

INTEGRATED SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RADIO SYSTEM: REDIFINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT- Community radio is a vital tool of participatory communication that essentially boosts social inclusion through local dialogue and grassroots empowerment. With a phenomenal rise of social media platforms, community radio broadcasting has undergone substantial transformation, thus, opening up a whole world of novel prospects for public engagement. This particular research is aimed examining how the integration of social media with community radio has led to the enriching of audience participation and civic engagement.

The study investigates how various social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) have played a pivotal role in the expansion and interactivity of community radio through real-time communication, user-generated content, and participatory journalism. The paper utilises some major communication theories such as Participatory Communication Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Network Society Theory, and the Public Sphere concept to delineate the delicate and decipher the complex relationship between social media and community radio. The paper emphasises the impact of social media-integrated community radio in essential domains such as education, disaster communication, gender empowerment, youth participation, cultural preservation, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Simultaneously, paper highlights some of the key challenge for social media integration of community radio in India including the digital divide, misinformation, financial constraints, technological limitations, algorithmic dependence, and regulatory barriers. To conclude, research stresses that the integration of social media with community of community radio is an innovative and convenient approach for inclusive communication model that ultimately ensure higher democratic participation and enhanced public engagement.

Keywords: Community Radio; Social Media; Public Engagement; Participatory Communication; Digital Convergence

1. INTRODUCTION

Community radio is one of the most effective tools and readily accessible medium of participatory communication at the grassroot level across the globe (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002; Howley, 2010). In fact, in sharp contrast to commercial broadcasting, the focal point of community radio is local participation and grassroots communication that ultimately ensures social inclusion as well as cultural preservation (Carpentier, Lie, & Servaes, 2003; Rennie, 2006). Over the past quarter-a-century, community radio has emerged as one of the most accessible and participatory forms of media communication across the world (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Girard, 2007). Yet on the other hand, over the past one-and-a-half decades or so, however, the phenomenal rise of social media platforms has brought about large-scale transformation in the media landscape (Castells, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). One of them, of course, is the integration of social media into community radio broadcasting which has

opened up a world of opportunities for greater community participation, improved interactivity, and enhanced public engagement (Jallov, 2012; Milan, 2009). Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) have completely transformed the traditional one-way communication model of radio broadcasting. Now it has turned into a highly interactive and participatory communication process (Jenkins, 2006; Shirky, 2011). In the present digital era Community radio stations have shifted to live stream programmes, receive feedback, engage in discussions, encourage civic participation transcending geographical boundaries (Tacchi, 2012; Fuller, 2007). This sort of integrated social media-community radio model triggered a pristine paradigm shift in the communication process that expands public engagement (Couldry, 2012; Dahlgren, 2009).

The concept of public engagement, popularised by Habermas, emphasises sensible and practical interaction between the media outlets and audiences. It assumes audience not just as passive consumers rather visualises them as active participants in the entire communication activity (Habermas, 1989; Carpentier, 2011). The integration of social media and community radio have created immense participatory opportunities that inspire dialogue, civic awareness and local development (Servaes, 2008; Rodriguez, 2011). Particularly in the developing country like India, this integration has turned into a meaningful tool for education, health communication, disaster management, cultural expression, and political participation (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Manyozo, 2012). As of May 2025, as per Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India data there are 362 operational community radio stations in India. Figure 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of these CRSs in India. Broadly speaking 10 CRSs are active in the Union Territories, 30 in Northeastern states while more than 320 CRSs are spread across India.

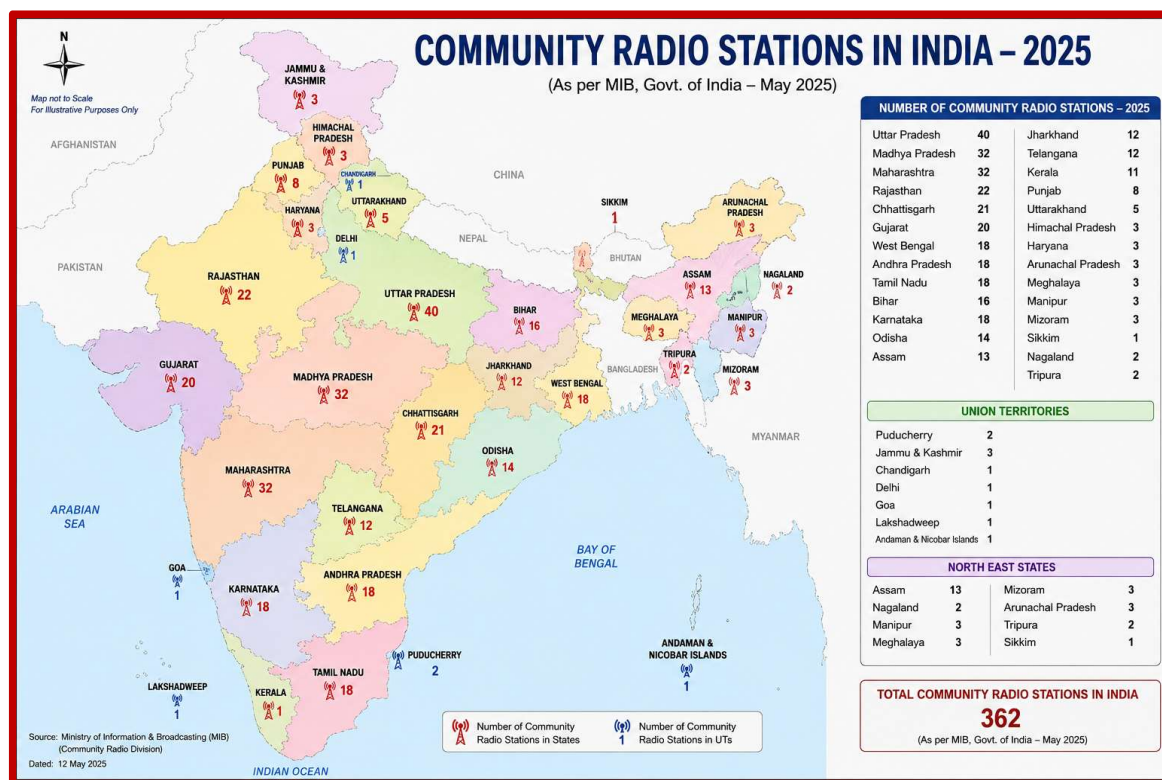


Figure 1: Operational Community Radio Stations in India (May 2025)

