

# **A Study on Community Radio as an Effective Medium for Encouraging Child Nutrition in Rajasthan**

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## **Abstract**

Nutrition is essential at every moment of life, and children need to consume a proper intake of nutrients to maintain their health and vitality as they age. The formation of good routines and an awareness of one's health can be helped by proper nutrition in childhood, which the child can then carry with them throughout their lives. Community radio has the tremendous potential to promote and stimulate social change and growth by altering people's behaviours, attitudes, and levels of awareness. The purpose of this study was to investigate community radio's impact on listeners' understanding of family health and nutrition issues in the state of Rajasthan. They studied the listeners of three particular radio stations, Radio Kamalvani, Radio Vaagdhara, and Radio Madhuban, in three distinct districts during September, October, and November of the year 2020. The findings suggest that listening to community radio can enhance the health of listeners' families and their understanding of nutritional issues. Many respondents prefer community radio to other types of media because it caters to the community's culture, requirements, and interests. Community radio aired a restricted number of health and nutrition programs and broadcasted those for shorter periods. As per the study's findings, 85% of respondents listened to CR programs, whereas 52% listened to at least one health and nutritional episode at least a few times in the last three months.

**Keywords:** Child Nutrition; Community Radio; Health; Malnutrition; Social development.

## **Introduction**

The whole food supply needs to be considered to achieve good nutrition,

which depends on the entire food supply. The primary ways human beings receive nourishment are the foods from plants and animals and the myriad of parts that make up these foods. Not only is proper nutrition essential for the growth and development of both humans and animals, but it is also essential for preventing and treating diseases (Ohlhorst et al., 2013). Malnutrition happens when proper nutrition does not satisfy body needs, affecting children's growth and development. Children with chronic diseases are at risk of malnutrition. Early diagnosis, prevention, and malnutrition therapy are crucial for children's rapid growth and development. The underlying disease and non-illness-related causes cause malnutrition in chronically unwell children (Larson & Goday, 2019). Community radio is a radio station that broadcasts content for local communities that major media outlets often ignore. In many developing countries, it has been a critical part of how social media and other things have grown and changed (Verma, A. 2021). "A community radio is run in the community, for the community, more about the community, and by the community." Today, mass media is still a tool for development in developing and underdeveloped countries (Verma & Hassan, 2019). In CR, "community" refers to a pool or group of people with similar characteristics and interests. The word "community" can mean either a group of people living in the same area or people getting the same or similar benefits. Community radio is a type of radio station that concentrates on the needs of a specific community, broadcasting content that is popular among local people but commercial or mass-media broadcasters often ignore it. Community ownership, especially among many community members who share a locality, similar interests, or challenges, and it may communicate, debate, and jointly engage in conversations that can lead towards designing solutions to social problems, is indeed the importance of community radio. Now that the world is facing with Nobel coronavirus pandemic, the attention on nutritional health for all, specifically the most susceptible, is much more critical in the context of such a new world threat.

There has not been a greater need for a more equal, flexible, and sustainable nutrition and health system. The Community Radio Stations (CRSs) effectively built local content, communicated in local dialects, and connected with remote communities. The Poshan Maah allowed 100 CR to come together and demonstrate their strength and competence in disseminating information on nutrition issues.<sup>4</sup> Radio programs, through a slew of innovative activities and exciting outreach events, the CRSs helped bridge the 'last mile connectivity across the country to reach around 1.5 crore population. The community assumes a primary role in creating, developing, and sharing their futures with such a collective approach to their

concerns. The importance of CR is the significance of public ownership, primarily between community members who have a locality, everyday needs, or problems and can interact, evaluate, and collaboratively engage in discussions that can help to attain answers to the social problem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At present, India is facing several challenges in the health sector. Among these challenges, one of the significant challenges is improving health-care-seeking behaviour, such as education, awareness-raising, and skill-building (UNICEF, 2018). According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (2020), three hundred-five community radio stations are functioning across India. They play a vital role in providing entertainment, news, education, and information on agriculture, health, sanitation, and climate change, as well as building awareness of critical social issues, like child and women's rights (Debnath, 2018). In terms of community radio and child nutrition studies, researchers try to show the most use of CR's health and nutrition programs in creating awareness. This attempts to study how CR programs affect listeners' health and nutrition awareness.

### **Review of Literature**

Community radio is third-tier broadcasting, along with public and private radio broadcasting, which is managed, run, controlled, and owned by a community for the betterment of the community and to cater to the needs, interests, and aspirations (Nirmala, 2015). Many rural communities around the globe do not have access to conventional mass media, hence cannot share their needs, complaints, or successes with mass people. Community radio is a medium that gives a voice to the voiceless and serves as a platform for the marginalized. Community radio is non-profit, non-commercial, and assisted by its listeners and communities. Consequently, UNESCO describes a community radio station as operated in the community, for the community, about the community, and by the community. Community radio can facilitate the underprivileged and vulnerable groups by raising their voice, exploring their problems, sharing their innovative ideas, and thinking for the development community and the nation. Community radio provides a means for individuals, groups, and communities to become active creators of and contributors to the media (Al-hassan et al., 2011). Hence, it can play a significant role in the rural development of third-world countries like India, focusing on a target community's agriculture, education, health and sanitation, recreation, and so-

cial problems (Khan et al., 2017).

