

Impact of Radio Programs on the Healthcare of listeners in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the role of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), commonly known as Radio Pakistan, in influencing socioeconomic development in Central Punjab (2008-2013). The first of its kind, the study assumes that Radio Pakistan has substantially contributed in socioeconomic development in Central Punjab, catering to social (healthcare) needs of Pakistani public. Listener is dependent on radio while radio independently produces programs to cater to audience's needs.

The study checked the efficacy of programs through the interviews of programmers and an audience satisfaction survey asking if program policy, topic, guest speaker's knowledge of topic, and quality were made to meet/meeting a listener's needs in the selected territory. Radio Pakistan relies on, what WHO calls, "the practice of development support communication, [which] is a multi-sectoral process of information sharing about development agendas and planned actions. It links planners, beneficiaries and implementers of development action, including the donor community" ("Development," 2001) that share information and answer the queries of listeners in radio programs.

The article comprises two qualitative studies based on data collected from 35/35 radio programmers/producers employed at the three stations in Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha, and 1000/1M random listeners/callers from Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha zones, covering 300 km², 120 km², and 50 km² geographical areas respectively (Punjab: 205,344 km²; Pakistan: 796,095 km²). The study examines the role of radio in socioeconomic development in Central Punjab through two survey questionnaires by asking 40 demographic and specific information questions (SED 1-40) from the programmers and listeners each respectively. The author developed two questionnaires: one for in person, in-depth interviews of 35 radio programmers and producers (22 males and 13 females), one for closed ended, telephonic interviews of 1000 random listeners/callers (636 males and 364 females). She collected authentic data with the help of two assistants for the qualitative study, and 55 assistants (30 males and 25 females), for the quantitative without any intervention/prejudice by the Corporation/radio in good faith and analyzed.

The qualitative study analyzed programmers' comments on topics, content, budget, expert opinion, and caller queries and suggestions for the improvement of the programs and finds that the radio meets/strives hard minute by minute to meet the audience expectations by adjusting/upgrading the content concerning indicated socioeconomic domains on daily basis through the exchange of information between the programmers and listeners/callers during 18 hours daily transmission (healthcare). The data collected through interviews showed that radio producers are restricted to the provincial and national agenda and policy. The limited budget, less skilled staff, conventional approach and less interest of high government officials are the hurdles in upgrading medium's capacity to engage a larger audience with more efficient results.

Keywords; Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC); Radio Pakistan; socioeconomic development in Central Punjab through the radio; Pakistani radio and healthcare.

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INTRODUCTION

Radio is the part of the people's lives. They take advice from the radio. It influences on their lives as an old buddy. Radio broadcasts programs focusing on all the spheres of life in the society including religious, agriculture, economic, children, women, senior citizens, labor, and music. The content and topics of programs are generally decided according to the ongoing socio-economic political and cultural events in the society.

The radio has a rich influence on its audiences. For this reason, the Radio Pakistan invites the experts as participants very carefully in order to ensure the quality of the programs transmitted. Radio Pakistan presenters took the role of elder brother or family member in every house. They guided people in all respects of life. Whether an earthquake or flood or heavy rains or war in the country.

As Radio Pakistan is government owned medium, it fulfills all its responsibilities in a very good manner. The major social indicator is religious programs, in

which radio broadcast programs on Hajj, Ramadan, and Muharram ul Haram, considering it a duty as the prime medium of broadcast. The other economic indicator is agriculture, Radio Pakistan since its existence, broadcast programs on agriculture, about different crops, their growing and cutting seasons and government policies regarding crops.

Social Media & Covid-19

During the pandemic of Covid-19 Radio Pakistan did a lot of work especially considering the rural areas to create awareness among the general public with the collaboration of the health department of Pakistan. The doctors, nurses, medical staff, technicians, pathologists as well as policy makers were invited for interviews during the lockdown so that people had correct information about the seriousness of this pandemic through programs.

Radio and Public Opinion Formation

The Radio Pakistan's programs generally have positive impact on the psychology of the public. The positive contribution is towards generating the rights, consciousness amongst the general public especially the rural areas (Hussain, 1997, pp. 16-19). Radio has put forth a positive psychological impact and the urban class has more exposure to the media. Urban people have begun to dislike the dictatorship and began voting for democratic leadership in the country, and influence the socioeconomic sector, this is a sign of awareness. While in the rural areas people understands the socioeconomic development in their areas as well as understands the local and national politics. This shows that leaders focus on the issues of the urban as well as rural class and they accept the freedom of speech and listen to divergent opinions (Ekong & Sokoya, 1982, pp. 217-224).

