

The Role of Media in Development: Insights from Mosuru Village

Regana Shanmukhi¹ Prof D. V. R. Murthy² Dr C M Vinaya Kumar³

1. *Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Andhra University Visakhapatnam.*
2. *Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Andhra University Visakhapatnam.*
3. *Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Andhra University Visakhapatnam.*

I. Abstract

This paper investigates the role of media in promoting development among the Scheduled Caste population in Mosuru Village, Andhra Pradesh. It examines how media exposure influences knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to development issues. Using a case study approach, the research explores the impact of media on the community's development trajectory. The findings reveal that while traditional media access is limited, community-based media and radio play crucial roles in disseminating development information. The study underscores the need for localized media strategies to effectively reach and engage marginalized populations.

Keywords: Media, Development, Scheduled Caste, Mosuru Village, Community based media.

II. Introduction

Media has long been recognized as a critical tool for development, providing information, education, and a platform for dialogue. In rural and marginalized communities, media can play a transformative role by enhancing awareness and facilitating the adoption of new practices. The increase in physical mobility through transportation could be enhanced by the exposure to the mass media. Thus, the mass media were important agents of modernization and hence he called them “magic multipliers”. Lerner’s model shows modernization in three phases: increasing urbanization leads to media exposure, and increasing media exposure accompanies wider economic and political participation. Further, Lakshmana Rao¹ (1995) in his study in India pointed out that communication was a prime mover in the development process. Though communication for development or development communication grew out of agricultural communication, the term comprehensively includes not only agriculture but also population, nutrition, health, education, housing, employment and so on. Because all these areas require communication inputs to expedite the processes of development, the significance of development communication is recognized in development. Nora Quebral (1975) defined development communication.

Communication for development is the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people toward a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work toward consensus, to help people plan actions for change and sustainable development, to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that society, to improve the effectiveness of institutions. Interpersonal communication was also adopted to bring in social change among the rural population. The socio-economic status is observed as a key element in accelerating social change, many studies have been undertaken by the researchers to study the impact of media on middle- and high income groups of the population.

If the respondents receive communication from mass media or interpersonal interactions, they are influenced to some extent, and there will be a behavioral change among them. Previous studies have pointed out that mass media exposure and interpersonal conversations will have a definite impact on the receivers. But this impact will vary from one respondent to another because of the individual differences or receiver variables as specified in Rogers's theory of diffusion. In the present study, the village respondents are deeply entrenched in rural environment, their attitudes are different from the urban audience. Therefore, the present study tries to ascertain whether the individual variables such as gender, age, education, spouse education, marital status, employment, religion, and occupation have an impact on their attitudes about some social issues. Thus, the following hypotheses are drafted to test their relationship with specific social issues that are prevalent in rural society particularly among the Scheduled Caste population in the village.

Study Context:

Mosuru Village, situated in Andhra Pradesh, has a significant Scheduled Caste population. This community faces numerous challenges, including limited access to traditional media channels. Understanding the impact of media on their development can offer valuable insights for designing effective communication strategies.

Objectives

This study aims to:

- Examine the role of media in promoting development among the Scheduled Caste population in Mosuru Village.
- Analyze how media exposure influences knowledge, attitudes, and practices.
- Provide recommendations for effective media strategies in similar contexts.

Literature Review:

Media and Development:

The role of media in development has been extensively studied, with a focus on its capacity to inform, educate, and influence public opinion. Media can bridge the information gap and empower communities by providing access to critical knowledge.

Case Studies of Media Interventions:

Various case studies highlight successful media interventions in promoting health, education, and agricultural practices. Community-based media, such as local radio stations, have been particularly effective in reaching rural populations.

Theoretical Frameworks:

Theories on media influence and behavior change, such as the Diffusion of Innovations theory and the Agenda-Setting theory, provide a framework for understanding how media impacts development.

Media use by respondents:

The Andhra Pradesh government printed small booklets containing information about the welfare schemes, and their expected benefits to the beneficiaries. These booklets were distributed by the volunteers in the village. The researcher asked the respondents whether the volunteer used any printed or publicity material about various government welfare schemes. About 94.1% of the respondents said that the volunteer distributed publicity material and 5.9% said he did not use any printed material.

Methodology

Research Design:

A case study approach was employed to explore the role of media in Mosuru Village. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the community's media consumption patterns and its impact on development.

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the selection of a village for the purpose of data collection was done by using a multi-stage sampling. Since, the focus of the study is on Scheduled Caste population in a village, a district was randomly selected from thirteen districts in Andhra Pradesh. Vizianagaram district came as a randomly selected.

The total number of households in Mosuru is 3150. The total number of SC households is 360. Out of these 360 SC populations, a representative sample of 186 households was selected randomly for the purpose of data collection.

Data Collection:

The data pertaining to the study were collected from October 1 to December 31, 2022 after the Covid -19 effect. Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions and individual interviews with villagers. These discussions aimed to gather insights into media access, preferences, and the perceived impact of media on development.

