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An assessment of the listening behavior of community radio listeners in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

Rural development largely depends on access to information and knowledge. Farmers benefit greatly from understanding local conditions, which guides practical decisions. Spreading relevant information and introducing advanced farming practices empower them to improve productivity, explore new opportunities, and strengthen their livelihoods, fostering overall growth in rural communities. The present study was carried to study the listening behavior of listeners in different eight Community Radio Stations of Madhya Pradesh. four Agro-climatic zones namely Bundelkhand region, Gird region, Malwa plateau and Vindhyan plateau were considered for sampling of CRSs, Thus, a total of 320 listener respondents were considered as a sample. The findings from the data distinctly indicated that majority of the respondents (66.56%) had medium level of listening behavior followed by high and low listening behavior.

Keywords: Listening behavior, community radio stations, community

Introduction

Community Radio Stations (CRSs) play a transformative role in strengthening participatory communication and grassroots development. In India, CRSs function under the regulatory framework of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which provides guidelines to ensure ethical broadcasting, community participation, and contextual relevance. These stations produce localized content in regional languages, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and addressing issues such as agriculture, health, education, women's empowerment, and disaster management (Verma, A. 2025) ^[7]. Recent studies highlight how CRSs contribute to climate change awareness, rural livelihoods, and digital inclusion. By bridging the information gap between policymakers and rural citizens, community radio strengthens democratic participation and fosters inclusive development in India. According to Tabing (2002), community radio is characterized as a medium that is created, managed, and sustained by the community itself, serving local needs and interests. In India, licenses for establishing Community Radio Stations (CRSs) can be obtained by non-profit entities such as NGOs, academic institutions, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). These stations are deeply community-driven, with more than half of their content generated by local people to ensure relevance and representation (The Hindu 2024, April 27). Governance structures generally include community representatives, reflecting shared ownership and responsibility. Programme design and broadcasting are carried out through participatory approaches, integrating the efforts of both community members and CRS staff.

The major objective of the research study was to assess the listening behavior of community radio listeners in state of Madhya Pradesh. An analytical and descriptive research design was employed to provide address to specific research objective.

Research Methodology

The present study was conducted in Madhya Pradesh state of India, which comprises 11 agro-climatic zones, namely Malwa Plateau, Satpura Plateau, Bundelkhand, Gird Region, Vindhya Plateau, Narmada Valley, Nimar Valley, Kymore Plateau and Satpura Hills, Northern Hill Region of Chhattisgarh, Jhabua Hills, and Chhattisgarh Plains. Among these, four zones with the highest concentration of functional Community Radio Stations (CRSs) Bundelkhand, Gird, Malwa Plateau, and Vindhya Plateau were purposively selected. Madhya Pradesh hosts 32 CRSs licensed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, operated by both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions (EIs). For the present study, these managing agencies were treated as sampling units to ensure equal representation. Accordingly, eight CRSs (four managed by NGOs and four by E.I.s) were randomly selected from the chosen agro-climatic zones. From these stations, a total of 320 listener respondents were identified using a population proportion formula, and the final respondents were drawn from the listener lists through a systematic random sampling method.

The data were collected from chosen respondents through personal interviews with the help of a structured interview schedule.

Results and Discussion

The listening behavior of community radio listeners was assessed on the basis of following parameters:

A. Listening frequency

The highest proportion of the respondents (43.75%) reported that they usually listened to community radio programs followed by (36.87%) who listened occasionally, and 19.37 percent who never listened the CR programs (Table 1). This could be because community radio offers content that is locally relevant, culturally appropriate, and addresses real-life issues, which encourages regular listenership.

B. Time of listening

Data presented in Table 2 indicates that 40.63 per cent of the listeners preferred listening to community radio programs in the evening while by 32.81 per cent listen the radio during afternoon. The reason might be the evening time is generally more convenient for listeners as they are free from work and household responsibilities, allowing them to relax and engage with radio content.

C. Time span

Table 3 clearly indicates that maximum number of community radio listener (45.63%) listened to programs for about half an hour followed by (30.94%) who listened for more than half an hour, and (23.44%) who listened for less than half an hour. This may be due to the typical length of community radio segments, which are designed to be concise and focused, fitting well within listeners' daily routines.

D. Usefulness of content

The data in Table 4 indicate the perceived usefulness of the content in CRSs. A majority (50.63%) of respondents reported that the content is very useful followed by (32.19%) of respondents who stated that the content was less useful, while a small proportion (17.19%) found the content to be useless. Community radio often provides practical information on agriculture, health, education, and local events, which directly benefits the listeners in their day-to-day lives.

