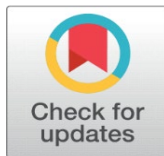


LEVERAGING COMMUNITY RADIO STATION (CRS) AS A TOOL TO EMPOWER RURAL COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF ODISHA'S RADIO NAMASKAR

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ABSTRACT

A community radio station popularly abbreviated (CRS) is more than just an informational tool. The stories of many people are combined into the story of one community by its waves. Community media can delve deeper and document local events that mainstream media often ignores. By giving the community required access to information, updates, and assistance during emergencies, community radio stations are essential in helping to handle local crises. This study examines the role of community radio stations as a transformative instrument for strengthening rural communities with a case study of Odisha's Radio Namaskar. A thorough assessment of the radio station's impact and its reach is expected to be achieved by methodically measuring factors. The study is expected to focus on social integration, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation as empowering factors of the community. The study will employ the quantitative method to assess the multidimensional impact of Radio Namaskar on people residing around the radio station. The research aims to improve the understanding of the role of a community radio that can help in supporting the rural development that the local community in Odisha has experienced. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the discourse on the impact of community radio in fostering local empowerment and sustainable development. The study may provide insights on best practices that can help policymakers and community radio practitioners to leverage community radio stations as powerful tools for empowerment.

Keywords: Community Radio Station, Empowerment, Rural Development, Radio Namaskar

1. INTRODUCTION

Media is always considered as a prominent tool for raising awareness, encouraging beneficial behavioral changes in society, and assisting individuals in doing so. It has frequently been attributed to the development of society (Timalsina & Pradhan, 2019). In addition to commercial and public broadcasting, community radio provides a third paradigm of radio transmission ("Community Radio," 2024).

Community Radio Station (popularly abbreviated as CRS), with its origin strongly rooted in the concepts of community engagement and inclusion provides a platform for supporting social, cultural and educational growth at the grassroots level. Community Radio Stations, as opposed to commercial radio station, prioritize the interests and requirements of the local community (KH, 2023). In 1865, James Maxwell suggested radio waves, although he did not have any actual data. In 1887, Heinrich Hertz produced a demonstration of electromagnetic wave transmission. In 1897, Guglielmo Marconi improved Hertz's device, allowing sound to be transmitted

across great distances. Therefore, in 1897, Marconi founded a wireless telegraph firm and a year later, in 1898, first radio company was founded in Chelmsford, England(Sharma, 2023). The first-ever radio broadcast took place on November 2, 1920, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the KDKA radio station. That same day, the results of the presidential election were released. Radio revolutionized communication media and quickly became incredibly popular, with listeners all over the world enjoying its news and other musical programme(Sreedhar & Murada, 2019). It was in Latin America, some more than fifty years ago, that the groundbreaking experiences that have given rise to modern community radio originated. The initial experiences—known as the Miners' radios in Bolivia in 1947 and Radio Sutatenza in Colombia that same year—were prompted by “poverty” and “social injustice”(Fraser & Estrada, 2001).

In India, community radio has expanded dramatically in recent years. However, it all began in the 1990s when a few avant-garde groups began experimenting with this medium. India's first radio broadcast was started by the Bombay Presidency Radio Club in July 1923. Indian Broadcasting firm Limited, a private firm, established two radio stations in India by agreement. On July 23, 1927, the first station opened in Bombay, and on July 26, 1927, the second station opened in Calcutta. The government took control and launched the two-year experiment known as Indian State Broadcasting Service in 1930 after the private corporation was dissolved and shut down. All India Radio (AIR) replaced the Indian State Broadcasting Service in 1936. In 1946, the Department of Information and Broadcasting acquired control of AIR(Sharma, 2023).

A ruling by the Supreme Court in February 1995 declaring that "airwaves are public property" encouraged community radio stations around the nation(Lakhendra, 2012), however initially only college radio stations serving educational purposes were permitted, subject to certain restrictions. Launched on February 1, 2004, Anna FM is India's first college "community" radio. It is operated by the Education and Multimedia Research Center, and all of its programs are created by Anna University's Media Sciences students(DMS - Anna FM, n.d.). The Indian government announced new Community Radio Guidelines on November 16, 2006, allowing non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society to own and run community radio stations. There are 479 operational community radio stations in India as of 8th January, 2024(Community Radio Stations | Ministry of Information and Broadcasting | Government of India, n.d.).

India continues to face a number of issues, including pollution, inadequate sanitation, income disparity, etc. Community radio serves as a conduit for information between the general public and legislators, enabling them to discuss these issues with the impoverished segment of society. According to an AMARC definition from 1998, community radio's guiding principles are to serve as a voice for the marginalized and an instrument of progress. Besides, community radio should emphasize community involvement, be a non-profit entity, and be owned and controlled by the community (Bhattacharya, 2022).

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The very concept of Community Radio lies in the theory of Participatory Communication which emphasizes planning, stakeholder participation, creating public participation in addressing societal issues through community-based strategies.

Freire (1978) explains the community-based communication in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that paved the way for the theory of participator communication. Community Radio Station with its origin strongly rooted in the concepts of community engagement and inclusion that provides a platform for supporting social, cultural and educational growth at the grassroots level.

