

Social Impact of Community Radio in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

The local language, customs and social practices, vary from place to place and region to region. This is where the need and role of community radio becomes all the more important. The community radio acts as a medium for providing a voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless, and gives way to help rural masses establish their right to information, development, communication, governance, decision making, participation, freedom of expression, employment, health, education and security through well designed programmes. Community Radio caters the need of farming community by giving the way to bottom up approach and providing a voice. The present research study was conducted in Budikote, Karnataka with the help of Namma Dhwani Community Radio. It was observed that participation and awareness created in Namma Dhwani programmes had great impact on leadership behaviour. Leadership was accorded with the highest mean score of 0.7 and ranked first; followed by health and sanitation, education, food habit.

Key Words: *Community radio; Social impact;*

Villages in rural India are not essentially facing the same types of problems or having the same type of expectations, since they are culturally, geographically, educationally and economically divergent. The local language, customs and social practices, vary from place to place and region to region. This is where the need and role of community radio becomes all the more important. The development of the poorest of the poor becomes much easier at the same time conserving our culture and tradition. And at the same time community radio acts as a medium for providing a voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless, and gives way to help rural masses establish their right to information, development, communication, governance, decision making, participation, freedom of expression, employment, health, education and security through well designed programmes. Community radio is known by different names all over the world, they are community radio, rural radio, cooperative radio, participatory radio, free radio, alternative, popular, educational radio. The present research study was conducted in Budikote,

Karnataka. The name of the community radio is “Namma Dhwani” which means “Our Voices”. This station is a community media partnership between the community of Budikote, NGO’s VOICES and MYRADA with support from UNESCO. It started functioning in 2001 and since then has been narrowcasting and cable casting programmes related to different aspects of life, social, economic, cultural, legal issues, etc. In a developing country like India and elsewhere poverty is much more than the mere absence of money, often it leads people to utter hopelessness. They are deprived of access to essential assets and basic information on opportunities such as education, healthcare, employment, natural resources, services, infrastructure, etc. Most scholars agree with the fact that the condition of the poorest of the poor can be improved by providing them with the most basic information so that they can learn to sustain in their environment by most efficient use of the resources available to them and henceforth improving their worsening condition. But the information delivery

strategies on development should be clear and the mistake of putting technology ahead of the community needs should not be followed. One such information and communication technology strategy is Community Radio Stations (CRS), it caters to the need of one or very few communities hence giving way to bottom up approach, and providing a voice to the voice less. Keeping these issues in mind the present study has been undertaken, to understand whether such initiatives can bring about reduction in poverty and to assess the impact of community radio on people’s social development.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Karnataka state in Budikote village of Kolar district. Budikote was selected purposively for the study, since it was the only village directly related to the purpose of the study and also because the community radio station services were effectively reaching the people through both cable casting and narrowcasting in this village only. A list of 300 people available in the documents of Namma Dhwani was selected who were actively involved in the activities of Namma Dhwani and the resource centre. Among these 300 people, 80 respondents were selected purposively. Among these respondents 9 respondents who were working in the community radio station as studio managers with a full scale salary were also interviewed. The data were collected by personal contacts with respondents and by attending SHG meetings and with the help of the interpreter. The responses so collected were tabulated in light of the objectives of the study. The suitable statistical tools were used for analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social impact of Namma Dhwani programme was operationalised on the basis of selected dimensions which are important to understand what kind of social change and development has occurred in the life of the people of Budikote village. The selected dimensions under social impact of Namma Dhwani, has been explained as under, *Family System:* Under this dimension the changes that have occurred in the family system have been considered. It was found that most of the respondents i.e. 80 per cent accorded that they have started giving importance to family planning after listening to

programmes of Namma Dhwani. They now had clarity about what kind of steps have to be taken to maintain family health and the advantages of having a small family. Only 2.5 per cent of the respondent had changed their family occupation, by deriving benefits from the resource centre. The change in family occupation was from farm labour to a worker in a factory. With regard to alliances from distant places and its importance was realized by 60 per cent of the respondents and now they opt for marriages outside their community rather than within the same community or caste.

Table 1. Impact of Namma Dhwani programmes on family system (N = 80)

S. No.	Impact dimensions	Change indicators			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Importance given to family planning	64	80	16	20
2.	Change in family occupation	2	2.5	78	97.5
3.	Awareness of marriage alliances from distant places has increased	48	60	32	40
4.	Dowry has decreased for the past few years	40	50	40	50
5.	Knowledge on age of marriage for boy/girl has increased	56	70	24	30

Dowry being one of the social evil, which has been practiced from the past and is not easy to eliminate, but Namma Dhwani and its resource centre have directed their efforts towards such evils and has produced a lot of programmes, their focus was usually on how to overcome it. With regard to dowry 50 per cent of the respondents agreed that in the recent past there has been a decrease in dowry. The rest 50 per cent were not sure and felt that it was still prevalent. Most of the respondents agreed that Namma Dhwani programmes had increased their awareness about, what kind of precautions have to be taken while giving or taking dowry so that no future problems crop up. Age for marriage of boys and girls has increased according to 70 per cent of the respondents.

Food Habit : Food habit was considered as an important dimension since it forms the part of a healthy diet, and

Namma Dhwani from the beginning was producing programmes on healthy diet. Only 35 per cent of the respondents accorded that they have changed their food habit in the recent past (Table 1). It was due to the fact that most programmes promoted by Namma Dhwani were on existing food habit and how they can be still improved upon to get a nutritious food. Most of the respondents agreed that their knowledge about healthy and balanced diet have increased in the recent past and it was due to the awareness created by Namma Dhwani and its programmes. Consumption of milk and fruits had gone up among 40 per cent of the respondents, and the rest 60 per cent had not increased their consumption of milk and fruits. 85 per cent of the respondents agreed that they had started to maintain cleanliness and they now have increased knowledge about how to keep their surroundings clean.

