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Regional Radio Broadcasting and Human Rights Awareness in Uganda: Audience Engagement and Institutional Constraints at Radio West FM

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Abstract

This study examined the role of Radio West FM in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda, focusing on its contribution to public education, audience engagement, and the challenges affecting human rights broadcasting. Radio plays an important role in disseminating information and facilitating public dialogue, particularly in communities with limited access to other information sources. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach using a case study design. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving radio listeners, media practitioners, media experts, human rights activists, and civil society representatives. Of the 67 questionnaires distributed, 56 were returned and analysed, while eight key informant interviews were conducted. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined thematically. The findings revealed that 78.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that radio contributes to human rights awareness, while 76.8% considered Radio West programmes accessible. Interview findings further indicated that news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and interactive call-in programmes provide opportunities for educating listeners about human rights issues, including gender-based violence, child protection, land disputes, equality, and access to justice. However, the study identified several challenges affecting the station's effectiveness, including limited airtime, financial constraints, political sensitivity, language barriers, and inadequate participation of legal and human rights experts. Guided by Agenda-Setting Theory, the study highlights the potential contribution of radio programming to the prominence of human rights issues in public discussions. It concludes that Radio West FM provides an important platform for human rights education, although its effectiveness may be constrained by institutional and communication challenges. The study recommends increased airtime for human rights programmes, stronger editorial independence, improved funding, greater involvement of qualified experts, and the use of accessible language to enhance public understanding of human rights.

Keywords: Radio broadcasting, human rights awareness, audience engagement, Agenda-Setting Theory, Radio West FM, Uganda.

1.1 Background to the Study

Human rights are fundamental freedoms and entitlements inherent to every individual, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, or social status. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 established an international framework for protecting human dignity. The media plays a significant role in promoting human rights awareness by providing information, exposing violations, and encouraging public participation. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes the importance of access to information and freedom of expression in democratic societies, while McQuail (2019) explains how media coverage influences public opinion and highlights issues of public concern.

In Africa, radio remains an important communication channel because it is relatively affordable, accessible, and

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capable of reaching rural communities with limited internet access and literacy levels. The African Union (2022) recognizes radio's contribution to civic education and public awareness of governance, equality, democracy, and human rights. In Uganda, the liberalization of broadcasting has increased the number of radio stations serving different communities. Despite the growth of digital media, radio continues to provide an important platform for disseminating public information, particularly through local-language programming that makes information accessible to diverse audiences.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), particularly Articles 21 and 29, guarantees equality before the law, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of expression and association. However, human rights violations, including gender-based violence, unlawful detention, political intimidation, and restrictions on media freedom, remain concerns. Reports by Human Rights Watch (2022) and Amnesty International (2023) highlight continuing challenges in protecting fundamental rights and ensuring accountability. Limited public awareness of constitutional protections and available legal remedies may prevent citizens from reporting abuses and seeking justice.

Radio therefore provides an important link between human rights institutions and the public through news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and interactive programmes. Radio West, a regional broadcaster operating under Vision Group, serves communities in western Uganda through English and Runyankole programming. Its coverage of governance, domestic violence, land disputes, women's rights, and access to justice provides opportunities to educate listeners and encourage public dialogue about human rights.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of radio in promoting human rights awareness may be constrained by political interference, commercial pressures, inadequate resources, and limited journalist training. Sekamate (2022), in a study of radio content selection at Radio Two in Uganda, found that European football received more airtime at the expense of local football. The study recommended a public-interest approach to programming, highlighting the importance of examining how broadcasting priorities influence the diversity of content available to audiences.

Furthermore, Kaaya, Muhindo, Nanyondo, Sekamate, and Muzeyi (2025) examined media training and journalistic ethics at NBS TV and NTV Uganda, emphasizing the relevance of professional training to objective and impartial reporting.

Radio can help bridge the gap between legal protections and public understanding through news bulletins, interactive talk shows, interviews with legal practitioners, and audience call-in programmes. Sekamate, Muyingo, and Katatumba (2025), in their study of Nation Television (NTV) Uganda, found that investigative journalism, coverage of marginalized communities, and interactive media platforms contribute to human rights awareness and public engagement. However, their study also identified challenges such as limited financial and technical resources, competition for audience ratings, and threats to journalists.

Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness among its audience

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Metropolitan Journal Of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

in western Uganda. It is important to establish the extent to which the station's programmes inform listeners about their rights, the effectiveness of its communication approaches, and the challenges affecting human rights coverage. The findings may contribute to improving public-interest broadcasting, strengthening human rights education, and enhancing the media's contribution to accountability and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the constitutional protection of human rights and freedoms in Uganda, public awareness and understanding of these rights remain important concerns, particularly among communities that rely on radio as a major source of information. Radio plays a significant role in promoting human rights awareness through news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and interactive programmes that educate citizens about gender-based violence, child protection, land disputes, equality, freedom of expression, and access to justice. However, the effectiveness of radio in fulfilling this role may be constrained by limited airtime, financial challenges, political sensitivity, language barriers, and inadequate involvement of human rights experts. Previous studies have examined media programming and human rights communication in Uganda. Sekamate (2022), in a study of content selection at Radio Two, highlighted how programming priorities influence the allocation of airtime to issues of public interest. Similarly, Sekamate, Muyingo, and Katatumba (2025) examined television broadcasting and human rights awareness at NTV Uganda, identifying challenges related to resources, audience competition, and threats to journalists. However, limited attention has been given to how regional radio stations contribute to human rights awareness among their audiences and the specific challenges affecting this role in western Uganda.Radio West FM serves communities in western Uganda through English and Runyankole programming, providing opportunities for human rights education and public participation. Nevertheless, the extent to which its programmes promote human rights awareness and the challenges affecting their effectiveness require further investigation. Findings from the present study indicate that 78.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that radio contributes to human rights awareness, while 76.8% considered Radio West programmes accessible. However, these perceptions do not independently establish actual levels of human rights knowledge or the causal effects of radio exposure.

Therefore, this study examines the role of Radio West FM in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda, focusing on its programming approaches, audience engagement, and institutional challenges, to generate context-specific evidence and identify measures for strengthening regional radio's contribution to human rights education.

1.3 Study Objective

i. To examine the role of radio in awareness creation of human rights issues in Uganda.
ii. To identify the challenges faced by Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in Uganda.
iii. To suggest possible solutions to challenges faced by Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in Uganda.

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Metropolitan Journal Of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

1.4 Theoretical Framework: Agenda-Setting Theory

This study is guided by Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which explains how media coverage influences the importance audiences attach to particular issues. The theory argues that the media does not necessarily determine what people think, but influences what they think about by selecting, emphasizing, and repeatedly reporting certain topics while giving limited attention to others. According to McCombs (2004), issues that receive frequent and prominent media coverage are more likely to become important in the minds of audiences.

Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Agenda-Setting Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how Radio West may influence public awareness of human rights issues in western Uganda. Through news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and audience call-in programmes, the station highlights concerns such as gender-based violence, child abuse, corruption, land disputes, and violations of freedom of expression. Repeated coverage of these issues may increase their visibility and perceived importance among listeners (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).

The theory provides a framework for examining how Radio West selects and prioritizes human rights content and how this coverage relates to listeners' awareness and understanding of their rights. It also guides the interpretation of questionnaire and interview findings by linking media exposure to the prominence audiences attach to human rights concerns.

However, the theory has limitations because audiences may interpret media messages differently depending on their education, culture, personal experiences, and existing beliefs. Furthermore, increased media coverage does not automatically guarantee accurate understanding or behavioural change. Despite these limitations, Agenda-Setting Theory provides a useful foundation for investigating the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness among communities in western Uganda.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Concept and Importance of Human Rights Promotion

Human rights promotion involves educating and empowering individuals to understand, exercise, and defend their fundamental rights and freedoms. The United Nations (2019) emphasizes awareness creation, advocacy, training, and information dissemination as important strategies for strengthening respect for human dignity, equality, and justice. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) recognizes human rights education as essential for promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and democratic governance. Access to information and freedom of expression are central to human rights promotion because individuals need reliable information to identify violations and seek remedies. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2022) highlights the importance of information in enabling people to exercise their rights and participate in public affairs. Governments, civil society organizations, and the media consequently share responsibilities in promoting awareness and holding duty bearers accountable. Human rights promotion strengthens democracy by encouraging citizens to participate in governance and demand transparency. It also protects vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. UN Women (2021) highlights the contribution of awareness campaigns to advocacy for gender equality and the protection of women's rights. In

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Uganda, the Constitution (1995) provides the legal foundation for fundamental freedoms, while the Uganda Human Rights Commission conducts public sensitization activities. Nevertheless, gaps in public knowledge of constitutional rights continue to make awareness creation important, particularly in rural communities.

2.2 The Role of Radio in Creating Human Rights Awareness in Uganda

Radio remains an important communication medium in Uganda because of its affordability, broad geographical reach, and use of local languages. The Uganda Communications Commission (2023) identifies radio as a significant source of information, especially for communities with limited access to internet services and newspapers. Radio programmes such as news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and call-in discussions provide opportunities to educate audiences about constitutional rights, gender-based violence, child protection, corruption, land disputes, and freedom of expression. Mwesige and Balikuddembe (2019) emphasize radio's contribution to public participation by enabling ordinary citizens to express their concerns about social and political issues. Similarly, UNESCO (2020) recognizes broadcasting as a platform for public dialogue, freedom of expression, and democratic accountability. Radio can also amplify the experiences of marginalized communities and connect listeners with legal practitioners, public officials, and civil society organizations.