Figure 1 presents the geographical distribution of licensed community radio stations across India as of May 2025, based on data from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India. The map visually illustrates the spread of community radio as a grassroots communication medium and highlights regional variations in its adoption. India has a total of 362 community radio stations operating across states and union territories. Uttar Pradesh leads the country with 40 stations,

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making it the largest hub of community radio broadcasting. It is followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, each with 32 stations, reflecting strong community media penetration in central and western India. Rajasthan (22), Chhattisgarh (21), and Gujarat (20) also have substantial numbers of stations. Several southern and eastern states demonstrate active participation in community broadcasting. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and West Bengal each have 18 stations, while Kerala has 11. Bihar (16) and Odisha (14) also show significant growth. In the northeastern region, Assam leads with 13 stations, followed by Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh, each with three stations, indicating increasing recognition of community radio as a tool for local communication and cultural preservation. The map also highlights the presence of community radio stations in Union Territories, including Jammu & Kashmir (3), Puducherry (2), and Delhi, Chandigarh, Goa, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (1 each). These stations play an important role in addressing local information needs and promoting community participation. The infographic demonstrates that community radio has achieved a nationwide presence, reaching diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic communities. The concentration of stations in populous and development-oriented states reflects policy support, educational involvement, and civil society engagement. Overall, the map underscores the growing significance of community radio in promoting local voices, participatory development, education, health awareness, agricultural communication, and democratic engagement across India.

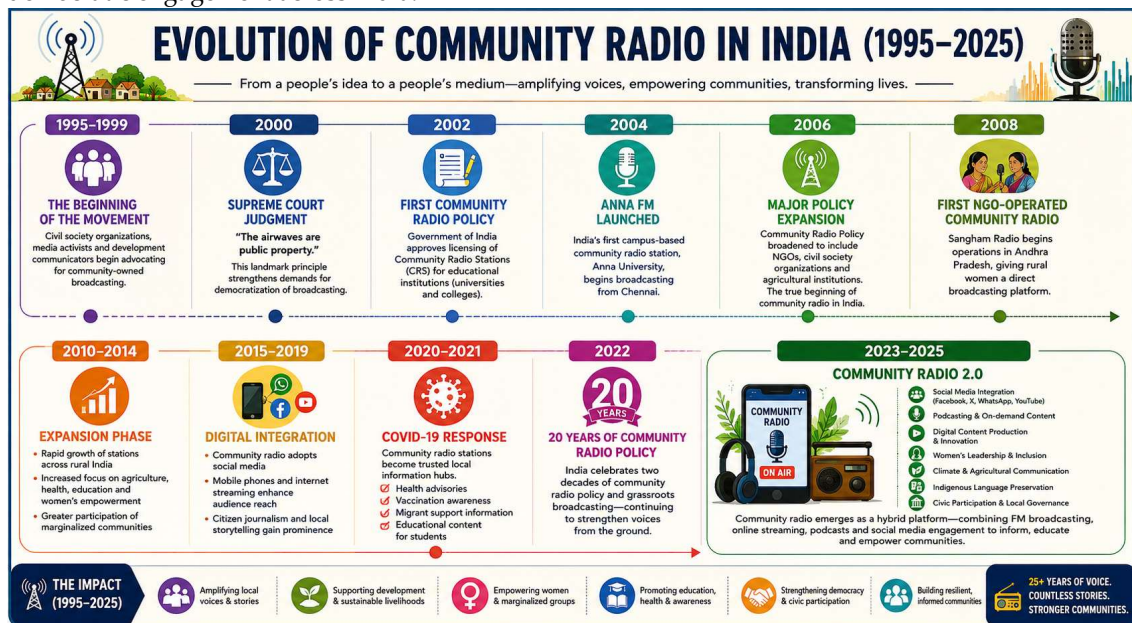


Figure 2: Evolution of Community Radio in India

Figure 2 presents a chronological overview of the growth, policy development, technological transformation, and societal impact of the community radio movement in India over three decades. It illustrates how community radio evolved from a grassroots communication initiative into a powerful medium for participatory development and social empowerment. The journey begins during 1995–1999, when media activists, development communicators, and civil society organizations advocated for community-owned broadcasting as an alternative to centralized media systems. A significant milestone occurred in 2000, when the Supreme Court of India declared that “airwaves are public property,” strengthening the demand for democratized access to broadcasting. In 2002, the Government of India introduced the first Community Radio Policy, allowing educational institutions to establish community radio stations. This was followed by the launch of Anna FM in 2004, India’s first campus-based community radio station. A major breakthrough came in 2006, when the policy was expanded to include non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and agricultural institutions, enabling wider community participation. The establishment of Sangham Radio in 2008, India’s first NGO-operated community radio station, marked a historic step in giving rural women and marginalized

groups a platform for expression. The period 2010–2014 witnessed rapid expansion, with stations focusing on agriculture, health, education, and women’s empowerment. Between 2015 and 2019, community radio embraced digital technologies, integrating social media, mobile communication, and internet streaming to enhance audience engagement. During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021), community radio stations became trusted local information hubs, disseminating health advisories, vaccination awareness, and educational content. In 2022, India celebrated twenty years of community radio policy, recognizing its contribution to grassroots communication. The final phase, 2023–2025, represents the emergence of Community Radio 2.0, characterized by podcasting, digital content creation, social media integration, climate communication, indigenous language preservation, and civic participation. Overall, the infographic demonstrates how community radio has become an influential medium for amplifying local voices, strengthening democracy, promoting inclusive development, and building resilient communities across India.



