

Principally Television but Panchayati Raj Institution as well is effectual in disseminating Rural Development Programmes in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, India

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ABSTRACT: Television is a popular media which provide useful information to its viewers, urban and rural, and is able to attract the viewers of any age groups, literate and illiterate and of all the strata of the society. Till 1991, in India, the only available network was 'Doordarshan' – the public service broadcaster. With the advent of transnational satellite television channels, Indian television suddenly became entertainment driven whereas initially this medium was developed for the benefit of rural population. In the present era of entertainment, this article has shown the role of television in generating awareness and consciousness among rural people of India about rural development programmes launched by the government of India. To collect the primary data of the study, survey schedule was prepared containing questions on demographic profile (age, religion, caste, education, economic category) of the respondents including their sources of information about rural employment scheme (MGNREGA), rural infrastructural scheme (Bharat Nirman Programme, IAY), social security scheme (old age pension scheme), and other initiatives taken by the government (for example, birth registration system, pulse polio programme, adhaar card etc.). A total of 80 respondents, comprising of 40 male and female respondents from Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal were interviewed. All the respondents are regular viewers and owned television set with cable network system. The study has revealed that the main source of information is television for the above mentioned programme except for IAY. It is also revealed that besides television, Panchayat is also an important source of information to the rural people.

Key Words: Television, rural development, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Radio, Programmes

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I. INTRODUCTION

Television (TV) has become an important element in the life of people. This mass-communicating medium is now easily accessible to the wide audience or viewers irrespective to urban and rural populations. It has created interest among the viewers because information is being provided to the mass as and when required. ¹TV attracts the largest number of viewers and its numbers far exceed the numbers of audiences for any other media. This is because television is able to attract the viewers of any age groups, literate and illiterate and of all it penetrates every stratum of the society. It is also very powerful and influential mass communication medium. But the effectiveness of TV in enhancing the process of nation building and development depends on the proper usage by the viewers or how often are the viewers attracted by the skill of presentation or how good are the central messages delivered.

In India, television was introduced in 1959 as an educational project of UNESCO, it started as an experiment in social communication for which small teleclubs were organised in Delhi and provided with community television sets. Educational television began in 1961 to support middle and higher secondary school education. Its experiments in the teaching of science, mathematics, and language proved successful and received appreciation from many UNESCO experts. ²Television, in its early stage, was "not considered to be a medium of entertainment but primarily a pedagogic tool". ³This medium, initially, was managed by All India Radio. In 1976, it was separated from radio and given a new name as 'Doordarshan' (meaning 'distant vision') which was owned and controlled by the government of India. One of the objectives of the government in introducing television was 'to highlight the need for social welfare, measures including the welfare of women, children, and the less privileged'. The government gave a very low priority on entertainment and this medium seemed only in terms of its educational potentialities. ⁴In the 1960s, according to the Chanda Commission's report "television

was to be a medium of education and any other programmes were relatively unimportant within the future plans of television”.⁵

Initially this medium was developed for the benefit of rural population, for example, a pilot project initiated by the Department of Atomic Energy in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, All India Radio, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and the Delhi Administration ‘20 minutes each day programme’ for farmers began in the form of *Krishi Darshan*⁶ and ‘Community viewing (i.e. one television set per village) was the method by which villagers watched TV. Sets were usually placed in the headman's house or in the village school’. Since the inception, this public service broadcaster – Doordarshan has been used over the years to deliver a number of useful messages on family planning, immunization, nutrition of the mother and the child, hygiene care, sanitation, and oral rehydration etc. for improving the quality of life of the rural people.⁷ But from the mid 60s, rural telecasts had begun to take a backseat because the proportion of entertainment programmes including feature films and song and dance sequences along with commercial advertisements and sports coverage had increased considerably, the practice of accepting advertisements on Doordarshan started in 1976.

