



Media Dynamics and Social Transformation: A Case Study of National Rural Livelihood Mission in Village Inderpura, District Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

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Abstract: Media revolutionizes various sectors, including public policies in urban areas and rural India, offering economic benefits and opportunities. Among the government initiatives contributing to this transformation is the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), dedicated to enhancing rural livelihoods and reducing poverty in these areas. The effective implementation of such policies hinges significantly on the role of media. To expedite the process of rural revitalization, it is imperative to leverage the advantages of all media sources. The media represents a significant potential for the poor to overcome the wealth gap, grab digital possibilities, share digital rewards, accomplish long-term poverty reduction, and prevent intergenerational poverty transmission. This study delves into the intricate relationship between media, caste dynamics, and social change, using the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) as a focal point in the village of Inderpura. The study investigates how various forms of media have influenced the implementation and outcomes of NRLM, particularly in terms of information dissemination, empowerment, and bridging social disparities. The research also explores the impact of social systems, such as patriarchy and caste/class structures, on media accessibility and the digitization of NRLM records. Considering these multifaceted elements, this paper provides recommendations to the government and other stakeholders on collaborative efforts to advance sustainable rural development through media interventions.

Keywords: National Rural Livelihood Mission, Media, caste dynamics, social change, Sustainable Rural Development.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a prevalent and long-lasting human issue that is challenging to comprehend. Some academics see it as a reaction to the stress of poverty, whereas others perceive it as a process of adapting to the condition of poverty (Lewis, 1996). Poverty is the primary source of oppression and social exclusion, resulting in immense misery and missed opportunities for individuals worldwide. It is one of the issues in society that is seen as the root cause of all social ills that adversely impact a society's internal structure (Pertti J. Pelto, 1978). To combat these social evils and further the development of those affected by poverty the government has introduced various developmental programs. Development is deliberate human effort that results from well-planned and goal-oriented advancement. Development is an ultimate product that must go through several procedures. These procedures involve phases such as defining the region or beneficiaries, formulating policies and programs, monitoring, evaluating, and following action. Following these methods or processes results in the desired ultimate output and development (Pandey, Development Anthropology, 2008). Although development and poverty are perceived as separate notions, they are two sides of the same coin. They are inextricably intertwined, and poverty may be viewed as the result of underlying structures that formed when the needs of a group or community are not addressed. Various government interventions are made from time to time to address such demands. As a component of large-scale poverty reduction efforts, community-based livelihood interventions that directly enhance income and employment have gained prominence. One such development program is the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) of the Government of India. The DAY-NRLM aims to provide effective and efficient institutional platforms for the rural poor to raise household income through sustainable livelihood improvements and enhanced access to financial services. NRLM believes in utilizing the poor's intrinsic strengths and supplementing them with the capacity (information, knowledge, skills, tools, financing, and collectivization) to participate in the country's rising economy. The mission aims to eradicate poverty from 8 to 10 million rural families (SECC - single deprivation households) by 2024-25. (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), n.d.)

The term 'Antyodaya' refers to the rise of society's last person. It is an intriguing truth that practically all programs connected to development and in the interest of the people center on this final individual, commonly known as the common person (Dwivedi, 2018). However, the information reaching out to that common person is directly proportional to the mediums of communication available in their particular culture or community. Media being the tool of communication plays an important role in representing that common person in all situations. As a result, they may make a significant contribution to their upliftment. Beginning from the requirement of the interventions in a particular situation, formulation, monitoring, and evaluation, media plays a critical role. Media being a medium of communication, is often regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. In contrast to the remaining three pillars of the democratic system, the judiciary, the legislative, and the executive,

this is the component of the system that has access to people's lives to the end. Over the previous few centuries, the media has frequently been the power of the commoner all over the world. The media can make any individual, organization, community, or society affluent and powerful politically, economically, and culturally. We have seen the staggering influence of media over and over again, from independence to emergency, agitation to war, and even in current times. As a result, by embracing the Antyodaya concept, the media can play a critical role in uplifting and empowering every little unit of society and the country.

The information revolution has significantly increased media strength and pace, enabling faster access and transmission of information. This new power has been fueled by technological transformation and development, but it remains untapped. This study focuses on the power of media in the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) which aims at the holistic development of the poor. This study will take a closer look at the role of media in NRLM within the context of the field study conducted in the Inderpura village of the Jhunjhunu District of Rajasthan.

