

## TELEVISION AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN WEST BENGAL

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**ABSTRACT:** *Television has spread rapidly throughout the developing world. The pivotal role of television as an instrument of development by altering the human perspective and transforming the traditional mindset of society is well recognized. These media sources expose viewers to new information about the outside world and other ways of life, which may affect attitudes and behaviours. We find that the introduction of satellite television is associated with increases in women's autonomy and decreases in fertility. This paper explores the effect of the introduction of television on women's empowerment in rural India. This study analyses the role of television in igniting the empowerment among rural women. Burdwan and Birbhum, one of the most important districts in West Bengal is taken as the locale of the study. Hundred rural women samples are selected for the research. This research paper underscores that TV has profound impact on social, economic, cultural and political life of rural women.*

**KEYWORDS:** Empowerment, Rural Women, Satellite Television, Traditional Society, Generalizations, Marginalization

### INTRODUCTION

The growth of television in the developing world over the last two decades has been extraordinary. The main aim of television is to inform, educate and motivate the masses to accept new ideas and changes and thus, influence people's opinion on almost every aspect of life. Beyond providing entertainment, television vastly increases both the availability of information about the outside world. TV as a mass medium is a regulated wellspring of data for making mindfulness about the advancements. It is a standout amongst the most flexible varying media help at any point created. Its capacity to pass on life and occasion in real life has a significant impact upon masses. The exposure of television can help in gaining knowledge and changing attitudes which will indirectly help women to gain freedom at all fronts. Television aims at improving the quality of life of those who are under developed.

The growth of TV in rural areas has had large effects on a wide range of day-to-day lifestyle behaviors. Television is no doubt, an important tool in bringing about

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massive social change and modernization in developing country is for spreading knowledge, facts and directing various emotional appeals to influence the public opinion. TV has today turned into a capable medium of communication, thus nobody can question its potential as an impetus of social change. The eye and ear mindedness of rural women makes TV as a standout amongst the most encouraging media of the present day. It has turned out to be well known in light of its enormous visual and capable of being heard interest. This has influenced their reasoning procedure and approach towards life. The accessibility of link and satellite TV opens them to new data about the outside world which fortifies generalizations and convictions which may influence singular demeanors and practices. May be a couple of the TV stations broadcast the independent work open doors for women. TV is being utilized for spreading information about such laws. In this way, its part has turned out to be critical. The data and information blast has brought more transparency. No government would now be able to keep its kin oblivious or in any fantasy. This is especially true for remote, rural villages. In order to educate rural women about their rights and opportunities, mass media is being used in various remote areas of countries.

Television play a vital role in addressing the issues of rural women, which will indirectly help women, so as the media has an important role to play in women empowerment. To this end, the empowerment of women, presentation to television channels of communications contributes as a central point. Television goes for enhancing the personal satisfaction of the individuals who are immature along these lines adding to empowerment. Further, there are many programs in television, which are interactive for women empowerment. From the meaning of rural women, most will be uneducated people and few literates, occupied with the generation of nourishment fiber and crude materials. Those occupied with agribusiness would no uncertainty require data on particular supplies required on their ranch. They likewise need to know the procedure, names of providers and how to fulfill the conditions for acquiring them. Individuals who are occupied with rural non-cultivate financial exercises require data on nourishment preparing, saving money, material, weaving, raffia work and fitting, among others.

The television is a prominent player in communication for Women empowerment. In meeting the audience-specific needs of communication, television channels have certain limitations. Therefore, to trigger the rural women empowerment activities and to facilitate the effective communication. To sum up, media communication is playing a significant role in the changing life style of women living in rural areas. As such, the present study analyzed the media Communication for empowerment of rural women. We have to find out how media communication factors have

contributed in the rural domain as a result of women empowerment process. It is also understood that rural societies are characterized by traditional values, use of primitive technology and non-rational behavior patterns, which are incongruent with the values, technology and behavior patterns of the modern world.

Television is extremely important for women empowerment. It plays a vital role in making the people in the rural areas realize the need for adopting new practices. Television is a voice which creates a sense of working towards economic and national goals. Women have a key position in the family. Hence, the transfer of appropriate knowledge to rural women is of immense importance. But we do not know how rural women utilize these media. Thus, the present study is an effort to assess the communication exposure of farm women and factors associated with it. In this paper, we explore the effect of the introduction of television in rural areas of India on a particular set of values and behaviors, namely attitudes towards and discrimination against women. Although issues of gender equality are important throughout the world, they are particularly salient in India.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Naomi Schiller (2008)** stated that community media initiatives rely on state funding to purchase equipment and pay staff members. As of 2007, there were 28 community television stations and over 100 community radio stations with permission to broadcast around the country. Community media production in Caracas has emerged as one of the most powerful ways by which people from poor neighborhoods assert themselves as political actors, influence their importance to shaping new Venezuelan futures and influence the direction of the state.