Radio has influenced a sense of accountability in the public and put their performance under strict scrutiny. Radio is a very vital tool which has played an important role in every society ever since it was invented. This tool has helped in the moral objectives as well as the cultural exchanges that are taking place and took place between diverse states of distinctive periods. In the Second World War it was exploited as a broadcast tool by the Nazis whereas the United States took advantage from the radio alongside the Soviet Union. United States used radio as a medium of broadcast in "Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in the war between capitalism as well as communism" (Bogart & Andrew, 2000, pp. 359-363). In Pakistan it is of great significance because of its vicinity and the cheap approach to the largest population of the country. It is important to mention here that radio has a robust influence on the rural areas of Pakistan and strives to develop this part of the society and enhances the good values among the listeners (Myers, 2008, pp. 1-10).

Radio and Youth

FM is now the craze of youth in Pakistan. FM 96.4, FM 100, FM 103, FM 106.2 and a number of channels of these frequencies are seemed to have given open license by the government because their majority programs are not good for young minds. The above-mentioned channels especially FM 106.2 airs songs the whole day. FM stations give 70% of their whole time to music, 10% time to talk shows, and 10% to advertising and remaining 5% to the news. From these facts, it is now not difficult to understand that how much responsible role radio is playing to educate the youth. The programs that are mostly broadcasted from these radio stations do not match with Pakistani culture and traditions. Their content is mostly other than the needs of the youngsters but whose target is feelings of people (Naqvi & Baloch, 2011, pp. 7-9). The most discussed topic in these programs is searching of love, or broken hearts, in the educational institutions instead of guidance about their careers, moral values etc., which is their basic requirements (Nakabugu, 2001, pp. 19-22). Youth listens to them and influenced greatly by these programs because the element of reality is involved in them. But the Radio Pakistan's target is to educate our youth. The youth mostly listen to FM radio stations. FM 101 is owned by Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation and the content of this channel are designed to motivate youngsters towards the ethics of the society and guide them about the avenues in education to improve their understanding in this field (Naqvi & Baloch, 2011, pp. 7-9).

In regard to destructive and constructive impacts of Radio on the society, discussion on radio-youth relationship is very important. Birsen says "Youth is influenced by radio more than any other communication media" (Birsen, 2012, pp. 117-126). Almost 90% of Pakistani youth, especially from age groups of 18 to 20 (college and university newcomers), have easy access to radios on their mobile phones. Due to study pressure and long hours at colleges and universities, they don't have time to watch television. They often rely on radio as every mobile phone is radio compatible, no matter how expensive or cheap mobile phone is. Our youth is mobile savvy. In their leisure time, they listen to the radio and often involve in the healthy debates regarding student matters (Hanif, 2010, pp. 23-28). The media have a measurable effect on public affairs (Bosch, Talk Radio, Democracy and Citizenship in (South) Africa, 2010). Besley, Burgess and Prat reinforced these ideas stating:

In the matter of local, national, economic and social issues, they help to create an informed citizenry by clarifying the complex matters of public affairs which exist at the local and national levels. The formation of public opinion towards the civic problems is generated. As such the media give the public a better understanding of these issues with which it must deal and influence

those who have to resolve these issues (Besley, Burgess, & Prat, Mass media and political accountability., 2002, pp. 45-60).

Radio has played significant role in socioeconomic development and forming public opinion across the world.

Methodology and research design

The research design is based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. Qualitative analysis has open ended questions which covers the role of radio in socio-economic development by asking these questions from the program producers of PBC Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha.

Qualitative analysis

Sampling technique

The qualitative data is collected through in-depth interviews of the producers of the radio programs on social and economic development in Central Punjab. The programs were broadcast by Radio Pakistan Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha.

Sample size

For the sampling of qualitative analysis, the author selected 17 programmers/ producers of the Radio Pakistan Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha.

Sample distribution

A sample of 1000 respondents was taken which consisted of 36.4% (364) females and 63.6% males. The data was collected from the audiences of Lahore, Faisalabad and Sargodha. The age group of all the respondents was ranging from early twenties to late 50s.

Instrumentation

The author carried out thematic analysis of collected data on the basis of responses of radio program producers, the respondents. The qualitative questionnaire is designed by the author of the study. She discussed the questionnaire in detail with senior professors like Dr. Rashid Khan and the thesis supervisor Dr. Wajiha Raza Rizvi. She shared the questionnaire with the producers. These questionnaires are hand filled by the programmers and producers.