NEED OF THE STUDY

NRLM believes that the poor can influence society (Pramod K Singh, 2017). To wield this power, however, a change in an individual's life is required first, because society is made up of individuals. An improvement in a person's life will naturally impact society. As Rajasthan is known as the 'State of Diversity' (Geography & History of Rajasthan, n.d.), this paper focuses on the part that media plays in achieving the goals of NRLM, ensuring sustainable livelihood in the village of Inderpura, which is the ultimate aim of the NRLM. This research will ultimately help to link the wide range of rural problems and opportunities that media can resolve and offer respectively, in the functioning of the NRLM in the rural and culturally diverse settings as in the village of Inderpura. This study will work as a baseline study for other research on community involvement programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section of the paper briefs about the aim of the study and for what type of data is collected, from whom or where the data is collected, how it is collected, and finally, how it was analyzed. The present study aims to look at the function of media platforms in one poverty-relief program, NRLM. The present study is exploratory, the field area and duration of the research were predetermined because it was part of the partial fulfillment of credits for a Master's in Anthropology.

Population and Sample

The universe of the study represents the whole population on which the study can be conducted (Kothari, 2004). For the present study, the universe of study is Indrapura village of Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan. As it is

impractical for the researcher to collect data from the entire universe of study, a smaller group has to be selected according to the research question which is referred to as the unit of study. The unit of study for this research is the different households of the village of Inderpura. As the current study is based on a poverty alleviation program, and because poverty is essentially experienced at the household level, where a lack of money and resources impacts the total well-being of individuals and their families, households were chosen as the study's unit.

As in Inderpura, the village is divided into various *Dhani* (Hamlets) based on different castes. Therefore, the data is collected across all the *Dhani*'s. The details of the sampling techniques are given below.

Sampling Techniques

Sampling method – As there was no predetermined list of persons to be studied, probability sampling would have been difficult and inappropriate. Therefore, the non-probability technique of sampling was selected for the research. Further, among the different forms of non-probability sampling, convenience sampling and Snowball sampling were used.

1. Convenience Sampling – It is also called accidental or opportunity sampling, in which a sample is drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand, readily available, or convenient (Kothari, 2004). Convenience sampling was a good fit because the researcher was trying to get an idea of people's attitudes and opinions. Also, as the population was scattered in the village and there was a time constraint, the mentioned technique was used to overcome these difficulties.
2. Snowball Sampling – The technique of picking samples with the aid of other samples who are familiar with them is known as snowball sampling (Kothari, 2004). As the beneficiaries of the schemes were very less, moreover the beneficiaries of the scheme, the women were reluctant to share information. So, using this approach to trace beneficiaries who were associated with this, tracking one beneficiary through another worked well in the collection of relevant data.

Both types of non-probability sampling techniques mentioned were used simultaneously while obtaining the samples for the study.

Sample Size – The data is collected from 68 households in the village, along with the area coordinator of the NRLM. As mentioned above, the village is divided into various *Dhani*'s (Hamlets) based on caste, so data was collected from each *Dhani* to get a clearer view. The details regarding the size and type of sample are given in the table below:

Table 1: Type and number of people selected for the sample.

| Caste | Sample Size |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Rajput's (General) | 13 |
| Saini (OBC) | 11 |
| Swami (OBC) | 17 |
| Meena (ST) | 5 |
| Balai (SC) | 12 |
| Jatt (General) | 10 |

Data Collection

For this study, both primary and secondary data were used, and both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The primary data was collected through Observation, Interviews, and Case Studies, Focused Group Discussions, Photography, and Videography. All three modes of observation were utilized in the current investigation based on the necessity and demand. Participant observation aided in developing a more comprehensive knowledge of the scheme and the community's reaction to it. Non-participants and quasi-participants assisted in data collection and getting insight into information that respondents did not provide vocally. In the village of Inderpura, where women are less vocal about their situations and desires, these methods were extremely beneficial in gathering significant insight into the subject. The interview technique helped in gaining in-depth information about the topic and a good rapport helped to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues. The Case studies in this research work facilitated the exploration of real issues and provided rich data for the study. Focused Group Discussion aided in gaining insight into people's common understandings of everyday life and how individuals in a group context are impacted by others. Also, in the field area, women were seen to be hesitant while sharing their opinions on an issue. However, during group discussions, they were seen to be more vocal as being surrounded by people of the same background gave them a sense of security.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The researcher was able to discover and investigate the primary themes, sub-themes, and linkages within the data using this procedure. The thematic analysis enabled the researchers to derive significant findings and insights linked to the research objectives by providing a thorough and nuanced comprehension of the acquired information.

