

Impact of the Community Radio on Local Development in Chapai Nawabganj, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Community radio serves as a platform for rural, marginalized, and hard-to-reach populations to express and exchange views, ideas, and concerns with the wider community. Its increasing popularity in recent years has provided both policymakers and grassroots individuals with an avenue to engage in the development process of their communities. In Bangladesh, community radio stations now broadcast 170 hours of daily programs, with the majority aimed at addressing local development goals in rural areas. These programs motivate people, bridge gaps, and collaborate on agendas such as poverty reduction, reducing inequalities, promoting education, good health, clean water, and sanitation. Additionally, community radio has provided a platform for the poor and marginalized communities to raise their voices and become the voice for the voiceless. This study, conducted using participatory theory, aims to underscore the significance and impact of community radio on the development of marginalized community at Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The findings indicate that community radio plays a crucial role in local development, providing essential information and bridging the gap between ordinary people and local government in rural areas. The current research was carried out in Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Bangladesh, with the support of the local community radio station, Radio Mahananda 98.8 FM. The study found that involvement in and awareness of Radio Mahananda programs significantly influenced local development.

Keywords: community radio, remote area, local development, grassroots peoples, Bangladesh, Radio Mahananda 98.8 FM

1. Introduction

Community radio, as the media of citizens of a particular community, has become a popular and new opportunity for both the media practitioner and grassroots people (Myers, 2011). It serves as the voice of the voiceless. Community radio mainly functions as a bridge between the government and the marginalised people. It communicates the problems faced by marginalized individuals to the government, while also delivering government information to the public. Community radio can help develop target groups such as the elderly, women, and children (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Girard, 2007). According to Tabing (2005), community radio is one that is operated “in the community, for the community, about the community, and by the community.” As a result, community radio is designed to benefit the people in the communities it serves, both through programming and information services, as well as opportunities for engagement in the station's operations and other activities. According to this description, community radio operates differently from mainstream media. While commercial and public service models treat listeners as objects to be captured for advertisements or information, community radio strives to treat its listeners as subjects and participants (Lewis et al., 2002). Another crucial component of this concept is that to varying degrees, the community should own, manage, and operate radio stations. The community can be geographical or based on a shared interest (Mtimde et al., 1998).

Community radio helps to ensure people's right to information and community participation by expressing the voice and thoughts of grassroots people in the development process (Dragon, 2001; Milioni, 2009). Community radio has seen significant development and growth worldwide. Its evolution can be traced back to the mid-20th century when community-based broadcasting initiatives began emerging in various countries. Since then, community radio has become an important medium for promoting local voices, cultural diversity, and grassroots participation in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, South Africa, Senegal, Uganda, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, community radio stations now broadcast 170 hours of daily programs, with the majority aimed at addressing sustainable development goals in rural areas (Siraj & Rahman, 2016). These programs motivate people, bridge

gaps, and collaborate on agendas such as poverty reduction, reducing inequalities, promoting education, ensuring good health, and providing clean water and sanitation. Additionally, community radio has provided a platform for poor and marginalized communities to raise their voices and become advocates for the voiceless. These new media outlets have opened numerous opportunities for upholding their right to information on social, political, cultural, and environmental issues. This scope has offered a ray of hope for poverty reduction and will contribute to meeting the sustainable development goals (SDG targets) in Bangladesh (Siraj & Rahman, 2016).

In Bangladesh, community radio primarily serves the regional population, particularly the general villagers who are avid radio listeners. It promotes awareness among villagers about social issues while entertaining them. Community radio plays a crucial role in providing information related to agriculture, purchasing and production, rainfall updates, and emergency alerts, among other topics (Khan et al., 2017). However, the socio-economic conditions of marginalized communities in the northern part of Bangladesh are more vulnerable. This vulnerability is largely due to natural disasters, such as annual floods, as well as the communication distance from their local government authorities and the lack of policymaking for the development process.

Prominent community radios like Radio Padma 99.2 FM in Rajshahi and Radio Mahananda in Chapai Nawabganj have taken initiatives to resolve these problems by conducting programs with local people and simultaneously considering long-term effective measures to mitigate issues that lead to sustainable social changes and development (Rahman et al., 2023). In developing countries like Bangladesh, significant efforts are being made to progress through various developmental phases and improve the overall socio-economic conditions of citizens. However, amidst these transitions, marginalized communities within the country face numerous challenges when it comes to expressing their voices and having their concerns heard. One major obstacle they encounter is the intricate political landscape that exists in such nations. Research on community radio and social change in Bangladesh attempts to grasp the significance of alternative media approaches, which is important not only in terms of the current media landscape but also in understanding the scope of communication methodologies in a technology-driven future media environment with its target audience (Rahman et al., 2023).

Community radios in Bangladesh are a crucial aspect of communication for development, but their potential can only be realized if residents are involved in their management and programming. In the Chapai Nawabganj District, there is a functioning community radio station. However, it remains unclear how much the people contribute to its programming and whether it brings them closer to their elected officials. By focusing on improving participation, community radio can assist locals in taking control of their developmental destiny. Community radio has the potential to enhance local government processes, gain insight from citizens, and support sustainable development by involving residents, but low participation hinders these goals.

The importance of this study lies in its examination of community development through radio programs in rural areas and the impact of community radio, specifically in the northern part of Bangladesh. The research's unique features combine the general public's thoughts regarding radio programs, including all relevant social issues and what people desire from their stations and local government. The objectives of community radios are to empower previously disempowered individuals and enable their participation in community systems. They may play an important role in the lives of rural Bangladeshi people as instruments of power to change their circumstances. This study aims to investigate the contribution of community radio stations to disseminating information and developing rural communities in Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Bangladesh, and to suggest ways to enhance access to information and empower rural society. The findings can be used to plan and carry out future communication for development programs by local governments, donor organizations, and the rural community.