Unit of analysis

The author compiled an interview guide, comprising open ended questions, keeping in view the indicators of social and economic development such as religious, health care, education, culture, politics, agriculture, trade and business, small and medium Enterprises, infrastructure and China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Sampling

The author of the study distributed the interview questionnaire to the programmers/ producers and briefed them about the study. The programmers of Radio Pakistan Lahore filled the questionnaire. While the author mailed this questionnaire to Radio Pakistan Faisalabad and Sargodha, where the programmers also filled this qualitative questionnaire and sent it back to the author.

Analysis of health care

Radio Pakistan in its daily transmission broadcast health programs on almost all the disciplines. Listeners of Radio Pakistan mostly belong to the rural areas or less educated population, they listen Radio and act as the comperes of Radio guide them on any subject. The compering in Radio is for the ordinary people, so that they bring betterment to their life. Radio programmer always invite best person for all the programs. Specialists for different disciplines invited in the daily transmission, live or recorded according to the requirement of the audience and program. In live programs listeners asks questions to the Doctor and can get the answers directly through Radio, while in recorded programs through letters they can get the relevant information.

Topic. The topics of Radio health programs are according to the weather conditions and needs of the people. The seasonal diseases address at the right time. Best medical specialists are invited in these programs to answer the questions of the audiences. These topics cover almost all the areas of health.

In this regard a female producer said that information about different diseases, their remedy, Interviews of renowned Doctors and special reports on special health days. Live programs with Doctors where audience can get their answers and special talks on diseases, reports on world health days. Health program "Tandrusti hazar naimat hay" consists of information about different diseases and health problems, also broadcast special reports on world health days on different diseases.

To create awareness among people is the basic goal of these medical programs. Information about the diseases, viral infections and government reforms in this regard is the main criteria of these programs. In these programs usually health concerns of the audiences addressed, different diseases issues, reports on health issues, how to send this information to the far areas of the country is very much considered. Radio Pakistan take care of their listeners about their health concerns, provide them the information about different diseases, live programs on viral diseases, reports on different world health days.

The basic purpose of health programs is to create awareness among people about the viral diseases, health issues, how to deal with medical problems and gives know how to the audience. The basic purpose of medical programs of radio is to inform people and create awareness so that audience knows how to deal with medical emergencies. The best doctors in towns are invited in these programs, which elaborates the health reforms and guided the audience. World health days like Malaria, Polio, Dengue or T.B. Arrange programs on minor or lethal diseases, invited best doctors of town for the talks on different medical problems. Government reforms on health issues and remedies of their problems. Health of general public,

seasonal diseases and their remedies, rules of health, suggestions of best doctors.

All the respondents stated that programs are well conceived and produced according to the requirements of the audience. There are few topics on which Radio is not allowed to talk like some gynecology problems for women and like breast cancer, but as day passes the policy becomes soft day by day as now discussion on breast cancer is allowed now. So that more topics are now included in the list of broadcasts able.

Policy. Radio Pakistan broadcast health programs as an essential service for the betterment of general public to increase the level of understanding for their health problems.

Instead of weekly programs, short duration segments must introduce for the benefit of the audience, so that they can know the routine health problems remedies. Also increase the number of visits of health officials to inform people about the government health policies. Few programs must arrange outside the studios to inform the people about health issues during specific weather conditions. It is always the policy of PBC to inform people in time, in detail about the health concerns of the society and especially during emergencies like in flood or earth quake conditions. The special programs included different aspects of health topics.

Radio has to broadcast more and more programs to inform and educate people about their rights. Audience participated health programs also good for audience, so that they can understand their rights about health issues. In health care department, the neglected issues by the government highlighted and broadcast the remedies of this negligence, so that a better programming will develop. New research methods should be highlighted in health care programs. Also, short talks on different diseases broadcasted on weekly bases.

Radio should invite a Doctor every week live in studio, District health officer must be invited prior to the viral diseases' days, Talk series on different diseases. Even health problems should be discussed in features and dramas. The policy of Radio Pakistan is very clear and we can do it more interesting and better with taking interest in health programs. To publicize the government health policy is in the normal program scheduling, and Radio Programming are according to these policies. Live medical programs increase in number and also invite the government officials of health ministries, so that all new information regarding health should reach people in time. The health programs should be just for information, and not for creating harassed among the people.

