



## Communication Strategy of Implementation of Economic Policy of Renewed Hope Agenda in Rivers State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study investigated various strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of Renewed Hope, Consolidation, and Continuity in Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: identify the communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda; investigate the perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope of the Government and examine the barrier that hampers the communication strategies of government on the implementation of renewed hope agenda on economic policy. The study adopted a survey research design with a total population of 7,407,394. The study employed the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula to arrive at 400 and used a multi-stage sampling technique as well as a questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The results of the study revealed that; the use of jingles, television and social media were the major Communication strategies the government adopted in implementing the Renewed Hope economic agenda in Rivers State and the perception Rivers State residents have of the economic policy of Renewed Hope is negative and that the economy would not be better. It was recommended that The Rivers State government should adopt the use of newspapers/magazines or other print media of communication since they offer information about economic policy in detail and The residents of Rivers State should have a positive perception and trust the government of the day.

**Keywords:** Communication, Communication strategy, Economic Policy, Renewed Hope Agenda, Rivers State

### Introduction

The economic sector of any nation is seen as the backbone of the country or state. Nnabuike et al. (2020) posit that a country whose economic sector is robust and viable has little to worry about overall development. Nigeria is a democratic nation with divergent cultures and socioeconomic problems. This has given rise to economic woes, hardship and starvation among the citizens of Nigeria. Despite being the largest economy on the African continent, Nigeria has made slow progress in the provision of quality education for all, dilapidated infrastructure, and poor welfare services. As the most populous country in Africa, it is also home to the highest number of out-of-school children in the world (estimated at around 20 million) (Fadokun, 2023). Available statistics from a recent survey by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics indicate that inequality and poverty are deep and pervasive with an estimated 70 per cent of the population living in poverty. This scenario posits that the economic growth process in the country itself is not productive and has not created an equal opportunity that emphasizes the creation of equal access for all.

Successive governments of Nigeria over the years have initiated various economic policies to ameliorate this menace. For instance, the introduction of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), The State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS), and The NAPEP as a medium-term planning strategy to meet the economic needs of the country (Ikeanyibe, 2017; Nnabuike et al., 2020). The policy according to Ikeanyibe (2017) contains all the envisaged policies and programmes of the federal government for the period 2003-2007 and far beyond and serves as the fountain of the much-touted Obasanjo's reforms. NEEDS is not only a macro-economic plan document but also a comprehensive vision, goals and principles of a new Nigeria that would be made possible through four key policies of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty eradication and value reorientation. Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua enunciated a seven-point agenda Plus Two Special Interest Areas to tackle the numerous problems facing The Nigerian economy. These

include power and energy, infrastructure, food security, wealth creation, transport, land reform, security and education (CBN, nd). The Jonathan Administration launched the Transformation

Agenda designed to improve the productive capacity of the Nigerian economy by increasing the level of human capital development/accumulation. However, the administration of Bola Amed Tinibu in 2023 came up with the ‘Renewed Hope Agenda’ as an economic policy. The Renewed Hope Agenda of the administration of President Bola Amed Tinibu unleashes Nigerians' full economic potential focusing on job creation, access to capital for small and large businesses, inclusiveness, the rule of law, and the fight against hunger, poverty, and corruption. Government at various levels, state and local government have keyed into the Renewed Hope economic policy. They appear to adopt different communication strategies such as traditional mode (town crier), radio, television, social media, town hall meetings, and billboards to sell the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda. Nonetheless, the dominant communication strategies adopted for the implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda in Rivers State as well as the perception Rivers State residents have of the Renewed Hope, economic Agenda pose a concern to Rivers State residents and researchers alike. According to Nnabuife et al. (2020), economic policy or reform is essential for the creation of economic growth and for improving the living standard of the citizens. However, communication is undoubtedly the oracle or instrument used in the propagation of various economic policies. Communication is also a potent force in building and sustaining a viable economy of a country (Odionye & Nwala, 2020). The communication strategy used for the enhancement and sustenance of the Renewed Hope Agenda of the Present Bola Tinibu in Rivers State is yet to be ascertained. The study investigated, the communication strategy of implementation of the Economic Policy of Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### Statement of the Problem