2. Methodology

An interpretive approach is employed to understand the role of community radio in social empowerment and social change, placing importance on the audience and viewing community radio stations from their perspective (Akpabli et al., 2013; Howley et al., 2005). The study utilizes a descriptive and analytical research design to explore the current phenomenon of community radio in rural settings. It does not involve altering any variables or existing environments; instead, through observation and analysis, it seeks to understand the relationship between variables—specifically, the correlation between the independent variable (community radio station) and the dependent variables (empowerment and social change). This causal design facilitates an understanding of the audience's attitudes toward this participatory medium in rural areas of northern Bangladesh.

The study adopts an interpretive approach, focusing on the audience's perspective (Akpabli et al., 2013). This involves examining the dependent variables, which in this case are empowerment and social change, through several methods:

- I. **Observation:** This involved watching and recording the behavior and interactions of the community members as they engaged with the community radio stations. The goal was to witness firsthand how these radio stations might influence empowerment and social change.

- II. **Interaction Analysis:** This method examined how people interact with each other and with community radio stations. By analyzing these interactions, the study aimed to understand the role of the radio stations in promoting empowerment and social change
- III. **In-depth Interviews:** These were detailed, one-on-one interviews with community members. The interviews aimed to gather personal insights and experiences regarding the impact of community radio stations. This method offered a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive the stations' influence on their lives.
- IV. **Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** These were group discussions with selected participants from the community and radio listener clubs. The discussions provided a platform for community members to collectively share their thoughts and experiences. FGDs helped capture a broader range of perspectives and highlighted common themes as well as divergent views on the impact of community radio stations

The study seeks to determine whether the observed empowerment and social change within the communities can be attributed to the community radio stations. By employing these methods, researchers gathered comprehensive data from multiple angles to understand the stations' influence on the community (Akpabli et al., 2013; Howley et al., 2005). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were another data collection approach used in this study. These interviews were planned around a series of predetermined open-ended questions, with additional questions emerging from the discussion between the interviewer and interviewees (Crabtree & DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). The semi-structured interview involves several processes, including developing the interview guide, conducting the interview, and reviewing the interview data as a data-gathering strategy (Baumbusch et al., 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Consequently, a written questionnaire was prepared to guide each key informant before conducting the interviews. According to Crabtree and DiCicco-Bloom (2006), semi-structured interviews can address a wide range of research questions. Therefore, the interview guide was divided into key topics for each informant based on the study's aims and objectives, as well as the informant's role or position. The Station Manager and the program producer were asked questions as key informants for Radio Mahananda 98.9 FM.

While surveying the radio stations, another round of interviews was conducted, and a participant observation survey took place that same week. An interview with the station manager discussed their plans and decision-making process regarding program arrangements at Mahananda Radio Station. The aim was to understand how the station's programs are organized and how well the audience understands the station's broadcasting philosophy. Additionally, the interview explored the audience's awareness of how they receive and engage with the programs. The primary goal was to gain insights into the station's operations and its impact on community development, assessing whether this aligns with or differs from listeners' views. This interview served both as participant observation and a standalone data source in various ways.

After conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews at the radio stations, a survey was performed in the field to observe Radio Listener Clubs (RLCs). This data collection sequence was designed to provide a comprehensive view of how community radio stations inspire their listeners to engage in media and development. Participants were then invited to take part in focus groups to discuss the relevance of the radio stations to them and their communities, as well as their involvement in station operations and development projects. The goal of participant observation in the RLCs was to better understand the activities club members engage in, which are facilitated by the community radio station. This helped address how community radio encourages participation in development and how RLCs assist in expanding their members' capacities. At Mahananda, several RLCs working with the radio station were selected, with the support of the station manager and his deputy, to observe their operations and conduct FGDs with them. Listening groups were identified in Chapai Nawabganj, including the Sona Masjid and Palsha Bazar RLCs. These clubs have engaged in various social activities such as participating in social events, raising awareness, and organizing debate programs.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with listeners of Mahananda Community Radio were held after observing the RLC club activities. This provided an opportunity to gather more information about previously identified issues and inquire about the station managers' statements, as well as what was observed at the radio stations and in specific programs. Four FGDs were conducted with 13 members of the listeners' clubs, including two FGDs at Sona Masjid in Chapai Nawabganj. The FGDs were held separately for male participants across four distinct community groups, including youth (18-28 years old), to obtain insights into each group's specific needs. Given the socio-personal tensions within the listener clubs, steps were taken to ensure participants felt comfortable expressing their thoughts freely. To conclude, the moderator and primary note-taker requested permission from the community radio's authorities to conduct the sessions and arrange participants in accordance with the FGD requirements. Stock-taking was conducted after each FGD to ensure that participants with specific needs were included.

3. Data Analysis

The data collected from the respective stations and FGD discussions were first analysed individually. Later, a comparative analysis of both stations was conducted to meet the research objectives. The data was specifically coded and then presented in the form of tables and graphical representations. By conducting a descriptive survey analysis, we gained

deeper insights into how community radio stations are perceived in rural areas. Survey analysis is one of the most effective methods for understanding an existing phenomenon, relating to different situations, and deriving suggestions or predicting future scenarios. It not only examines but also takes into account various variables, making it essential for understanding audience behavior in the media industry.