Table 2. Impact of Namma Dhwani programmes on food habit (N=80)

S. No.	Impact dimensions	Change indicators			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Food habits have changed in recent past due to awareness programmes.	28	35	52	65
2.	Knowledge about healthy and balanced diet has increased.	68	85	12	15
3.	Consumption of milk and fruits has gone up due to awareness programmes.	32	40	48	60
4.	Maintaining cleanliness has increased	68	85	12	15

Education: Education as a dimension was considered important since in most rural society school drop outs is a major problem. Hence, whether the programmes have brought about changes in the society and motivated the parents to send the children to school had to be analyzed. Ninety per cent of the respondents have started to send their children to schools regularly due to awareness created by the Namma Dhwani programmes. Most respondents have realized the advantages of sending their children to school regularly. It's not only important

that one realizes the importance sending children only up to primary school or middle school, further higher studies is also important and 35 per cent of the respondents agreed that they have been motivated to send their children outside their village for higher studies. In rural India the most neglected is girl education their improvement was usually curbed from the childhood itself but Namma Dhwani and its programmes have motivated 70 per cent of the respondents to send their girl child to school regularly. Namma Dhwani also has a direct cable feed wire to the nearby school were children not only listen to programmes but also participate in conducting programmes, 80 per cent of the respondents have realized that their children have shown marked improvement in their studies. Nearly 85 per cent of the respondents were happy with the fact that their children are now motivated to go for higher studies (Table 2). They credited this to the efforts of Namma Dhwani and its team for providing constant information on scope for higher studies outside Budikote. Studies are also important to enhance the capability of the children to face future challenges

Table 3. Impact of Namma Dhwani programmes on education (N=80)

S. No.	Impact dimensions	Change indicators			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Started sending children to school regularly.	72	90	8	10
2.	Programmes motivated boy/girl to go out for higher studies.	28	35	52	65
3.	Girl education has increased.	56	70	24	30
4.	Children shown signs of any improvement in their studies.	64	80	16	20
5.	Children motivated to go for higher studies.	68	85	12	15

Health and Sanitation : Improving the standard of living has been one of the most important objective of MYRADA since long time, to achieve this in Budikote lot of efforts have been put and programmes on health and sanitation have been recorded from various places

by the community resource persons the affect of such programmes indicated that 80 per cent of the respondents have agreed that the awareness programmes have increased the knowledge of giving preventive cares to children as child care (Table 3) being most important to avoid any irreversible disorder.

Table 4. Impact of Namma Dhwani programmes on health and sanitation (N=80)

S. No.	Impact dimensions	Change indicators			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Awareness programmes have increased the knowledge on giving preventive cares to children.	64	80	16	20
2.	Taking precautionary measures for keeping members of the family disease free	48	60	32	40
3.	Timely use of medicines	40	50	40	50
4.	Timely treatment of sick members of family	68	85	12	15

Sixty per cent of the respondents were more precautions in taking measures for keeping the members of the family disease free. They accorded it to the timely information provided by the programmes. Exactly half of the respondents also agreed that they now go for timely use of medicines to prevent diseases. Eighty five per cent of the respondents now also give timely treatment to sick members of the family, such awareness programme includes information on availability of medical treatment at appropriate places (Table 4).

Table 5. Impact of Namma Dhwani programmes on leadership (N=80)

S. No.	Impact dimensions	Change indicators			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Respondent offers advice and information to others.	20	75	60	25
2.	Respondent used to seek advice and information from others.	52	65	28	35

Leadership : Leadership is the ability of an individual to guide, advice and influence the decision making behavior of their followers. Seventy five per cent of the respondents offered advice and information to others, this kind of capacity building was due to the participation of the respondents in various phases of the participatory message development and communication (Table 5). It is not only important that the respondent were offered advice but also sought advice from others or not and 65 per cent of the respondents agreed that they have started seeking advice from others due to the participatory approaches followed by Namma Dhwani.

Table 6. Overall social impact of Namma Dhwani programmes (N=80)

Social impact dimensions	Mean Score	Rank
1. Family system	0.55	V
2. Food habit	0.6125	IV
3. Education	0.68125	III
4. Health and sanitation	0.6875	II
5. Leadership	0.7	I

Overall Social Impact : The overall social impact of Namma Dhwani indicated that participation and awareness creation in Namma Dhwani programmes had great impact on leadership behavior. As indicated in Table 6 leadership was accorded with the highest mean score of 0.7 and hence was ranked first and this was followed by health and sanitation, education, food habit and family system which were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. The results of this study are inline with the findings of the studies conducted by *Noronha (2003)*, *Xu Guanren, (1989)*, *Girard (1992)* *Chattopadhyay, (2003)* and *Radhakrishnan, (1988)*.

CONCLUSION

The overall social impact of Namma Dhwani indicated that the participation and awareness created by Namma Dhwani programmes had great impact on leadership behaviour. Leadership was accorded with the highest mean score of 0.7 and hence was ranked first and this was followed by health and sanitation, education, food habit and family system which were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. The findings of the study may be utilized by the extension agencies, non-Government organizations, policy makers

and other similar organizations for community mobilization. Findings of impact assessment of community radio station would help the researchers to understand how timely access to information can help in socio-economic and cultural development of the

people. Dimensions such as leadership, family system, savings, education, health and sanitation, etc have brought about significant changes in the life of the people in Budikote. Hence, community radio can play a catalytic role in changing the life of the rural people.

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