The role of radio can be explained through Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The theory proposes that the media influences which issues audiences consider important by selecting and emphasizing particular topics. Accordingly, consistent coverage of human rights violations may increase public attention to these issues, although awareness does not automatically guarantee behavioural change or access to justice.

Sekamate, Muyingo, and Katatumba (2025), in their study of television and human rights in Uganda, provide relevant insights into the contribution of broadcasting to public awareness and the challenges associated with media practice. Although their study focused on NTV Uganda rather than radio, it offers a useful basis for examining how broadcasting can promote human rights and how professional, financial, and institutional constraints may affect this role. The present study extends this discussion by focusing specifically on Radio West and its audiences in western Uganda. Despite its contribution, radio's effectiveness may be limited by commercial priorities, political influence, and inadequate resources. Nyabuga (2020) argues that commercialization can reduce attention to public-interest programming when media organizations prioritize advertising revenue and audience ratings. These concerns make it necessary to investigate how Radio West balances commercial interests with its responsibility to promote human rights awareness.

2.3 Challenges Faced by Radio in Promoting Human Rights Awareness

Although radio plays an important educational role, several challenges limit its effectiveness in promoting human rights awareness in Uganda. One major challenge is political interference, censorship, and intimidation of journalists covering sensitive issues. The Committee to Protect Journalists (2023) reports restrictions affecting journalists covering protests, elections, and governance. Such pressures may discourage critical reporting and limit public access to information. Commercialization is another challenge. Freedman (2020) observes that commercial pressures can reduce investment in investigative journalism and public-interest programming. Consequently, entertainment and advertising may receive more airtime than human rights education. Nyabuga

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(2020) similarly highlights the risks that media ownership and political interests pose to editorial independence. Inadequate remuneration, poor working conditions, and limited professional training also affect reporting quality. The Human Rights Network for Journalists Uganda (2023) emphasizes that attacks against media practitioners undermine press freedom and the media's watchdog role. These challenges demonstrate that effective human rights broadcasting depends not only on editorial commitment but also on adequate funding, professional competence, independence, and journalist safety.

2.4 Possible Solutions to the Challenges

Improving radio's contribution to human rights awareness requires coordinated institutional and professional interventions. First, media organizations should strengthen editorial independence through clear policies that protect journalists from political and commercial interference. Regulatory institutions should also promote freedom of expression and safeguard journalists' rights. Second, radio stations should diversify revenue sources and reserve sufficient airtime for public-interest programming. Kula and Blose (2025) discuss the challenges commercialization create for broadcasting's public-service role, highlighting the importance of strategies that balance financial sustainability with social responsibility.

Third, media organizations should improve journalists' remuneration, employment security, and access to professional development. Regular training in human rights law, investigative journalism, ethical reporting, fact-checking, and source protection can improve the accuracy and sensitivity of coverage. These measures are particularly important when reporting on vulnerable individuals and legally sensitive matters. Fourth, investment in broadcasting equipment, affordable digital technologies, and investigative resources can strengthen programme quality and audience reach.

Finally, journalist safety should be strengthened through safety training, legal support, appropriate insurance, and cooperation between media organizations and relevant authorities. These interventions can help create an environment in which journalists report human rights concerns independently and responsibly.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter presents the methods used to investigate the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda. It describes the research approach, design, study area, population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis, quality control, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Radio West's contribution to human rights awareness. Quantitative data helped establish patterns in respondents' views, while qualitative data provided detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2020). A case study design was used, with Radio West as the case under investigation. This design enabled an in-depth examination of the station's programming, audience engagement, and challenges within its real-life context (Yin, 2018).

3.2 Study Area and Population

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The study was conducted at Radio West, located at Boma Hill in Mbarara City, western Uganda. The station was selected because of its regional reach and broadcasting in English and Runyankole, which enables it to communicate with diverse audiences. The target population comprised 92 respondents: 28 media practitioners, 8 media experts, 10 human rights activists, 6 civil society representatives, and 40 Radio West listeners.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 75 respondents was selected from the target population of 92, guided by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size determination table. Purposive sampling was used to select media practitioners, media experts, human rights activists, and civil society representatives because of their relevant knowledge and experience. Stratified random sampling was used to select radio listeners to ensure representation of different audience groups. The sample comprised 23 media practitioners, 6 media experts, 8 human rights activists, 5 civil society representatives, and 33 listeners.

3.4 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The study used primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data was obtained through documentary review. Questionnaires containing open-ended and closed-ended questions, including a five-point Likert scale, were administered to gather information on listeners' awareness and perceptions of human rights programming. Semi-structured interviews with selected key informants explored programming practices, audience participation, and challenges affecting human rights reporting. Questionnaires and interview guides served as the main research instruments.