Survey analysis allows investigations to take place in realistic settings, such as studying newspaper reading, television viewing, radio listening, and consumer behavior patterns in their natural environments, rather than in artificial conditions. This approach enhances our understanding of the relationships between variables—in this case, the connection between community radio and development. Complementary methods such as observation, interaction analysis, in-depth interviews, and survey analysis facilitated the overall analysis process. Through this comprehensive approach, we were able to assess how effectively the stations addressed their audience's needs and to understand the audience's perception of their community radio stations, as well as their aspirations for development and change.

To achieve the research objectives, we conducted a comparative analysis of responses from the stations and examined the relationships between various variables. The key findings from the listeners helped generalize the results and formulate recommendations for significant improvements in the operation of community radio stations in northern Bangladesh.

4. Result and Discussion

Radio Mahananda 98.8 FM was officially launched in Chapai Nawabganj on February 1, 2012, through the efforts of the Proyash Manobik Unnoyon Society. The station prioritizes listener preferences, particularly in its news programs, which focus on local issues and opportunities and have become the most popular. News related to public projects in Chapai Nawabganj, a region in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, also receives significant attention. The audience eagerly tunes in at 6:30 PM and 9:30 PM for the station's news broadcasts. Before the establishment of Radio Mahananda, the local community had little opportunity to share their thoughts on a broader communication platform. Now, they have the chance to voice their opinions and ideas in the air. Radio Mahananda plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the community by raising awareness about agriculture, health, women's rights, and education.

4.1 Programs

Radio Mahananda produces and broadcasts three types of programs: social awareness and development programs, infotainment radio programs, documentaries and news, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Radio Mahananda 98.8 FM Programs

Types of Programs	Name of the Programs	Duration (mins)	Broadcasts per Month (hrs)	Participated of Audience
Development	Krishi O Jibon	30	2	Yes
	Shopner Thikana	30	1	No
	Gamcha Mathal	30	4	No
	Amader Campus	30	4	Yes
	Baha shandish	30	1	No
	Projukti Dot Com	30	2	No
	Shastho kotha	30	3	Yes
	Chader hashi	30	1	Yes
	Harge Geram	30	1	Yes
	Jago Sobai	30	2	No
Entertainment	Café Mahananda'	45	3	Yes
	Jora Shalik	3hrs 25 mins	four times	Yes
	Sandhya Pradeep	4hrs	four times	Yes
	Rosher Hari'	3hrs 25 mins	four times	Yes
	Chirodiner Shur'	3	four times	No
	Surer Tara"	3hrs 25 mins	four times	Yes
	Lagra Panch Farong'	3hrs 25 mins	four times	Yes
	A rat tomar amar	2 hrs	four times	Yes
	Man Majhi	3hrs 25 mins	four times	Yes
	Theko Bandhu	30	2	Yes
Ajker Chapainawabganj	30	60	No	
News	Chetonai Amor Ekushe	30	1 per year	No
Documentary	Narir Agrozatray Amra	30	1 per year	No
	Ke Ami	30	2	Yes
	Monishider Kotha	30	2	No

As indicated in Table 1, local people have been actively participating in most of the development programs, which helps raise their voices within the community and to local leaders. In addition, Radio Mahananda regularly broadcasts local

news through its news program, *Ajker Chapainawabganj*. This program covers the latest news in the Chapainawabganj district, broadcasting both local and national news, along with sports updates and weather forecasts. The news is broadcast throughout the day at 3:30 PM, 7:30 PM, 9:30 PM, and 11:30 PM.

The preferences and demands of listeners are always prioritized in the production of these programs. Nearly all the content reflects the interests and needs of the audience, with particular emphasis on local development issues in the developmental programs. Overall, Radio Mahananda takes great care to consider its audience's preferences when producing and broadcasting content. By curating programs that resonate with the community and addressing relevant local development topics, Radio Mahananda strives to provide informative, entertaining, and engaging programming for its listeners.

4.2 Identified Social Problems

This section highlights the existing social problems addressed by Radio Mahananda's broadcasts, supported by data, remarks, and case studies. Radio Mahananda can be heard approximately 34 km around Chapai Nawabganj, where residents consistently face various social challenges. These issues hinder daily life and impede development in the area. The following problems have been identified in this study:

4.2.1 Drug Issues

Research has shown that a drug problem exists in the Palsa area of Chapai Nawabganj Sadar Upazila. A radio listener, Md. Barkat, a 50-year-old businessman from the Palsa Bazar area, articulated that the drug problem has reached alarming proportions. Located on the banks of the Mahananda River, the Palsa area has become a hotspot for drug dealers, who easily transport and sell drugs across the river. Many young and middle-aged residents regularly consume drugs, and those who cannot afford them often resort to abusing other family members to meet their needs. In desperation, they sometimes resort to stealing from the streets or committing thefts. Day by day, this issue is gaining momentum in our area, disturbing peace and order. Md. Kauser, a 36-year-old raw materials trader and another radio listener, also raised concerns about the drug problem:

We have been suffering from drug problems in our area for the last 20 years. We once formed a drug program committee in the village, but we could not take any effective action against the drug lords, who are very powerful. They have been managing everything for a long time by bribing law enforcement agencies. Despite filing verbal and written complaints to the local administration, law enforcement, and public representatives about the local drug problem, no action has been taken. He added that even with the presence of the Border Guard Battalion Headquarters and Police Lines in the area, drug dealers continue to operate openly when no one is watching.

Raju Ahmed, a 19-year-old college student and radio listener, highlighted that drug aggression is the leading social problem in the district. Approximately half of the district shares a border with India, and many of these border areas are inadequately protected, making it easy for smugglers to transport dangerous drugs into Bangladesh. Influential individuals and drug dealers in the area facilitate the distribution of drugs to the youth.