E. Listening style

Table 5 presents data on the listening styles of the respondents. Around (43.75%) mentioned that they occasionally listened with family or friends followed by (34.06%) who always listened to programmes alone, while only (22.19%) of respondents stated that they always listened with family members. This may be because community radio promotes communal listening through relatable topics, yet differences in individual interests or schedules can limit group listening to occasional instances.

F. Attention of listeners

The data presented in Table 6 illustrates the level of attention given by respondents to CRSs programmes. A majority (54.69%) reported that they always paid attention to the programs followed by (34.06%) who occasionally paid attention, while only few (11.25%) stated that they never paid attention to CRSs programmes. Listeners are likely to pay close attention because the topics discussed are often relevant to their socio-economic context, and the language used is familiar and easy to understand.

G. Clarity of the message

The findings reported in Table 7 highlights the respondents' perceptions regarding the clarity of messages delivered through CRSs programmes. A majority (54.69%) stated that they occasionally found the messages to be clear followed by (31.25%) who always found the messages clear, while only (14.06%) never found the messages clear. While the messages are generally understandable, occasional lapses in clarity may occur due to poor audio quality, complex language, or lack of context in certain broadcasts

H. Discussion after listening

The results illustrated in Table 8 presents data on whether respondents discussed the messages conveyed by CRSs programmes after listening. The majority (52.19%) reported that they always discussed the messages provided by Radio station followed by (42.81%) who occasionally discussed the content, while only (5.00%) stated that they never discussed the messages provided by CRSs programmes. The community oriented nature of the content encourages dialogue among listeners, prompting them to share and discuss information with others in their households or social circles.

I. Overall Listening behavior

The data presented in Table 9 explains the overall listening behavior of the respondents. A two third majority of the respondents (66.56%) exhibited a medium level of listening behavior, followed by (17.19%) with high listening behavior, and (16.25%) who demonstrated low listening behavior. The results of the study are in partial agreement with Sharma A., Bisht K. & Naberia S., (2020) ^[5], Kumbhare, N. V., *et al.* (2015) ^[3], Raghuvanshi *et al.* (2022) ^[4].

Table 1: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Listening frequency

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Usually	118	36.87
2.	Occasionally	140	43.75
3.	Never	62	19.37
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.18, S.D.:0.73			

Table 2: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Listening time

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Morning	85	26.56
2.	Afternoon	105	32.81
3.	Evening	130	40.63
Total		320	100
Mean: 1.86, S.D.:0.81			

Table 3: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Duration of listening

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less than half an hour	75	23.44
2.	Half an hour	146	45.63
3.	More than half an hour	99	30.94
Total		320	100
Mean: 1.93, S.D.:0.73			

Table 4: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Usefulness of the content

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very much useful	162	50.63
2.	Less useful	103	32.19
3.	Useless	55	17.19
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.33, S.D.:0.75			

Table 5: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Listening style

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Always listening alone	109	34.06
2.	Occasionally listening with family friends	140	43.75
3.	Always listening with family	71	22.19
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.12, S.D.:0.74			

Table 6: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Attention of listener

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Always	175	54.69
2.	Occasionally	109	34.06
3.	Never	36	11.25
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.43, S.D.:0.69			

Table 7: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Message clarity

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Always	100	31.25
2.	Occasionally	175	54.69
3.	Never	45	14.06
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.17, S.D.:0.65			

Table 8: Distribution of listeners on the basis of Discussions after listening

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Always	167	52.19
2.	Occasionally	137	42.81
3.	Never	16	5.00
Total		320	100
Mean: 2.47, S.D.:0.59			

Table 9: Overall listening behavior of the CRS listeners

S. No.	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	52	16.25
2.	Medium	213	66.56
3.	High	55	17.19
Total		320	100
Mean:17.49, S.D.:2.04			

Conclusion

The findings reveal that most listeners tune in regularly, prefer evening broadcasts, and engage for about half an hour. Content was widely regarded as useful, with many

paying close attention and often discussing programmes afterward. Overall, respondents exhibited medium level of listening behavior, underscoring CRSs' relevance yet highlighting scope for deeper engagement.

The findings imply that while community radio stations (CRSs) successfully attract regular listeners and provide content perceived as useful, there remains untapped potential to deepen audience involvement. By extending interactive elements, diversifying programme formats, and tailoring content more closely to community needs, CRSs could foster stronger engagement and maximize their developmental impact.

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