3.5 Validity, Reliability, and Data Analysis

Validity was enhanced through review of the research instruments by the supervisor and knowledgeable individuals. Reliability was addressed through a pilot study, which helped identify and revise unclear questions. After collection, data was checked, coded, classified, and securely stored. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, presented in tables where appropriate. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically by identifying recurring ideas and patterns related to the study objectives. Findings were interpreted alongside the reviewed literature.

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents, interprets, and analyses findings of the study on the role of radio in awareness creation of human rights issues in Uganda, with specific reference to Radio West. The study is based on data collected from 75 respondents comprising media practitioners, media experts, human rights activists, civil society representatives, and Radio West listeners in selected districts in western Uganda.

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires, while qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), mixed methods enhance validity through triangulation of data sources.

4.1 Response Rate

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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

Out of 67 questionnaires distributed, 56 were returned and deemed valid for analysis, representing a response rate of 83.6%. 11 questionnaires were not returned, giving a non-response rate of 16.4%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), a response rate above 70% is considered adequate for reliable statistical analysis in social science research. In addition, 8 key informant interviews were successfully conducted with station manager, 6 media experts, and 1 civil society representatives.

Table 4.1: Response Rate of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned Questionnaires	56	82.5
Unreturned Questionnaires	11	17.5
Total	67	100

Source: Researcher 2026

The table shows the questionnaire response rate for the study. Out of 67 questionnaires distributed to respondents, 56 were returned, representing 82.5%, while 11 questionnaires were not returned, representing 17.5%. The high response rate indicates that the majority of the targeted respondents participated in the study by completing and returning the questionnaires. The response rate of 82.5% suggests that sufficient data was collected to support the analysis of the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda. The 17.5% non-response rate may be attributed to factors such as respondents' limited availability or failure to complete and return the questionnaires. Overall, the response rate provided a substantial basis for analyzing respondents' views and drawing conclusions in relation to the study objectives.

4.2 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected in this study was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques, in line with the study design.

4.2.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies, percentages, and tables. This method enabled the researcher to systematically summarize and present respondents' views on the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness. The use of descriptive statistics facilitated the transformation of raw data into a meaningful format that allowed for easier interpretation and comparison of responses across different categories of respondents. According to Kothari (2019), descriptive statistics are fundamental in social science research as they provide an effective way of organizing, summarizing, and presenting data in a clear and understandable manner. The analyzed data was then presented in tabular form and interpreted in line with the study objectives to ensure that the findings directly addressed the research questions.

4.2.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved transcribing all interview responses, systematically organizing the data, and coding it into meaningful themes aligned with the study objectives. These themes focused on the role of Radio West in promoting human rights

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awareness, the effectiveness of its radio programs, the challenges faced in broadcasting human rights-related content, and the suggested improvements to enhance program delivery. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2019), is a flexible and widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This approach enabled the researcher to move beyond simple description and generate deeper insights into participants' experiences and perceptions. In addition, direct quotations from respondents were incorporated to support the findings and enhance the authenticity and credibility of the interpretation, ensuring that the voices of participants were accurately represented in the study.

4.2.3 Data Interpretation

Findings were interpreted through a process of triangulation involving quantitative data from questionnaires, qualitative data from interviews, existing scholarly literature, and the Agenda Setting Theory. The quantitative results provided measurable trends and patterns regarding the study variables, while the qualitative findings offered in-depth explanations and contextual understanding of respondents' views. These empirical findings were then compared with existing literature to establish areas of convergence and divergence with previous studies. Furthermore, the interpretation was guided by the theoretical assumptions of the Agenda Setting Theory, which explains how media influence public perception by determining which issues are considered important. This triangulation approach enhanced the validity, reliability, and depth of the study findings by allowing cross-verification of evidence from multiple sources, thereby improving the credibility of the conclusions drawn (Denzin, 2017).

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents demographic information of respondents including gender, age, and education level. The demographic data was important in understanding the characteristics of respondents and ensuring representation from categories of participants.

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (&)
Male	30	53.6
Female	26	46.4
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher 2026

Table 4.2 presents the gender distribution of respondents who participated in the study. The findings indicate that 30 respondents (53.6%) were male, while 26 respondents (46.4%) were female. This shows that male respondents constituted the majority of participants, although the difference between male and female respondents was relatively small. The findings suggest that the study obtained views from both male and female respondents, providing a range of perspectives on the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda. The participation of both genders is important because human rights issues affect men and women differently, particularly in areas such as gender-based violence, equality, and access to justice.

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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

4.3.2 Age of Respondents

Table 4.3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25 Years	15	26.8
26-35 Years	22	39.3
36-45 Years	10	17.9
46 Years and Above	9	16.1
Total	56	100

Source: researcher 2026

Table 4.3 presents the age distribution of the 56 respondents who participated in the study. The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents, 22 (39.3%), were aged between 26 and 35 years. This was followed by 15 respondents (26.8%) aged between 18 and 25 years. Meanwhile, 10 respondents (17.9%) were aged between 36 and 45 years, while 9 respondents (16.1%) were aged 46 years and above.