Raju further emphasized that drugs are alarmingly easy to obtain, even within the confines of one's home, often with the help of corrupt law enforcement agencies. Substances such as foreign liquor, Phensidyl, Gaza, and heroin can be purchased and consumed by anyone. Another radio listener, Md. Samir Hossain, a 20-year-old college student, expressed concern about the dark path many young individuals are being led down and how their lives and families are being affected by this dire situation.

Raju and Samir are concerned citizens actively addressing the drug problem in their community. They have held meetings with local representatives to inform them about the issue and emphasize its negative impact on youth. Unfortunately, despite receiving assurances, no practical actions have been taken, and their written complaints to the local administration have gone unanswered. As a result, the community is increasingly worried about the well-being of its young members.

4.2.2 Scarcity of Medical Support

The empirical findings from this research illuminate the inadequacies in the maternal and child health care system in the Palsa area of Chapai Nawabganj district. A radio listener named Md. Omar Faruque, a 40-year-old small businessman, shared his personal experience, stating that:

The area where he lives lacks proper medical facilities. The community clinic does not have competent doctors, and the distance to Chapai Nawabganj Government Hospital is considerable, making it challenging to access emergency healthcare services. Without registered doctors' offices in this remote rural area, residents must travel approximately 40 kilometres to reach the government hospital. This situation not only wastes valuable time—often, resulting in at least one lost working day—but also incurs additional costs, such as ambulance fares, which can amount to BDT 3,000 or more. The

community has repeatedly requested improved medical facilities and qualified doctors from the Union Parishad community clinics and upazila health centres, but no action has been taken so far. The lack of essential medical services has created an undesirable situation where preventable deaths occur, posing a significant concern for the residents of Palsa, as expressed during the FGD discussion.

4.2.3 Scarcity of Sanitation

Another problem in the Palsa market area of Chapai Nawabganj district is the lack of public toilets. Approximately 350 people work in this market, and around 3,000 visitors come daily for their shopping needs. Residents from the village come here each day to buy and sell their products. Despite the high volume of foot traffic, authorities have not set up any public toilets in this busy market. As a result, men and women who visit the market face significant difficulties when nature calls. Women often have to seek out a nearby house to use the toilet, which can be embarrassing for both them and the homeowners. Meanwhile, shop employees are permitted to go to toilets located a few kilometers away from the market. Mohd. Ujjwal, a 32-year-old small business owner and radio listener, mentioned that:

Sometimes we feel very embarrassed about finding a place to go to the toilet. Some people resort to using the land around the market, which pollutes our environment. We have made numerous written requests to the market committee to establish a public toilet, but they have yet to take any action. We have also appealed both verbally and in writing to the union council chairman, but still, no action has been taken. (Palsa FGD).

4.2.4 Child Marriage

Research indicates that another significant social problem in the Chapai Nawabganj district is child marriage. Although this issue has persisted in the area for a long time, it has become increasingly evident during the COVID-19 crisis. With schools and colleges closed and uncertainty surrounding their reopening, many girls have been unable to continue their education. As a result, their parents grow increasingly anxious about their daughters' future, especially as their ages continue to rise without any progress in education or work opportunities. During this time, parents, particularly of girls in the eighth or ninth grades, often feel pressured to arrange early marriages. Radio listener Al Mamun, a 16-year-old college student, spoke about these issues:

We have arranged several meetings with senior citizens in the area to take steps to stop child marriage, but they often respond that if a guardian decides to marry off their daughter, there's nothing we can do about it. Over the last year and a half, many school-going girls in the village have been married off, and now they are living in their fathers-in-law's homes. We are very concerned that some of these girls are under 18, and if they have children now, the lives of both the mother and the child will be at risk. While we are raising awareness about this issue among our family and relatives, we believe that community radio has a significant role to play in educating everyone about the dangers of child marriage. They could promote more short dramas, public service announcements (PSAs), and talk shows to raise awareness. (Sonamosjid FGD)

4.2.5 Road Accident

This research indicates that the Sona Masjid area in Chapai Nawabganj is prone to accidents. Located near the Dhaka-India highway, Sona Masjid serves as a land port through which many cargo trucks enter Bangladesh daily, with at least two thousand trucks crossing the border. The heavy traffic of these cargo trucks often leads to frequent accidents, resulting in the loss of life and property for ordinary people. Sahrul Islam, a 20-year-old resident, recounted a tragic incident where two daughters of one of his relatives died in a road accident last September. The sisters were in an autorickshaw when a truck collided with them, killing them instantly and casting a shadow of mourning over their family. Another listener, Mamun Aur Rashid, an undergraduate student at a local college, expressed frustration that they have repeatedly alerted the relevant authorities, including the local administration, about the need to reduce road accidents, yet no solutions have been implemented.

Listeners identified several significant reasons for the high rate of road accidents, including a lack of public awareness regarding road safety, reckless driving, and insufficient measures to punish traffic rule violators. More than 50 people are killed every year in accidents in the Sona Masjid Road and Kansat Mango market area. According to some radio listeners, one particular incident remains unforgettable, having occurred in the same location:

Raju Ahmed, a graduate student at a local college, was a victim of a road accident in the Sona Mashjid area. On that day, he was traveling with a friend to the Kansat market in a battery-powered autorickshaw. As they approached the Kansat Piling junction on the Chapai Nawabganj-Sona Mashjid highway around 10:00 AM, a truck collided head-on with their autorickshaw. The truck then veered off and crashed into a roadside shop. Tragically, two passengers from the autorickshaw, Harun and

Renu Begum, died at the scene. Raju Ahmed (19), along with Ahidul Islam (24) and Ahmed Ali (22), all from Argarahat, sustained injuries in the incident. Locals quickly rescued the injured and transported them to the Shibganj Upazila Health Complex. Raju was later referred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, where he underwent treatment for about three months, costing him approximately BDT 4 lakh. While he eventually recovered physically, he continues to require regular medication, which remains quite expensive. Raju Ahmed expressed that if the community radio had broadcast more awareness messages aimed at drivers and the public, the frequency of such accidents in the area could have been reduced. (Source: Interview with community radio listener in the Sona Mashjid area, Chapai Nawabganj, Bangladesh) (FGD Sona Mashjid).