### **Research Objectives**

To find out what is going on with health and nutrition programs on community radio that are meant to make people more aware.

To investigate the impact of CR programs on listeners' health and nutrition awareness.

To identify the aspects of subsidizing CR health and nutrition.

To explore a role in increasing health and nutrition awareness among CRs.

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, the researcher has adopted a mixed-method approach. According to Creswell (2007), mixed-method research is a research design with philosophical assumptions and a method of inquiry. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. This study adopted multistage random sampling to determine the sample size. From each district, two villages were randomly selected. Hence, the total numbers of villages considered in this study were six. This research adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. A structured interview schedule was developed to collect general information, as well as to find out the determinants of family health and nutrition awareness and listen to CR health and nutrition programs. Family health and nutrition awareness was measured using a five-point Likert scale of 15.

The statements were prepared to consult the health and nutrition program contents of three selected CR stations. Alongside quantitative methods, this research also used qualitative methods such as 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The respondents included in qualitative methods were radio listeners, CRS managers, health and nutrition program anchors, doctors who participated in CR health programs, etc.

### **Data-analysis and Interpretation**

The results are presented in Figure 1, which reveals that 85.3% of the respondents listen to CR programs. On the other hand, the regularity with which they listen to CR programs varies greatly across respondents to the

extent that slightly less than one-third (31.5%) of respondents listen to CR programs on a moderate to highly irregular basis. A pie chart illustrates the percentage of people who responded that they listen to CR programs.

### **Access to Community Radio & Network Availability**

According to Figure 2, 75.6% of the respondents had easy access to CR. This is more than three-quarters of the total number of respondents. Access to CR was challenging for only a minuscule fraction of the population (1.8% to be exact). Community radio offers several distinct benefits compared to more traditional forms of radio broadcasting. People can listen to CR on their radio sets and on their cell phones, computers, and the internet. Cell phones, which almost everyone uses, make it easy for people to get to CR.

Figure 3 shows that there is a difference in the network availability of CR. Local CR stations are supposed to be a strong network for people who listen to them. However, because of a few places, CR stations could not make a strong network. One reason for this difference was that broadcasting was done with low-cost equipment. Even though the radio stations are not very far away, it can be hard to listen to CR because of interference from other networks, like mobile phone networks.

### **Listening to CR Health and Nutrition Programmes**

Even though many respondents listen to CR, only 48% of respondents listen to CR health and nutrition programs on CR (Figure 4). Most people who participated in qualitative data collection methods agreed that community radio stations broadcast helpful programs about family health and nutrition. Sadly, only a small number of people watch those shows regularly. During the FGD, many people said they listened to CR health and nutrition programs, but very few could name the shows they liked.

Figure 4 Percentage distributions of respondents who listen to CR health and nutrition programs.

### **Effect of CR-listening on Family Health and Nutrition Awareness**

The effectiveness of listening to CR on the level of health and nutrition awareness among family members was investigated using regression analysis. The following factors were included as predictors in the model: listening to CR health and nutrition programs, having access to CR, and

having network availability for CR. In the model, the availability of the network was represented by dummy variables, and the category denoting a moderate level of connectivity served as the model's reference point. It was determined whether or not the data could be used for regression analysis.

### **Present Status of Health and Nutrition Programmes on CR**

"Jankari Express" is a one-hour show that airs on the weekends. The show tries to give listeners a sense of control over their lives by giving them general information about the community and society. The RJ also talks about news from other countries to give a wide range of information. In another one-hour show called "Aap Ka Swasthya Aap Ke Hath," the central theme is that prevention is better than treatment. It talks about many common diseases and medical problems, including their symptoms, causes, and ways to avoid them. The guest doctor gives helpful advice on how to keep people's health, medical fitness, and personal and public hygiene in good shape. The show also deals with a constantly changing climate and environment. An expert doctor can help people with their health problems by phone or SMS.

The responses revealed that most respondents believe that the overall quality of the CR health and nutrition program is satisfactory. It does not necessarily imply that all of the shows aired on CR were high quality. During group talks, it was asserted that several physicians who participated in the phone programs lacked the necessary qualifications. It appeared that several of the physicians did not have an adequate understanding of the topics they were discussing. For instance, call-in shows on a radio station only continue for thirty minutes, which is not enough time for a medical professional to have a meaningful conversation with listeners and respond to their questions and concerns. Many viewers could not watch many of the shows since they were aired at inappropriate times. Most of those in attendance stated preferred time to listen to the radio was in the evening and early into the night. Specifically between the hours of six and ten o'clock at night; consequently, it is challenging for them to tune in to programs that are broadcast during these hours. Most people who answered thought it would be good for them if a show could be shown again at times that worked better for them.