Countries all over the world, be it Britain, America even Africa make economic policies. These economic policies help each of the countries to control food security, economic index as well as the standard of living of the citizens. The economic development of any country is measured by a sustainable increase in property and quality of life through innovation, lowered transaction costs, and utilisation of capacities towards the responsible production and diffusion of goods and services. However, each Nigerian President has made different economic policies with the promises of turning the economy of the country around. Despite these policies, Nigeria's economy has been perceived as poor, given the high cost of products, poor infrastructure, high level of illiteracy, poor health care services and the number considered as poor or living below average. The present administration of Bola Amed Tinibu has come up with an economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda. The agenda focuses on job creation, access to capital for small and large businesses, inclusiveness, the rule of law, and the fight against hunger, poverty, and corruption. Government at various levels including Federal, state and local government have keyed into the Renewed Hope economic policy. It appears that the indices used to measure the level of economic development of people in Rivers State such as cost of products, education, health care services, infrastructure, GDP and living standard of the people are still in a poor state.

Every government policy at all levels is driven and implemented through communication. Rivers State is one of the states in the Niger Delta and one of the richest States in Nigeria. It was radio, television, newspapers, magazines, social media, and interpersonal communication like town hall meetings to implement other government programmes and policies. The residents of Rivers State are always complaining about the economic policies of the previous government because they have addressed or improved the economy of the state. Items in the markets are very expensive due to the removal of fuel subsidies. Every resident of Rivers State appears to complain about the present economy of Nigeria given the high cost of living. Could this affect the implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda of the present administration in Rivers State? The communication strategy adopted to drive and implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope Agenda in Rivers State has not been ascertained. Not only that, the perception Rivers State residents have of the Renewed Hope economic Agenda of the present administration is a concern. It is on this premise the study investigated various communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study

1. identify the communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda
2. Investigate the perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope of the Government.

3. Examine the barriers that hampers the communication strategies of government on the implementation of renewed hope agenda on economic policy.

### Research Questions

The researchers formulated the following research questions

1. What are the communication strategies government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda?
2. What is the perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope economic policy?
3. What are the barriers that hampers the communication strategies of government on the implementation of renewed hope agenda on economic policy?

### Review of Related Literature

The economic policy of any government is vital to the overall development of the society. According to Nnabuike et al. (2020), it is through the economic policies of any government that, the government enhance massive industrialisation, generates employment, improves the living standard of its citizens, reduces poverty, increases the Per Capita Income of the citizens, infrastructure as well as Gross Domestic Product. Nnabuike et al. (2020) conducted a study on mass media and economic development in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to ascertain how mass media could be better developed to bring about economic development in Nigeria. The study reviewed that corruption is the major bane of economic growth and development in the country. The study is related to the present since they focused on communication use and economic development in Nigeria. The previous study considered mass media and economic development, the current study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State

Adogbamhe (2012) investigated economic poverty strategies plan for poverty reduction and found a disconnect between the government and the poor, and the dichotomy between the rich and the poor, NEEDS appears to be a colossal failure in terms of poverty reduction. Ojenike et al. (2014) carried out a study on the challenges of communication strategies for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Kendal rank test. The results of the study show that ownership of communication outfits, and cultural and ethno-religious issues in Nigeria were the challenges of communication for sustainable development. The study is similar to the present study because they looked at communication for national development in Nigeria. The previous study looked at the challenges of communication strategies for sustainable national development while the current study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State. In another development, Suleiman (2018) carried out a study on the media, implementation of the national communication policy and citizens' participation in development. The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not the implementation strategies of the policies had been affected by the government and the extent to which the media had performed the functions that the communication policy assigned to them, to bring about development, particularly in the rural communities. The result of the study revealed the capability of the media to facilitate economic empowerment and improvement in the quality of life of rural people. The study recommends that both government and media must do more than necessary and work collaboratively to reduce the growing poverty in Nigeria's rural communities. This study adopted a conceptual framework and relied on secondary and tertiary sources. The study is related to the current study, both studies focused on with implementation of communication policy for national development in Nigeria. The previous study looked at the media implementation of the national communication policy and citizens' participation development while the current study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State. Fan and Dwyer (2019) investigated the impact of information and communication technology on Nigeria's Small Medium Sized Enterprises. The purpose of the study was to determine how