The story illustrates that serious accidents continue to occur in this area. The primary causes of these accidents are a lack of awareness among pedestrians regarding road safety and reckless driving by the drivers.

4.2.6 Poverty

This research highlights a significant social issue in the Sona Masjid area of the Chapai Nawabganj district: poverty. According to a radio listener named Mohammad Mamun Ur Rashid, a 23-year-old college graduate:

Poverty is a pervasive issue in this area, with most residents living below the poverty line. Many lack the means to access necessities and improve their quality of life. Unemployment is widespread, leading to insufficient income to afford essential resources. As a result, people struggle to meet their basic needs and find suitable living conditions.

The consequences of poverty in the Sona Masjid area are severe. The lack of proper nutrition has led to widespread malnutrition and a decline in the physical well-being of residents. Faced with frustration and limited livelihood opportunities, some individuals turn to substance abuse, while others resort to criminal activities. This issue primarily impacts young boys, who are often drawn into various criminal acts due to the absence of employment and financial stability. This cycle not only deepens poverty but also disrupts peace and order within the community.

To address this issue, Mohammad Mamun Ur Rashid, a local radio listener, emphasized the need for technical training for the youth. By acquiring valuable skills, they could secure employment and improve their financial well-being. However, practical steps have yet to be taken to tackle this critical problem. Community radio could play a vital role in raising awareness and providing information. Programs offering expert advice and guidance on becoming small entrepreneurs or improving financial stability could help alleviate poverty in the Sona Masjid area. Through such initiatives, community radio could contribute significantly to breaking the poverty cycle (as expressed during the Sona Masjid FGD discussion).

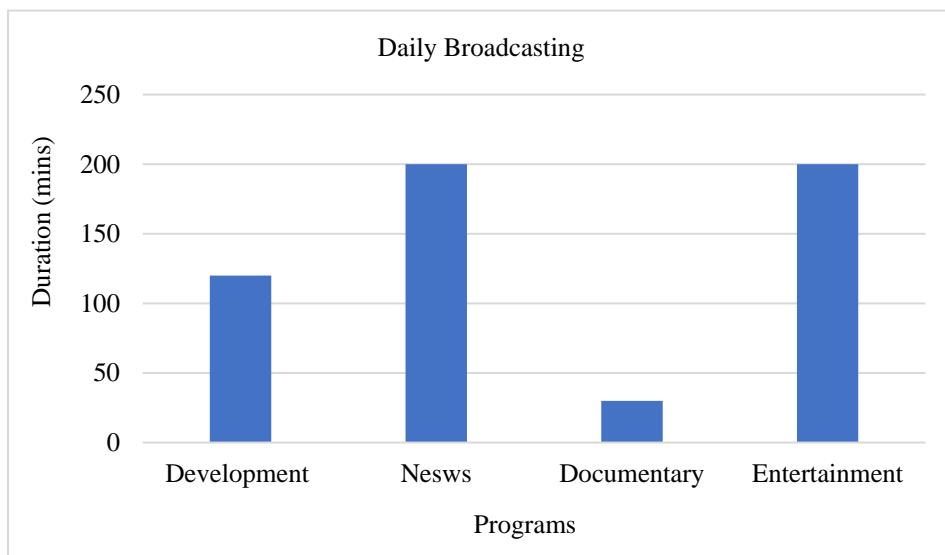
4.3 Effectiveness of the Radio Program

To fully understand the role of community radio (CR) in addressing local issues, it is essential to analyze it from the perspective of the target community. This study explores the nature of Radio Mahananda as a participatory medium, helping to mitigate the social problems in the Chapai Nawabganj District. By analyzing the station's programs and social impact, it becomes clear how the station serves its audience. The research has shown that entertainment programs are particularly popular among the younger generation in Chapai Nawabganj. As illustrated in Graph 1, Radio Mahananda 88.9 FM's daily program schedule is heavily influenced by listener preferences. In this sense, the listeners actively shape the content, ensuring that the radio caters to their interests.

The program distribution analysis, presented in Graph1, reveals that:

- 50% of the broadcasts are dedicated to entertainment and news.
- 25% are focused on development programs that address community issues and foster progress.
- 3% consist of documentary content.

This programming mix is heavily influenced by audience feedback and interaction. What makes these findings significant is the active participation of listeners, who are not passive consumers of media but are engaged in the decision-making process that determines the station's content. This participatory model ensures that Radio Mahananda responds effectively to the needs and desires of its audience, making it an essential platform for promoting awareness, education, and local development. The station's success in combining entertainment with developmental messaging shows how CR can serve as a powerful tool for addressing both social and economic challenges while keeping the community engaged.