Figure 3: Major Themes of Community Radio

Figure 3 highlights nine major themes of Community Radio in India. Community radio serves as a participatory communication platform that gives local communities an opportunity to share information, preserve culture, and address local concerns. The first theme, Rural Development, focuses on addressing local issues, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and strengthening community bonds. Community radio acts as a bridge between rural populations and development initiatives. The second theme, Agricultural Communication, emphasizes the dissemination of farming techniques, weather forecasts, market information, and decision-support content that helps farmers improve productivity and income. The third theme, Women Empowerment, demonstrates how community radio provides women with a voice, discusses issues related to rights, health, and livelihoods, and promotes gender equality and leadership. The fourth theme, Health Awareness, highlights the role of radio in spreading information about healthcare, preventive practices, nutrition, and overall well-being. The fifth theme, Disaster Communication, underlines the importance of community radio during emergencies by providing early warning alerts, timely information, and support for disaster preparedness and resilience building. The sixth theme, Educational Broadcasting, focuses on supporting formal and informal learning, offering educational programmes, and encouraging lifelong learning among people of all ages. The seventh theme, Indigenous Language Preservation, showcases the role of community radio in broadcasting in local languages and dialects, preserving cultural traditions, and strengthening cultural identity. The eighth theme, Civic Participation, illustrates how radio encourages informed citizenship, public discussion, and participation in local governance and democratic processes. Finally, Social Media Engagement reflects the modern evolution of community radio, where digital platforms

such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram extend audience reach, encourage interaction, and build active online communities. Overall, the infographic demonstrates that Indian community radio is much more than a broadcasting medium; it is a powerful instrument for education, empowerment, development, cultural preservation, and participatory communication at the grassroots level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Crisell (1994) examines radio as a distinctive medium characterized by its immediacy, intimacy, and reliance on sound. He argues that radio creates a unique relationship between broadcasters and listeners, effectively informing, educating, and entertaining audiences while fostering imagination, companionship, and a sense of community among listeners.

Mtimde, Bonin, and Opoku-Mensah (1998) argue that community radio serves as a participatory communication platform that empowers local communities by providing access to information, encouraging dialogue, preserving cultural identity, and promoting grassroots development. It enables marginalized groups to voice their concerns and participate actively in social, economic, and democratic processes.

Tacchi (2002) highlights the role of community media, particularly community radio, in fostering social inclusion, local participation, and community empowerment. She argues that community radio creates spaces for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and civic engagement, enabling diverse voices to be heard while strengthening social networks and supporting local development initiatives.

Jenkins (2006) introduces the concept of participatory culture, where consumers actively create, share, and circulate media content rather than merely consuming it. He argues that digital technologies foster collaboration, collective intelligence, and user engagement, blurring the boundaries between producers and audiences while transforming communication and cultural participation.

Pavarala and Malik (2007) emphasize that community radio is a people-centered medium that promotes participatory communication, social inclusion, and democratic engagement. They argue that it empowers marginalized communities by providing locally relevant content, facilitating grassroots dialogue, preserving cultural diversity, and enabling communities to address development challenges through collective action and local knowledge.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to create public or semi-public profiles, articulate connections with other users, and navigate their social networks. They emphasize that these platforms facilitate relationship maintenance, social interaction, identity presentation, and the formation of online communities.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications built on the foundations of Web 2.0 that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. They highlight its interactive, participatory, and collaborative nature, which allows individuals and organizations to communicate, share information, build communities, and engage audiences globally.

Castells (2010) argues that digital communication networks have transformed society into a “network society,” where information flows across interconnected platforms. He emphasizes that power, culture, and social relationships are increasingly shaped by communication networks, enabling individuals and communities to create, share, and mobilize information beyond traditional institutional boundaries.

Shirky (2011) argues that social media and digital technologies empower individuals to collaborate, share information, and organize collective action on an unprecedented scale. He highlights how

networked communication lowers barriers to participation, enabling communities to create content, mobilize resources, and engage in social, cultural, and political activities.

Couldry (2012) argues that media should be understood through the practices of everyday users rather than solely through institutions or technologies. He emphasizes that digital media enable people to tell their own stories, participate in public life, and construct social reality, thereby enhancing voice, agency, and democratic engagement.

Madianou and Miller (2012) argue that contemporary society is deeply shaped by the process of *mediatization*, where media technologies increasingly influence social interactions, institutions, and everyday life. They emphasize that digital media transform how people communicate, construct identities, maintain relationships, and participate in social, cultural, and political activities.

Van Dijk (2012) explains that social media are networked communication platforms that facilitate interaction, content creation, and information exchange among users. He emphasizes their role in strengthening social connections, expanding access to information, and enabling participation in public discourse, while reshaping communication patterns in contemporary digital society.

Gordon (2012) examines the evolving role of community radio in the twenty-first century, highlighting its continued relevance in promoting local participation, cultural diversity, social inclusion, and democratic communication. The work explores how community radio adapts to technological change while empowering communities, supporting development initiatives, and amplifying marginalized voices.