**Payel Das (2012)** conducted a study from this research work. The researcher said that television plays an important role in the awareness of the respondents. The study has also revealed that television is the most popular form of mass media and TV serials, TV talk shows, TV news and TV documentaries are the most popular items of mass media, through which the respondents are exposed to gender issues. From the study, it is revealed that programs on crucial social issues have penetrated in our society, special economic schemes for women and government schemes for economic development of gender, special awards for women participation, and awareness of central social welfare board schemes for gender development.

**Shaik Haseena (2011)** conducted a study in Andhra Pradesh for this research work. The researcher stated that the media must be involved in developmental activities for the betterment of the community. Village-related problems must be focused in TV channels. Grass root problems and women problems in rural areas must be honestly telecast for rural development. Mass media can play a positive role in women

awareness programs. Audio visual communication and little media should be utilized more frequently for insertion, motivation and effective propagation about schemes. Entrepreneurial development programs should be conducted for the socially and economically advantaged groups.

**Rosemary, O.O. (1995)** Stated that, some of the strategies accepted during the Nairobi conference called for the eradication of exploitative discrimination against women. The Beijing Platform for Action repeated the centrality of the media as one of the critical areas of concern. The media were barely mentioned in the strategy documents of the first of the three UN conferences on women, held in Mexico in 1975. The content are mostly commercialized which is primarily targets the educated and financially equipped society for commercial benefits few have been focusing upon community or women development, which should be a top priority. The actual development of the county is in the hands of women, who play a major role in all aspects of development of the society including family and individuals. The poorest and the neediest in most rural areas women. They carry heavy responsibilities in farming and many other professions, for the sake of feeding their families and often take the role of head of the household.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the role of Television in empowering the rural women.
2. To assess the role of television in marginal rural women empowerment.
3. To evaluate the impact and the effective reach of television in rural society.
4. To find out the influence of socio-economic factors in shaping Television viewing.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Development Communication Theory, specifically, discuss about the habit of scientific application of strategies and doctrines of communication to establish a positive notion of social change. Communication has undertaken exactly the same responsibility of various empowerment programmes, accepting limitations and directives from the State. It is an undisputed fact that there can be no foundation of Empowerment without communication and this concept provides the basis for the Development Communication Theory. Communication for empowerment, as it is called, means the press has taken the responsibility of bringing out constructive empowerment programmes, accepting limitations and directives from the state. Political, economic, social and cultural needs of the society are dictating the media to act as catalyst to the process of Empowerment and play its role.

The study was informed by the Democratic Participant Media Theory which is one of the normative theories of the media which emphasizes and supports the media multiplicity, local nature of the media, horizontal media involvement and interaction. The theory is mainly concerned with the right of every person to information, the right to reply, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small scale settings of interest groups, sub-culture and community. Democratic Participant Media Theory is very effective in that it guarantees some channels for feedback and an opportunity for often neglected rural women communities to express their opinions and views on issues of interest to them.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. The main focus of this study is to find out how Communication for Improving the education of Rural Women in West Bengal.

**Research method:** This study uses conjoining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative methods used were adopted among the Rural Women to find out the pattern of communication and how it could be improved.

**Methods of data collection:** Methods play a major role in every research. The study used primary and secondary source for data collection.

**Primary Source:** The primary data are collected through two methods viz interview and observation. Information was collected through interviews of the beneficiaries are conducted through an interview schedule.

**Secondary Source:** Secondary data was collected from books, journals, periodicals, articles and Past Study records and web-based materials and internet. And other published sources of the State Government, Central Government and International Organization.

**The Universe:** The study was conducted in two districts of West Bengal. The districts were so selected that they were representative of the state of West Bengal.

**Selection of sampling:** The primary data for the study have been collected through a multi stage stratified random sampling method.

**Selection of District:** In the first stage, in twenty district of West Bengal namely Burdwan and Birbhum, have been selected purposively to cover the entire Burdwan Division. The study conducted in two district of West Bengal has been purposively selected for the present study.