The findings show that the majority of respondents (66.1%) were aged between 18 and 35 years, indicating that young adults constituted a significant proportion of the study participants. This suggests that the study captured the views of a relatively young population whose perspectives may be important in understanding radio listenership and awareness of human rights issues. However, the participation of respondents aged 36 years and above also provided perspectives from older age groups.

4.3.3 Education Level of Respondents

Table 4.4: Education Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Certificate	10	17.9
Diploma	16	28.6
Bachelor's Degree	17	30.4
Postgraduate	13	23.2
Total	56	100

Source: Researcher 2026

Table 4.4 presents the education levels of the 56 respondents who participated in the study. The findings indicate that 17 respondents (30.4%) held a bachelor's degree, representing the largest proportion. This was followed by 16 respondents (28.6%) with diplomas, while 13 respondents (23.2%) had postgraduate qualifications. The remaining 10 respondents (17.9%) held certificates. The findings show that respondents had varying educational backgrounds, with the majority holding diploma or higher qualifications. This suggests that many participants had formal educational experience that could help them understand and express informed views on human rights issues and the role of Radio West in creating public awareness.

The participation of respondents with different educational qualifications was important because education may influence how individuals access, interpret, and respond to information about their rights. Respondents with higher

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qualifications may have greater familiarity with legal and civic issues, while those with certificate-level qualifications provide additional perspectives on human rights awareness. However, educational attainment alone does not necessarily determine an individual's level of human rights awareness.

4.4 Category of Respondents and Data Collection Methods

Table 4.5: Category of Respondents and Data Collection Methods

Category	**Sample size**	**Method**
Media practitioners	15	Questionnaires & interviews
Media experts	6	Interviews
Human rights activists	8	Questionnaires
Civil society representatives	5	Questionnaires & interviews
Radio listeners	22	Questionnaires
Total	56	

Source: Researcher 2026

The table presents the categories of respondents who participated in the study and the data collection methods used to obtain information. Out of the 56 respondents, radio listeners constituted the largest group, with 22 respondents, followed by media practitioners with 15 respondents. Human rights activists accounted for 8 respondents, while media experts and civil society representatives comprised 6 and 5 respondents, respectively.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from media practitioners, human rights activists, civil society representatives, and radio listeners. Interviews were conducted with media practitioners, media experts, and civil society representatives to obtain detailed information about human rights programming, audience participation, and challenges affecting radio broadcasting. The inclusion of different respondent categories enabled the researcher to gather diverse perspectives on the role of Radio West in promoting human rights awareness in western Uganda. Radio listeners provided information about their experiences and understanding of human rights programmes, while media practitioners and experts offered insights into broadcasting practices. Human rights activists and civil society representatives contributed perspectives on advocacy and public education.

Overall, the use of questionnaires and interviews provided both quantitative and qualitative information, supporting a broader understanding of Radio West's contribution to human rights awareness.

4.5 Findings from Interviews

4.5.1 Role of Radio West in Human Rights Awareness

The interview results revealed that Radio West plays a significant role in promoting human rights awareness to the people of western Uganda. According to the participants, the station spreads the message by organizing different programs, such as talk shows, news, and call-in that allow people to participate in solving and discussing human rights issues actively. Such programs create a platform for educating and creating awareness among people regarding human rights and freedom. A media expert also supports that claim by stating that Radio West is ‘a critical tool in a public’s awareness of human rights issues in western Uganda.’ This finding indicates that the station has a great impact on its audience by providing them with public information and education on human

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rights matters. The result also coincides with the research done by Banda (2020) claiming that radio is the most potent medium for conducting civic education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is because, currently, it is the most accessible and popular means of communication in the rural and urban areas of Uganda. Therefore, the research results reveal that radio stations have an essential role in creating public awareness and educating people about their human rights.

4.5.2 Importance of Radio in Promoting Human Rights in Uganda

The interview results indicate that interactive radio programmes, particularly the call-in shows, play a significant role in raising awareness of human rights in Uganda. The respondents explain that such programs give radio-listeners a platform to participate in discussions, ask questions, and share their views on human rights issues. They are, therefore, useful in promoting public interaction and sensitization on human rights, especially among Radio West audiences. The civil society respondent asserted that "call-in radio programmes provide a participatory platform, raising awareness and understanding among the listeners." Indeed, interactive radio programmes offer a conducive forum for discussing human rights matters, allowing the audience to become involved and interested in the issues. In addition, such programmes promote active citizenship by encouraging the to question and remind their leaders of obedience to the rule of law and respect for human rights. The findings align with Banda's (2020) claim that radio is among the most influential media in promoting civic education, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to its accessibility and ability to reach remote and vulnerable communities. Similarly, McCombs (2018) explains the importance of media in promoting awareness of human rights and social issues by focusing on the audience's agenda. As a result, the media's role in highlighting human rights matters helps shape public opinion through Agenda Setting. However, the study also identified several challenges related to the use of radio in promoting human rights awareness in rural Uganda. The limited time allocated for such programs limits extensive and detailed discussions of the issues, lowering the overall impact. Nyamnjoh (2019) agrees with the findings and explains that radio stations in Africa face structural challenges, such as limited airtime allocated for such discussions, limiting their ability to deliver comprehensive civic education. Overall, the results indicate that radio is a critical tool in promoting and protecting human rights in Uganda because of the benefits it offers over other media.