Secondary data were analyzed from local media outlets and development organizations working in the area. This included content analysis of media programs and reports on development initiatives.

The researcher used survey research to collect data from the respondents. In this method, the researcher tested some variables to investigate research questions or test research hypothesis. The results allowed researcher to examine the inter-relationship among variables and to develop explanatory inferences. Normally, there are four types of surveys to collect data. The researcher used personal administration of the questionnaire, and interview schedule was used. In this method, the researcher used structured interview schedule to elicit responses from the respondents.

Data Analysis:

The data thus collected was analyzed by developing a code for each variable in order to use SPSS 16.0 version. The data was entered into SPSS software and was analyzed into different variables. Cross-tabulation was done keeping in view the objectives of the study, and appropriate statistical tests were used depending upon the need of the analysis. The relationships between variables were analyzed.

The qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify key patterns and themes. Content analysis of secondary data helped triangulate findings and provides a comprehensive view of media's role in the community.

Findings:**Media Consumption Patterns:**

The findings indicate that while traditional media access is limited, community-based media and radio are widely used and trusted sources of information. Television and newspapers are less accessible due to economic constraints and literacy levels.

Impact on Knowledge and Attitudes:

Media exposure significantly influences the community's knowledge and attitudes towards development issues. Radio programs on health, agriculture, and education have successfully raised awareness and encouraged behavior change.

Community-Based Media:

Community-based media, such as local radio stations, play a crucial role in disseminating development information. These media channels are tailored to the local context, use local languages, and address community-specific issues, making them highly effective.

Discussion:

Effectiveness of Different Media Types:

The study highlights the varying effectiveness of different media types in promoting development. Community-based media and radio are particularly effective in reaching marginalized populations, while traditional media face accessibility challenges.

Barriers to Media Access:

Several barriers hinder media access in Mosuru Village, including economic constraints, literacy levels, and infrastructural limitations. Addressing these barriers is essential for enhancing media's role in development.

Recommendations for Media Strategies:

Effective media strategies should prioritize community-based approaches, leverage local content, and ensure accessibility. Collaboration with local leaders and development organizations can enhance the impact of media interventions.

6. Conclusion:

Summary of Findings: The researcher tried to assess the media preferences of the respondents. Of the 186 respondents, 86.6% watch television programmes such as serials, entertainment programmes and news, while 63.4% read newspapers that come to their village, and 36.4% see films that are exhibited in the neighboring village. Only 17.7% read books.

Interestingly, 48.9% follow social media, and 42.5% show interest in watching folk dance etc.. Even in this age of availability of mass media, village folks watch folk programmes.

Nearly one-fourth of the respondents (24.7%) read newspapers regularly while 52.2% read the newspaper some times. Fifty percent of the respondents (50.5%) did not read magazines. Above 18% watch films occasionally. The reason being that the films which are released newly for every two or three weeks, and the respondents evince interest in watching a film, they go to a theatre located in the other village. Nearly 48% watch television regularly and 53.8% follow social media. Interesting 43.5% evinced interest in watching folk dance or mythological plays that are enacted in the nearby villages sometimes and regularly.

The study concludes that media, particularly community-based media and radio, play a transformative role in promoting development among the Scheduled Caste population in Mosuru Village. Effective media strategies must consider local contexts and address accessibility barriers.

Those respondents who utilize the media sometime or regularly, the respondents expressed the view that the media were relevant and useful to them. The respondents who were watching television said that they learn about politics, general knowledge and entertainment.

Implications for Development Practitioners:

Development practitioners should focus on enhancing the reach and effectiveness of community-based media. Tailored media content that addresses local needs and engages the community can drive significant development outcomes.

Future Research:

Future research should explore the long-term impact of media interventions and the potential of digital media in reaching marginalized populations. Understanding the evolving media landscape can inform more effective development communication strategies.

References

1. David R. Seibold, Daisy R. Lemus, Dawna I. Ballard, et al. (2009). Organization Communication and Applied Communication, Research: Parallels, Intersections, Integrations and Engagement in Frey, L. R., & Cissna, K. N. (Eds.). (2009).
2. Fraser, C and Restrepo- Estrada S. (1998) Communicating for Development: human change for survival. New York: I B Tauris.
3. Gopal Guru (2007). Dalit movement in mainstream sociology. In S M Michael (ed). Dalits in modern India: Vision and values (pp 150-161). New Delhi: Sage.
4. Hartmann, P, Patil , B R and Dighe, Anita (1989). The mass media and village life: An Indian study. New Delhi: Sage.
5. Katz, E and Lazarsfeld , P F. (1955). Personal influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communication. Free Press.
6. Lakshamana Rao, Y V (1995) Communication and Development, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

7. Madhusudhan, K (2006). Traditional media and development communication. New Delhi: Kanishka publishers.
8. McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. Sage Publications
9. Narula, Uma. (1994). Development Communication: Theory and Practice, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.
10. Schramm, W. (1964) Mass Media and National Development, California: Stanford University Press.
11. Servaes, J. (2008). Communication for Development and Social Change. Sage Publications.

-