Presentation style. The presentation style of the Radio health programs is informative as well as educates the people. Due to its dry topics, it is carefully handled and keep duration less in time so that people listening to these programs without getting bored. In these

programs' health experts are invited to talk on medical issues. Especially they discuss the general health problems and give answers of audience questions. To promote the general health conditions in the country, especially the viral diseases and world health days. The live programs in which audience asks questions and gets the answers by the best doctors. We invite different medical experts to talk on different issues; it contains Talks, Discussions, Reports and question answer sessions.

Discussions on medical problems, interviews of health experts, medical seminars and medical documentaries. The style of Radio's health programs are Talks, Features, Disc Jockey, Public Service messages, Interviews and Discussions on health issues. These are for the general audience so very easy language is used in it. Also, the programs broadcasted on health issues and viral diseases. Mostly live programs are broadcasted from Radio, and also program consists of Talks, Discussions, reports on national issues to be broadcast.

Health programs are broadcasted according to the need of the audience through talks and question answer programs. Live programs are broadcasted from radio, talks and interviews are broadcasted with new information in health field. In this regard new techniques are used to inform people about their health. These are broadcasted in easy language and style, so that everyone can understand the topics.

The presentation style of the Radio health programs is informative as well as educational, these programs are basically for the masses, so that its language should be easy and understandable, and people knows the remedy of the problem. It must be catchy for the interest of public. These are dry subjects for the people that is why usually live programs are scheduled.

Problems. There are certain problems faced by the programmers like budget problems, less availability of best doctors, no invitee wants to talk on health policies, and live programs problems as when at the eleventh hour. The remedy of this is a recorded program, but without question answer sessions the program becomes stale, so again we have to go for the live program.

As we are public medium, we have to take care of the ethical grounds of our society, so to choose the topic of medical talk and discussion is a bit difficult. To invite best doctors in live program is a very difficult job because they used to be very busy, and selection of topic in medical program is difficult also. Unawareness of the people about common medical problems and how to select an interviewer for the doctor's interview. The funds for these programs are too less, so it is very difficult to invite good doctor for the interview. Main problem is to invite good doctors and funds shortage, also preparation of questionnaire is very difficult. Fewer budgets are a problem and also new talent in medical

field is very difficult to find, it is very difficult to invite doctors from their busy schedules.

There are some medical topics on which we can't talk in our programs, so the compere only gives the advice that for this you have to consult to a doctor. Program on some special topic at times create problems for the producer due to less availability of the doctors. The terminology doctors used is very difficult and to convert it in easy words is sometimes difficult. It is a specialized program, sometime we feel great difficulties to record the program when doctors are not available and program has to go on air in time. At times our customs and rituals create problem in recordings of medical programs, like when doctor advised that give a bath to the kids during temperature, in our society to accept this type of advice is difficult to implement.

Suggestions. There are many suggestions for the betterment of the programs; Radio Pakistan always has the brain storming sessions in daily program meeting, in these meetings all the programmers discussed the mode of the program, quality of programs and how to make a program a success. There is a quarterly scheduled system in Radio Pakistan, these schedules are helping the programmer to rethink and reschedule the segments of the programs, and even he/she is allowed to change all the complexion of the program with strong reasons, just to make program a success.

There is always an officer is deputed in Radio from livestock department and from agriculture department, so if a doctor from health department is deputed in Radio, it will be a bold step as it can be very beneficial for the listeners in case of any emergency. All the new researches results must be broadcast from Radio, so that people take interest in these researches

Avoid unauthorized persons in medical programs. Only best doctors should be invited. Seminars and Discussions are a must for health programs. Live programs are very informative and helpful to create awareness among the audience. A magazine type program must be planned in which all topics regarding medical health should be included. The language of these programs should also be local as well as in Urdu. Radio Pakistan should have an agreement with the health department, so that radio can call the doctor whenever there is a program on health issue. There is always a capacity for the new ideas of the programs. Ideas are the same, but we have to keep changing the segments to improve the quality of the program.

As all the respondents stated there are many suggestions to reorganize the program for increase listening, which they knew by the feedback system. A doctor as a compere is a very good suggestion, who can cover the program even in the absence of the medical expert.

Conclusion

Radio is a diplomatic instrument for governments. To accept its localization and regionalization in the shape

of local community radio is to revoke power from the government, and hand it over to local communities, which have long been kept out of the scene of public administration (Besley, Burgess, & Prat, Mass media and political accountability., 2002). For many thousand years, these communities had their own parliamentary forms of justice and organization, but they have been seized. Let these responsibilities be handed over back to them slowly, let people again take possession of them through the numerous social, political and economic organizations airing on the continent, and why not let this take place by the use of local rural radio stations (Abbas, Sheikh, Muhammad, & Ashfaq, 2010).

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