4.5.3 Challenges in Broadcasting Human Rights Issues

The study's findings identified a number of challenges facing Radio West in its task of broadcasting human rights issues including limited airtime, political sensitivity, inadequate funding and language barriers. According to the respondents, limited airtime was a major limitation as it restricted the opportunity to adequately explore human rights issues. This was because limited airtime was a limitation in terms of depth and duration of airing human rights issues which often resulted in superficial coverage of the issues of public interest. One media practitioner observed that "limited airtime makes it difficult to properly discuss human rights issues in depth, especially during prime time". Political sensitivity was a major concern to the media practitioners interviewed indicating that some human rights issues were considered to be sensitive by the political establishment. Their views further suggest that political sensitivity influenced the choice of human rights issues to be aired and therefore affected the freedom of broadcasting. In addition, the study identified financial constraints as a major challenge facing Radio West in

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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

its effort to broadcast human rights issues. Limited funds constrained the radio station from engaging expert presenters and producing human rights specific programmes. Inadequate funding resulted in the lack of professionalism, field investigation and insufficient resources hindering the extent to which human rights issues could be aired and discussed. As a result, some programmes lacked adequate expertise and field investigation resulting in the limited quality and depth of human rights issues broadcasted by the radio station.

Language barriers were also a major challenge facing Radio West in its effort to broadcast human rights issues. Despite the fact that the radio station primarily broadcasted programmes in the Runyankole and English languages, some respondents felt that the use of these languages was a limitation in transmitting human rights related information to a wider audience. This was because there were audiences who were not fully proficient in either of the languages and therefore found it difficult to fully understand human rights issues. Respondents further revealed that the use of terminologies in discussing human rights issues made it difficult for them to participate fully in the discussions. Language barriers therefore constrained the extent to which the radio station could effectively promote human rights awareness and education to its diverse audience. The limited involvement of experts in human rights issues was also identified as a major challenge facing Radio West in its efforts to promote human rights awareness and education in the communities it serves. Some human rights issues required professional expertise in their discussions. The absence of experts such as lawyers and human rights activists limited the extent to which human rights issues could be aired and discussed. The limited involvement of professionals constrained the ability of audiences to fully understand their rights and the available avenues for justice.

These challenges were consistent with the findings of Freedom House (2024) indicating that media houses in developing countries are often constrained by a range of financial, political and structural challenges that limit the extent to which they can report freely and widely on governance and human rights issues. Similarly, Nyamnjoh (2019) reveals that the majority of African media houses are faced with a range of resource and time constraints that adversely affect the quality and depth of programmes on public interest issues. Collectively, the findings of this study indicate that despite the potential of radio in promoting human rights awareness, its effectiveness was constrained by a range of institutional and environmental factors that limited its ability to fully broadcast human rights issues.

4.5.4 Possible Solutions to the Challenges in Broadcasting Human Rights Issues

The findings indicate several measures that can be taken to improve the way Radio West reports human rights issues.

Firstly, the station could ensure that there is enough time allocated to human rights programmes, allowing presenters, experts and callers to delve deeper into human rights issues than the very brief discussions currently permitted. Secondly, Radio West could take steps to bolster editorial independence and formulate explicit editorial guidelines when reporting on politically sensitive human rights issues, thus enabling journalists and programme presenters to report on matters of public interest professionally while upholding journalistic ethics, accuracy and impartiality. Thirdly, the station could explore alternative funding sources and possible partnerships with civil society organisations, human rights organisations and development agencies to create dedicated human rights

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Metropolitan Journal Of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
ISSN: 3006-4384
Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

programmes, increase the participation of experts and provide resources for investigative field reporting. Fourthly, the station could promote the use of local languages, including Runyankole, in addition to English, to ensure that human rights information is accessible to a wider audience. Using language that is familiar to the audience can increase comprehension and engagement with human rights programmes.