Small and Medium-sized (SME) leaders in Nigeria use information communication technology adopted as a business strategy to increase profitability and compete globally. The study discovered that the adoption contributes to benefits the SME and government to address economic problems in Nigeria. The study is similar to the present study since they deal with communication and economic development. The previous study focused on the impact of information and communication technology on Nigeria's Small Medium Sized Enterprises while the present study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State. Again, Tseggy (2015) studied the role of the mass media in economic development in Nigeria and discovered that media are an important resource in mobilizing the members of society

to achieve national development. It also found out that corruption is the major bane to the country's economic development. The study is similar to the present study since they focused on communication and economic development in Nigeria. The previous study focused on the mass media use and economic development in Nigeria while the present study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State. In another study conducted on media and socioeconomic development in Northern Nigeria by (Pate, 2013). It was discovered that media alignment of the needs, aspirations and expectations of the people with the state and national policies is capable of bringing about economic prosperity and development. Omotoso (2010) also carried out a study on the use of mass media in economic development practice and found out that mass media are important force in driving community economic development. It also discovered that the media act as the major part or instrument of the plan strategies in economic development. The study is related to the current study since they focused on communication and economic development in Nigeria. The previous however focused on the use of mass media in economic development practice while the present study focuses on communication strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of the Renewed Hope agenda in Rivers State.

## Theoretical Foundation

### Development media theory

Development media theory was propounded by McQuail in 1987. The theory according to Omego and Nwachukwu (2013) was between developed for developing countries. The underlying fact behind establishing the theory was that there cannot be development without communication. Asemah et al. (2017) argue that the media undertook the role of carrying out positive development programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the state. The media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs, hence, the stress on the development of communication development journalism. The media can do this by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic growth, development and national sovereignty. The theory sees communication as an agent of development and social change in any given society. Thus, the theory postulates that communication be used to complement the government's efforts by carrying out programmes that lead to economic change. The media in the developing countries of the world should, therefore, be immersed in the development issues in the country. They are expected to complement the government policy. According to McQuail (2005), the media should carry out positive development tasks in line with national development.

Messages or information about the economic policy of Renewed Hope of President Tinibu appears on various channels of communication especially radio, television, magazines, newspapers, and social media among other communication channels. The idea for this is to bring positive change, development and re-orientation of the Rivers State residents and Nigerians since they are critical stakeholders and leaders of tomorrow. It is the responsibility of communication industries to disseminate economic information capable of changing the attitude of Nigerian citizens and charge the government to improve development processes. Folarin (2002) explains that media are given the responsibilities which make them socially responsible to the people to gather and disseminate information about their social well-being including economic development.

## Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The justification for this was to seek the opinions of Rivers State residents on communication strategy for the implementation of the economic policy of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinibu's administration. The population of the study is 7,407,394, being the residents of Rivers State. The population is considered due to the rising agitations, poor living standard and high cost of products in Rivers State. The study employed the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula to arrive at 400 and used a multi-stage sampling technique. Rivers State residents were divided into three Senatorial Zones; Rivers East, Rivers South and Rivers West. Out of three Senatorial zones, two zones; Rivers East and Rivers West were selected due to availability and accessibility. However, Rivers East and Rivers West Senatorial zones have 16 Local Government Areas, out of these 16 LGAs, 6 were selected. The six local government areas selected have 94 wards. Obio/Akpor has 17, Okrika 12, Etche 19, Bonny has 12, Akuku-Toru has 17, while Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni is 17 wards. Out of these 94 wards, a total of 50 wards were selected. The 50 wards selected have a total of 1,723 units, out of which 200 units were selected. Since it is not easy to obtain the exact population of the street contained in each unit selected in the government areas as they contributed to the population of Rivers State residents, the researchers used a systematic sampling technique; by dividing the sample size 400 by 200 units selected in the wards of the various local government areas selected which gives a total of two persons. Two persons were selected per unit in the selected wards of the local government areas. Two copies of the questionnaire were therefore administered to each of the units in an interval of five households of the units in every ward and local government area. Nonetheless, a questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. There are 15 items