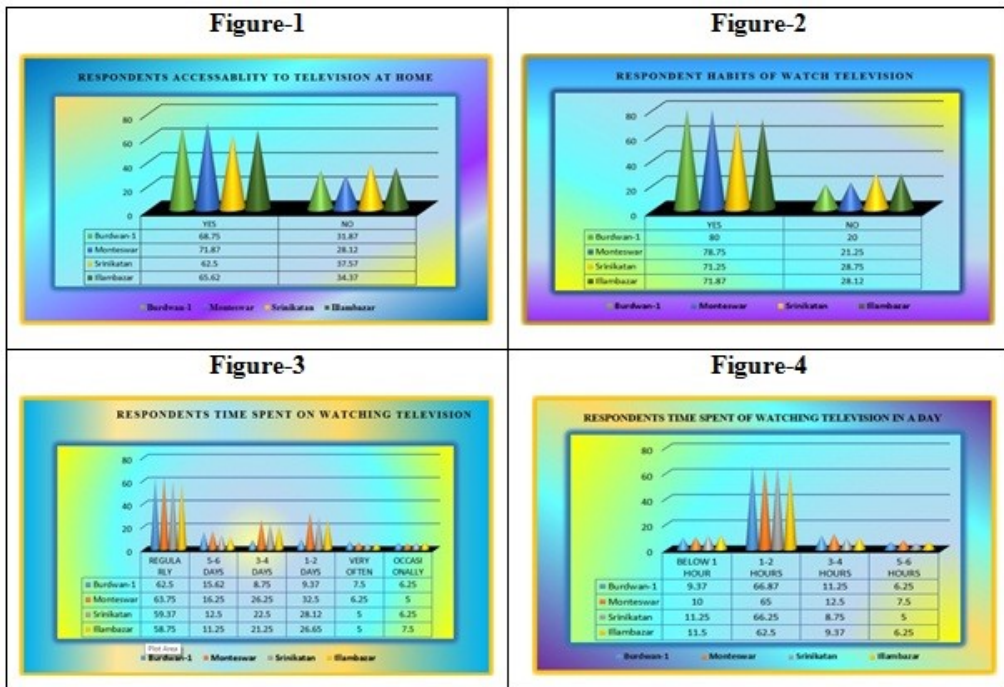
**Selection of Blocks:** In the second stage, two blocks from each district has been selected randomly. From each district four blocks were randomly selected.

**Selection of Villages:** In the third stage from each block 2 villages have been selected randomly. Two villages from each block i.e. 8 villages in all were selected. From each village 80 respondents in total 640 households have been selected as sample unit of this study.

**Sample Size:** The total sample was taken out of the eight villages, and from there 80 women were randomly selected for the present study. The sample was designed to have a total of 640 respondents. All women respondents were rural women.

**Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion**

In this Section, an in depth analysis of the collected data has been attempted as per the objectives stated earlier. The interpretations, the findings are also given. The study helped to find the effectiveness of communication of media among the rural women community by taking a small village in West Bengal state of India. The collected survey data from the women respondents were analyzed and tabulated to derive the results. Analysis of the data is given below.