Finally, Radio West could strengthen its relationships with human rights experts, lawyers, civil society representatives and other professionals, ensuring that such experts are regularly involved in the discussion of human rights issues, thus enhancing the accuracy and depth of coverage as well as the credibility of the station's programmes. By implementing these measures, Radio West can address the challenges that respondents identified and strengthen its role in raising human rights awareness throughout Western Uganda. Generally, Radio West can improve its human rights reporting by expanding the amount of airtime devoted to human rights programmes, strengthening financial and technical resources, protecting editorial independence, promoting the use of accessible local languages and involving qualified human rights experts. These measures can increase the quality and accessibility of human rights information and enhance the overall awareness of human rights among listeners.

4.6 Findings from Questionnaire Data

4.6.1 Human Rights Awareness

Table 4.6: Human Rights Awareness

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly agree	24	42.9
Agree	20	35.7
Neutral	6	10.7
Disagree	4	7.1
Strongly disagree	2	3.6
Total	**56**	**100**

Source: Research 2026

The table presents respondents' views on the contribution of radio to human rights awareness. The findings indicate that 24 respondents (42.9%) strongly agreed, while 20 respondents (35.7%) agreed that radio contributes to human rights awareness. Six respondents (10.7%) were neutral, four (7.1%) disagreed, and two (3.6%) strongly disagreed. Overall, 44 respondents (78.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that radio contributes to human rights awareness, demonstrating that the majority of respondents recognize radio as an important source of information about human rights. This suggests that Radio West may help listeners understand their fundamental rights and freedoms through news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and public education programmes.

However, 10.7% of respondents expressed disagreement, while another 10.7% remained neutral. These findings suggest that some listeners may not fully recognize or experience the contribution of radio to human rights awareness. This could indicate a need for more consistent, accessible, and informative human rights programmes. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that Radio West plays a significant role in promoting human rights

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awareness among its audience in western Uganda, although further efforts may be necessary to reach listeners who remain uncertain or unconvinced about the contribution of radio.

4.6.2 Programme Accessibility

Table 4.7: Programme Accessibility

Response	frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	22	39.3
Agree	21	37.5
Neutral	7	12.5
Disagree	3	5.4
Strongly disagree	3	5.4
Total	**56**	**100**

Source: Research 2026

Table 4.7 presents respondents' views on the accessibility of Radio West programmes. The findings indicate that 22 respondents (39.3%) strongly agreed that the programmes are accessible, while 21 respondents (37.5%) agreed. Seven respondents (12.5%) were neutral, whereas three respondents (5.4%) disagreed and another three (5.4%) strongly disagreed. Overall, 43 respondents (76.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that Radio West programmes are accessible, indicating that the majority of respondents can access the station's broadcasts. This suggests that Radio West provides a useful platform for disseminating information about human rights issues to communities in western Uganda. Its use of English and Runyankole may further enhance accessibility by enabling people from different language backgrounds to understand the information presented.

However, 12.5% of respondents were neutral, while 10.8% expressed disagreement. This indicates that some listeners may experience difficulties accessing the programmes or may not be fully familiar with the station's human rights content. Radio West could therefore improve accessibility by publicizing programme schedules, broadcasting at convenient times, and using clear, audience-friendly language. The findings are consistent with Sekamate, Muyingo, and Katatumba (2025), whose study of NTV Uganda examined how broadcasting contributes to human rights awareness and identified the importance of media programming in communicating human rights issues. Although their research focused on television, it provides relevant insights into the contribution of broadcasting to public awareness.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that Radio West programmes are generally accessible to most respondents, supporting the station's potential to promote human rights awareness in western Uganda.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

The results of the study indicate that Radio West plays a significant role in promoting human rights awareness among its target audience. Both quantitative and qualitative results of the research revealed that a substantial number of the respondents acknowledge the role of the radio station in providing airtime to human rights issues through news, talk shows, and interactive programs. It can be concluded that the research proves the influence of the radio as a tool for increasing public awareness and educating the audience on human rights issues since the

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radio station is regarded as a reliable source of information. The results of the study align with Agenda Setting Theory that emphasizes the importance of media in helping the public identify and prioritize issues that require attention. Thus, considering the study's findings, it can be stated that Radio West influences the audience's perception of human rights issues by providing continuous coverage of the topic and engaging in call-in programs. Hence, the study reveals that Radio West is more focused on increasing the level of public awareness rather than attempting to change the government's policies regarding human rights issues. Similarly, the findings are consistent with the research conducted by McCombs (2018) that prove that continuous attention of the media to a particular topic increases the level of public awareness and concerns about the issue. Additionally, the findings are aligned with Banda's (2020) study that reveals the significance of radio as a method of civic education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Human rights issues are highly relevant within the radio programs of Radio West because they resonate with the audience. However, there are several limitations to radio as a tool for human rights advocacy. The issue of time, money, political instability, language barriers, and the lack of involvement of experts dominate the discussion. Such limitations to the effective delivery of human rights issues via radio programs are supported by the research of Freedom House (2024) that identify a number of obstacles to press freedom in developing countries.