Chadwick (2013) introduces the concept of the *hybrid media system*, arguing that old and new media interact and influence one another in shaping communication, politics, and public discourse. He emphasizes how digital platforms, social media, and traditional media operate together, enabling new forms of participation, information flow, and political engagement.

Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that contemporary society is deeply shaped by the process of *mediatization*, where media technologies increasingly influence social interactions, institutions, and everyday life. They emphasize that digital media transform how people communicate, construct identities, maintain relationships, and participate in social, cultural, and political activities.

S. No.	Key Theme	Major Focus	Sources / Authors
1.	Participatory Communication	Community participation, dialogue, empowerment, grassroots communication	Paulo Freire (1970); Jan Servaes (1999, 2008); Nico Carpentier (2011)
2.	Community Radio as Democratic Media	Local dialogue, civic awareness, democratic participation	Clemencia Rodriguez (2001, 2011); Kevin Howley (2010); UNESCO (2001)
3.	Digital Convergence	Integration of radio with social media and digital technologies	Henry Jenkins (2006); Nick Couldry (2012); Manuel Castells (2010, 2012)
4.	Public Engagement and Civic Participation	Audience interaction, public discourse, participatory democracy	Jürgen Habermas (1989); Nico Carpentier (2011); Peter Dahlgren (2009)
5.	Social Media Integrated Community Radio	Use of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, podcasts, and X for radio engagement	Tanja Bosch (2013); Jo Tacchi (2012); Andreas M. Kaplan & Michael Haenlein (2010)

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6.	Youth Participation and Digital Culture	Youth engagement through digital storytelling, podcasts, memes, and online discussions	danah boyd (2014); Henry Jenkins et al. (2009); Amanda Lenhart (2015)
7.	Social Inclusion and Marginalized Communities	Inclusion of women, indigenous groups, minorities, and rural populations	Clemencia Rodriguez (2001); Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron (2001); Nick Couldry (2012)
8.	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, peace and justice	United Nations (2015); Jan Servaes (2008); World Health Organization (2020)
9.	Challenges of Digital Integration	Digital divide, misinformation, financial and regulatory barriers	Pippa Norris (2001); Tarleton Gillespie (2014); José van Dijck (2012)
10.	Future of Community Radio	Hybrid media systems, citizen journalism, audience analytics, digital participation	Andrew Chadwick (2013); Philip Napoli (2011); Richard Berry (2006)

Table 1: Social Media Integrated Community Radio: Key Themes and Major focuses

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the impact of social media integration with community radio on public engagement, social inclusion, civic participation, and community development. The research was guided by Participatory Communication Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Network Society Theory, and the Public Sphere concept. A conceptual framework was developed to analyse the relationship between Social Media Integration, Community Radio Participation, Information Quality, Perceived Credibility, Technological Accessibility, and Public Engagement. The target population comprised community radio listeners, social media users, community volunteers, and programme participants associated with community radio stations in India.

3.2. Sample Size

A sample of 400 respondents was proposed to ensure adequate representation and statistical reliability. Respondents were selected through purposive and convenience sampling techniques, focusing on individuals who actively engaged with community radio and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter).

3.3. Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing both demographic and Likert-scale items. The questionnaire measured key constructs including social media usage, community radio participation, information quality, perceived credibility, technological accessibility, and levels of public engagement. Data collection was conducted through online surveys distributed via social media platforms and community radio networks, supplemented by face-to-face interactions where required. Secondary data were gathered from books, journal articles, government reports, and relevant literature on community radio and digital communication.

3.4. Major Findings

1. Integration of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and X with community radio transforms traditional one-way broadcasting into a participatory communication process, significantly increasing audience interaction and engagement.
2. Active listener participation through programme feedback, discussions, and content contribution strengthens civic engagement and democratic participation at the grassroots level.
3. The integrated model provides marginalized groups, women, rural populations, indigenous communities, and physically challenged individuals with greater opportunities to participate in public discourse and community development.

4. Reliable information, perceived credibility, internet access, device availability, and digital literacy significantly contribute to higher levels of public engagement and community participation.
5. Social media-integrated community radio supports education, health communication, gender equality, disaster communication, cultural preservation, and SDGs. However, challenges such as the digital divide, misinformation, financial constraints, technological limitations, and regulatory barriers continue to affect implementation.