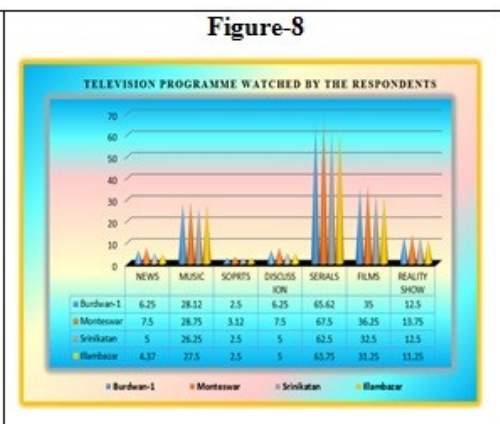
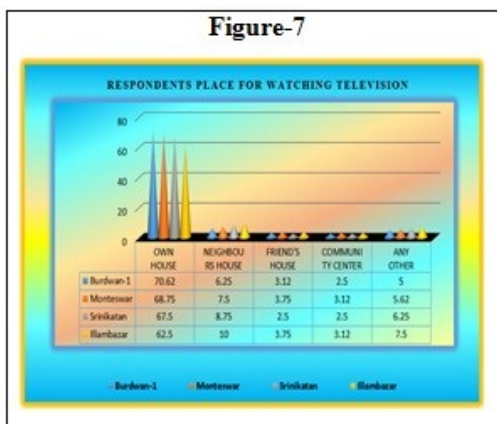
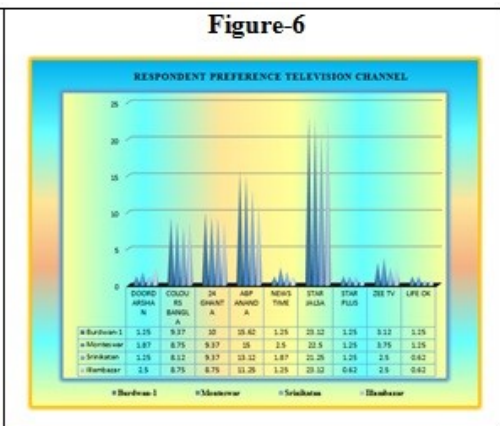
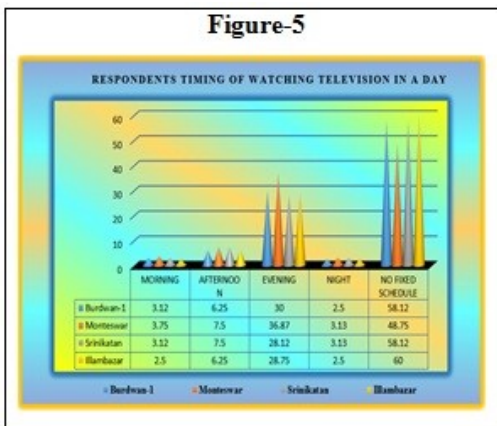
**Figure-1** shows the accessibility of Television (TV) at home. The majority populations 67.18% of the respondents now-a-days have a Television in their homes and it indicates Monteswar (71.87%) holds the majority. The rest, 32.81% of the respondents don't have any TV in their home but they do watch TV somewhere else.



**Figure-2** indicates that the people under survey 75.46% of respondents watch television daily in the rural areas of Burdwan-1, Monteswar, Srinikatan and Illambazar Blocks. The rest, 24.53% of the respondents, watch TV occasionally as they depend on others to watch television.

**Figure-3** evidently shows how much time respondents spend on watching television daily. The majority of the respondents 61.09% watch TV daily, whereas 13.90% watches TV 5 to 6 days a week.19.68% respondents watch TV 3 to 4 days a week. 24.06% watches TV one or two days a week. 5.93% respondents watch TV very often. 6.25% respondents watches TV occasionally in case of something interesting/important come on TV.

**Figure-4** It is observed from the above figure-4 that, as stated by rural area people 65.16% watch television for 1 to 2 hours daily, 10.46% of respondents watch television for 3 to 4 hours, 6.25% watches television for 5 to 6 hours and 10.78% respondents watch TV for less than one hour. It shows that television is most popular mass media among all the media in the rural areas of Burdwan-1, Monteswar, Srinikatan and Illambazar Blocks.

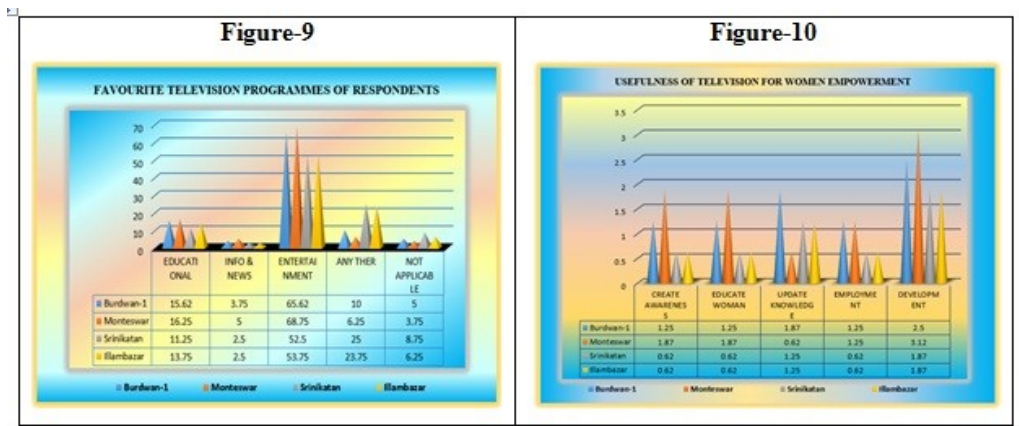


It is certain from the above **figure-5** that maximum of the viewers do not have any fixed schedule in watching television while 30.93% respondent watch TV in the evening. 2.81% watch TV at night after finishing their daily works, 6.87% watch TV in the afternoon. 12.50% viewers watch TV in the morning. The survey shows majority watches TV at evening or has no fixed schedule in the rural areas of Burdwan-1, Monteswar, Srinikatan and Illambazar Blocks.