By the mid-1980s, the volume of commercial advertisements was considerably increased and consolidated in the next decade. With the introduction of satellite or cable television in 1990, ‘Indian television suddenly became much for entertainment driven’.⁸ These entertainment programmes “produced primarily by and for urban viewers carry values and ideas that often run counter to the realities of rural life”.⁹

With this background, at the present era of entertainment, it is very important to study the role of television in generating awareness and consciousness among rural people of India about rural development programmes launched by the government of India. Because the introduction of television itself has shaped ‘a new social dynamic within village life,.....satellite television has taken that dynamic to a much higher level’.¹⁰

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the demographic profile of the respondents
2. To know the major sources of information about rural development programmes
3. To know the impact of television in generating awareness and consciousness among the male and female respondents

III. METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected from Shikarpur Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri district. The study was conducted in five villages, namely Belakopa, Sonarbari, Pradhanpara, Babupara, Sardarpara of Shikarpur Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri district. The sample comprised 80 rural people (40 male and 40 female respondents) who are above 20 years of age and regularly watch television. A survey method was adopted along with personal interview technique for the collection of primary data. A survey schedule was prepared to contain questions on demographic profile (age, religion, caste, education, economic category) of the respondents including their sources of information about rural employment scheme (MGNREGA), rural infrastructural scheme (Bharat Nirman Programme, IAY), social security scheme (old age pension scheme), and other initiatives taken by the government (for example, birth registration system, pulse polio programme, adhaar card etc.)

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age-wise distribution

Age	Male (in percent)	Female (in percent)	Total (in percent)
20-30	16 (40.00)	19 (47.50)	35 (43.75)
30-40	15 (37.50)	15 (37.50)	30 (37.50)
40-50	6 (15.00)	4 (10.00)	10 (12.50)
50-60	3 (7.50)	2 (5.00)	5 (6.25)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, the data presented in Table 1 showed that a majority of the respondents (43.75%) are aged between 20–30 years old and a total of 35 respondents were in the category of this age group. This is followed by respondents between the age of 30–40 years old, comprising of 30 respondents (37.50%). A significantly lower number of respondents were aged 50-60 years (6.25%) while only 10 respondents were aged between 40–50 years old (12.50%).

Table 2: literacy status of the respondents

Education	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Primary	4 (10.00)	-	4 (5.00)
Upper primary	21 (52.50)	33 (82.50)	54 (67.50)
Secondary	2 (5.00)	-	2 (2.50)
Higher secondary	8 (20.00)	6 (15.00)	14 (17.50)
Graduate	5 (12.50)	1 (2.50)	6 (7.50)
	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

As for the level of educational achievement, the findings were presented in Table 2. It reveals that a majority of the respondents had only upper primary level education, comprising of 54 individuals (67.50%). This represents a large number of respondents, male and female with the most basic level of education, as compared with those with higher level education, specifically at the college level where only 6 respondents (7.50%) had achieved this level of education. There were 14 respondents (17.50%) having high school education as their highest level of educational achievement. The findings of the study clearly revealed that the level of education of most of the respondents of the study was at the lowest stage of the educational categories (upper primary level).

Table 3: Religion of the respondents

Religion	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Hindu	24 (60.00)	24 (60.00)	48 (60.00)
Islam	16 (40.00)	15 (37.50)	31 (38.75)
Others		1 (2.50)	1 (1.25)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Table 3 indicates that 60% of the respondents are Hindus followed by 38.75% Muslims.

Table 4: castes of the respondents

Caste	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
General	29 (72.50)	22 (55.00)	51 (63.75)
Scheduled caste	9 (22.50)	15 (37.50)	24 (30.00)
Scheduled tribe		1 (2.50)	1 (1.25)
Other backward class	2 (5.00)	2 (5.00)	4 (5.00)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

The respondents hailed from different castes: 63.75% from General Castes, 30% from Scheduled Castes and the rest belonging to ST and other backward classes.

Table 5: Economic category of the respondents

Economic category	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Above poverty line	29 (72.50)	25 (62.50)	54 (67.50)
Below poverty line	11 (27.50)	15 (37.50)	26 (32.50)
	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Table 5 represents the living status of the 80 respondents. It shows that 67.50% of the total numbers of respondents are of APL Category and the remaining (32.50%) are of BPL category.