on the instrument, items 1, 2,3, 4, 5 and 6 used to address research question 1 which sought to identify strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda. Also, items 7, 8, 9, and 10 investigated the perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of Renewed Hope of the government, these answer question two while items; 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 examine the barrier that hamper the communication strategy of government on the implementation of Renewed Hope Agenda on economic policy and these address research question 3 of the study. The Weighted Mean Score (WMS) was adopted as the method of data analysis. implication of using the Weighted Mean Score is to either agree or disagree with respondents' responses. If the result is 2.5 (i.e.  $4+3+2+1$  divided by 4) then it is accepted. That is, any response that measures 2.5 or higher is accepted while scores below 2.5 are rejected.

## Results

**Objective one:** identify the communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda

**Table 1. Communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda**

| Communication strategies the government adopted  | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | Total | WMS | Decision |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|----------|
| The use of jingle is the communication strategy the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda            | 113 | 141 | 58  | 39  | 1029  | 2.7 | Accepted |
| Television is the communication strategy adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda                         | 105 | 159 | 78  | 36  | 1088  | 2.9 | Accepted |
| The use of newspapers/magazines is the communication strategy adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda    | 21  | 57  | 112 | 188 | 666   | 1.8 | Rejected |
| Social media is the communication strategy adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda                       | 98  | 104 | 110 | 66  | 990   | 2.6 | Accepted |
| The use of interpersonal communication is the strategy the government adopted in the implementing the renewed Hope economic agenda | 51  | 64  | 73  | 190 | 732   | 1.9 | Rejected |

The data in 4.1.1 indicated that the use of jingles, television and social media were the major Communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda in Rivers State.

**Objective two: investigate the perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope of the Government**

**Table 2: Perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope**

| Perception of Rivers State residents on the economic Policy of renewed hope   | SA  | A   | D  | SD  | Total | WMS | Decision |
|---|-----|-----|----|-----|-------|-----|----------|
| The perception Rivers State residents have of the economic policy of Renewed Hope is that the economy is not better | 161 | 111 | 61 | 45  | 1143  | 3.0 | Accepted |
| The perception Rivers State residents have on the economic policy of Renewed Hope is negative                       | 114 | 124 | 76 | 64  | 1043  | 2.8 | Accepted |
| The perception Rivers State residents have on the economic policy of Renewed Hope is Positive                       | 41  | 71  | 98 | 168 | 740   | 2.0 | Rejected |

|  |     |     |    |    |      |     |          |
|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|-----|----------|
| The perception Rivers State residents have on the economic policy of Renewed Hope is that the economy is to loot the recovered money | 109 | 136 | 83 | 50 | 1059 | 2.8 | Accepted |
|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|-----|----------|

The data in 2 show that the perception Rivers State residents have of the economic policy of Renewed Hope is negative and that the economy would not be better.

**Objective three:** Examine the barrier that hampers the communication strategies of government on the implementation of the renewed hope agenda on economic policy

**Table 3: The barrier that hampers the communication strategies of government on the implementation of the renewed hope agenda on economic policy**

| The barriers that hamper the communication strategies of government on the implementation of the renewed hope agenda on economic policy       | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | Total | WMS | Decision |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|----------|
| Poor/unstable signals is the barrier that hampers the communication strategies of the implementation of the renewed Hope agenda               | 132 | 147 | 59  | 40  | 1126  | 3.0 | Accepted |
| The attitudes of Rivers State residents are among the barriers that hamper the communication strategies of the renewed Hope's economic policy | 143 | 129 | 81  | 25  | 1145  | 3.0 | Accepted |
| Poor electricity supply is among the barriers that hamper the communication in the implementation of The Renewed Hope's economic policy       | 34  | 91  | 103 | 150 | 764   | 2.1 | Rejected |
| Illiteracy is among the barriers that hamper communication strategies of Renewed Hope's economic policy                                       | 51  | 72  | 112 | 142 | 785   | 2.0 | Rejected |
| Poor government implementation plans are among the barriers that hamper communication strategies of Renewed Hope's economic policy            | 113 | 123 | 79  | 63  | 1042  | 2.8 | Accepted |

The data in the Table revealed that Poor/unstable signals, the attitudes of Rivers State residents and poor implementation plans of the government were the major barriers that hampered the communication strategies of Renewed Hope's economic policy.

