a more rigorous job of gatekeeping and quality control to ensure the sustainable development of that vigorous and responsive communication research culture we want for Africa.

Notes

1. The two new research methods—Focus Group Method and Q-Surv Method—are “new” in the sense that they are just being introduced into African communication research.

They have been in use for a long time elsewhere, especially the United States.

2. This statement should *not* be interpreted to mean that descriptive information is not useful and important. Some research problems may, and very often do, require the production of only descriptive statistical results, such as means, standard deviations, percentages, tables, graphs, etc. At other times, these descriptive statistics are needed to perform the preliminary but important function of describing or summarizing data before the presentation of higher statistical values for hypotheses tests and inferential interpretations of results. Some of the published articles in the present study that used only percentages in the presentation of their results required the extraction and presentation of higher statistical results, such as chi-square, t-test, regression analysis, etc., after the descriptive percentages in order that the necessary inferences which the results from the *samples* used (my emphasis) called for could be made.
3. Raw data provide little-to-no useful scientific information if some kinds of statistical analyses have not been applied to the data to produce some interpretable and meaningful statistical information. Thus, "results" presented in the form of raw data are as good as no results, until the raw data are statistically analyzed (see Sidney J. Armore, *Statistics: A Conceptual Approach*, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 21-27).
4. No meaningful research was found in the present study on the operations, problems, and impacts of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA), and none was done on the extent to which African media houses have their staff correspondents covering African states other than their own or covering non-African countries and regions of the world.

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