Table 6: Propensity of the respondents in listening radio

Listening to radio	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Yes	15 (37.50)	10 (25.00)	25 (31.25)
No	25 (62.50)	30 (75.00)	55 (68.75)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Radio is one of the most important and cheapest mass media to convey the messages quickly to a large group of people, whatever be their distance and literacy level for which it is very useful in rural development programmes. The messages can be communicated without electricity even in the remote corner of the country through this media. The data recorded in the Table 6 showed that majority of the respondents (68.75%) do not listen to any programme in radio. However 31.25 per cent respondents listened to only FM Radio. The study has focused on the respondents' perceptions on whether television is the best medium for dissemination of rural development programmes-related information to the general rural people. In this study,

according to responses received from the respondents, the sources of information are divided into five categories: television, panchayat, both (television and panchayat), television and other media (radio, newspaper etc.) and others which include friends, relatives etc.

Table 7: Sources of knowledge/ information regarding Employment programme

Source of knowledge/information regarding Employment programme (MGNREGA)	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	22 (55.00)	17 (42.50)	39 (48.75)
Panchayat	10 (25.00)	16 (40.00)	26 (32.50)
Television and Panchayat	5 (12.50)	4 (10.00)	9 (11.25)
Television and other media	-	-	-
Others	3 (7.50)	1 (2.50)	4 (5.00)
Do not know about it	-	2 (5.00)	2 (2.50)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

As per field survey information on the major source of information regarding MGNREGA, it was found that majority of the male respondents gathered information from the television. It is evident from the table 7 that chief source of information, as stated by as many as 48.75% of respondents, was television but at the same time, 32.50% respondents collected information about MGNREGA from Panchayat office. Although the panchayat office provides the base line information for implementation of the programme, television is also a very effective tool for the dissemination of information about every activity relating to MGNREGA.

Table 7: Sources of knowledge/information about Bharat Nirman programme

Source of knowledge/information about Bharat Nirman Programme	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	33 (82.50)	26 (65.00)	59 (73.75)
Panchayat	-	2 (5.00)	2 (2.50)
Television and Panchayat	1 (2.50)	1 (2.50)	2 (2.50)
Television and other media	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-
Do not know about it	6 (15.00)	11 (27.50)	17 (21.25)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

A series of programmes relating to irrigation, road, rural housing, rural water supply, rural electrification and rural telecommunication and connectivity were taken under Bharat Nirman Programme. Rural connectivity, rural housing and rural water supply were three major goals of this programme. It was necessary to inform about the government policies to the viewer so that more and more people become aware and come forward to take the advantage of government policies & plans. The findings of the study, as revealed in Table 7 clearly indicated that a majority of the respondents, comprising of 59 respondents (73.75%) became aware of the program via television which proved beyond doubt that TV was indeed the best medium for obtaining the information regarding Bharat Nirman programme. However, a total of 17 respondents, out of which most of them were female respondents, are unaware of such programme.

Table 7: Sources of knowledge/ information about Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)

Source of knowledge/ information about IAY	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	10 (25.00)	11 (27.50)	21 (26.25)
Panchayat	13 (32.50)	10 (25.00)	23 (28.75)
Television and Panchayat		2 (5.00)	2 (2.50)
Television and Other Media	1 (2.50)		1 (1.25)
Others	2 (5.00)		2 (2.50)
Do not know about it	14 (35.00)	17 (42.50)	31 (38.75)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Housing is one of the basic needs for human survival. The Ministry of Rural Development launched Indira Awas Yojana (presently it is known as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana) to provide financial assistance to rural BPL households. In the guidelines, it is mentioned "allotment of dwelling units should be in the name of the female member of the beneficiary household. Alternatively, it can be allotted in the name of

both husband and wife". In order to get the benefit, it is necessary to be informed by the rural men and women about this Yojana. Table 7 shows that panchayat is the main source of information about IAY according to 23 numbers of respondents. Although 26.25% of the respondents opined that television is the source of information about IAY but 38.75% of the total respondents were completely unaware about this programme. One point needs to be considered that IAY is for the benefit of the BPL category. In this survey, 32.5% belong to BPL category. Hence interest of retrieving information on IAY will be of very less importance and therefore ignored by the respondents belonging to APL category.