The results of the study indicate that Radio West plays a significant role in promoting human rights awareness among its target audience. Both quantitative and qualitative results of the research revealed that a substantial number of the respondents acknowledge the role of the radio station in providing airtime to human rights issues through news, talk shows, and interactive programs. It can be concluded that the research proves the influence of the radio as a tool for increasing public awareness and educating the audience on human rights issues since the radio station is regarded as a reliable source of information. The results of the study align with Agenda Setting Theory that emphasizes the importance of media in helping the public identify and prioritize issues that require attention. Thus, considering the study's findings, it can be stated that Radio West influences the audience's perception of human rights issues by providing continuous coverage of the topic and engaging in call-in programs. Hence, the study reveals that Radio West is more focused on increasing the level of public awareness rather than attempting to change the government's policies regarding human rights issues. Similarly, the findings are consistent with the research conducted by McCombs (2018) that prove that continuous attention of the media to a particular topic increases the level of public awareness and concerns about the issue. Additionally, the findings are aligned with Banda's (2020) study that reveals the significance of radio as a method of civic education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Human rights issues are highly relevant within the radio programs of Radio West because they resonate with the audience. However, there are several limitations to radio as a tool for human rights advocacy. The issue of time, money, political instability, language barriers, and the lack of involvement of experts dominate the discussion. Such limitations to the effective delivery of human rights issues via radio programs are supported by the research of Freedom House (2024) that identify a number of obstacles to press freedom in developing countries.

Overall, the analysis of the study's results indicates that Radio West plays an essential role in human rights advocacy by increasing public awareness of the issues. However, the efficiency of the radio as a tool for advocacy

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Vol. 5 Issue 10, October- 2026, Pages: 273-289

is diminished by a number of limitations. Hence, the study reveals that the influence of Radio West on its audience is conditionally positive since the radio station provides extensive coverage of human rights issues while being influenced by a number of political, financial, and linguistic conditions.

5.0 Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings, conclusions, recommendations, contribution to knowledge, and areas for further research concerning the role of Radio West 100.2 FM in promoting human rights awareness in Uganda. The study examined the station's contribution to human rights education, the importance of human rights promotion, the relationship between radio broadcasting and human rights protection, and the challenges affecting effective awareness creation.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study established that Radio West plays an important role in promoting human rights awareness through news bulletins, talk shows, interviews, and interactive programmes. These programmes inform listeners about constitutional rights, gender equality, domestic violence, child protection, corruption, access to justice, and freedom of expression. The findings suggest that radio provides an accessible platform for public education, audience participation, and engagement with leaders and human rights organizations. This supports Mwesige and Balikuddembe (2019), who emphasize radio's contribution to civic education and public participation.

The study also established that promoting human rights is essential for strengthening democracy, social justice, accountability, peaceful coexistence, and sustainable development. Human rights awareness enables citizens to understand their freedoms, challenge discrimination, and seek remedies for violations. It is particularly important for protecting vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and rural communities. However, the study identified several challenges affecting Radio West's effectiveness, including political interference, censorship, commercialization, inadequate funding, poor working conditions, limited professional training, and threats against journalists. These challenges may reduce the airtime, independence, and quality of human rights reporting.

The study identified several measures for addressing these challenges, including strengthening editorial independence, diversifying funding sources, improving journalists' welfare, providing specialized training, enhancing journalist safety, and collaborating with civil society and human rights organizations.

5.2 Recommendations

Radio stations: Increase airtime for human rights programmes, establish specialized reporting initiatives, strengthen editorial independence, and collaborate with legal experts and civil society organizations.

Government: Protect freedom of expression, prevent intimidation of journalists, enforce relevant labour protections, and support public human rights education.

Human rights organizations: Provide journalists with training, resource materials, technical assistance, and opportunities for collaborative awareness campaigns.

Journalists: Uphold accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and professional ethics while strengthening their knowledge of human rights law and investigative reporting.

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Educational institutions: Integrate human rights reporting, media ethics, and investigative journalism into journalism training programmes.

The public: Participate in radio discussions, seek reliable information about their rights, and report violations to appropriate authorities.

5.3 Areas for Further Research

Future studies could investigate:

The role of social media in promoting human rights awareness in Uganda.

The effectiveness of community radio in human rights advocacy.

The influence of media ownership on human rights reporting.

The contribution of television to democratic governance.

Challenges affecting investigative journalism and press freedom.

The impact of digital media on civic participation among young people.

5.4 General Conclusion

The study concludes that Radio West 100.2 FM makes an important contribution to human rights awareness in western Uganda through public education, informative programming, and audience engagement. Human rights awareness supports democracy, social justice, accountability, and the protection of vulnerable groups. However, the station's effectiveness is constrained by political, financial, and professional challenges. Strengthening editorial independence, improving journalists' welfare and training, and investing in public-interest broadcasting are essential for enhancing radio's contribution to human rights promotion and democratic development in Uganda.

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