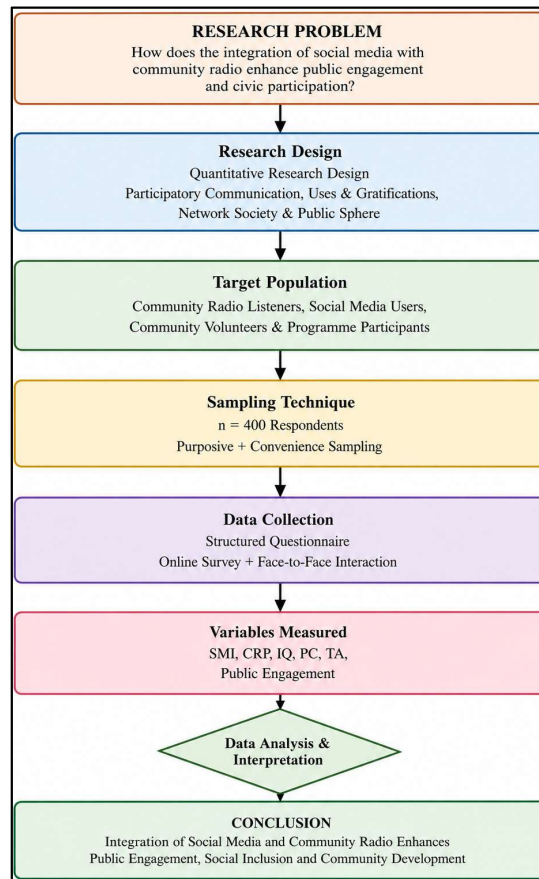


Figure 4: Research Methodology of study

Figure 4 systematically outlines the stages of the research process, beginning with the identification of the research problem and ending with the study's conclusion. The framework starts with the Research Problem, which asks: "How does the integration of social media with community radio enhance public engagement and civic participation?" This question reflects the growing importance of digital platforms in extending the reach and interactivity of traditional community radio. The second stage describes the Research Design, which adopts a quantitative approach. The study is grounded in key communication theories, including Participatory Communication Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Network Society Theory, and the Public Sphere Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide the foundation for understanding audience participation, media use, and civic engagement. The Target Population consists of community radio listeners, social media users, community volunteers, and programme participants. These groups are directly involved in the production, consumption, and interaction processes associated with community media platforms. The framework then specifies the Sampling Technique, which includes a sample size of 400 respondents selected through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods. This approach ensures that participants possess relevant experience while allowing practical access to respondents. The Data Collection stage utilizes a structured questionnaire, administered through both online surveys and face-to-face interactions,

enabling broader coverage and improved response rates. The study measures several key variables, including Social Media Integration (SMI), Community Radio Participation (CRP), Information Quality (IQ), Public Communication (PC), Technological Accessibility (TA), and Public Engagement. These variables help assess the effectiveness of integrating social media with community radio. Following data collection, the information undergoes Data Analysis and Interpretation, where statistical techniques are used to identify patterns and relationships among variables. The framework concludes that the integration of social media and community radio enhances public engagement, social inclusion, civic participation, and community development, demonstrating the value of combining traditional community broadcasting with contemporary digital communication technologies.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result and Analysis

This section presents and interprets the empirical findings of the study on the integration of social media and community radio as a participatory communication model for enhancing public engagement. The analysis is based on data collected from 228 respondents representing diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and educational qualification. The primary objective of the analysis is to examine how demographic variables influence public engagement, trust in community radio, and social media participation within the context of integrated communication systems. Descriptive statistics have been employed to understand the demographic profile of the respondents, while inferential statistical techniques, particularly One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), have been used to test the proposed hypotheses and identify significant differences among groups. The findings provide valuable insights into the evolving relationship between traditional community radio and contemporary social media platforms. The integration of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and other digital platforms with community radio has transformed the conventional one-way broadcasting model into a more interactive and participatory communication process. This transformation has expanded opportunities for audience engagement, feedback, information sharing, and civic participation. The results are interpreted in light of Participatory Communication Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Network Society Theory, and the Public Sphere concept, which collectively emphasize active audience involvement, media interactivity, and democratic communication. The discussion not only highlights statistically significant relationships among the study variables but also contextualizes the findings within existing scholarly literature on community media, digital convergence, and public engagement. Furthermore, the analysis explores the implications of social media-integrated community radio for social inclusion, community empowerment, and sustainable development. The section concludes by demonstrating how demographic characteristics shape communication behaviour and audience participation, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of integrated media systems in contemporary society.

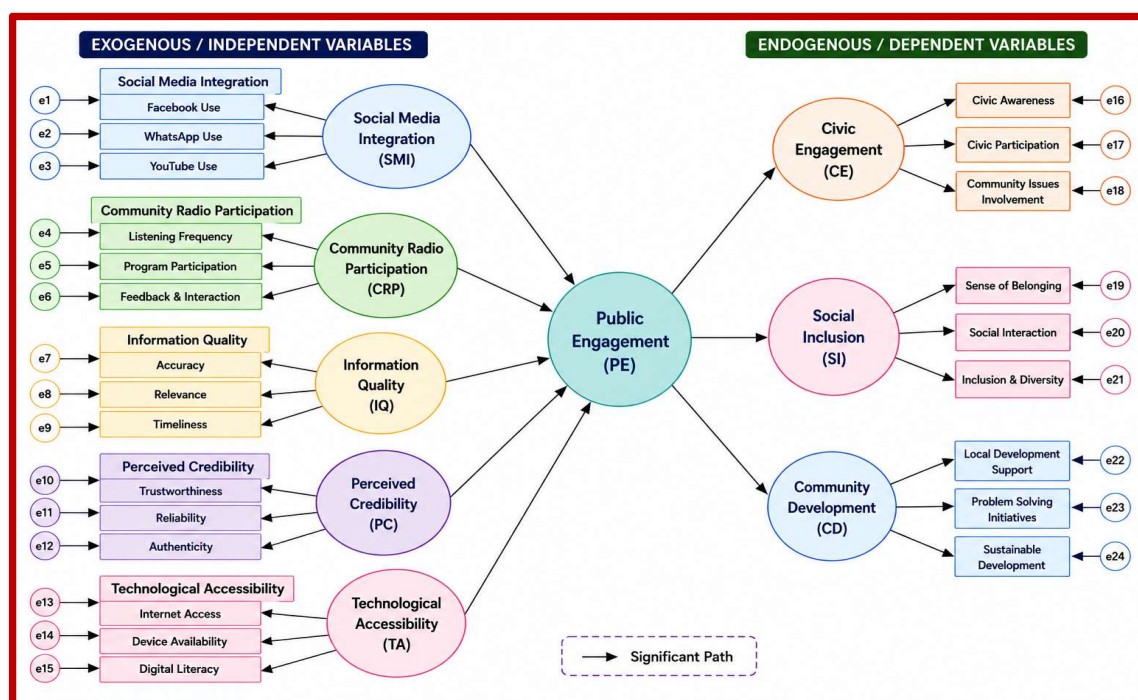


Figure 5: Social Media Integrated Community Radio System

Figure 5 demonstrates the relationship between social media and community radio in enhancing public engagement and promoting democratic communication, social inclusion, and community development.