## Discussion

### The communication strategies the government adopted in the implementation of the Renewed Hope economic agenda

The study investigated various strategies the government adopted to implement the economic policy of Renewed Hope and found that the use of jingles, television and social media were the major Communication strategies the government adopted in implementing the Renewed Hope economic agenda in Rivers State. The finding is related to the findings of other scholars. For instance, Nnabuike et al. (2020) economic policies of government through the media enhance massive industrialisation, generate employment, improve the living standard of its citizens, reduce poverty, increase the Per Capita Income of the citizens, infrastructure as well as Gross Domestic Product. The media act as the major part or instrument of the plan strategies in economic development (Omotoso, 2010). The study conducted by Suleiman (2018) also revealed that the media can facilitate economic empowerment and improvement in the quality of life of rural people. The media are an important resource in mobilizing the members of society to achieve national development (Tsegay, 2015). Omotoso (2010) also found out that mass media are an important force in driving community economic development. This means that communication is also a potent

force in building and sustaining a viable economy of a country (Odionye & Nwala, 2020). The finding agrees with the media development theory used in the study. According to Asemah et al. (2017), the media undertook the role of carrying out positive development programmes, accepting restrictions and instructions from the state. The media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs, hence, the stress on the development of communication development journalism. The media should carry out positive development tasks in line with national development (McQuail, 2005).

### **The perception of Rivers State residents on the economic policy of renewed hope economic policy**

It was discovered that the perception Rivers State residents have of the economic policy of Renewed Hope is negative and that the economy would not be better. The finding is similar to the findings of Fan and Dwyer (2019), Fan and Dwyer (2019) found that the adoption contributes to benefits the SMEs and the government to address economic problems in Nigeria. Pate (2013) discovered that media alignment of the needs, aspirations and expectations of the people with the state and national policies is capable of bringing about economic prosperity and development. Nigeria is perceived as the most populous country in Africa and also home to the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, estimated at around 20 million (Fadokun, 2023). Ikeanyibe (2017) found that the perception of policies and programmes of the federal government for the period 2003-2007 and far beyond serves as the fountain of the much-touted Obasanjo's reforms.

### **The barriers that hamper the communication strategies of government on the implementation of the renewed hope agenda on economic policy**

The study equally confirmed that poor/unstable signals, the attitudes of Rivers State residents and poor implementation plans of the government were the major barriers that hampered the communication strategies of Renewed Hope's economic policy. The finding is related to the findings of Nnabuife et al. (2020) and others. Nnabuife et al. (2020) found that corruption is the major bane of economic growth and development in the country. The disconnection between the government and the poor, and the dichotomy between the rich and the poor, NEEDS appears to be a colossal failure in terms of poverty reduction in Nigeria (Adogbamhe, 2012). Again, Ojenike et al. (2014) discovered that ownership of communication outfits, and cultural and ethno-religious issues in Nigeria were the challenges of communication for sustainable development.

### **Conclusion**

The study confirmed that the use of jingles, television and social media were the major Communication strategies the government in Rivers State adopted in implementing the Renewed Hope economic agenda. Although the perception Rivers State residents have of the economic policy of Renewed Hope is negative and that the economy would not be better. Poor/unstable signals, the attitudes of Rivers State residents and poor implementation plans of the government were the major barriers that hampered the communication strategies of Renewed Hope's economic policy.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that:

1. The Rivers State government should adopt the use of newspapers/magazines or other print media of communication since they offer information about economic policy in detail.
2. The residents of Rivers State should have a positive perception and trust the government of the day.
3. There should be adequate power supply and special enlightenment programmes for the education of the residents.

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