(Can add it later)

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATION

The word media, which refers to many forms of communication intended to reach a wide audience, is the plural version of the word medium (Society, 2022). NRLM's main goal is to encourage rural poor people to organize self-help organizations, develop their skills via training, and make it easier for them to access credit and bank services to increase their chances of making a living (B.P.Mahesh Chandra Guru, 2012). For the holistic development of the poor, it was seen that different forms of media were employed in the various phases of this intervention in Inderpura.

The qualitative data reveals that the various social media platforms, local newspapers, Kinship ties, and internet resources were the dominating forms of media through which the residents of the village got familiar with the scheme. The people of Inderpura even associate the accessibility to new media such as smartphones with the development. The local phrase to understand this association is, “*Mar kan touch alo phone to hai koni jna maro vikas koni ho pav*” which means I don’t have a smartphone which is why we are not getting developed.

The media preference for the Inderpura people is explained below.

The qualitative data reveals that the social media app plays an important role in the NRLM, as Facebook, was the medium through which the residents of the village got familiar with the scheme.

Media Preference – The type of media preferred always varies from one set of people to another. The qualitative data reveals that the social media app plays an important role in the NRLM, as Facebook, was the medium through which the residents of the village got familiar with the scheme. The other common types of media that emerged from the data were local newspapers (Shekavati Bhaskar, Jhunjhunu Patrika), YouTube channels like jhalkoJhunjhunu, Social media apps like Facebook and Twitter, Internet, Kinship ties and younger generations. In Inderpura, the community where different castes co-exist, the preferences vary from one caste to another.

Table 2: Percentage of preference for different types of media by different castes.

| Medium (%)Castes | Local Newspaper | You tube | Social media | Internet | Kinship ties | Younger Generation |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Rajput | 7.6% | 0% | 23% | 23% | 100% | 46% |
| Saini | 45% | 54% | 45% | 54% | 81% | 54% |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Swami | 11% | 41% | 17% | 47% | 100% | 29% |
| Jatt | 60% | 80% | 70% | 90% | 0% | 20% |
| Balai | 25% | 16% | 16% | 16% | 100% | 0% |
| Meena | 0% | 26% | 20% | 26% | 20% | 13% |

From the above data, it can be noted that the preference for media varies from one caste to another. The qualitative data reveals it is because of the accessibility that depends on various factors like cultural factors, power dynamics, economic factors, education, etc. It can be noted that in the upper castes, the restriction is more which is why their main source of media is kinship ties and the younger generation through which they get access to the internet. Whereas when we go down in the caste hierarchy the restriction lessens as they are open to change. Therefore, intervention due to different sources is more but the economic factor limits their medium to Television, local newspapers, and kinship ties. Whereas in *Meenas* (STs) the economic condition and education level are seen to be much better, therefore the uniformity in the distribution of the medium was observed. It can be noted that no government workers as a means of information medium were accepted by any caste in the village of Inderpura.

Role of Media: The role played by media in the National Rural Livelihood Mission among the villagers of Inderpura can be categorized under various themes, such as it acted as:

1. **Source of Information:** It gives accessibility to information through the penetration of an independent platform uncorrupted by external factors like government regulation, third-party interventions, local governance, and other socially and economically powerful people, cultural norms, etc.
2. **Mean of empowerment:** According to Foucault, knowledge and power are mutually reinforcing and generate one another (Hewet, 2004). Through access to media, they get accessibility to an ocean full of unfiltered information which has resulted in their increase in confidence and has widened their view ultimately resulting in their empowerment. It has been found through case studies that social media sites like Twitter were utilized to get NRLM authorities to waive the unwanted loan requirement. In an area where education is not prioritized, out of 68 households, three women were noted for pursuing further education after marriage to fulfill the NRLM requirement. Four women were found to have attained financial independence, which led to their empowerment. Thus the media helped them to rise above the social archetype.
3. **Corridor to tackle social disparity:** In Inderpura every beneficiary of NRLM is linked to social media. Through exposure to media, they could see through the wall created by their cultural norms and got familiar with the ample opportunities. Certain cases of women continuing their education after marriage and four cases of Rajput women coming out to do business were observed. Therefore we can say, that

in Inderpura media bridges the gap created by social disparity. It acted as a corridor between the government and the common people.