The idea of community radio strongly supports the theory of empowerment. The social inclusion and involvement of the local population in their own development is a fundamental component of the Empowerment Theory. Initiatives aiming at enhancing the lives of community members can be attributed to Community Radio. The process of contact and sharing of knowledge, abilities, and information is necessary for these development activities (Asuman & Diedong, 2019). By incorporating community engagement in interactive programming, radio as a public sphere can achieve its goal (Sujoko et al., 2023).

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Community radio is viewed as a medium that encourages a sense of ownership and self-expression by enabling local communities to actively engage in the creation and distribution of content. UNESCO defines community media as Independent, locally owned and operated media. Since it provides an alternative to mainstream and commercial media, it is crucial to a pluralistic media ecosystem because it keeps media ownership from being concentrated and enables individuals to exercise their right to free speech (Community Media | UNESCO, n.d.). Theorists have identified one of community radio's most notable advantages as being its capacity to promote engagement in local politics and act as a democratizing instrument. Community radio, more than any other broadcast medium, fosters communities by encouraging conversation. By providing chances for self-expression, it represents the goals and opinions of the community it serves. Community radio, at its core, facilitates interaction and conversation among listeners that most closely resembles the ideal of public discourse (Belloe, 2015).

Bosch (2014) stresses that community radio stations are thought to offer a distinct kind of programming, with content catered to the local populace in their native tongues and listeners actively involved in station operations, production, and programming. He further elaborates that community stations are typically understood to be those that are funded by grants, sponsorships, contributions, and advertising and are operated, owned, and controlled by local residents or organizations.

Community radio takes a different approach than traditional broadcasting, even if it is a type of public-service media. By including them in all facets of administration and program creation, as well as by offering them programs that will support the growth and social improvement of their community, it aims to make its audience the primary protagonists (Fraser & Estrada, 2001).

Radio is one of the communication mediums that has proven crucial for social transformation. It has also been recognized as a tool important to social and economic growth as well as a channel for interactive communication (Pragya, 2018). A lot of community radio theorists and practitioners think that community radio, along with participatory media in general, may "solve" some of the issues that come with traditional development. Community radio has been utilized as a development tool (Tucker, 2013). By providing a platform for local voices to be heard, disseminating important information, and promoting education, health, and

economic empowerment, community radio stations can help create a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for local communities.

People who have experienced political, economic, or cultural marginalization have frequently turned to community radio as a means of advocating for their inalienable human rights. This claim illustrates how marginalized groups have adapted this radio format to draw attention to their everyday experiences. This further demonstrates how marginalized and oppressed populations can view community radio as a liberating medium(Tyali, 2021).

The fundamental features that differentiate community radio from commercial and public-service radio are its non-profit status, community ownership, and community involvement. It guarantees democratic participation in the administration and governance of its structure because it is run by the community. Through bringing people from different socioeconomic classes together, community radio serves to connect its listeners to a larger community(Ray, 2015). Community members are not, in the usual sense, the audience for community radio, which is a departure from traditional, mainstream modes of media creation. Instead, they are aspiring and experienced broadcasters and producers who are engaged in their local communities, creating platforms for a range of views, concerns, and viewpoints in an attempt to unite communities and promote change(Gaynor & O'Brien, 2012). Three fundamental concepts—non-profit status, community ownership and management, and active community involvement—define community radio. It usually has low power transmission, restricted local coverage, and programming catered to the socio-cultural, educational, and developmental requirements of its target population(Nair, 2011).

The Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh, was instrumental in promoting community media in the country by emphasizing its vital function in elevating the voices of underrepresented groups. Their efforts paid off in 2008 when the People's Republic of Bangladesh's Ministry of Information introduced the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast, and Operation Policy. The government's approval of 14 community radio stations was made possible by this policy, which was a major step in the direction of democratizing information access(Khan et al., 2017). Development in rural areas has gained additional significance from community radio operations. A suitable medium has been developed to aid in communicating. Promoting accountability and transparency is seen in the interactive sessions the station offers local leaders to discuss government policies and activities(Sjuchro et al., 2022). Effective leadership and good governance, particularly in underprivileged areas, are group processes that rely on the growth of a vibrant, involved, and knowledgeable civil society. In this context, community radio has shown to be a viable and engaging medium that allows communities to be heard, informed, and to form informed opinions, and become more active agents of their development(Wabwire, 2013).

4. OBJECTIVES

The study aims to examine how community radio stations, like Radio Namaskar in Odisha, can be transformative tools for empowering local rural communities and to analyze the Radio Namaskar's role in empowerment by measuring factors including economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and community involvement.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present investigation utilizes a quantitative research approach to methodically evaluate the influence of Radio Namaskar, a community radio station in Konark, Odisha, on the surrounding community. Numerous elements that support community engagement, economic, educational and women empowerment, skill development and how effective is the radio station in addressing local issues are to be measured through quantitative approaches. The study utilizes a purposive sampling technique to select participants residing around Radio Namaskar's coverage area (8 kilometers) of the station as the range of the Community Radio Station is 8 kilometers radius. The researcher used Google form for the survey which received data from 310 samples. Quantitative data collected from the surveys were analyzed using statistical software SPSS to identify relationships and patterns within the data.

6. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF RADIO NAMASKAR

Radio Namaskar, the first community radio station in Odisha was founded in Konark, in the Puri district on 12 February, 2010. It has around 700 villages spread over four blocks in the Puri outer belt of Konark (Gop, Nimapada, Kakatpur, and Astaranga). Twelve hours of programming are aired on the radio every day in two sessions: six hours in the morning (7.00 AM-1.00 PM) and six hours in the evening (4.00 PM- 10.00 PM). The radio produces programmes in Odia language. Some of the prominent programmes of Radio Namaskar are Chasa Basa Katha, an interactive programme where local farmers interact with experts; Jana Soochana, a programme based on information about government schemes; Ajira Nari, a programme based on women rights; Angya Namaskar, a programmed based on interview with noted personalities and citizens from the community; and Janata Darbar, a programme based on people's forum. The most notable accolades that Radio Namaskar has received for its community service are the first "National Community Radio Award" from S. Jagathrakshakan, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, and the "Manthan South Asia Award". It also won the Laadli Media Award for its noteworthy support of gender sensitivity(Radio Namaskar – ...promotes Voice of the Voiceless, n.d.).

7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A frequency analysis of gender for the sample (N=310) indicates that the sample consists of 155 (50%) male and 155 (50%) female. The even distribution in gender representation points to a sample of men and women in the research population that is equally representative of each gender.

Table 1

Table 1 Frequency Distribution for Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	155	50.0
Female	155	50.0
Total	310	100.0

A frequency analysis of education for the sample (N=310) indicates that 125 (40.3%) respondents have below 10th qualification, while 112 (36.1%)

respondents have up to 12th level, 53 (17.1%) respondents have graduation, 15 (4.8%) and 5 (1.6%) respondents have PhD and above qualification respectively.

Table 2

Table 2 Frequency Distribution for Education		
Education	Frequency	Percent
Below 10th	125	40.3
10th – 12th	112	36.1
Graduation	53	17.1
Post Graduation	15	4.8
Ph.D. & Above	5	1.6
Total	310	100

A frequency analysis of age for the sample (N=310) indicates that 2 (.6%) respondents are below 15 years of age, while 9 (2.9%) respondents are between 15-25 years, 68 (21.9%) respondents are between 25-35 years, 231 (74.5%) respondents are above 35 years of age respectively.

Table 3

Table 3 Frequency Distribution for Age		
Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 15 Years	2	.6
Between 15-25 Years	9	2.9
Between 25-35Years	68	21.9
Above 35Years	231	74.5
Total	310	100.0

This table presents descriptive analysis for six empowerment constructs (Community Engagement, Skill Development, Economic Empowerment, Addressing Local Issue, Women Empowerment and Educational Empowerment) measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Descriptive statistics for community engagement reveal an overall mean score of 3.973 (SD=0.341). The mean score for Skill development is 4.083 (SD=0.201). The mean for economic empowerment is 3.839 (SD=0.246), and for addressing local issues is 3.998 (SD=0.352), for women empowerment is 4.618 (SD=0.423), and for educational empowerment is 4.134 (SD=0.302). The means of all the six constructs show the respondents' inclination towards higher value which means that the community radio helps empower its community.

Table 4

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Empowerment Constructs				
Empowerment Constructs	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Community Engagement	2.67	5.00	3.9731	.34185
Skill Development	3.67	5.00	4.0839	.20102
Economic Empowerment	3.00	4.67	3.8398	.24679
Addressing Local Issue	2.33	5.00	3.9989	.35221
Women	3.67	5.00	4.6183	.42337

Empowerment				
Educational Empowerment	3.00	5.00	4.1344	.30257

8. CONCLUSION

This study looked into how a community radio station empowers its listeners. A well-balanced sample with equal representation of men and women was found through analysis, albeit with a slight skew towards older demographics. A favorable image was presented by the descriptive statistics for each of the six empowerment constructs. On the 5-point Likert scale, a mean score of 3.8 or above for all constructs indicates a tendency toward agreement. This shows that most listeners believed the community radio station had a good impact on their sense of empowerment in a number of ways. "Women Empowerment" was the empowerment category with the highest mean score (4.62), suggesting that listeners strongly believe the radio station does a good job of promoting gender equality. "Educational Empowerment" (4.13) and "Skill Development" (4.08) both received high mean value, indicating that the radio station is beneficial in advancing knowledge and skills. "Economic Empowerment" (3.84), "Addressing Local Issues" (3.99), and "Community Engagement" (3.97) all had scores higher than the midpoint, suggesting that people typically view the radio station's contribution to these areas favorably.

Therefore, the study indicates that the community radio station has a big impact on listeners' empowerment in a lot of different ways. In addition to addressing neighborhood issues, the station promotes skill development, education, and a sense of community involvement. Above all, it makes a big difference in the community's empowerment of women. On the basis of these results, more investigation can be conducted to pinpoint the precise methods by which the radio station produces this beneficial effect.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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