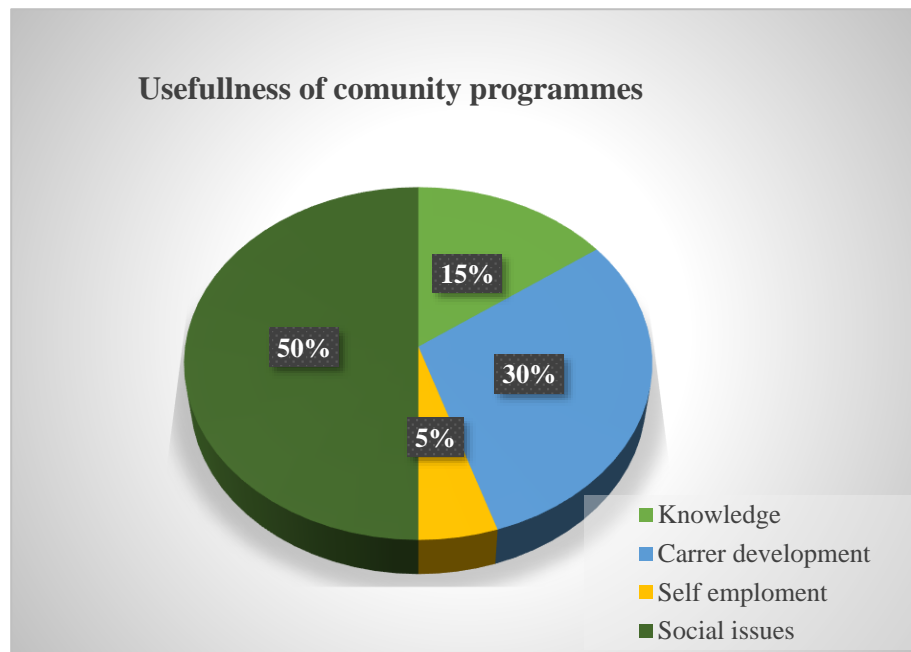


Graph 1. Daily broadcasting the programs and their duration

In the survey conducted on community radio programs, community members, particularly young people, expressed a strong interest in the development programs broadcast on Radio Mahananda. Graph 2 shows that these programs are highly popular, especially among the youth, as they offer insights into self-employment and entrepreneurship. Around 50% of young listeners reported being inspired by the biographies of successful individuals, motivating them to pursue local agriculture and other development-oriented activities. In response to how these programs could be more beneficial for their personal and community development, the target audience provided several suggestions. The breakdown of responses included:

- I. Awareness of Social Issues: 50% of young listeners stated that community radio programs helped them become aware of social issues in their community. This indicates that these programs played a significant role in informing and educating the youth about critical social matters that directly impact on their surroundings.
- II. Career Development: 30% of the respondents said that community radio programs were helpful for their career development. This suggests that these programs provide valuable insights, skills, or resources that could enhance their professional growth or open employment opportunities.
- III. Knowledge Acquisition: 15% of the participants reported that community radio programs gave them opportunities to gain knowledge. This implies that these programs served as a platform for educational content or discussions, enabling listeners to broaden their understanding of various subjects or acquire new skills.
- IV. Self-Employment: Only 5% of the respondents considered community radio programs helpful for self-employment, specifically through self-help groups. This suggests that a small portion of the audience found these programs supportive in providing information or guidance related to starting their own businesses or entrepreneurial endeavors within self-help groups.

Overall, the survey highlights the diverse ways in which community radio programs positively impacted the target audience. They contributed to raising awareness of social issues, supporting career development, facilitating knowledge acquisition, and, to a lesser extent, helping in self-employment through self-help groups.



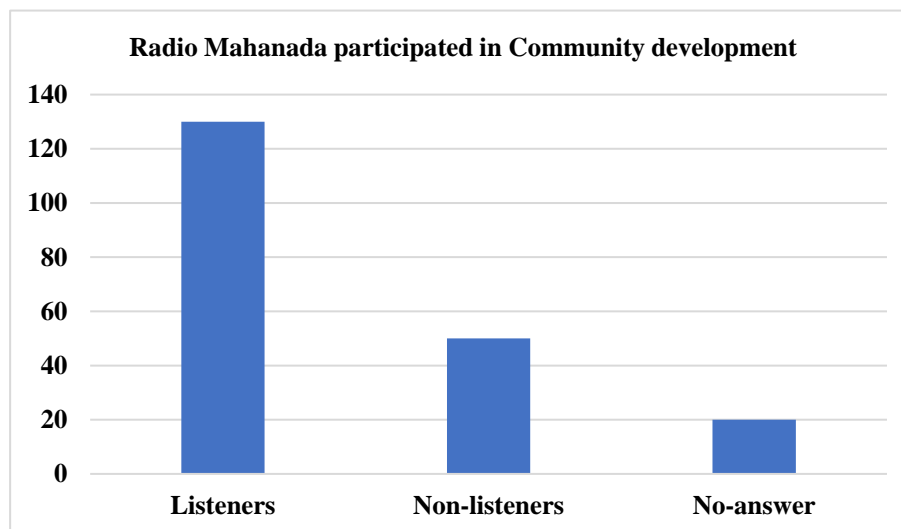
Graph 2. Listener views about the importance of different Radio Programs

This study emphasizes the significant impact of participatory, interactive, and democratic programming on the listeners of Radio Mahananda. Graph 3 offers a visual representation of how these types of programs have influenced listeners and contributed to the development of their communities and villages. Here's a detailed explanation of the findings:

- I. **Improved Agricultural Practices:** The respondents mentioned that their agricultural practices have improved after listening to Radio Mahananda. This indicates that the radio station provided valuable information, advice, and guidance related to agriculture. Listeners started focusing on collective agriculture, ensuring the land was not idle in any season. This suggests that the radio station promoted effective farming techniques and encouraged the utilization of available resources.
- II. **Enhanced Animal Rearing:** Radio Mahananda also provided information about animal rearing, which improved the animals' health and well-being. By disseminating knowledge and tips related to animal care, the radio station empowered listeners to adopt better practices and take care of their livestock more effectively.
- III. **Improved Lifestyle:** The programs on Radio Mahananda had a positive impact on the lifestyle of the listeners. The station provided information on cooking and health tips, helping individuals make informed choices about their diet and nutrition. By broadcasting such content, the radio station contributed to the listeners' improved lifestyle and overall well-being.
- IV. **Encouragement of Discussions on Agriculture:** Regular meetings facilitated by Radio Mahananda encouraged discussions on agriculture which were then broadcast. This suggests that the radio station played a role in fostering a sense of community and knowledge sharing among the listeners. By providing a platform for discussions and broadcasting them, Mahananda Radio facilitated the exchange of ideas and practices related to agriculture.
- V. **Self-Reliance through Seed Stocking:** Mahananda Radio also emphasized the importance of stocking up seeds. By doing so, the listeners were able to be self-reliant and have a variety of seed choices during any season. This highlights how the radio station empowered individuals to take control of their agricultural activities and make independent decisions.

Overall, the impact of the programs broadcast on Radio Mahananda has been profoundly enriching and enlightening for its listeners. The station has effectively acted as both a mediator and an initiator, providing valuable information and resources that the community could use to address local issues. Listeners of Radio Mahananda did not merely consume information passively. Instead, they actively engaged with the content, connecting the information from the broadcasts with other resources available to them, and taking ownership of solutions to address their communities' challenges. This empowerment allowed listeners to bridge the gap between awareness and action, making the radio a vital tool for social transformation. By offering a platform for dialogue and sharing experiences, Radio Mahananda has fostered discussions on issues such as health, education, agriculture, and social problems like child marriage and drug abuse. This participatory approach has not only helped spread awareness but has also facilitated community development. Respondents often

expressed that the radio helped them initiate actions in their communities, whether it was organizing awareness campaigns or influencing local governance. In essence, Radio Mahananda has been instrumental in creating a community-driven development model. It empowered listeners to take charge of their communities' futures, encouraging them to make informed decisions, share ideas, and collectively work towards solving their local problems.

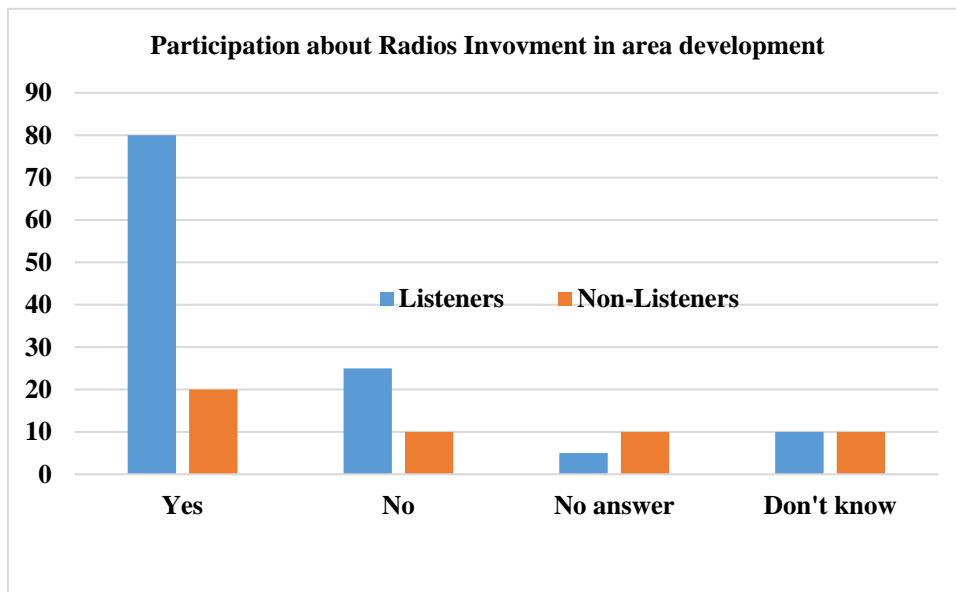


Graph 3. Radio programs influenced on local development through involving local people

The statement provides a nuanced view of how non-listeners perceive Radio Mahananda's contribution to the development of their area. According to Graph 4, approximately 25% of non-listeners acknowledged that the radio station has the potential to significantly contribute to local development, despite not regularly tuning in. These individuals likely observed the positive impact that the station had on their community, through either word of mouth or visible changes driven by radio-inspired initiatives. However, a segment of non-listeners expressed disagreement, with varying reasons for their stance. Here is a more detailed explanation:

- I. **Agreement among Non-Listeners:** Approximately 25% of non-listeners agreed that Radio Mahananda could contribute to the development of their area. This indicates that even without actively listening to the station, a significant portion of non-listeners recognized the potential impact of the radio station's programming on the overall development of their community.
- II. **Non-Listeners Disagreement without Giving Reasons:** Out of the non-listeners, 25 listeners disagreed with the idea of Radio Mahananda's contributing to development without providing any specific reasons. It is unclear why they held this opinion, as no explanation was given in the survey.
- III. **Reasons for Non-Listener's Disagreement:** Among the 50 non-listeners who disagreed with the notion that Mahananda Radio could contribute to development, some reasons were provided:
- IV. **Lack of Radio Sets:** 10 non-listeners stated that they do not have radio sets and do not listen to the station. This suggests that they need access to radio equipment to experience the potential benefits of the station's programming.
- V. **Network Problems:** Another 10 non-listeners emphasized the problem of network connectivity in their areas, particularly in border regions. This implies that the need for more reliable network coverage made it difficult for them to regularly tune in to Radio Mahananda, limiting their exposure to the station's content.
- VI. **Perception of Radio's Relevance:** Some respondents mentioned nobody listens to the radio. This indicates a perception among non-listeners that radio as a medium may have lost popularity or relevance in their communities.