Table 8: Sources of knowledge/information about Old Age Pension Scheme

Source of knowledge/information about Old Age Pension	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	28 (70.00)	21(52.50)	49 (61.25)
Panchayat	5 (12.50)	4 (10.00)	9 (11.25)
Television and Panchayat		5 (12.50)	5 (6.25)
Television and Other Media	1 (2.50)		1 (1.25)
others	4 (10.00)	1 (2.50)	5 (6.25)
Do not know about it	2 (5.00)	9 (22.50)	11 (13.75)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

The utilization of social security schemes depends on the awareness of the people for whom it is concerned. In this study, we have focused on Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme. A large number of respondents (65) in this study are in the age group between 20-40 years. Only 5 of them are in the age group of 50-60 years. But it is expected that everyone should be aware or informed about this social security scheme. The study reveals that 61.25% of the respondents got information about this scheme from television. At the same time table 8 indicates that 22.50% of the total female respondents are not informed about this scheme.

Table 9: Source of knowledge/information about Birth Registration System

Sources of knowledge/information about Birth Registration System	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	28 (70.00)	22 (55.00)	50 (62.50)
Panchayat	2 (5.00)	8 (20.00)	10 (12.50)
Television and Panchayat	5 (12.50)	3 (7.50)	8 (10.00)
Television and Other Media	1 (2.50)	-	1 (1.25)
Others	3 (7.50)	7 (17.50)	10 (12.50)
Do not know about it	1 (2.50)	-	1 (1.25)
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

In 1969, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act (RBD Act) was passed which made the registration of births, deaths and still births compulsory across the country. The first legal document of an Indian citizen is his/her birth registration. By registering birth, the name of the child gets entered along with the name of the parents. This legal document contributes not only to the enrichment of national statistics; it also serves the individual the age proof, identity, nationality, heritance and civil status. It has been observed that incidence of birth registration is less prevalent in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. Almost all respondents, except one, were aware of birth registration. One of the main reasons might be the requirement of official birth certificate during enrolment in school for the children or for issuing ration card or obtaining passport of the children. 70% of the total male respondent answered that television is the source of knowledge about birth registration system.

Table 10: Sources of knowledge/information about pulse polio programme

Source of knowledge/information about pulse polio programme	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	35 (87.50)	35 (87.50)	70 (87.50)
Panchayat	-	-	-
Television and Panchayat	2 (5.00)	2 (5.00)	4 (5.00)
Television and Other Media	-	-	-
Others	3 (7.50)	3 (7.50)	6 (7.50)
Do not know about it	-	-	-
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Table 10 reflects that the primary source of information about Pulse Polio Programme is television as per this study is concerned. This indicates that television is a key mediator in deciphering information related to vaccination against diseases like polio and other concerns related to public health. The efficiency of telecasting such information is greatly enhanced when celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan, Sachin Tendulkar and many other popular movie stars and cricketers are involved.

Table 11: Sources of knowledge/information about Aadhaar card

Source of knowledge/information about Aadhaar card	Male (in Percent)	Female (in Percent)	Total (in Percent)
Television	27 (67.50)	23 (57.50)	50 (62.50)
Panchayat	7 (17.50)	7 (17.50)	14 (17.50)
Television and Panchayat	2 (5.00)	5 (12.50)	7 (8.75)
Television and Other Media	1 (2.50)	-	1 (1.25)
Others	3 (7.50)	5 (12.50)	
Do not know about it			
Total	40 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	80 (100.00)

Table 11 reflects that information about Aadhaar card has pervaded to every respondent and none remained unaware about it. All sources of information were utilized. Unique Identification Numbers issued by UIDAI is of great advantage because holding of such card not only generates a trustworthy social identity of a citizen but also renders a special kind of identity which enables one to apply for admissions at educational institutions, bank loans, phone (including mobile) connections, passports, and visas. Our study reveals that television retains the top position among all sources to disseminate information about Aadhaar card. A considerable fraction (62.50%) of the respondents derived Aadhaar card information from television. Panchayat has also created awareness on Aadhaar card among the respondents.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study has clearly indicated the positive role played by the television as a mass/ electronic medium in disseminating information about rural development programme among rural people of northern West Bengal, India. Majority of the respondents retrieved information about the ongoing rural development programmes from the telecast sponsored by the government agencies. The second most important source of information to the rural people is the panchayat office. The government should therefore fully exploit television, and strengthen Panchayati Raj Institution in disseminating key and important information about developmental programmes to the rural people.

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