Influence of Social Systems on Media Accessibility- To understand the influence of social systems on media accessibility, two common themes emerged from the data.

| |
|-----------------|
| Patriarchy |
| Caste and Class |

1. **Patriarchy:** In Inderpura, it was observed that the men acted as gatekeepers of media accessibility to women excluding one medium, which is, kinship. Apart from this, all the information about the NRLM and other scenarios is seen to have the filtration of men's perspective. Among the men, NRLM is regarded as '*lugaiyo ka samuh*' in Inderpura, thus this perception has been generalized in every section of the village, which ultimately hampers the understanding of the main objective of the mission and also creates a gender stereotype among the villagers.
However, it was seen that as we come down on the caste hierarchy level, the role of men as gatekeepers of media accessibility decreases but lack of resources in that section forms another type of media segregation.
2. **Caste and Class:** As discussed above, different forms of media are seen to be segregated by caste and class in Inderpura. The medium for the upper caste was Mass media, and the Younger generation but in the lower castes the common mediums were Local newspapers and Television. In the middle of the hierarchy, other sources like YouTube channels, and social media platforms step in. The upper castes are seen to have limited access due to the high restrictions whereas the lower castes women have less accessibility to information due to lack of economic resources. Also, due to power dynamics involved in caste and class segregation a wide range of discrimination was seen in the village. But as the cultural restrictions are less when we move down in the caste hierarchy, the women of lower castes of Inderpura were seen to be more vocal as compared to other women.

Digitization of the NRLM- The level of digitalization of NRLM varies from ground level to surface level influenced by various factors. At the ground level, the records for the NRLM are kept in the registers only this is because the literacy level is very low among the beneficiaries. However, at the block level, there is a Management Information System (MIS) that updates the records on the portal of NRLM. The Focused Group Discussions with the *Balai* (SCs) group of people revealed that due to the practice of keeping physical records, there is a lack of transparency in financial matters and as they belong to lower castes their voices and opinions

remain unheard. Given that the data at the grassroots level is not digitalized, the validity of the information available at the surface level becomes a matter of concern.

DISCUSSION

A new paradigm for development has been built as a result of the evolution of media from the period of monarchy to the present. The old communication process has been replaced by interactive and digital communication as a result, giving rural residents access to knowledge about numerous programs launched to raise the standard of living, this new paradigm has redesigned the process of grassroots development. In this era of globalization, media institutions need to be made aware of their social and developmental responsibilities. The dissemination of information, the provision of a venue for debate of issues, the teaching of ideas and skills for a better living, bridge the gap between the beneficiaries and developmental worker, and the formation of a basis of consensus for the stability of the state are all considered as key roles that the media may play in development programs. This study offers insight into the complex interplay between media, social dynamics, and the execution of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) in the setting of Inderpura. The media's complex function in sharing knowledge, empowering people, and overcoming sociocultural divides was observed to achieve the objectives of NRLM. It was seen that media is an important channel for knowledge transmission and empowerment in altering villagers' awareness and involvement with NRLM. It has been noticed that the media is an effective source of knowledge, empowering individuals by widening their ideas and instilling confidence. The case studies mentioned demonstrate the concrete influence media has on transforming people's livelihoods via empowerment and education. It was discovered that social media, notably platforms like Facebook, played an important role in introducing the scheme to the people of Inderpura. As indicated by a local proverb, access to new media, particularly cell phones, was connected to views of development. The importance of cultural, economic, and power dynamics on media consumption patterns was demonstrated by differences in media choices across caste hierarchies. This study demonstrates that the media serves as an important source of unfiltered knowledge, allowing individuals to make educated decisions and widen their viewpoints. Furthermore, media is viewed as a channel via which societal norms and cultural obstacles may be overcome, allowing individuals to seize possibilities that were previously unavailable. Though the media is considered a tool for change among the people of Inderpura, it is also impacted by social systems like patriarchy and caste/class relations. In the era of the Internet where the world is reaching Mars, access to any sort of information for women of Inderpura is still restricted by Patriarchal standards, contributing to gender stereotypes and uneven portrayal. Along with this, Caste and class differences impact media choices and availability even further, with consequences for knowledge access and empowerment. As the social order alters, different segments of society confront distinct difficulties and possibilities in terms of media involvement. Furthermore, the difficulties connected with digitizing NRLM data expose discrepancies in literacy and

transparency. While tangible records are helpful for some, they can result in restricted openness and inhibit the involvement of marginalized groups.

In conclusion, the study illustrates the intricate interplay between media, societal norms, and development programs like NRLM. The study demonstrates that media while acting as a powerful tool for empowerment and information dissemination, can be influenced by prevailing societal structures. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for effective implementation, inclusivity, and positive impact of development initiatives. It is important to address barriers created by patriarchal norms, caste-based disparities, and technological limitations to ensure that the media's potential is harnessed for holistic and sustainable rural development which is the ultimate goal of NRLM and is crucial for the eradication of poverty. Therefore the future agenda for this development program at the grassroots level must deal with the process of participatory communication and development since new media application for grassroots development assumes profound significance in the new millennium.

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