The left panel of the SEM carries five major exogenous or independent variables which are the primary dimensions. They have been carefully chosen as they directly influence directly to public engagement. The first independent Variable is Social Media Integration (SMI) that includes indicators such as Facebook use, WhatsApp use, and YouTube. These social media platforms, in tandem, bolster the interaction on community radio by converting traditional one-way communication into a participatory and multidirectional communication process. The second Independent Variable is Community Radio Participation (CRP) is measured through listening frequency, program participation, and feedback. This is an important construct because it emphasises participatory nature of community radio by elevating audiences from passive receivers to active influencers of programme content. The third Independent Variable is Information Quality (IQ), represented through accuracy, relevance, and timeliness. The fourth Independent Variable is Perceived Credibility (PC), consisting of trustworthiness, reliability, and authenticity. The fifth Independent Variable is Technological Accessibility (TA) that connotes internet accessibility, device availability, and digital literacy.

In the middle of SEM diagram is place the Mediating Variable of Public Engagement (PE). The PE operates as the essential connector between the Exogenous Variables and Endogenous Variables. The arrows directed toward public engagement signify that stronger integration of social media, active participation in community radio, credible information, and technological accessibility significantly enhance audience engagement. The model reflects the theoretical assumptions of Participatory Communication Theory, which emphasizes dialogue, interaction, empowerment, and grassroots communication. It also aligns with Uses and Gratifications Theory, where audiences actively utilize media to satisfy informational, social, and participatory needs.

The three Endogenous Variables namely Civic Engagement (CE), Social Inclusion (SI), and Community Development (CD) are listed on the right side of the SEM. They display the expected outcomes produced due increased public participation. The first Dependent Variable Civic Engagement (CE) suggest community participation. The second Dependent Variable Social Inclusion (SI), emphasises integrated approach to promote equality, preserve cultural diversity and strengthening social cohesion.

The third dependent construct Community Development (CD), indicates how social media integration with community radio can be potential tool for development. The error terms (e1 to e24), associated with each observed indicator confirm unexplained variances in SEM analysis. Overall, the SEM highlights that social media integration with community can strengthen public engagement.

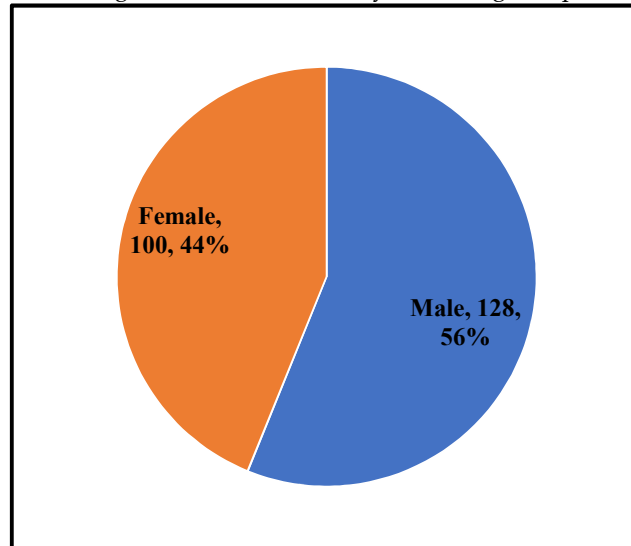


Figure 6: Gender wise Distribution of Respondents

Figure 6 presents the gender-wise distribution of the respondents participating in the study on the Integrated Social Media and Community Radio System: Redefining Public Engagement. Out of the total 228 respondents, 128 (56%) were males, while 100 (44%) were females. The data indicate a relatively balanced representation of both genders, although male respondents constitute a slightly higher proportion of the sample. Overall, the data indicates that the integrated use of social media and community radio is relevant to both men and women, supporting its potential as an inclusive platform for enhancing public engagement and community development.

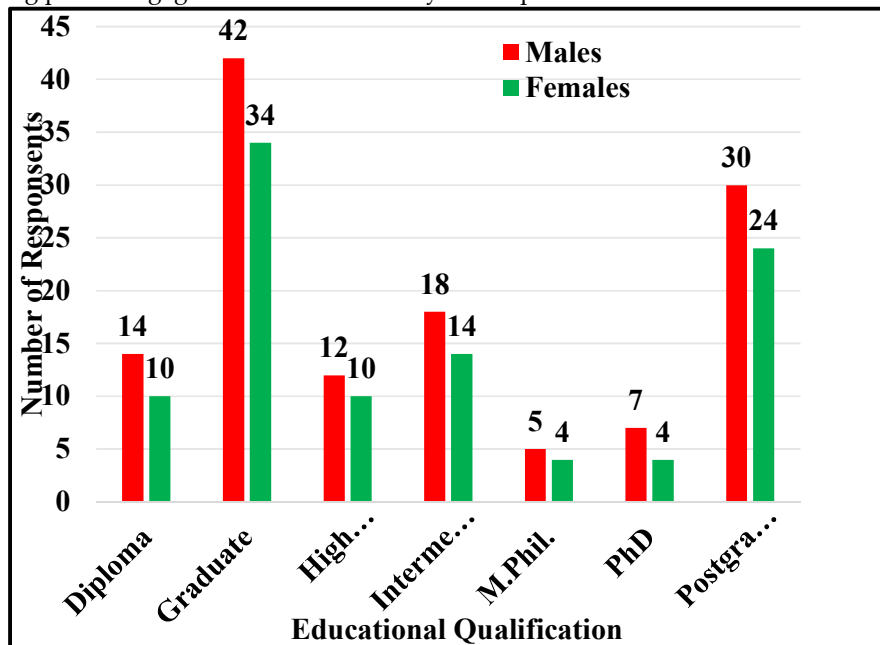


Figure 7: Gender wise Distribution of Educational Qualification of Respondents

The figure 7 demonstrates the gender-wise distribution of respondents according to their educational qualifications. It compares the number of male and female respondents across seven educational categories: Diploma, High School, Intermediate, Graduate, Postgraduate, M.Phil., and PhD. The data