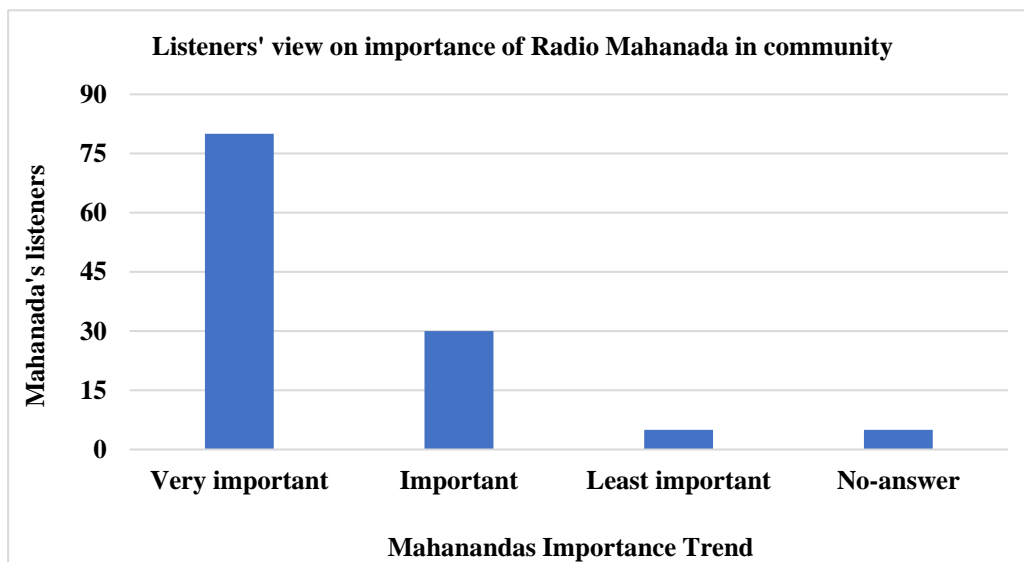
It is indeed important to recognize that while some non-listeners acknowledge Radio Mahananda's potential to contribute to development, several challenges prevent them from engaging with its programming. The most common barriers identified include: the absence of radio sets, network problems, and the perception of radio's relevance. These challenges reveal gaps that need to be addressed to expand the station's audience and maximize its developmental impact. Possible strategies to overcome these barriers could include Promoting low-cost radio sets, improving network coverage and enhancing awareness campaigns.



Graph 4. Local development through radio program: Listener Vs Non-Listener

The case study highlights the significance of complementing the programs of Radio Mahananda based on the analysis of its listeners, shown in Graph 5. Many listeners, specifically 80.0% (120 individuals), consider complementing the programs significantly, indicating a strong desire for further improvement and development. Another 30.0% of listeners also perceive complementing the programs as important, further underscoring the value placed on this aspect. Radio Mahananda is committed to serving its audience and working for sustainable and long-term development. The radio station aims to empower its listeners, enabling them to enhance their lives and take control of their development. Radio Mahananda strives to equip its audience with the knowledge, resources, and tools needed to bring about positive changes in their lives and communities by providing relevant and impactful programs.

The data from the case study validates the effectiveness of Mahananda Radio in fulfilling its mission. The high percentage of listeners emphasizing the importance of complementing the programs demonstrates the radio station's ability to cater to the needs and aspirations of its audience. By actively involving the listeners and addressing their concerns, Radio Mahananda contributes to the overall development and progress of the community it serves. In summary, Mahananda Radio's commitment to its audience's well-being and its efforts to facilitate sustainable development is evident through the importance placed on complementing the programs, as indicated by most listeners. This aligns with the station's objective of empowering individuals and fostering positive change at the grassroots level.



Graph 5. Common people thought about the Radio Programs on community development

5. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the deep connection between Radio Mahananda's programming and the development of its surrounding community. Both listeners and non-listeners recognize the potential of a community-focused radio station to bring about significant changes, particularly in areas like agriculture and regional development. In the context of community radio, around 80% of listeners and 25% of non-listeners agreed that a community radio station has the potential to bring about change and contribute to development.

Radio Mahananda has developed social consciousness and activeness among its audiences, and this is visible through instances such as they are aware of the harmful effects of excessive mechanization and chemical fertilizers, now develop their manures, and store their seeds, become self-reliant, celebrate all festivals together without any religion or caste differences, they work together for Radio Mahananda program production, women participate and take equal part in discussions along with men, many respondents stated about realizing health effects of alcoholism and understood the necessity of sending girl child to school, taking care of expecting mothers and gaining nutrition from the available food grains. A good level of social consciousness and activeness is garnered through the station. Now this could be taken to the next level by looking into matters of higher education, jobs for educated people, proper roads, drinking water facilities, and provision of more schools as suggested by the audience.

Radio Mahananda has significantly contributed to enhancing social awareness and community engagement. Its role as a platform for discussion, education, and unity positions it as a vital resource for local development. Moving forward, the station's programming could evolve to focus on higher-level community needs, further leveraging its influence to promote sustainable growth and address pressing local issues. This dual focus on empowerment and practical solutions could solidify its impact and drive meaningful change within the community.

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