### **Difficulties CR Stations Face in Developing Quality Programmes**

The development of high-quality health and nutrition initiatives requires

adequate resources and expertise. All radio stations lack the resources and expertise to produce high-quality health and nutrition programming. Due to a severe lack of cash, radio stations cannot offer a physician a sufficient stipend. Skilled personnel is required for the execution of each of these phases. Workers in radio stations, regardless of their location, were grossly underpaid. A robust network is required for listening to radio programs with clarity. Unfortunately, there are regions within the coverage of the CR network where the signal is weak, presenting listening barriers. Numerous service providers, including the mobile phone industry, public and private television channels, and radio stations other than CR, employ radio networks for program airing, resulting in a hostile relationship between the networks. Because the radio stations' transmission equipment was not very good, they could not keep up with other networks and had trouble reaching their audiences.

### **Strategies for Increasing Listener Participation in Health and Nutrition Programmes on CR**

During data gathering, some audiences claimed they missed CR health and nutrition sessions because they were unaware of the program's schedule and topics. Linking audiences requires the extensive promotion of the program's schedule and content before its broadcast. Except for one radio station, the other two did not promote health and nutrition programs on the air. However, they did promote other entertainment programs. Program hosts, station management, and viewers agreed that it is necessary to promote health and nutrition program content and airtime widely to attract more potential viewers. Posters, banners, and billboards can be used to promote these programs in public places such as supermarkets, hospitals, schools, etc. In addition to SMS and milking, radios can also employ mobile SMS and public announcements to update their audiences. Feedback is regarded as the foundation of communication. It is essential to improve the efficacy of communication. Aside from gathering a few comments from interested listeners during programs, none of the radio stations had a permanent system for collecting comments from a large audience about health and nutrition programming. As a result, radios create and broadcast programs emphasizing the supply side rather than the demand side. This issue inhibits the establishment of community-based programs that could significantly impact listeners' lives. So, tagging more people with CR health and nutrition initiatives needs a consistent way to get feedback from the public audience regularly.

### **What Makes CR's Health and Nutrition Programmes Work?**

The CR health and nutrition program listening question could only be answered with yes or no. So, regression analysis found out what made people listen to the CR health and nutrition program.

#### **Conclusion**

Children in Rajasthan rural areas are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, and community radio can help raise awareness about the importance of proper nutrition for children. Using radio Madhuban as an example, we can say that community radio stations in Rajasthan are among the most effective channels for spreading messages about healthy eating and active living among children in rural areas. Community radio demonstrates the importance of focusing on social and economic issues in inspiring people to participate in development and open their minds to diverse perspectives to improve their living conditions. Mothers' involvement is in sharing their thoughts on the importance of good nutrition for children. It is also valuable because it helps to persuade the target population, who are more likely to adopt a new way of thinking if suggested by someone they trust, such as a spouse or a neighbour. Women participating in such a program are more likely to be concerned about their children's diets, which can lead to positive social and economic change.

The study's findings suggest that breastfeeding women view the Madhuban radio program as a platform for promoting child nutrition, which could catalyze a societal and economic shift that ends the region's epidemic of child malnutrition. It is essential for the media, especially radio Madhuban, which can reach even remote areas, to spread ideas that help women who are breastfeeding in their daily lives. Radio is generally acknowledged as one of the most successful mass media, only with the most extensive range of audiences. It has significantly impacted the nation's socio-economic scenario until now. This study looks at how the health and nutrition programs on CR have affected the listeners' knowledge of family health and nutrition. The results show that CRS is vital in making people more aware of family health and nutrition. The people who answered liked CR better than traditional media because it is based on the community's culture, needs, and interests. It was noticed that there are not many health and nutrition programs in CRs and that they do not last very long. There were also not a lot of well-planned health and nutrition programs. The results also show that CRs do not have enough money or skilled workers to offer good health and nutrition programs. For radios



to get more people to listen to health and nutrition programs, they need to get the word out about the time, the content of the programs, and the need for participatory programs in the field. When deciding to talk about and how to talk about health and nutrition on the radio, the demand side should be given more weight.

### **Recommendations**

Family health and nutrition knowledge depends a lot on listening to and getting to CR health and nutrition programs. So, there should be more CR radio stations with more health and nutrition programs tailored to the community's needs and interests. Men were not as interested in health and nutrition programs on CR as women were, even though men are usually the primary decision-makers in their families when it comes to health issues, especially treatment. So, CR should develop new ways to get more men interested in its health and nutrition programs.

### **Abbreviations:**

CR: Community Radio

CRS: Community Radio Station

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