reveal that graduates constitute the largest educational group among both males and females. A total of 42 male respondents and 34 female respondents are graduates, indicating that graduation is the most common level of education among the participants. The second-largest category is postgraduate education, where 30 males and 24 females are represented. This suggests that a substantial proportion of respondents have pursued higher education beyond the undergraduate level. The Intermediate category also shows a notable number of respondents, with 18 males and 14 females, reflecting moderate participation from individuals with senior secondary qualifications. At the lower educational levels, 14 male and 10 female respondents possess diploma qualifications, while 12 males and 10 females have completed high school education. These categories account for a smaller share of the sample compared to graduate and postgraduate groups. The least represented educational categories are M.Phil. and PhD. Only 5 male and 4 female respondents hold M.Phil. degrees, whereas 7 males and 4 females possess doctoral qualifications. This pattern indicates that relatively few participants have attained advanced research degrees. Across all educational categories, male respondents outnumber female respondents. However, the differences are generally modest, suggesting a relatively balanced gender distribution within the sample. The similarity in male and female representation is particularly noticeable in the High School and M.Phil. categories, where the numerical gap is minimal.

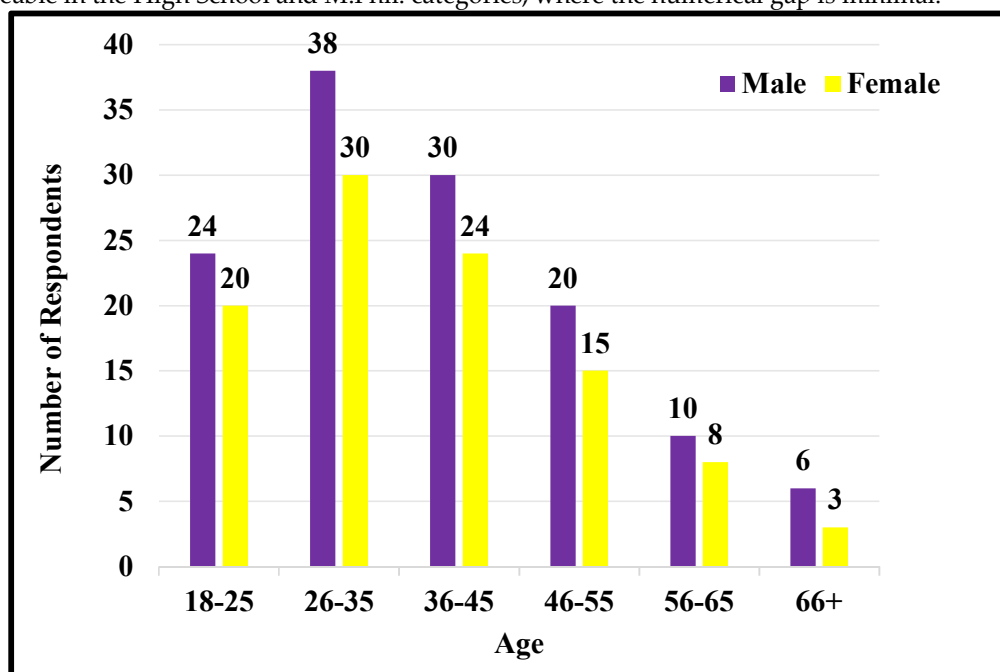


Figure 8: Gender wise Distribution of Age of Respondent

Figure 8 reveals the age-wise and gender-wise distribution of the 228 respondents included in the study. The findings indicate that respondents belong to a diverse range of age groups, ensuring representation from both younger and older segments of the population. Among the male respondents, the largest proportion falls within the 26–35-year age group (38 respondents), followed by the 36–45-year age group (30 respondents) and the 18–25 year age group (24 respondents). Similarly, among female respondents, the highest representation is observed in the 26–35-year age group (30 respondents), followed by the 36–45 year age group (24 respondents) and the 18–25 years age group (20 respondents). The data reveal that the majority of respondents belong to the economically active and technologically engaged age categories of 18–45 years, accounting for a substantial proportion of the total sample. This demographic profile is particularly relevant in the context of the Integrated Social Media and Community Radio System: Redefining Public Engagement, as individuals within these age groups are generally more familiar with digital communication technologies and social media platforms. Their active participation provides valuable insights into how integrated media systems facilitate information sharing, community interaction, and public discourse. The number of

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respondents gradually decreases in the higher age categories. The 46–55 years age group comprises 20 males and 15 females, while the 56–65 years age group includes 10 males and 8 females. The 66 years and above category has the lowest representation, with 6 male and 3 female respondents. Despite their smaller numbers, these respondents contribute important perspectives regarding traditional media usage and community radio engagement.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Gender	Public engagement
Age group	Trust in community radio
Education level	Social media participation

Table 2: Variables of the Study

Table 2 outlines the key variables used in the study and illustrates the relationship between selected demographic characteristics (independent variables) and communication-related outcomes (dependent variables). Here gender is examined in relation to the public engagement. This relationship helps determine whether male and female respondents differ in their level of engagement with community radio activities, programmes, and discussions. Age group is examined in relation to trust in community radio. Education level is examined in relation to social media participation. Educational attainment often influences an individual's access to digital technologies, media literacy, and online communication behaviour.