The preferred television channels are revealed in the figure-6 that many of the respondents have chosen more than one type of channels. In this rural areas, 1.71% of respondents have preferred to watch Dooradarshan, 12.18% have preferred to watch Zee Network, 23.59% have preferred to see Star Network, 6.25% have preferred to watch Sony Network, 24.53% have preferred to watch other networks also and (44.0%) of all the respondents prefer to watch all the channels from all the networks mentioned above.

**The figure-7** indicates the respondents place for watching television and it shows that the majority (67.34%) have TV in their own houses. 8.12% of viewers watch television on their neighbor’s home. 3.28% watch in their friends’ houses, 2.81% viewers watches TV in the community centers in their areas and 24.53% have no fixed place for watching TV.

**Figure-8** evidently shows that majority of the respondents (64.84%) very much interested in watching serials, 5.78% viewers watch news, almost an equal number of viewers (5.93%) are keen to watch discussions on any serious issue. Music and Reality show are watched by 27.65% and 12.50% respectively. 32.75% watch films whereas only 2.65% people watch sports on TV in these rural areas.



**The figure 9** indicates favorite media programs of respondents. 15.62% uses media for educational purpose followed by 3.75% for info and news, and the majority 65.62% for entertainment and 10% for other purposes in the rural areas of Burdwan-



1 Blocks. 16.25% uses media for educational purpose followed by 5% for info and news, and the majority 68.75% for entertainment and 6.25% for other purposes in the rural areas of Monteswar Blocks. 11.25% uses media for educational purpose followed by 2.5% for info and news, and the majority 52.50% for entertainment and 25% for other purposes in the rural areas of Srinikatan Blocks. In Illambazar Blocks 13.75% uses media for educational purpose followed by 2.50% for info and news, 53.75% for entertainment and 23.75% for other purposes.

**The figure 10** indicates usefulness of television for women empowerment. 1.25% uses television to create awareness followed by 1.25% to educate women, 1.87% to update knowledge among women, 1.25% uses television as a tool for employment and 2.50% uses television for development in the rural areas of Burdwan-1 block. 1.87% uses television to create awareness followed by 1.87% to educate women, 0.62% to update knowledge among women, 1.25% uses television as a tool for employment 3.13% uses television for development in the rural areas of Monteswar Block. 0.62% uses television to create awareness followed by 0.62% to educate women, 1.25% to update knowledge among women, 0.62% uses television as a tool for employment, 1.87% uses television for development in the rural areas of Srinikatan Block. In the rural areas of Illambazar Block, 0.62% uses television to create awareness followed by 0.62% to educate women, 1.25% to update knowledge among women 0.62% uses television as a tool for employment, 1.87% uses television for development.

## DISCUSSION

This research, therefore, aimed at understanding the state of media communication practices in rural India, evaluating women empowerment screening knowledge, and examining influencing factors toward screening using media Communication. Scholars working with media communication needs express the urgency to involve ethnic or local stakeholders in the community television. In turn, when residents are strongly connected to each other and to these local entities, knowledge about rural women empowerment issues travels faster and reaches more individuals. Our results suggest that those connections exist and should be promoted in prospective women empowerment screening campaigns.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We are not aware of any organization trying to demand stronger press freedom for the mass media, but they may exist. Even if improved, the mass media still present challenges: (1) the main language of mass media broadcasts are elitist Bengali, which the rural women's do not easy understand; (2) not everyone can afford a television (3) one still needs to have access to and afford electricity to watch TV since electricity

does not reach the entire nation, nor does it provide service 24/7; finally, given these constraints is better suited to disseminate mass information.

## CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate whether the upheld the role of television in women's empowerment, which is poor, has improved as a result of exposure to TV following the extraordinary development of TV coverage in India over the past decades. The roles cover the socio cultural, political, and economic, agriculture, health, education and employment spheres. With proper planning and by systematic research approach and meticulous execution television can be trapped as an efficacious medium for empowerment of women. The deep penetration and largest reach of the medium will definitely improve the quality of rural women and bring them to the main stream. All needs to be done are proper and judicious content creation and execution. Our findings have crucial policy implications because the results provide policy-makers with a new method to tackle the gender inequality problem in India. Moreover, if the main goal of the Indian government is to improve women's social status, TV may be a substantially more cost-effective channel that can be used to empower women than other programmes that involve expanding education or providing immovable assets to women.

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