Based on Table 2 following three Hypotheses can be inferred:

1. Gender has a significant influence on public engagement with community radio activities and programmes.
2. Age group significantly influences the level of trust in community radio among listeners.
3. Education level has a significant effect on social media participation related to community radio.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.84	1	12.84	4.36	0.038
Within Groups	665.92	226	2.95		
Total	678.76	227			

Table 3: ANOVA for Gender differences in public engagement

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between gender and public engagement with community radio.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant relationship between gender and public engagement with community radio.

Since $p = 0.038 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis of equal means is rejected. This indicates a statistically significant difference in public engagement between male and female respondents. In practical terms, gender appears to influence how respondents engage with the integrated social media and community radio system.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether public engagement differed by gender. The analysis revealed a significant effect of gender on engagement, $F(1, 226) = 4.36$, $p = .038$.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.864	5	1.973	5.487	.000
Within Groups	79.794	222	0.359		
Total	89.658	227			

Table 4: ANOVA for Age Group and Trust in Community Radio

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between age group and trust in community radio.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant relationship between age group and trust in community radio.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether trust in community radio differed significantly across age groups. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in trust levels

among the six age categories, $F(5, 222) = 5.487$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that age group has no effect on trust in community radio is rejected.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.842	6	2.807	7.913	.000
Within Groups	78.385	221	0.355		
Total	95.227	227			

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between education level and social media participation.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant relationship between education level and social media participation.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether social media participation differed significantly across educational qualification groups. The analysis revealed a statistically significant effect of education level on social media participation, $F(6, 221) = 7.913$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that educational qualification has no significant influence on social media participation is rejected.

4.2 Discussion

Social media integration of community radio offers numerous ways of community participation and hence has created robust opportunities for social inclusion. Physically challenged persons, women, children and those living at far-off have specially benefitted from this integration of community radio with social media as they can engage online. It is a common practice for community radio stations to use their social media pages/handles to simultaneously run campaigns on domestic violence, education, health, and women's rights. Even though the social media integration of community opens up a world of opportunities for better and more nuanced communication models, yet, this also throws up certain pertinent challenges. First and foremost is the Digital Divide that plagues the developing nations. This may cause the exclusion of large number of populations especially rural and marginalised section of people who lack internet and smartphones and still consume content through traditional community radio stations. Yet another constraint is limited financial resources. To maintain a proper website, social media teams, live streaming services may result in extra financial burden for the community radio station. Small-scale and low-budget community radio stations often lack technical expertise for multimedia production – an essential requirement for social media account management. Notwithstanding the above challenges, the integration of community radio with social media offers a lot opportunities for greater community participation. The social media pages and handles of the community radio stations have demolished the traditional geographical barriers and expanded their reach to diaspora communities and far off places literally to any corner of the world. The social media integration of community radio has obviously upgraded the broadcasting into a two-way interactive communication process facilitating direct participation of community members in discussions, provide feedback and decide programme content.

Another aspect of social media integration with community radio is the promotion of gender equality that aligns with SDG 5. As a practical measure community radio stations run gender equality campaigns parallelly both through traditional one-way broadcasting as well as through their social media pages and handles. Social media integration creates alternative and more flexible communication channels that enable women to participate more actively in public discourse. Community radio stations maintain their dedicated WhatsApp Group, Facebook pages, X (formerly Twitter handles) and through them women can not only communicate with community radio station but also interact with the larger audience and engage in meaningful discussions on a variety of topic including but not limited to maternal health, gender violence, legal rights, and girls' education without necessarily being physically present at radio stations. The social media integration of community radio also helps in reducing inequalities in the world that corresponds to SDG 10. This is achieved by letting marginalized sections of the society such as indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, migrants, rural populations, and economically weaker section express their identities, languages, traditions, and local concerns on the

social media pages and handles of the community radio, which then takes up these issues, as and when it deems fit, and may also invite select few listeners to the radio station discuss them.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can safely be asserted that the integration of social media with community radio characterises a transformative communication model, which although, is in transitory phase and nascent phase, possesses immense potential to generate democratic participatory spaces for the community members and listeners to actively engage rather being passive audience. This new form of communication presents immense opportunities for educational, achieving gender equality, meaningful civic engagement, cultural preservation and community empowerment. Although there are some inherent challenges such as digital inequality, financial limitations, and regulatory barriers remain significant, that hinder the progress, however, there are abundant opportunities as well to expand the community radio broadcast beyond the tradition boundaries. The future of community radio lies in its ability to adapt to digital environments while maintaining its core principles of participation, local ownership, inclusivity, and social empowerment.

The participation of both male and female respondents is significant in understanding how integrated communication platforms influence public engagement. Community radio has traditionally served as a participatory medium that amplifies local voices, while social media provides real-time interaction, content sharing, and broader outreach. The substantial participation of female respondents demonstrates the growing role of women in both community radio initiatives and social media engagement. This is particularly important because integrated communication systems aim to promote inclusivity, social participation, and community empowerment across demographic groups. The gender distribution reflect a wide spectrum of experiences related to public engagement, information dissemination, and community participation. The age distribution suggests a balanced and diverse sample, with a strong representation of younger and middle-aged individuals.

Different age groups exhibit varying levels of confidence in community radio as a credible and reliable source of information. Older listeners value community radio for its familiarity and local relevance, while younger audiences may compare it with digital and social media platforms. Respondents with higher educational qualifications are more active on social media platforms, enabling them to interact with community radio stations through digital channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, or Instagram. The findings imply that age is an important determinant of trust in community radio. Older respondents may perceive community radio as a more reliable and locally relevant source of information, whereas younger respondents may rely more heavily on digital and social media platforms. These results support the hypothesis that age group significantly influences trust in community radio among listeners. Thus, the results support the hypothesis that education level significantly influences social media participation among community radio audiences.

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